

“Pickling” History with Words: A Post-colonial Interpretation of Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children

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Abstract. *Midnight’s Children*, by British-Indian author Salman Rushdie, takes the birth of its protagonist Saleem Sinai at the exact moment of India’s independence in 1947 as its narrative starting point. Through Saleem’s psychic connection with a thousand other “midnight’s children,” the novel recounts the turbulent history of post-independence India. The mystery surrounding Saleem’s origins serves as a metaphor for the identity crisis inherent in the postcolonial condition, revealing the complex relationship between cultural hybridity and national identity. In Rushdie’s hands, history is “pickled” like pickles, where fact and myth intermingle and coexist. He uses magical elements as a flavoring agent, skillfully deconstructing the Western rationalist view of history and transforming India from a described object into a self-interpreting subject. The numerous metaphors in the text reflect the malformation of individuals and society by colonial power, with themes of language, culture, and national resistance interwoven, constituting the core concerns of postcolonial literature. Therefore, employing post-colonialism as the theoretical framework, this paper begins with the social alienation precipitated by colonial rule to analyze the interaction between individual destiny and national history in *Midnight’s Children*, and to explore the cultural and political implications behind the birth, development, and tragic end of the “midnight’s children” collective. Furthermore, the author hopes this study will enrich current literary scholarship on post-colonialism and provide a valuable reference.

Keywords: Salman Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*, Post-colonialism, Reconstruction, Narrative

1. Introduction

Midnight’s Children, the renowned magical realist novel by British-Indian author Salman Rushdie, tells the story of the birth, growth, and tragic demise of one thousand and one “midnight’s children,” each endowed with unique powers. Born at the midnight hour of India’s independence, these children, led by the protagonist Saleem, attempt to guide the nascent nation, only to fail due to a series of internal and external conflicts. Narrated in the first person, the story revolves around the coming-of-age of the most powerful child, Saleem, and his experiences of allying with the “midnight’s children.” Set against the backdrop of an India that had just achieved political independence while remaining deeply influenced by colonialism in social, cultural, and other aspects, the narrative delves into the oppositions and contradictions within Indian society in the

postcolonial context through allegory and symbolism, reconstructing a world distinct from traditional Western historiography.

Since its publication, the novel has won numerous awards, directly establishing Salman Rushdie's international reputation. This classic work has also attracted widespread attention from literary, historical, and political science circles, both domestically and internationally. Consequently, considerable scholarly research has been conducted on it. Existing literature primarily focuses on the theme of "identity" in the novel, emphasizing the transformations of individual and national identity in India after colonial rule. For instance, Luan Tianyu analyzed the "hybrid" nature in the identity construction and growth process of the characters in the novel [1]; Lin Yuan examined the hybridity of character identities in the work, thereby reconsidering postcolonial Indian identity [2]; while Dong CunChun, grounded in postcolonial theory, explored the reflections on postcolonial cultural identity contained within Salman Rushdie's novelistic creation [3]. In foreign language scholarship, research on writing techniques such as magical realism and surrealism is more prominent, for example, Laura Buchholz brings the notion of unnatural narrative into dialogue with Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* [4]. In recent years, with the rise of new trends like feminism, literary criticism of *Midnight's Children* continues to evolve. For instance, Nie Ye, in "Interpretation of the Theme of *Midnight's Children* from the Perspective of Postcolonial Feminism," interpreted Rushdie's postcolonial feminist thought and his concern for the rights and status of Third World women as a central theme in *Midnight's Children*, based on Gayatri Spivak's postcolonial feminist theory [5].

Overall, most existing studies adopt a relatively narrow perspective, failing to utilize postcolonial theory to comprehensively and holistically interpret the novel's content. Multiple aspects of the work exhibit postcolonial characteristics: in terms of body politics, Saleem's origins and body reflect the chaotic and distorted state of India under colonial rule; linguistically, the text frequently employs rhetorical features specific to Indian English; in national narrative, the novel integrates the narrative framework of *The Arabian Nights*, mythological archetypes from Indian epics, and Western modern narrative techniques. This indicates that there remains room for further development in the postcolonial interpretation of *Midnight's Children*.

