EXPLORING HISTORICAL FICTION, IDENTITY, AND MEMORY IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN* (1981)

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Abstract
This paper explores the intersection of identity, history, and memory in Salman Rushdie's 1981 novel *Midnight's Children*. The paper explores how Rushdie created a central character that uses the complementary roles of history and memory to forge an identity that is at once personal and communal. In order to achieve this objective, the paper uses postmodern historiography as its theoretical framework to examine how Rushdie fuses the history of Indian independence with that of the central character, Saleem Sinai through the deployment of an ingenious narrative technique of parallelism. In this regard, we see how memory is used to narrate the stories of the life of Saleem in tandem with that of the emergence of an independent Indian nation. The two histories are simultaneously narrated based on fragmented recollections from memory. Consequently, it becomes difficult to separate the personal from the public, and fact from fiction in the narrative. In the end, the identity of Saleem Sinai is fused with that of the postcolonial Indian nation.
Keywords: Salman Rushdie, history, identity, memory, postmodern historiography

Introduction

> The historian will tell you what happened. The novelist will tell you what it felt like (E.L. Doctorow, qtd in "Talk to the Practitioner", *The Writer Magazine*, April 2023, An Interview with Kathleen Aleala, Pp 15-17).

Identity, history, and memory are important concepts in postcolonial literature. Most often, these concepts find expression in postcolonial fiction coming out of Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean where authors "respond to questions raised by…critical discourses about colonialism, imperialism, race… and Eurocentrism" (Uściński 40). Fiction writers from these once colonised regions employ their craft to explore and explain the travails of a people that are still recovering from the damages inflicted on them by colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism. Sometimes these writers are profoundly nostalgic about the past, especially the history and memory of their nations before and after colonisation by European powers. In effect, they become nostalgic by trying to re-live that past in their fictional and non-fictional writings. More often than not, they re-live this in/glorious past by fictionalising the fractious histories of their nations. Most often, in the course of doing this, they intermingle their personal history with that of the nation thereby blurring the *thin* line between fact and fiction. On another level, memory and history provide a ready-made tool for the postcolonial writers to both remember and re-inscribe the past in their literary discourse. As Edward W. Said, argues in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983), "History [...] issues from the mind, and what is mind but historical memory [...] capable of infinite articulation, modulation, [and] change" (115-116). It is noteworthy that most often the memory from which this chiasmic history is sourced is fragile, weak, selective, protean, as well as subjective. One of the postcolonial writers that try to demonstrate the fusion of personal and national histories to create an identity for the self through the medium of fiction is the Indian-born writer, Salman Rushdie.

A Brief bio-data of Salman Rushdie

Salman Rushdie was born on 19 June, 1947 in Bombay, India. He attended schools in both India and England. He graduated from King's College, Cambridge University with MA (hons) History in 1968 (Reynolds and Noakes 191). His first novel *Grimus* was published in 1975.*Midnight's Children*, published in 1981, thrust him forward to literary fame by winning the 1981 Booker Prize. Salman Rushdie is a prolific and controversial writer who has courted the wrath of the global Muslim community by satirising Islam in his in/famous novel,*The Satanic Verses*. Other of his fictional work includes *Shame* (1983), *Luka and the Fire of Life* (2010), *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty Eight Nights* (2015), and *The Golden House* (2017), *Victory City: A Novel* (2023), and *Knife: Meditations After an Attempted Murder* (2024). His memoir, *Joseph Anton: A Memoir* was published in 2012.

Postmodern Historiography as Theoretical Framework

This paper will use postmodern historiography as its theoretical framework because it allows researchers leeway to challenge traditional (read—'professional') historical narratives by questioning the objectivity and sanctity of such accounts as well as exploring alternative ways of representing the past. It also favours the blurring of the line between fact and fiction in narratives thereby providing the means of deconstructing the rigid genre compartmentalisation in the arts and humanities.

Postmodern historiography is an intellectual movement deeply rooted in postmodern principles. In this paper, postmodernism refers to methods for examining social, political, economic, and historical phenomena. The corollary is that history, historical structures and knowledge occupy a very important place in postmodern thought. Postmodernism among other things reject genre distinctions (say between 'fiction' and 'non-fiction' as in 'literature' and 'history') thereby favouring parody, bricolage, pastiche, irony, and playfulness in arts and literature. It instead celebrates ambiguity, discontinuity, and fragmentation in narrative structures like the novel and historiography (a lá Hayden White). In addition, it thoroughly rejects universalism by interrogating and rejecting master narratives. It rather favours 'mini-narratives' that are always contingent, provisional, temporary and situational, thereby empowering marginalised voices in discourses of power like History and Literature (Klages 169). In short, postmodernism disputed the truth claims of order, stability, progress and universality that form the bedrock of modernism.

