ABSTRACT

GENDER UNDER PRESSURE IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *SHAME* AND GITHA HARIHARAN'S *THE THOUSAND FACES OF NIGHT*

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Salman Rushdie’s novel *Shame* (1982) reflects the history of Pakistan, while Githa Hariharan in *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992) links her story to the mythological material of the Sanskrit tradition. Both novels consist of two intervening "tracks"; one containing the plot and the other the explanatory notes on the plot as well as on the historical and mythological undercurrent. These notes, often put in asides (especially in *Shame*), seldom help to unravel the text but rather complicate the understanding of it. They create a dislocation in time and space and blur the conceptualisation of myth and history.

My paper analyses the shift or displacement in the conceptualisation of history and myth and their implications for the concept of gender. I also argue that these implications entail some dramatic consequences for the concept of agency. With the help of a theoretical framework consisting of Franz Fanon and Lacanian psychoanalytical theory (e.g. Julia Kristeva) I finally aim at positioning the concept of agency in relation to gender.

I claim that these novels deal with the same problems of dislocation in time and space and their influence on the conceptualisation of gender and agency. In both novels the conceptualisation of gender and agency can be located in the juxtaposition between two elements, permeated with the tension created between the plot on the one hand, and the historical and mythological material on the other.