

BETWEEN THE IMAGINED COMMUNITY AND THE POSTMODERNIST VIEW OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITY IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S "SHAME". A LITERARY ANALYSIS

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Abstract: *The present paper succeeds to our theoretical framing of what distinguishes New Historicism from traditional historiography and to a survey of the theoretical positions assumed by the main representatives of this school that has fuelled literary studies since the 80s. This time we are examining the writing practices drawing on the assumptions of a New Historicist view of the past which bear upon narrative structure, rhetorical devices, character construction and troping. According to Linda Hutcheon, postmodernism is less a period than a poetics or an ideology. Historiographic metafiction is a type of writing that doubles back upon itself; a generic hybrid in its inscribing of both historical and literary intertexts. But it often does so by using the very techniques of modernist aestheticism against themselves. The autonomy of art is maintained; metafictional self-reflexivity even enforces it. But within this seemingly introverted intertextuality another dimension is added through the ironic inversions of parody: art's critical relation to the "world" of discourse and beyond that to society and politics. History and literature provide the intertexts in the novels examined here, but there is no question of a hierarchy, implied or otherwise. They are both part of the signifying systems of our culture. They both make sense of our world. This is one of the lessons of that most commonly practised genre of postmodernism: historiographic metafiction. "Shame" is Salman Rushdie's third novel, published in 1983. It portrays the lives of two historical personages, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, disguised as Iskander Harappa and General Raza Hyder. On the high level of a nation's history, the professed purpose of the novel is to teach the readership a lesson about overthrowing a dictator. On the level of commoners, it is a plumbing of the collective unconscious affected by such a totalitarian regime: its psychological pressure gives birth to violence. In New Historicist fashion, Rushdie judges the present society against its historical background, producing a hybrid overlay of past and present history. Rushdie interrogates the sense of guilt and of shame that is seen as an heirloom of*

colonialism. It is precisely the lack in confidence that comes with a nation's awareness of its roots, of its past that makes it vulnerable, that induces spiritual paralysis. It is worth noting that the freedom in the treatment of the past does not at all indicate contempt for the past as was the case with the vanguard movements of the last century. New Historicism is a critique of false ideas about history, of political attempts to rewrite the past according to circumstantial interests of the power system. Rushdie is a master in providing tropes of this lack of authenticity affecting some versions of the past: fading photographs, vanishing ink, empty luggage, and letters instead of meaningful linguistic units.

Keywords: Collective Identity; Salman Rushdie; New Historicism; Historiographic Metafiction.

Introduction

Linda Hutcheon in her book *Historiographic Metafiction. Parody and the Intertextuality of History*, tries to identify the context in which the postmodern historical sense situates himself:

“What we tend to call postmodernism in literature today is usually characterized by intense self-reflexivity and overtly parodic intertextuality. In fiction this means that it is usually metafiction that is equated with the postmodern. Given the scarcity of precise definitions of this problematic period designation, such an equation is often accepted without question. What I would like to argue is that, in the interests of precision and consistency, we must add something else to this definition: an equally self-conscious dimension of history. My model here is postmodern architecture, that resolutely parodic recalling of the history of architectural forms and functions. The theme of the 1980 Venice Biennale, which introduced postmodernism to the architectural world, was "The Presence of the Past." The term postmodernism, when used in fiction, should, by analogy, best be reserved to describe fiction that is at once metafictional and historical in its echoes of the texts and contexts of the past. In order to distinguish this paradoxical beast from traditional historical fiction, I would like to label it "historiographic metafiction". The category of novel I am thinking of includes *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *Ragtime*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and *The Name of the Rose*. All of these are popular and familiar novels whose metafictional self-reflexivity (and intertextuality) renders their implicit claims to historical veracity somewhat problematic, to say the least.” (Linda Hutcheon, *Historiographic Metafiction. Parody and the Intertextuality of History*, p.3)

