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## **Hybridity and Postcoloniality: Formal, Social, and Historical Innovations in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children***

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Hybridity and Postcoloniality: Formal, Social, and Historical Innovations in Salman  
Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

Sarah Bounse  
Senior Honors Thesis Project  
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Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), remains a central text in postcolonial literature. Rushdie's ambitious novel rejects the British colonial versions of India and constructs a 'new' world and a new depiction of Indian citizens and history in an attempt to provide greater truth to Indian images and history. *Midnight's Children* follows Saleem Sinai, the novel's narrator, as he self-consciously explains his family history to the reader and to his listener, Padma. While describing his grandfather and grandmother's personal history, Saleem intertwines Indian history within his narrative. This combination of his own familial history and Indian history culminates in the moment of his birth. Born at precisely midnight, August 15, 1947, Saleem echoes the birth of an independent India, which gained its independence from Great Britain at the same exact moment as Saleem's birth. In this moment, Saleem gains the ability to communicate with the other "midnight children," those also born on the same day as Indian independence. The novel aligns Saleem's narrative to the narrative of a newly independent India, creating an allegorical reading of his character.

*Midnight's Children's* importance and significance as a postcolonial text arises from the novel's ability to intertwine three major themes: the creation and telling of history, the creation and telling of a nation's and an individual's identity, and the creation and telling of stories. Within these three connected themes, the novel explores the problems of postcoloniality, depicted in the novel as the difficulties in assigning one's point of personal or national origin, the problems in determining one's personal and national history, and the impossibility of finding and achieving personal and national "authentic" identity. The novel expresses these themes of the creation and telling of history, identity, and stories, while simultaneously introducing the problems of

postcolonial identity, through connected and dependent forms of hybridity. Within this thesis project, the term hybridity becomes defined as the combination and mixing of multiple, seemingly opposing elements in a manner that maintains the various elements' characteristics. However, through this mixing, the various elements' characteristics subvert and alter the characteristics of the other elements. Through this subversion, the characteristics meld together to create some new element, which shares characteristics with the various elements it was formed from, but maintains its own separate identity from those various elements. *Midnight's Children* remains the embodiment of hybridity, because every aspect of the novel is imbued with this mixing and melding of various elements and characteristics. Along with the use of hybridity, the novel's use of humor throughout the text allows for the enthusiastic and exuberant exploration of Indian postcoloniality and history, allowing the novel to create its own literary and historical identity, instead of forcing the novel to remain a mere retelling of history. Through dependent forms of hybridity, the novel becomes able to openly explore Indian postcoloniality, while discussing the problems associated with this postcoloniality. By understanding *Midnight's Children*, with its complete embodiment of hybridity, it becomes possible to understand the difficulties and problems associated with postcoloniality, along with understanding postcoloniality itself.

The novel employs different levels of hybridization, each depending on each other to exist and work within the text, through which the novel illustrates India's emerging postcoloniality. The ability of the narrator, Saleem Sinai, to wordlessly communicate with the other Indian children born on the same day, the date of Indian independence, August 15, 1947, demonstrates how magical realism gives Indians the opportunity to

communicate the thoughts, desires, and dreams of a nation. The novel employs the formal technique of magical realism, a “hybrid” of realism and the supernatural, through myth and historical events, and Rushdie simultaneously represents ordinary events alongside fantastic elements (Abrams 203). Hence, these “midnight children” “literally give voice to an entire subcontinent,” without the narrative being controlled by British colonial powers; this post-colonial narrative becomes possible with magical realism’s supernatural power to connect post-colonial citizens and allows them to communicate together (D’Haen 198).

The formal technique of magical realism becomes the framework of the novel, through which the characters become able to communicate their individual perspectives and provide their own, more accurate versions of history. Yet magical realism is not merely a stylistic choice made by Rushdie, but instead, it remains a necessary formal innovation needed to adequately express India’s new postcoloniality. Homi Bhabha describes a “‘separate’ place, a space of *separation*...-which has been systematically denied by both colonialists and nationalists who have sought authority in the authenticity of ‘origins.’ It is precisely as a separation from origins and essences that this colonial space is constructed” (Bhabha 1181). This “space of separation” arises through “*Entstellung*,” which is the “process of displacement, distortion, dislocation, [and] repetition;” this process may occur by the colonial powers as they seek to cement their power in colonized lands, or it may occur as the post-colonial people try to separate themselves from their colonizers (Bhabha 1169). Thus, in order to effectively illustrate a new and emerging Indian postcoloniality, it becomes necessary to write in a new method to properly communicate to colonial and post-colonial citizens. Rushdie’s use of magical

realism in *Midnight's Children* becomes not only a new literary technique, but a necessary one, vital to communicate the new problems and struggles associated with Indian postcoloniality.

Within the framework which magical realism provides, the novel's cultural and social hybridity, depicted through the cultural and character diversity within the novel, allows new images of colonial and postcolonial Indian citizens to emerge. As the characters become hybridized socially, through their shifting relationships with each other, the characters alter and change. Through these character interactions and subsequent character changes, the novel depicts societal shifts and historical changes. The relationships between the other "midnight's children," with whom Saleem is able to communicate with, alter after these children learn their parents' religious and traditional beliefs. Before this cultural indoctrination, the children communicate with each other openly, able to discuss their different gifts and talents, but after learning their cultural traditions, the relationships between the children disintegrate. Through the novel's presentation of a multitude of differing characters and allowing these characters to articulate their own histories and stories, a new colonial and post-colonial history emerges through these varying characters' voices, which remained silenced in an imperial and colonial India.

The novel's social and cultural hybridization, illustrated through the multitude of differing characters, also allows historical hybridization to occur, through which the characters may explain more accurate versions of their own colonial and postcolonial history, as opposed to the rigid one-sided version history from their British colonialists. The novel's creation of new and seemingly more accurate versions of Indian colonial and

post-colonial history stems from the text's explicit references to historical events. These new historical depictions depend upon the cultural and social hybridity of the novel's character diversity. Bhabha's term "*Entstellung*," which is the "process of displacement, distortion, dislocation, [and] repetition," occurs now from the Indian characters who attempt to displace and distort British colonial versions of history, and ultimately allows the postcolonial citizen to write his or her own history, as the novel explicitly does.

Saleem Sinai's narrative position in the novel makes him central to the questions of hybridity. He self-consciously calls attention to the process of narrating his story often explains and attempts to justify theatrical and literary devices used in the telling of his story. Saleem's authorship and creation of his life narrative become inextricably linked to India's creation due to the significance of his birth date, the date of Indian independence, August 15, 1947. Saleem melds Indian and his familial history and connects both histories to his own present moment. The simultaneous authorship of his own and India's history serves as a means to articulate and assert his own power and history, as a post-colonial citizen, and his nation's power and history, as a post-colonial nation, instead of remaining under British imperial versions of history. Saleem's position as author, writer, and creator of his familial history brings up the idea that history may be created, just as a family history may be embellished and exaggerated. Saleem appears as a "symbol" for India; his birth and his ability to communicate with his fellow "midnight children" associate him with a "mother-earth" figure, like "Mother India."

Fredric Jameson states that "all third-world texts are necessarily...allegorical...[and] they are to be read as what I will call *national allegories*" (Jameson 69). This reading of the novel seems fair, due to Saleem's

significant birth date, Indian independence, and his supernatural ability to communicate with others born on that date. While Saleem communicates, primarily to Padma, his listener, he simultaneously tries to express himself to the Western world, his former colonial rulers. Padma questions his narrative and forces Saleem to explain himself thoroughly, but Saleem requires Padma to inherently believe in his narration, no matter how ridiculous his story may appear. Saleem's "magical powers" of telepathy, given to him due to his significant birth date, allows him to communicate with all of India's "midnight's children." He maintains this connection between the "midnight's children," and become able to communicate with the diverse number of Indian citizens. Saleem becomes associated with two of the "midnight's children" in particular, Shiva, who, as a war-hero, becomes Saleem's rival, and Parvati-the-witch, a sorceress who eventually becomes Saleem's wife. Shiva and Parvati are both Hindus, while Saleem is Muslim, and their relationships demonstrate the mixing of religious and cultural mythologies present within India. Thus, Saleem's character in the novel serves as an allegory for India, through Saleem's creation of his identity and life narrative, his attempts to explain his narrative, his ability to communicate with other Indian postcolonial citizens, and his association with other religious mythologies and traditions.

*Midnight's Children's* inherently connected levels of hybridity work together to form a new picture of India, as the nation becomes a postcolonial land. Through the formal framework of magical realism, the novel allows its multitude of characters, belonging to different cultural backgrounds, to evaluate and formulate their own versions of Indian history, thus subverting British colonial versions of history. Magical realism becomes necessary to communicate the postcoloniality of India, and within its

framework, the novel explores and presents a postcolonial history of its own. The cultural and social hybridity, along with the historical hybridity present within the novel allows the text to illustrate the major themes of the novel and postcoloniality itself: the creation and telling of history, identity, and narratives. The novel effectively and clearly depicts the problems of postcoloniality, and through the use of hybridity, *Midnight's Children* seeks to show if these problems remain may be solved, and if possible, seeks to solve them.

