
Ovid in Rushdie, Rushdie in Ovid: A Nexus of Artistic Webs

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It may seem ridiculously romantic, but I was actually strengthened by the history of literature. Ovid in exile, Dostoyevsky in front of the firing squad, Genet in jail—and look what they did: the *Metamorphoses*, *Crime and Punishment*, everything that Genet wrote is prison literature. I thought, Well, if they can do it, I can have a go at doing it.

—Rushdie, *Paris Review* interview, January 1, 2008.

TWO THOUSAND years after the emperor Augustus relegated Ovid to the fringes of the then known world, Salman Rushdie sees the Roman poet as a source of courage for him. Included with Dostoyevsky's most-read novel and Genet's so-called prison literature, the *Metamorphoses* is not simply a learned and colorful mythological compendium of metamorphic tales, but—Rushdie's line—a subversive work that bespeaks the crime and punishment of the artist. Rushdie's engagement with Ovid is far from “ridiculously romantic” and starts years before the notorious *fatwa*. In the seventies and eighties, when most classical scholars thought of Ovid as a playful and naive poet who had no interest in politics, Rushdie was a keen reader of the deeply political nature of Ovid's work.

There is an intricate literary and political nexus between Ovid and Rushdie: first, the *ekphrasis* of eighteen shawls in Rushdie's novel *Shame* (published in 1983), based on Ovid's Arachne episode; then Rushdie's adaptation of Arachne as a way of interpreting the *Metamorphoses*, *Shame* becoming a way into Ovid's own performance. Finally, one of Rushdie's central concerns, which he sees in Ovid's career, is the poli-

tics of censorship, which I will focus on in the last section of this paper.

I. RANI AND ARACHNE

THROUGH AN overarching study of the relationship between shame and violence, *Shame* portrays the religious and political upheaval during the birth of a country called Peccavistan. The country of sin (Peccavistan) can be easily identified with Pakistan, which is often translated as “the land of the pure.”¹ The rise and downfall of Iskander Harappa and the military dictatorship of General Raza Hyder occupy the main part of the novel and are actually the thinly disguised stories of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and General Zia ul-Haq. Despite its literary value,² or perhaps because of it, the novel was banned in Pakistan.

Critics have pointed out that women are crucial to *Shame*'s narrative.³ Gender becomes a platform of political critique in a novel which filters national history through two competing family dynasties; “the women seem to have taken over,” says the narrator, “they marched in from the peripheries of the story to demand inclusion of their own tragedies, histories and comedies” (*Shame*, 173).⁴ Although they are repressed, secluded, and imprisoned, the women of the novel are always powerful. One of the sources of their power is the ability to give their own female account of the male-dominated arena of political rivalry. Rani, widow of the fallen tyrant Iskander Harappa, exemplifies the power of female narrative as she gives her version of her husband's rule by weaving eighteen marvelous shawls.

After the execution of Iskander, Rani and her daughter Arjumand are exiled and confined under house arrest for six years. During these years, Rani completes her shawls, “the most exquisite pieces she ever created” (200). In the beginning, Captain Ijazz, the chief warder of the women, had denied Rani needles and thread, but Rani “shamed him out of that quickly enough.” “What do you suppose?” she asked

him, “Will I hang myself, perhaps, by a noose of embroidery wool?” (200). This rhetorical question, right before the *ekphrasis* of the shawls, alludes to the last part of the Arachne episode in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. After Minerva strikes Arachne’s head with her shuttle, the weaver hangs herself by a noose (*non tulit infelix laqueoque animosa ligauit / guttura*, *Met.* 6.134–35). Thus, Rushdie sets Rani, whose name conceivably seems to pun on *aRANea*, against the background of Ovid’s Arachne.⁵ The widow of the fallen tyrant evokes the spider-woman from Ovid.

The woolen noose, common to both Arachne’s and Rani’s stories, symbolizes art and punishment simultaneously. The former is not just the reason for the latter, it also provides the material. The material of a weaver’s art, thread, provokes the political establishment and turns out to be the tool of a self-inflicted punishment. Likewise, when Ovid in his *Tristia* envisions an epitaph engraved on his tomb, he cites his own wit as the cause of his death (*ingenio perii Naso poeta meo*; *Tr.* 3.3.74). In *Shame*, Rani’s eighteen shawls are described as “an epitaph of wool” (201),⁶ and in her last shawl she weaves “the hard earth of her exile” (205).

Rani and Arachne do not incur punishment just because their creations are provocative, but also because of their shocking realism. Rani’s shawls reveal in lurid detail the debaucheries, tortures, and corruption of the dictator Iskander Harappa. Rushdie’s thorough description of the images conveys the disturbing effect of Rani’s embroidery; the narrative forces graphic depictions of lust and torture on the reader. Perfection and accuracy are emphasized repeatedly. Rani’s shawls are “perfect” (200) and we are told that she weaves the disemboweled body and the tear in the armpit through which a man’s own heart had been removed “with an accuracy that stopped the heart” (205). The hearts of the beholders stop as they view the torn-out heart of the victim: the audience subjected to the realism of Rani’s art shares the pain of Iskander’s political opponents. Similarly, the thrust of Arachne’s tapestry consists of uncompromising realism

and flawless accuracy.⁷ The weaver deceives her audience into thinking that the transformed Jupiter is a real bull and the power of her skill breaks the boundaries between artistic depiction and reality.⁸ In the end, neither Minerva, Arachne's rival, nor Jealousy herself can find a flaw in her work (*Met.* 6.129–30).

Arachne and Rani do not use the magical realism⁹ of their embroidery just to create perfect artifacts. Instead, their graphic images aim at shocking and shaming their audiences. Patricia Johnson argues convincingly that Arachne's tapestry depicts scenes of graphic sex.¹⁰ The gods turn themselves into animals in order to deceive and rape virgins, and the diction of the *ekphrasis* leaves no doubt that Arachne catches the gods *in flagrante*. For instance, the girl portrays Jupiter transformed into a snake while raping his daughter Proserpina (*Met.* 6.114), or Jupiter reclining on top of Leda as a swan (*Met.* 6.109), and she does not hesitate to depict the supreme god ejaculating while raping Nycteis (*Iuppiter implet gemino Nycteida fetu*, *Met.* 6.111). Arachne depicts an obscene panorama of rape and bestiality, and her impeccable art guarantees the shocking effect of her tapestry.¹¹

The internal audience in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Rushdie's *Shame* is key to interpreting the artifacts of Arachne and Rani. Arachne depicts the sexual assaults of Jupiter in order to provoke his virgin daughter Minerva. As the champion of Jupiter's regime, Minerva is forced to face her hypocrisy; although she is a virgin goddess and advocate of virgins, she supports a regime of rapists ruled by her father, the arch-rapist.

Rani likewise weaves her shawls and sends them to Iskander's daughter, Arjumand, a fervent devotee of her father's regime. Arjumand has also refused to marry and thus been nicknamed "The Virgin Ironpants." A virgin daughter who supports a promiscuous tyrant is clearly a reference to Minerva, while the epithet Ironpants recalls Minerva's martial attire (cf. *Met.* 6.78–81). And just as Arachne makes Minerva

see an aspect of Jupiter she wishes to suppress, Rani confronts Iskander's virgin daughter with the crimes of her father.