Postmodern historiography on the other hand is an approach to studying and writing history that emerged in the latter half of the 20th century as part of the larger postmodern intellectual movement. It represents a major shift from traditional historiography and interrogates many of its assumptions. For example, it questions traditional historiography's belief in Grand Narratives or 'Master-narratives'. In this regard, it thoroughly rejects overarching, universal and totalising explanations of historical processes. It therefore questions the idea that history follows a single, comprehensible path of progress or development. It equally stressed that all accounts of history are inherently subjective, influenced by the historian's own biases, cultural context, and ideological perspectives akin to fictional narratives.

More importantly, postmodern historiography advocates for including diverse voices and perspectives particularly those that have been marginalised or ignored in traditional accounts such as those of the various subaltern groups in especially multi-ethnic, multi-racial, and multi-religious societies. In short, postmodern historiography favours and encourages the deconstruction of historical narrative with the aim of uncovering its hidden assumptions, power structures, and prejudices. Moreover, postmodern historiography encourages relativism by suggesting that there is no single, objective historical truth, but rather multiple valid interpretations. It therefore believes that historical facts can be found in works of literature presented in form of fiction, and that history will be better comprehended by examining it as a narrative structure. Even more, postmodern historiography often views historical writing as a form of literary activity (on this see Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe, 1973*).

Consequently, postmodern historiography affords

fiction writers the liberty to blur the lines between history and fiction thereby challenging official narratives by tweaking historical facts to deconstruct accepted version of a particular historical narrative. It also encourages giving voices to micro-histories. This is the way in which Salman Rushdie tries to challenge, question, deconstruct, and undermine the 'official' history of India from the beginning of British colonialism to its eventual decline in 1947 in *Midnight's Children*,(1981).

Key voices associated with postmodern historiography include Hayden White (*Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, *1973*) who explored the narrative structures in historical writing, Michel Foucault (*The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, 1970) who examined the relationship between knowledge and power, and Jean-Francois Lyotard (*The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, *1979*) who critiqued Grand Narratives.

History in *Midnight's Children*

Jerome De Groot (2016) postulates that, "Historical novels participate in a semi-serious game of authenticity and research" by using "tropes of realism" to weave fictional narratives (14). He goes on to suggest that "The historical novel" most often "demonstrate the sublimity of history" in that "it subverts the legitimacy of mainstream ways of thinking about the past" (19). In short, history has more often than not provided a huge corpus of data that novelists may use as source to fictionally write about their experiences. This is the manner in which Salman Rushdie freely draws from actual historical events to stitch his narrative by creating characters that ingeniously problematises "the history-fiction divide"(Lipski and Maciulewicz 3) in his 1981 novel, *Midnight's Children*, a magnum opus that spans 647 pages.

To say that public and private history features prominently in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is an obvious understatement. History in the form of recalling and retelling of the past dominates the tapestry of the text. For instance, in the opening page of the text Saleem Sinai, the protagonist of the novel begins his story with this historical tone:

> I was born in the city of Bombay [...].Once upon –a time. No, that won't do,there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's NursingHome on August 15th 1947[...].On the stroke of Midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came [...] at the precise instant of India'sarrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world. (*Midnight Children*3)

This passage illustrates the merging of memory, identity, and history. In short, two strands of history can be discerned as we are told about the birth of the protagonist which is organically linked with that of India's independence. Interestingly, the two histories here exist in a condition of mutual reinforcement. Furthermore, the coincidence of Saleem's birth at the precise moment of the 'birth' of the new Indian nation makes him to, "becomes heavily embroiled in Fate—at the best of times a dangerous sort of involvement" (*Midnight Children*3). Rushdie has echoed similar sentiment in an interview he granted Jonathan Noakes on 8th July, 2002 in London. Commenting on the relationship between the birth of Saleem and that of the Indian nation in *Midnight's Children* Rushdie says:

> That's why I describe him as being 'handcuffed to the history'and why I thought that in some way he is double twinned. Onthe one hand he had this alter ego with whom he was exchangedat birth—and that's a kind of twinning—and another thing is thecountry itself is like a twin in that they are growing up together,and it became necessary to tell their story in that very closely connected way. (15)

It therefore follows that the life of citizen Saleem becomes enmeshed with the history of the Indian nation. Consequently, its travails become his and vice versa. Thus, Saleem Sinai rides on the crest of the history of India as it emerged from colonialism as both an acute observer as well as an involved insider. For instance, he informs us about important historical events like the 'Hartal' strike of April 6th, 1949, and also the 'Rowlatt Act' strike of April 13th, 1949. These are strikes, organised by the Indian nationalists led by Mahatma Gandhi,

"To mourn in peace, the continuing presence of the British [in India]" (*Midnight's Children*37).

