

*The Telling of Lies and
“the Sea of Stories”:
“Haroun,” “Pinocchio” and the
Postcolonial Artist Parable*

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SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990) and Carlo Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (1883)¹ are both children's stories for grownups, fantastic quest-romances set in similarly allegorical topographies of the imagination, and, as it happens, they are also artist parables—allegorical accounts of the dialectic between Art and Life. But neither work is escapist fantasy, divorced from social and political concerns. Rushdie's political sympathies are clear: “the poor lived in tumbledown shacks made of old cardboard boxes and plastic sheeting, and these shacks were glued together by despair” (18); one purpose of the characters in his frame narrative is to use the powers of storytelling, in a democratic, albeit corrupt, society, to ameliorate this situation. Collodi's tale is a mischievously subversive critique of the social and economic oppression of the poor by the rich, and of the gullible by the sneaky. Yet, in the end, he draws a moral which runs counter to Pinocchio's freely imaginative picaresque subversions of the status quo.² In postcolonial terms, Collodi lacks the political courage of his artistic convictions. For in co-opting Pinocchio into the virtues of submissive obedience (especially to parental authority), dutiful school attendance and assiduous study habits, in preparation for a life of hard work for little pay, he is inculcating virtues designed to maintain and enhance the hierarchical hegemony of the rich over the poor, in a kind of home-grown provincial colonialism. As Carole Durix, typically for postcolonial critics, puts it, such a story is “a tool for reinforcing colonial values . . . to prepare its readers for the stations they will occupy when adult” (i), making *Pinocchio* much the same sort of story for the children of newly united Italy in the

last century that Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901) or *The Jungle Books* (1894) were for the Boy Scouts who would grow up to be the servants of Britain's empire. So *Pinocchio* cannot help but be, one supposes, a pre-postcolonial children's story, employing the savage pedagogy of the School of Hard Knocks (like that of the Cat, who ate the Blackbird "to teach him a lesson" [161]), to make Pinocchio into what an adult would consider to be "a good little boy." By internalizing those standards within the Puppet, what is lost in the end is precisely the Puppet himself; perhaps the Cat has eaten this Blackbird as well.

The version far better known today than Collodi's, the Walt Disney animated film, *Pinocchio*, is clearly something worse than merely colonial; it's a *neo-colonial* children's story. The political implications of the Disneyfication of *Pinocchio* (Wunderlich 1992) fit admirably into Ariel Dorfman's argument, based on Donald Duck, about the deleterious effect of the Disney empire upon countries of the Third World. If Rushdie, on the other hand, can be taken to be an exemplary and deliberate post-colonial writer, does it then follow that *Haroun* is a postcolonial children's story? Not necessarily. Both *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* and *Pinocchio* are played out in episodes, selected for their teaching value, of a boy-child's growing up into socially acceptable maturity, although the virtues the two stories hope to inculcate are not quite the same. Rushdie's postcoloniality has not enabled him to write a children's book innocent of any ideological claim upon the young, although we are at liberty to find his list of virtues, and his protagonist's attitude towards them, more palatable than Pinocchio's occasional expressions of a "goody-goody" moral self-satisfaction. Freedom of speech and human ecological guardianship of earth and sea are two closely linked topics on which Haroun (Rushdie's eponymous boy-hero) can be almost as moralistic (125; 146) as Pinocchio on filial obedience. Because of the pollution of the Sea of Stories, "Goopy and Bagha [the Plentimaw Fish] were coughing and spluttering" (122): their speech difficulties signal an effective diminution of their Freedom of Speech.

In one respect Rushdie's tale is strikingly postcolonial: it subverts, or at least gives a little twist to, an eclectic amalgam

of colonial elements from "classical" Children's Literature;³ *Pinocchio* is my chief exemplar of the sort of text that Rushdie could draw upon.⁴

Intertextuality is imaged in topography in Rushdie's mantra-like numerology of "a thousand and one small islands" (87), echoing and resembling the thousand and one nights, standing, like them, synecdochally, for a thousand and one stories. "I'm going to need a little help with the geography" (79), says Haroun, as he starts his magical travels on the Story-Moon, Kahani. Its characters, objects, and geographical features, from "Alphabet Bay" to "the Sea of Stories," from Alph the Sacred River to Xanadu, constitute "made up" Homelands or, as Rushdie puts it elsewhere, "Imaginary" ones. They are "made up," in both senses, out of reifications of mental and moral circumstances or out of figures of speech: like the meteorological "harsh, hot wind" which is the "hot air" of the politician's speeches made literal (47); like "The Dull Lake," which yields a moral aesthetic; like the "Moody Land" as a projection of temperaments (48); like the "sadness factories" of the city in Alifbay which had forgotten its name (15).