In Rushdie, the *ekphrasis* of the shawls, which takes up six pages, is interspersed with comments in italics. These comments make clear that Rani has woven her shawls in order to criticize Arjumand's blind support of Iskander.¹² For instance, after the description of the first shawl, which portrays Iskander naked receiving the ministrations of his numerous concubines, we read in italics:

Yes, I know, you have made a saint of him, my daughter, you swallowed everything he dished out, his abstinence, his celibacy of an Oriental Pope, but he could not do without for long, that man of pleasure masquerading as a servant of Duty. (*Shame*, 201)

The comments in italics make Rani's authorial intention clear. Ovid does not pass narratorial judgment on Arachne's intentions,¹³ but the way in which Rushdie interprets Arachne's tapestry really makes sense of the episode: it is not just a plausible reading of Arachne, it is a very convincing one. More on this later.

The Ovidian background to Rushdie's *ekphrasis* is further underpinned by Rani's similarities with another weaver from *Metamorphoses* 6, Philomela. In Ovid, Tereus rapes Philomela, his sister-in-law; he then cuts out her tongue and imprisons her. Philomela cannot escape from her guards (*Met.* 6.572), but reveals Tereus' crime to her sister Procne by depicting her rape and mutilation in a tapestry. Not unlike Philomela, Rani is kept under house arrest and denounces Iskander's crimes in her embroidered shawls. She even depicts the torn-out tongue of a victim (*Shame* 205), a detail which suggests Iskander's similarities with Tereus. By illustrating the victim's inability to speak, Rani voices her criticism and reveals the failure of tyrants to silence opposing narratives. Similarly, Philomela speaks a truth that for her is physically as well as officially unutterable.

Rushdie is evidently well acquainted with Ovid's work. The narrator describes Rani as "cracked and cobwebby"

(191) and she finally depicts herself on the autobiographical shawl as “cracks and spiders” (204).¹⁴ Note that Rushdie refers specifically to Ovid and the myth of the spider-woman in *The Satanic Verses*: “While pushing their way out of the white came a succession of cloudforms, ceaselessly metamorphosing, gods into bulls, *women into spiders*, men into wolves” (Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, 7, my emphasis).

Gods transforming into bulls is an unmistakable reference to Jupiter’s metamorphosis,¹⁵ a tale told in *Metamorphoses* 2.833–3.5 and also depicted in Arachne’s tapestry (*Met.* 6.104–8). The transformation of a woman into spider is another clear allusion to Ovid: aside from a brief and a puzzling reference to Minerva’s hatred for spiders in Vergil’s *Georgics* 4.246–47, our only ancient source for the story of Arachne’s transformation is Ovid. Finally, the last example of the passage cited above—men turning into wolves—alludes to the story of Lycaon in *Metamorphoses* 1.232–39.¹⁶

There is a second passage (again with my emphasis) from *The Satanic Verses* referring to the world of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*:

To get his mind off the subject of love and desire, he studied, becoming an omnivorous autodidact, devouring the metamorphic myths of Greece and Rome, the avatars of Jupiter, the boy who became a flower, *the spider woman*, Circe, everything. (*The Satanic Verses*, 24.)

Gibreel, one of the protagonists of the novel, studies the metamorphic myths of Greece and Rome and I believe that he reads Ovid in particular; that is suggested by the sequence of the myths which follow the order in which they appear in Ovid’s epic: Jupiter (*Met.* 1–2), Narcissus (*Met.* 3), Arachne (*Met.* 6), Circe (*Met.* 13–14). It is, of course, ironic that Gibreel reads the *Metamorphoses* in an attempt to get his mind off the subject of love and desire.¹⁷ Obviously, he is reading the wrong book. He should have read the *Remedia Amoris* instead.

Rushdie's knowledge of Ovid is not restricted to listing names and myths. In *The Satanic Verses*, a character refers to Ovid explicitly and paraphrases a passage from Pythagoras' speech in the *Metamorphoses*:

'However,' up went the ex-schoolmaster's finger, 'poet Ovid, in the *Metamorphoses*, takes diametrically opposed view. He avers thus: "As yielding wax"—heated, you see, possibly for the sealing of documents or such,—“is stamped with new designs And changes shape and seems not still the same, Yet is indeed the same, even so our souls,”—you hear, good sir? Our spirits! Our immortal essences!—“Are still the same forever, but adopt In their migrations ever-varying forms.”' (*The Satanic Verses*, 285)

This paraphrases *Metamorphoses* 15.169–72:

*utque nouis facilis signatur cera figuris
nec manet ut fuerat nec formam seruat eandem,
sed tamen ipsa eadem est, animam sic semper eandem
esse, sed in uarias doceo migrare figuras.*

As pliable wax is stamped with new designs and neither remains what it was nor does it keep the same form, yet it is still one and the same, I teach that the soul is always the same, but migrates into various forms.

Rushdie has read the *Metamorphoses*—most likely in translation—carefully. This is proven not only by the passages cited above, but also by the appropriation of the Arachne episode in *Shame*. Rushdie did not simply know an outline of the myth of Arachne, but read Ovid's tale closely and translated the narrative dynamics between ekphrastic description and internal audience from Ovid's Arachne to the world of his novel.

2. SHAME IN THE METAMORPHOSES

THE SECOND PART of my paper focuses on Ovid and that Rushdie's adaptation of Ovid's Arachne can shed new light on the weaving competition between Minerva and Arachne.

If we read the Arachne episode through the lens of Rushdie's novel, we will see that shame is an important aspect in the *Metamorphoses*. Before she sends the shawls to the "Virgin Ironpants," Rani includes a piece of paper on which she writes her chosen title: "The Shamelessness of Iskander the Great" (200). She then signs her work with her maiden name, and Rushdie thus draws in a further parallel between Rani and the virgin Arachne. The theme of Arachne's tapestry is similar: "The Shamelessness of Jupiter the Great and the other Great Gods" would be an appropriate title. The shamelessness of tyrannical males causes the shame of powerful virgins as Arachne and Rani subject Minerva and Arjuman to the bare truth of their hypocrisy.

Minerva's reaction is violent. She tears Arachne's tapestry and attacks the girl with her shuttle (*Met.* 6.131–35). According to Ovid, Minerva was grief-stricken because of Arachne's flawless tapestry, but I think that Minerva's violent outburst is also related to the images she has to examine. While trying to find a flaw in the tapestry, Minerva has to survey the rapes of the gods in detail and feels shame as goddess defeated by a mortal but also as virgin faced with offensive images of her kin. In his novel, Rushdie reflects on how shame ignites one's pride and finally erupts in violence. Ovid's Minerva is an example of the interconnectedness between shame and violence. Unlike the Muses and Apollo, who defeat their mortal challengers and punish them for their hubris, Minerva loses the contest, but punishes Arachne nonetheless. Her cruel attack on the girl is the outcome of her profound embarrassment.

Interestingly, Minerva's violence, though triggered by her shame, results in a shameless deed. In her attempt to destroy Arachne's embroidered indictment, Minerva repeats the crimes. Her unfair attack on Arachne curiously resembles the sexual attacks of the gods:

*doluit successu flaua uirago
et rupit pictas, caelestia crimina, uestes;*

*utque Cytoriaco radium de monte tenebat,
ter quater Idmoniae frontem percussit Arachnes.
non tulit infelix laqueoque animosa ligavit
guttura;*

(*Metamorphoses* 6.131–35)

The blond virgin warrior was distressed by the success and tore the embroidered cloth, the divine rapes; and as she was holding the shuttle from the mount Cytorus, three and four times she pierced through the forehead of Idmonian Arachne.