*Midnight's Children's* setting, Bombay, allows the novel's stylistic innovations and various forms of hybridity to flourish, because the city embodies the multiplicity, theatricality, and diversity which the novel espouses. Bombay's history, expressed through Saleem's narration, explains the process of Indian colonization by the various European powers, such as the Portuguese and the British, along with Bombay's central role in the Indian independence movement, to achieve independence from Great Britain. Using Bombay as the novel's setting, with its religious diversity, social caste differences, and multiplicity, allows the novel to illustrate the struggles of forming a postcolonial identity, due to the various type and number of people present in the city. The city itself is a hybrid, of Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, and Christian; of young and old; of the past and the present moment; within this context, the novel becomes able to express new versions of Indian history and accurately illustrate Indian postcolonial citizens.

Saleem begins his narration with "I was born in the city of Bombay...once upon a time;" the ellipsis demonstrates Saleem's attempts at avoiding assigning a particular point of origin for himself, India, and his narrative. Yet almost immediately, he reconsiders, pinpointing his origin in more specific terms within the novel's first paragraph:

I was born in the city of Bombay...once upon a time. No, that won't do, there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No, it's important to be more...On the stroke of midnight, as a matter a fact. Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world.

Saleem describes the moment of independence, and this historical event takes on new meaning as he attempts to discover the true point of his own and his nation's origins. Inherently connected to this discovery and creation of history is the identity of the nation and the self. Saleem remains confused by his own identity, and within this passage, he describes how he has been called many different names, including "Snotnose, Stainface, Baldy, Sniffer, Buddha and even Piece-of-the-Moon." The difficulties in determining one's identity remains central to the novel and remain connected to determining a nation's identity. The problematic nature of creating an Indian national identity becomes clear within the novel, through the multitude of cultures, religions, and peoples. Yet Saleem embraces his various names, realizing that one of the inherent problems of a postcolonial society is the impossibility of finding and embodying one true "authentic" identity.

Saleem's avoidance and deferral of time, along with his use of ellipses, demonstrates the problem of determining a nation and a postcolonial citizen's point of origin. Does this point of origin begin at the point of independence from the colonial powers, in India's case, August 15, 1947, when they gained independence from Great Britain? Or does this point of origin begin at the beginning of Indian civilization, in Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, or Christian mythology? In the imperial project, the point of origin was created by the imperial colonizers, who determined the point of origin for their particular empire. Yet, the colonized Indian citizen lacked any privilege in determining

his or her own national point of origin. However, although Saleem demonstrates the difficulties in assigning a particular point of origin, within the novel's introduction, he claims Bombay as his story's setting and his own place of origin, his birthplace. Saleem matter-of-factly states his place of origin as Bombay, appearing comfortable with assigning this locality as his origin point. However, he remains reluctant to assign his own point of origin. The novel intimately describes the times and places of its characters, yet often, its characters remain uncomfortable with these categorizations. Through this novel, Rushdie illustrates the extreme difficulty in determining one's national, and in Saleem's case, individual point of origin.

The novel describes the origins of Bombay and illustrates the city's evolutions and changes, from the indigenous people settling the city to colonial powers asserting their control over it. Saleem describes the first settlers of the city:

The fishermen were here first....at the dawn of time, when Bombay was a dumbbell-shaped island tapering, at the center, to a narrow shining strand beyond which could be seen the finest and largest natural harbour in Asia, when Mazagaon and Worli, Matunga and Mahim, Salsette and Colaba were islands, too—in short, before reclamation, before tetrapods and sunken piles turned the Seven Isles into a long peninsula like an outstretched, grasping hand, reaching westward into the Arabian Sea; in this primeval world before clocktowers, the fishermen—who were called Kolis—sailed in Arab dhows, spreading red sails against the setting sun. They caught pomfret and crabs, and made fish-lovers of us all.

There were also coconuts and rice. And, above it all, the benign presiding influence of the goddess Mumbadevi, whose name—Mumbadevi, Mumbabai, Mumbai—may well have become the city's (Rushdie 101).

The narrator describes how the early fishermen settlers of Bombay arrived “the dawn of time,” during which the “primeval world” of the region lacked the “clocktowers” and the focus on regimented time-keeping that the colonialists focused upon. The narrator continues and describes the natural environment of Bombay, the “dumbbell-shaped island

tapering, at the center, to a narrow shining strand...[and the] largest natural harbour in Asia.” The narrator names the regions and island making up Bombay, “Mazagaon, Worli, Matunga, Mahim, Salsette, and Colaba,” and references the natural crops of the region, “coconuts and rice.” These descriptions of early Bombay, as “primeval” and ‘natural,’ links early Indian settlement to the primitive, similar to visions by colonizers viewing lands they sought to colonize.

Yet, through these ‘primitive’ images of early Bombay, the novel demonstrates the difficulty in assigning a point of origin for a city, a nation, or a people. Although Saleem appears to be describing the native and indigenous Indian people, he instead shows how India remained a conquered land throughout its history, with the “Kolis” arriving first on Bombay’s shores, followed by the Portuguese and the British. However, although the novel describes the colonizers who invaded Bombay, Saleem does not describe the indigenous people living on the islands of Bombay. Through this omission, Saleem illustrates the problems of attempting to find a true beginning point of Indian civilization, or any civilization. Without the description of an indigenous people living in early Bombay, no indigenous group even exists. Through this lack of an indigenous group, the Bombay’s land itself, its harbor and islands, become the “citizens” affected by the colonization process. Yet, the tone of this passage remains, not angry for the colonizers overtaking the natural land, but ambivalent, unconcerned, and even slightly positive. Saleem describes how the “Kolis... caught pomfret and crabs, and made fish-lovers of us all,” attributing this apparently typical Bombay preference of loving seafood, as stemming from Bombay’s early invaders. This particular passage illustrates the impossibility of categorizing and determining any people as the “authentic” Indian citizen

or peoples, because this characteristic of Bombay citizens, as “fish-lovers,” remains not an attribute of the indigenous people of Bombay, but instead, a characteristic stemming from early Bombay’s colonizers, the Kolis. The novel shows how the idea of authenticity remains flawed and impossible to define, because no authentic culture can exist due to the continuous contact and influence between various cultural groups; these various cultural groups interact, creating cultural changes between them, thus eliminating any possibility for any true “authentic” culture to exist.

Saleem continues to describe the colonization of Bombay, and demonstrates how power shifted from the early settlers to the later colonizers. The Portuguese and British illustrated their power by shifting the city’s association with the “benign residing influence of the goddess Mumbadevi, whose name—Mumbadevi, Mumbabai, Mumbai—may well have become the city’s” (Rushdie 101). Instead, “the Portuguese named the place Bom Bhai for its harbour, and not for the goddess of the pomfret folk” (Rushdie 102). The renaming and naming of places remains a significant aspect of colonial rule, as the colonizers attempt to assert their control over their colonized lands. Renaming the city, from Mumbai to the Portuguese “Bom Bhai” and later to the British “Bombay,” shows the power shifts within the city and nation. Although the city was later renamed to Mumbai in 1996, the city remained “Bombay” until that date.

The shift from a British India to an independent India remains connected to the Indian independence movements occurring within Bombay. The narrator describes the final change in power to the Indians from the British as a change occurring in the “dominion” of Bombay: “in August 1947, the British, having ended the dominion of fishing-nets, coconuts, rice and Mumbadevi, were about to depart themselves; no

dominion is everlasting” (Rushdie 103). The novel describes this change, India as a colonized land to an independent nation, as a change occurring within Bombay. Bombay remains central in the movement to create an independent India, and Saleem, the novel’s narrator, demonstrates Bombay’s importance in this struggle through various historical references.

The novel’s character diversity, both in social rank and religious beliefs, reflects the diversity present within Bombay’s own massive population. In 1951, approximately 3 million people lived in Bombay, and in 1981, approximately 8.2 million people lived within the city ([http://theory.tifr.res.in/bombay/stats/pop\\_stat/](http://theory.tifr.res.in/bombay/stats/pop_stat/)). The novel describes an immense number of people living within the city, even in 1951, along with the diversity of the population, in terms of religious and social backgrounds. Saleem comes from a middle-class Muslim family, while his “ayah,” or nanny, Mary Pereira, is a Christian convert who works for Saleem’s family. Shiva, a character born, like Saleem, as one of the “midnight’s children” on the night of Indian independence, yet is a Hindu who was raised in extreme poverty. The religious and social diversity of the characters echoes the diversity in Bombay itself, because the mixing and melding of various cultures and traditions within Bombay represents social hybridization. The novel illustrates the difficulties in creating one central historical narrative for a nation and people by providing so many various and multiple perspectives within the text. *Midnight’s Children* seeks to combine India’s narrative, imbued with various people and ideas, into Saleem’s personal narrative, and one of the ways the novel attempts to do this is by placing Saleem into Bombay, allowing him to interact and meet various and diverse people.

As the narrator, Saleem realizes the importance of language to express his own history and narrative. He describes how the versions of the goddess Mumbadevi's name, like "Mumbadevi, Mumbabai, [and] Mumbai...may well have become the city's," but the Portuguese renamed the city to "Bom Bhai" (Rushdie 100). Saleem focuses on this renaming and naming process to illustrate aspects of Indian history, while simultaneously demonstrating the importance of etymology and language. Bombay remains connected to storytelling and theatricality through the Indian film industry, also known as "Bollywood." The elaborate and lengthy films use music, myth, and narrative to express romance and tragedy, and Saleem uses these elements in his narration of his own story. The melding of theatricality and realism, evident in Bollywood films, comes together in the literary technique of "magical realism." Magical realism, with its combination of mythology, realism, and history, becomes the means through which Saleem tells his story, and this technique remains the most effective way for Saleem to express his narrative and his position as a postcolonial Indian citizen and the position of India as a postcolonial nation. The novel's major themes, connecting the creation and telling of history, identity, and stories, arises through the structural hybridity of magical realism. Without magical realism, it would remain incredibly difficult to connect these three themes, along with the novel's discussions of the problems of postcoloniality, together.