Post-colonialism focuses on the research perspective that "after the end of colonial history, the world remains influenced by colonialism." Its core is concerned with how the unequal relations left by colonialism persist, and how colonized groups redefine themselves. It opposes treating the Western perspective as "universal truth," advocating for formerly colonized groups to narrate their own history and culture, thereby reclaiming the right to interpret their "self-identity." From the perspective of body politics, bodily signs still imply cultural biases from the colonial era, and bodily autonomy can be manipulated by power structures, essentially a transformation of colonial "bodily hegemony." Linguistically and culturally, post-independence Third World nations reject an "either-or" dichotomy, embodying characteristics of "hybridity," where the "undecidability" produced in cross-cultural linguistic contact constitutes a space of resistance. "When the colonialist discursive address attempts to objectify itself as a universalized knowledge or a normalized hegemonic practice, the strategy of hybridity opens up a space of negotiation. The enunciation within this space is ambiguous and full of ambivalence." [6] Embedding local vocabulary and grammar into the colonial language simultaneously breaks the purity of the colonial language and utilizes it as an expressive tool, forming a form of spiritual resistance. In terms of national narrative, it involves exposing the lies of colonial narratives, restoring obscured histories of trauma and resistance, while refusing to simplify national history into the singular myth of "independence victory," acknowledging the plural voices within the postcolonial nation, and allowing marginalized groups to

participate in the narrative. These three aspects collectively point to the essence of post-colonialism: the end of colonization is merely the starting point of power games; the reconstruction of body, language, and narrative remains the core battleground for “dissolving the colonial legacy and establishing local subjectivity.” Therefore, this paper will systematically and comprehensively interpret *Midnight’s Children* from three aspects: Body Politics and Colonial Power, Linguistic Hegemony and Cultural Resistance, and Historical Reconstruction and National Narrative.

2. Body politics and colonial power

Colonial power shattered the natural connection between the body and the subjective will, as well as cultural traditions, turning the body into a site for the performance, operation, and consolidation of colonial power, ultimately achieving dual control over the colonized, both physical and spiritual. In the novel, Saleem’s enormous nose is a persistent “symbol of body politics,” a metaphor for the alienation of the body by colonial power. This abnormal organ first appears on Saleem’s grandfather, Adam Aziz—an Indian doctor who studied in Germany. The novel describes his nose:

My grandfather’s nose: nostrils flaring, curvaceous as dancers. Between them swells the nose’s triumphal arch, first up and out, then down and under, sweeping in to his upper lip with a superb and at present red-tipped flick [7].

This exaggerated physical characteristic is also inherited by the protagonist Saleem, whose nose is spectacularized through newspaper reports within the novel. This description transforms the nose from a private physiological organ into an object of public gaze and discourse, where the media technology of colonial modernity becomes a tool for disciplinary power—by converting bodily abnormality into a national symbol of the “glorious hour,” colonial discourse successfully incorporates the individual body into the nationalist narrative framework. As the narrative progresses, the alienating characteristics of the nose are further intensified:

‘Sir sir if that’s the map of India what are the stains sir?’ It is Glandy Keith Colaco feeling bold. Sniggers, titters from my fellows. And Zagallo, taking the question in his stride: ‘These stains,’ he cries, ‘are Pakistan! Thees birthmark on the right ear is the East Wing; and thees horrible stained left cheek, the West! Remember, stupid boys: Pakistan ees a stain on the face of India!’ [7]

This geographical mapping onto the body is, in essence, the spatial appropriation of the colonized body by colonial power. Here, the body becomes a political signifier, with Saleem’s nose serving as a living projection of the colonial map. Its physiological features are forcibly imbued with geopolitical meaning, and individual subjectivity dissolves under colonial violence.