The goddess first tears the *uestes* into shreds just as a rapist tears a girl's clothes.¹⁸ The explanatory *caelestia crimina* refers to the topic of Arachne's work, but it can also be read as the narrator's comment on Minerva's assault.¹⁹ When the goddess tears Arachne's *uestes*, her action resembles the woven scenes of divine violence against mortal virgins. The two *crimina* are, one could say, intertwined. From that perspective, the goddess' reaction is interwoven with the scenes of divine violence against mortal virgins. What is more, the hitting of Arachne's forehead with a phallic shuttle reenacts a divine rape. Arachne depicts the gods' crimes with her shuttle, but Minerva perpetrates one with her own. And if the sexual meaning of *radius*, which is attested in the medical works of Caelius Aurelianus,²⁰ was current in Ovid's time, the parallel between Minerva's penetration and the divine rapes is quite striking as the goddess tears the embroidered clothes and pierces through her innocent victim. Instead of obliterating *caelestia crimina*, Minerva adds one more reproach against the gods to the list—she proves Arachne's accusations, while trying to destroy evidence. In fact, censoring and destroying a work of art are often the strongest confirmation of an artist's accusations against a tyrannical regime.²¹ Shame, anger, censorship, and punishment validate the accusations instead of refuting them.

Unable to bear Minerva's attack, Arachne hangs herself. Her suicide attempt further supports the reading of Minerva's assault as rape; Arachne feels the disgrace of a rape

victim and chooses a particularly female way to end her life. The shameless assault of the goddess hurts Arachne, just as the shamelessness of a rapist paradoxically causes a deeply painful feeling of disgrace to the victim. Violent assaults generate violence—but this time Arachne directs the violence of shame against herself.

Ironically, Minerva calls Arachne *improba* (*Met.* 6.136) at this point. In Minerva's eyes, Arachne is shameless for two reasons: first, because she challenged a goddess in a weaving competition. Note that after Minerva's epiphany, Arachne blushes (*erubuit*, *Met.* 6.45), but soon gets over her shame and provokes the goddess. Second, Minerva calls Arachne *improba* because she insulted a virgin goddess by depicting images of graphic sex. By punishing the girl, Minerva deals with her embarrassment, transposing the shamelessness of the gods, who perpetrated the rapes, to Arachne, who merely depicted them. As a powerful goddess who assaults a mortal virgin, Minerva proves that she is the appropriate champion of her father's regime. Thus, the interrelatedness between violence and shame, a central theme in Rushdie's novel, is crucial to understanding Ovid's Arachne episode. Reading Ovid through the lens of Rushdie can shed light on the role of shame in the weaving competition of *Metamorphoses* 6.

3. SUBVERSIVE ARTISTS AND OPPRESSIVE TYRANTS

THE OFTEN intrusive narrator of *Shame* tells us that he did not write a realist novel and explains why: "If I had been writing a book of this nature, it would have done me no good to protest that I was writing universally, not only about Pakistan. The book would have been banned, dumped in the rubbish bin, burned" (*Shame*, 67–68). Of course, the novel was banned in Pakistan anyway. Rushdie and Ovid resorted to the universal appeal of fairy-tales²² and myths, but this was not enough to cover up the deeply political and artfully subversive nature of their works. In the final part of

this paper, I focus on the politics of Rani's and Arachne's artifacts and also examine the motif of art and punishment in *The Satanic Verses* and the *Metamorphoses*.

Rani's loom issues a political indictment; her weaving, described by the narrator as "an act of *accusation* on the grandest conceivable scale" (*Shame*, 203, my emphasis), replicates the *caelestia crimina* (*Met.* 6.131) of Arachne's tapestry. Such a fearless criticism is partly responsible for Arachne's punishment. Not unlike Minerva, Arjumand punishes Rani for her exquisite and scathing artifacts. The "Virgin Ironpants" receives Rani's eighteen shawls after she is set free and reborn into power. These shawls ensure, says the narrator, that Rani will live in exile for the rest of her life since Arjumand has her own mother placed under guard at Mohenjo (294). Rani uses the particularly female and domestic art of weaving in order to criticize the male-dominated world of politics. And her politically subversive art is the reason of her protracted exile. But the political world of *Shame* not only belongs to Rushdie's fabulous narrative, but also corresponds to crucial historical events. Rushdie's fictional names can be easily identified with the Bhutto family; Iskander Harappa is Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Rani is Zulfikar's second wife (Begum Nusrat Ispahani), and the Virgin Ironpants is Benazir Bhutto. Can we draw such a neat correspondence between myth and history in the *Metamorphoses*? No. Still, Ovid's use of Greek myth as a veiled commentary on Roman politics is well known.

As I have argued above, in her attempt to eliminate Arachne's accusations, Minerva repeats the crimes of the gods and thus confirms Arachne's indictment. When she interprets Arachne's depictions, the goddess reveals her own bias and anxieties.²³ Her view of her rival's tapestry mirrors her guilty conscience. And as is often the case with censored works of art, the act of banning, destroying, and burning a work of art simply reinforces its complexity, while highlighting the shortsightedness of the censor.

We have historical evidence that Augustus censored and burned books.²⁴ Seneca (*Controversiae, praef.* 10.5–7) men-

tions that the books of the historian Titus Labienus were burned under Augustus. When Labienus heard that his entire library was consigned to flames, he committed suicide. Through his death, he wanted to send a message about censorship to Augustus and to Roman citizens. Before the case of Labienus, Augustus led the poet Gallus, who could not hold his tongue when he had too much wine (Ovid, *Tr.* 2.446), to kill himself. Suetonius (*Divus Augustus* 66) says that Augustus' wrath caused Gallus' suicide, but then the *princeps* wept for the dead poet. The emperor's *ira* overshadows his *clementia*, while his tears (if not crocodile) were shed to no avail.

The similarities between Augustus' victims and Arachne are intriguing. When Minerva destroys her work, Arachne tries to kill herself. Still, Minerva does not allow her to commit suicide. The narrator tells that the goddess took pity on the girl (*Pallas miserata*, *Met.* 6.135), but the result of Minerva's pity is far from merciful. The goddess passes a moral judgment on the girl (cf. *improba*, *Met.* 6.136) and condemns her and her offspring to the same punishment (*lexque eadem poenae*, *Met.* 6.137). Minerva sprinkles the girl with the hellish herbs of Hecate and turns her into a spider, perpetually hanging alive from a thread. The goddess guarantees that the disgrace of Arachne's suicide attempt will live forever. Thus, the description of the girl's nightmarish metamorphosis (*Met.* 6.140–45) is another punitive transformation inflicted by a vengeful god, not a touch of pity. In fact, Arachne never asked for pity. As censor, Minerva wants not only to convict and punish the artist herself but also present her own cruelty as mercy.

