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Magical Realism and Historiography

in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of the following discussion is to study the ways in which magical realism and historiography are interrelated. That is, the aim is, firstly, to observe the realistic grounding of magical realism and to see in what ways magical realism has a strong political tendency. Secondly, the goal is to see how magical realism is used to rewrite reality and history, and to discern how this kind of rewriting provides postcolonial authors with a voice of their own and the possibility to create their own kinds of alternative realities. Furthermore, after such general observations, the aim is to see how all of these aspects manifest in Salman Rushdie's award-winning 1981 novel *Midnight's Children*.

Therefore, it is first necessary to provide a theoretical background of magical realism. That is, the origins of the term will be traced all the way to its very beginnings, in order to then provide a thorough definition of the term, with a special emphasis on Wendy B. Faris' fourteen characteristics of magical realism. Furthermore, magical realism will be placed within the context of the theory of the fantastic. That is, it will be observed in what way it fits (or does not fit) the categories conceived by Tzvetan Todorov, Rosemary Jackson, and Amaryll Beatrice Chanady. Moreover, magical realism will be studied within the context of historiographic metafiction. In other words, it will be studied in what way magical realist works fit the categories of Patricia Waugh's *metafiction* and Linda Hutcheon's *historiographic metafiction*s – i.e., in what ways they reveal themselves as works of fiction, and in this sense highlight the fictionalized nature of reality and history. Lastly, magical realism will be placed within the context of postcolonialism. Bearing in mind that magical realism most commonly flourishes in postcolonial societies, it will be observed in what way it celebrates Homi K. Bhabha's concept of *hybridity* as a sign of progress, as well as how it questions and subverts the colonial order and the Western literary canon.

With all this in mind, the analysis of *Midnight's Children* will be provided. Since Rushdie's novel deals with one of the most crucial moments in Indian history, the discussion will provide an observation of how Rushdie uses magical realism to provide the reader with his own envisioning of Indian history. In order to do that, the characteristics of magical realism will firstly be traced within the novel. Then the claim that *Midnight's Children* pertains to historiographic metafiction will be analysed by a detailed study of literary and historical intertexts present in the novel, as well as how they are used to lay bare the fictionalised nature of reality, history, and historiography.

Lastly, the emphasis will be placed on the postcolonial aspect of the novel. Namely, bearing in mind Rushdie's position of a hybrid, migrant writer – a product of postcolonial hybridity – his advocacy of postcolonial ideas will be studied in more detail. Hence, the emphasis will be placed on Rushdie's use of the English language. Moreover, Rushdie will be observed within the context of Rachel Trousdale *transnational literature* and Søren Frank's *migration literature*, to see all the ways in which he celebrates hybridity, as well as how he redefines the notion of nation, and creates an alternative world as a new realm of possibilities for his fellow hybrids and migrants.

## 2. Theory of Magical Realism

The purpose of this chapter is to observe the theoretical background of magical realism. The aim is to prove that magical realism not only has a strong basis in the real, extra-textual world, but that it is also a highly political mode which attempts to rewrite history and reality in order to create a new world view, as well as a new world order, all of which will be necessary to take into consideration in the analysis of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*.

### 2.1. The Origin of the Term

The majority of magical realist critics, such as Stephen Slemon, Theo L. D'Haen, Luis Leal, Teya Rosenberg, and Maggie Ann Bowers, trace the origins of the concept of magical realism all the way back to 1925 (Slemon 407; D'Haen 191; Leal 120; Rosenberg 15; Bowers 8). It was in 1925 that German critic Franz Roh coined the term *Magischer Realismus* in order to describe a manner of the post-expressionist painting of the Weimar Republic (Bowers 2). These paintings are marked by strange paradoxical juxtapositions of objects which are depicted realistically, but which also give off a sense of unreality and mystery (D'Haen 191). Hence, Bowers translates Roh's term as magic realism, claiming that magic realism is "related to art forms reaching for a new clarity of reality" (Bowers 14). According to Bowers, Roh's findings had been translated into Spanish and published in a Spanish journal *Revista de Occidente*, which later on circulated among the Latin American writers, such as Miguel Ángel Asturias and Jorge Luis Borges (12). The immense influence of Roh's work on Latin American writers put into motion a new literary movement – that of marvellous realism.

However, contrary to the critics mentioned above, Angel Flores marks the year 1935 and the publication of Borges' collection *A Universal History of Infamy* as the point of departure of the

magical realist movement (113). Flores neglects Roh's magic realism in its entirety and focuses solely on the literary beginnings of the movement, claiming that Borges was the first of many magical realists to follow. However, although Bowers disagrees with the idea of Borges being the first magical realist, she recognizes that the publication of Borges' work paved the way for a new trend in Latin American literature – *lo real maravilloso* or marvellous realism (2). Marvellous realism is characterized by “an expression of mixture of realist and magical views of life in the context of the differing cultures of Latin America” (Bowers 2). From this point of view, the “marvellous” is perceived as an ontological necessity of the Latin American population's world view (Slemon 407).

The term *lo real maravilloso americano* was introduced in 1949 in the preface of Alejo Carpentier's novel *The Kingdom of This World* (Carpentier 76). He claims that marvellous realism is inherent to Latin America, since the real

begins to be unmistakably marvellous when it arises from an unexpected alteration of reality (the miracle), from a privileged revelation of reality, an unaccustomed insight that is singularly favoured by the unexpected richness of reality or an amplification of the scale and categories of reality, perceived with particular intensity by virtue of an exaltation of the spirit that leads it to a kind of extreme state [*estado límite*] (Carpentier 86).

In other words, the logic of reality is not completely attacked or subverted. On the contrary, the categories of reality are only slightly altered, and in this way broadened, enriched, and painted with far more colour. Reality is observed through the intense prism of the Latin American world view. Such a world view is in itself a mixture of the Western logic and rationalism, as well as the indigenous viewpoint, soaked in magic and mystery. Due to this distinct clash of cultures and experiences, Latin America creates “an extraordinary atmosphere, alternative attitude and differing appreciation of reality” (Bowers 13). Such a different view of reality is “the heritage of all of America” (Carpentier 87). In Carpentier's opinion, the entire history of Latin America is only “a chronicle of the marvellous real” (Carpentier 88). Not only does *lo real maravilloso* embody the way Latin America perceives reality, but it also manifests the way Latin America thinks and writes about its history.

In this regard, Carpentier claims that “the phenomenon of the marvellous presupposes faith” (86). In other words, he finds that the marvellous realist author has to truly believe in magic, so as

to be able to write about it. In this sense, the author is enabled to reach the *extreme state (estado límite)* “that allows him to intuit the imperceptible subtleties of the external world” (Leal 123). By stressing the importance of faith for marvellous realism, Carpentier accentuates a difference between *lo real maravilloso americano* from European surrealism. In his opinion, European surrealism is “invoked in disbelief” (Carpentier 86). That is, surrealist writers are writing about mystery, albeit that mystery is not a part of their own viewpoint or inner belief. The marvellous is, in the case of surrealism, a manifestation of otherness, of something foreign and distinct from their own reality. Consequently, Carpentier’s conceptualization of marvellous realism is thoroughly political, since it clearly divides the Western (or European) and the Latin American (or postcolonial) perspective of the mysterious. Nevertheless, by claiming that the marvellous is inherent to Latin American consciousness, and that the marvellous realist has to truly believe in this kind of magic, Carpentier neglects the fact that the majority of marvellous realists were, in fact, the hybrid products of postcolonial societies. For example, although brought up in Cuba, Carpentier himself was part French and part Russian. Moreover, he and his other modernist contemporaries would often spend a certain amount of time in Europe, especially Paris, and were under great influence of European surrealism. Therefore, the phenomenon of marvellous realism does presuppose the abandonment of disbelief on the side of the reader and the narrator, when confronted with a magical occurrence, but it does not imply the lack of disbelief on the side of the author. By incorporating elements of the marvellous, the marvellous realist does expand the understanding of reality. However, s/he need not share these beliefs. The marvellous elements may be inculcated in the Latin American consciousness, but they have also been subverted by Western influences and its logic.

The term magical realism, as a term which defines a new literary mode as well as a new literary movement, first appeared in Flores’ 1955 essay “Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction” (Bowers 14). The publication of Flores’ essay triggered another wave of magical realist literature which developed into a Latin American literary “boom” of the 1960s and the 1970s (Bowers 16). What all of the “boom” authors have in common is that they all treat “the supernatural as if it were a perfectly acceptable and understandable aspect of everyday life” (Warnes 2-3). According to Bowers, the term magical realism may be said to contain both aspects of magic and marvellous realism (14). In this regard, magical realism may be defined as “the commingling of the improbable and the mundane” (Rushdie qtd. in Bowers 3). Magical realism is, thus, marked by two differing

views of reality, the magical and the realist or mimetic, both of which are juxtaposed. Out of such a juxtaposition a new vision of reality breaks through and challenges the Western epistemology by extending the notion of reality. Magical realist literary movement then spread from Latin America to other postcolonial societies, such as India, Canada, Australia, Africa, etc., and turned into one of the most significant literary modes of the contemporary era. In this respect, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* played a seminal role, especially following the 1981 Booker Prize.

## 2.2. Defining Magical Realism

In order to build up a detailed definition of magical realism, it is necessary to observe how various critics, such as Slemon, Faris, Leal, and Christopher Warnes define it. Firstly, Warnes defines magical realism as “a mode of narration that naturalises or normalises the supernatural” (3). That is, it is “a mode in which real and fantastic, natural and supernatural, are coherently represented in a state of equivalence” (Warnes 3). In a similar vein, Slemon claims that the term itself is an oxymoron, in which the two oppositional representational codes – that of realism and that of fantasy – are in a constant struggle and neither one ever fully comes into being (409). These two modes “never manage to arrange themselves into any kind of hierarchy” (Slemon 410). Therefore, the marvellous is not observed as an anomaly within the realistic world, but it “seems to grow organically out of the ordinary” (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 1). For that very reason, the marvellous is accepted as entirely normal and integrated within the fictional reality of the narrative. Moreover, Leal defines magical realism as “an attitude towards reality that can be expressed in popular or cultured forms, in elaborate or rustic styles, in closed or open structures” (121). For that reason, magical realism is, in the context of this discussion, studied as a literary mode, and not a genre. The form or the style of the magical realist narrative may differ, but the purpose of magical realism remains to discover “the mysterious relationship between man and his circumstances” (Leal 122). There is no need to uncover the realist logic behind things. Neither does the magical realist text strive to come up with an elaborative representation of the logic of the marvellous. What magical realism requires is for the author to “seize the mystery that breathes behind things” (Leal 123), without too much pondering on its nature.

In her book *Ordinary Enchantments. Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative*, Faris distinguishes between five primary characteristics of magical realism. Firstly, the text has to contain an *irreducible element* of magic, that is, an element which cannot be explained in

accordance with the Western laws of logic (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 7). However, such an element has to be explained in the same manner that the ordinary elements are explained (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 7). In other words, the narrator of the magical realist text introduces the elements that would usually be considered unordinary, illogical, or magical. Nevertheless, s/he blends them perfectly into the scheme of ordinary events, so that their presence does not seem to disrupt the logic of the ordinary and mundane to a great extent. What this points to is that “in the terms of the text, magical things ‘really’ do happen” (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 8). Therefore, the narrator expresses no wonderment or bewilderment and does not comment on them. By doing so, s/he may even make “the real as we know it [...] seem amazing or even ridiculous” (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 11). The real may seem unusual if the supernatural is accepted to such an extent that it overrides the natural.

Secondly, the text has to be abundant with realistic, detailed descriptions which mirror the presence of the phenomenal world (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 14). These descriptions, on the one hand, renew the realistic tradition, but they also bring about intriguing magical details (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 14). That is, since the two representational codes intertwine, the abundance of realistic descriptions is used to describe both realistic and magical elements. Both are treated as if they were on the same level. Therefore, the details are “freed [...] from a traditionally mimetic role” (Faris, “Scheherazade’s Children” 169). Realistic descriptions no longer serve only to depict a mimetic representation of reality. On the other hand, they are also used to create a vivid portrayal of the world which is deeply immersed in magic. Moreover, the use of realism in magical realism serves like the bridge for the reader in and out of the story world (Aldama 40). The “well-trodden paths” of realism lead the reader into the story, only to have him/her confronted with the supernatural elements which s/he must accept. In this sense, the reader is forced to question his/her view of reality, as well as the importance of mimetic presentation within the Western literary canon.

Thirdly, Faris claims that the reader of magical realism “may hesitate between two contradictory understandings of events, and hence experience unsettling doubts” (*Ordinary Enchantments* 17). In this regard, Faris draws on Todorov’s idea that the genre of the fantastic depends on the reader’s hesitation (*Ordinary Enchantments* 17). Nevertheless, Todorov’s notion of the reader’s hesitation, as well as his theory of the fantastic, will be further elaborated anon.



However, Faris suggests that in the majority of instances, the magic in magical realism is quite clear and the reader barely hesitates, for the narrator shares his acceptance of the magic with the reader and the reader is required to adopt it (*Ordinary Enchantments* 20). Moreover, as Faris suggests, the level of hesitation also depends on the reader's cultural background and how much the marvellous is embedded into his/her culture (*Ordinary Enchantments* 17). It is fairly important to keep this idea in mind, especially in the case of Salman Rushdie and the reception of his novel in India and Asia, as opposed to the reception of his novels in Europe and the U.S.

Moreover, Faris states that the fourth characteristic is the experience of "the closeness or near-merging of the two realms" (*Ordinary Enchantments* 21). In this regard, Faris expresses a similar idea to that of Slemon – that magical realism represents the constant struggle between the two representational codes (Slemon 409). As she suggests, magical realism presents "a confrontation between real-world norms (the laws of nature) and other-worldly, supernatural norms" (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 21). Moreover, in "terms of cultural history, magical realism often merges ancient or traditional – sometimes indigenous – and modern worlds" (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 21). In this regard, such a claim resembles Carpentier's definition of marvellous realism. Magical realism, then, situates itself "at the intersection of the two worlds, at an imaginary point inside a double-sided mirror that reflects in both directions" (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 21). It occupies the space of in-betweenness, or what Faris calls "the ineffable in-between" (*Ordinary Enchantments* 46), belonging to both of these worlds at the same time, and enabling both of these worlds to develop on the same level. Since the reader is confronted with the struggle between these two worlds, the laws of which have to be equally accepted, magical realism is marked by a "perspective [which] cannot be explained, only experienced" (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 46).

And lastly, as the fifth primary characteristic of magical realism Faris mentions the disruption of received ideas about time, space, and identity (*Ordinary Enchantments* 23). Drawing on Frederic Jameson's claim that realist clock-bound time and measurable common space replace the older forms of cyclical time and sacred space, Faris asserts that magical realism subverts the realist time and space in a way that it lets the ancient magic leak through the holes of the realist structure and flood it ("Scheherazade's Children" 173-174). According to Patricia Merivale, time may become cyclical, as in the case of Gabriel García Márquez, who creates a stylized and abstracted

relationship between history and time – that is, his books are more about history in general than about the real, concrete history of the nation (330). However, the novel can also be set in a historical, linear time, as in Rushdie. Nevertheless, in such a case, the historical time is subverted from within by numerous jumps between the past, the present, and the future. Moreover, the characters who inhabit the magical realist time, as well as the magical realist space, are no longer coherent, homogeneous beings. Identity is turned into a manifestation of multivocality, hybridity, and multiplicity (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 25). What is more, magical realist space becomes diverse, hybrid, and immeasurable. As Rawdon Wilson suggests, magical realist space proposes a model in which “different geometries [and] inscribing boundaries that fold and refold like quicksilver can superimpose themselves upon one another” (210). The magical realist space is turned into a space of constant struggle between realism and fantasy. Everything seems familiar, and yet everything is foreign. Everything seems possible, and nothing seems at all surprising. According to Aldama, magic realist space should be perceived as a “fourthspace” (91) – the space that transcends the binary opposition between the European, “rational”, “civilized” and “real” firstspace, and the “pre-rational”, “magical” thirdspace (91). Consequently, the fourthspace may serve as a revision and a critique of such binary oppositions (Aldama 91). The space of in-betweenness, or the fourthspace, then has the power to question the realist (and in this regard, the Western) view of time, space, and identity, as well as the ancient, magical and traditional world view.