Saleem continuously connects himself to Bombay, seeking to hold on to some inherent idea of "Bombay," which becomes removed from him when he becomes associated with other regions. Although Saleem's family history stems from Kashmir, a mountainous region in the Indian subcontinent, he remains disconnected from Kashmir: "in our house, we were infected with the alienness of Kashmiri blood" (Rushdie 101).

When Saleem's family moves to Karachi, Pakistan, Saleem describes how he "never forgave Karachi for not being Bombay," and how he sought the "highly-spiced nonconformity of Bombay" (Rushdie 352-353). In Karachi, as his family wanted to "become new people" because, "in the land of the pure [Pakistan], purity because our ideal" (Rushdie 355). Yet Saleem resists and remains "forever tainted with Bombayness" (Rushdie 355). He associates this "Bombayness" with "nonconformity," believing that the essence of Bombay remains in the city's unwillingness to become an undifferentiated mass of people, but instead, combining various cultural groups and peoples together into one area, allowing their interactions to become centralized in Saleem's narrative. However, the fact remains that all cities, no matter their location, combine various peoples together into an urban location. This "authenticity" which Saleem craves to deem as "Bombayness," the diversity and multiplicity of the city, consists of the same qualities which make up all cities. Yet Saleem clings to this idea that all Bombay citizens share this "Bombayness;" he seeks to find an authentic identity of location, but, as demonstrated through the discussions of Bombay's origins earlier, any authentic identity appears almost impossible to recognize. However, Saleem ties this idea of an authentic Bombay identity, "Bombayness," to the city's mythology and theatricality. The myth of "Bombayness," this myth of an innate social and cultural identity, combines with the city's religious and cultural mythology, allowing the novel to explore the problems of believing in and searching for a true authentic identity. Through Saleem's constant desire to remain a part of the city, he uses these elements of Bombay, mythology, history, and cultural mixing, to tell his own narrative, through magical realism, which combines the

elements of Bombay into a literary technique, necessary for the story which Saleem seeks to tell, with the city as its background and setting.

*Midnight's Children* uses the framework of magical realism to explore the problems of postcoloniality, as the postcolonial citizens attempt to create and share their own histories, identities, and stories to others. The novel explores Indian historical events through Saleem's familial and his own personal history. Through the novel's focus on the personal histories of its characters, along with its use of humor, the text destabilizes the authority and power of major historical events. By undercutting the power of these historical events, the novel grapples with both the Britain's power over Indians, along with the Indians attempts to reassert their own power, through independence, and the consequences of this newly acquired independence. The novel combines previous perspectives of history, like the British colonizers, with the Indian citizens, to depict more accurate versions of history. Yet, as the novel illustrates, these more accurate versions of history, from the Indian citizens' perspectives, remain impossible to separate from previous versions of history. One significant problem of postcoloniality remains the ability to create and tell one's own, either personal or national, history; yet this history remains forever tainted with the actions of the postcolonial citizen or nation's previous colonizers. *Midnight's Children* demonstrates how the postcolonial citizen may create his or her own historical narrative by destabilizing previous colonial historical narratives through a greater focus on personal histories and humorous retellings of these histories.

The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, also known as the Amritsar Massacre, was a brutal massacre that occurred on April 13, 1919, in the Indian city of Amritsar. An

unarmed gathering of men, women, and children were present in the Jallianwala Bagh (Garden) to celebrate the Sikh religious New Year. Due to civil unrest in the area, British officials ordered a ban on Indian assembly. Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer, a British officer, ordered British Army soldiers to attack the gathering of men, women, and children at Jallianwala Bagh. The attack lasted about ten minutes and due to the constricted nature of Jallianwala Bagh, with a narrow alleyway allowing people to leave and enter the area, all those gathered in the area remained trapped. Although official reports placed the number of fatalities as 379 killed, later approximations indicated that about 1500 people killed and more than were 2000 injured.

The novel depicts this violent attack through the perspective of Aadam Aziz, Saleem Sinai's grandfather, thus allowing an Indian citizen to maintain control over the historical record, instead of allowing the British version of this historical event to take precedence. Brigadier-General Dyer attempted to explain his motives for the brutal attack: "I think it is quite possible I could have dispersed the crowd without firing, but they would have come back again and laughed, and I should have made what I consider to be a fool of myself...I looked upon the crowd as rebels and I considered it was my duty to fire and fire well" ("10 Minutes' Fire on Mob"). Dyer continued, saying that "it was a horrible duty I had to perform. I think it was a merciful thing...If I had the right to fire one shot, I had the right to fire a lot of rounds...There was no medium course. The one thing was force" ("10 Minutes' Fire on Mob"). Dyer attempts to justify his actions, but a commission created by the British and consisting of five Englishmen and three Indian members reported that Dyer "committed a grave error in firing too long" ("British Condemn Slaughter in India"). Yet, the English and Indian committee members differed

in their attitudes regarding Dyer's failure to medically attend to those injured in the attack: the English members believed that Dyer should not be held responsible for the injured who were unable to seek medical attention, because "[the English members were] not convinced any one was exposed to unnecessary suffering for want of medical attention," while the report states that "this opinion is not shared by the Indian members, who, while agreeing in the condemnation of General Dyer's action, take a graver view of the whole incident, stigmatizing his conduct as in-human and un-British" ("British Condemn Slaughter in India"). Although the Indian members of the commission clearly explain their reasons for why Dyer's attack was wrong, the Englishmen's (and British) attitude on the attack becomes the main narrative. The novel seeks to place the Indian citizen's narrative as the more accurate and important version of history, and within this passage, clearly demonstrates the brutality and violence of the attack, along with showing how the attack remained completely unnecessary. The attack incited Indian anger and resentment towards their British colonizers, and became a catalyst for the Indian independence movement.

The novel juxtaposes Aadam's perspective of the attack, as an Indian citizen, with descriptions of Dyer himself and his actions. Through this narrative shift, by depicting the attack from the Indians' perspective, the text illustrates the horrific consequences of Dyer's cold and violent actions. Someone, an Indian present at the gathering, tells Aadam that the gathering is a "peaceful protest," and the meeting appears festival-like, with "hawkers mov[ing] through the crowd selling channa and sweetmeats," while "a group of Sikhs as spread a cloth on the ground" for a picnic. As Aadam walks through the crowd,

Brigadier R.E. Dyer arrives at the entrance to the alleyway, followed by fifty crack troops. He is the Martial Law Commander of Amritsar—an important man, after all; the waxed tips of his moustache are rigid with importance...the fifty-one men march down the alleyway [and]...The fifty-one men enter the compound and take up positions, twenty-five to Dyer's right and twenty-five to his left...Brigadier Dyer issues a command (Rushdie 34).

This description of Dyer portrays him as imbued with self-importance, calling him an “important man,” and even the “tips of his moustache are rigid with importance.” This importance stems from the power Dyer holds over the Indian citizens. The British Indian Army, the army which Dyer remains the commander over, consists of many Indian citizens who joined to obtain some privilege in their colonized society. Dyer becomes able to order fifty soldiers from the British Indian Army to attack their own people, demonstrating Dyer's, and Britain's, power over India and its citizens. The novel uses British colloquial phrases, such as the description of the fifty troops as “crack” and later describing the attack as a “jolly good thing,” and stereotypical British images, such as the British army officer's vision of grandeur, in describing Dyer. By using these phrase and images, the novels seeks to marginalize the British, by describing them using these stereotypical images and colloquial phrases, just as the British, and other colonial powers, marginalized Indians, and other colonized people, through the language, literature, and images these colonized people were portrayed in. *Midnight's Children* attempts to destabilize existing images and ideas of coloniality by participating in the same methodology as the colonizers.

Aadam struggles to understand the attack itself and the consequences of Dyer's actions. He hears “screams...and sobs and [a] strange chattering continues,” and “more people seem to have stumbled and fallen on top of [him].” Eventually, “the chattering stops and is replaced by the noises of people and birds.” While Aadam attempts to

understand the attack, since he sneezes just as Dyer commanded the soldiers to fire their weapons, Dyer remains unconcerned with the consequences of the attack:

Brigadier Dyer's fifty men put down their machine-guns and go away. They have fired a total of one thousand six hundred and fifty rounds into the unarmed crowd. Of these, one thousand five hundred and sixteen have found their mark, killing or wounding some person. "Good shooting," Dyer tells his men. "We have done a jolly good thing."

Although Dyer's statement to his men, "Good shooting... We have done a jolly good thing," may not be historically accurate, the novel, as a fictional postcolonial text, demonstrates the incongruity of the attack's consequences and Dyer's nationalistic attitude towards the attack. Dyer uses a stereotypically British phrase to describe the attack, calling it a "jolly good thing." The novel seeks to marginalize and simplify the British, reducing Dyer to a stereotypical British officer, while increasing the presence of the Indian citizens, by placing Aadam's perspective as the central narrative during the attack.