Such a vengeful act of pity recalls Augustus' much-vaunted *clementia*. In the exile poetry, Ovid repeatedly appeals to Augustus' *clementia*, a key term seemingly incongruous with the emperor's *ira*.²⁵ We know that Ovid's books were banned from public libraries (see *Tr.* 3.1.60; *Pont.* 1.1.5) and their author was relegated to the fringes of the known world by a 'merciful' emperor, who at least did not sentence Ovid to

death. This is the sort of notorious *clementia*, which, as Frederick Ahl points out, a tyrant uses in order to prove his victim wrong just by saving him.²⁶ An outburst of anger disguised as a touch of pity was one of Augustus' typical imperial policies; Minerva employs a similar tactic in *Metamorphoses* 6.²⁷ It is indeed hard to tell Augustus' and Minerva's wrath from their mercy.

Ovid blended the fabulous world of Greek myth with the real world of Roman politics from the very beginning of his epic poem. In *Metamorphoses* 1, the *concilium deorum* takes place in high heaven's Palatine (*magni . . . Palatia caeli*, *Met.* 1.176) and the council resembles the political procedure in the Roman Senate; Jupiter, like Augustus,²⁸ sets the agenda and presides over the other gods. In fact, Ovid compares the two explicitly:

*nec tibi grata minus pietas, Auguste, tuorum est
quam fuit illa Ioui.*

(*Metamorphoses* 1.204–5)

nor was the piety of your people less gratifying to you, Augustus, than it was to Jupiter.

The *princeps*' assimilation to the supreme god is alluded to in the Arachne episode. In her tapestry, Minerva weaves a royal image of Jupiter sitting in the middle of the Olympian gods:

*bis sex caelestes medio Ioue sedibus altis
augusta gravitate sedent. sua quemque deorum
inscribit facies: Iouis est regalis imago;*

(*Metamorphoses* 6.72–75)

The twelve gods sit in *august* majesty, on their high thrones, with Jupiter in the middle. Their own appearance is an inscription for each god. The image of Jupiter is a royal one.

The adjective *augustus* is suggestive; the readers of the *Metamorphoses* encounter this adjective for the first time here

and Ovid uses it only three times in his epic (*Met.* 9.270; 15.145). Minerva depicts the Olympian pantheon symmetrically enthroned around Jupiter's magisterial pose, and the august solemnity of her image alludes to Augustus, the *princeps* who claimed to be a god. Minerva's art is a piece of propaganda aimed at extolling her father's regime and her role in it. By contrast, Arachne debunks this image of divine solemnity. Her tapestry presents a Jupiter quite different from the royal image in Minerva's artifact. The two faces of Jupiter, the severe ruler of Minerva's tapestry and the shameless adulterer of Arachne's work, recall the rumors about the double life of Augustus. The emperor's moral propaganda and his law against adultery contrast with the rumors about his private life, which, according to Suetonius, was full of adultery and debauchery. Suetonius describes an Augustus given to extra-marital sex and going to parties in which the guests, dressed up as the twelve gods, indulged in novel debaucheries (*Divus Augustus* 68–70).

Likewise, Iskander Harappa presents himself as a moralist, while his life is tainted by adulteries and murders. In the novel, people treat him as a saint (108, 201) or as a deity (109), but Rani remembers the days before her husband had acquired a halo. And she is there to speak about those days and shock not only her daughter but also those readers of the novel who thought of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as the august restorer of democracy in Pakistan. Yet, some of those readers probably reacted like Arjumand, who "had already reached the stage of refusing to hear anything bad about her father" (108). Arjumand reportedly views her father as an Oriental Pope (201), overlooking his promiscuous life. Interestingly, as an Oriental Pope, Iskander resembles Augustus, the *Pontifex Maximus*, who was responsible for the chastity of the Vestal virgins, while rumors about his numerous paramours were circulating at Rome.²⁹ And as a father of an only daughter, Iskander is similar to Augustus, who had a daughter but failed to father a male successor.³⁰ Thus, Rushdie does not add a political dimension to his

adaptation of Arachne; instead, he reads Ovid's political allegory, based on Augustus' identification with Jupiter, and translates it to the historical and political context of his novel. And just as Rushdie's fabulous characters can be easily identified with the main players in Pakistan's political turmoil, Greek myth is a veiled commentary on Roman politics in Ovid.

Ovid's endlessly allusive and cunningly subversive genius is well known to modern readers and critics. The political dimension of his poetry has also been the focus of modern scholarship and proven to be a particularly fruitful field.³¹ Yet, we should bear in mind that Rushdie's *Shame* came out in 1983 and consider how classicists approached Ovid's poetry at this time. By and large, the scholarly consensus was that Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, with its universal epic program, transcends its Roman context.³² Some scholars went as far as considering the poem's Roman and Augustan themes irrelevant.³³ Williams argued further that Ovid sought to escape from political themes and the imperial present through Greek mythology.³⁴ Such arguments would be more convincing, had Augustus not systematically employed Greek myth in his propaganda. Or if Ovid had not extended the scope of his epic to Roman history and his own age.

Ahl's seminal article, "The Art of Safe Criticism in Greece and Rome," came out in 1984, a year after the publication of *Shame*. Ahl examines the subtle rhetoric of subversive authors under the principate and attacks the classicists' logic of reading Latin literature, which he summarizes as follows: (1) it is "unthinkable" to criticize the emperor; (2) no right-thinking person would criticize a "good" emperor and no one who valued his life would criticize a "bad" emperor; (3) flattery of the emperors is therefore sincere.³⁵ Such opinions now sound like dark voices from the past. Still, it was the scholars' *communis opinio* of Ovidian poetry when Rushdie was working on *Shame*. Rushdie, a novelist, was by far a more sensitive reader of Ovid than many classical scholars in the seventies and the eighties.

Rushdie is aware not only of the political dimension of the *Metamorphoses* but also of its narratological complexities. The narrative dynamics between ekphrastic description and target audience in the Arachne episode were fully understood and reworked in *Shame* before classicists had discovered the intricacies and subtleties involved in the interaction between narrators and internal audience in the *Metamorphoses*.³⁶

Rushdie's sophisticated and political Ovid is not an isolated example of a novelist anticipating classical scholarship. It seems that the Ovid of the scholars was seldom the same as the Ovid of the poets and the novelists. This is partly because Ovid fascinated poets and novelists as a symbol of the unjustly punished writer, the poet as victim of the state.³⁷ In fact, several authors not only played up the political aspect of Ovid's poetry, but also got themselves into trouble by modeling their works on his. Christoph Ransmayr's Ovidian novel *Die letzte Welt* (1988), for instance, blends the world of Ovid's exile with the world of his *Metamorphoses*³⁸ and thus draws a connection between the politics of myth and exile. In the novel, the Augustan regime rules over the world via a labyrinthine and inscrutable bureaucracy,³⁹ a description which was partly responsible for the fact that the novel was banned in Romania. Rushdie reviewed Ransmayr's novel after it was translated into English,⁴⁰ and read it as "a parable of the ability of art to survive the artist." By that time, he knew that Ovid was a dangerous model: the *fatwa* on the alleged blasphemy of *The Satanic Verses* had been pronounced in February 1989.⁴¹

In *The Satanic Verses* (1988), Rushdie's initial allusion to Ovid has had an incendiary force.⁴² At the beginning of the novel, Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta fall from the sky after a terrorist attack on a hijacked Air India jumbo. In a passage that celebrates metamorphosis, hybridity, and impurity,⁴³ Rushdie blends together such diverse intertexts as Ovid's stories of Jupiter and Europa, Arachne, and Lycaon, Lewis Carroll's Alice, the Bible, and the Qur'an.⁴⁴ The metamorphosis of Farishta into the Archangel Gabriel and the

transformation of Chamcha into Satan are completed via a hybridization of culturally miscellaneous literary and religious traditions. It is no wonder that Ovid plays a central part in this process of cultural and temporal metamorphosis. It is also no wonder that the opening scene of *The Satanic Verses* infuriated Rushdie's detractors: metamorphosis—literary, political, religious or otherwise—is a provocative idea for the defenders of unchanging purity.