In her article, “Scheherazade’s Children”, Faris also distinguishes between nine secondary characteristics of magical realism that will also be used for discussing Rushdie’s novel. Firstly, Faris claims that metafictional dimensions are common in magical realist texts and that these texts tend to comment on themselves (“Scheherazade’s Children” 175). In this regard, magical realism manifests the traits of postmodernist writing, which will be further commented on in the subchapter on magical realism as historiographic metafiction. Secondly, the reader of magical realism may experience a kind of “verbal magic” – that is, s/he experiences the linguistic experience in which metaphors are made real and literalized (Faris, “Scheherazade’s Children” 176). Therefore, the role of language is no longer that of solely bringing worlds to life. The words seem to develop a life of their own and play a game with the reader, bringing more meaning to the life of the story. As a result, these magical realist language games embody “a central problem of language theory, the question of whether words reflect or create the world” (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 115).

This, once again, brings about the postmodernist preoccupation with the notion of both reality and history being narratives, made entirely out of words. In this regard, magical realism highlights the power of language and the process of story-making as the process which can also recreate realities and histories.

According to Faris, the third secondary characteristic is that the magical realist narratives appear childlike, fresh, or even primitive to adult Western readers (“Scheherazade’s Children” 177). The wonders “recounted largely without comment, [...] accepted [...] as a child would accept them” (Faris, “Scheherazade’s Children” 177) are perceived by the Western reader as an account of the Other. Since these wonders defy the rules of the Western logic, the reader is often incapable of leaving his/her own viewpoint and adopting that of the Other. The immediate response to such incapacity is to diminish them as childlike, exotic, and primitive, often without being able to discern what lies on beneath them. However, such reading defies the premise of magical realism – that the laws according to which the text functions should be accepted in their entirety.

For the fourth principle, Faris suggests that repetition is a narrative principle of magical realism and that it creates a magic of shifting references (“Scheherazade’s Children” 177). The images tend to repeat themselves with “an unusual and uncanny frequency, confusing further our received notions of similarity and difference” (Faris, “Scheherazade’s Children” 178). But other than images, history tends to repeat itself. The lives of the characters seem to mirror one another. The names tend to reappear and repeat themselves. Moreover, people who bear the same names tend to bear the same characteristics as their predecessors, etc. Faris also stresses the importance of the “mirroring phenomenon [as] the occurrence of reversals of various kinds” (“Scheherazade’s Children” 178). These reversals, in her opinion, stress the lack of control over human events (“Scheherazade’s Children” 178) and further deepen the sense that the laws of these worlds function in an entirely different way, but that such a way has to be accepted as the new norm of normality.

The fifth principle is based on frequent recurrence of metamorphoses which often stem from magical realist tendency towards metaphor and metonymy (Faris, “Scheherazade’s Children” 178). That is, “metamorphosis becomes a figure of metaphor itself, showing how meanings are carried over from text to text, from language to the world” (Warnes 15). Characters who are *like* something often *become* something, the self transforms into selves, and the limit between subject

and object is erased (Jackson 50). Characters tend to transform into various animals or mysterious beings. They also tend to multiply or turn into their doubles. They can change shapes or become various objects. That is, the objectification of their subjects can undergo a process of complete literalization.

The sixth characteristic is that magical realist texts are often antibureaucratic and use magic against the established order (Faris, "Scheherazade's Children" 179). That is to say, a large number of magical realist texts are thoroughly political, social, and anti-totalitarian. They tend to use magic to offer the alternative views of historical events, as well as to uncover the political and social pitfalls of the contemporary era. Since these texts strive for "narrative freedom from realism" (Faris, "Scheherazade's Children" 180), they also strive for freedom from political oppression and totalitarianism of any kind. In this regard, Faris' notion of magical realism being antibureaucratic is of great importance, for magical realist texts are often dismissed as pure fantasy. However, such readings of magical realism completely neglect the inherent political nature of these texts which most commonly stems from complex cultures and societies marked by great political turmoil. In this sense, these texts bear important social and political messages which must not be overlooked.

Faris notes that the seventh characteristic of magical realism is that "ancient systems of belief and local lore often underlie the text" ("Scheherazade's Children" 182). Whether these texts are set in rural areas, like the majority of magical realist texts from the Latin American "boom" period, or they are set in urban centres, like Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, these texts rely heavily on the ancient traditions and their inherent magic. In accordance with Carpentier's claim that the marvellous is inherent to the nature of Latin America, it can also be claimed that ancient magic is deeply entrenched in the postcolonial "centres" of magical realism. These ancient magical aspects are embraced by magical realist authors and introduced into the narrative to uncover a new, alternative view of reality and history.

The eighth characteristic Faris enumerates is that magical realist texts favour a Jungian over a Freudian perspective – in other words, the magic is "attributed to a mysterious sense of collective relatedness rather than to individual memories or dreams or visions" ("Scheherazade's Children" 183). The magic is, therefore, not hallucinatory nor dream-like, but a part of the surrounding reality. In this regard, Carpentier's division between marvellous realism and surrealism, as previously mentioned, can be recalled, since he states that the marvellous realists extract magic

from their world view and their surroundings, whereas European surrealism extracts the sense of magic from dreams, hallucinations, myths and fairy tales. In other words, European variant of magical realism is, contrary to magical realism stemming from postcolonial societies, far more Freudian (Bowers 86). Postcolonial magical realism draws its magic from the collective sense of magic being inherent in reality.

Lastly, Faris claims that the last, or the ninth, secondary characteristic of magical realism is magical realist carnivalesque spirit (“Scheherazade’s Children” 184). In this regard, Faris draws on Mikhail Bakhtin’s idea of the carnivalesque. Bakhtin conceives the idea of the carnival as the time in which the “nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspects of the world” (qtd. in Cooper 24) are brought to life. The world of carnival is a world of hybridity, the reversed world order, and the grotesque. Thus, the carnivalesque spirit of magical realism subverts the ordinary order, which is then questioned and critiqued. This adds a political aspect to the text. Moreover, the carnivalesque spirit also concerns language. “Language is used extravagantly, extending its resources beyond its referential needs” (Faris, “Scheherazade’s Children” 184). Therefore, the referentiality of language is subverted and also used to subvert the stability of the world outside the text.

### 2.3. Magical Realism in the Context of the Theory of the Fantastic

When Faris claims that the third primary characteristic of magical realism is hesitation experienced by the reader while reading the magical realist text (*Ordinary Enchantments* 17), she relies heavily on Todorov’s claim that the first condition of the fantastic is that the reader hesitates between interpreting the marvellous elements as imaginary or as supernatural (31). According to Todorov, the genre of the fantastic implies that there has to be an uncanny event which provokes hesitation in the reader, and often in the hero, but that it also depends on the interpretation of the reader – the reader must not read the fantastic as poetic or allegorical (32). Reading of the text as allegorical immediately eliminates the sense of the supernatural, and, hence, the feeling of hesitation. Consequently, Todorov sets the genre of the pure fantastic between other two genres – the uncanny, in which the supernatural phenomena can be rationally explained, and the marvellous, in which the supernatural elements are accepted and receive no explanation (42). He also introduces other two sub-genres – the fantastic-uncanny, in which supernatural elements that stretch throughout the story receive a rational explanation in the end (Todorov 43), and the fantastic

marvellous, which resembles the fantastic and is based on hesitation until the reader, in the very end, accepts the supernatural explanation (Todorov 52).

Therefore, taking into account Todorov's division between these three genres and two sub-genres, it seems to be hard to situate magical realism within the boundaries of any of these five categories. Placing magical realist works into the category of the uncanny, or the fantastic-uncanny, does not do them justice because the logic of magical realist novels works on its own and the supernatural cannot be explained according to the laws of the Western logic that easily, whether that be at the very beginning or at the end of the narrative. Faris' claim that hesitation is an obligatory characteristic of magical realism situates it within the domain of the pure fantastic. Nevertheless, that very claim appears as quite problematic. On the one hand, hesitation truly does affect the reader, especially the Western reader, since s/he is confronted with a literary world which is entirely different from his/her own extra-textual world, and hesitation is naturally consequential. However, the problem lies in the fact that the magical realist narrator accepts the notion of the supernatural, and attempts to make the reader inherit his/her acceptance of the supernatural. In this regard, it is very unlikely to categorize magical realism as the pure fantastic, for the reader of magical realism is expected to accept the supernatural, as opposed to experience wonderment or hesitate. As a result, it would seem natural to place magical realism in the domain of the marvellous. However, this very categorization again appears problematic. The marvellous implies that a completely new world order, with its own rules and logic, has been created, and the logic of the supernatural in this world is immediately accepted by the reader. However, magical realism is often situated in something that deeply resembles the real extra-textual world or even real historical situations. In other words, magical realism seems to be too *real* to belong to the marvellous.

Nevertheless, magical realism can contain elements of what Todorov calls "hyperbolic marvellous" (54) and "exotic marvellous" (55). He defines the former as the form of the marvellous in which "phenomena are supernatural only by virtue of their dimensions, which are superior to those that are familiar to us" (54). The latter is defined as a type of the marvellous in which supernatural events are set in the space with which the reader is not familiar and, therefore, s/he does not question the nature of these events (Todorov 55). The elements of the hyperbolic marvellous can be found in many magical realist works. For example, García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* depicts a character called Aureliano who one night visits a girl who is

forced to sleep with *seventy* men per night to pay off her family's debts. By the end of every night, she has to wring the sheets, which are drenched in sweat and weigh nearly a *ton*. Bearing in mind that *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is one of the most exemplary magical realist texts, these numbers have to be taken by the reader as true. Moreover, the same novel depicts how the rain which lasts for *five* years imprisons the inhabitants of a small town called Macondo. And Macondo itself may exemplify the elements of the exotic marvellous, since it is a town completely made up by the author and the reader has no reason to question its supernatural nature. However, the problem stems from the fact that a large amount of magical realist fiction takes place in a space which, to an extent, mirrors real places of extra-textual reality. In this sense, Macondo, albeit imaginary, mirrors the life of an ordinary Colombian town of the era. Moreover, taking Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* as an example, the novel is set in a fictional Bombay and Pakistan, which mirror the real Bombay and Pakistan to a great extent.

Taking into account Jackson's revision of Todorov's categorization, she first opposes Todorov's view of the fantastic as a genre and claims that "the fantastic [is] a literary *mode* rather than a genre, [...] [placed] between the opposite modes of the marvellous and the mimetic" (32). In this context, the mimetic includes all narratives "which claim to imitate an external reality" (Jackson 33), i.e., the texts embedded in literary realism. The fantastic consists of narratives which are apparently realist and familiar, but are disrupted by the strange, supernatural element (Jackson 34). Lastly, the marvellous, as the space completely guided by the laws of the supernatural, "is characterized by a minimal functional narrative, whose narrator is omniscient and has absolute authority" (Jackson 33). As a form, the marvellous discourages reader participation and it requires a passive relation to history (Jackson 33).

In this regard, magical realism definitely does not pertain to the mode of the mimetic. Despite the fact that it does imitate an external reality to some extent, it also brings to the surface numerous magical elements which co-exist with realism on the same level. Secondly, magical realism neither belongs to the domain of the fantastic, since the order of the magical realist reality is not disrupted by the appearance of the supernatural. And lastly, magical realism is not a part of the mode of the marvellous, since magical realist texts are not solely ruled by the laws of the supernatural. Neither are they passive in their relationship to history, nor detached from it. On the contrary, they are

marked by their deep interconnection with history. In these texts, there are important historical events which magical realism strives to redefine and rewrite.

Therefore, magical realism appears not to belong to any of these categories entirely. However, in her book *Magical Realism and the Fantastic. Resolved versus Unresolved Antinomy*, Chanady offers a solution to this problem by claiming that magical realism is a mode of its own. Firstly, Chanady draws on Todorov's definition of the uncanny, and she claims that the "uncanny can be produced either by mysterious happenings that turn out to have natural causes, or by the presence of something that is generally disquieting" (4). Secondly, Chanady defines the fantastic as a mode in which "the world view coincides with our own, and is threatened by an event which does not fit into the logical code expressed by the rest of the text" (3). In other words, the "harmony of a world ruled by the norms of reason" (Chanady 3) is destroyed. Therefore, there are two levels represented in the fantastic – that of reality and that of supernatural (Chanady 5). Such a claim bears a strong reminder of Slemon's definition of magical realism as being the competing ground of the two different representational codes (409). However, the difference lies in the fact that the supernatural in magical realism is accepted by the narrator, and consequently by the reader, while in the fantastic, the supernatural is "seen as a breach of the normal order of things" (Chanady 5). The feeling of hesitation and the slight sense of terror is an expression of "fear at seeing our world of reason destroyed" (Chanady 5). In this regard, the text itself serves as a norm against which the level of the unusual and the supernatural is measured (Chanady 6). The supernatural is, in the case of the fantastic, "rejected" (Chanady 10) by the reader and his/her realist logic. On the other hand, the marvellous is set in a world which is "so different from our own that we do not question the possibility of what happens" (Chanady 5). Therefore, magical realism cannot be placed in the category of the marvellous either, since magical realist worlds are either set in imaginary places which mirror the outer world or are set in literary spaces which directly refer to extra-textual real places and events. These worlds, as Rushdie suggests, exist "at a slight angle to reality" (qtd. in Aldama 91).

Hence, Chanady rewrites Todorov's concept of hesitation and introduces the term "antinomy" (12), which she defines as "the simultaneous presence of two conflicting codes in the text" (12). Since both the representational code and the supernatural code are present in the fantastic, and "neither can be accepted" (Chanady 12), the "supernatural element remains inexplicable"



(Chanady 12). However, in the case of magical realism, things tend to be a little bit different. Magical realism, as a mode, is characterized by “two conflicting, but autonomously coherent, perspectives, one based on an “enlightened” and rational view of reality, and the other on the acceptance of the supernatural as part of everyday reality” (Chanady 21). The key difference between the fantastic and magical realism, according to Chanady, then lies in the fact that the reader of magical realism does not consider the supernatural elements antinomic with the conventional view of reality (23). The supernatural is not deemed problematic, but natural. The magical realist author is forced to abolish this antinomy and make the reader suspend his/her judgement (Chanady 25).

Lastly, Chanady emphasises yet another factor important for magical realism – that of “authorial reticence” (30), i.e., the “absence of obvious judgements about the veracity of the events and the authenticity of the world view expressed by characters in the text” (Chanady 30). The narrator should express neither surprise nor wonder at having encountered the supernatural element, it should not comment on the events that are taking place, nor express its judgment on their nature. By doing this, the narrator allows the reader to play “the game of a naïve witness [...] [who] simply enjoys the narrative without distancing himself from the events and pondering the validity of the fictitious world” (Chanady 102). However, as it will be observed in the following chapters, authorial reticence is not always as comment- and judgement-free in magical realist texts. That is especially the case of Saleem Sinai, the narrator of Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, as it will be discussed anon.