As Aadam becomes surrounded by the attack's violence, Dyer and his men remain at a distance, merely shooting "their machine-guns" for 10 minutes and then "go[ing] away." Dyer's failure at governing, by preventing indigenous people from gathering on their own land, illustrates the irrationality of the British colonization process. The attack becomes a symbol of a British invasion and brutality towards India and Indian citizens, instead of a symbol of British power and strength. The Massacre not only illustrates the physical brutality and violence caused by the British, but also demonstrates the psychological impact of the colonial presence. As Aadam goes back to his home, his wife asks him, "*where have you been, my God?*" and Aadam replies, saying "Nowhere on earth," and shakes in her arms. The attack's effect upon the Indian

people becomes personalized through Aadam's perspective. His homeland, India, becomes separated and foreign to him due to the attack. Thus, even as the novel attempts to destabilize and marginalize the British presence, their invasion of India continues to affect all Indians, physically and psychologically. While *Midnight's Children* tries to escape and solve the problems of postcoloniality, the struggle to create and tell one's own personal and national history, the novel simultaneously demonstrates the extreme difficulty and even impossibility of completely avoiding the colonizers' effect upon the colonized people.

*Midnight's Children* interweaves two historical records: India's national history and Saleem's familial history. Just as the novel attempts to depict more accurate versions of Indian history, Saleem seeks to create his own familial identity through his narrative. In the novel, identity creation occurs at both the national level and the personal level. Thus, while the novel describes the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre from the perspective of Indian citizens in an attempt to accurately depict the event, the description of the event serves as a means for Saleem to explain and understand his grandfather's past. Saleem's gift of having an incredible sense of smell, allowing him to determine others' emotions and thoughts, stems from his grandfather, Aadam, who also had the same large nose and magical gift. The novel explains how Aadam's sensitive nose ultimately saved him from being killed in the attack:

As the fifty-one men march down the alleyway a tickle replaces the itch in my grandfather's nose...Aadam Aziz ceases to concentrate on the events around him as the tickle mounts to unbearable intensities. As Brigadier Dyer issues a command the sneeze hits my grandfather full in the face. "Yaaaakh-thoooo!" he sneezes and falls forward, losing his balance, following his nose and thereby saving his life.

The sneeze provides a sense of humor and levity to the brutal attack, distracting the reader from the massacre itself. Instead of focusing on the physical gunfire and subsequent deaths occurring around Aadam, the novel undercuts this brutality by focusing on Aadam's inability to control his sneeze. Humor remains one method the novel uses to grapple with the incredible violence spawned by colonization. By focusing on Aadam's struggle to control his sneeze, the novel seeks to solve a problem of postcoloniality: the difficulty of creating and determining one's own personal and national identity. Through humor, Saleem becomes able to focus on his own familial identity, allowing Saleem to gain a greater understanding of his own identity. He becomes able to see the origins of his "sense of smell," his telepathy, through his grandfather's actions. The creation and telling of a postcolonial citizen's personal history remains inextricably linked to the creation and telling of a postcolonial nation's history, due to the unavoidable presence of the colonizers in the citizen and nation's past.

This connection, between the postcolonial personal and national histories, becomes explicitly linked via Saleem's personal narrative. His birthday, midnight on August 15, 1947, remains tied to the date and of Indian independence, midnight on August 15, 1947. Saleem describes the build-up to the precise moment of independence, midnight on August 15, 1947. All areas across what will soon be India and Pakistan are in the throes of celebration, celebrating this "new myth" of independence. While some revelers eat "pistachio sweetmeats...[and] saffron laddoo-balls," others burn trains in the Punjab region of India. Yet in "all the cities all the towns all the villages the little di-lamps burn on window-sills porches verandahs," connecting all of India together in this moment of independence. While the nation celebrates, the political landscape also shifts,

and the new prime minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, delivers his speech to the Assembly Hall in Delhi, proclaiming the creation of India, causing India to be awoken to “‘life and freedom.’”

Yet while the nation readies itself for independence from Great Britain, two couples arrive at Doctor Narlikar’s Nursing Home to give birth to their children: Amina and Ahmed Sinai, Saleem’s mother and father, and Vanita and Wee Willie Winkie. Both women give birth to sons at the exact same moment, midnight on August 15, 1947. However, connecting the moment of Saleem’s birth to the moment of Indian independence and Saleem’s own personal history becomes complicated. Why? Due to Mary Pereira, present in delivery rooms, who switches the babies, causing Amina and Ahmed Sinai’s biological son to be given to Vanita and Wee Willie Winkie, and Vanita and Wee Willie Winkie’s son to be given to Amina and Ahmed Sinai. Thus, Saleem, biologically the son of Vanita and Wee Willie Winkie, is given to Amina and Ahmed Sinai, and Amina and Ahmed Sinai’s biological son, eventually named Shiva, is given to Vanita and Wee Willie Winkie. Both sons gain special gifts due to their miraculous births; Saleem gains the power of telepathy, while Shiva gains the gift of war.

This switch immediately complicates the ideas of inheritance, identity, and history within the novel. Although Aadam is not Saleem’s biological grandfather, Saleem connects to him, through the inheritance of his nose, which allows Saleem to sense various ideas and things just as his Aadam was able to do. It becomes unclear whether Saleem received the gift of telepathy merely due to his birth situation, being born at the moment of midnight, or whether his gift stems from the personal history he claims as his own, his grandfather’s nose. The creation of history remains vitally important within the

novel, and Saleem participates in this process beginning at the moment of his birth. He must create his own familial narrative and history, and he combines various cultural myths, histories, and stories to complete his own narrative. Similarly, although India's "birth" arises at the moment of independence, midnight on August 15, 1947, India must decide what narratives to include into its own national history and what narratives to exclude. The novel combines various cultural mythologies, from the West, Arabia, and India, with India's new postcolonial citizens to create a new, seemingly more accurate vision of Indian history.

In an effort to solve the problems of postcoloniality, the difficulties of creating and determining one's history, identity, and point of origin, the novel employs magical realism as its formal technique. M. H. Abrams defines magic realism as fiction which connects "a sharply etched *realism* in representing ordinary events and details together with fantastic and dreamlike elements, as well as with materials derived from myth and fairy tales" (203). Thus, magical realism becomes a form of formal hybridization, through its combination of realism and myth. Although the novel's presence of magical realism illustrates another form of hybridization within the novel, this formal technique is not merely another example of hybridization in the text. Magical realism remains the framework of the novel itself, and within magical realism, the entire novel explores postcolonial problems in an attempt to solve them via connected forms of hybridity. This formal technique remains necessary to express India's growing postcoloniality, and without its usage, the novel's attempts to adequately illustrate varying Indian citizens and their more accurate versions of history would remain difficult, if not impossible.

Homi Bhabha explains that forms of cultural discourse occur between the colonizers and the colonized people through “stereotypes, jokes,” literature, and visual and verbal communication which occur within “a specific space of cultural colonial discourse” (“Signs Taken for Wonders” 1181). This “‘separate’ place, a space of *separation*” remains an area “which has been systematically denied by both colonialists and nationalists who have sought authority in the authenticity of ‘origins.’ It is precisely as a separation from origins and essences that this colonial space is constructed” (1181). The “space of separation” stems from Bhabha’s term “*Entstellung*,” which he describes as the “process of displacement, distortion, dislocation, [and] repetition” (1169).

According to Bhabha, ambivalence pervades the “boundaries of colonial ‘positionality’—the division of self/other—and the question of colonial power—the differentiation of colonizer/colonized” (1171). The differences between the colonizers and the colonized people remain differences in the levels of power each group holds; while the colonizers control the “invention of history” and have “mastery” over the colonized people, the colonized group has access to “fantasy [and] psychic defence” (1171). Imperialism seeks to undermine the native culture and place the colonizers’ culture in its place, attempting to erase the native culture for political and economic profit. However, this disavowal of the native culture is often justified through the focus on imperialism’s supposed “civilizing mission” of “civilizing” the native people by Christianizing them. Thus, colonization destroys, among other things, the intellectual agency and power of the indigenous population, while the colonizers gain control over their subjects’ narratives of identity and origin.

According to Bhabha, hybridity remains the only way the colonized people may gain some power and control over their colonizers. Bhabha explains that “hybridity is a *problematic* of colonial representation...that reverses the effects of the colonist disavowal, so that other ‘denied’ knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority” (1176). Through the use of hybridity, the colonized people become able to reverse the “*formal* processes of disavowal” which their colonizers practiced; thus, “the violent dislocation, the *Enstellung* of the act of colonization, becomes the *conditionality* of colonial discourse” (1177). By employing hybridity, such as the various forms of hybridity engaged within the novel, as the text expresses the cultural and social hybridity of postcoloniality through the formal hybridity of magical realism, thus allowing historical hybridization to occur, then the colonizers’ racist and discriminatory images of the colonized people are undermined (1177).

*Midnight’s Children’s* formal technique of magical realism, then, becomes not only a mere formal innovation, but the most adequate expression of the history of Indian colonialism and the modern moment of Indian postcoloniality. The novel connects historical events, mythological stories, and fictional narratives and combines them to form a true picture of Indian postcoloniality. Through the varying character narratives and their myriad connections to each other, the novel accurately depicts the problems of the colonial project. While the colonizers categorized India and Indians as a monolithic place and people, the novel illustrates India’s multiplicity and diversity, in an attempt to overturn the colonial image of India.