It is noteworthy that both strikes were true historical events that had taken place in the life of the Indian nation. This interweaving of fiction and history is one of the striking things about *Midnight's Children*. This is the sense in which Uma Parameswaran sees Saleem's narrative as a kind of "fission-fusion" (5) process of national and personal history. An instance of this "fission-fusion" process can be seen in the postmodernist way Saleem's narration of his life and the history that surrounds it move from one time frame to another, back and forth, as if his mind is caught in a web of confusion and uncertainties. We see this in how the trajectory of his narrative oscillates, in many places, from a narrow perspective of personal event to a larger national historical event in one fell swoop. For example, moving from this plane of narrative contraction and expansion like a "perplexing world full of the 'storm tossed' confusion of conflicting ideas" (Sardar 118), he narrates a story that spans a period of sixty-three years (*Midnight's Children* 17)to his barely literate lover, Padma by situating specific historical events in specific time frames, citing exact dates. An example of this can be seen where he narrates how the death of his grandparents in 1918 coincides with the end of the First World War:

> In 1918, Doctor Aziz's father [...] died in his sleep; and at once his mother, [...] who now saw her husband's death as a merciful release for her from alife filled with responsibilities, took to her own deathbed and followedher man before the end of his own forty-day mourning period. By the timethe Indian regiments returned at the end of the war, Doctor Aziz was anorphan, and a free man [...]. (*Midnight'sChildren 30*)

Elsewhere in the text, we are cynically told that on the fateful night Saleem and the Indian nation are born they are accompanied by other dreadful siblings. Saleem lamentably narrates that "the offspring of Independence were not all human" as they include, "Violence, corruption, poverty, generals, chaos, greed and pepperpots [...] (405)". And with this, the stage is set for the confusion and crises that eventually erupted in both India and Pakistan immediately after independence in 1947. It is my contention that the narrative in this monumental text is principally a *bildungsroman* of its central character, Saleem Sinai as well as that of his *twin at birth*, the Indian nation.

The original son of the Englishman William Methwold, Saleem is switched at birth by nurse "Miss Mary Pereira",(157) and exchanged with an Asian baby at "Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947" (*Midnight's Children* 3). Saleem has, in a meditative rumination, declares that, "Methwold's hair, parted in the middle, has a lot to do with my beginnings. It was one of those hairlines along which history and sexuality moved" (125). Through this part of his life, "the backdrop of colonial history" (Sardar 119) is foregrounded. Methwold, a member of the British Imperial elites in India represents the colonisers that came to conquer and pillage India which, in this case is symbolised by his Indian wife. Selling off his estate (which symbolises the Indian nation) to Saleem's assumed 'parents' immediately after independence, Methwold leaves a legacy in the lives of both the estate as well as its inhabitants. Before he signs over the title deeds of the estate, Methwold in a fit of colonial-power-hangover insists on the insertion of a caveat that left intact the colonial ritual of the daily "cocktail hour" (*Midnight's Children* 126) started by him. This incident is a symbolic representation of the neo-colonial status of India. This caveat symbolically reinforces the suspicion that India might have achieved political independence but the mark of inherited colonial culture will remain entrenched in the day to day running of the neo colonial state. As a postcolonial novel, *Midnight's Children* is fully engaged in a "dialogue with history" (Dash 199) and memory. History is indeed very important to a postcolonial writer like Rushdie. Moreover, a familiar trope and a resonant symbol of postcolonial writings in general and literature in particular is the copious use of historical intertexts. But the history presented in this novel is, following the postmodern style, fragmented and non-linear. Its depiction is also not chronological. Michael Dash (1995) captures it more eloquently when he posits that:

> One feature of Third world Writers which distinguishes them as a

> distinct literary fraternity is the fundamental dialogue with history in which they are involved[...].They adhered to the view of history as fateful coincidence and tragic accident, and saw their function as artist in terms of their attitude to the past, that is either in terms of a committed protest against the past which would give birth to a new humanism, or were so overwhelmed by the 'fact' or privation or dispossession that they withdrew to a position of cynicism with regard to their peoples. (199)