Another particularly inflammatory part of *The Satanic Verses* is the story of a brothel in Jahilia, in which the prostitutes assume the names of the Prophet's twelve wives (371–407).⁴⁵ A subversive poet called Baal hides behind The Curtain—the brothel's suggestive name—trying to avoid the Prophet's punishment for the vitriolic verses of his youth, when he lampooned the new monotheistic religion. As the theme of art and punishment resurfaces in *The Satanic Verses*, I can see that Rushdie's Baal has a lot in common with Ovid's Orpheus.⁴⁶

But first we must consider the motif of the censorship of art and punishment of artists in the *Metamorphoses*.⁴⁷ At the end of *Metamorphoses* 5, the mortal Emathides challenge the divine Muses to a singing competition. When they lose, the Emathides dispute the result and the Muses, angered, punish them (*ibimus in poenas et qua uocat ira sequemur*, *Met.* 5.668) by turning them into magpies. Transformation silences the victims and in this case metamorphosis works as an effective act of censorship. But the censorship of the Emathides is more intriguing than their final transformation suggests. Interestingly, the Emathides' challenge and their performance are reported in indirect speech by a Muse, their bitter enemy. The Emathid's song is compressed into thirteen lines (*Met.* 5.319–31), while Calliope's performance is replayed verbatim and takes up almost three hundred lines (*Met.* 5.341–661).⁴⁸ A Muse recounts the entire episode as a flashback, in order to answer Minerva's query about the chattering magpies (*Met.* 5.294–300). The silencing of the Emathides, who appear as

magpies in the beginning and the end of the tale, and the biased manipulation of their words by the Muses are a crucial aspect of Ovid's narrative structure. We hear only the voice of the Muses, and the song of their rivals is reported, distorted, by Jupiter's daughters. The actual complaints of the Emathides after their loss are briefly paraphrased by the Muse (*Met.* 5.662–65). By contrast, the Muse's response is given in direct speech (*Met.* 5.665–67). The singing competition is an excellent example of silencing artists and editing out alternative narratives. Victors tell their own stories and often erase the version of the defeated.

The weaving competition of Arachne and Minerva, which follows the singing competition, closes with another example of a punitive transformation cast as an act of censorship. Other artists who are punished because of their art in the *Metamorphoses* include Marsyas (*Met.* 6.382–400) and Orpheus (*Met.* 11.1–66). Orpheus is an interesting case of an artist punished for his subversive art. Having lost his wife Eurydice for a second time, Orpheus abstains from the love of women and transfers his love to young boys (*Met.* 10.83–85). He introduces the theme of his next song as “boys loved by gods and girls stricken with forbidden passion, deserving punishment for their lust” (*Met.* 10.152–54). Thus, he sets out to praise pederasty and denounce female perversion. Such a topic enraged the married women of Thrace (*nurus Ciconum*, *Met.* 11.3), who, under the spell of a Bacchic frenzy, attack the legendary bard. It seems that Orpheus' renunciation of marriage offended the social mores of these married women. The Thracian matrons, however, are at first unable to harm the poet since their missiles succumb to the magic of his lyre (*Met.* 11.7–13). They are more effective when they manage to silence Orpheus' song with their Maenadic hubbub (*Met.* 11.15–19). When the racket of Bacchic horns, drums, shrieks, and shouts silence the sound of Orpheus' performance, the stones cannot hear the sweet music of the bard any more and they hit Orpheus (*Met.* 11.16–19). Thus, the women first censor and silence

Orpheus' music and then execute him. They kill him by hurling stones, branches, hoes, and mattocks. The poet's body is torn to shreds and his dismembered limbs are scattered in different places, the head and his lyre floating on the river Hebrus, singing something mournful (*flebile nescioquid*, *Met.* 11.52). The bard has been reduced to a whimpering head, just as the Emathides' song has turned into the hoarse chattering of the magpies, and Arachne's impeccable art becomes mere cobwebs. Interestingly, Orpheus' detractors censor and punish a poet who celebrates change and sings of metamorphoses,⁴⁹ not unlike Ovid himself.⁵⁰

But let us return to *The Satanic Verses* and the poet Baal. As the new monotheistic religion of the Prophet gains ground in Jahilia, freedom of speech and satire are suppressed under the single truth of the book, which is supposedly dictated to the Prophet by the Archangel. No wonder Baal feels the danger and changes the topic of his poetry: "He looked away from public affairs and wrote poems of unrequited love" (*The Satanic Verses*, 374). Still, the strict rules of the new religion, which meticulously prescribed even what positions were allowed in marital sex, made love poetry an issue of public affairs. Hiding "behind The Curtain" (389), Baal lives out of the sun in a place which operates at night and is run by "the ancient and nameless Madam of the Curtain whose guttural utterances from the secrecy of a chair shrouded in black veils had acquired, over the years, something of the oracular" (389). Baal begs the "sibylline" (389) figure of the bawd for help, she accepts him into her brothel and saves his life as an act of nostalgia for his "lively and wicked youth" (389). The oracular and aged Sibyl of Rushdie's fabulous world protects an Orphic poet: Baal's reception in a world of darkness resembles a *katabasis*.⁵¹ From here, the story expresses subtle yet clear affinities with Orpheus and Eurydice.

Thanks to Baal's suggestion that the prostitutes assume the names of the Prophet's twelve wives, business in the Curtain thrives. The brothel becomes the distorting mirror of the Prophet's harem and the prostitutes the *Doppelgängerinnen*

of the Messenger's chaste wives. The girls of the Curtain are the images, like ghosts of the Prophet's wives, who live in a dark underworld.⁵² In this underworld, the poet Baal descends not to save his wife's life, like Orpheus, but his own.

Baal's affinities with Orpheus surface gradually as the story of his art and punishment unfolds. The girls of the Curtain want to marry him, and the poet, having no other option, agrees to the twelvefold proposal. Eventually, Baal grows accustomed to his role as the husband of the twelve courtesans. When the Prophet returns to Jahilia and orders the brothels to be closed (401), the soldiers arrest the girls of the Curtain and put them in jail. The prostitutes are to be stoned to death. Having failed to defend his wives when they desperately needed his support, Baal is ashamed and hurt by his loss. Defying the "new immorality laws" (403), the poet stands below the windows of the jail and begins to sing his love poems. The crowd gathered in front of the jail is stunned and the girls appear at the windows of the jail for the first time, drawn by the magic of the lines. The poet goes forward to nail his poetry at the wall after finishing his recital and "the guards at the gates, their eyes running with tears, made no move to stop him" (403).

