

ATINER CONFERENCE PAPER SERIES No: LIT2013-0676

Athens Institute for Education and Research

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ATINER's Conference Paper Series

LIT2013-0676

**The Manipulation of Simulacra to
Create a Public Image in Salman
Rushdie's Novel *Shame***

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URL Conference Papers Series: www.atiner.gr/papers.htm

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ISSN 2241-2891

1/11/2013

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This paper should be cited as follows:

Radavičiūtė, J. (2013) "The Manipulation of Simulacra to Create a Public Image in Salman Rushdie's Novel *Shame*" Athens: ATINER'S Conference Paper Series, No: LIT2013-0676.

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Abstract

The article aims at exploring the mechanism of the creation of the public image in Salman Rushdie's novel *Shame* as well as the effect it produces on the intended audience and the person whose image is created. The research is carried out within the theoretical framework of postmodernism, with the view to the works of Jacques Derrida and Jean Baudrillard. The portrayal of Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder reveals the process of employing the play of simulacra to create public images. The public image which Iskander creates incorporates a multitude of signs referring to different spheres of life. In contrast to the images the signs refer to, they lack meaning, as they relate only to the signs but not the concepts they are supposed to represent. The indeterminacy of the simulacra is revealed through the implosion of meaning, which allows opposing significations coexist within the same sign, and a possibility of the coexistence of a few contrastive images representing the same individual simultaneously. The portrayal of Raza Hyder reveals the theme of violence underlying the concept of a simulacrum. The merger of the public and private domains in the construction of a simulacrum results in the suppression of the difference to the advantage of the impact of the newly created image. However, the suppression causes the violence which is capable of revealing the void created and supplemented by the simulacrum.

Keywords:

Corresponding Author:

The novel *Shame* is largely a political satire where a lot of attention is focused on the creation and the use of political images. The portrayal of Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder reveals the process of employing the play of simulacra to create public images. The further analysis will aim at exploring the mechanism of the creation of the public image as well as the effect it produces on the intended audience and the person whose image is created.

To begin with, the creation of the public image of Iskander Harappa will be analysed with the view to the transformations it undergoes throughout the novel. The portrayal of Iskander Harappa gains significance in the novel at the period of its transformation from a private to public figure. His intention to become a politician is followed by numerous changes whose detailed description is provided in the novel:

He gave up stud poker, chemin de fer private roulette evenings, horse-race fixing, French food, opium and sleeping pills; when he broke his habit of seeking out beneath silver-heavy banqueting tables the excited ankles and compliant knees of society beauties, and when he stopped visiting the whores whom he had been fond of photographing with an eight millimeter Paillard Bolex movie camera while they performed (...) It was the beginning of that legendary political career (...) (Rushdie,1995)

A detailed list of changes attracts the reader's attention to the images which Iskander Harappa manipulates to present himself to the society. Formerly recognised as a playboy and a debaucher, Iskander eliminates the qualities which have been the most characteristic of his former image such as gambling, sex and drugs for the purpose of creating his new public image. The attention to detail in the process of change hints at the artificiality of the image. Jean Baudrillard calls this phenomenon hyperreality, which is created through the excess of meaning due to the hyperbolic focus on detail. (Baudrillard, 1983)

The implosion of meaning is another strategy used to create Iskander Harappa's image. Jean Baudrillard defines an implosion as '*an absorption of the radiating model of causality, of the differential mode of determination, with its positive and negative electricity.*' (ibid) The excerpt reveals that the image of Iskander Harappa as a playboy embraces contradictory self-exclusive concepts: French food is paired with opium and sleeping pills, society beauties-with whores. None of them appear to be superior: when the image is relevant, they coexist within the same discourse; when the image loses its significance, all of its constituents are eliminated. However, namely the process of unmasking the image exposes the fact that there is nothing behind the image: it is its own simulacrum.