Topographical imagery is, of course, merely a special case of such Rushdiean rhetorical strategies, familiar from *Midnight's Children* and elsewhere, for making abstractions of all kinds concrete. Numerous analogies offer themselves from *Pinocchio*, most prominently the reifying of proverbs, as in the "donkeyfication" of the errant schoolboys. Into a fairly "realistic" Tuscan landscape, inhabited to be sure by numerous species of talking animals, pop up such Bunyanesque allegorical places as Dodoland ("paese dei Barbagianni"), Funland ("paese dei balocchi" or Country of Toys), and Catchafool Town (citta . . . "Achiappacitrulli").

Rushdie's brief glossary to *Haroun* tells us that "Alifbay is an imaginary country," a metatextual reification via "the Hindustani word for 'alphabet'" (217), and indeed the imagined places are at first alphabetical (thus metatextual) and only then intertextual: the "Mountains of M," are, proleptically, the Mountains of the Moon (37). The actual eleventh-century anthology, still in existence, entitled *The Ocean of the Streams of Story*, mentioned on

page 51, has, by page 72, turned into "the Ocean of the Streams of Story," which is a principal setting for the fictional action.

Rushdie's eponymous "Sea of Stories" yields an artist-parable for the magic realist, for *Haroun's* polysemously metafictional allegory of intertextuality could indeed be read *in toto* as the text of a magic realism self-reflexively considering its own nature. Rushdie's panoramic descriptions of this "Sea of Stories" constitute a *mise en abyme* of his own narrative method:

[Haroun] looked into the water [of the Sea of Stories] and saw that it was made up of a thousand thousand thousand and one different currents, each one a different colour, weaving in and out of one another like a liquid tapestry . . . all the stories that had ever been told and many that were still in the process of being invented could be found here . . . so that unlike a library of books, the Ocean of the Streams of Story was much more than a storeroom of yarns. It was not dead but alive. . . . (72)

. . . the Plentimaw Fishes were . . . "hunger artists"—"Because when they are hungry they swallow stories through every mouth, and in their innards miracles occur; a little bit of one story joins on to an idea from another, and hey presto, when they spew the stories out they are not old tales but new ones . . . no story comes from nowhere; new stories are born from old—it is the new combinations that make them new." (85-86)

Rushdie, the poet-laureate of the aesthetic border-crossings and intertextual miscegenation so characteristic of the postcolonial, here makes artistic virtue of the political and biographical necessity of being what used to be called a "rootless cosmopolitan."

"The real world was full of magic, so magical worlds could easily be real" (50), says Haroun, in a compact definition of Magic Realism. Collodi's work, too, is prototypical Magic Realism, with the fantastic having to make its way in a realistically, even satirically, observed imperfect world: "[Collodi's] fantastic is never far removed from the familiar" (Perella 59). But the labours of the creative imagination are relegated to the implicit by Collodi, who, like a latter-day Plato, exploits those very charms of the fantastic which his ethical precepts force him to denounce, or at least diminish: all those worlds of pleasure and imaginative escape, for instance, which offer hedonistic temptations to the puppet on his way to his ethical goal—school. And schoolbooks

are rare and precious; all the more shocking when they are used as missiles in the schoolboy battle by the shore, and eventually nibbled by the fishes, who find them too dry for food.

As it is for Rushdie, art is largely performance for Collodi; he “speaks” throughout, as storyteller, to his implied auditors (“i miei piccoli lettori,” “my little readers”: “No, children, you are wrong” 82-83). Rashid the storyteller’s explicitly oral performance, the key framing activity of Rushdie’s book, makes “lots of different tales juggled together,” thinks his son Haroun, metaphorically (16), and conversely he thinks that Blabbermouth’s literal “juggling is [perhaps] a kind of storytelling, too” (109), reversing reification to interpret the concrete abstractly (109). Although, in clear historical allegory, a Rushdean terrorist can pervert performance (that is, art) into deception and destruction by juggling not with gold balls but with a “live bomb,” included, and thus concealed, among his more orthodox paraphernalia (182), for neither entertainer can the aesthetic be detached from the political.