Historiographic metafiction is particularly doubled, like this, in its inscribing of both historical and literary intertexts. Its specific and general recollections of the forms and contents of history writing work to familiarize the unfamiliar through (very familiar) narrative structures (as Hayden White has argued ["The Historical Text", 49-50]), but its metafictional self-reflexivity works to render problematic any such familiarization. And the reason for the sameness is that both real and imagined worlds come to us through their accounts of them, that is, through their traces, their texts. The ontological line between historical past and literature is not effaced (see Thiher 190), but underlined. The past really did exist, but we can only "know" that past today through its texts, and therein lies its connection to the literary. If the discipline of history has lost its privileged status as the purveyor of truth, then so much the better, according to this kind of modern historiographic theory: the loss of the illusion of transparency in historical writing is a step toward intellectual self-awareness that is matched by metafiction's challenges to the presumed transparency of the language of realist texts.

Historiographic metafiction, therefore, represents a challenging of the (related) conventional forms of fiction and history through its acknowledgment of their inescapable textuality. As Barthes once remarked, Flaubert's *Bouvard and Pecuchet* become the ideal precursors of the postmodernist writer who

"can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any of them" (Irrage 146).

The formal linking of history and fiction through the common denominators of intertextuality and narrativity is usually offered not as a reduction, as a shrinking of the scope and value of fiction, but rather as an expansion of these. Or, if it is seen as a limitation-restricted to the always already narrated-this tends to be made into the primary value, as it is in Lyotard's "pagan vision", wherein no one ever manages to be the first to narrate anything, to be the origin of even her or his own narrative (78). Lyotard deliberately sets up this "limitation" as the opposite of what he calls the capitalist position of the writer as original creator, proprietor, and entrepreneur of her or his story. Much postmodern writing shares

this implied ideological critique of the assumptions underlying “romantic” concepts of author and text, and it is parodic intertextuality that is the major vehicle of that critique. Perhaps because parody itself has potentially contradictory ideological implications (as “authorized transgression”, it can be seen as both conservative and revolutionary [Hutcheon 69-83]), it is a perfect mode of criticism for postmodernism, itself paradoxical in its conservative installing and then radical contesting of conventions. Historiographic metafiction, like Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Gunter Grass's *The Tin Drum*, or Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (which uses both of the former as intertexts), employ parody not only to restore history and memory in the face of the distortions of the “history of forgetting” (Thiher 11 Linda Hutcheon 202), but also, at the same time, to put into question the authority of any act of writing by locating the discourses of both history and fiction within an ever-expanding intertextual network that mocks any notion of either single origin or simple causality. When linked with satire, as in the work of Vonnegut, V. Vampilov, Christa Wolf, or Coover, parody can certainly take on more precisely ideological dimensions. Here, too, however, there is no direct intervention in the world: this is writing working through other writing, other textualizations of experience (Said Beginnings 237). In many cases intertextuality may well be too limited a term to describe this process; interdiscursivity would perhaps be a more accurate term for the collective modes of discourse from which the postmodern parodically draws: literature, visual arts, history, biography, theory, philosophy, psychoanalysis, sociology, and the list could go on. One of the effects of this discursive pluralizing is that the (perhaps illusory but once firm and single) centre of both historical and fictive narrative is dispersed. Margins and edges gain new value. The “ex-centric”—as both off-centre and de-centred gets attention. That which is “different” is valorised in opposition both to elitist, alienated “otherness” and also to the uniformizing impulse of mass culture. And in American postmodernism, the “different” comes to be defined in particularizing terms such as those of nationality, ethnicity, gender, race, and sexual orientation. Intertextual parody of canonical classics is one mode of re-appropriating and reformulating—with significant changes—the dominant white, male, middle-class, European culture. It does not reject it, for it cannot. It signals its dependence by its use of the canon, but asserts its

rebellion through ironic abuse of it. As Edward Said has been arguing recently (“Culture”), there is a relationship of mutual interdependence between the histories of the dominators and the dominated. It is generally accepted that intercultural learning “starts with learners achieving various degrees of cultural awareness or cultural understanding”. Cultural awareness/understanding, in turn, is conceived as requiring some form of critical thinking or (self-)reflection which can roughly be described as “a process through which one is examining one’s cultural assumptions when confronted with a different world view” (A.E. Jacobsen 2016:190).