The artificiality of the new image is exposed further in the novel by Iskander's wife Rani Harappa. She produces shawls to reveal the private image of her husband which is hidden from the public eye during his political career. One of the shawls depicts Iskander's love affairs outside the city:

the badminton shawl, on which, against a lime-green background and within a delicate border of overlapping racquets and shuttle-cocks and frilly underpants, the great man lay unclothed, while all about him the pink-skinned concubines cavorted, their sporting outfits falling lightly from their bodies (Rushdie, 1995)

Ironically, the apparent difference between the two images of the man, repeatedly emphasized through the reference to Iskander Harappa as 'legendary' and 'great' in the context of his inappropriate behaviour, does not have any destructive effect on either of the images. Both of them coexist in spite of their contrastive natures. Jacques Derrida emphasizes this quality of a postmodern sign to acquire a signification with the view to the environment it functions in. Discussing the concept of trace, he maintains: '*If words and concepts receive meaning only in sequences of differences, one can justify one's language, and one's choice of terms, only within a topic [an orientation in space] and a historical strategy.*' (Derrida, 1997)

In respect to Iskander Harappa, the orientation in space and its role in determining the choice of means are evident in the creation of his multiple images. In addition to the play with the image of his (a)sexuality, the choice determining his language could be mentioned. The language is considered to be an important part of the images Iskander creates for himself:

He expunged from his public, urban vocabulary his encyclopaedic repertoire of foul green village oaths, imprecations which could detach brim-full cut-glass tumblers from men's hands and shatter them before they reached the floor. (But when campaigning in the villages he allowed the air to turn green with obscenity once again, understanding the vote-getting powers of the filth.) He stifled for ever the high-pitched giggle of his unreliable playboy self and substituted a rich, full-throated, statesmanlike guffaw. (Rushdie, 1995)

The description of the alterations Iskander's language undergoes in the process of the creation of a new image reflects the reduction of his private image to a secondary one which continues to exist on the margins of the personality. In respect to the concept of sexuality, the description of the two existing images is physically distanced in the text: the description of the private image of Iskander's sexuality appears at the end of the novel, almost a hundred pages away from the description of the new image. The two images related to his language appear in the same description; however, the usage of brackets to punctuate the information about Iskander's private language emphasises the reduction of its importance from public to private. The question of space acquires significance in terms of the two images: in both cases the urban environment is related to the newly-created public image, while the rural area is related to the private image. Even if the village is mentioned in relation to

Iskander's political career (as it is in the description of the language), the contrastive nature of the images is retained.

The attention to detail in the process of the creation of the image is well-revealed in the portrayal of Iskander Harappa's political career. The transition from a debaucher to a politician is just a starting point in the formation of his image as a politician. The excerpt describing his image as a supporter of the Chinese communists contain a variety of detail with respect to the colours he chooses and to the pictures hanging on the wall of his office:

Iskander Harappa had taken to dressing in green outfits styled by Pierre Cardin to resemble the uniforms of the Chinese Red Guards, because as the Foreign Minister in the government of President A. he had become famous as the architect of a friendship treaty with Chairman Mao. A photograph of Isky embracing the great Zedong hung on the wall of the room. (Rushdie, 1995)

The attention to the visualization of the simulacrum strikes the reader in the excerpt. The choice of the means to create the desirable effect on the target audience enhances the feeling of artificiality of the image: Iskander chooses a suit which is a perfected copy of the outfit it is supposed to resemble. The reference to Pierre Cardin is not accidental in this context as well; the significance that the consumer society attaches to brand names is not overlooked in respect of the creation of an image. The designer's name is repeatedly mentioned in regard to the impact the image has on the ones subjected to it: '*such was the power of his tongue, or perhaps of the sartorial talents of Monsieur Cardin, that nobody seemed to recall Isky's own status.*' (ibid) The importance of the two elements in the description of the simulacrum: a combination of language and visual images is repeatedly emphasised in the latter quotation as well. The merger of the simulacrum with the image it intends to portray serves as the means of proving the existence of the object it simulates.