The novel's use of magical realism allows Saleem to mix and combine different narratives from different cultures. Saleem describes an affair between two of the novel's characters, Lila Sabarmati and Homi Catrack:

Once upon a time there were Radha and Krishna, and Rama and Sita, and Laila and Majnu; also (because we are not unaffected by the West) Romeo and Juliet, and Spencer Tracy and Katherine Hepburn. The world is full of love stories, and all lovers are in a sense the avatars of their predecessors. When Lila drove her Hindustan to an address off Colaba Causeway, she was Juliet coming out on to her balcony; when cream-scarfed, gold-shaded Homi sped off to meet her (in the same Studebaker in which my mother had once been rushed to Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home), he was Leander swimming in the Hellespont towards Hero's burning candle (Rushdie 297).

Saleem combines varying narratives and mythologies to describe the relationship between two of the novel's characters: the Hindu religion, with the love relationships between the Hindu gods and goddesses Radha and Krishna and Rama and Sita; Arabian storytelling, with the thwarted love narrative of Laila and Majnu, in which Majnu falls in love with Laila, but is prevented from marrying her, causing him to eventually become insane; Western literature, with the doomed love affair described William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*; Western cultural icons, with the love relationship between the Hollywood actors Spencer Tracy and Katherine Hepburn; and Greek mythology, with the tragic love narrative of Leander and Hero, in which Leander drowned on his way to meet Hero. Along with these cultural, literary, and mythological figures, Saleem uses his own family's history to imprint his own personal narrative to the story, describing how the car which "Homi sped off to meet [Lila]" was "the same Studebaker in which my mother had once been rushed to Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home." Through magical realism, the novel's characters, the characters' personal histories, and multiple cultures' mythologies and histories combine to create a more accurate image of events. Thus, in the above

passage, Saleem becomes able to clearly describe both Lila and Homi's relationship and their specific actions, driving off to meet each other at various locations, through the various mythologies and cultural narratives he combines.

Hybridity in itself remains vital to the novel and Bhabha's theories, but along with hybridity, Bhabha draws attention to the act of writing and storytelling. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* explains that the "very *writing* of historical transformation becomes uncannily visible" (224). Similarly, *Midnight's Children's* focus on Saleem's self-conscious storytelling illustrates how the novel both builds upon past literary traditions and demonstrates how Saleem participates in identity creation of his personal history and national history. According to Bhabha:

the *history* of modernity's antique dreams is to be found in the *writing out* of the colonial and postcolonial moment [and] in resisting...attempts to normalize the time-lagged colonial moment, [it becomes possible to] provide a *genealogy* for postmodernity (*The Location of Culture* 250-251).

As Saleem creates his own personal narrative and national (Indian) narrative, he participates in this "*writing out* of the colonial and postcolonial moment," thus creating a "*genealogy*" for his and India's post-modernity and postcoloniality. The Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru writes to Saleem after learning of his significant birth date, August 15, 1947, the same as India's independence, and newspapers celebrate his birth (Rushdie 139). Thus, just as Saleem is born, he becomes associated with language and the "*writing out* of the colonial and postcolonial moment," although he is not active in this "*writing out*" process at this particular moment, due to his age.

However, as Saleem begins his telling of his personal narration, he uses the oral tradition of telling his story to Padma, his listener, and the readers, but also physically

writes out his story. He alludes to the physical “*writing out*” of his narrative throughout the text, such as describing his naming of a chapter:

I have titled this episode somewhat oddly. “Alpha and Omega” stares back at me from the page, demanding to be explained—a curious heading for what will be my story’s halfway point, one that reeks of beginnings and ends, when you could say it should be more concerned with middles; but, unrepentantly, I have no intention of changing it, although there are many alternative titles, for instance “From Monkey to Rhesus,” or “Finger Redux,” or—in a more allusive style—“The Gander,” a reference, obviously, to the mythical bird, the hamsa or parahamsa, symbol of the ability to live in two worlds, the physical and the spiritual, the world of land-and-water and the world of air, of flight. But “Alpha and Omega” it is; “Alpha and Omega” it remains. Because there are beginnings here, and all manner of ends; but you’ll soon see what I mean (Rushdie 254).

Saleem participates in a self-conscious narration as he explains his reasoning behind the name of the chapter entitled in the novel itself as “Alpha and Omega.” The above passage demonstrates the difficulties of language to specifically describe any event completely and totally; Saleem struggles with finding the most accurate name for the chapter, citing other possible chapter names which, according to him, could also accurately describe the chapter’s contents. Yet, he eventually reverts back to “Alpha and Omega,” explaining that “there are beginnings here, and all manner of ends; but you’ll soon see what I mean.”

Saleem seeks to fulfill both narrative techniques, yet completing both techniques successfully remains difficult. He struggles between the “*writing out*” of his narrative and “telling” of his story to his listener, Padma, and the readers, his other audience. She interrupts him following the above passage: “Padma clicks her tongue in exasperation. ‘You’re talking funny again,’ she criticizes, ‘Are you going to tell about Evie or not?’” (Rushdie 254). A tension remains between the telling of the story and the writing of the story. Although the completion of the novel itself, as a physical object, signifies

Saleem's success in "*writing out*" his narrative, Saleem continues to struggle with the physical writing of his story and oral storytelling throughout the text. Saleem justifies his written narrative through oral communication with the reader, appearing to undermine his written narrative through his constant attempts to explain himself. Yet, through his explanations of his narrative, his choices and ideas, Saleem becomes able to actively develop and form his narratives, both the personal and national histories he seeks to explain. The writing of the novel and Saleem's oral storytelling of the narrative to Padma and the reader becomes another form of hybridity within the text. The creation and telling of stories remains central to the novel, because the novel itself is the physical embodiment of Saleem's story. The difficulties Saleem encounters in "*writing out*" his narrative, attempting to create his own identity and history, echo the problems which all postcolonial citizens face. However, the completion of Saleem's narrative, along with the novel's presence in of itself, indicates the possibility for postcolonial citizens to achieve success in forging their own identities. Yet, these identities, as the novel illustrates, remain clearly tied to their colonial histories.

*Midnight's Children's* character multiplicity, both in number and type, allows many varying perspectives to emerge as the novel's central narrative, ultimately connecting to Saleem, who tells his personal narrative through these multiple character narratives. By depicting a myriad of characters, the novel demonstrates the impossibility of identifying a true "authentic" Indian identity or history. Instead, the novel shows that if a postcolonial citizen remains able to create his or her own history and identity, as Saleem does, it becomes possible to ignore questions of authenticity and instead embrace cultural multiplicity and diversity, in order to create a new postcolonial narrative,

consisting of the combined perspectives of all postcolonial citizens. The novel combines the perspectives of many postcolonial citizens, a manner of cultural and social hybridization, through Saleem's power of telepathy, along with Saleem's relationships with other postcolonial citizens.

*Midnight's Children* consists of a large number of central characters, associated with various parts of Saleem's life. Padma, as Saleem's listener, remains central to the novel, due to her importance as Saleem's sole source of feedback for his storytelling process. The novel begins with Saleem's grandfather, Aadam Aziz, and his grandmother, Naseem, and their relationship. The novel continues to describe Saleem's immediate family, his father, Ahmed Sinai, his mother, Amina, and his sister, the Brass Monkey, along with his ayah (nanny), Mary Pereira, who takes care of him as a child. Various historical figures pervade the text, including British officials like Brigadier-General Dyer and Earl Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of the British Indian; along with Indian and Pakistani officials, like Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's first prime minister, and others.

Saleem's personal narrative remains inextricably tied to the Indian narrative, due to the significance of his birth. His connection to India, the nation itself and the postcolonial citizens living within the nation, echoes Fredric Jameson's belief that "all third-world texts are necessarily...allegorical" (69). Jameson explains further:

[All third-world texts]...are to be read as what I will call *national allegories*...Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic—necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: *the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society* (69).

According to Jameson, any third-world narrative must grapple with the colonialism and imperialism that occurred within in their nation. The postcolonial citizen, seeking to describe his own personal narrative, wrestles with his identity creation. The postcolonial citizen tries to form his own identity, but ultimately recognizes the ways colonialism has affected his identity and attempts to reconcile the historical past of colonialism with his present moment. Thus, the postcolonial citizen becomes able to create his own identity, while simultaneously forming a national history and identity. The novel, through Saleem's personal narration, understands the need to explore the history and identity of one's nation in order to adequately express one's own personal history. Thus, the ways in which the novel's characters interact and overlap allows for the combination of fiction with myth and history. This mixing and melding of history, identity, and storytelling occurs through the social interactions within the novel, mostly occurring relationally to Saleem. Thus, the social and cultural hybridization occurring within the text directly influences Saleem's narrative, and hence, allows new postcolonial narratives to become prominent, while marginalizing colonial narratives.

The novel immediately connects Saleem to India's new nationhood. The Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru writes to Saleem after learning of his significant birth date:

“Dear Baby Saleem, My belated congratulations on the happy accident of your moment of birth! You are the newest bearer of that ancient face of India which is also eternally young. We shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own” (Rushdie 139).

The letter refers to Saleem as a “mirror” of India, indicating that his life remains forever intertwined with India's narrative. Nehru becomes an almost parental figure in this moment, caring for Saleem just as he cares for India, and promising to continue “watching over [his] life,” just as Nehru oversees the Indian nation. The novel illustrates

the importance of Saleem's birth date by giving him, and the other "midnight's children," certain "magical powers;" Saleem gains the ability of telepathy, allowing him to connect to all people. Saleem begins jumping into other people's minds at the age of nine, and he describes these first encounters:

...I leaped into the heads of film stars and cricketers—I learned the truth behind the [Bollywood] gossip...and inevitably, through the random processes of my mind-hopping, I discovered politics.