#### 2.4. Magical Realism as Historiographic Metafiction

Since magical realism is deeply immersed in postmodernism and influenced by postmodernist thought, it is necessary to observe what makes magical realist texts postmodernist. Therefore, Faris observes how magical realist authors are to be situated within the context of postmodernism. In order to highlight the postmodern nature of their writing, Faris names magical realist authors “Scheherazade’s children” (“Scheherazade’s Children” 163). In her words, these authors are “postmodern narrators, born out of the often death-charged atmosphere of high modernist fiction” (“Scheherazade’s Children” 163). They use magic to battle depersonalized death of high modernism – death in terms of the death of fiction, as well as the modernist obsession with world wars and death in general (Faris, “Scheherazade’s Children” 164). The term “Scheherazade’s

children” is also intertextual in two ways. Firstly, Faris refers to *The Thousand and One Nights*’ protagonist, Scheherazade, as a “popular paradigm of the high modernist narrator – exhausted and threatened by death” (“Scheherazade’s Children” 164). Scheherazade’s stories highlight the autogenerative nature of fiction and of language itself – the stories grow out of other stories, characters double themselves, and metaphorical images develop lives of their own (Faris, “Scheherazade’s Children” 164). In this regard, Faris draws on Brian McHale’s idea that modernism is epistemological, concerned with questions of knowledge, whereas postmodernism is ontological, concerned with questions of being (qtd. in “Scheherazade’s Children” 166). Therefore, although Scheherazade is mostly preoccupied with epistemological questions, her children, as the children of postmodernism, are preoccupied with ontological questions and “must invent their fictional identities for themselves” (Faris, “Scheherazade’s Children” 166). Since they are deprived of totalities, truth, or a unified view of history and reality, they have to come up with histories and realities of their own. They have to acknowledge the multiplicity and the hybridity of these concepts. Secondly, Faris refers to the title of *Midnight’s Children* – the novel which, in her opinion, best exemplifies her theory of magical realism (“Scheherazade’s Children” 164). Since *Scheherazade’s children* are the children of postmodernism, suffering from the lack of history and reality, as well as the lack of belief in absolutes, their writing is also highly contemplative and metafictional. In order to determine metafictionality of magical realist texts, it is first necessary to observe Waugh’s definition of metafiction, as well as Hutcheon’s definition of historiographic metafiction.

According to Waugh, metafiction is a fictional form which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact, and consequently, questions the relationship between fiction and reality (40). It is constructed on the “principle of opposition” (Waugh 43). It first creates fictional illusion, and then lays bare that very illusion (Waugh 43). In a similar vein, Hutcheon introduces the term historiographic metafiction and defines it as a type of fiction which “works to situate itself within historical discourse without surrendering its autonomy as fiction” (“Historiographic Metafiction. Parody and the Intertextuality of History” 4). That is, it combines both literary and historical texts in fiction. However, it also constantly highlights the postmodernist belief that both literature and history are human constructs (Hutcheon, “Historiographic Metafiction. Parody and the Intertextuality of History” 4). In other words, both literature and history are perceived as man-made narratives. The reader of historiographic metafiction is forced

to recognize the “textualized traces of the literary and historical past [...] [as well as] the inevitable textuality of our knowledge of the past [...] [and] the value and the limitation of that inescapably discursive form of knowledge” (8). By pointing to the textualized nature of human knowledge, as well as the textualization of literature and history, historiographic metafiction also emphasises the textualized nature of reality. Reality is turned into a polyphonic narrative, in which a multitude of different voices and perspectives are woven together. According to Hutcheon, reality, as well as history, is not a “transparent record on any sure ‘truth’” (“Historiographic Metafiction. Parody and the Intertextuality of History” 10). In this regard, historiographic metafiction disrupts the possibility of the existence of absolutes.

Historiographic metafiction is marked by the use of parody and intertexts. Parody, in the context of historiographic metafiction, opens the text up (Hutcheon, “Historiographic Metafiction. Parody and the Intertextuality of History” 7). It not only restores history and memory but also questions the authority of any act of writing by placing the discourses of history and fiction within an ever-expanding intertextual network which mocks any notion of absolutes (Hutcheon, “Historiographic Metafiction. Parody and the Intertextuality of History” 11-12). Also, the use of the intertexts of both history and literature “reshapes any material [...] in the light of present issues” (Hutcheon, “Historiographic Metafiction. Parody and the Intertextuality of History” 22). That is, rewritten history and rewritten fiction both point to contemporary issues and problematize them. Therefore, Hutcheon claims that historiographic metafiction is one of the “most didactic of postmodern forms” (“Historiographic Metafiction. Parody and the Intertextuality of History” 28). It rewrites history and attempts to rewrite the present, offering a multitude of perspectives, as well as a multitude of different voices.

Therefore, due to their postmodernist nature, contemporary magical realist texts are categorized as historiographic metafiction. They are thoroughly situated in history and deeply affected by it. Nevertheless, they attempt to acknowledge the narrativized nature of history and rewrite it. They lay great emphasis on the lack of historical truth(s). As Rushdie suggests, “History is always ambiguous. Facts are hard to establish, and capable of being given many meanings. Reality is built on prejudices, misconceptions and ignorance as well as on our perceptiveness and knowledge” (“Errata’: Or, Unreliable Narration in *Midnight’s Children*.” 25). If the lack of absolute truth is to be acknowledged, then the “multiplicity of historical perspectives” (Bowers

74) has to be accepted. This, in turn, includes the possibility of numerous contradictions, all of which also require acceptance. As Brenda Cooper suggests, magical realism, in this sense, offers a different kind of historical consciousness by placing the supernatural on an equal level with history (33). Therefore, the supernatural seems to present historical events in a different light. It presents the reader with different historical perspectives. What this also points to is the fact that “historical events and myths are both essential aspects of our collective memory” (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 16). Accordingly, the creation of our consciousness is also affected by various historical and mythical narratives, which means that the individual in every society is “historically constructed and connected” (Foreman 286).

Hence, magical elements can emphasise the multiplicity of various historical truths, since when combined with the elements of magic, history often shows its other side. These magical elements also “[highlight] the historical atrocities” (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 140). By adding a supernatural dimension to the real historical events, these events are put in the spotlight and have a far greater effect on the reader. The totalitarian versions of truth as singular and absolute are being juxtaposed to other alternative versions of history, and their veracity is questioned. In this sense, magical realism obliterates the possibility of a dogmatic belief in absolute truths, and sets history free from the bounds of its one-sided versions of the past. However, history in magical realism can also be deconstructed in favour of the mythical (Merivale 335). In this sense, the mythical and the legendary cause the historical atrocities to become inculcated into the minds of the characters and, thereby, the minds of the readers. In this regard, they are again emphasised, but in this case, they acquire the status of the legend. Moreover, by subverting history, magical realism also models and questions contemporary politics (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 160). Political conflicts become far more visible. Various political ideas and decisions are questioned and observed in a different light.

## 2.5. Magical Realism and Postcolonialism

Due to its places of origin, as well as its immensely hybrid nature, magic realism is strongly tied to postcolonialism. Postcolonial societies are thoroughly affected by what Antonio Gramsci calls “hegemony” (qtd. in Treverson 19). Hegemony signifies a process of establishing political dominion by imposing the colonizer’s culture – namely, language and literature – on the culture of the colonized, and in this sense, the “subaltern” is persuaded to consent to his/her subordinated

position (Gramsci qtd. in Treverson 19). Therefore, after years of colonization and the influence of the culture of the colonizer on the native culture, postcolonial societies are greatly marked by the hybridity of their identity, their language, and their culture. Therefore, magical realism naturally flourishes in the hybrid grounds of postcolonial cultures. From the European (or Western) perspective, these areas – such as Latin America, Canada, the Caribbean, India, Africa, Australia – are perceived as peripheral. In this sense, magical realism has turned into “the literature of the ex-centric” (D’Haen 194). It promotes “ethnic and postcolonial heteroglossia that celebrates biological, cultural, and identitarian impurities and critiques” (Aldama 35). It celebrates multiplicity and harshly condemns authoritarianism. Magical realist writers seem to emphasize and relish their status of the Other, in this sense opposing the Western world view, as well as the Western literary canon. Moreover, due to the popularity of magical realism both among the postcolonial readership, as well as the Western readers, this periphery “has quickly become central” (Faris, “Scheherazade’s Children” 165), and the marginalized have been placed in the spotlight. They “are now disrupting the European tradition of the printed word” (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 146).

However, in order to observe the interconnection between postcolonialism and magical realism in more detail, it is necessary to observe how various critics, such as D’Haen, Trousdale, Frank, Faris, Aldama, and Brennan, tie these two concepts together. D’Haen places great importance on the role of language, claiming that magical realism is thoroughly postcolonial in a sense that it uses the power of language to represent social relations of the postcolonial societies (411). In other words, the language of magical realist texts strives “toward a language of expressive, local realism” (D’Haen 411), in order to gain its own power and escape the binary opposition within itself, caused by the imposition “of a foreign language on an indigenous population” (D’Haen 411). Thus, the language which naturalizes the supernatural strives to depict reality in a way that the postcolonial cultures perceive it – a reality which in itself also naturalizes the supernatural. As Rushdie proclaims, magical realism “expresses a genuinely ‘Third World’ consciousness” (qtd. in Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 38). It also strives to create an alternative reality which would right all the wrongs committed by colonisation (Aldama 6). Consequently, Faris compares magical realist language to William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* character Caliban, who “learns the master’s language, [and] then uses it to curse” (*Ordinary Enchantments* 28). That is, the magical realist narrator masters the language of the colonizer and then reshapes it to express a reality of his/her

own. Or in Rushdie's case, as it will be discussed anon, he makes use of his masterful knowledge of English with the effect of "destabilizing Englishness" (Treverson 25). By decolonizing language, he strives to decolonize the mind and "change his readers' attitudes towards the idea of empire" (Treverson 28).

Faris also associates the practice of writing magical realist fiction to the shamanistic practice, claiming that "magical realist narrative resembles the performance of a shaman who constructs a persona and a discourse that imaginatively negotiate different realms, joining the everyday world of concrete reality and the world of the spirits" (*Ordinary Enchantments* 75). That is, in a similar way that a shaman has the "ability" to communicate with the inhabitants of the realm of the spirit, a magical realist is able to "open the reader's eyes" and make him/her see the magic palpating beneath the ordinary aspects of life. Moreover, a shaman is able to "cure individuals of diseases or to heal community wounds" (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 80). In a similar vein, the magical realist "shaman" is able to cure his readers of the confining limits of realism and its authoritarian discourse. Bearing in mind magical realism's close connection to history and the fact that these texts often "address particular historical wounds" (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 80-81), the alternative versions of history and of historical truths may also be an attempt to heal these wounds. As Gloria Anzaldúa recognizes, the shaman has the ability to empower the patient by creating "images that induce altered states of consciousness conducive to self-healing" (qtd. in Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 83). The colonized are allowed to "shape their own bodies, to escape from the confines of ethereal sacred space and marginalized indigenous culture and emerge into modernity" (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 156). Thus, by providing the possibility of "a remystification of narrative in the West" (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 80), which only demonstrates the "cultural need for spirituality" (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 75), magical realism provides an opportunity to create a new kind of space – a *fourthspace* – that could close the gap between the First and the Third World, between realism and fantasy, and between totalitarian discourses of the West and indigenous spirituality of the marginalized cultures.

However, Trousdale's theory slightly differs from D'Haen and Faris', since she suggests that magical realist fiction, such as that of Salman Rushdie, should not be categorized as colonial, postcolonial, exiled or cosmopolitan (3), but that it pertains to a type of literature called "transnational literature" (2). Trousdale defines it as a type of literature

full of fictional countries, alternate histories, and science-fictional worlds because fantastic locations create communities that replace national cultures. Novels set in imaginary worlds use the rhetoric and epistemology of nationalism to enlist readers and writers into a new kind of group identity. Alternate worlds begin as refuges from exile but become kernels of a real home [...] Transnational novels continually renegotiate the balance between the physical and the abstract, the historical and the fantastic, and the real and the speculative (2).

In other words, transnational novels attempt to disrupt the previously appreciated notion of the nation as a unified, authoritarian whole. By using the rhetoric of nationalism, they attempt to redefine the “nation” and create a new international identity – and identity which is hybrid in its core and which transgresses the burden of national boundaries and identities as they were previously conceived. Therefore, transnational authors should be simultaneously rooted in their nation(s) of origin and the “imagined world of transnationality” (Trousdale 13). In this regard, these authors create alternate worlds and alternate histories, in order to make space for their new vision of nation and nationalism. In doing so, these authors “adopt elements of the supernatural or the alternate historical in order to stage conflict or communication between cultures” (Trousdale 28). As Trousdale proclaims, hybrid “alternate-world fiction [...] demands that all its readers see themselves as migrants and exiles” (3). In other words, the readers of transnational fiction should assume the transnational identity of the author.

In this regard, Trousdale draws on Bhabha’s idea of the hybridity. According to Trousdale, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, race theorists believed that hybridity could cause miscegenation and sterility (6). However, from Bhabha’s point of view, hybridity is an explicitly political notion, since it is “the sign of the productivity of colonial power” (112). It signifies “the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority)” (Bhabha 112). That is, hybridity is no longer perceived as a sign of contamination which follows the process of colonization. It is no longer seen as a sign of anomaly. On the contrary, it comes to signify progression. It signals the process in which the positions of power and dominance are questioned and reversed, in this sense also subverting the colonial order. Therefore, hybridity is perceived “as much more than a form of resistance” (Trousdale 5). What is best of both worlds should be conjoined and celebrated, making way for a new order in which the positions are occupied by hybrids. Therefore, transnational novels

seem to relish impossibility and transform these incompatible elements into a plausible reality (Trousdale 22).

Frank introduces yet another term in relation to magical realism and postcolonialism – that of *migration literature*. Frank claims that migration literature signifies different “*oscillatory and inconclusive processes* [in relation to migration] that manifest themselves on different levels in the literary work – for example, in relation to personal, national, and cultural identity, language, narrative form” (*Migration and Literature* 8). That is, identity is perceived as multiple, fluid and migratory. It can change shapes and transform from one identity to the other. A nation is transformed into an all-inclusive notion – that is, it is perceived as a mixture of multiple, transnational cultural influences that cannot blend together into a homogenous whole. The language of the narrative is abundant with the multiplicity of voices and discourses. It is also often a blend of both the native language influences, as well as the influences of the colonizer’s language. Since humans perceive reality through language, the multiplicity of languages leads to the multiplicity of perspectives. As Frank claims, the literature of migration is “characterized by a Bakhtinian heteroglossia, an acute sensibility toward language and an awareness of the world’s high degree of constructedness” (*Migration and Literature* 20). The time of the novel has also become constitutive – it opens up the past, the present, and the future as “virtual spaces in which new meanings can be inscribed” (Frank, *Migration and Literature* 23). Time is no longer a fixed, arrow-like category, stretching from the beginning to the end, which bears a single determinate meaning. It is intertwined and it can shift from one period to the other.