There is no doubt that history in *Midnight's Children* is treated as "fateful coincidence and tragic accident" as the narrative reveals one disaster after another in the world of the text. There is an abundance of tears and blood in the structure of this narrative. As Joseph D'Costa, a character in the novel observes, the 1947 independence "is for the rich only; the poor are being made to kill each other like flies. In Punjab, in Bengal. Riots riots, poor against poor" (139).Weare equally shown the brazen display of brutality by the British Imperial agents in the 'Rowlatt Act' riot in Amritsar in 1919. Several Indians have lost their lives in this riot as a result of gun-fire from the British troops. In a detailed presentation of what transpires, Saleem graphically reports:

> Aziz penetrates the heart of the crowd, as Brigadier R.E. Dyer arrives at the entrance to the alleyway, followed by fifty crack troops. He is the Martial Law Commander of Amritsar—an important man, after all [...].

In the midst of the confusion that follows as a result of a clash reminiscence of the proverbial David and Goliath story:

> Brigadier Dyer's fifty men put down their machine guns and go away. They have fired a total of one thousand six hundred and fifty rounds into the unarmed crowd. Of these, one thousand five hundred and sixteen have found their mark, killing some person. (*Midnight's Children* 41-42)

In the above quoted passage we can see a succinct display of historical facts as death figures (1,516 people), names of specific people (Brigadier Dyer) and locations (Amritsar)as well as statistical record of ammunitions fired (1,650 rounds)are meticulously documented. In addition, the number of casualties is also enumerated. This is a good example of the incorporation of historical data in literary texts that is the hallmark of historical novels. It is also an example of what Ivan Joblanka (cited in LaCapra 110) has called the "Traumatising reliving of the past" that is mostly found in historical narratives.

Similarly, we see a repeat of this style of historical narration in the story of the partition of India into the two nations of India and Pakistan in 1947, exactly "seventy days to go to the transfer of power" (120). Here too we can observe the merging of personal history with that of the nation:

> On June 4th, my ill-matched parents left for Bombay by frontier mail [...].On the same day, Earl Mountbatten of Burma held a press conference atwhich he announced the partition of India, and hung his countdown calendaron the wall [...]. (*Midnight's Children* 120).

As mentioned earlier, we can observe here how personal history (the "ill-matched parents leaving for Bombay") is closely tied to public history (the partition). This narrative pattern is widely observed throughout the text. There is hardly any national event that happens without an associated counterpart in the private domains of one of the characters. For example, even 'elections' and 'development' plans that are in the domain of public sphere eventually come to assume relevance in the life of some of the characters. A good illustration here is where the Indian public history transmutes into the life history of Saleem Sinai. In other words, the life of Saleem Sinai allegorically becomes an extension as well as a reflection of the history of the Indian nation. In this respect, Saleem lamentably declares:

> Let me sum up: at a crucial point in the history of our child-nation, at a time when five year plans were being drawn up and elections were

> approaching and language marchers were fighting over Bombay, a nine-year-old boy named Saleem Sinai acquired a miraculous gift. Despite many vital uses to which his abilities could have been put by his impoverished, under-developed country, he chose to conceal his talents, frittering them away on inconsequential voyeurism and petty cheating. (237-238)

From the above cited lines, it can be argued that the stories we tell can hardly be separated from the life we live and as Indira Karamcheti (1986) has noted, "We are the stories told about us" (82) as well as by us. This can be seen in *Midnight's Children*, where Saleem gradually reveals a personal identity through his national narrative. As a "midnight child", his birth represents the independence of not only India but Pakistan as well. He is an embodiment of both nations by virtue of the circumstances of his birth.It is important to clarify that before the partition, Saleem was a bonafide Indian citizen, however as a consequence of the partition, he "was flung across the Partition-created frontier into Pakistan" as a result of border adjustments (*Midnight's Children* 393).Even so, he essentially as a consequence of birth becomes a "vehicle of Indian nationality because of this miraculous conjunction of biological and political nativity" (Kane 95). Born at the threshold of the splitting of India, "Saleem will be in himself the 'conflict' that all good stories require" (Winner 157). His birth and family background has positioned him as an illustration of "the national body as fragmented or ill" (Kane 95). This fragmentation and eventual catastrophe can be observed in the riots, violence, and killings that trail the partition of the new nation.