Pinocchio’s own puppet-show, in the *commedia dell’arte* mode,⁵ and particularly his enforced and enslaved circus performance, are, in contrast to Rashid’s, seen largely as false and degrading. And our sympathies are inevitably with the puppets, in their revolt against their brutal puppet-master, as later with the circus-animals, in their painful servitude. Because “the telling of lies” is a form of storytelling, storytelling itself is seen as, at least in part, the telling of lies. Not only is the puppet metaphysically rewarded, by his metamorphosis into boyhood, for turning his back on “spontaneity, exuberance and fantasy” (Perella 57), but he is also socially rewarded with middle-class status, making him a role-model for his actual (middle-class) readers.

Pinocchio’s protagonist is, appropriately, a “fantastic” boy—the puppet who moves without strings—who, while inserted into a relatively “real” episodic, often politically and socially satiric, plot, moves towards becoming correspondingly “real” himself. The protagonist of the fantastic adventures in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is, conversely, the persona of a “real” boy (both fictionally and autobiographically), Rushdie’s dedicatee, his son Zafar, and the storyteller’s name, Rashid, is an explicit anagram for Rushdie himself.

That *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* constitutes a powerful allegory of the author's own historical situation is a point which can hardly have escaped the attention of any reader old enough to read the newspapers. Note that "history" (that is, that part of Rushdie's own biography that has now, all-too-tangibly, become "history") is presented quite unmistakably, yet obliquely, indeed almost covertly, in *Haroun*. This is a chiasmic reversal of the method of Rushdie's earlier novel, *Midnight's Children*, in which "History"—the history of India since independence—is front-and-centre, while it is the allegory of intertextuality—its genealogical appropriations and textual border-crossings—that is covert (see Merivale).

Both *Haroun* and *Pinocchio* are built up of eclectic intertextualities. Rushdie finds relevantly fantastic topoi in all the great children's-stories-for-grownups: in *Alice in Wonderland's* chessboard landscape, in *The Wizard of Oz* (a notable Rushdie favorite), *The Phantom Tollbooth*, *The Earthsea Trilogy*, and many others. But of course, like another eclectic meta-text published at about the same time, John Barth's *The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor* (1991), *Haroun* is most particularly indebted to the *Arabian Nights*: all its "vista[s] . . . are like . . . magic carpet[s]" (34; see Aji). *Haroun's* villain, Khattam-Shud, is like the genie in-and-out of the bottle (156), while *Haroun's* Hoopoe is like the living metal bird who provides magical transport in the *Arabian Nights*. Their houseboat, called *Arabian Nights Plus One* (1002? or [modestly] just "sequel?"), even includes an icon of the Whale That Swallowed Men (51), as if to acknowledge explicitly the climax of *Pinocchio's* story. The houseboat is a liminal place, that is, one not yet wholly imaginary. It is in the Valley of K—once known as a historical landscape, but now a bilingual pun turned into a compact commentary on the sorrows of History: what was the Earthly Paradise of *Midnight's Children* is now "a cloud from a dream or a nightmare . . . Kache-mer . . . Kosh-Mar" (that is, Kashmir; 38, 40).

If Collodi's topography is more this-world and matter-of-fact, it is nevertheless filled, surreally, with all the appropriate stage properties for its emblematic actions. And the talking animals of his *Beast Fable*, birds and sea-animals in particular, chick-

let, falcon, pigeon (useful for magic transport, like Butt the Hoopoe), woodpecker, parrot, the friendly Dolphin, a big Crab with a voice "like a trombone with a cold," the Tuna with his "cracked, harsh voice," and especially the Cat and the Fox recognizable from their verbal tics even in the heaviest disguises, all have their analogues in Rushdie. His frame characters can be identified in their dream-vision morphs by similar verbal tics, like the "butbutbut" verbal stutters of the Hoopoe, formerly Mr. Butt the bus-driver, who now speaks "without moving his beak" (82). "[Haroun] heard himself beginning to sound like the water genie" (57; he is speaking in the elegant variations of Iff's synonymous repetitions). Rushdie's *Floating Gardeners* ("high speed vegetation [in] something like the shape of a man" [82]), like all the rest of the strange anthropomorphic bestiary of his *Moon-World*, are creatures of the *Beast Fable* imaginatively wedded to the landscapes of romantic vision and its update, science fiction.