Moreover, Frank distinguishes between five different functions of migration in the novel (16-17). As a first function, he enumerates the function of authorial biography (*Migration and Literature* 17), i.e., the biography of the author, who is, in the majority of cases, also a migrant, influences his/her outlook on the world and the way in which s/he creates the world of the narrative. Moreover, Frank suggests that the term *migrant* refers to numerous concepts, such as that of the exile, the expatriate, the refugee, the nomad, the wanderer, the explorer, etc. (*Migration and Literature* 17). In this regard, Rushdie claims that exiles are haunted by a sense of loss, and thus try to recreate their “imaginary homelands” (“Imaginary Homelands” 10). Therefore, migrant authors create alternative worlds in fiction in order to bring their hybrid homelands to life. Secondly, the characters of the novel themselves have to be migrants and the narrative should



portray how they cope with migration (Frank, *Migration and Literature* 18). Hence, the characters also pertain to the world of migration and transnationalism, in which the borders are slowly being erased and the notion of hybridity is beginning to be celebrated. Thirdly, Frank suggests that the literature of migration deals with the questions of nation and nationalism (*Migration and Literature* 18), by observing how these notions are reversed and redefined in the contemporary era. Fourthly, migration literature deals with the meaning of Europe and European literature, as well as the novel as a European genre (Frank, *Migration and Literature* 18). In other words, migration literature questions the notion of Europe as a colonizer and a dominant force. It also questions European literary canon and its long domination on the literary scene, with hopes to make the voice of the Other, the ex-centric, be heard on a global scale. Lastly, Frank states globalization as a significant theme of the literature of migration (*Migration and Literature* 18), since globalization is a predominant force of the contemporary era, redefining the notions of the nation and national boundaries.

Finally, Timothy Brennan connects the mode of magical realism to the notion of cosmopolitanism, claiming that magical realist authors, such as Rushdie, should be described as *Third World cosmopolitans* – that is, migrant intellectuals who are identified both with a Western metropolitan elite, as well as the interpreters of public voices of the Third World (qtd. in Treverson 195). However, as Brennan suggests, these authors are accepted in the West only because “they speak to the West in its own voice” (qtd. in Treverson 195). That is, taking Rushdie as an example, he not only writes in English, but the fact that he was brought up and educated in the UK has definitely made a great impact on his writing. From this point of view, Rushdie could be accused of exoticising his land of origin and appropriating it for the Western readers. Nevertheless, Rushdie’s use of English, as well as his use of the novel as a particularly Western form may also be observed from a different perspective. Namely, Rushdie seems to be using the language and the forms of the West in order to slither into the Western domain – into its canon, as well as the homes of its readers – and question it from within. Therefore, Rushdie seems to reshape the English language and make his own place within the canon of the literature written in English. As Caliban in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, Rushdie learns the language of the colonizer and then uses it to suit his own purposes – he subverts it from within.

### 3. Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*

In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie reconstructs Indian reality in such a way that he provides the reader with his own envisioning of Indian history – seemingly full of magic, yet unmistakably realistic and political. In doing so, Rushdie puts a strong emphasis on laying bare all of the flaws of authoritarian regimes in India – be it nationalistic, colonialist, or religious. According to Treverson, Rushdie's focus on the political emerges from “the ideological proving ground of 1960s radical student consciousness” (12), as Rushdie firmly believes that one of the main functions of fiction is “to confront the world, its authorities, its pieties and its settled perceptions” (Treverson 12). Hence, from Rushdie's point of view, art is socially, politically, and historically constructed and cannot be separated from the place and time of its creation (Treverson 14). It should be used as a means to critique the existing status quo. In this sense, Treverson claims that Rushdie is not so much a politically *transformative* writer, but a *reactive* writer, “satirising what is, without attempting to offer any coherent blueprints for what should be” (208). His aim is to lay bare all of the angles from which his topic of interest can be observed; however, without ever opting for just a single one.

### 3.1. *Midnight's Children*

In its condemnation of totalitarianism, *Midnight's Children* is mainly preoccupied with three different aspects of the individual and the nation. Firstly, it is a novel which enacts “a discursive reconfiguration of the relationship between Self and Nation” (Rege 146). It presents these two notions as being both opposed and united (Rege 156). It also questions the notions of nation and nationalism and how they affect individuals. Secondly, since the novel traces Indian history from 1915 to 1979, it also serves as an attempt to rewrite history and reconfigure the position of the Self within the historical context. Moreover, as Rushdie himself suggests, *Midnight's Children* is also a novel about the nature of memory (qtd. in Rege 151). The novel is, therefore, preoccupied with the question of how one remembers and how the process of remembering helps construct history – that is, how memory is tied to historiography.

The story is told by an unreliable auto- and homodiegetic narrator, Saleem, who is telling his story to a listener – a narratee called Padma. His style of narration is full of digressions, interruptions, and teeming with stories and characters. According to Merivale, Saleem as a narrator presents himself in two different roles – as the artist-as-entertainer, who bears the chief role within the action of the novel, and as the artist-as-historian, who plays the chief part in narrating

history(340). Saleem as the artist-as-entertainer claims that both the fictional and the historical narrative revolve around him. He is well aware of the “need to hold [his] audience” (Merivale 340). He avoids getting to the gist of the story and repeatedly tries to further stir the feeling of curiosity in Padma and, therefore, the reader. In such a way, Saleem bears great resemblance to the character of Scheherazade. He never ceases to unfold the story, as if his life were depending on the amusement of his listener. While narrating, he is constantly jumping from one moment in time to another, back and forth. As suggested by Cundy, these constant temporal shifts in Saleem’s narrative signal a “pendulum movement” (28). As Cundy argues, “[just] as a metronome or pendulum picks up the speed and regularity of its beat from the initial wider swing [...], so the narrative [...] takes a swing further back into family and national history before resuming its steady tick-tock drift between two historical points” (28). Saleem, therefore, starts his story by going back all the way to his roots, only to be able to go back to the present. However, the closer to the present he is, the more fast-paced his narrative becomes. Rushdie also depicts Saleem’s manner of narrating through the metaphor of the cinema screen, claiming that his narrative loses deep perspective and becomes more partial and more subjective, the closer it is to the contemporary events (“Imaginary Homelands” 13). As Saleem claims at the end of the novel:

I refuse absolutely to take the larger view; we are too close to what-is-happening, perspective is impossible, later perhaps analysts will say why and wherefore, will adduce underlying economic trends and political developments, but right now we’re too close to the cinema-screen, the picture is breaking up into dots, only subjective judgements are possible (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 608).

That is, the closer Saleem approaches the time of narration, the more subjectively he narrates his history. Furthermore, Frank asserts that Saleem’s narration attempts to depict a panoramic image of Indian history through numerous close-ups (“The aesthetic of elephantiasis” 194). These details are depicted with most utter precision. Each one appears like an important piece of a larger puzzle – like an attempt to create a total image of India out of innumerable different details, while knowing that such a task is impossible. On the other hand, Saleem the historian strives to retell and encapsulate Indian history through his own narrative and, thus, his own perspective. Saleem places himself at the centre of history and tries to recreate history through the fragmentary chunks of his memory. By recollecting history and retelling it in his own way, he tries to give it a meaning. However, in this way, he opens history up for questioning and further revision.

### 3.2. *Midnight's Children* and Magical Realism

In order to justify its status of a magical realist work, it is necessary to trace the characteristics of magical realism present in the novel. As it has already been suggested, Faris states that the magical realist text looms with irreducible elements of magic which cannot be explained according to Western logic but which grow organically out of the ordinary and which, in terms of the text, really do happen (Faris, *Ordinary Enchantments* 7-8). These irreducible elements of magic are described realistically and intertwined with real-world elements in order to make the real world seem more estranged. Accordingly, *Midnight's Children* is swarming with such elements of magic. One of the most obvious examples is the fact that *Midnight's Children* – that is, Saleem, along with an entire generation of children born from midnight to one a.m. on August 15, 1947, when India gained its independence – are in possession of special powers. The closer their birth to midnight is, the greater their powers are. As a result, Saleem and his counterpart Shiva seem to be the most powerful, having been born exactly at midnight. Their special powers seem to be an indicative of the belief that the generation of children born simultaneously with independent India bear hopes of a great future – the hopes that will, nevertheless, be shattered soon after Independence.

Furthermore, at the beginning of the novel, when Saleem starts to tell the story of his family and recounts the life of his grandfather, Aadam Aziz, he depicts a scene in which his grandfather gets injured in an attempt to pray and begins to bleed and cry rubies:

One Kashmiri morning in the early spring of 1915, my grandfather Aadam Aziz hit his nose against a frost-hardened tussock of earth while attempting to pray. Three drops of blood plopped out of his left nostril, hardened instantly in the brittle air and lay before his eyes on the prayer-mat, transformed into rubies. Lurching back until he knelt with his head once more upright, he found that the tears which had sprung to his eyes had solidified, too; and at that moment, as he brushed diamonds contemptuously from his lashes, he resolved never again to kiss earth for any god or man (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 4).

Therefore, Aadam's mundane reality is suddenly interrupted by the occurrence of something magical, and yet, there is no expression of wonder, neither by Aadam nor by Saleem as the narrator. Such lack of wonderment points to what Chanady calls "authorial reticence" (30). That is, Saleem expresses absolutely no surprise nor judgement at the magical occurrence. It does not appear as a

violent invasion, but as something that can occur any other moment. Moreover, the lack of wonderment is also a proof of the fact that in magical realism, as Chanady suggests, the supernatural does not appear to be antinomic with reality (23). Therefore, the magical element does come freely into being, and it is described in most precise detail so that it seems entirely vivid, almost palpable.

However, authorial reticence is not always present in the novel. Since Saleem appears as a thoroughly unreliable narrator, there are numerous instances in which he expresses doubt in himself and in the truthfulness of his account. As he suggests, “[...] like an incompetent puppeteer, I reveal the hands holding the strings” (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 83). Since his account is solely his own, it is flawed, uncertain, subjective and self-reflexive. As he tells Padma, “if you’re a little uncertain of my reliability, well, a little uncertainty is no bad thing” (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 294). Uncertainty is no bad thing since nothing is certain. There are no more absolute truths. By making Saleem unreliable, Rushdie highlights the fictiveness of memory, and, as a result, his process of rewriting history. Consequently, Saleem’s doubtfulness has nothing to do with the lack of belief in magical occurrences in the text. On the contrary, these magical events are a formative part of his consciousness and memory and are, therefore, present in his accounts. What the lack of authorial reticence accentuates is, in fact, only the lack of veracity of Saleem’s historical account – of Saleem’s historiography.

Furthermore, Faris claims that magical realist texts are often antibureaucratic and use magic against the established order (“Scheherazade’s Children” 179). Rushdie enquires into numerous questions about cultural, social and political life. His purpose is to question and subvert any sort of totalitarianism, and, for that reason, he places his protagonists in strict opposition to it. For example, the above-mentioned scene testifies to the inception of Aadam’s revolt towards any sort of religious or nationalistic devotion. Aadam refuses to bow his head for anyone, and for that reason he constantly places himself in the space of in-betweenness among various ideologies throughout the novel. Each time he feels a sense of authoritarianism imposed upon him, he begins to feel utter disappointment and disapproval towards such ideas which cannot be contested. Furthermore, Rushdie tackles numerous problematic political aspects. For example, Saleem’s father, Ahmed Sinai, has his assets frozen by the State. At the same time, the most “valuable possession” of his body – his genitals – get frozen too. By introducing this irreducible element of

magic, Rushdie critiques the political situation in India at the time, in which the State, led by a Hindu nationalist current, is in a position to be able to draw such a move against a Muslim, without any restrictions or consequences. His critique is, therefore, directed towards the growing discord between the Muslims and the Hindus, which later on escalates in Indo-Pakistani conflicts.

Faris also claims that magical realism disrupts the received ideas about time, space and identity (*Ordinary Enchantments* 23). Unlike time in the fictional worlds of García Márquez, which tends to be cyclical and mythical, time in *Midnight's Children* is thoroughly historical and determined. Nevertheless, its unity is disrupted by numerous jumps in time made by Saleem in his narration. When it comes to space, the novel is set in “specific, time-bound, mappable urban topographies” (Merivale 334) – namely, India, West Pakistan and East Pakistan (Bangladesh). As Treverson suggests, *Midnight's Children* “announces its locality, its resistance to the abstracted illusions of ‘once upon a time’” (121). However, India and Pakistan in the novel are, in fact, *an* India and *a* Pakistan – only fictional representations of the real-life locations, coated with a layer of magic, in which the real and the fantastic intertwine. Moreover, identity is disrupted in a sense that it evades the possibility of unification. In the case of each character, and especially Saleem, identity is presented as multiple, ever-changing, and heterogeneous. For example, as a child of an Englishman and a Hindu, and yet raised by Muslims, Saleem is of a hybrid identity. This kind of cultural hybridity results in the production of “forms of identity that cannot be reduced to any singular conception of self” (Treverson 129). Therefore, the self as a whole is now divided into many selves. Saleem also invents several fictive parents, such as his ayah Mary Pereira, his aunt Pia Aziz, the magician Picture Singh, etc. (Frank, *Migration and Literature* 137). The creation of fictive parents also points to the notion of identity being only a creation – a constructed unit.

In magical realism, language is used as a tool to represent the unrepresentable (Aldama 20). Therefore, most of the magic in *Midnight's Children* “has to do with use of language, of wordplay and image” (Rosenberg 19). According to Warnes, Rushdie’s magical realism operates through hyperbole, the blurring of the border between the literal and the metaphorical, and the emphasis on the performative over the descriptive capacities of language (101). It also operates through “verbal magic” (Faris, “Scheherazade’s Children” 176). Rushdie’s use of literalized metaphors demonstrates his critique of totalities and a preference for contradiction and multiplicity (Ball 218). Rushdie emphasises the meaning behind the metaphor by making it literal, but he also further

embellishes and obscures his narrative through the same process, making it multiple and at times even indecipherable. One of the examples of literalized metaphors in *Midnight's Children* is the process of whitening of Ahmed's skin. After Ahmed's friend, Narlikar, is killed in a language march, the hopes of India's unity despite the inner conflicts dies with him. As a result, Ahmed begins to fade and literally turns white. However, as Saleem claims, "he was secretly rather pleased when [the doctors] failed to explain the problem or prescribe a cure, because he had long envied Europeans their pigmentation" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 247). The fact is that Rushdie subverts the metaphorical meaning of the phrase *to pass as white* and turns it into something literal. Consequently, this scene signals Ahmed's disillusionment with India, since India's potential to become a unified independent country seems impossible to be achieved. Years after Independence, India is still torn between numerous communal conflicts. His becoming white signals the need to succumb to the lure of Europe and its influence, for there is nothing more to keep him attached to India, since India did not turn out to be what he expected of it. Saleem, then, continues, claiming that he notices something odd, that "during the first nine years after Independence, a similar pigmentation disorder [...] afflicted large numbers of the nation's business community" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 248) – the "businessmen of India were turning white" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 248). In other words, the literalized metaphor of *becoming white* points to the fact that numerous businessmen in India began to turn their gaze westward, without any consideration of how they could benefit the economic condition of their own independent country.

Moreover, Rushdie's use of literalized metaphors "captures the mythic sensibility of a novel steeped in Hindu mythology" (Ball 218). In other words, there is a great influence of Hindu thought, which erases the borders between what is real and what is fantastic – everything is interconnected (Ball 218). In other words, everything is characterised by what Todorov calls "pan-determinism" (112) or "pan-signification" (112). As Todorov suggests, since there are relations on all levels, among all elements of the world, the world becomes highly significant (112). Therefore, Saleem believes that everything is interrelated and sets himself at the very centre of these interrelations.

What this also suggests is that ancient systems of belief underlie the text (Faris, "Scheherazade's Children" 182). Whereas Hindu iconography informs Rushdie's text, Islam also provides both the philosophical subtext and appears as a repressive political power (Trousdale 33).