Magic Realism and Discourses of History in Salman Rushdie’s *Shame*

Shame is Salman Rushdie's third novel, published in 1983. Like most of Rushdie's work, this book was written in the style of magic realism. It portrays the lives of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (Iskander Harappa) and General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq (General Raza Hyder) and their relationship. The central theme of the novel is that violence is born out of shame. The concepts of 'shame' and 'shamelessness' are explored through all of the characters, with main focus on Sufiya Zinobia and Omar Khayyám. Shame discusses heritage, authenticity, truth, and, of course, shame and shamelessness, as well as the impact of all these themes on an individual, the protagonist Omar Khayyám. This story takes place in a town called “Q” which is actually a fictitious version of Quetta, Pakistan. In Q, the three sisters (Chunni, Munnee, and Bunny Shakil) simultaneously pretend to give birth to Omar Khayyám Shakil. Therefore, it is impossible to know who Omar's true mother is. In addition, they are unsure of who Omar's father is as the three sisters got pregnant at a house party. While growing up, Omar becomes mischievous and learns hypnosis. As a birthday present, Omar Khayyám Shakil's “mothers” allow him to leave Q. He enrolls in a school and is convinced by his tutor (Eduardo Rodriguez) to become a doctor. Over time, he comes in contact with both Iskander Harappa and General Raza Hyder.

One potential reading in terms of New Historicism is Rushdie’s symbolism of the Hegiran calendar:

“All this happened in the fourteenth century. I’m using the Hegiran calendar, naturally: don’t imagine that stories of this type always take place long ago. Time cannot be

homogenized as easily as milk, and in those parts, until quite recently, the thirteen hundreds were still in full swing.” (Rushdie, 1997: 10)

The excerpt below tries to identify the social and national networks tensioning the lives of the Shakils:

“It became clear, however, that the snobbishness which their father had bred into the sisters’ bone-marrow had fatally infected the guest list. Most of the burghers of Q. had already been mortally insulted to find themselves deemed unworthy of the company of the three lustrous ladies, whose gilt-edged invitations were the talk of the town. Now the crimes of omission were compounded by those of commission, because it was seen that the sisters had committed the ultimate solecism: invitations, scorning the doormats of the indigenous worthies, had found their way into the Angrez Cantonment, and into the ballroom of the dancing sahibs.” (Rushdie, 1997:14)

The effect of ideological constraints and taboos on individual psychology can be highly seen in the following paragraph:

“Omar Khayyam Shakil was afflicted, from his earliest days, by a sense of inversion, of a world turned upside-down. And by something worse: the fear that he was living at the edge of the world, so close that he might fall off at any moment. Through an old telescope, from the upper-storey windows of the house, the child Omar Khayyam surveyed the emptiness of the landscape around Q.,

.....How young he was when he made the surprisingly adult resolution to escape from the unpalatable reality of dreams into the slightly more acceptable illusions of his everyday waking life!” (Rushdie, 1997:15)

The gendered bodies can be compared in an asymmetric relationship to the Ophelia/Hamlet polarity in relation to madness:

“His wife, the elder daughter of General Raza Hyder, was an insomniac too; but Omar Khayyam’s sleeplessness is not to be compared with hers, for while his was willed, she, foolish Sufiya Zinobia, would lie in bed squeezing her eyelids shut between her thumbs and forefingers, as if she could

extrude consciousness through her eyelashes, like motes of dust, or tears.

.....Dizzy, peripheral, inverted, infatuated, insomniac, stargazing, fat: what manner of hero is this?" (Rushdie, 1997:24)

The anatomy of "shame" can be easily recognized in Rushdie's referential Pakistan. Analysing the plot of political antagonism in the excerpts below, one can define the "imagined community" and the postmodernist view of collective identity:

"When individuals come unstuck from their native land, they are called migrants. When nations do the same thing (Bangladesh), the act is called secession. What is the best thing about migrant peoples and seceded nations? I think it is their hopefulness. Look into the eyes of such folk in old photographs. Hope blaze sun dimmed through the fading sepia tints. And what's the worst thing? It is the emptiness of one's luggage. I'm speaking of invisible suitcases, not the physical, perhaps cardboard, variety containing a few meaning-drained mementoes: we have come unstuck from more than land. We have floated upwards from history, from memory, from Time. I may be such a person. Pakistan may be such a country. It is well known that the term 'Pakistan', an acronym, was originally thought up in England by a group of Muslim intellectuals. P for the Punjabis, A for the Afghans, K for the Kashmiris, S for Sind and the 'tan', they say, for Baluchistan. (No mention of the East Wing, you notice; Bangladesh never got its name in the title, and so, eventually, it took the hint and seceded from these cessionists. Imagine what such a double secession does to people!) So it was a word born in exile which then went East, Shame? 86 was borne-across or translated, and imposed itself on history; are turning migrant, settling down on partitioned land, forming a palimpsest on the past. A palimpsest obscures what lies beneath. To build Pakistan it was necessary to cover up Indian history, to deny that Indian centuries lay just beneath the surface of Pakistani Standard Time. The past was rewritten; there was nothing else to be done.

Who commandeered the job of rewriting history? The immigrants, the mohajirs. In what languages? - Urdu and English, both imported tongues, although one travelled less distance than the other. It is possible to see the subsequent history of Pakistan as a duel between two layers of time, the obscured world forcing its way back through what-had-been-

imposed. It is the true desire of every artist to impose his or her vision on the world; and Pakistan, the peeling, fragmenting palimpsest, increasingly at war with itself, may be described as a failure of the dreaming mind. Perhaps the pigments used were the wrong ones, impermanent, like Leonardo's; or perhaps the place was just insufficiently imagined, a picture full of irreconcilable elements, midriff baring immigrant saris versus demure, indigenous Sindhi shalwar-kurtas, Urdu versus Punjabi, now versus then: a miracle that went wrong. As for me: I, too, like all migrants, am a fantasist. I build imaginary countries and try to impose them on the ones that exist. I, too, face the problem of history: what to retain, what to dump, how to hold on to what memory insists on relinquishing, how to deal with change. And to come back to the 'roots' idea, I should say that I haven't managed to shake myself free of it completely." (284)

The reasons for Sufiya's progressive psychic disturbance are directly related to the analogy between Sufiya as "miracle that went wrong" and Pakistan spoken of in similar terms:

"The heroine of our story, the wrong miracle, Sufiya Zinobia, was as small a baby as anyone had ever seen. (She remained small when she grew up, taking after her near-midget paternal great grandmother, whose name, Bariamma, Big Mother, had always been a sort of family joke.)

And at this point' I am quoting from the family legend again when her parents had to admit the immutability of her gender, to submit, as faith demands, to God; at this very instant the extremely new and soporific being in Raza's arms began it's true! - to blush. 'O rubescent Sufiya Zinobia! It is possible that the above incident has been a little embellished during its many tellings and retellings; but I shall not be the one to question the veracity of oral tradition. They say the baby blushed at birth. Then, even then, she was too easily shamed.'" (142)

The effects of ideology on the gendered body are presented in the following paragraph:

"Who sits at her father's feet while, elsewhere, Pinkie Aurangzeb grows old in an empty house? Arjumand Harappa: thirteen years old and wearing an expression of huge satisfaction, she sits cross-legged on the marble-chip

floor of a rococo bedroom, watching Shame, Good News and the Virgin? Isky complete the process of remaking himself; Arjumand, who that will stick to her for most of her life. She has always known in the precocity of her years that there is a second man inside her father, growing, waiting, and now at last bursting out, while the old Iskander slips rustling and discarded to the floor, ashrivelled snakeskin in a hard diamond of sunlight. So what pleasure she takes in his transformation, in finally acquiring the father she deserves! 'I did this,' she tells Iskander, 'my wanting it so badly finally made you see.' Harappa smiles at his daughter, pats her hair. 'That happens sometimes.' 'And no more Omar-uncle,'