Discussing the choice of the images Iskander Harappa incorporates into the simulacra which represent him, the images borrowed from films should be mentioned. Facing a critical situation, he uses a powerful image from a famous Hollywood film to influence public opinion:

Iskander Harappa tore off his shirt and ripped it in half; he bared his hairless breast to the cheering, weeping crowd. (The young Richard Burton once did the same thing in the film Alexander the Great. The soldiers loved Alexander because he showed them his battle scars.) (ibid)

The comparison between the episode of the film and the scene enacted on the political stage reveals the transformation an image has undergone through time. The act which is performed by Richard Burton serves as a reference to the memory of a basic reality: a historic fact of soldiers' love and respect for

Alexander the Great due to his military experience, which is referred to through the image of scars. In contrast, the scene Iskander Harappa enacts in front of his supporters only imitates the gesture but reveals the lack of content to ground it: he bares his '*hairless breast*' to expose the lack of connection with the military crisis in the face of which he delivers his speech.

Both images are postmodern in their origin. The episode of the film records a historic fact thus turning it into a sign. The threat which the recording of the memory imposes on the object resides in the loss of the connection between the memory turned into a sign and life. Jacques Derrida maintains that the memory which cannot be identified as living transforms into a simulacrum: '*letting itself get stoned by its own signs, its own guardians, by the types committed to the keeping and surveillance of knowledge, it will sink down into lethe, overcome by non-knowledge and forgetfulness.*' (Derrida, 2004) The memory of this kind acquires its value within the process of the play of simulacra. Consequently, the subversion of the image by Iskander Harappa serves as a supplement within the order of the play. The supplement proves to be inadequate in terms of the accuracy of the produced image, for a supplement is not capable of becoming an equivalent for the image it substitutes. What is more, namely this feature reveals the void behind the image, the lack of meaning.

In terms of the content of the simulacrum, the portrayal of Iskander Harappa's political career includes a war episode which displays the features characteristic of a simulacrum:

The catastrophe: throughout the war, hourly radio bulletins described the glorious triumphs of the Western regiments in the East. On the last day, at eleven a.m., the radio announced the last and most spectacular of these feats of arms; at noon, it curtly informed its audience of the impossible: unconditional surrender, humiliation, defeat. (ibid)

Two features typical of a simulacrum could be distinguished in the excerpt: the discourse of the catastrophe and the implosion of meaning. According to Jean Baudrillard, the formation of a simulacrum requires an illusion of the real to be complete. The discourses which are used to supplement the lack of reality are two: the discourses of crisis and desire. (Baudrillard, 1983) In this episode, the discourse of a crisis is employed to complete the simulacrum. Iskander Harappa initiates the war, but he is capable of using the failure to strengthen the impact of his public image. He is the first to react to the news: he conducts the arrest of the President, and the action puts him in the leading position in the country.

The excerpt also illustrates the ability of the discourse of a simulacrum to incorporate contrastive elements as integral parts of a single discourse. Jean Baudrillard calls it an implosion of meaning. In the war episode, the outcome of the war does not have any impact on the effect the simulacrum has on its target: either way the creator of the simulacrum benefits from the situation.

Summarising, the portrayal of Iskander Harappa in the novel *Shame* reveals the principles of the constitution of the simulacra as well as the ways of using it to someone's benefit. The public image which Iskander creates incorporates a multitude of signs referring to different spheres of life, including fashion and film-making. In contrast to the images the signs refer to, they lack meaning, as they relate only to the signs but not the concepts they are supposed to represent. The indeterminacy of the simulacra is revealed through the implosion of meaning, which allows opposing significations coexist within the same sign, and a possibility of the coexistence of a few contrastive images representing the same individual simultaneously.