Consequently, Rushdie's characters are often described as and compared to various mythological and religious characters. For example, Padma is "named [after] the lotus goddess" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 24). Moreover, due to his large and powerful nose, Saleem is compared to the elephant-headed god Ganesh, "Such as – yes, why not – mammoth-trunked, Ganesh-nosed as I am" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 270). However, his bright blue eyes also evoke the Indian god Krishna, who "is always depicted with blue skin" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 137). On the other hand, his double Shiva is named after "the god of destruction, who is also most potent of deities, [...] whom no force can resist" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 306). However, Shiva is also "the God of Procreation" (Goonetilleke 35). In this sense, although Saleem adopts Shiva and Parvati's child, Aadam Sinai, Shiva is his biological father. Therefore, Shiva's power, albeit destructive, is also procreative.

Another way in which magic tends to emerge in the novel is through numerous repetitions and mirroring. That is, various images, words, motifs and stories tend to repeat themselves with "an unusual and uncanny frequency" (Faris, "Scheherazade's Children" 178). At the very beginning of the novel, Saleem claims that "already [he] can see the repetitions beginning; [...] the curse begins already" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 8). Firstly, there is the motif of the noses – mainly Aadam's and Saleem's – which signify their olfactory power. However, the motif of the noses also signals the interrelatedness between the lives of Aadam and Saleem, which mirror one another. Moreover, the image of Shiva's strong knees is constantly repeated through the novel, signifying his physical power and the strive for dominance achieved by force. Then there is the repeating motif of impotence. Firstly, there is the previously-mentioned freezing of Ahmed's assets, which affects not only Ahmed, but also his wife, Amina, who suddenly finds herself trapped both in a marriage to an impotent man and in a sexless, impotent affair with her ex-husband, Nadir. The motif of impotence then appears as a strong symbol in the scene of the castration of the whole generation of the *Midnight's Children*. Saleem's impotence is especially highlighted in his relationship to Padma. Her sexuality is constantly placed in the foreground, only to accentuate his lack of sexual power. As Saleem confesses, "Despite Padma's many and varied gifts and ministrations, I can't leak into her, [...] despite everything she tries, I cannot hit her spittle" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 45). This lack of sexual power is only a manifestation of a greater loss of power – the loss of creative and political power. It is also a manifestation of the loss of hope and possibility. In other words, Saleem's impotence signals the fact that, albeit the creator of



his story, he is incapable of changing the course of history in any way. He is allowed to change his account, but other than that, he is only a passive observer. In this sense, he is also deprived of political power. What is more, since the whole generation of *Midnight's Children* has been castrated in the course of Indira Gandhi's government, they all suffer from "political impotence" – they are deprived of the ability to act politically and prevent India from destroying its hopes of a prosperous future.

Another important motif which tends to repeat throughout the novel is that of the perforated sheet. The perforated sheet is firstly used by Saleem's great-grandparents to cover their daughter Naseem's body while she is placed under Doctor Aadam's examination. Aadam then gets to observe her body bit by bit through the holes of the moth-eaten cloth:

So gradually Doctor Aziz came to have a picture of Naseem in his mind, a badly-fitting collage of her severally-inspected parts. This phantasm of a partitioned woman began to haunt him, and not only in his dreams. Glued together by his imagination, she accompanied him on all his rounds, [...] but she was headless, because he had never seen her face (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 26).

The moment Aadam finally does manage to see her face is the moment he falls in love with her. Moreover, the motif of the perforated sheet emerges again in order to connect Saleem's parents. After her divorce from Nadir, Amina marries Ahmed and forces herself to fall in love with him. "To do this she divided him, mentally, into every single one of his component parts, [...] in short, she fell under the spell of the perforated sheet of her own parents, because she resolved to fall in love with her husband bit by bit" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 87). Therefore, the perforated sheet signals a new way of gathering a flawed image of the whole – through the subjective observation of fragments. That is, this motif "points to the existential condition of man who is destined to perceive and know the world in fragments" (Frank, "The aesthetic of elephantiasis" 196). It is also a manifestation of a manner in which Saleem constructs his history – through fragments. That is, Saleem constructs history out of memory and memory is only a set of scattered images one attempts to gather into a whole. As a result, as Rushdie suggests, "one of the simplest truths about any set of memories is that many of them will be false" ("Errata': Or, Unreliable Narration in *Midnight's Children*" 24). That is, they are personal, shaped by one's own perspective and partial. Therefore, memory creates historical accounts which are often flawed, or even false,

and only one of the many. Therefore, remembered history further intensifies history's fictionalized nature.

Memory is also tied to the concept of repetitions. That is, it is “constructed around the objects and artefacts which come to represent its fabric in the narrative” (Cundy 34). Therefore, all of the repeating motifs, such as the nose and knees and the perforated sheet, “map out [Saleem's] memory of growing up alongside the new India” (Cundy 35). In other words, Saleem's memory is constructed around various elements, and the constant repetitions of these elements help him reconstruct his own multiple identity, as well as that of India. Therefore, these objects around which memory is constructed are like “[the] broken pots of antiquity; from which the past can sometimes, but always provisionally, be reconstructed” (Rushdie, “Imaginary Homelands” 12).

Moreover, Faris enumerates carnivalesque spirit as another characteristic of magical realism (“Scheherazade's Children” 184), as mentioned earlier. In this sense, *Midnight's Children* contains the elements of the Bakhtinian concept of the Menippean satire (Ball 213). Menippea was characterised by the hostility towards static, concrete units, by the juxtaposition of incompatible elements and by its resistance to fixity (Jackson 15). In this sense, Ball suggests that the Menippean spirit of *Midnight's Children* can be traced in its favouring of the concepts of hybridity, pluralism, impurity, transformation and newness (215). It can also be traced in the preference towards questions, and not answers, in the opposition towards absolutism in favour of provisional and indeterminate truths, and in its strive to deny the official, political versions of truth (Ball 215). Moreover, the spirit of the grotesque is captured in the depiction of the grotesque bodies (Ball 218). According to Bakhtin, the important parts of the grotesque body are the open cavities where “the confines between [...] the body and the world are overcome: there is an interchange and interorientation” (317). The grotesque body “ignores the closed, smooth and impenetrable surface of the body and retains only its excrescences [...] and orifices, only that which leads beyond the body's limited space or into the body's depths” (Bakhtin 317-318). The body is no longer an enclosed, self-sufficient whole, but a ruptured entity which opens itself up to the world and takes it in. For example, Saleem notices the tiny holes on his body, which is the moment in which his body begins to crack. Similar holes are encountered on Aadam's body. These holes on Saleem's body, therefore, signify the opening of the body to the world. The body takes the world in and slowly transforms itself into a multitude of voices. Moreover, the carnivalesque spirit is present in

Saleem's language. That is, his "polyphonic medley of discourses and languages [...] makes his monologue a 'microdialogue'" (Ball 214). His account speaks for numerous Indians who were previously deprived of their voice. When his body eventually dissolves, he lets these multiple voices loose. In this sense, the plurality of voices is only a manifestation of the plurality of truths. The multiplicity of voices obscures the possibility of hearing just a single one. The truth turns into truths, when represented through numerous voices.

However, despite it being a mode of its own, magical realism can, in fact, contain elements of Todorov's "hyperbolic marvellous" (54). In *Midnight's Children*, one of the most obvious examples of the hyperbolic marvellous is the fact that there are a thousand and one children born in the first hour of August 15, 1947 and that all of them have magical abilities. The number is firstly reminiscent of *The Arabian Nights* – that is, their total of a thousand and one nights. Secondly, as Saleem suggests, "[in] itself, that is not an unusual fact (although the resonances of the number are strangely literary)" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 271). That is, such a fact is not unusual, for it is "'roughly accurate' according to the Indian birth-rate" (Goonetilleke 33). In other words, Rushdie accentuates the fact that India has a very high birth-rate. However, due to horrible living conditions, many of these children die early, or suffer throughout their lives. As a result, in the novel, four hundred and twenty do not survive their childhood, and the symbolism of the number is again significant, "since 420 has been [...] the number associated with fraud, deception and trickery" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 272). In this sense, Rushdie's use of hyperbole is once again political, serving as a critique of enormous child death-rates in India, caused by bad living conditions and child exploitation. It also refers to Indira Gandhi's policy of sterilization, conceived as an idea to control population rates, which will be further discussed anon.

### 3.3. *Midnight's Children* as Historiographic Metafiction

As stated previously, Hutcheon defines historiographic metafiction as fiction which places itself within historical discourse, while at the same time acknowledging its fictive nature ("Historiographic Metafiction. Parody and the Intertextuality of History" 4). Therefore, history and human knowledge are conceived as man-made narratives. Consequently, historiographic metafiction can "enact the problematic nature of the relation of writing history to narrativization and, thus, to fictionalization" (Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* 93). That is, historiography is now closely tied to the act of writing fiction. It becomes hard to distinguish where facts end and

fiction begins. As a result, historiographic metafiction demonstrates how fiction is historically conditioned and how history is discursively structured (Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* 120). Rushdie is greatly interested in metahistory – in a way in which “historical processes are given meaning (and indeed change their meaning) according to the narrative structures that are used to mediate them” (Treverson 77). Therefore, the meaning and shape of history lie “not *in the events*, but *in the systems* which make those past ‘events’ into present historical ‘facts’” (Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* 89). The question, then, no longer concerns what happened, but how we remember it happening. Therefore, Rushdie pays great interest to the ways in which “history is recorded, [...] and by the ways in which the individual ‘historiographer’ understands (or misunderstands) his relationship with his material” (Treverson 126). Therefore, *Midnight’s Children*, with its unreliable and self-reflexive narrator, its constant reveal of its fictive nature and its questioning of the processes through which history is remembered and written perfectly fits the category of historiographic metafiction. The use of various literary and historical intertexts helps Rushdie in the process of reshaping history, as well as in the process of reshaping India’s present by emphasizing its contemporary problems. Nevertheless, the novel does not seek to offer any viable resolution to all of the problems it tackles. The “stabilizing institutional forces of self-hood, convention, and national consensus” (Marzec 155) are laid out for questioning, but the possibility of ever finding a proper answer is diminished – chaos is embraced in its entirety. In the same vein as other historiographic metafictions, *Midnight’s Children* fails “to offer any stable anchor” (Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* 189), since it relishes in the complexity of its myriad of unresolved possibilities.

One of the most evident literary intertexts is the story of Scheherazade and *The Arabian Nights*. The parallels between Scheherazade and Saleem are constantly drawn throughout the novel:

In the renewed silence, I return to sheets of paper [...], ready and willing to put out of its misery a narrative which I left yesterday hanging in mid-air – just as Scheherazade, depending for her very survival on leaving Prince Shahryar eaten up by curiosity, used to do night after night! (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 24-25).

Hence, Saleem presents himself as a narrator who has to leave the listener/the reader craving for more. In order to preserve his life, he has to keep the story going. However, there are other literary intertexts Rushdie makes use of, such as García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and

Günter Grass' *The Tin Drum* (Merivale 329), Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, and *The Mahabharata* (Bowers 51-52), etc. Secondly, in Book Three, when Saleem enters the Sundarbans jungle, the legends he recounts to his fellow soldiers largely resemble Christopher Columbus' travelogues about Central America (Aldama 98). There is a strong reason why Rushdie appropriates the conquistador's text. The conquistadors' travelogues were usually immensely Eurocentric and, as a consequence, orientalized. In such accounts, the life and the culture of the Other was observed either with a strong sense of condescendence, or even viewed as largely inferior, barbaric, and animalistic. This time, Saleem, as a postcolonial subject, is able to provide the reader with his own point-of-view (Aldama 98). Moreover, this chapter is reminiscent of Joseph Conrad's depiction of the heart of the African jungle in *The Heart of Darkness*. Rushdie's jungle serves as an answer to all such Western canonical texts which depict the world of the Other through a prism of superiority.

Furthermore, Rushdie plays with historical intertexts and rewrites numerous important events from Indian history, so as to observe them from a different point of view. By doing so, he attempts to break down the pillars of absolute historical truths. He incorporates numerous real-life historical events, as well as real-life characters, in order to lure the reader in. However, once the reader is encapsulated in the world of the novel, the events are recounted in a different way from that which should be expected. The historical is now blended with the fictive and opened for questioning. Moreover, various historical data is deliberately falsified to highlight the potential failures of recorded history (Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* 114). Unlike historical fiction, which tries to assimilate historical data in a coherent whole, in order to provide the reader with a feeling of verifiability, historiographic metafiction questions its premises by incorporating such data without their assimilation into the text (Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* 114).

Saleem, as a self-proclaimed historiographer, is positioned in the centre of the action. He claims to be responsible for everything that constitutes history and it seems as if history were revolving around him. Due to his central position, the historical material in the novel is transformed into a biography (Treverson 127). As Hutcheon suggests, in historiographic metafiction, private experience is elevated to public consciousness, so as to demonstrate how the public and historical are indivisible from the private and biographical (*A Poetics of Postmodernism*, 94). Historiography is always, in a way, biased and personal. Consequently, Saleem provides the reader with his own

account of the important events in Indian history. Along with the detailed description of his birth, which is simultaneous to the birth of India as an independent country and which “implies his *synecdochical* relationship to India” (Frank, *Migration and Literature* 138), Saleem also recounts events such as the Amritsar massacre of 1919, the elections of 1957 and 1977, the Bombay language marches of 1956, the Sino-Indian War of 1962, the Indo-Pakistani wars of 1965 and 1971, the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971, the period of Emergency from 1975 to 1977, etc. Nevertheless, each of these events is portrayed in order to depict a greater social or political issue looming from below the surface.

In order to depict the forceful nature of British colonialism, Saleem narrates the story of his grandparents who find themselves in Amritsar on a seemingly peaceful protest on April 13, 1919. As the crowd gathers for a peaceful protest, Aadam’s nose begins to itch harder and harder, as if he were sensing the imminent danger. Once a British Colonel, Brigadier Dyer, issues a command to shoot the people in the masses, Aadam sneezes. At that very moment, his “‘doctori-attaché’ flies open; bottles, liniment and syringes scatter in the dust. He is [...] trying to save his equipment before it is crushed. There is a noise [...] and someone falls on him. Red stuff stains his shirt” (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 41). Aadam, who, as an Indian doctor educated in Germany, should help heal the existing discord between the two worlds, is now locked in a stalemate in the middle of one of the bloodiest and most violent conflicts between the British officials and Indian natives. Goonetilleke claims that after the First World War India was marked by growing nationalism (23). As a result, numerous campaigns were put into action to support the idea of India as an independent country. One such campaign was Mahatma Gandhi’s attempt to organise a peaceful protest against the British government in Amritsar, which was silenced by the killings of thousands of participants. As a result, the fact that Aadam’s medical equipment flies open leaves him deprived of any chance to prevent the conflict, or heal the wounded. He is left desperate – a living proof of the impossibility of ever finding an equal grounding between the two worlds. After this experience, Aadam “becomes an Indian” (Goonetilleke 24). He begins to feel incredibly detached from anything Europe-related, especially the British.

