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Self-reflexivity in Salman Rushdie's *Shame*

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Letter of Recommendation

PawanPokhrel has completed his thesis entitled “Self-reflexivity in Salman Rushdie’s *Shame*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from November 2020 to April 2021. I hereby recommend his thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

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## Self-reflexivity in Salman Rushdie's *Shame*

### Abstract

*This research paper explores Salman Rushdie's novel Shame by focusing on the self-reflexive nature of narration. It attempts to highlight that this approach of the author to self-reference his own process draws attention to the constructed nature of the novel and it also challenges the various oppressive ideologies by drawing attention to their construction. There is a regular intrusion of narrator as the author of the novel where he discusses in length about his inspiration, ideas and approach to write this novel. Here the author reflects upon the various issues like historical narrative, religion, relationship of shame and violence, oppression of women. Instead of just dramatizing the issues and themes, the author examines their construction and function. By drawing attention to their conventionality, he problematizes their use as a tool of oppression. There are several references to the events and characters of Pakistan's history as well as other literary works. This paper primarily uses Linda Hutcheon's concept of Historiographic Metafiction and Patricia Waugh's ideas of metafiction to explore how the Rushdie's self-aware and self-referential technique of storytelling focuses on the intertextual and parodic nature of this novel. The self-reflexive act of the narrator illuminates the various themes and issues discussed by the novel. The narrator lays bare the traditional methods of characterization and narration and highlights the constructed nature and artificiality of the text as well as reality. It also foregrounds the relationship between fiction and the world outside the fiction.*

**Key Words:** History, Historiographic Metafiction, Intertextuality, Narration, Parody, Self-reflexivity

Salman Rushdie's novel *Shame* deals with the history of Pakistan where the author parodies the historical events and figures of Pakistan's history. The novel is full of many interruptions by the narrator in which the narrator appears as the author of the novel. The narrator continuously reflects on the act of writing this story. The boundary between the narrator of the story and the author of the novel overlaps. Due to the many similarities between the events portrayed in the novel and the historical incidents of Pakistan, *Shame* has been called as the novel that "tells the story of Pakistani nation-building" (Morrison 148). Moreover, the authorial asides that appear in the novel time and again do not hide the fact that the story of the novel is connected to the historical happenings in Pakistan. The narrator of the story comments about Pakistan, his relationship with the country and tells the readers that "The country in this story is not Pakistan, or not quite. There are two countries, real and fictional, occupying the same space, or almost the same space"(Rushdie 29). It shows the existence of real as well as fictional country of Pakistan in the novel. So, the readers can make the connection of the story with the real historical events of Pakistan.

Although the main story of the novel progresses as a fairy-tale with elements of fantasy and magic realism, the author discusses about the various issues and themes in the authorial asides. His frequent self-reflections on the issues draw attention to their constructed nature. The narrator every now and then intrudes with his thoughts, commentaries and his influences while writing the story. Due to the self-conscious and self-reflexive nature of narration, this makes the novel a work of meta-fiction. A metafictional work not only draws attention to its fictional nature but it also explores the conventions of the reality outside a text. In the main story, various issues related to Pakistan's history and society are dramatized. But at the same time, the author scrutinizes these issues by foregrounding them as ideological constructs. He questions

the conventions of history writing, explores the concepts of honor and shame and analyses the role of religion in Pakistan's politics and social sphere.

The narrator's frequent interjections where he mentions about the real incidents like invasion of Afghanistan by Russia, execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto grounds the novel in the historical reality of Pakistan. He confesses to the readers that this is not a realistic novel about Pakistan, but he also discusses in length about the real incidents of the country which he has omitted from the story. Major historical events and figures have been parodied in the novel. By doing so, the author subverts the larger narratives dominant in any historical context. He also discusses about the nature of historical narrative and likens it with the conventions of storytelling.

Besides the principal characters of the novel who are the parody of major historical figures, the novel also parodies the influence and domination of Islam in the Pakistani society and politics through the character Maulana Dawood who is also the political confidant of RazaHyder in the novel.

Moreover, the narrator's acknowledgement that there are two versions of Pakistan in the novel makes the connection more apparent. The narrator is self-conscious about his process of selecting and omitting the events for his story. With his frequent commentaries, the narrator locates the novel within the intertexts of history and argues that "both the fictional and historical accounts are similar and openly not definitive" (Goonetilleke50). The act of self-reflexivity by the author reveals the constructed nature of the various issues discussed in the novel. It connects the fictional Pakistan of the novel with the various discourses outside the text. The narrator of the story is also self-aware about his position as the author of the novel. He discusses about his point-of-view as an outsider as well as an immigrant. He is candid about the limitations of his perspectives but he also argues that his shortcoming is also

common to all other perspectives. He talks about the state of censorship in Pakistan which automatically limits the perspective of any insider. He also discusses about his personal connections with Pakistan and how he has known the country in fragments. He is self-aware about his limitations and he also addresses the possible reactions to his act of telling a story about Pakistan's history as an outsider. He also questions about the authority that can command the act of writing history. Reality or history is not only a question of permanent truths or empirical facts but a constructed structure. Thus, by confessing about his own artifices of storytelling as well as that of the history writing, the narrator challenges the fixed world view of a particular historical narrative.