'Just wait and see!' Omar Khayyam's absent bulk carries with it the shadows of the past. Iskander, supine in white-and-gold bed and sunk in frenzie dreverie, states with sudden clarity: 'It's a man's world, Arjumand. Rise above your gender as you grow. This is no place to be a woman in.' The rueful nostalgia of these sentences marks the last death-throes of Iskander's love for Pinkie Aurangzeb, but his daughter takes him at his word, and when her breasts begin to swell she will bind them tightly in linen bandages, so fiercely that she blushes with pain. She will come to enjoy the war against her body, the slow provisional victory over the soft, despised flesh ... (157)

The surrogate identity, in Omar as well as Babar's case can be considered a characteristic of Postmodernist identity philosophy. The influence of politics affects the characters in the novel as it follows:

"Under the impact of the tragedy, Chhunni, Munnee and Bunny began to crumble inside, becoming mere facades, beings as insubstantial as the sloughed-off corpse of their son. She must have been sleepwalking, because when they found her she looked rested, as if she'd had a good deep sleep. When the wind died and the household awoke from its turbulent afternoon slumber Shahbanou noticed the empty cot at once and raised the alarm. Afterwards nobody could work out how the girl had escaped, how she managed to sleepwalk through an entire houseful of government furniture and sentries. Shahbanou would always say that it must have been quite a wind, it sent soldiers to sleep at the gate and wrought a somnambulist miracle of such potency that Sufiya Zinobia's passage through the house, into the garden and over the wall acquired the power of infecting

anyone she passed, who must have fallen instantly into a wind-sick trance.

But it is my opinion that the source of the power, the worker of the miracle, was Sufiya Zinobia herself; there would be other such occasions, when one could not blame the wind ...

They found her in the aftermath of the Loo, sitting fast asleep under the sun's ferocity in the turkey-yard of the widow Aurang- Shame, Good News and the Virgin ? 143 zeb, a little huddled figure snoring gently amidst the corpses of the birds. Yes, they were all dead, every one of the two hundred and eighteen turkeys of Pinkie's loneliness, and people were so shocked that they forgot to clear away the corpses for a whole day, leaving the dead birds to rot in the heat and in the crepuscular gloom of the evening and beneath the ice-hot stars, two hundred and eighteen that would never find their way into ovens or on to dining tables. Sufiya Zinobia had torn off their heads and then reached down into their bodies to draw their guts up through their necks with her tiny and weapon less hands. Shahbanou, who found her first, did not dare to approach her; then Raza and Bilquis arrived, and soon everybody, sister, servants, neighbours, was standing and gaping at the spectacle of the bloodied girl and the decapitated creatures with intestines instead of heads. PinkiAurangzeb looked hollowly upon the carnage, and was struck by the meaningless hatred in Bilquis's eyes; the two women remained silent, each in the grip of a different horror, so that it was Raza Hyder, his watery black-rimmed eyes riveted upon the face of his daughter with her bloodied lips, who spoke first in a voice echoing with admiration as well as revulsion: 'With her bare hands,' the new government minister trembled, 'what gave the child such strength?' Now that the iron hoops of the silence had been snapped Shahbanouthe ayah began wailing at the top of her voice: 'Ullu-ulluullu!',a gibberish lament of such high pitch that it dragged SufiyaZinobia out of her lethal sleep; she opened those eyes of watered milk and on seeing the devastation around her she fainted, echoing her own mother on that far-off day when Bilquis found herself naked in a crowd and passed out cold for shame. What forces moved that sleeping three-year-old mind in its twelve-year-old body to order an all-out assault upon feathered turkey-cocks and hens? One can only speculate: was Sufiya Zinobia trying, like a good daughter, to rid her mother of the gobbler