After Amritsar, both Aadam and the majority of other Indians, begin to suffer from the so-called “optimism disease” (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 46), greatly opposing the British dominance and believing in Indian unity and the possibility of independence. In this sense,

optimism disease serves yet as another element of magic, in order to depict the growing sense of enthusiasm towards the idea of independent India and the possibility of its prosperous future. The idea of Indian Independence grows stronger by day and the movement is led by Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nerhu and M. A. Jinnah. However, the emerging optimism and the apparent unity of Indian people are soon disrupted. According to the BBC documentary, *India's Partition: The Forgotten Story*, the three leaders soon entered a state of discord. That is, Jinnah's insistence on the prosperity of the Muslims distanced him from Gandhi and Nehru. Such a discord also suited the British who not only instigated these conflicts in the first place, but they also decided, in fear of the possibility that independent India, as conceived by Nehru, would have been too much of a threat for Britain, to support Jinnah. Therefore, The Muslim League, led by Jinnah, began to advocate a "two nation theory", which claims that Hindus and Muslims are two different nations which need to be separated in two different national territories (Weickgennant Thiara 21). However, Rushdie opposes such ideas by introducing the anti-Partition Free Islam Convocation, under the leadership of Mian Abdullah, or the Hummingbird (Weickgennant Thiara 21). Mian, albeit a fictional character, represents the idea of a Muslim advocating a unified, standalone India. However, Mian is soon assassinated and his assassination marks the end of hope for India's hybrid unity and the end of the period of optimism. The Partition appears as the only solution for India's Independence.

The moment of Independence and the simultaneous birth of Saleem, Shiva and India as an independent nation is also marked by something that Saleem only glimpses over – the Partition massacres. Although these massacres between the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs mark one of the most horrific events in Indian history, Saleem decides to evict them out of his account, for they do not fit into the story. Not only do these massacres diminish the glorious birth of Saleem and his nation, but they also signal the horrors of the growing discord between the Muslims and the Hindus – the discord that will only escalate in the Indo-Pakistani wars two decades after that. In this sense, Saleem's history "resembles benevolent imperialist historiography with its account of an almost unblemished birth of independent India" (Weickgennant Thiara 26). As any other historiographer, Saleem becomes partial. He tailors history so as to suit his purposes.

Moreover, in depicting a Sino-Indian conflict of 1962, Saleem points to the importance of propaganda and how it changes written historical records. A conflict which has emerged out of the border dispute is demonstrated as an attack on the innocent by each of the participants. Whereas

India announces the news of an “unprovoked attack on India” (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 414), China states that “*In self-defence, Chinese frontier guards were compelled to strike back resolutely*” (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 414). Therefore, war propaganda greatly influences historiography. Each side of the conflict reads history in a different way, so as to suit its purpose. As Saleem proposes, “in a country where the truth is what it is instructed to be, reality quite literally ceases to exist, so that everything becomes possible except what we are told is the case” (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 453).

Furthermore, Saleem’s depiction of the Indo-Pakistani wars once again places himself and his family at the centre of history. As he suggests, he is of the belief that the hidden purpose of the war in 1965 was the “elimination of [his] benighted family from the face of the earth” (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 469). The conflict between India and Pakistan which revolved around the region of Kashmir causes the extinction of his entire family. Such horrific experience, in which Saleem and his family are yet again victimized by history, pushes him into an a-historic and a-temporal state. Saleem enters the Sundarbans jungle in East Pakistan and becomes *the buddha*. He loses his memory and is, thus, deprived of history and, as a result, of his identity. That is why he no longer uses the personal pronoun “I”, but speaks of the buddha at a third-person (Rege 158). Therefore, as the buddha, he “simply records, impersonally, minus [his] individual perspective” (Goonetilleke 37). In the same way that Pakistan was divided from India and Bangladesh will be divided from West Pakistan, the buddha divides present from past (Goonetilleke 38). He is at the same time completely compliant and yet entirely free, for he has no historical baggage to drag him back to himself and his identity. However, his a-historical condition is retold more like an “act of weakness and submission” (Rege 158). Accordingly, the Sundarbans chapter is different in texture from all the others and represents a descent into hell (Goonetilleke 38), or, as Rege claims, “he is drawn into the depths of his insanity” (159), since the state of a-historicity is a state without responsibilities and such a state comes with a great price. As each individual is historically constructed, there is no escape from history. Saleem confirms this by claiming that, after the Sundarbans, “my old life was waiting to reclaim me. I should have known: no escape from past acquaintance. What you were is forever who you are” (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 513).



A snake bite brings back most of his memory and Saleem emerges out of the Sundarbans in 1971, just in time for the second Indo-Pakistani war and the Bangladesh Liberation War. Once again at the wrong side of history, Saleem describes this experience as follows:

[...] Shaheed and I saw many things which were not true, which were not possible, because our boys would not could not behaved so badly; we saw men in spectacles with heads like eggs being shot in side-streets, we saw the intelligentsia of the city being massacred by the hundred, but it was not true because it could not have been true, [...] we moved through the impossible hallucination of the night, hiding in doorways while fires blossomed like flowers, [...] there were slit throats being buried in unmarked graves, and [...] the Buddha spoke, [...] ‘a person must sometimes choose what he will see and what he will not; look away, look away from there now’” (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 524).

Namely, Saleem describes in great detail the situation occurring in East Pakistan before the liberation of Bangladesh – the conflicts between the Bengali population supported by India and the Pakistani Muslim population. These horrific war atrocities committed by both sides are described as impossible and untrue. What this scene highlights is, in fact, yet another growing discord. This time, the conflict occurs not only between the Muslims – that is, the Pakistanis – and the Hindus – or Indians – but also between the West Pakistanis and the East Pakistanis. The territory which was once a totality of India is now torn between numerous conflicts. However, each side of the conflict chooses to represent only those parts of the truth that suit their purpose. Consequently, one is forced to choose what version of truth s/he will see – whom s/he would blame and which idea s/he would support. In other words, the scene suggests that historiography is constructed in such a way so that it supports a particular idea and it can, in this way, embellish the truth and erase the atrocities committed in those empty textual gaps between the historical facts. Moreover, the sarcastic tone of the above-quoted paragraph also emphasizes the harshness of these atrocities. There is a sense of panic provoked by having to witness yet again such harsh communal violence. By having the narrator negate their occurrence, Rushdie makes these events appear even more dreadful to the reader. It seems as if Saleem were in such a state of shock that he cannot believe his eyes. Furthermore, elements of magic are added to his account to further highlight the horrendous events. As Saleem suggests, “afterwards people would never forget how a mosque had screamed out the terrible agony of war” (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 526). The mosque, as a

token of Muslim religion, a site of peace and accord, is now personalized and utters a scream of terror at the sight of discord and violence taking place within Indian society.

Saleem manages to escape Pakistan by the help of Parvati-the-witch and her magic. She smuggles him into India by making him disappear in a wicker basket. However, in India, he is confronted with history once again - faced with the reign of Indira Gandhi and, later on, the period of Emergency. Saleem again places himself at the centre of history, beginning to believe that it is he who must save his own country from Indira. Since during the Emergency, Indira's government becomes thoroughly autocratic, in order to fight this kind of totalitarianism, Saleem decides to join the communist movement. He begins to live in a magician's ghetto and takes on their communist beliefs – their emphasis on the importance of the community and the strive towards equality. As he claims, “I began zealously to turn red and then redder, as [...] my father had once turned white, so that now my mission of saving-the-country could be seen in a new light” (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 554). Here Rushdie once again plays with literalized metaphors, referring to the previously-mentioned scene of his father's becoming white. Saleem's skin begins to assume the colour associated with communism. However, the magician's ghetto is destroyed by Indira's forces. The whole camp is literally put to the ground by the military forces led by Shiva. In this sense, Shiva is reminiscent of Sanjay Gandhi, Indira's son, who was mostly associated with the horrific occurrences during the period of Emergency. Therefore, Saleem is captured and, “like the self-appointed leaders of the Indian nationalist movement, [he] is to betray the people he claims to represent” (Rege 159) – the *Midnight's Children* and, as a consequence, India. While he is tortured, he reveals the names and locations of *Midnight's Children*, who are then brought in for questioning and later sterilized. As previously suggested, the motif of impotence and castration is fairly common throughout the novel. Nevertheless, in this context it gains even greater meaning. Firstly, it addresses the apparent sterilizations of men and women during the Emergency as an attempt to control India's population numbers. However, it also points to the loss of hope for India and the generation of *Midnight's Children*. Since the children “embody vague notions of India's promise and a sense of the extraordinary potential of the nation” (Weickgennant Thiara 33), the prevention of their procreation signifies the destruction of all such hopes of realizing India's potential. Nevertheless, the birth of Parvati and Shiva's son, Aadam, is simultaneous with the birth of Emergency, which points to the fact that Aadam has the potential to become the “first man” to stand up to such a totalitarian horrific regime and offer a new kind of hope for India.

In depicting various historical events, Rushdie also depicts numerous important historical personae. However, these characters bear a greater symbolic value in the text. The “‘true character’ of Rushdie’s source [...] becomes irrelevant, because in his fictional universe the political, symbolical and aesthetic functions of that character override all ‘personal’ considerations” (Treverson 69). For example, Rushdie uses his aunt’s friend, the Urdu poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz, as an inspiration for the character of Nadir Khan (Treverson 68). They were both communists who were forced to spend their lives hiding, due to their political affiliation (Treverson 68). However, Faiz’s character is only used symbolically, in order to depict in what way communism served as the antithesis of the growing nationalism of the Congress Party at the time. As Saleem recounts, “[on] election day, 1957, the All-India Congress was badly shocked. Although it won the election, twelve million votes made the Communists the largest single opposition party” (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 307). Therefore, despite the apparent advocacy of social democracy by the Congress Party, Rushdie notices quite early its totalitarian nationalist tendency, which will later augment in a desperate attempt “to secure [their] centralized state power” (Rege 152). Such a tendency is only counterpoised by the Communist Party for a short period of time. However, since Nadir is depicted as a slightly ridiculous character, passive and incapable, he embodies communism’s eventual incapability of opposing such a strong emerging nationalist force. His impotent marriage to Mumatz, as well as their impotent extramarital affair afterwards “is symbolic of his powerlessness” (Goonetilleke 25), as well as the powerlessness of communism.

Rushdie also caricatures various political figures (Treverson 70). Probably one of the most evident caricatures he depicts in *Midnight’s Children* is that of Indira. Saleem portrays her in the following way:

No colours except green and black [...] the stars are green the Widow is green but her hair is black as black. The Widow sits on a high high chair the chair is green the seat is black the Widow’s hair has a centre-parting it is green on the left and on the right black. High as the sky the chair is green the seat is black the Widow’s arm is long as death its skin is green the fingernails are long and sharp and black. Between the walls the children green the walls are green the Widow’s arm comes snaking down the snake is green the children scream the fingernails are black they scratch the Widow’s arm is hunting see the children run and scream the Widow’s hand curls round them green and black. (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 288).

Indira is called *the Widow*, due to her real-life status of a widow, but also because the notion of a widow is “a figure of ill-omen in Indian culture” (Goonetilleke 34). She is depicted like the wicked witch, “a coming-together of the Wicked Witches of the East and of the West” (Rushdie qtd. in Goonetilleke 34). She is also reminiscent of the black wicked witch from *The Tin Drum* (Goonetilleke 34). That is, the Widow is sitting on her high throne, haunting innocent children, striving to destroy their hopes. As children represent India’s potential, Indira seems to prevent India from realising this potential. Moreover, since during Indira’s rule, “India is being made impotent” (Goonetilleke 34), so are the children. The Widow’s hair is also parted at the centre. Rosenberg notices that such a parting should be interpreted as the duality of India’s economy at the time – the white part symbolizes the official part, whereas the black part stands for the underground and corrupt part (21). Moreover, the parting can symbolize the two sides of Emergency – the white part, which was public, documented, a matter for historians, and a black part, which was secret, macabre, and untold (Rosenberg 21). Moreover, the parting of her hair is reminiscent of the goddess Devi, “the Mother-goddess in her most terrible aspect, [...] with a centre-parting and schizophrenic hair” (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 612). The notion of the mother is reminiscent of Bengali mother goddess worship and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s image of the land as mother – the *Bharat Mata* (Weickgennant Thiara 123-124). As a result, Indira’s position of a totalitarian nationalist leader is equated to that of the mother goddess – the mother of India, who is, in fact, the embodiment of India. Nevertheless, she is not a benevolent mother goddess, but a wild, schizophrenic, Medea-like Mother of India, willing to devour her children. She is more of a “demon goddess than Bharat Mata” (Gupte qtd. in Weickgennant Thiara 150). Rushdie chooses to disrupt the notion of Bharat Mata, for it is an exclusively Hindu tendency of equating their deity with Indian nation. As he suggests, Indira “became, by the end, too much a Hindu, and too little a national leader” (“Dynasty” 50), making the division between the Hindus and the Muslims appear even deeper.

Other important political figures, such as Nehru and M. Gandhi, are also present in the novel. Nehru is depicted as a great orator, giving a speech at the exact moment of India's Independence. “We have to build the noble mansion of free India, where all her children may dwell. A flag unfurls: it is saffron, white and green” (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 158). That is, Nehru promotes the idea of India as a secular nation based on “unity in diversity” (Weickgennant Thiara 10), free of the British influence – a self-sustainable country, ready to progress and

modernise. Unlike Indira's colours, which are green and black, the colours of Nehru are saffron, white and green – the colours of the Indian flag. In this sense, his belief of India who is able “to absorb various influences and incorporate them without losing its basic cultural characteristics” (Weickgennant Thiara 10) is teeming with hopes of better future. However, these hopes will soon be shattered by the Hindu-Muslim conflicts and Hindu nationalism.

Furthermore, Saleem narrates another important moment for India's history and its loss of hope and potential – Mahatma Gandhi's death. As Rushdie suggests, Gandhi “was murdered by Nathuram Godse, a member of the Hindu-fanatic RSS, who blamed the Mahatma for the Partition of India” (“Attenborough's Gandhi” 103). However, Saleem admits a mistake about the time of Gandhi's death, claiming that “in [his] India, Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time” (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 230). That is, Gandhi's death signifies “India's loss of innocence, demonstrating the internal ruptures in Indian society” (Trousdale 111) – namely, the division between the Hindus and the Muslims. Since Gandhi advocated religious and independent India, which would have been based on religious and ethnic plurality, his death represents the beginning of the inner chaos that will only further intensify as the time, and the novel, progresses. Gandhi's death also alienates the Sinai family from India – they have now become the Other, the Muslims, and not solely Indians (Trousdale 112). Bearing all of this in mind, Gandhi really does die at the wrong time. Only a year after Independence, India's hopes for prosperity based on its hybrid, religiously plural grounds have already been trampled on. However, despite Saleem's emphasis on the moment of Gandhi's death as the moment of the emerging Hindu-Muslim conflicts, these conflicts have been present way before Gandhi's death. Nevertheless, since Saleem manipulates his history, and avoids mentioning the Partition massacres, he introduces the notion of communal violence through the death of the political figure most associated with the notion of peace.

However, there is a reason why both Gandhi and Nehru appear only in short instances within the world of the novel. Both have been thought of as representatives of India. On the one hand, Gandhi was “the man of the masses, dedicated to a simple life, self-denial, asceticism, who was [however] financed all his life by super-capitalist patrons” (Rushdie, “Attenborough's Gandhi” 104). Hence, there is this other side to his alleged simplicity. Moreover, despite the fact that Gandhi emphasised the need for respect between the members of various religious communities, and a unity that transcends these differences, he was still a Hindu, led by numerous Hindu beliefs, and

for that reason, the Muslim population would struggle to identify with his policies. In the same way, Nehru's position as the *father of the nation* is also thoroughly problematic in this sense. Despite the fact that he advocated the idea of a secular, social and unified India, his rivalry with Jinnah proved that in Nehru's vision of India, the privileged would be the majority – that is, the Hindu population. Therefore, neither of these leaders could represent India as a whole. Rushdie, in fact, holds a grudge against “the nationalist hero myth” (Trousdale 109) in general and even attacks “the concept of heroism as a whole” (Trousdale 114), since there are dangerous consequences of “adopting such a view of history where the course of history is depicted as being shaped by a single protagonist” (Weickgennant Thiara 30). However, the rivalry between Gandhi and Nehru, as well as the opposition between their ideologies, is of extreme importance for understanding India's nature. As Rushdie suggests:

Nehru was not Gandhi's disciple. They were equals and they argued fiercely. Their debate was central of the freedom movement – Nehru, the urban sophisticate who wanted to industrialize India, to bring it to the modern age, versus the rural, handicraft-loving, sometimes medieval figure of Gandhi: the country lived this debate, and it had to choose. India chose Gandhi with its heart, but in terms of practical politics, it chose Nehru. One can understand nothing about the nature of India's independence unless one understands the conflict between these two great men (Rushdie, “Attenborough's Gandhi” 105).