Similarly, the author also reflects upon his choice of the title for the novel. He mentions about various real-life anecdotes that led him to choose shame as the title as well as one of the major themes of the novel. He puts the theme and influence of the title into the perspective of being an individual of Asian descent. He argues how the concept of shame and honor are interwoven in the socio-cultural fabric of Pakistan and other Asian communities. The author dissects and deconstructs the concepts of shame and honor and their relationship with violence.

Likewise, the narrator also gives his opinions about the characters as well as plot-points of the novel. The narrator reveals the characterization as well as the plot to highlight the constructed nature of the novel. He is candid about the characters and story as the part of his imagination and talks about them accordingly. The narrator also expresses his dissatisfaction with various characters and their choices. Similarly, the narrator discusses about the significance of the female characters and how they asserted themselves even though the narrator was planning the novel as a masculine tale. He also talks about the oppression of women in Pakistan which highlights one of



the themes of the novel. The narrator also discusses about other literary works like *Beauty and the Beast*, “Danton’s Play” to show their connection with the issues of the novel. This shows the intertextual nature of the novel. Here the narrator not only directly refers to other literary works but he uses them in a parodic and ironic manner. Moreover, the narrator reflects upon the issue of Islamic fundamentalism and the role of religion in Pakistani society. His self-reflections highlight the influence of religion on the various characters of the novel as well as the history of Pakistan.

The novel is self-reflexive and is self-conscious about its fictional and textual nature. The narrator does not shy away from the fact that the reader is reading a constructed fictional tale. The frequent appearance of the narrator with his own views and commentaries show the connection of this fictional tale with the real Pakistan. The narrator discusses about his relationship to the country, his influences behind certain characters, the themes of the novel and his views about the unfolding of the narrative as well. Similarly, the narrator also enters into confessional and autobiographical mode in the asides. He talks about how he is tied to Pakistan through his family relationships, and at the same time his position of an outsider to that country.

So, the author’s approach to this tale raises some pertinent questions: Why does the author employ this particular way of narrating the story? What kinds of ideologies are challenged by the author? How does the narrator negotiate with the historical reality outside the novel? How does the author treat the historical figures in the novel?

Linda Hutcheon has coined the term historiographic metafiction to describe the texts that talk about history but are self-reflexive and self-aware about their constructed nature. A postmodern text is self-aware about its relationship with the

history as well as other texts. It is conscious about the textual nature of its narrative. Hutcheon argues that, “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” (Hutcheon 3). She opines that we cannot just dismiss both fiction and history as narrative constructs. Instead there is a more nuanced and complex interaction between fiction and history. A text of historiographic metafiction is connected to history but it is also aware about such connections. It even questions such connections. The novel *Shame* is aware about its textual nature as the narrator of the novel appears as the author of the book he is writing. Through the reflections of the narrator, we are told about the connection of the novel with the history of Pakistan. The narrator is also honest about his point-of-view as an outsider and an immigrant. The text works as an interpretation of Pakistan’s history but it is also aware about it being a fictional work.

She distinguishes a text of historiographic metafiction from the traditional historical fiction as it is more conscious about its fictional nature. In a traditional historical fiction, the history becomes the background of the main narrative. But a postmodern novel of historiographic metafiction uses and parodies the conventions of both historiography as well as fiction. Such text is intertextual as it uses both history and literature as intertexts. It recognizes that history is also a form of narrative where the stories are selected and omitted. It exists in a context of other texts and history. Hutcheon argues that, “Historiographic metafiction works to situate itself within historical discourse without surrendering its autonomy as fiction” (4). It does so by using and subverting the intertexts of history and literature in a parodic way. It does not seek to undermine history writing but only makes it more self-aware. It recognizes

the fact that intertextuality and narrativity are the common denominators of both history and fiction.

Hutcheon argues that a text of historiographic metafiction is located within the intertexts of history and other literary texts. Such postmodern text is aware about the self-conscious dimension of history. A text is not an isolated entity with an inherent meaning, instead it exists as a part of discourse. The discourse is both historical and literary.

One of the main features of historiographic metafiction is parodic intertextuality. Intertextuality replaces the relationship between the author and the text with the relationship between reader and text. Thus, the author is not the sole creator of meaning of the text, but the meaning of the text is located within the history of discourse. The text lies within the vast intertexts of history and literature. Postmodern intertextuality challenges the formalist closure of the text and it also subverts the single and centralized meaning of a text. A text is permeated with prior meanings of other texts. The self-reflexive use of other literary texts in a text of historiographic metafiction highlights the constructed nature of the text. It draws attention to the act of creating the text. Similarly, parody uses the intertexts of history and literature and also uses such intertexts in an ironic and subversive way. Parodic intertextuality questions the romantic notions of originality and creativity. Hutcheon argues that, “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” (11). By linking with satire parody can have ideological implications. Parody also challenges the dominant aspect of historical representation which can treat history as a monolith. The authoritarian regimes can distort history and a historical narrative can be bended to their interests. But parody

can provide alternative history and challenge the authoritarian version of mainstream history. The parodic intertextuality of historiographic metafiction situates the discourses of history and literature within the multiple intertexts of historical events and literary texts. This subverts any notion of simple causality of historical events.