The creative imagination must express itself by storytelling, a process explicitly privileged, as well as allegorically enacted, in *Haroun*, by means of what we (but not the text) would call the "inspiration" provided by the "magic" Story Waters from the Streams of Story. A romantic-visionary artist parable finds expression in a romantic-visionary landscape: "where Alph the sacred river ran," as Coleridge put it, in the allegorical topography of his "Kubla Khan," cited by Rushdie in his own acrostic epigraph, "Zembla, Zenda, Xanadu":

. . . the capital of the Land of Gup was built upon an Archipelago of one thousand and one small islands just off the Mainland—waterways [and a Lagoon] thronged with craft . . . a gigantic formal garden came down in terraces. . . . In this Pleasure Garden were fountains and pleasure-domes and ancient spreading trees. (87-88)

And there are of course "ancestral voices" announcing preparations for war (89). The antithesis of this paradisaical landscape is again a Romantic one. The poisoning of the Ocean, in making the "coastal waters" cool, clammy, colourless, and death-dealing, has created a negative, because polluted, landscape, a Waste Land. "On those [perhaps Keatsian] twilight shores, no bird sang"; there are only "shadows" and "stillness . . . in this leafless

glade [where the shadow man fought] *against his own shadow*" (122-23).

When they first landed on this moon, invisible from earth, its surface seemed "to be entirely liquid." Like a youthful Ancient Mariner, Haroun saw "Water, water everywhere; nor any trace of land" (68). Now the questers go south, leaving behind the shoreline of "that dark and silent continent," into the still colder, stickier, less colorful "Southern Polar Ocean" (138), at the "edge of the Twilight Strip, very near the hemisphere of Perpetual Darkness" (140). However, when a forest, a "floating jungle" (141) full of monstrous hybrids of ancient creatures, stands up from the ocean, Rushdie's waterworld becomes more like one of J. G. Ballard's apocalyptic landscapes. So the intertextually romantic topography now becomes science-fictional—as if 1002 had flipped over into 2001. *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is indebted throughout to "sci-fi" quest romances, from Lucian's *The Marvellous Voyage* (a major source for *Pinocchio* as well) to the cosmic-visionary landscapes of *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*. Rushdie's "sci-fi" topography is lunar, or like Mercury's, although it is more Manichean than Mercurial. The hemisphere of Perpetual Darkness (Chup, the totalitarian enemy kingdom) is separated by the Twilight Strip (compare "Zone") from its virtuous opposite, Gup, the hemisphere of Eternal Daylight. Rushdie's word-play for describing this landscape is marked by verbal-visual inversions of darkness and light: "like a film negative that somebody forgot to print" (125); the blacks of their reversed eyes; the unreliable "dark sea-horses" (148).

Both *Haroun* and *Pinocchio* climax in archetypal Night-Sea journeys, negative Descents into an Under-Sea world, with *Pinocchio* drawn into the dark belly of the Shark (only Disney calls it a Whale; Collodi says "pesce-cane," that is, dog-fish or shark) and Haroun diving from Khattam-Shud's even darker factory Ship into the depths of the Polar Ocean. Haroun and his friends, captured, are drawn by the dark Web (not the supposedly beneficial World Wide Web now, only seven years later, ensnaring us all) towards Khattam-Shud (that is, "The End"), also known as the "Black Hole," who/ which is both the "heart of darkness" and the source of pollution. They find, of course,

that, in accordance with our own popular scientific mythologies, the Black Hole “eats light, eats it raw with his bare hands,” and therefore, in this book’s symbolic economy, he “eats words, too” (145). He pollutes the Sea of Story; worse, he threatens an apocalyptic Final End of Story, destroyed forever by the poison of his anti-stories. But apocalypse is counteracted by Haroun’s visionary experience (more Shelleyan or Nabokovian than Coleridgean here) of “a huge underwater fountain of shining white light” (167), the wondrous undersea Source or Well-spring of the Sea of Stories; the Grail, the goal of the quest. Haroun magically (and triumphantly) succeeds in Pulling the Plug (a neat example of the literalization of colloquialism which marks Rushdie’s comic language), the plug with which Khattam-Shud had intended to seal the Well-spring forever; thus Haroun restores the purity of the Streams of Story.