In other words, both Nehru and Gandhi represented different sides of India. However, it would be impossible to claim that they could ever represent the whole. Nevertheless, the dynamic between them is of great importance for India as a nation, and, in this sense, for Rushdie's novel, as well. As there is no Gandhi without Nehru and vice versa, there is also no Saleem without Shiva, nor Shiva without Saleem.

The duality of Shiva and Saleem is, in fact, a manifestation of a greater division that has been long present within the Indian society. The idea of India gaining independence had been present in India long before 1947. One of the most burning questions has been that of the formation of the Indian national identity. As Trousdale maintains, “India contains many subdivisions: citizens belong to states, language groups, religions, ethnicities, tribes, castes, and classes, and each market potentially carries its own sense of communal identity” (96). Therefore, the notion of the nation is immensely complicated to define within the Indian context. What obfuscates the nature of Indian national identity is the distinction between the national and communal identity (Trousdale 95).

That is, on the level of the nation, all of India's people, despite their ethnic, religious or language differences, are equally Indian (Trousdale 95) and should be able to imagine their identity as "pan-Indian" (Trousdale 96). However, bearing in mind the amount of divergent religious, ethnic, tribal and other groups who have been long present in India, the creation of such a pan-Indian identity asks for the ability of overcoming centuries of emphatic communal differences. As a result, numerous communities in India developed their own nationalist movements (Trousdale 95). The awakening of such ethnic/religious nationalist feelings is what stirs the feeling of terror in Rushdie. Were national identity to be built on the basis of any communal identity, such a move inevitably involves the exclusion of other communities, as well as the augmentation of the feeling of hatred and exclusivity towards other groups.

Years before Rushdie, in his novel *The Home and the World*, Rabindranath Tagore addresses this problem. He creates a dichotomy between the two male characters, Nikhil and Sandip. On the one hand, Nikhil advocates the idea of cosmopolitan India, "free from fetters of materialism, nationalism [...] and religious and racial orthodoxy" (Rathi 186). His vision of Indian national identity is that of pan-Indian nation, which has embraced its hybrid nature. However, Nikhil is greatly affected by his westernized education and his privileged upper-caste position. In this sense, he contests Indian tradition and its authority, but also relies too much on the privileged position he gains within the colonial system. On the other hand, Sandip represents the creation of Indian national identity out of the Hindu communal identity, since he manifests the Hindu nationalist streak. He is utterly anti-colonial and focused on the poor lower castes and their prosperity. However, as the novel progresses, his version of nationalism goes into extremes and comes to represent fanaticism, violence and divisiveness. Tagore deeply feared that Hindu nationalism had great potential to turn into a type of terrorism, for he was convinced that what all nationalist leaders had in common was the eventual tendency to seek only personal gain, under the pretence of seeking what is best for the nation (Rathi 186). Therefore, in his strong opposition to the Crown, Sandip dives into a sort of tyranny himself. As he claims, it is necessary to rule "with an iron hand" (Tagore 130), since "[in] the case of those who are slaves by nature, the lack of a strong master is the greatest of all calamities" (Tagore 130). Therefore, he presents himself as the upper-hand – the *superior* leader of the *inferior* masses. He looks down upon his fellow Indians and diminishes their power in order to extract his own. Moreover, as a Hindu leader, he fuels even greater hatred towards the Muslim population. According to Weickgennant Thiara, the Bengali middle class at

the time consisted of mainly upper-caste Hindus who imagined India as a Hindu nation, whose glorious Vedic past was deteriorated by the Muslim rule (6) and Sandip uses such a belief to his advantage.

Rushdie continues such analogy by introducing the rivalry between Saleem and Shiva. However, he dares to go one step further than Tagore. Both Saleem and Shiva are born at midnight and soon after that swapped by the nurse, Mary Pereira. Therefore, each one of them, in fact, lives the life the other should have lived. As Saleem's double, Shiva starts off by constantly contesting Saleem's authority as the leader of the group. For example, in one of the meetings of Midnight's Children's Conference, Shiva verbally attacks Saleem:

And now I: 'But people are not things; if we come together, if we love each other, if we show that this, just this, this people-together, this Conference, this children-sticking-together-through-thick-and-thin, can be that third way...' But Shiva, snorting: 'Little rich boy, that's all just wind. All that importance-of-the-individual. All that possibility-of-humanity. Today, what people are is just another kind of thing.' And I, Saleem, crumbling: 'But... free will... hope... the great soul, otherwise known as *mahatma*, of mankind... and what of poetry, and art, and...' Whereupon Shiva seized his victory: 'You see? I knew you'd turn out to be like that. Mushy, like overcooked rice (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 355).

Accordingly, Saleem advocates tolerance in hybridity, the coming-together of people, a creation of a heterogeneous unity out of various different pieces of the puzzle. He calls it *that third way* – namely, not solely a modernized, cosmopolitan India which relies too much on its colonial history and its ties to the Crown, nor a nationalist, totalitarian Hindu India, but a third kind of India. This *third way* would, therefore, come to embody a new path for India to take – a path in which all of the differences would be acknowledged, plurality and hybridity would be cherished, the inner chaos which characterizes India would be embraced, and India would come to terms with its colonial history. As Saleem claims about himself:

I am the sum total of everything that went before me, of all I have been seen done, of everything done-to-me. I am everyone everything whose being-in-the-world affected was affected by mine. I am anything that happens after I've gone which would not have happened if I had not come. Nor am I particularly exceptional in this matter; each 'I', every one of the now-six-hundred-million-plus of us, contains a similar multitude. I repeat for the last time: to understand me, you'll have to swallow a world (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 535).



In other words, Saleem presents his own identity in a way which reflects the identity of his *third-way* India – India as a hybrid multiplicity of voices, faces, and perspectives. This India is also a sum of its history, connoting that it has come to terms with its colonial past. In this sense, Saleem’s third way goes one step further than Nikhil’s idea of India. Saleem does not look upon the West to create an independent India. On the contrary, what he offers India is an opportunity to accept its own true identity and its colourful richness, its myriad of voices. However, Shiva puts an end to all of Saleem’s hopes and beliefs. He patronizes Saleem, diminishes his authority and presents him as incredibly soft and weak. He also embodies the pitfalls of Hindu nationalism – a tendency towards aggression and violence. Shiva eventually turns into one of Indira’s greatest military leaders and betrays his fellow *Midnight’s Children*.

Therefore, numerous historical references in the novel, as well as real-life historical characters, not only situate the novel within a particular context, but also “bring into question already existing historical assumptions” (Bowers 73). Various political and social questions are addressed and accentuated with a touch of magic, making the possibility of a singular historical truth appear dogmatic and totalitarian. By emphasising the political aspect of these events, and the possibility of numerous interpretations that can be applied to these events, Rushdie also attempts “to encourage a self-reflexiveness in the reader” (Kortenaar qtd. in Bowers 75). The purpose is to make the reader notice the flaws in the ways in which history is recorded and given meaning, and how historiography can be immensely partial, dogmatic, and even used as a means of propaganda. As a result, Rushdie’s rewriting of history also serves as a means to critique authoritarian discourse, especially that of communal and religious nationalism. As he claims, there “can be no one way – religious, cultural, or linguistic – of being an Indian; let difference reign” (“The Assassination of Indira Gandhi” 44).

#### 3.4. Postcolonialism in *Midnight’s Children*

Rushdie recognizes the consequences colonialism has had on India, and the ways in which the British Raj further extended the boundaries of India’s already hybrid nature. Therefore, he decides to offer a critique of the colonial system, while at the same time acknowledging all the possible ways in which India might prosper from this influence. In other words, he believes that the only way for India to go forward is to come to terms with its colonial past and embrace its hybrid identity – to make the best out of its conflicting nature. In this sense, Rushdie himself greatly

embodies this multiple hybridity of a postcolonial Indian. He is an Indian brought up in a middle-class Muslim family, yet affected by his Hindu surroundings through his upbringing in Bombay, who was then educated in Britain and graduated at Oxford. As a result, Rushdie's magical realist work comes out as an expression of this inherent hybridity. It also expresses an ex-centric consciousness, which strives to subvert the Western world view and its literary canon. Since Faris claims that magical realism "creates a new decolonized space" (*Ordinary Enchantments* 135) which serves as "a space of reenchantment and the healing of phantoms" (*Ordinary Enchantments* 167), magical realism provides Rushdie with the possibility of creating a new space for India to come to terms with colonial history and accept the hybrid position of the postcolonial society.

Another aspect of postcolonialism lies in the appropriation and abrogation of the imperial language, which magical realism brings to the fore and attempts to construct a language which expresses postcolonial local realism (D'Haen 411). In this sense, Rushdie uses English as a means to express complex Indian postcolonial consciousness. Despite numerous protests and accusations that he is using the language of the *colonizer*, Rushdie continues to advocate the use of English in his work. Firstly, since he was raised in the Muslim family which spoke Urdu, and was yet encouraged to use English as the language of everyday discourse even at home (Cundy 1), English is, in this sense, only a manifestation of Rushdie's "dual consciousness" (Cundy 1) – just another one of his mother tongues. Secondly, Rushdie suggests that his use of English is only a subversion of it – an attempt to subvert English from within, and, in this sense, to undermine the colonial power as well.

In order to understand Rushdie's idea of appropriation of English, it is necessary to return to the beginnings of the British Raj. In the colonization of India, English was used as a means to impose the British power upon Indian population. As Treverson claims, English was presented as the language of reason, which could also solve the problem of the multiplicity of languages in India, and was slowly implemented in educational system (31). As argued by Thomas Babington Macaulay in his "Minute on Education":

the dialects commonly spoken among the natives [...] contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are moreover so poor and rude that [...] the intellectual improvement of those classes of the people who have the means of pursuing higher studies can at present be affected only by means of some language not vernacular amongst them.

In other words, numerous languages in India were deemed inferior and incapable of possessing any literary or scientific value. Hence, Macaulay presents the British as seemingly benevolent benefactors who “offer” their language – the language of science, literature and reason – as a means to prevent the masses from “wasting” their potential away. His thoroughly patronising stance is also observed in a statement that the other two languages that could be introduced as languages of education in India – namely, Arabic and Sanskrit – are also not scientific enough. For Macaulay, these “are the languages in which the sacred books of a hundred millions of people are written” (“Minute on Education”) and, since such literature is closely tied to religions he deems inferior, it is also supportive of “absurd history, absurd metaphysics, absurd physics, absurd theology” (“Minute on Education”). Consequently, as education was only granted to the middle and higher castes, by claiming this the advocates of the implementation of English, in fact, aimed to form a group of Indian supporters of the British Crown. According to Macaulay, the attempt is to “form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect” (“Minute on Education”). In this sense, the aim was to achieve “the cultural domination of Indians” (Treverson 32), in order to ease the process of political, social and economic domination. That is, English had “become the constitutive of thought itself for the educated. It cut them off from their own tradition” (Guha qtd. in Weickgennant Thiara 165). The character like Nikhil from Tagore’s *The Home and the World* or Aadam Aziz from *Midnight’s Children* serve as an apparent example of such privileged individuals who received Westernized education, whether in India, like Nikhil, or Europe, like Aadam. These characters convey the struggle of the two worlds crashing within themselves and never manage to entirely come to terms with it. For example, in a scene in which Saleem narrates his grandfather’s experience in Heidelberg, a sense of self-centredness and superiority is easily felt by the Europeans. “Heidelberg, in which, along with medicine and politics, he learned that India – like radium – had been ‘discovered’ by the Europeans [...] and this was what finally separated Aadam from his friends, this belief of theirs that he was somehow the invention of their ancestors” (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 6).

For that reason, in order to subvert its power, Rushdie opts for the appropriation of the English language. Supporting Guracharan Das’ claim that English has become only one of India’s many languages, and that to remove English would be just as intrusive as it was to introduce it (qtd. in Treverson 34-35), Rushdie tailors English in a different way to suit his means. He believes that,

“we [cannot] simply use the language in the way the British did; [...] it needs remaking for our own purpose” (“Imaginary Homelands” 17). Firstly, he appropriates the speech rhythm of Indian storytelling, and, by doing that, destroys “the natural rhythms of the English language” (Rushdie qtd. in Goonetilleke 43). That is, Indian oral narratives have

all the methods of the modernist novel, because when you have somebody who tells you a story at that length, [...] it probably contains roughly as many words as a novel, and during the course of that story it is absolutely acceptable that the narrator will every so often enter his own story and chat about it – that he’ll comment on the tale, digress because the tale reminds him of something, and then come back to the point. All these things, which are absolutely second nature in an orally told story, become bizarre modern inventions when you write them down (Rushdie qtd. in Goonetilleke 18).

The language of oral storytelling is self-conscious, metafictional, highly digressive and full of formulaic repetitions, and it tends to break its linearity with an anti-linear tendency to return to various narrative motives (Treverson 45-46). Moreover, it enables Rushdie to “convey both the rhythm and sense of the many different Indian dialects without needing to employ any or all of them” (Cundy 7). Secondly, the language is focused on the expression of the senses – on sounds, smells, and tactility (Frank, *Migration and Literature* 155). The senses are especially highlighted in terms of Saleem’s and Aadam Aziz’s olfactory powers, as well as Aadam Sinai’s auditory powers. Therefore, Rushdie suggests that to “conquer English may be to complete the process of making [themselves] free” (“Imaginary Homelands” 17). The appropriation of English neither destroys the Indian idiom, nor does it eliminate other forms of English (Treverson 134). Cundy calls this appropriation of English “the Indianisation or Rushdification of English” (40). By this appropriation and adaptation, Rushdie also steers away from what he calls a “ghetto mentality” (“Imaginary Homelands” 17) – a mentality in which one is only fixated on his/her own community, without acknowledging the valuable properties of the world outside his/her cultural borders. Therefore, Rushdie depicts his act of writing as a “stroke of the decolonizing pen” (qtd. in Cundy 9), which, according to Cundy, indicates his belief that writing in a language that is not one’s own and trying to represent life beyond the scope of colonialism is a strong political act (9).

However, Rushdie not only expresses his postcolonial aspirations through language, but also strives to redefine the meaning of the term nation. According to Rachel Trousdale, Rushdie’s work pertains to a type of literature called “transnational literature”, which redefines the notion of the

nation and national identity and observes them as hybrid, borderless, intellectual and emotional notions, rather than geographical affiliations (2). In other words, this kind of literature addresses “practical and theoretical problems of migrancy” (Trousdale 1). It creates alternative fictional worlds in order to make space for a realization of this international, borderless potential. That is, “the world of fiction provides a locus for ‘transnational space’” (Trousdale 16). It also depicts the migrant experience and what it really feels like to inhabit the intersection of cultures. The attempt is to “provide alternative identities [and] [realities] not simply for members of diasporas or migrants from a single location but for what Rushdie calls a ‘community of displaced persons’, each one of whom is simultaneously rooted in a place of origin and in the imagined world of transnationality” (Trousdale 13). The reader is forced to acknowledge that diversity is good and that cultural dialogue is a necessity (Trousdale 16).