At one time I was a landlord in Uttar Pradesh, my belly rolling over my pajama-cord as I ordered serfs to set my surplus grain on fire...at another moment I was starving to death in Orissa, where there was a food shortage as usual: I was two months old and my mother had run out of breast-milk...My daring grew...I deliberately invaded the head of our own State Chief Minister...And finally I hit my highest point: I became Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister...“Look at me!” I exulted silently. “I can go any place I want!” (Rushdie 198-199).

Saleem becomes able to enter the minds of any person he wishes, “film stars and cricketers,” landlords and babies, politicians and heads of state, and by doing so, he learns various truths about each person, but he himself does nothing with the information he gains by visiting all these people's minds. He becomes infatuated with the mere idea of gaining entry into another person's mind to gain “knowledge.” Saleem explains his feelings towards entering the heads of all these people's minds:

...the feeling had come upon me that I was somehow creating a world; that the thoughts I jumped inside were *mine*, that the bodies I occupied acted at my command; that, as current affairs, arts, sports, the whole rich variety of a first-class radio station poured into me, I was somehow *making them happen*...which is to say, I had entered into the illusion of the artist, and thought of the multitudinous realities of the land as the raw unshaped material of my gift (Rushdie 199).

Saleem's infatuation with gaining entry into various people's minds stems from his desire to create and control his own world, his own narratives, within previously created “characters.” He focuses on the idea that he is an “artist” who is “*making* [various actions and events] *happen*,” the passage becoming an allegory for storytelling and novel

writing. His attempts to combine “current affairs, arts, sports,” and music echoes the novel’s formal technique of magical realism. Saleem seeks to combine all these influences into his own narrative, by entering these postcolonial citizens’ minds. The importance of creating and telling one’s own story, regarding one’s identity and history, becomes central within this passage, and highlight the novel’s usage of magical realism to effectively create these new postcolonial histories and identities. However, while the novel uses magical realism to provide more accurate versions of history and narratives of the postcolonial Indian citizens and India itself, Saleem does not care about these goals. Instead, Saleem refers to the postcolonial citizens whose minds he occupies as “bodies;” he focuses on himself and believes that these “bodies,” along with the “current affairs, arts, sports,” and music serve only to shape his “gift” of storytelling.

Saleem’s communication with the other “midnight’s children,” remains a two-way process, between himself and the other children, unlike Saleem’s relationship with the postcolonial citizens who lack the gifts of the “midnight’s children.” Yet, the relationship between Saleem and the “midnight’s children” remains much more complicated than a two-way interaction, merely due to the large number of “midnight’s children,” who consist of one thousand and one children (Rushdie 230). Saleem, as the leader of the “Midnight Children’s Conference,” a conference that occurred within his mind in which all the “midnight’s children” met and discussed various issues, becomes very involved in the interactions and relationships between the “midnight’s children.”

Saleem describes the origins of these “midnight’s children”:

Understand what I’m saying: during the first hour of August 15th, 1947—between midnight and one a.m.—no less than one thousand and one children were born within the frontiers of the infant sovereign state of India. In itself, that is not an unusual fact (although the resonances of the number are strangely literary)...what

made the event noteworthy (noteworthy! There's a dispassionate word, if you like!) was the nature of these children, every one of whom was, through some freak of biology, or perhaps owing to some preternatural power of the moment, or just conceivably by sheer coincidence...endowed with features, talents or faculties which can be only described as miraculous. It was as though—if you will permit me one moment of fancy in what will otherwise be, I promise, the most sober account I can manage—as though history, arriving at a point of the highest significance and promise, had chosen to sow, in that instant, the seeds of a future which would genuinely differ from anything the world had seen up to that time (Rushdie 224).

Saleem again associates himself with art and creation, by analyzing his own words, claiming that “is not an unusual fact [that no less than one thousand and one children were born within the frontiers...of India].” However, in parenthesis Saleem explains that “(...the resonances of the number are strangely literary).” Similarly, he describes the first hour following Indian independence as “noteworthy,” but follows this assertion with another parenthetical explanation: “(noteworthy! There's a dispassionate word, if you like!).” Even as Saleem participates in the “*writing out*” of his narrative, he struggles with his artistry. Thus, the novel suggests the difficulties in creating and telling one's own narrative, even while the novel participates in the process.

The passage illustrates how all these “midnight's children” become associated with Indian independence, linking their postcolonial histories and identities to the newly created nation of India. Saleem seriously believes that all of their gifts stem from “history [which] had chosen to sow, in that instant, the seeds of a future which would genuinely differ from anything the world had seen up to that time.” Hence, at several moments within the novel, either the novel itself, through various characters, or through Saleem's own narration, demonstrates how Saleem and the other “midnight's children” remain vital to India's future. Not only are these children necessary for India's new future, arriving at a “point of highest significance and promise,” but Saleem in particular

remains a “mirror” for India’s future, illuminating the strengths and weaknesses of an independent India. The birth of the “midnight’s children” allows Saleem to literally explore many perspectives and narratives within his own mind, along with demonstrating the importance of multiplicity and diversity within a postcolonial India. He becomes able to discuss with these “midnight’s children” theoretical ideas and theories regarding any number of subjects and issues within his own mind, via the “Midnight Children’s Conference.” By communicating with these other children, each of whom has different cultural backgrounds and religions, Saleem becomes able to encounter new ideas, different from his own family. The impossibility of categorizing a central postcolonial Indian narrative becomes clear as Saleem tries to sort through the voices of the “midnight’s children” within his head. The idea of authenticity again becomes rejected as Saleem communicates with these “midnight’s children.” The novel clearly illustrates that each of the “midnight’s children’s” perspectives remains valid and important to understanding and creating a new history and identity for India.

Saleem’s relationship with the “midnight’s children,” clearly demonstrates the multiplicity and diversity of India:

...I am refusing to distinguish the voices [of the “midnight’s children”] from one another...For one thing, my narrative could not cope with five hundred and eighty-one fully-rounded personalities; for another, the children, despite their wondrously discrete and varied gifts, remained, to my mind, a sort of many-headed monster, speaking in the myriad tongues of Babel; they were the very essence of multiplicity, and I see no point in dividing them now. (But there were exceptions. In particular, there was Shiva; and there was Parvati-the-witch) (Rushdie 262).

However, the voices of the “midnight’s children” remain confusing to Saleem, describing them as “speaking in the myriad tongues of Babel.” He remains unable to understand them clearly, yet clearly admires their “personalities...[and] their wondrously discrete

and varied gifts.” Saleem’s problems in defining and categorizing the “midnight’s children” echoes the difficulties of postcolonial narratives, in which the attempts to define oneself, as a postcolonial citizen, nation, and peoples, becomes problematic due to the immensity of the effort to rid oneself of the imperial presence. Yet, as the novel suggests, it becomes necessary to not merely define and categorize the postcolonial citizen, nation, and people, but one must allow their narratives to be examined. Thus, even though Saleem explains how the “the children...were the very essence of multiplicity,” even he becomes able to form relationships and communicate with two of the other “midnight’s children,” Shiva and Parvati-the-witch. Along with his relationships with Shiva and Parvati-the-witch, Saleem remains influenced by the other “midnight’s children.”

Although Saleem remains a part of the “midnight’s children,” he becomes unable to understand them, referring to the voices as the “myriad tongues of Babel” (262). The “midnight’s children,” although “magical, [they] are not immune to...the prejudices and world-views of adults [which] began to take over their minds” (Rushdie 292). The “midnight’s children” become unable to communicate with each other, and they reject Saleem’s attempts to communicate with them, “accusing [him] of secrecy, prevarication, high-handedness, egotism...[his] mind...became the battlefield,” instead of a “parliament chamber” (Rushdie 341). Most of the “midnight’s children” retreat back into private life and reject the possibility for communication (342). As Jameson’s theories indicate, the personal narrative of a postcolonial citizen depends upon the national narrative. However, while indigenous Indians became destroyed by outside invaders, the Midnight Children’s Conference “was also destroyed by things” (Rushdie 342). Yet these “things”

that destroy the Conference are not outside invaders and colonizers, but are instead “bickerings, prejudices, boredom, selfishness—which [Saleem] believed too small, too petty to have touched them” (Rushdie 342). These internal problems destroy the Conference, and although Saleem believed these problems were “too small [and] too petty to have touched them,” these issues highlight the incredible difficulties in creating a central postcolonial narrative. Even as the postcolonial citizens seek a new identity, separate from their former colonizers, it remains difficult to escape from their cultural and social divisions, which had been exploited by the British colonizers in order to obtain and maintain power.