Yet such binary absolutes as Gup and Chup can only yield permanent stasis; the heroic solution must be dynamic, changing into dialectic the Manichean terms of the landscape. Haroun’s fairy-tale wish has a “sci-fi” effect: as the Moon starts to rotate, sunlight destroys the shadow world, undoes Ayatollan “black magic” (173), and breaks “the ropes . . . woven out of shadows” (174). When “the coastline of the Land of Chup” is “lit up by the evening sun for the first time” (176), it becomes part of the “real” (or dialogic) world again, one in which light and dark, silence and talk, can reciprocate and compromise, can share and debate, can give and take. But the cosmological dynamics which reverse apocalypse—“Look at the sky! The sun [is] rising!” (188)—which turn this philosophical scheme into cosmic topography and thence into story, are a scenario from a “sci-fi” version of quest-romance.⁶

Collodi’s compounding of bestiaries, animal fables, folk and fairy tales, and the downmarket *Commedia dell’arte* of the puppet shows, with echoes of the entire canon of Italian literature, the Book of Jonah, Lucian, *The Golden Ass*, and the artist-parables in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, among much else from another veritable “sea of stories,” yields a moral allegory for the use of children, of what it means to be, or rather to choose to become, human, couched as a Pygmalion-like artist-parable of the choice between Art and Life.

Both works are allegories with didactic purpose, in which, as Edward Blishen, reviewing *Haroun*, says, "the moral and the magic merge, as in the best children's literature." But they "merge" in different, even inverse, ratios in the two books. The marvellous puppet, Pinocchio, is in search of a work-and-virtue ethic, an adjustment to the hegemonic status quo, the attaining of which is to be rewarded by "real" boyhood. The value of "life" is thus asserted, and chosen, over the marvel of the artifice. The puppet without strings is immune to many of the ills that flesh is heir to, but his inability to grow up, to be a "real boy," is the flip side of his implied immortality, or at least demonstrated hardness, as a "thing made."⁷

The reification of the ethical judgment upon Pinocchio's "telling of lies" to avoid richly deserved punishment is, of course, the single feature of *Pinocchio* that all its readers and its even greater number of non-readers, those who have seen or heard about Disney's *Pinocchio*, remember. It is that dangerous, embarrassing, involuntary, phallic, lengthening of the puppet's wooden nose (211-13). In *Pinocchio* the "telling of lies" is a child's power of fantasy seen as a moral weakness, an escape from responsibility, rather than Haroun's privileging of the stories "that aren't even true" by coming to see *and believe in* not only the beauty but also the power, and the fundamental morality, of the uncensored storytelling imagination. Rushdie himself saves the pejorative term "lies" for the fraudulent promises and deceitful utterances of (neocolonialist) politicians trying to get elected, manipulating the gullibility of the electorate as the Fox and the Cat ("Liars, and cheats, and crooks," in Rushdie's terminology; 58) manipulate Pinocchio's.

Haroun, our contemporary, is in search of a liberty-and-free speech ethic, one privileging the untrammelled play of the imagination, in a world where "books [no longer] wear padlocks" (102). His quest will be rewarded by the return of both his father's creative gifts and the domestic happiness of his reunited family: the value of art is seen as coterminous with the value of life, and political virtue is essential to both.

These two artist parables can both be seen as didactically promoting the social virtues needed to "raise" the young into

fully social humanity—that is, adulthood—according to the ideologies underpinning each author's Weltanschauung. They differ in this respect from the magical allegories of a girl (or boy) not growing up in *Alice in Wonderland* (or *Peter Pan*). Indeed they resemble more closely Ursula Le Guin's allegory of a Boy Growing Up to become himself the Magician, that is, the artist. (This can be compared with Rushdie's earlier artist parable of the Delhi Magicians in *Midnight's Children*.) In her *Earthsea Trilogy*, illustrated with splendidly detailed maps of an archipelago-world of at least "one thousand and one small islands," the ethical-aesthetic maturing of Le Guin's young hero, through encounters, enacted as physical struggles, with his (own) Shadow, is very like what happens to both Pinocchio and Haroun (123-24). The latter, in his more explicitly meta-textual text, meets not only Shadow-Persons but Shadow-Tales as well: "each anti-story seeking out its victim" (160) to cancel it out and thus destroy it: a "sea of stories" polluted to death.