Similarly, Patricia Waugh's ideas about metafiction are also useful to study the texts that are self-conscious about their constructed nature. According to Patricia Waugh,

Metafiction is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text. (2)

Thus, metafictional and self-reflexive texts foreground their relationship with the reality. But they also explore the constructed nature of reality. The reality is the world outside the fictional text which we understand through the mediation of language. The texts of metafiction problematize the relationship between reality and fiction as such texts illuminate their own conventions and artifices as well as of the world.

The novel *Shame* has been reviewed by several reviewers and scholars focusing on the several aspects of the novel. In the article "Intertextuality and Parodic Reworking of Representation in Salman Rushdie's Novels *Midnight's Children* (MCH) and *Shame* (SH)" published in the *International Journal of Art and Literature*, author Béchir Chaabane explores the novels of Rushdie as post-modern narratives that are metafictional as well as intertextual. Chaabane discusses in length about Linda Hutcheon's term 'historiographic metafiction' and considers Rushdie's *Midnight's*

*Children and Shame* as its exemplary cases. Similarly, Chaabane also talks about the theories of metafiction put forward by Patricia Waugh which has significantly served postmodern questioning of the conventional conception of the relationship between fiction and reality” (2). Chaabane mainly uses theories of metafiction by Hutcheon and Waugh to discuss about the postmodern qualities of Rushdie’s novels and their subversive nature as far as historical reality is concerned. Chaabane argues that Rushdie’s insertion of historical events “allows him to subvert the incorporated events and personages and ultimately undermine the ideology behind them” (3). He highlights the intertextual nature of the novels where they use historical events and literary works in a self-conscious way. According to him, the author uses the intertexts of history and literature with irony to dissect the dominant discourse of history. Thus, the intertextuality becomes a liberating act which problematize the so-called objectivity of historical representation.

Likewise, Chaabane discusses about the importance of juxtaposing real and fictional Pakistan in the novel. He argues that by blending facts and fiction, the author interrogates the factuality of the historical events. He also argues that the resemblance between the real and fictional Pakistan presents this novel as a national allegory. Similarly, Chaabane highlights the position of Rushdie as a British-Indian postcolonial writer who questions the discourse of history written from the colonial perspective.

Similarly, in the article titled “The Dialectic of Shame: Representation in the metanarrative of Salman Rushdie’s *Shame*”, Ayelet Ben-Yishai discusses about the metafictional quality of the novel by focusing on the frequent intrusions of the author/narrator throughout the novel. According to Ben-Yishai “The form of these

metanarratives works relentlessly to give the impression of "laying bare the device." Because they foreground the novel's own conceits of representation, they do seem to be ontologically absolute moments of candor, truth, and almost transparency—of very limited (if any) mediation" (249). For her the authorial asides that appear in the novel every now and then are ideologically significant.

Moreover, the real-life anecdotes about Pakistan discussed by the narrator imparts a certain truthfulness to the metanarrative. Likewise, Ben-Yishai argues that although the main story may be a fairy-tale, the metanarrative asides are factual because the author/narrator not only uses the historical anecdotes about Pakistan, he also includes his personal anecdotes by mentioning about his sister. So, Ben-Yishai argues that "this specificity and personal tone (as well as the production of the Rushdie persona) lends an autobiographical-hence non-fictional-tone to the text" (251). In the article, the author is mainly concerned about the act of representation in the novel rather than what it represents.

Similarly, in the review of the novel titled "Memories of a Mohajir" by Sajni Mukherji published in the *Social Scientist* journal, the reviewer praises Rushdie for accommodating a distinct South Asian experience in the imperial language. She begins her review by expressing her disappointment with the English fiction written about the former British-ruled India or the present India. According to her, they either mystified or exoticized the East. So, she considers that the, "Indian writers writing in their native tongues are far more credible and infinitely more absorbing" (70). But Rushdie brings his vast international experience of being an immigrant and writes about Pakistan with a "Joycean comic detachment" (Mukherji 72). She praises Rushdie for this use of non-English idioms in an effective manner and calls the women characters as the novel's greatest strength. She argues that the intrusions of

the authorial persona always connect the realities of Pakistan with the fairy-tale of the novel. She opines that with the progression of the novel, the fictional characters and their supposed counterparts from Pakistan's history start to merge. She argues that, "...but when the tale gathers momentum and the asides and confidences diminish we find that these identities have fused and changed kaleidoscopically, until they are no longer distinguishable" (72). She considers the novel as the analysis of his roots by the author. For her, the manipulation of layers of time and nuances of language share his understanding with the readers.