If the portrayal of Iskander Harappa reveals a possibility of the coexistence of two contrastive images to represent an individual, Raza Hyder's case illustrates the process of the creation of a public image on the basis of the existing personal one. The concept of the supplement will be central in the discussion of the development the simulacra undergoes in this case. Therefore, a short introduction into this concept will be provided.

Jacques Derrida maintains that the concept of the supplement is double in its nature, incorporating both positive and negative influences on the object it supplements. Firstly, the supplement signifies plentitude, for it '*adds itself, it is a surplus, a plentitude enriching another plentitude, the fullest measure of presence.*' (Derrida, 1997) Secondly, it marks the absence, for '*it adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself in-the-place-of; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void.*' (ibid) This idea of the supplement is echoed in Jean Baudrillard's work on simulacra as well. Although he does not use the term of the supplement, the definition of the term hyperreal he provides coincides with the one of the supplement. Baudrillard points out that hyperreal is created by the excess of meaning, which results in the creation of non-meaning. (Baudrillard, 1983) The depiction of Raza Hyder's public image reveals the impact of a supplement on the signified: the public and self-perception of Raza Hyder.

The first introduction of Raza Hyder's public image as a politician resembles the public image of Iskander Harappa in terms of the complexity of details and the methods of presenting them to the public:

on the morning after the coup Raza Hyder appeared on national television. He was kneeling on a prayer-mat, holding his ears and reciting Quaranic verses; then he rose from his devotions to address the nation. This was the speech in which the famous term 'Operation Umpire' was first heard by the people. 'Understand,' Raza said briskly, 'the Army seeks to be no more than an honest ref or ump.' (...) The television camera traveled down from his gatta- bruised face, down along his right arm, until the nation saw where his right hand rested: on the Holy Book. (Rushdie, 1995)

The image which Raza presents is complicated in its structure: religious elements are incorporated alongside references to sport, thus, mixing the elements of high and low styles. The mix meets the requirements of the

medium selected for the introduction of the image: it appeals to the masses through the references to sport, but retains the difference between the authority which Raza aims at representing and an average person watching TV.

The image of the authority is expressed through the connection with religion through the use of multiple references such as a prayer-mat, the act of reciting Quaranic verses, a gatta-bruised face and, finally, the Holy Book. A link between the authority and religion is a classical one, and Raza Hyder makes it central to his image not only through an extensive use of religious elements but also through the technique of framing his image with these elements, placing them at the most important segments of the discourse. The reference to himself as a referee adds to the enhancement of the message of power and authority, which seems to dominate the whole image.

In contrast to Iskander Harappa who does not identify himself with the public image he has created, Raza Hyder's choice of religion as the central theme of his public image relates his private and public images, for he is a religious person. This choice leads him to the confusion of the private and the public which is initially reflected in the appearance of two points of view within him:

the voice of Iskander Harappa became so loud in his ears that he could hardly hear anything else (...) Raza rushed back to his other home, where he could relax, because there Maulana Dawood's voice in his right ear was louder than Isky's in his left (...) the effect of the ceaseless monologue of Iskander Harappa was to drive Raza into the ectoplasmic arms of his old crony Maulana Dawood (...) and the more Iskander whispered, the more Raza felt that God was his only hope. (ibid)

The excerpt marks the turning point which results in the final confusion between the private and the public. Iskander Harappa's voice appears in the situations related to Raza Hyder's political career, for instance, in conferences and meetings. Maulana Dawood is a holy man, befriended by Raza during his military trips. His voice represents the religious values which Raza cherishes within his household; therefore, his voice appears within Raza's private domain. However, once religion is chosen as the central theme of Raza's public image, the confusion between the two spheres becomes inevitable: '*Raza felt that God was his only hope.*' Consequently, Raza's private image begins to interfere with his public actions, supplementing his public self.