Pinocchio is, to be sure, a less explicit artist parable than *Haroun*. Collodi nowhere elaborates a metafictional allegory, but, rather, implies an Ovidian one: Geppetto is a Pygmalion whose Galatea comes to life in the form of the miraculous puppet.⁸ He is the artist of a more classical aesthetic, bringing out the "life" inherent (or trapped) in, and already crying out to be freed from, the "pezzo di legno" or "piece of wood" (82-83). Geppetto as master wood-carver is the Artist, "un artista di genio" (130), as Collodi only half-mockingly puts it. Indeed Geppetto is the Artist as God the Father, in the Michelangelo fashion, whose Adamic creation of the puppet constitutes the artifice as the Son—although, when he carves new feet for Pinocchio, he ironically realizes that Pinocchio will use them to run away from home, for, like a new Adam, he is "free to fall." Replacing the Beloved with the Son (both Adamic and Prodigal) constitutes a de-sexualization of Ovid (unsurprising for 1883), like Pinocchio's subsequent, equally de-sexualized, Apuleian (or, more accurately, Lucianic) metamorphosis into a donkey. Disney makes the Creating of Pinocchio even more Ovidian in one way: he emphasizes, indeed invents, Geppetto's "wishing on a star" that Pinocchio become a "real boy." Likewise, Pygmalion's statue of Galatea

was so beautiful that, falling in love with it, he implored the gods to make it live. And so it did. Disney's more sentimental *Pinocchio*, by the same token, however, de-emphasizes woodcarving, and with it, the Pygmalion-like possibilities for an artist parable of the life-already-in-the-wood.

Both narratives are propelled by reciprocated family love, of which the father-son bond is the strongest element, and plotted on the separation, the mutual seeking, and eventual reunion, of father and son. Both are Telemachies rather than Odysseys; they are tales in which the heroic boy-child accomplishes the rescue of his imprisoned artist-father, and, by the same token and *pari passu*, his own transition into grown-upness.

Pinocchio shouts, "Voglio salvare il mio babbo!" ("I want to save my father!" 266-67) as he bravely leaps into the sea. After much eventful delay, he is sucked into the belly of the very Shark where his father is held captive. He saves his father's bodily life, by carrying him on his back, Aeneas-like, out of that dank prison; but it is far more important that Pinocchio, by choosing to become brave, truthful, and unselfish, thus *deserving* to become fully human, "saves" Geppetto-the-artist by *validating* his Pygmalion-like artistic endeavour.

Pinocchio's cry is echoed in Haroun's bravery, goodness, and filial love: "*What's the use of stories that aren't even true.* I asked that question and it broke my father's heart. So it's up to me to put things right" (27). He saves his father (as well as himself) by validating Rashid's artistic endeavour, for Haroun finds in his experience of the world of Story, at first falsely divided into the Manichean binaries of light and dark, of "chatter" and "silence," a ringing answer to that rhetorical question—"what's the use of stories that aren't even true?"—which had destroyed, for the moment, both his father's marriage and his father's creative gifts.

"All my life I've heard about the wonderful Sea of Stories. . . . now that I've . . . actually seen with my own eyes how beautiful the Ocean is, with . . . its Floating Gardeners and Plentimaw Fishes . . . it turns out . . . the whole Ocean's going to be dead any minute if we don't do something . . . I don't like the idea that all the good stories in the world will go wrong for ever and ever, or just die . . . I only just started believing in the Ocean, but maybe it isn't too late for me to do my bit [to save it]." (137)

The fairy-tale magics of believing and wishing link the two books, for in crises it is the interventions of the Blue-Haired Fairy (note the "sky-blue whiskers" of Haroun's friend and ally, the Water-Genie), which save Collodi's Pinocchio. In much the same fairy-tale way, Haroun is saved by his three magic gizmos: Butt's brain-box, the Bite-a-Lite, and especially the bottle of Wishwater. They are magical devices which can only achieve their story-shaping potential in conjunction with Haroun's fairy-tale hero's combination of good will and cleverness (he is cleverer than Pinocchio). Haroun, by Willpower combined with Wishwater, moves the Story-Moon so that sunlight destroys the shadow-world of Khattam-Shud, the Ayatollan tyrant, whose case against stories is, fundamentally, political: "inside every single story . . . there lies a world, a story-world, that I cannot Rule at all" (161).

And this finds its real-world, frame-narrative parallel in Mr. Sengupta's once so devastating question, privileging—like Khattam-Shud, whose real-world avatar is this dry, weedy clerk—fact over story. "What's the use of stories that aren't even true?" he asks, to lure Soraya, Rashid's wife and Haroun's mother, away from her domestic hearth. The two interwoven themes, like the correspondingly transmuted characters, in the "personal" frame story—Rashid's loss of his gifts and of his wife—are paralleled in the "political" inner sequence by Khattam-Shud's poisoning of the entire Sea of Stories and the corollary abduction of the mock-fairy-tale Princess Batcheat.