Similarly, in an article titled "Problematizing History in Salman Rushdie's *Shame*" by Shrikant Jadhav published in *Epitome Journals: International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, the writer argues that Rushdie's novel can be read as a subversive text that problematizes the boundary between history and fiction. He calls the novel as a historiographic metafiction which contains different voices and alternative histories that challenge the monology and objectivity of historical representation.

Jadhav in the article discusses how Rushdie refers to the real political events of Pakistan's history like Partition of India, secession of Bangladesh from Pakistan as well as the political figures of history in his novel but does not just insert these events and figures into the fictional world directly. He instead reflects in a satirical tone. Jadhav argues that, "Rushdie handles the historical material in the magic realist narrative of the novel with a self-reflexive narrator, which points to the constructedness of historical facts at the same time" (143). He points to the fact that the self-conscious narrator remarks on the act of his writing. Similarly, he also comments on the reliability of his narration. For Jadhav, the approach of metafictional self-reflexivity to the historical events subverts the Eurocentric history writing. He

opines that Rushdie retells the political history of Pakistan from the perspectives of peripheral characters. Rushdie puts the voice of the victims in his counter-narrative for challenging the dominant narrative.

The novel retells the history of Pakistan although the narrator mentions that “The country in this story is not Pakistan, not quite. There are two countries, real and fictional, occupying the same space, or almost the same space” (Rushdie 29). Similarly, he further adds that “My story, my fictional country exist, like myself, at a slight angle to reality” (Rushdie 29) which means that he has taken some liberty in this fictional version of Pakistan’s history. The narrator brings the readers’ attention to the fact that Pakistan is present in the novel. So, the main narrative gains significance as we as readers will compare the story with that of Pakistan’s history. A relationship between the fictional story and the history is established. The narrator’s self-awareness about the historical connection of this novel becomes evident. It is not a historical novel where the historical events are portrayed in the background and such events have an impact on the characters and plot points. As Ben-Yishai in her article opines, “...the novel cannot be classified as “historical fiction” or even the textual equivalent of a “docu-drama because instead of striving for verisimilitude as these genres require, the narrator shies away from it” (196). But the narrator makes this novel historically significant by frequently talking about the real Pakistan and its history. He talks about the various real-life anecdotes about Pakistan like death of Deputy Speaker of East Pakistan Provincial Assembly in a scuffle inside the parliament, film censorship in Pakistan, President Ayub Khan’s alleged foreign bank account, genocide in Baluchistan, misuse of state scholarships, execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, anti-Semitism, drug smuggling, corruption and several others. Inclusion of



these facts and real events gives a realistic effect to the narrative even though the narrator argues that this is not a realistic novel.

Here the narrator is actively bringing the history of Pakistan as well as the idea of history writing in the novel through his self-reflections on the act of his writing this novel. By asserting his rights as an outsider and an immigrant to tell the history of Pakistan, the author questions the idea of a singular historical narrative. He adds the dimension of self-awareness to the act of writing history. History writing is also a narrative act rather than just the direct representation of the past. The narrator argues that there is the conflict of two layers of time in Pakistan: the past and the new. So as the formation of Pakistan meant it had to write a new history over the old one, the narrator too describes a similar role as an author. The old history with India had to be forgotten and a new story for the newly formed nation had to be invented. So, like creating a fictional text, certain elements have to be selected and others need to be omitted. Referring to himself as a fantasist, he talks about imposing his fictional country over the ones that already exist. In the authorial asides, he talks about the real Pakistan and discusses its issues. Whereas in the main story, a magic realist fiction is being told that reflects the history of Pakistan. Like the act of writing a history, the author of this novel too has to select and avoid stories as per the need. History writing is also a constructed narrative like his fiction.

There are many parallels between Rushdie's fictional country's story and the history of Pakistan. The narrator through many interjections that frequently appear in the novel makes the relationship of the fictional work with the outside history more apparent. He discusses about his relationship with the country, his position as the author of the novel, the existing socio-political reality of Pakistan. The connection of this novel with the history of Pakistan is mainly through its characters RazaHyder and

Iskandar Harappa. The history of newly formed Pakistan is portrayed through the lives of RazaHyder and Iskandar Harappa and their relationship. RazaHyder is supposedly modeled on General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq and Iskandar Harappa is supposedly modeled on Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the fourth President of Pakistan from 1971 to 1973 as well as the ninth Prime Minister from 1973 to 1977. Similarly, Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, Pakistan's longest serving head of state, became the sixth President of Pakistan after declaring martial law in 1977. *Shame* was published in 1983, nearly four years after Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's execution. Zia ul-Haq who had toppled Bhutto's government in a military coup was still the head of the state. The authorial asides in the novel clearly state the influence of Pakistan on the novel. The narrator who resembles the author Rushdie discusses in length about Pakistan. This makes it a political novel, and the author gives a large commentary on the relationship of the real Pakistan and the fictional country he has created in the novel. The metafictional narration parodies the historical reality of Pakistan and blurs the boundary between historical fact and the fictional text. The figure of author who communicates with the reader by intruding in the main story helps to make this novel a political satire.