The nose inherited by Saleem is not merely a product of biological heredity but also the result of the internalization of the colonial gaze. His nose possesses a superhuman sense of smell, capable of detecting abstract entities like danger, emotion, lies, and jealousy. Although this ability directly serves Saleem himself, it is essentially twisted into an instrument serving power. “In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity. It is a third person consciousness. The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty.” [8] Saleem is constantly troubled by the presence of his nose, repeatedly confirming its shape in the mirror. This behavior echoes the colonial psychological mechanism revealed by Fanon—the colonized are forced to monitor themselves, living as if walking on thin ice. Saleem’s nose is described as the “central thread of recent Indian history.” His nose, mingling diverse bloodlines, symbolizes the “hybrid” characteristic of the postcolonial nation; Saleem’s “sinusitis” metaphorizes the unhealed colonial trauma; the nose becomes a permanent marker of otherness, placing the colonized forever in the position of the abnormal subject—just as Fanon pointed out, being regarded as a normal subject and treated accordingly is a privilege

inherited by the white body. Through this transgenerational nose imagery, Rushdie reveals how colonial power achieves continuity through body politics: from direct physiological control—the examination through the sheet—to psychological internalization—Saleem’s self-loathing—until the colonized individual is completely alienated. As the most powerful “midnight’s child” born precisely at the midnight hour of India’s independence, Saleem possesses telepathic abilities, capable of summoning the one thousand and one midnight’s children for psychic conferences in his mind. This supernatural setup metaphorizes the promise of mass mobilization in postcolonial independence movements. However, its outcome—forced sterilization by the government army—brutally reveals how the postcolonial regime inherits colonial violence, exercising institutional control over citizens’ bodies.

Saleem’s ability was initially conceived as an instrument of national redemption:

It is a sort of national longing for form - or perhaps simply an expression of our deep belief that forms lie hidden within reality; that meaning reveals itself only in flashes. Hence our vulnerability to omens ... when the Indian flag was first raised, for instance, a rainbow appeared above that Delhi field, a rainbow of saffron and green; and we felt blessed [7].

He attempts to construct an idealized national community through the psychic conferences of the midnight’s children, echoing the political vision of a “unified India” during the independence movement. Yet, Rushdie hints at the fragility of this collective fantasy through Saleem’s monologue: the children of midnight were “mysteriously handcuffed to history,” destined to be “both masters and victims of their time,” to “forswear privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes.” This prophecy implies how the violence of colonialism destroys individual’s freedom. With the declaration of the Emergency by Indira Gandhi, Saleem’s ability is discovered by the army and “instrumentalized,” turning him into a “man-dog” for the army. The narrative starkly reveals how post-colonial regimes inherit the techniques of colonial governance: reducing the citizen’s body to a biological tool. Here, the postcolonial state completes an economic and soul restructuring, leading to a complex inferiority complex for an entire race. Saleem’s transformation from “savior” to “dog-man” epitomizes this continuity of violence—his body is degraded from a symbol of spiritual leadership to a mere carrier of sensory functions. Through the disintegration of Saleem’s body, Rushdie completes a cyclical metaphor: starting with the individual malformation symbolized by the nose and ending with the collective consumption symbolized by the body’s fragmentation, colonial power achieves perpetual continuity by changing forms (from the colonial government to the postcolonial regime). Furthermore, under the hegemony of male narrative, female characters are reduced to functional symbols and narrative objects. The washerwoman Padma initially exists as Saleem’s “cleaning tool” and “emotional patch.” Her emotions and actions are entirely interpreted by Saleem, and her own voice is never directly presented. As Spivak points out, on the track of the effacement of the subaltern subject, the distinction between the sexes is doubly impacted. Coupled with the context produced by colonialism, where the subaltern classes are not inscribed into history and thus ultimately cannot speak, the female subaltern is even more deeply obscured in darkness. As a washerwoman, Padma belongs to the “true subaltern” as defined by Spivak—the uneducated peasantry, the lowest strata of the urban sub-proletariat. Her sole value lies in being the passive listener to Saleem’s story—When Padma attempts to tell her own story, male hegemony immediately overwrites it:

And there are so many stories to tell, - too many, such an excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumours, so dense a commingling of the improbable and the mundane! I have been a swallower of lives; and to know me, just the one of me, you’ll have to swallow the lot as well [7].