The description of Raza's political career which is conducted under the influence of his personal beliefs reflects what Derrida calls '*the fullest measure of presence*':

what Raza did: he banned booze. He closed down the famous old brewery of Bagheera so that Panther Lager became a fond memory instead of a refreshing drink. He altered the television schedule so drastically that people began summoning repair men to fix their sets,

because they could not understand why the TVs were suddenly refusing to show them anything except theological lectures. (ibid)

The initially diverse public image which Raza has presented on TV and which has incorporated elements of high and low styles to appeal to the masses is replaced by a one-sided creation dominated by one theme and one style.

According to Jacques Derrida, the replacement signifies the appearance of a void as '*somewhere, something can be filled up of itself, can accomplish itself, only by allowing itself to be filled through sign and proxy.*' (Derrida, 1997) The void which is masked by the abundance of religious elements is exposed through the private domain from which the supplement has derived. The excerpt describing Raza Hyder's obsession with religion contains an image which further becomes relevant in terms of the revelation of the void: it is the image of a panther.

In terms of the confusion between public and private domains, the image of a panther is symbolic because it unites both spheres of Raza's life. It is first introduced as an image related to the public sphere, for it stands for the restrictions which Raza imposes on the public. Panther Lager is introduced as an image referring to tradition and memory; therefore, the ban which Raza places on it is also a violation of tradition. The impact that such an act has on the people and an individual as its integral part is demonstrated through the transference of the image from the public to private domain. When Raza's intoxicated daughter Sufiya escapes from the family house, she reappears to haunt her father as a white panther.

The significance Raza Hyder attaches to the image of the white panther reveals a deeper connection between the image and Raza himself than a link between his public and private lives:

he was aghast at this latest proof of his helplessness to resist his daughter. It seemed to him once again that the years of his greatness and of the construction of the great edifice of national stability had been no more than self-delusory lies, that this nemesis had been stalking him all along, (...) his own flesh had turned against him, and no man has a defense against such treason. (Rushdie, 1995)

The contemplation about the appearance of the white panther and its role in his destiny appears to be deeply personal at this stage. The panther does not represent the missing daughter or the anger of the people; through the reference to '*his own flesh*', Raza identifies this image with a part of his old self suppressed throughout the years of his political reign. The violence the suppression causes is revealed through the use of military terms to describe the situation Raza faces: he has no *defense* to protect himself from this *treason*. The excerpt also exposes the indeterminacy of the opposition which has served as a basis for the created image: the creation of '*the national stability*' appears to be '*self-delusory lies*', thus acquiring a negative connotation in the context of change; while the suppressed evil seems to be one's '*flesh*'.

The perception of the indeterminacy of the significations attached to the signs constituting the image Raza has produced for himself does not imply the recovery of his former self. In contrast, the moment of crisis uncovers the void which has been supplemented by a simulacrum, and the image of the void dominates the final transformation of Raza Hyder:

The living wear shrouds as well as the dead. Bilquis Hyder 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 (...) Now Raza Hyder fell: in improbability; in chaos; in women's clothing; in black. (ibid)

Negative terms dominate the episode of Raza's defeat: he is dressed in burial garment, compared to his dead son, passive and unresisting. However, the episode does not contain the implications to the destruction of the simulacrum; in contrast, the simulation of death implied in the statement '*the living wear shrouds as well as the dead*' is supposed to be as covering as any other feature of a simulacrum. According to Jean Baudrillard, '*every form of power, every situation speaks of itself by denial, in order to escape, by simulation of death, its real agony.*' (Baudrillard, 1983)

To sum up, the portrayal of Raza Hyder reveals the theme of violence underlying the concept of a simulacrum. The merger of the public and private domains in the construction of a simulacrum results in the suppression of the difference to the advantage of the impact of the newly created image. However, the suppression causes the violence which is capable of revealing the void created and supplemented by the simulacrum. The death which is caused by the violence should be related to the concept of the simulacra rather than the concept of the void, for it displays the signs of simulation but not the agony, experienced by an individual.

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