Similarly, the narrator discusses about the fact of him being an immigrant. He mentions that he has a connection with three countries: India, England and Pakistan. He calls himself a translated man because he has grown with different cultures. He then spends the next few pages clarifying and justifying this position of an immigrant. He argues about the benefit of his place as an outsider or an immigrant by comparing the movement of migration with flying and conquering the gravity. He also compares migration with secession of countries. According to him, the best thing about migrant peoples and seceded nations is their hopefulness. Here he is making the connection of

his position with that of Pakistan. Because Pakistan is also a young country separated from India which further undergoes secession to form Bangladesh. Similarly, the narrator mentions that the name of Pakistan was conceived in England by a group of Muslim intellectuals. About the name Pakistan, he says that, “So it was a word born in exile which then went East, was borne-across or translated, and imposed itself on history...”(Rushdie 87). Therefore, Pakistan like an immigrant has moved ahead from its previous state i.e. India and has to rewrite its new history as a new nation. And the people who took the job of rewriting the past and history were immigrants.

He is aware that he will be called an outsider as well as a trespasser. In one of the authorial asides in the novel, the narrator explains his position through the following paragraph:

Outsider! Trespasser! You have no right to this subject! ... I know: nobody ever arrested me. Nor are they ever likely to. Poacher! Pirate! We reject your authority. We know you, with your foreign language wrapped around you like a flag: speaking about us in your forked tongue, what can you tell but lies? I reply with more questions: is history to be considered the property of the participants solely? In what courts are such claims staked, what boundary commissions map out the territories? (Rushdie 28)

In the above paragraph, the narrator mentions some of the possible reactions to his endeavor about writing a novel about Pakistan’s history. He is aware about his position as an author. He argues for the rights of the outsiders to write about history. He questions if there are any legitimate authorities that determine who have such right.

In the authorial asides, the narrator also explains the title of the novel i.e. shame. He spends a considerable amount of time discussing about his reason for using

this particular word as the novel's title. A self-aware literary text not only tells a story but it also discusses about the act of storytelling. Waugh argues that, in a metafictional text, "The two processes are held together in a formal tension which breaks down the distinctions between 'creation' and 'criticism' and merges them into the concepts of 'interpretation' and 'deconstruction'" (6). Similarly, he further discusses about the concepts of shame and honor in South Asian culture and their relationship with violence. He shares an anecdote about a Pakistani man in London who murders his daughter for having a relationship with a white boy. The relatives and friends of the man are reluctant to condemn such ghastly action as they are sympathetic to the man's point of view. Even the narrator who says that he is a new father understands the killer. Even though he considers it unthinkable to murder one's own child, he is familiar to the reason behind such actions. He then gives the reason for this understanding: "We who have grown up on a diet of honor and shame can still grasp what must seem unthinkable to peoples living in the aftermath of the death of God and tragedy: that men will sacrifice their dearest love on the implacable altars of their pride" (Rushdie 115). Thus, the notion of shame and honor are the roots of violence. By discussing about the concept of shame and its relationship with violence, the author counters the oppressive ideologies of shame and honor. Through his personal anecdotes, the author scrutinizes the role of honor and shame in driving people to commit ghastly forms of violence. Shame and honor are used by people to exercise violence upon others who allegedly flout them.

This notion is prevalent throughout the novel and it affects almost every character and their preoccupation. Similarly, the narrator shares further two anecdotes in relation to the notion of shame in the Asian community. In one case, when an Asian girl is beaten by a group of teenage white boys, she does not feel angry but ashamed.

She does not make any official complaint, but instead hopes that the incident remains unknown. According to the narrator, this particular girl is the representative of many other girls.

Here the narrator is discussing in length about one of the major themes of the novel: shame and shamelessness. He accepts that the murdered girl of his anecdote is haunting this novel. One of the major characters of the novel, SufiyaZinobiaHyder, daughter of RazaHyder and BilquisHyder, is the personification of shame and its relationship with violence. So, the narrator shares the anecdotes to show the influences behind this character. Though many characters in the novel are guided by the notion of shame and shamelessness, it is through the character of SufiyaZinobiaHyder that the relationship of shame and violence is most pronounced. Thus, the narrator reflects upon the nature of shame and violence through the incidents he has witnessed around him.

The author argues that the concepts of shame and shamelessness is born out of the tussle between hedonistic and puritan values. By referring to Georg Buchner's play "Danton's Death" and its relationship with the characters of RazaHyder and Iskandar Harappa, the author discusses the relationship of hedonism and puritanism with shame and shamelessness. "Danton's Death" is a German play set during the French Revolution. In the novel, the play is referred in terms of the characters of Georges Danton and Maximilien Robespierre. Danton denotes pleasure and hedonism whereas Robespierre denotes puritanical values.