Therefore, the alternative world Rushdie creates in *Midnight's Children* is thoroughly hybrid, and yet, this “hybridity is simultaneously local, as varying Indian groups merge in the genealogy and experiences of a single individual, and global, as Western cultural artefacts enter the Indian mainstream” (Trousdale 92). In other words, it reflects India's inner hybridity, as well as the outcomes of its colonial history. Rushdie's fiction also opens up a “liminal space between mythologized national histories and physical reality” (Trousdale 92). That is, he questions various national myths and historical accounts and presents them in a different light, in order to demonstrate their fictitiousness, their malleability, and their nature which is prone to change in accordance with various interpretations.

As a result, the sense of national identity becomes only a myth, a category imposed upon an individual which s/he chooses to accept and support. From this perspective, national identity is a fluid category which is an end in itself and is easily laid out for questioning and redefinition. In a country like India plurality and chaos must be accepted as integral parts of the national identity. Such identity cannot be represented by a single person nor by a single minority. India is not Nehru's, Mahatma Gandhi's or Indira Gandhi's. It is neither singularly Hindu, nor singularly Muslim. It is most definitely not a British property. Neither is it Saleem's. As Trousdale suggests, the fact that Saleem disintegrates at the end of the novel does not signify the destruction of India nor of Indian national identity, but “the necessity of relinquishing exclusionary representations wherein one exemplary body stands for the subjective realities of hundreds of millions of people”

(94). In this sense, Rushdie makes “forming a national identity India’s greatest problem” (Trousdale 114) and advocates plurality on every turn. He insists that “all cultures are inherently plural, inherently intertextual, and that any ideological insistence upon purity, separation and singularity is a falsification of culture” (Trousdale 58). As a result, in a plural postcolonial society, such as India, influences from all sides must be acknowledged, accepted and integrated within a new sort of identity which would be plural in its every pore. The identity of India should be “a dialogue between rival groups, each of which must recognize its difference from and similarity to its interlocutors” (Trousdale 115).

In this sense, *Midnight’s Children* also addresses the concept of migration. Frank introduces the term *migration literature* in order to suggest that Western culture is defined by a belief that individuals are rooted in their place of origin, whereas, in fact, the protagonists of popular novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, of the works of migration literature, have turned out to be migrants (*Migration and Literature* 1). Consequently, migration literature “deals primarily with colonialism/postcolonialism, which means that migration is regarded as a phenomenon strongly related to people who were formerly colonized, most notably by the British Empire” (Frank, *Migration and Literature* 11). Consequently, Frank introduces five functions of migration, which can be traced in Rushdie’s novel. Firstly, the role of authorial biography is accentuated by the fact that Rushdie himself is a migrant. Numerous autobiographical elements emerge in the novel. For example, just like Saleem, Rushdie was born on the stroke of midnight in Bombay in 1947, just two months before Independence, on June 19, in a Muslim family (Frank, *Migration and Literature* 129). That is, Rushdie “is a child of midnight, formed and raised by the secular ideals of the Nehru Congress in the days when Independent India itself was young” (Rege 164). Moreover, Rushdie’s family also moved to Pakistan in 1964 (Frank, *Migration and Literature* 130), which turned out to be a breaking point in Rushdie’s life, for he also felt suddenly disoriented, as if he had lost the “east” (Treverson 76). As Rushdie claims, the drive behind *Midnight’s Children* was, in fact, the need to restore the past for himself – to remember and retell his own account of the events in Indian history to himself (“Imaginary Homelands” 10).

Furthermore, novel’s characters in migration literature are also migrants (Frank, *Migration and Literature* 18). Saleem is a hybrid, a product of the merging of cultures, a product of postcolonialism and of Indian Independence, a migrant commuting between India and Pakistan,

etc. As he claims, “to know me [...], you’ll have to swallow the lot as well. Consumed multitudes are jostling and shoving inside me” (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 4). Since “identity has become a *postulate*” (Frank, *Migration and Literature* 133), Saleem has to come up with his own, amidst all of his inherited cultural contradictions. However, such a task is in itself impossible. His migrant identity deprives him of a territory in which he could root himself and he comes “to personify the condition of transcendental homelessness” (Frank, *Migration and Literature* 133). Deprived of fixed points of origin, his identity is “rhizomatic – [...] a network of multiple *knots* and *threads* that interconnect and proliferate through air; not as a tree, but as moss or grass” (Frank, *Migration and Literature* 141). Rhizome does not necessarily imply rootlessness – it just supposes that roots can be multiple (Frank, *Migration and Literature* 141). In other words, an individual can pertain to more places at once and let his/her roots in numerous places. Saleem’s rhizomatic identity is, according to Frank, even more problematized by his family tree which, in fact, ceases to be a tree and turns into a rhizomatic field (*Migration and Literature* 134-135). Saleem is not a biological child of Ahmed and Amina and the “genealogical structure so carefully outlined [...] throughout the first book is completely subverted when he discloses that instead of being [their] son, he is in fact a simulacrum in the genealogies of the Aziz and the Sinai families” (Frank, *Migration and Literature* 135). He also, as it has already been discussed, comes up with numerous fictive, imaginary parents of his own.

As a part of its historiography endeavour, *Midnight’s Children* also questions the notion of nation and nationalism. In a similar vein to Trousdale’s claims about the idea of nation, Frank asserts that nation turns out to be imagined in a “new hybrid and antinativist ways” (*Migration and Literature* 157). The question of what “the nation [means] to a person who does not belong to one, but to several nations” (Frank, *Migration and Literature* 18) haunts the reader throughout the entire reading experience and remains unanswered. The migrant is trapped in a constant state of not belonging, and incapable of coming to terms with the sense of his national identity. In a similar way, Saleem belongs neither to India, nor to Pakistan, and yet he is a product of both. He is trapped in a state of constant not-belonging.

Moreover, Frank claims that migration deals with the question of European influence and globalization (*Migration and Literature* 18). Saleem grows up with his family on an estate owned by William Methwold, a British citizen living in India. Before Independence, Methwold decides

to sell his estate, under the condition that everything stays preserved in it. In this sense, Methwold's Estate symbolizes the colonial rule and its influence on India. After Independence, the estate is inhabited by Indians, and yet, all of the Indian natives are confronted with the tokens of British government that are not allowed to be moved or changed. In other words, Indians are still confronted with the consequences of the colonial power and have to learn how to cope with them. The last time Methwold appears in the novel, his wig is taken off, and he is described as a hairless Samson, deprived of his power: "William Methwold's power had resided in his hair; but now, bald patch glowing in the dusk, he flings his thatch through the window of his motor-car; distributes, with what looks like carelessness, the signed title-deeds to his palaces" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 153). The farce of the Raj has been uncovered and the power of this Western colonial Samson has been diminished. Yet there are numerous consequences left for Indians to overcome.

As it has been suggested previously, Brennan describes Rushdie as one of the *Third World cosmopolitans* – that is, migrant intellectuals who at the same time represent the Western metropolitan elites and the public voices of the Third World (qtd. in Treverson 195). The Third World cosmopolitans advertise change, but with such a familiar strangeness that the Western intellectual institutions are prone to easily accepting these previously marginalized voices (Treverson 195). However, Brennan argues that Rushdie's fiction is, in this sense, only useful to the Western audiences, for it is addressed precisely to them (qtd. in Treverson 196). Nevertheless, such a claim completely neglects the fact that such cosmopolitans can make both sides of the conflict prosper. Firstly, the novel, as the Western form, is now suited according to the needs of the Other. It is written in the language of the colonizer, and yet this language is largely appropriated to suit the Other's needs. Secondly, the story is now told through the voice and perspective of the Other. The Other is, in this sense, no longer as exoticised. S/he does master the language of the West, but only in order to subvert it, challenge it, and dethrone it. In this sense, the other is enabled to show his/her real face – as well as the true multiple face of his/her culture. Consequently, there is hope that magical realism may further deepen the amount of tolerance and understanding in the Western reader and diminish the gap between the two worlds. It may also expose the constructiveness of exoticism projected onto Indians (Aldama 7).

As a result, hybridity represents "a new way of life" (Cooper 21). It is posed as a possible *third way* – the act of compiling and blending the complete opposites in order to overcome all the



shortcomings of colonial history. As Rege suggests, “this is the spirit in which Rushdie writes, sensitive to the dualities inherent in postcoloniality, accepting – even flaunting – them rather than attempting to deny or conceal them” (161). That is, “duality as method enables him to expose dualism as prison” (Rege 161) and advocate the idea of comingling, of multiplicity. As Treverson claims, in Rushdie, difference is not eliminated but proliferated (134).

#### 4. Conclusion

The purpose of this discussion has been to prove that magical realism is a highly political mode which has a strong basis in the extra-textual world and which uses this power to lay bare the fictionality and narrativized nature of reality and history. In this way, it provides the postcolonial authors, such as Rushdie, with a strong basis on which they can create alternative realities of their own and, in this way, create a space in which postcolonial subjects can accept their hybrid identities and possibly come to terms with their colonial history.

Therefore, the paper focuses on the origins of magical realism from Roh’s first mentioning of the term *Magischer Realismus* to Flores’ introduction of the literary term *magical realism*. By observing various definitions by Warnes, Slemon, Faris and Leal, magical realism has been defined as a literary mode in which the supernatural elements emerge out of the natural organically and naturally and are accepted as normal by the author and the characters, as well as the reader. In this sense, the world of magical realism is very much based in the extra-textual reality, but it uses elements of magic to question and offer an alternative view of it, and, in this way, magical realism assumes its political stance.

Furthermore, magical realism has been observed within the context of the theory of the fantastic. After a short introduction into Todorov and Jackson’s theory, it has been concluded that magical realism does not fit any of Todorov’s genres and sub-genres, nor does it fit Jackson’s modes of the fantastic. Therefore, the solution has been encountered in Chanady’s definition of magical realism as a mode of its own which, unlike the fantastic, places the supernatural within the realist context, but accepts this supernatural as normal, and not as an anomaly.

The paper also argues that magical realism pertains to Hutcheon’s historiographic metafiction. That is, magical realism is a kind of literature which admits its fictionality, and, in this sense, lays bare all the ways in which literature in general, human knowledge, reality, history and

historiography are also human constructs – fictionalised and narrativised. Therefore, magical realism uses numerous literary and historical intertexts to open the text up for questioning and prove that there are no absolute truths – every account is only a version of the truth. Moreover, these intertexts are even more emphasised by the use of magic, as is their meaning.

Magical realism is then discussed in connection to postcolonialism. Bearing in mind that magical realism most commonly emerges in postcolonial societies, marked by centuries of hegemony and characterised by complex hybridity, it has become a means for postcolonial subjects to express their consciousness which in itself is hybrid – a mixture of ancient beliefs and cultures and the Western logic and literary canon. In this sense, magical realism has provided postcolonial authors with a space in which they can subvert the language of the colonizer and use it to express their own local realism. Moreover, it has provided these authors with a space in which they can situate their alternative realities – realities in which they are enabled to rewrite colonial history and come to terms with it, but also realities in which their hybrid identities are perceived as the norm and in which the notion of the nation and national exclusivity is subverted and redefined and turned into an all-inclusive, hybrid notion.

All these claims are then applied to the analysis of Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. Rushdie, as a hybrid postcolonial, uses the mode of magical realism in order to rewrite Indian history, and in that process, lays bare the pitfalls of totalitarian regimes – namely, totalitarian nationalistic movements, autocratic governments and religious idealisms. In Rushdie, magic is conveyed in language, through the use of literalized metaphors and repetitions, and elements of magic are used in order to highlight greater problematic political aspects looming in the background. In other words, Rushdie's novel tries to redefine the position of an individual within the context of a hybrid nation which constantly strives towards unification, but constantly turns towards some kind of totalitarianism. Moreover, Rushdie's novel also strives to rewrite history and focuses on the fictionality of historiography. That is, if historiography is created out of memory, it is inevitably partial and flawed.

Therefore, in positioning his protagonist as a postcolonial hybrid historiographer, Rushdie lays bare all the pitfalls of historiography. On the one hand, Saleem is deeply manipulative. He positions himself at the centre of history and tailors it in order to suit his purposes. He changes historical information, sometimes on purpose and sometimes due to his bad memory. In this way,

he proves the partiality of historiography and its constructiveness. However, Saleem is a postcolonial subject who is given a voice, as well as the opportunity to retell Indian history through his perspective. His account of various important historical occurrences in Indian history, such as the Amritsar massacre, the Independence and the Partition, the Sino-Indian war, the Indo-Pakistani wars, and the Emergency are teeming with elements of magic in order to subvert the official historical records and question their nature in its entirety, and also to emphasise the harshness of the atrocities committed. Moreover, through a depiction of various historical personae, such as M. Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah, I. Gandhi, etc., Rushdie operates through the mouth of Saleem, offering his critique of Indian leaders and the decisions which affected India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in such horrific ways.

However, in all of his complexity, Saleem, and in this sense Rushdie also, proposes a *third way* – both for India and for postcolonial subjects in general. He advocates the embracement of hybridity in every possible way, claiming that India should cherish its diversity and find its unity through the embracement of its inner chaos. Only by doing so, will it become possible for India to overcome its colonial past as well as the past deeply affected by communal conflicts. Nevertheless, in this way, Rushdie also advocates hybridity in terms of national identity in a global sense. In a globalized world in which the borders are seemingly being eroded and the similarities tend to increase, every individual, in one way or another, is turned into a sort of a hybrid and a migrant. In this sense, hybridity should not be perceived as a sign of contamination, but embraced and praised in its totality.

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## 6. Abstract

The paper traces the interrelatedness between magical realism and historiography and observes how the two manifest in a postcolonial context through the analysis of Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children*. The paper first provides a theoretical background of magical realism. It traces its origins in order to provide a thorough definition of the term. Then it places magical realism within the context of the theory of the fantastic, to observe how it fits the categories conceived by Tzvetan Todorov, Rosemary Jackson and Amaryll Beatrice Chanady. Moreover, it places magical realism within the context of historiographic metafiction, in order to determine its positioning towards the questions of nature of reality, history and historiography. With all this in mind, magical realism is also studied within the context of postcolonial fiction, in order to observe the reason why it most commonly flourishes in postcolonial societies and what it offers postcolonial subjects. Once the theoretical basis has been constructed, *Midnight's Children* is analysed in the same way. Firstly, the elements of magical realism are traced within the novel, in order to prove how these elements foreground a stronger political message. Secondly, an elaborate study of literary and historical intertexts in the novel is provided, in order to justify its status as historiographic metafiction, and to observe how it questions the fictiveness of history and historiography. Moreover, it is observed how Rushdie condemns the historical and political situation in India through his rewriting of history. Lastly, the postcolonial aspect of the novel is studied in more detail. It is observed how Rushdie, as a postcolonial author, subverts the language of the colonizer and the Western literary canon. Moreover, it is studied how he uses magical realism in order to redefine the notion of nation and national identity and create an alternative world in which hybridity, migration and diversity are praised. By creating such a world, it is claimed that he creates a space for hybrids to transcend their colonial history and come to terms with their multiple hybrid identities.

Keywords: magical realism, historiography, historiographic metafiction, postcolonialism, Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*