As mentioned previously, the tapestry of *Midnight's Children* is riddled with this kind of monstrous comparison between the life of an individual with that of an entire nation. Seen in another perspective, it can be argued that Saleem represents India itself. Consequently, as the narrative progresses, it can be observed that his experiences, triumphs and struggles mirror those of the Indian nation. The nation transmutes not only as his alter ego but his "twin-in-birth" joined to him "at the hip so that what happened to either of" them "happened to" them "both" (*Midnight's Children* 538). Even more, the other "one thousand and one children born in the first hour of India's independence" on "August 15th,1947" (*Midnight's Children* 271) that symbolises the diversity of the new Indian nation "were also the children of *the time*; fathered […] by history" (italics original, *Midnight's Children* 159). This is the nation that Saleem playfully describes as "[…] the new myth—a collective fiction in which everything was possible, a fable rivalled only by the two other mighty fantasies: money and God" (*Midnight's Children* 150). From what has been seen so far, we can argue that the re-writing of history is the raison d'êtres well as the leitmotif that guides the narrative in *Midnight's Children*. Hence, it is fairly easy to observe that history is the thread that stitched together events and characters in this monumental narrative of identity and memory. However, the history narrated in this text is a heap of confusion; a mixture of fact and fiction; a mirror reflection of the events that engulfs the Indian nation soon after independence.

Memory in *Midnight's Children*

It can be argued that Rushdie's view of history is that of act of telling that for most part depends on memory irrespective of the veracity of that memory; after all every historiography is subjective (written/told from a certain perspective) in addition to being a selection and a mixture of fact and fiction.

Acknowledging the fragility of memory in the historical reconstruction of the past, Saleem asserted that the story he tells in the text is not beyond questioning because at several plot-points in the story he "[…] fell victim to the temptation of every autobiographer, to the illusion that since the past exists only in *one's memories* and the words which strive vainly to encapsulate them, *it is possible to create past events by simply saying they occurred*" (added emphasis, *Midnight's Children* 619). This statement therefore foregrounds the *wilful falsification* of historical data that litters this novel.

On this view, it is important to remember that there are instances in the text where dates or events are

deliberately falsified in order to demonstrate the fragility of memory in historical narratives. One important observation is that Saleem has insisted that the 'truth-value' of his narrative is not sacrosanct because it is simply his own 'truth', no more, no less. Consequently, in the fragments recalled and presented from his fragile memory, Saleem repeatedly commits historical inconsistencies that he freely acknowledges. Thus, as his story progresses, we realise that there are instances where he *deliberately* confuses important dates and events. For instance, at one juncture of the story, he refuses to get the date of the death of an important figure in Indian history like Mahatma Gandhi correctly:

> Re-reading my work, I have discovered an error in chronology. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi occurs, in these pages, on the wrong date. But I cannot say, now, what the actual sequence of events might have been; in my India, Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time. (*Midnight's Children* 230)

The above passage is a testimony to Saleem's obtruse distortion of historical facts. Although he acknowledges such mistakes, he none the less insists on keeping his version of this 'history' by refusing to comply with the so called 'historical' facts. By acting in this manner, Saleem is insisting in a postmodern historiographical sense, that *his* version of *this* history is as good as any other documented version. Thus, within the context of this narrative, his own version of truth means more to him than what had actually been imputed to have happened. Elsewhere in the text, he defends his story's accuracy in spite of its glaring inconsistencies to Padma by explaining that:

> Memory's truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events; and no sane human being ever trusts someone else's version more than his own. (*Midnight's Children* 292)

The narrative in *Midnight's Children* is a chiasmatic entanglement between Saleem's life, the nation and fragments of the past. Indeed, Winner (1997) has aptly noted that, "Saleem's story and his selfhood are one, and both are his own at the same time that they are his partitioned country's" (156).

Identity

It is noteworthy that Saleem embodies both India and Pakistan and as such he tries to reconcile the values of the two nations albeit with very little success. One thing that is clear from the narrative in *Midnight's Children* is that the identity Saleem Sinai creates for himself is political in nature. This identity is symptomatic of the problems of people living in societies emerging from colonialism. It is my contention that this strategy of identity construction is a deliberate survival mechanism for Saleem in the chaotic social environment he finds himself. Indeed, Saleem occupies a liminal space between India and Pakistan. While he pledges his loyalty to India, the partition unfortunately pushes him across the frontier into Pakistan. It is this situation that eventually creates an uncertain identity for him. In short, Saleem embodies a dual identity as an Indian- Kashmiri, and Pakistani. For, while he is Pakistani through the fiat of border creation, he nonetheless 'acts and displays' through his body language and rhetoric, a desire to be a citizen of India. He cleverly bifurcates his allegiance to the two nascent nations by 'staging' in the true Butlerian sense, a dual identity whenever needed.