The author argues that the conflict between epicurean and puritan values is the true dialectic of history. These two opposing values do not necessarily appear in separate entities. According to him, every individual has these contrasting characteristics. Thus, the dialectic is internal. He says, "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" (Rushdie 241). In the context of the novel too, the characters of RazaHyder and Iskandar Harappa possess these disparate values. Although Iskandar Harappa was initially a hedonistic person, he later turned into a tyrant. Similarly, RazaHyder may seem a Robespierre at first, but the author argues that he took pleasure in what he did. So, he was probably a hedonist in terms of the power he liked to exercise. Through the play "Danton's Death", the narrator is underscoring the constant tussle between the puritan and epicure throughout the novel. Thus, the concept of shame and shamelessness is born out of this tussle. The characters are supposed to feel shame or be shameless due to the judgmental attitude of puritan values. The Shakil sisters fearing the possible public shame of unmarried pregnancy lock themselves away from the society for their whole life. So, they teach their son Omar Khayyam Shakil to feel no shame for anything and he turns out to be a hedonistic character.

Thus, the author examines that shame and honor are not just some natural emotions that we are supposed to feel. Instead they are related to our ideas about pleasure and puritanism. In an oppressive society, shame and honor are used to exercise domination upon groups like women and others who do not subscribe to the conventional notions. They are co-opted by political and religious tyrants to exert control over the masses. The author also argues how the concept of shame is mediated through language. He argues that the Urdu is more loaded with the nuances of the emotion especially in the context of Pakistani society. According to the author, the Urdu translation of the word shame i.e. *sharamis* closer to his intended meaning. For him, the English word "is a wholly inadequate translation" (Rushdie 39) but the Urdu

translation contains “encyclopedias of nuance” (Rushdie 39). Thus, the author is discussing about the concepts of shame and honor and examining their construction and operation. He also discusses how the context of these concepts in a Pakistani society is significant.

The narrator also reflects on the role of female characters in this novel. He tells that before beginning his novel, he had thought of this novel as a masculine tale. But during the process of writing, the female characters took over the story. Thus, the story became more complex. Here he also discusses about the repression of women in the larger context of an authoritarian rule. He weaves the repression of women with the overall attitude of a dictatorship and argues that his ‘male’ and ‘female’ plots are the same story after all because, “... a society which is authoritarian in its social and sexual codes, which crushes its women beneath the intolerable burdens of honor and propriety, breeds repressions of other kinds as well” (Rushdie 173). Thus, the narrator argues that the tyrannical societies are puritanical, and the shame and honor of women becomes a sensitive topic. The narrator also alludes to the fact that the chains over the women are getting heavier. As this novel is also about the relationship between shame and violence, the narrator is warning about the upcoming violence that will occur through the character of Sufiya because she is the embodiment of shame of her family. Through these self-reflections on the issues of tyranny and repression of women, the narrator is linking the story to the larger socio-political context in Pakistan. This is the method employed by the narrator throughout the text where he is reflecting on the themes of the novel. Thus, the self-reflexive act of the narrator illuminates the various issues and themes of the novel.

Similarly, the narrator also reflects upon the issue of Islam religion in Pakistan. He does not believe that Pakistan is a fundamentalist society in terms of

religion. He talks in length about the influence of religious extremism in Pakistani society. He argues that the founder of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Jinnah was not interested in god or religion. For him the religion of Islam were cultural and political ideas. This is a meaningful interjection by the narrator because the figure of Islamic clergy or the mullah has been parodied through the character of Maulana Dawood in the novel. He is portrayed as a very regressive figure with anachronistic ideas. He befriends RazaHyder and influences his thinking even after his death.

According to the narrator, the religious extremism has not come from the people. The excessive glorification of Islam as a unifying force in Pakistan has been force-fed to people. He argues:

So-called Islamic ‘fundamentalism’ does not spring, in Pakistan, from the people. It is imposed on them from above. Autocratic regimes 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. (Rushdie 251)

The novel parodies the influence and domination of Islam in the Pakistani society and politics through Maulana Dawood who is also the political confidant of RazaHyder in the novel. Zia Ul-Haq during his rule had enforced Islam in the political and social life of Pakistan. There was a rampant state-sponsored Islamization throughout the country which Rushdie himself as called “the ugliest possible face of the faith” (54). There were various blasphemy laws incorporated in the penal and civil code of the country. The laws were very discriminatory towards women, and there were many restrictive provisions for women like the obligation to cover their heads in public places, restrictions in sports and performing arts.



Similarly, the narrator also contemplates about the fact that Pakistan's conception lacked imagination as a plural society was turned into a country with religion as its foundation. He argues that, "...perhaps the place was just insufficiently imagined, a picture full of irreconcilable elements, midriffbaring immigrant saris versus demure, indigenous Sindhi shalwar-kurtas, Urdu versus Punjabi, now versus then: a miracle that went wrong" (Rushdie 87). His reflections highlight the diversity of the Pakistan which was converted into a monolith controlled by the principles of Islam.