The novel combines religious mythologies and stories into the narrative, illustrating the realities of Indian postcolonial life, attempting to rectify the destabilization the British colonizers employed to maintain their power. Although the creation of Pakistan, on August 14, 1947, the day before India’s independence from Great Britain, was an attempt to give Muslims living in British India a nation of their own, not all Muslims left the newly created India for Pakistan. India’s borders hold many different religions, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Sikhism, and others. The novel illustrates this multiplicity and combining of religious traditions through the relationships of Saleem, Shiva, and Parvati-the-witch, two of the “midnight’s children.” Shiva embodies the warrior nature of the Hindu god Shiva, yet his “religiousness” does not extend to doing good works. Parvati-the-witch, just as the Hindu goddess Parvati, whom she is named after, becomes involved as a consort to Shiva, Parvati-the-witch forms a relationship with Shiva, finally becoming pregnant with his child. Yet he rejects her and Parvati-the-witch then goes to Saleem; Saleem and Parvati-the-witch marry, but only

after Parvati-the-witch converts to Islam. Saleem describes that he “found himself insisting, in another throwback to an earlier life” (Rushdie 477). As the novel combines and changes the relationships of these characters, the religious backgrounds remain ever-present in the background, and sometimes, taking precedence, such as when Saleem insisted that Parvati convert to Islam. The characters’ religious associations continue to shift, such as Parvati’s conversion and her name change to Laylah. The changing and shifting religious mythology connected to the characters illustrates the multiple religions present within India and the mixing and melding of those religions together forms hybridized religious practices, although the “pure” versions of those practices continue to exist.

These cultural and religious divisions become clearly highlighted through Saleem’s relationship with Shiva and Parvati-the-witch. These relationships illustrate both the attempts of communication between Saleem and other postcolonial citizens, but also illuminate the religious and cultural hybridity present in India. Saleem’s relationship with Shiva remains complicated because of the nature of their births; Saleem and Shiva were switched at birth, and each was born at the exact moment of independence, midnight (Rushdie 130). Saleem describes Shiva and his powers:

Saleem and Shiva, Shiva and Saleem, nose and knees and knees and nose...to Shiva, the hour had given gifts of war (of Rama, who could draw the undrawable bow; of Arjuna and Bhima; the ancient prowess of Kurus and Pandavas united, unstoppably, in him!)...and to me, the greatest talent of all—the ability to look into the hearts and minds of men (Rushdie 229).

Shiva becomes a war hero, since his gifts allow him to achieve great success in that arena, while Saleem becomes a storyteller, using the information gleaned from his travels into the “hearts and minds of men” to create stories. Both Shiva and Saleem remain in

constant battle with each other, and each struggles against the other to gain power.

Parvati-the-witch, on the other hand, “had been given the...genuine gifts of conjuration and sorcery” (Rushdie 229). She connects herself to Saleem, eventually marrying him, and although their marriage fails, Saleem gains a child.

Shiva, the name of a Hindu god, becomes inherently associated with Hinduism, due to his name and his gifts. The novel describes his “gifts of war,” which echo the powers of the Hindu gods, depicted in Hindu mythology: “Rama, who could draw the undrawable bow...the ancient prowess of Kurus and Pandavas united, unstoppably, in [Shiva]!” (229). Parvati, the name of a Hindu goddess, remains associated with the energies of the earth, and Parvati-the-witch echoes this connection with her ability to combine the energies of the earth to allow for sorcery and conjuration. As a Hindu deity, Parvati is connected to Shiva, because in Hindu mythology, Parvati is a consort of Shiva. While both Shiva and Parvati-the-witch remain associated with Hinduism, Saleem, as a Muslim, only connects himself to Islam occasionally, and instead, Saleem combines both religions in his narrative. When Saleem first hears the voices of the “midnight’s children” in his head, he relates it to the prophet Muhammad, considered by Muslims to be the final prophet who brought Islam and to whom the Quran, the Muslim’s holy book, considered to be the literal word of God, was revealed to. Saleem explains his connection to the prophet:

...like Muhammad the Penultimate, I heard voices on a hill...Muhammad (on whose name be peace, let me add; I don’t want to offend anyone) heard a voice saying, “Recite!” and thought he was going mad; I heard, at first, a heedful of gabbling tongues, like an untuned radio; with lips sealed by maternal command, I was unable to ask for comfort. Muhammad, at forty, sought and received assurance from wife and friends: “Verily,” they told him, “you are the Messenger of God”; I, suffering my punishment at nearly nine, could neither seek...assistance nor solicit softening words...

Gabriel or Jibreel told Muhammad: “Recite!” And then begin The Recitation, known in Arabic as Al-Quran: “Recite: In the Name of the Lord thy Creator, who created Man from clots of blood...” That was on Mount Hira outside Mecca Sharif; on a two-storey hillock opposite Breach Candy Pools, voices also instructed me to recite: “Tomorrow!” I thought excitedly. “Tomorrow!” (Rushdie 185-186).

Saleem connects himself to the prophet Muhammad’s own journey of hearing a voice in his head, calling him to “Recite!,” while Saleem hears the voices in his head, instructing him to talk to them “Tomorrow!” As Saleem attempts to tell his parents of these voices in his head, he explains that he “really think[s]—that Archangels have started to talk to [him],” just as the angel Gabriel talked to Muhammad (Rushdie 187). Although Saleem clings to his Islamic faith early in his narrative, as he tries to understand the voices in his head, Saleem later becomes more ambivalent towards Islam, just as Shiva and Parvati-the-witch remain ambivalent towards their religions.

The religious hybridization that occurs within the novel allows Saleem to connect his own narrative, his own creation and telling of his identity and history, to these religious mythologies. These mythologies aid Saleem in his attempts to formulate his own identity and history, while also providing a point of origin for him, if he seeks it. Saleem describes the Quranic passage in which Gabriel tells Muhammad that “thy Creator...created Man from clots of blood.” Thus, God becomes the ultimate point of origin and these “clots of blood” remain the actual origin of all humankind. Yet, Saleem’s attempts to create his own point of origin show that religion, for Saleem, remains an inadequate narrative for his new postcolonial status.

Saleem, instead, seeks to create his own narrative, and his relationship with Padma, his listener who eventually becomes his fiancée, remains incredibly important to his storytelling, because she serves as the “listener,” taking the place of the reader, giving

Saleem feedback on his storytelling. Padma questions and interrupts Saleem, seeking to understand his texts, but often remains unable to follow Saleem's various tangents into myth and history. Although she seeks to know only of Saleem's personal history, she becomes involved with the national narrative that Saleem describes. Thus, Padma serves the role of the Western world, a former colonial ruler, who listens to Saleem's postcolonial narrative of his own familial history and his version of Indian history. Yet, as a character within the novel, her life becomes intertwined with Saleem's personal narrative, ultimately connecting to his as they become engaged.

Saleem requires Padma's presence, because without her, he remains unable to determine whether any of his audience remains able to understand his story. Padma repeatedly leaves Saleem in anger, and Saleem reflects upon this fact: "I am seized by a sudden fist of anger: why should I be so unreasonably treated by my one disciple? Other men have recited stories before me; other men were not so impetuously abandoned" (Rushdie 170). He needs her realism to counteract his magical narrative, allowing him to form a better story: "How to dispense with Padma? How give up her ignorance and superstition, necessary counterweights to my miracle-laden omniscience? How to do without her paradoxical earthiness of spirit, which keeps—kept!—my feet on the ground?" (Rushdie 170). However, Saleem not only needs Padma for these storytelling and literary reasons, but, as he says, "Padma has gone, and I miss her. Yes, that's it" (171). While Saleem uses Padma as a means to better his narrative, her presence is not merely to aid him in his storytelling, but instead, he cares for her.

The novel demonstrates the complicated relationship between the listener and reader of a narrative and author of the narrative; both influence the other, although the

author, Saleem, claims to maintain control over one's narrative, the listener, Padma, influences the author's writing. During Padma's absence, Saleem becomes confused by his "certainties...even [his] nose has been playing tricks on [him]" (Rushdie 189). He remains unsure whether he has fallen in love with Padma, saying to himself, "the workforce giggles behind its hands: the poor sahib has been crossed in—what?—surely not *love*?...Padma, and the cracks spreading all over me...a little confusion is surely permissible in these circumstances" (189). Yet, due to this confusion, Saleem discovers "an error in chronology," and remains unable to fix it (190). Padma's relationship with Saleem shifts, from being merely a listener, to his helper and editor, to perhaps his lover. Yet these changes in their relationship further confuse Saleem's narrative, but no solution remains to fix his problem. These complications in Saleem's relationship with Padma only further illustrate the difficulties in creating a postcolonial narrative. Just as Saleem tries to combine oral storytelling with novel writing, becoming confused with the methodology of each, Saleem struggles with telling his story due to these psychological interactions.

Padma's presence, however, allows Saleem to create his story in a way that those who lack any previous knowledge of him would be able to understand. She guides him, into explaining certain points, pushing him to finish his main point, as she asks him, "Why you're waiting? Begin...Begin all over again" (Rushdie 399). She constantly forces him to end his tangential explanations of his literary process, such as the naming of his title "Alpha and Omega" (Rushdie 255). While Saleem continues on and on, explaining various other title names, "Padma clicks her tongue in exasperation. 'You're talking funny again,' she criticizes, 'Are you going to tell about Evie or not?'" (Rushdie

255). Yet even as Padma pushes Saleem to complete his narrative, she remains a character with whom Saleem shares affection for, and when Saleem makes mistakes in his narrative, she tries to comfort him:

...it occurs to me that I have made another error...I don't know what's gone wrong...[Padma] says, trying uselessly to console me: "What are you so long for in your face? Everybody forgets some small things, all the time!" (Rushdie 254).