Pinocchio, metamorphosed from puppet into living being, essentially re-born, "jumping out of bed . . . found a fine new suit of clothes prepared for him. . . . He went to look at himself in the mirror and [instead of] the usual image of the wooden marionette . . . he saw the lively intelligent image of a handsome boy . . . looking as happy and joyful as if it were the [Easter] holidays" (458-49); he sees the ridiculous puppet, his former self, "propped against a chair" (461) and goes into the next room to find his father, Geppetto, hard at work carving, an artist once again.

Haroun, likewise, goes to sleep back at the home to which his mother has returned, and wakes the next morning to find that the clocks, stopped and broken during all their adventures on Kahani, the Story-Moon, have started up again. And "there were

new clothes laid out at the foot of his bed. . . . it was his birthday. . . . Outside, in the living room, his mother had begun to sing" (211). Heroic feats accomplished, his father Rashid returns to real-world storytelling—and of course the very first story he tells is *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*.

Two fantastic artist-parables with almost opposite views of both the relationship between Art and Life and the "colonial" politics of hegemony, have arrived at the same happy ending; two boys have shown, by their courageous validation of the world of their fathers, that they are starting to grow up and deserve to take their places in that world. In that sense, although *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is the more radical of the two, neither is truly postcolonial; perhaps no "children's story," written by even the most imaginatively empathetic of grownups, ever can be. A synthesized—imagined—Happy Ending frames Haroun's Dream Vision, for Kahani, the Story-Moon, turns back into the Story-City: the names collapse into one (Kahani) as the City so sad that it had forgotten its name now remembers that its name is "Story."

NOTES

- 1 Both English and Italian quotations are from the Perella edition and translation.
- 2 See Jannet; Rosenthal; Wunderlich; and Segel for readings along these lines.
- 3 See Neil ten Kortenaar's forthcoming article on what he calls the "Postcolonial Epiphany" of *Midnight's Children*, for an insightful account of Rushdie reworking another kind of artifact designed for the political education of the colonial/imperial young—the well-known Victorian painting of "the young [Walter] Raleigh" listening to the tales of "the old, gnarled, web-mending sailor"—and adapting the "reading" of the painting to the circumstances of a postcolonial child, in a new place and time.
- 4 In these terms, of course, *Haroun* resembles many other quest-romances in addition to *Pinocchio*: Dieter Petzold, for instance, has recently examined Michael Ende's best-seller, *The Never-Ending Story* (1979, 1983), for its affinities with *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. *The Never-Ending Story* is a palimpsestic text in the manner of the German Romantics, with the Other World superimposed upon This World, and, under special and marvelous circumstances, accessible to its inhabitants. Although it, too, like *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, is a didactic boy's growing-up story and a self-begetting narrative—one that ends with the artist starting to tell the story that we have just read—it cannot, although contemporaneous and intertextual, be considered especially postcolonial.
- 5 "By the late nineteenth century, the puppet theatre was regarded as the last resting place of the commedia dell'arte," says Segel (40).
- 6 Like an inversion of Isaac Asimov's "Nightfall," or, to suggest the local-in-the-Cosmic once more, Arthur C. Clarke's "Nine Billion Names of God," in which

Apocalypse comes by way of a computer in Tibet. The static binaries are a planet-scape like that of Ursula Le Guin's allegory, *The Dispossessed*.

- ⁷ This theme is, curiously, dwelt upon by numerous contemporary science-fiction writers: Asimov's "Bicentennial Man," Le Guin's "Nine Lives," Roger Zelazny's "For a Breath I Tarry," as well as in the postmodern—but no longer by any standard Children's—Pinocchio's of Robert Coover and Jerome Charyn, of Paul Auster and J. M. Coetzee. With a kind of anthropocentric self-regard, these authors, like Collodi, postulate that marvelous beings will *choose*, out of a nostalgic admiration for us, the mortal limitations of the human condition.
- ⁸ Richard Powers, in his novel *Galatea 2:2* (1995), subverts the theme of the artifact who *wants* to be human. His computer, educated into the mental processes of a (female) human being, chooses to sink back into circuits and cyberspace as she approaches too closely to understanding the sorrows of human beings. Ovid, of course, does not name his statue, but, like Powers and most later commentators, I opt for the convenience of the time-honored name, Galatea.

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