There are many instances in the novel where the narrator interjects in the narrative as an author of this work to give his opinions on the characters or plot points. It is not the case of the narrator being one of the parts of the plot. Here the narrator is outside the main plot of the novel. He is interrupting purely as the author of the novel. By constantly appearing as the author, the narrator highlights the relationship between fiction and the world outside fiction. A metafictional work deconstructs the fictionality of the world and helps us to understand how the experience of the world is constructed. Rushdie in the first few pages only interjects as "...the present author, who has already been obliged to leave many questions in a state of unanswered ambiguity, is capable of giving clear replies when absolutely necessary..." (Rushdie 18). These sorts of asides frequently appear in the novel wherein the narrator gives his views on the characters or plots of the novel as well as talks about the inspiration behind those characters or plots. He never reveals who is the biological mother of Omar Khayyam Shakil. In the novel, the three sisters Chunni, Munne and Bunny create an illusion where all three women play a persuasive role of being a pregnant woman. The narrator even says that he will not guess the name of the real mother. They feign the signs of pregnancy together and the narrator tells that

they even showed the entire range of symptoms that a pregnant woman is supposed to exhibit. But the narrator strongly asserts that these alleged gimmicks were not just a ruse to display to the outside world. He argues:

In spite of biological improbability, I am prepared to swear that so wholeheartedly did they wish to share the motherhood of their sibling- to transform the public shame of unwedlocked conception into the private triumph of the longed-for group baby- that, in short, twin phantom pregnancies accompanied the real one; while the simultaneity of their behavior suggests the operation of some form of communal mind. (Rushdie 20)

Here the narrator too is playing along the magic realist quality of this incident. He is giving us the probable reasons behind their shared pregnancy. Due to the fact of being unmarried mother, they are supposed to feel this shame. But as the narrator argues, they are able to overcome the public shame and instead enjoy the collective motherhood. It is one of the instances of novel where the opinions of the narrator help us to illuminate the reasons behind the events of the novel.

Similarly, in the first chapter itself, the narrator discusses about the personality of Omar Khayyam Shakil. The narrator also expresses his dissatisfaction with his own protagonist/hero at the end of the first chapter: “Dizzy, peripheral, inverted, infatuated, insomniac, stargazing, fat: what manner of hero is this?” (Rushdie 25). Thus, the narrator not only describes about the character but also gives his opinions on him. He lays bare of the illusion of fiction and engages in the critique and commentary of his own fictional creation.

The novel is full of such candid interruptions where the narrator interjects with his commentaries, anecdotes and opinions. The narrator is not a character of the main story, but nevertheless his presence occupies a significant portion of the novel. The

line between author and narrator is almost non-existent. When the narrator makes his appearance, he appears as the author of the novel we are reading. We are reminded that this is a made-up work. We are privy to how the novel was constructed and the various inspirations and anecdotes that influenced the novel. The narrator also confides in us why a particular theme of the novel was chosen. The traditional methods of characterization and storytelling/narration is laid bare and their constructed nature is highlighted. Characters and plots are presented as the figment of narrator/author's imagination. But the narrator discusses and reflects upon the inspiration and ideas behind the issues and themes expressed through characters and plots. The narrator comments on the process as well as his particular choices. The authorial asides which contemplate on the main story at length remind the reader about the artificiality of the main story. The third-person narrator is omniscient but his frequent interjections about the character make him a very self-conscious and self-aware narrator who does not seem to forget or let us forget that we are inside a story. The themes and issues present in the novel are discussed in detail. The narrator gives his opinions regarding them. Through the self-reflections of the narrator as the author of the novel, we are drawn to make the connection with the writer of the novel i.e. Salman Rushdie.

There are frequent interruptions from the narrator with his commentaries and anecdotes. This disrupts the flow of story where the narrator reflects and contemplates on the various aspects of the story like characterization and plots. The narrator creates a sense of detachment with the story through his interruptions. Every now and then the narrator reminds us the constructed nature of this story. The main story is constructed as a magic realist tale, although the story of RazaHyder and Iskandar Harappa mirrors the history of Pakistan. But there is the frequent appearance of the

narrator as the author of this novel. The narrator then discusses in length about the novel. There is self-awareness about the movement of plot and the position of the story. So, the reader is reminded that although the main story plays out on an exaggerated scale, the issues and themes are very much real and serious.

A self-conscious fiction also draws attention to other works of fiction. In the novel, the narrator refers to several other texts of literature like Georg Buchner's play "Danton's Death", Robert Louis Stevenson's novel *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and the fairy tale "Beauty and the Beast". Rushdie's fiction always has been referential and full of intertextual references. Any text does not lie in a vacuum and is always influenced by several other texts. Intertextuality was mainly popularized by Julia Kristeva in her analysis of Bakhtin's concepts of Dialogism and Carnival in the essay "Word, Dialogue and Novel" where she argues that, "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (37). So, any text is not just self-contained in itself and other texts and forms of discourses are referred by it. Intertextuality puts the themes and issues of this novel among the other literary works. Thus, we can examine these issues through the perspective of prior works as well. It denies centrality to a single expression and instead shows a creative expression amidst a web of interconnected meanings.