plague? Or did the anger, the proud outrage which Raza Hyder ought to have felt, but refused to do so, preferring to make allowances for Pinkie, find its way into his daughter Shame? 144 instead? - What seems certain is that Sufiya Zinobia, for so long burdened with being a miracle-gone-wrong, a family's shame made flesh, had discovered in the labyrinths of her unconscious self the hidden path that links sharam to violence; and that, awakening, she was as surprised as anyone by the force of what had been unleashed. The beast inside the beauty. Opposing elements of a fairy-tale combined in a single character ... Bilquis did not, on this occasion, faint. The embarrassment of her daughter's deed, the ice of this latest shame lent a frozen rigidity to her bearing. 'Be quiet, 'she ordered the ululating ayah, 'go in and bring out scissors.' Until the ayah had completed her enigmatic errand Bilquis would let nobody touch the girl; she circled her in a manner so forbidding that not even Raza Hyder dared go near. While Shahbanou ran for scissors Bilquis spoke softly, under her breath, so that only a few words wafted as far as the watching husband, widow, younger daughter, servants, anonymous passers-by. '... Tear your hair ... birthright ... woman's pride ... all fuzzy-wuzzy like a hubshee female ... cheapness ... loose ... crazy,' and then the scissors came, and still nobody dared intervene, as Bilquis grabbed hold of great clumps of her daughter's savaged tresses, and cut, and cut and cut. At last she stood up, out of breath, and working the scissors absently with her fingers she turned away. Sufiya Zinobia's head looked like a cornfield after a fire; sad, black stubble, a catastrophic desolation wrought by maternal rage. Raza Hyder picked his daughter up with a gentleness born of his infinite puzzlement and carried her indoors, away from the scissors that were still snipping at air in Bilquis's uncontrollable hand. Scissors cutting air mean trouble in the family

'O, Mummy!' Good News giggled with fear. 'What did you do? She looks like ...'

'We always wanted a boy,' Bilquis replied, 'but God knows best.'

To come to the point: for some days Omar Khayyam watched Sufiya at home, playing with the numberless children, skipping for them and shelling pine-kernels, and he could see that she was getting worse, because this was the first time that the violence bursting from her had left no after-effects, no immune-disorder, no comatose trance; she

was becoming habituated to it, he thought in fright, it could happen again at any time, the children. Yes, he saw the danger, now that he was looking for it he caught the flickers in her eyes, the coming and going of little pricks of yellow light. He was watching her carefully so he saw what casual eyes would have missed, which was that the edges of Sufiya Zinobia were beginning to become uncertain, as if there were two beings occupying that air-space, competing for it, two entities of identical shape but of tragically opposed natures. From the flickering points of light he began to learn that science was not In the Fifteenth Century? 249 ... The Beast has many faces. Some are always sad. A hanging in the courtyard of the District Jail at dead of night. Prisoners howling, banging cups, sang Isky's requiem. And the Hang man was never seen again. Don't ask me what became of him; I can't be expected to know everything. He vanished: poof! - And after the body was cut down, the flight to Mohenjo, Rani tearing the death-sheet from the face. But she never saw the chest. And then blind men seeing, the lame walking, lepers cured when they touched the martyr's tomb. It was also said that this tomb touching was a particularly efficacious remedy for disorders of the teeth." (249)

According to Rushdie art is free from contextual constraints, as one can notice in the following excerpt:

"They told me the story of a recent attempt to stage Julius Caesar at the University of P. It seems that the authorities became very agitated when they heard that the script called for the assassination of a Head of State. What was more, the production was to be in modern dress: General Caesar would be in full dress uniform when the knives got to work. Extreme pressure was brought to bear on the University to scrap the production. The academics, honourably, resisted, defending an ancient writer with a rather martial name against this assault-of-the-Generals. At one point the military censors suggested a compromise: would the University not agree to mount the whole production, just as scripted, with the single exception of that unpalatable killing? Surely that scene was not absolutely necessary? Finally, the producer came up with a brilliant, a positively Solomonic solution. He invited a prominent British diplomat to play Caesar, dressed in (British) Imperial regalia. The Army relaxed; the play opened; and when the first-night curtain fell, the houselights

went up to reveal a front row full of Generals, all applauding wildly to signify their enjoyment of this patriotic work depicting the overthrow of imperialism by the freedom movement of Rome.” (258)

Rushdie’s attempts to fight back fundamentalism are highly stressed in the following passage:

“The people are not only like Robespierre. They, we, are Danton, too. We are Robeston and Danpierre. The inconsistency doesn’t matter; I myself manage to hold large numbers of wholly irreconcilable views simultaneously, without the least difficulty. I do not think others are less versatile. Iskander Harappa was not just Danton; Raza Hyder wasn’t Robespierre pure-and-simple. Isky certainly lived it up, perhaps she was something of an epicure, but he also believed that he was always, unarguably, right. And eighteen shawls have shown us that he wasn’t averse to Terror, either.” (161)