Her attempts to relieve his anxieties about forgetting dates in his narrative demonstrate the complicated relationship between both characters. While she serves as his listener, she shifts into many other roles, but simultaneously maintains her other roles. Padma is Saleem's listener, editor, helper, lover, and friend, and she resists any one designation. While Padma serves as the role of the listener, providing ready criticism to Saleem's narrative, just as India's former colonizers might view his narrative of a postcolonial India, but her more intimate relationship with Saleem prevents her from being viewed as merely the "listener."

The creation of history, which remains one of the roles India's former colonizers participated in, suddenly becomes Saleem's responsibility within the novel. Saleem's birth date ties to India's "birth" as an independent nation, yet the novel questions when the point of origin for both Saleem and India actually begins. While Saleem's actual birth date is midnight on August 15, 1947, his family's history extends far behind him, moving his origin date further into the past. Similarly, India's creation as an independent nation is August 15, 1947, yet India contains a history that extends far beyond the origin point designated for its creation. Saleem explains India's independence movement in the buildup to midnight, August 15, 1947:

...there was an extra festival on the calendar, a new myth to celebrate, because a nation which had never previously existed was about to win its freedom,

catapulting us into a world which, although it had five thousand years of history, although it had invented the game of chess and traded with Middle Kingdom Egypt, was nevertheless quite imaginary; into a mythical land, a country which would never exist except by the efforts of a phenomenal collective will—except in a dream we all agreed to dream; it was a mass fantasy shared in varying degrees by Bengali and Punjabi, Madrasi and Jat, and would periodically need the sanctification and renewal which can only be provided by rituals of blood. India, the myth—a collective fiction in which anything was possible, a fable rivaled only by the two other might fantasies: money and God (124-125).

The novel explains how “although [India] had five thousands years of history,” it remained “a nation which had never previously existed [which] was about to win its freedom.” India’s point of origin remains confused: does its point of origin begin from its independence from Great Britain? Or does its point of origin stem “five thousand years” back in history? The novel refuses to answer this question of origination, because although the novel focuses heavily on the date of India’s independence, even naming the novel after the children born on the date of independence, the idea of determining one’s point of origin remains flawed, as depicted through Saleem’s personal history. His own point of origin remains midnight, Indian independence day, yet his “adoption” and his subsequent “adoption” of his family’s history demonstrates the absurdity of assigning any one particular origin point for all postcolonial citizens. His narrative illustrates, although he focuses upon his birth date, categorizing him as one of the “midnight’s children,” his familial history extends further into the past than his point of birth. Even Saleem’s narrative begins not with his own birth, but with his grandfather’s conflicts in assigning his true home, deciding between Kashmir, where he grew up as a child, and Germany, where he studied to become a doctor. Thus, the novel begins with a narrative that remains confused and unable to assign a particular point of origin and truth. No one origin point can be assigned because to do so would require one to assign an idea of

“authenticity” to a particular postcolonial citizen or group; the novel rejects this notion of authenticity, and thus, determines that one’s origin point should be what one claims as one’s own. This origin point of one’s identity and history can not be placed upon one, but instead, the postcolonial citizen must decide upon his or her own history and attempt to discover his or her own point of origin.

The joining of India’s diverse populations is the crucial step in the creation of an independent nation. India’s creation was a “dream [all Indian citizens] agreed to dream...shared by...Bengali and Punjabi, Madrasi and Jat;” thus, the creation of India’s national identity depends upon the “efforts of a phenomenal collective will.” The novel refers to India’s creation as “a mass fantasy,” a “myth,” “a collective fiction,” and “a fable,” connecting India’s nationhood to literature and storytelling. The nation becomes willed into existence by the multiple and diverse groups within India, and these groups participate in the creation of India’s postcolonial identity.

The creation of only one specific identity, a personal identity or a national identity, becomes impossible, due the impossibility of condensing varying people’s perspectives into one coherent narrative. Saleem realizes that each person has his or her own personal history, and although, as Jameson explains, the national history plays a role in a postcolonial citizen’s narrative, one’s memory exerts a “special kind” of truth over one’s narrative. Saleem attempts to explain this idea to Padma:

“Memory’s truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent vision of events; and no sane human being ever trusts someone else’s version more than his own” (Rushdie 242).

Thus, memory becomes the author of one's own reality, just as Saleem becomes the author of his own reality and history by combining mythology and cultural histories through magical realism. Saleem emphasizes that "no sane human being ever trusts someone else's version [of reality] more than his own," and this focus on the individual perspective demonstrates how the novel illustrates the various characters' narratives. This passage also illuminates the novel's own premise of attempting to "select, eliminate, alter, exaggerate, minimize, glorify, and vilify" what the novel deems as important in order to create "its own reality, its heterogeneous, but usually coherent vision of events."

Saleem attempts to fashion his own personal narrative, while simultaneously constructing an Indian narrative, but he struggles with the relationship between truth, reality, and storytelling. He confuses dates in his narrative, and attempts to explain what occurred:

Rereading my work, I have discovered an error in chronology. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi occurs, in these pages, on the wrong date. But I cannot say, now, what the actual sequence of events might have been; in my India, Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time (190).

Saleem recognizes the inaccuracy of his narrative of putting the assassination of Gandhi in an incorrect moment. Yet, although he explains his mistake, he asserts the power of his story over the accuracy of the events: "in my India, Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time." Along with Saleem incorrectly placing Gandhi's death in the wrong chronological moment, the idea that "Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time" implies that the message of a combined India, which Gandhi sought, failed due to Gandhi's untimely death. Thus, the novel suggests that the problems associated with the myriad of cultural and social groups, which the novel continuously highlights, through the disintegration of Saleem's "Midnight Children's Conference," perhaps may not have

had such fraught and difficult relationships if only Gandhi had not died “at the wrong time.”

The India that Saleem describes is not the India of pure facts, but instead, narrative and storytelling takes precedence over historical accuracy. Although this rejection of historical accuracy appears paradoxical, due to the novel’s continued attempts to combine narrative threads in order to create more accurate versions of history, the novel’s relationship with history and storytelling remains incredibly complicated. While the novel stresses the importance of various narrative perspectives, along with the novel’s use of magical realism to explore and explain certain events and people more accurately, Saleem, as a character, remains focused on his own personal narrative.

Yet eventually, the overwhelming nature of the multiplicity present within India itself and the novel, Saleem becomes forced to end his own personal narrative and focus on the national narrative, consisting of varying narrative threads. Saleem explains that “the curse of midnight’s children is to be both masters and victims of their times, to forsake privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes, and to be unable to live or die in peace” (Rushdie 533). Although this “whirlpool” may refer to the large number of “midnight’s children,” Saleem describes how the “midnight’s children” must be “both masters and victims of their times.” Thus, they remain forever connected to their birth date, the date of Indian independence, and they eventually must “forsake [their] privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes,” preventing them from living or dying in peace.

Yet, although it appears that the individual identities of these “midnight’s children” become lost through their connection with Indian independence, Saleem

describes how the “midnight’s children” will eventually have their own children, continuing until the “thousand and first generation” (Rushdie 533). The “thousand and one midnights [will] have bestowed their terrible gifts,” allowing their powers to continue, even as the “midnight’s children” die (Rushdie 533). Yet, Saleem differentiates between the “midnight’s children’s gifts” and their own identity. He attempts to separate his gift of telepathy from his personality, yet the two remain forever intertwined, due to their affect upon his life. However, even though Saleem seeks to separate himself from his gift, the novel remains unwilling to allow him to do so. The novel complicates any simple choice between the importance of a personal narrative and identity and a national narrative and identity.

Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* remains a cornerstone of postcolonial literature. The novel clearly illustrates these important ideas of postcoloniality, the creation and telling of history, identity, and storytelling. While the novel discusses these important and significant themes, it becomes necessary to discuss the problems associated with formulating and creating a postcolonial identity and history. The novel illustrates the problems of postcoloniality, the difficulties in assigning an origin point, determining one’s own history, and finding an authentic identity. As demonstrated in this thesis project, the means through which the novel illustrates these problems of postcoloniality is through hybridity. The novel itself remains the embodiment of hybridity and through the formal hybridity of magical realism, the social hybridity of the multiple and diverse characters, and the historical hybridity of the characters’ perspectives, along with the hybridity of storytelling itself, with Saleem’s conflict between oral storytelling and novel writing, the novel becomes able to adequately respond to and attempt to solve the issues

surrounding postcoloniality. By understanding the novel's usage of hybridity, the reasons why the text employs this combining and mixing of elements to create new ideas, it becomes possible for one to understand the problems of postcoloniality itself.

Through *Midnight's Children's* attempts to solve the problems of postcolonial writing, new postcolonial authors are now able to write without acknowledging the relationship between a postcolonial citizen and the struggle for independence. Writers like Jhumpa Lahiri, author of the *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), a Pulitzer Prize winning collection of short stories, become able to lack the historical pressure of contending with imperialism and colonialism, which Rushdie was forced to confront within *Midnight's Children*. Instead, Lahiri's novels and short stories focus on the interactions between postcolonial citizens and other citizens; these postcolonial citizens are often immigrants to new lands, and their interactions become central to Lahiri's narratives, instead of the larger historical questions which Rushdie's novels contend with. However, without Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, it would have been almost impossible for Lahiri, and other postcolonial writers, to be able to write about the minutia of postcolonial citizens, as immigrants, or any other role, because Rushdie's text explores the problems and difficulties of postcoloniality and allows one to understand these problems and the possibilities to solve these problems. Thus, *Midnight's Children* remains central to postcolonial literature because without its presence, it would remain impossible to write without discussing the historical implications.

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