In the novel *Shame* too, the author alludes and parodies history as well as works of literature. The narrator appears as the author of the novel and is self-aware about how he is telling this story using several other sources. According to Hutcheon, "intertextuality replaces the challenged author-text relationship with one between reader and text, one that situates the locus of textual meaning within the history of discourse itself" (7). A literary work is never completely original and it borrows its

themes and meanings from other works. But the act of borrowing is not done directly. Rushdie parodies the intertexts of other literary works to fit into the narrative.

Similarly, the novel also refers to the French fairy tale *Beauty and the Beast* written by French novelist Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve. The narrator quotes his poet friend who tells him that the fairy tale is an example of arranged marriage. The narrator alludes to this text to question and challenge the given notion of stability and happiness in a marriage. In the fairy tale, the character of Beauty is forced to marry with a hideous Beast to save her father. But later when the Beast dies and the Beauty is feeling guilty about it, the Beast appears. It turns out that the Beast is a handsome prince who had been turned into a hideous figure and now due to true love, the curse is now broken. So, then they live happily ever after. The narrator's friend likens it to the custom of arranging a marriage between two contrasting people where they slowly grow fond of each other and finally become happy. He says, "Picture them as they grow closer to each other, as they move inwards over the years from the opposed poles of Beautyness and Beastdom, and become at last, happily, just plain Mr. Husband and Mrs. Wife" (Rushdie 158). It does not have to be actual physical or social change but the change is in Beauty's perception of the hideous Beast.

The narrator questions the convention of the fairy-tales where marriage is always treated as a happy ending. The poet friend argues that a woman in a marriage should make the best of her condition and love the man for her own benefit. Without her man, a woman loses her identity as a wife or a daughter and becomes worthless. But the narrator is reluctant to accept this given notion of happiness and worth for a woman in a marriage. The poet friend then reprimands the narrator accusing him of becoming too westernized and suggests him to spend some time in the village so that

the narrator will recognize that the fairy tale *Beauty and the Beast* is an eastern story. But the many marriages of the novel argue against the given notion of happiness and worth for a woman. All the marriages of the novel are complicated and the couples do not live happily ever after. The author questions the ideological construct of the fairy tale. He alludes to the text to problematize its ideological interpretation. Just like the author argued that the concepts of shame and shamelessness are born out of our internal tussle, he further argues that both beauty and beast can be inside a single person like Danton and Robespierre.

He also gives the example of Robert Louis Stevenson's novel *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* to the presence of such contrasting dual personalities within a single individual. Here the author is parodying *Beauty and the Beast* to appropriate its theme and meaning into his own story. Using parody, the author has also subverted the meaning and questioned the ideology of the original story. As Hutcheon says, "To parody is not to destroy the past; in fact, to parody is both to enshrine the past and to question it. And this is the postmodern paradox" (6). It helps to create a dialogue among the literary texts of the past. Such parodic intertextuality also subverts the idea that the author of a novel or a literary work is the sole creator of meaning of the text. In fact, the meaning of the text is also found in how the author uses other texts. So, there is a continuous referral to other works.

Apart from these works, the author also briefly alludes to several other works in his narrative. He uses a passage from the book *The Life Science* written by Peter Brian Medawar and Jean Medawar where he quotes a passage related to psychosomatic event of a body. The passage explains the blushing of SufiyaZinobiaHyder in which the narrator argues that it is due to her internal conflict that she blushes so much. Likewise, the author quotes from Milan Kundera's book

*The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* to signify that his unnamed fictional country must have a name as its past cannot be suppressed and omitted. Similarly, the author uses Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* whose quotations are heard by RazaHyder inside his head as the voice of Iskander Harappa after his execution. Also, a quote from Franz Kafka's *The Trial* is used to talk about the shame attached with the death of a girl in one of the narrator's anecdotes. These uses of other literary texts in the novel highlights and draws attention to the act of writing itself. It shows that any creation is already infiltrated by other previous texts and the meaning and themes put forward by a literary work are contained within a discourse. It also highlights the plural and hybrid nature of a text and its influences. It can also be extended to the point that a literary text like any cultural product is plural and interdependent with other works.

Thus, Rushdie's novel *Shame* is a self-reflexive work of fiction which parodies the various events and characters of Pakistan's history. It incorporates the different issues like concept of shame and honor, political tyranny, radical Islam, oppression of women, history writing into the novel in a self-conscious manner. It not only dramatizes these issues but also exposes their role as oppressive ideologies. The self-reflexive act of the author examines the dynamics between fiction and reality by drawing attention to their conventions and narrative structure. The narrator appears in the novel as the author of this story and discusses about his act of creating the story and how he has accommodated various issues in the novel. The self-reflexive and self-conscious narrative highlights its constructed and textual nature. The narrator is self-aware about his position as the author and he also foregrounds the novel's location within the intertexts of history and literature. The novel uses as well as subverts other literary works which makes it a text of parodic intertextuality. As a

metafictional and self-reflexive text, the novel problematizes the conventional assumptions of plot, character, author and representation.



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