Baal's song is as magical as Orpheus' performance. Even the guards of the girls weep, not unlike the Furies, who, won over by Orpheus' song, wet their faces with tears for the first time (*Met.* 10.45–6). Still, despite the magical beauty of their songs, both Orpheus and Baal fail to save their wives from death. We are told that Baal's verses were full of loss (382). Not unlike Orpheus' Eurydice, "figures walked away from him (i.e., Baal) in his odes, and the more passionately he called out to them the faster they moved" (382). Far from effectively using the magic of their poetry in order to save their wives, Orpheus and Baal are cruelly executed on account of their subversive poems. The bards wanted their wives to join them in life, but in the end they are united with them in death.

After the end of Baal's twelfth performance in front of the jail, the poet reveals his identity as follows: "I am Baal," he

announced. ‘I recognize no jurisdiction except that of my Muse; or, to be exact, my dozen Muses.’” (404). Orpheus, who invoked his mother, the Muse Calliope (*Musa parens*, *Met.* 10.148),⁵³ at the beginning of his recital, performed a song of magical beauty, which was also the cause of his death. After the revelation of his identity, Baal is seized by the guards (404). The magic spell of his song is over and the guards’ tears seem to have dried up. In what follows, Baal’s twelve wives are sentenced to death by stoning and Baal is put on trial and also sentenced to death. The poet is beheaded (404–5), an execution that recalls the end of Orpheus in the *Metamorphoses*.⁵⁴ In sum, Rushdie casts Baal as an Orphic poet, whose art is not only magical but also provocative. The subversive aspect of Orpheus’ poetry and the relationship between his art and his punishment feature prominently in the *Metamorphoses* and Rushdie draws on exactly this facet of Ovid’s narrative.

But toying with the politics of religion, even in the world of myths and fairy-tales, can be risky. Salman Rushdie has been repeatedly compared with Ovid after the notorious *fatwa*. He was forced to live in exile and write in defense of his work. In his essay “In Good Faith,”⁵⁵ Rushdie argues, like Ovid in *Tristia* 2, that his work has been grossly misinterpreted, and he assimilates himself to the figure of the exiled Ovid.⁵⁶ Interestingly, the works of Rushdie and Ovid contain numerous artists who are punished by oppressive tyrants on account of their subversive art. Art incurs punishment and exile is a form of punitive metamorphosis in both writers. Rani’s imprisonment, for instance, is explicitly described as exile. It is indeed intriguing that both Ovid and Rushdie eventually meet the fate of their fictional characters. Myth turns into reality, while the authors are absorbed in the universe they created in their works. The Roman poet and the Indian novelist believed in a world that can be transformed by their writings, only to find out that artists can be crushed effortlessly at an old tyrant’s whim.

NOTES

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1. See B. Nicholls, “Reading ‘Pakistan’ in Salman Rushdie’s *Shame*,” in A. Gurnah, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Rushdie* (Cambridge 2007), 119.

2. *Shame* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize.

3. See I. Grewal, “Salman Rushdie: Marginality, Women, and Shame,” in D. M. Fletcher, ed., *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie* (Atlanta 1994), 123–44; S. Dayal, “The Liminalities of Nation and Gender: Salman Rushdie’s *Shame*,” *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 31.2 (1998), 39–62; Nicholls (note 1), 114.

4. This shift happens not just in the case of the narrative focusing on women, but it also happens genetically in the story. Both Raza Hyder and Iskander Harappa fail to father a male heir and the women eventually take over. Genealogy and succession are important in *Shame*.

5. D. W. Hart, “Making a Mockery of Mimicry: Salman Rushdie’s *Shame*,” *Postcolonial Text* 4 (2008), 16, mentions in passing that Rani creates her shawls “with narrative strands of Arachne flowing through her.”

6. Rani is confined at Mohenjo, the luxurious Harappa estate, and is virtually entombed there. As Hart (note 5), 9, points out, Mohenjo alludes to Mohenjo-daro, translated as “The Mound of the Dead,” which lies in the province of Sind in Southern Pakistan.

7. See *Maeonis elusam designat imagine tauri/ Euopen; uerum taurum, freta uera putares* (“The Maeonian girl [Arachne] depicts Europa deceived by the image of the bull: you would think it was a real bull, real sea.” *Met.* 6.103–4); *omnibus his faciemque suam faciemque locorum / reddidit*. (“She gave to all these their own appearance and the appearance of the places” *Met.* 6.121–22).

8. Arachne depicts how Bacchus deceived Erigone with false grapes (*Met.* 6.125). P. Hardie, *Ovid’s Poetics of Illusion* (Cambridge 2002), 176, argues that this otherwise unattested story alludes to a famous anecdote, the com-

petition between the artists Parrhasius and Zeuxis in which “Zeuxis exhibited grapes painted so successfully that birds flew up to the wall of the stage” (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 35.65). For Zeuxis and Arachne artistic realism is a convincing deception.

9. Magical realism, a key term for understanding Rushdie’s work, is a literary trend which applies mainly to twentieth century literature. *The Decameron* and *Don Quixote* are frequently mentioned as literary forerunners of magical realism, though Ovid certainly deserves a place as a precursor. D. F. Kennedy, “Recent Receptions of Ovid,” in P. Hardie, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid* (Cambridge 2004), 330, suggests that Ovid’s absence from discussions of magical realism may be in part the result of Ovid’s critical eclipse over the past two centuries.

10. See P. J. Johnson, *Ovid Before Exile: Art and Punishment in the Metamorphoses* (Madison, WI 2008), 85–87, on Arachne’s pornographic realism.

11. Interestingly, the blending of supernatural with realistic elements, which defines the aesthetics of magical realism, contains an “implicit criticism of society, particularly the elite” (see N. Lindstrom, *Twentieth-Century Spanish American Literature* [Austin 1994]). Magical realism’s construction of a new reality aims at correcting the reality of established viewpoints. Thus, the literature of magical realism can be subversive and revolutionary against politically and socially dominant forces. The connection between magical realism and political critique has been well studied in Spanish American Literature (see N. Lindstrom, above; L. P. Zamora and W. B. Faris, *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* [Durham, NC and London 1995]) and I believe that Ovid’s construction of a new, fabulous reality is closely associated with the subversive element of his poetry. Ovid’s magical realism often has an anti-Augustan dimension.

12. Rani first hides her shawls in a trunk and then sends them to Arjumand as a gift. Arjumand is clearly Rani’s target audience.

13. It has been argued, although it is a minority view, that Minerva’s violent reaction may be a case of interpreting Arachne’s artistic intention tentatively. E. W. Leach, *The Rhetoric of Space: Literary and Artistic Representations of Landscape in Republican and Augustan Rome* (Princeton 1988), 444, points out: “Nowhere, however, is it said that Arachne intentionally condemns the gods by these depictions of hidden identity. Instead, her art reproduces that manipulation of appearances that has beguiled human eyes. The border of flowers with which she surrounds her work provides a luxuriant sensual context for the generative energies with which the scenes are charged. Condemnation rests with the spectator—that is with Minerva, who tacitly admits the success of the work by that same gesture of moral indignation that destroys its testimony to *caelestia crimina*.” See E. W. Leach, “Ekphrasis and the Theme of Artistic Failure in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*,” *Ramus* 3 (1974), 117: “The fact is that Arachne does not, by her representation, make a moral judgment upon the loves of the gods. It is Minerva’s interpretation that makes the subject immoral and trivializes this vast panorama of desire and generation as *caelestia crimina*.”