The behaviour of Saleem is in agreement with the observation of Bayart 1996 (cited in Bouché and Alou 126) who acknowledged the artificiality of identity by describing it as "a cultural, political or ideological construct." In the same manner, some scholars such as Stuart Hall and Judith Butler have viewed identity as a fictional construct—a performance that can be staged as the situation demands.

In short, it can be argued that Saleem's identity is symbolic because it is manifested in representations, knowledge, memories and projects concerning the self in the social world of his existence. Consequently, it is constructed in and by the various discourses and interpretations that intersect at different levels in the world of the text. This kind of identity is palpably ambiguous

as well as complex. The complexity of Saleem's identity stems from its hyphenated nature. In this respect, he problematically becomes a locus of various identities that sometimes intersect, comingle, separate, coalesce, and contradict one another. Thus, he is variously (re)presented in the narrative as Indian, Pakistani, and Kashmiri. These are the identities made available for Saleem to choose from depending on the circumstances he finds himself in. He thus periodically experiences a sort of post-imperial identity crisis in the narrative.

This taking-up of preferred identity by a person depending on situation has been described by Bronwyn and Rom Harré (1990; cited in Stephanie Taylor 2010) as "positioning". They explain positioning as the identities conferred and taken up by people in different situations (14). In fact, this is the sense in which Michael Bamberg (2010) defines identity as a label "attributed to the attempt to differentiate and integrate a sense of self along different social and personal dimensions" (4). Echoing a similar sentiment, Jenkins (2004) understands identity as a process of "'being' or becoming" (5).

In the same vein, Brubaker and Cooper (2008; cited in Jenkins 10) have equally noted how identity is a product of discourse about the "fragmented quality of the contemporary experience of an unstable 'self' […] contingently 'activated' in differing contexts." In this light we, then, come to see identity as a social location where individuals are defined and in turn define themselves as subjects by way of discourse. We see this at play in *Midnight's Children*. The manner in which his identity is bifurcated is duly reflected in the partition of the nation soon after independence, into India and Pakistan instead of having one united, indivisible nation. In addition, unity was to become a mirage for India itself as language marchers struggle to have the country further balkanised along linguistic lines. There is no doubt that these partitions will eventually result into the creation of new disharmonious cultural identities. In the same way, history in this text is a mosaic of real and fictional events, and the reader is faced with the task of unravelling this pastiche. In fact, the meaning of history for Rushdie is captured in the words of his protagonist Saleem Sinai as "the continuing struggle of oneself-against-the crowd" (*Midnight's Children* 392).

By contrast, Saleem's son, Aadam Sinai did not experience the same level of identity crisis in the narrative because he is unmistakably an Indian citizen by virtue of his birth. Aadam is born in Old Delhi, India during the time of the leadership of Indira Gandhi as the Prime Minister. However, he too, like his father is born at the "precise instant of India's arrival at the Emergency" and "he was mysteriously handcuffed to history, his destinies indissolubly chained to those of his country" (586). It thus seems there is no respite for the Sinais because of their entanglement with their nations' histories.

Conclusion

The story in *Midnight's Children* is tailored to reflect the postcolonial project of writing history from below. This process empowers the subalterns to tell their history in their voice. It is a gradual approach to a revisionist historiography. In describing this process of historical narration, Saleem elegantly and aptly quips that, "What had been (at the beginning) no bigger than a full stop had expanded into a comma, a word, a sentence, a paragraph, a chapter; now it was bursting into more complex developments, becoming, one might say, a book"(133). Indeed, as a demonstration of this process of historical narration, we have seen how the story of the birth of Saleem Sinai is ingeniously connected with political events in both India and Pakistan. In this way we also witnessed the almost seamless merging of personal and public history in *Midnight's Children*.

It is pertinent to note that most often people search for, and reveal their identities in stories and tales. In other words, the search for identity at the level of the individual is always articulated in narratives. Consequently, identity formation is constructed through the various discourses that intersect to define the individual. Hence identity formation becomes a product of discourses that are constructed in language through the use of memory. Salman Rushdie has indeed elegantly demonstrated this in *Midnight's Children*.

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