What makes Rushdie remarkable in point of depth psychology is the representation of the character in the passage below:

“On all fours, the calluses thick on her palms and soles. The black hair, once shorn by Bilquis Hyder, long now and matted around her face, enclosing it like fur; the pale skin of her mohajir ancestry burned and toughened by the sun, bearing like battle Shame? 270 scars the lacerations of bushes, animals, her own itch-scratching nails. Fiery eyes and the stink of ordure and death. 'For the first time in her life' - he shocked himself by the sympathy in the thought - 'that girl is free.' He imagined her proud; proud of her strength, proud of the violence that was making her a legend, that prohibited anyone from telling her what to do, or whom to be, or what she should have been and was not; yes, she had risen above everything she did not wish to hear.” (172)

In terms of plot we may say that it twists to “fairy tale”, to magic, while still in the historical world. Rushdie uses the magical style of magic realism in which myth and fantasy are blended with real life. The entire novel is an example of magic realism:

“How does a dictator fall? There is an old saw which states, with absurd optimism, that it is in the nature of tyrannies to

end. One might as well say that it is also in their nature to begin, to continue, to dig themselves in, and, often, to be preserved by greater powers than their own. Well, well, I mustn't forget I'm only telling a fairy-story. My dictator will be toppled by goblinish, faery means. 'Makes it pretty easy for you,' is the obvious criticism; and I agree, I agree. But add, even if it does sound a little peevish: 'You try and get rid of a dictator some time.' Approaching across the pine-kernel droppings is the forgotten figure of Bilquis Hyder. Who is carrying a heap of shapeless garments, a selection from the work of her isolated years. Burqas, Omar Khayyam realizes, as hope bursts inside him; head-to-toe cloaks of invisibility, veils. The living wear shrouds as well as the dead. Bilquis Hyder says simply, 'Put these on.' Shakil seizes, rushes into his womanly disguise; Bilquis pulls the black fabric over her husband's unresisting head. 'Your son became a daughter,' she tells him, 'so now you must change shape also. I knew I was sewing these for a reason.' The President is passive, allows himself to be led. Black-veiled fugitives mingle with escaping servants in the darkened corridors of the house. How Raza Hyder fell: in improbability; in chaos; in women's clothing; in lack. Nobody questions women wearing veils. They pass through the mob and the ring of soldiers, jeeps, trucks.(...) For days they scarcely speak, and force themselves to remain impassive when policemen walk squinting along queues of waiting travellers at small-town depots, tapping their lathis against short-trousered thighs. For Shakil and Hyder, the humiliation of the ladies' latrines. There is no country poorer than Escape.(...) 'Look where we've got to in this country,' the bus-driver sneers, he is enormous, with tree-trunk arms and a face like a horsehair cushion, 'even the transvestites are going into purdah now.'" (174)

Conclusion

The overall conclusion which can be drawn from the analysis is that, according to Linda Hutcheon,

“postmodernism is less a period than a poetics or an ideology. It clearly attempts to combat what has come to be seen as modernism's hermetic, elitist isolationism that separated art from the 'world', literature from history. But it often does so by using the very techniques of modernist aestheticism against themselves. The autonomy of art is maintained; metafictional self-reflexivity even underlines it. But within this seemingly introverted intertextuality another

dimension is added through the ironic inversions of parody: art's critical relation to the 'world' of discourse and beyond that to society and politics. History and literature provide the intertexts in the novels examined here, but there is no question of a hierarchy, implied or otherwise. They are both part of the signifying systems of our culture. They both make and make sense of our world. This is one of the lessons of that most didactic of postmodern forms: historiographic metafiction." (Hutcheon, 1989:28)

It is generally accepted that intercultural learning "starts with learners achieving various degrees of cultural awareness or cultural understanding. Cultural awareness/ understanding, in turn, is conceived as requiring some form of critical thinking or (self-) reflection which can roughly be described as a process through which one is examining one's cultural assumptions when confronted with a different world view.

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