Still, *caelestia crimina* (*Met.* 6.131) is the narrator's comment, not Minerva's (it is Leach's own choice to read *caelestia crimina* as Minerva's interpretation). For an endorsement of Leach's reading, see E. Oliensis, "The Power of Image-Makers: Representation and Revenge in Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6 and *Tristia* 4," *CA* 23 (2004), 290–91.

14. Spiders make several appearances in Rani's shawls. Rani reveals "the arachnid terrors" (*Shame*, 202) of Iskander's days and represents the oaths coming out of her husband's lips as crawling "ochre scorpions, *indigo spiders*, albino rats" (*Shame*, 203, my emphasis).

15. Rushdie's reference to Jupiter's transformation into a bull is the first in a succession of metamorphic cloudforms. Jupiter, the cloud-gatherer weather god, appropriately emerges from the clouds and morphs into a bull.

16. For Ovid in *The Satanic Verses*, see Kennedy (note 9), 327–32; T. Ziolkowski, *Ovid and the Moderns* (Ithaca, NY 2005), 173–76.

17. It seems that Gibreel follows the Medieval tradition of moralizing interpretations of Ovid. Not unlike the anonymous author of the *Ovide moralisé* or Pierre Bersuire, the author of *Ovidius moralizatus*, who saw Ovid as a forerunner of Christian morality, Gibreel seems to read the *Metamorphoses* as a moral denunciation of erotic passion.

18. For Minerva's similarities with a rapist, see Oliensis (note 13), 289–90, 292–93.

19. G. Rosati, "Form in Motion: Weaving the Text in the *Metamorphoses*," in P. Hardie, A. Barchiesi, and S. Hinds, eds., *Ovidian Transformations: Essays on Ovid's Metamorphoses and its Reception* (Cambridge 1999), 251, notes: "I am tempted to see in *caelestia crimina*, 'a reproach against the gods', of 6.131 also a comment of the narrator on the gesture of the goddess."

20. For *radius* meaning penis, see Caelius Aurelianus, *Acut.* 3.115; see J. N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (Baltimore 1982), 14–15, 23.

21. Oliensis (note 13), 295, notes: "Indeed, in the very act of punishing Arachne violently and unjustly for her tapestried images of divine violence and injustice, Minerva effectively unravels her own hierarchical tapestry and validates the truth of the world of force depicted on Arachne's."

22. For *Shame*'s affinities with fairy-tales, see, for instance, Hart (note 5), 12–14.

23. See Leach, "Ekphrasis" (note 13), 117; Leach, *Rhetoric* (note 13), 444; Oliensis (note 13), 290–91. S. Bartsch, *Actors in the Audience: Theatricality and Doublespeak from Nero to Hadrian* (Cambridge, MA and London 1994), 90–91, discusses the writers' ploy of holding tyrants responsible for their interpretations. She cites Phaedrus' disclaimer that if a reader of his fables should err through an excess of suspicion and apply to himself what is meant as a comment on mankind in general, he would stupidly lay bare his own guilty conscience (see *Phaedrus* 3. prol. 45–50).

24. Although Augustus had had the reputation of being lenient and tolerant with authors, the last ten years of his reign were a grim time: books

began to be burned and writers were punished for their works (see R. Syme, *History in Ovid* [Oxford 1979], 204–14; D. Feeney, “*Si licet et fas est*: Ovid’s *Fasti* and the Problem of Free Speech under the Principate,” in A. Powell, ed., *Roman Poetry and Propaganda in the Age of Augustus* [London, 1992], 1–25). Ovid, Titus Labienus, and Cassius Severus are the three known authors whose works were banned under Augustus. Ovid and Cassius Severus were banished, while Titus Labienus killed himself, thus depriving Augustus of the opportunity to punish him. Augustus’ legislation extended the definition of *maiestas* to libel and slander against the emperor. Thus, allegedly subversive works become an act of treason. See the *lex Iulia maiestatis*, *Dig.* 48.4; Suet. *Div. Aug.* 55; Tac. *Ann.* 1.72.2–73.1 (see L. Robinson, *Freedom of Speech in the Roman Republic* [Baltimore 1940], 58–60). For literature and censorship in the early Roman Empire, see V. Rudich, “Navigating the Uncertain: Literature and Censorship in the Early Roman Empire,” *Arion* 14 (2006), 7–28. For book burning under Augustus, see C. Forbes, “Books for the Burning,” *TAPA* 67 (1936), 115, 119–23; and N. Krevans, “Bookburning and the Poetic Deathbed: the Legacy of Virgil,” in P. Hardie and H. Moore, eds., *Classical Literary Careers and their Reception* (Cambridge 2010), 197–201, 206–8. P. E. Knox, “The Poet and the Second Prince: Ovid in the Age of Tiberius,” *MAAR* 49 (2004), 1–20, argues that Tiberius was responsible for Augustus’ new policy of censorship. During the last decade of Augustus’ principate, Tiberius was *de facto* and in the end *de iure* co-regent. Knox’s suggestion is attractive, but speculative. For the problem of free speech under the principate, see Feeney (above).

25. On Augustus’ *clementia* and *ira* in Ovid’s exile poetry, see J. F. Gaertner, *Ovid: Epistulae ex Ponto* 1 (Oxford 2005).

26. See F. Ahl, “The Art of Safe Criticism in Greece and Rome,” *AJP* 105 (1984), 203.

27. It is striking that some modern critics fail to assess the irony of Minerva’s pity. A scholar as learned and sensitive as Anderson notes: “Minerva, now at last feeling a touch of pity, intervenes and releases her [Arachne] from the noose. . . . Ovid’s stories often end with an act of pity from the gods to alleviate the cruel condition of suffering mortals.” (W. S. Anderson, *Ovid’s Metamorphoses: Books 6–10* [Norman, OK 1972], 169). For a more perceptive reading of Minerva’s pity, see Johnson (note 10), 94–95. Johnson mentions Caesar’s famous saying after Cato’s suicide: “I begrudge you your death, Cato, because you begrudged me my clemency (Plutarch, *Moralia* 3.206.13). Minerva, unlike Caesar, was able to stop Arachne’s suicide, only to make the girl available for a more degrading punishment.

28. For the parallels between Jupiter and Augustus in Ovid, see *Met.* 1.173–76, 200–6; 15.850–60; *Tr.* 1.1.69–72; 81–82; 2.22, 33–42, 215–18.

29. On Augustus as *Pontifex Maximus* and the intimate relationship between the office and Vesta, see G. Herbert-Brown, *Ovid and the Fasti: A Historical Study* (Oxford 1994), 63–81. According to Herbert-Brown, the idea of Vesta having a male priest did not exist before Augustus became *Pontifex Maximus* (69).

30. Unfortunately for Augustus, Julia was no Benazir Bhutto and was far from being a “Virgin Ironpants.” The failure of male leaders to father a male heir is central to *Shame*’s narrative.

31. See, for instance, A. Powell, ed., *Roman Poetry and Propaganda in the Age of Augustus* (London 1992); A. Barchiesi, *The Poet and the Prince: Ovid and Augustan Discourse* (Berkeley 1997); S. Wheeler, *A Discourse of Wonders: Audience and Performance in Ovid’s Metamorphoses* (Philadelphia 1999), 194–205; C. Newlands, “*Mandati memores*: Political and Poetic Authority in the *Fasti*,” in P. Hardie (note 9), 200–16; P. J. Davis, *Ovid and Augustus: A Political Reading of Ovid’s Erotic Poems* (Duckworth 2006); Johnson (note 10).

32. See E. J. Kenney, “Ovid” in E. J. Kenney and W. V. Clausen, eds., *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature II: Latin Literature* (Cambridge 1982), 440–41; and J. B. Solodow, *The World of Ovid’s Metamorphoses* (Chapel Hill, NC 1988), 75–76. B. Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet* (Cambridge 1966), 338–39, writes about Ovid: “He was non-political. . . . In the way he felt and thought about the world, Ovid was fundamentally anti-Augustan. I see no particular evidence that this anti-Augustanism was explicitly political.” A. W. J. Holleman, “Ovid and Politics,” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 20 (1971), 458–66, challenges this peculiar but widespread view, that Ovid could be both anti-Augustan and apolitical. See C. Segal, “Myth and Philosophy in the *Metamorphoses*: Ovid’s Augustanism and the Augustan Conclusion of Book XV,” *AJP* 90 (1969), 257–92.

33. See D. A. Little, “The Non-Augustanism of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*,” *Mnemosyne* 25 (1972), 390, who calls Ovid an apolitical trifler; see K. Galinsky, *Ovid’s Metamorphoses: An Introduction to the Basic Aspects* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1975), 252–55. For a refutation of those views, see Wheeler (note 31), 194–205.

34. G. W. Williams, *Change and Decline* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1978), 100–1.

35. Ahl (note 26), 204–5; see also Ahl, “The Rider and the Horse: Politics and Power in Roman Poetry from Horace to Statius,” *ANRW* II.32.1 (1984), 40–110.

36. Wheeler (note 31) is the first systematic narratological study of the *Metamorphoses*.

37. See the collection of papers in J. Ingleheart, ed., *Two Thousand Years of Solitude: Exile after Ovid* (Oxford forthcoming). T. Ziolkowski, “Ovid in the Twentieth Century,” in P. E. Knox, ed., *Blackwell’s Companion to Ovid* (Malden, MA and Oxford 2009), 459, notes that writers who were driven into exile by the totalitarian regimes of the 1930s—initially such German writers as Hermann Broch, Bertolt Brecht, and Lion Feuchtwanger—identified themselves with the exiled Ovid.

38. The real world of Ovid’s exile and the fabulous world of his *Metamorphoses* are also blended in David Malouf’s Ovidian novel *An Imaginary Life* (1979); see I. Ziogas, “The Myth is Out There: Reality and Fiction at Tomis (David Malouf’s *An Imaginary Life*),” in Ingleheart (note 37). Schol-

ars have started to examine the continuity between Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and his exile poetry since S. Hinds, "Booking the Return Trip: Ovid and *Tristia* 1," *PCPS* 31 (1985), 13–32.

39. Vintila Horia's novel *Dieu est né en exil* (1960) is Ovid's secret journal during his exile. In Horia's novel, Rome evokes modern totalitarian regimes with their secret police and informers and the atmosphere of terror (see Ziolkowski, note 37, 459).

40. See S. Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981–91* (London 1991), 291–93.

41. One of the main models of *The Satanic Verses* is *The Master and Margarita* by Mikhail Bulgakov. Rushdie (note 40), 404, comments: "*The Master and Margarita* and its author were persecuted by Soviet totalitarianism. It is extraordinary to find my novel's life echoing that of one of its greatest models."

42. See Ziolkowski (note 16), 173–76.

43. See Rushdie (note 40), 394: "*The Satanic Verses* celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. *Mélange*, hotchpot, a bit of this and a bit of that is *how newness enters the world* . . . *The Satanic Verses* is for change-for-fusion, change-by-conjoining. It is a love song to our mongrel selves" (Rushdie's italics).

44. See Kennedy (note 9), 327–28. On Ovid in *The Satanic Verses*, 7, see above.

45. See Rushdie's defense of this story in Rushdie (note 40), 401–2.

46. In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (2000), Rushdie imagines an Indian Parsi boy as the secret originator of rock music. As R. Falconer, "Shape-changing in Hell: Metamorphosis and Katabasis in Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*," *E-rea* [On line] 2.2 (2004) URL: <http://erea.revues.org/449>, points out, the boy, Ormus Carma, is a mythological hybrid of Orpheus with the Hindu god of love Kama, who is rescued from the underworld by his wife Rati, goddess of music. Falconer further argues that Vergil's *Georgics* 4 is an important intertext for Rushdie's Orphic tales in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*.

47. See Johnson (note 10).

48. Leach, "Ekphrasis" (note 13), 114, notes: "Since the Muses are giving the account, they compress the song of the Pierides into a hasty, distasteful summary, while their own lengthy contribution is unfolded in all its detail."

49. Orpheus' tales (*Met.* 10.148–739) all include metamorphoses: Jupiter turns into an eagle in order to seduce Ganymede, Hyacinthus turns into a lily, the Propoetides are petrified, Pygmalion's statue becomes a girl, Myrrha turns into a myrrh tree, Atalanta and Hippomenes morph into lions, and a flower grows from Adonis' blood.

50. The parallel between Orpheus and Ovid can be traced in Orpheus' futile attempt to define his audience before he starts singing the story of Myrrha's incestuous passion: *dira canam; procul hinc, natae, procul este*

parentes! (*Met.* 10.400). This line is reminiscent of Ovid's similar exhortation in *Ars* 1.30–32: *uera canam. . . . este procul, uittae tenues, insigne pudoris, / quaeque tegis medios instita longa pedes*. Both Ovid and Orpheus were unable to control the members of their audience. Orpheus was punished because of his song and Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* was probably in part responsible for his relegation. Both Orpheus' and Ovid's poetry allegedly undermined marriage. For Orpheus as a surrogate for Ovid, see Johnson (note 10), 96–116; B. Pavlock, *Image of the Poet in Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Madison, WI 2009), 106–9.

51. Note that the Sibyl guides Aeneas to his underworld adventure in *Aeneid* 6. She is also a virgin, who turned down Apollo's advances (see *Met.* 14.129–51). The Sibyl's eternal virginity contrasts with Rushdie's sibylline bawd. For the metamorphosis of Orpheus' *katabasis* in Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, see Falconer (note 46).

52. It is a nice touch that the Curtain, the labyrinthine domain of carnal pleasures, resembles the incorporeal world of the dead. In the Curtain, men seek to satisfy their fantasies along with the passions of the flesh.

53. It is worth noting that Baal worships the goddess Al-Lat, "the mother-goddess, whom the Greeks called Lato . . . Al-Lat. *The goddess*. Even her name makes her Allah's opposite and equal" (*The Satanic Verses*, 102, Rushdie's emphasis). Lato, the Doric form of Leto, is the Greek goddess of motherhood and the mother of Apollo, the god of poetry and father of Orpheus.

54. General Khalid promised to slice Baal so thin "you'll be able to see right through each piece" (*The Satanic Verses*, 388). Cutting the poet to shreds is reminiscent of Orpheus, whose body was torn apart by the Thracian Maenads.

55. See Rushdie (note 40), 393–414.

56. See Kennedy (note 9), 331.