Saleem uses the urgency of his narrative as a pretext to deprive Padma's rights to speak, just as Spivak's opinion: the subaltern must "adopt the language and procedures of the prevailing Western power" to speak, a process that itself constitutes a secondary deprivation of the subaltern's right to speak.

Colonial rule not only caused a series of alienating effects on the bodies and psyches of the Indian people but also solidified the operational modes of colonial violence at a deeper level of power. Under the impact of this powerful force on individuals, women suffer dual oppression based on gender and class, serving merely as objects and catalysts for subplots, also reflecting the demonization in gender portrayal.

3. Linguistic hegemony and cultural resistance

As a "milestone of postcolonial literature," *Midnight's Children* interweaves the history of post-independence India with mythological narratives through magical realism. One of the novel's most captivating features is its postcolonial reconstruction of the three major Hindu deities—Vishnu (the Preserver), Shiva (the Destroyer and Regenerator), and the Goddess Devi (the Divine Mother). Vishnu, as the Preserver, typically descends in avatars to save the world and maintain cosmic order; Shiva embodies the duality of destruction and creation; and the Goddess Devi (including her forms like Durga and Kali) represents the dialectic of motherhood and destruction. In the novel, Vishnu's protective mission fails, Shiva's destructive aspect is alienated by the colonial legacy, and the Goddess becomes a symbol of oppressive power. These deities are incarnated in the novel as the protagonist Saleem Sinai, his rival Shiva, and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, undergoing a profound process of desacralization and deformation. Through this mythological metaphor, Rushdie reveals the complexity and contradictions of nation-building in postcolonial India, as well as the enduring impact of the colonial legacy on identity, power, and language.

Postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha's concept of "mimicry and mockery" provides a theoretical reference for this "divine deformation." Bhabha argues that by mimicking the culture and practices of the colonizer, the colonized exposes the inherent contradictions and instability of colonial authority itself. In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie extends this theory to the mythological realm: when Hindu deities "mimic" their original divine functions, they appear inadequate or even become absurd parodies due to the interference of the colonial legacy. For example, Saleem, as an avatar of Vishnu, attempts to guard the ideals of Indian independence but fails due to his bodily disintegration and unreliable memory; Shiva's destructiveness loses its cosmological sacredness, becoming instead a tool of political violence; the maternal aspect of the Goddess Devi is alienated into the authoritarian rule of the "Widow Goddess," Indira Gandhi.

Rushdie's mythological reconstruction does not negate the value of traditional Indian culture. Rather, by exposing the gap between divinity and humanity, he reveals the inherent contradictions in the construction of the nation-state in the postcolonial era. Rushdie consciously imagines India as a unified whole, yet the fragmentation contained within this imagined unity reflects his disillusionment with postcolonial India. This contradiction is evident in the depiction of the "Midnight's Children's Conference"—the 1001 children with special powers, intended as the ideal embodiment of Indian independence, ultimately disintegrate due to internal strife and external oppression. Through the desacralization of the deities, Rushdie questions the grand narrative of postcolonial nationalism and emphasizes that fragmentation and hybridity constitute India's true reality.

Saleem discovers his ability to telepathically convene all the midnight's children and attempts to create a conference representing India's pluralistic ideals. However, the conference ultimately

collapses due to internal quarrels and external pressure; “not even Shiva’s fist nor my nose could hold us together.” Vishnu’s avatars typically succeed in integrating order (like Prince Rama establishing a righteous kingdom), whereas Saleem’s failure exposes the fragility of postcolonial nationalism. The disintegration of the conference symbolizes the insurmountability of religious, linguistic, and class divisions in post-independence India, just as Saleem mockingly refers to himself as a “citizen of Pakistan.” Homi Bhabha has pointed out that postcolonial identity exists in a state of hybridity across multiple cultures, not as a single essence. Saleem’s failure is precisely the result of this hybridity not being accommodated by nationalist narratives.

Saleem claims to possess an over-developed memory, yet constantly engages in self-doubt:

Heat, gnawing at the mind’s divisions between fantasy and reality, made anything seem possible; the half-waking chaos of afternoon siestas fogged men's brains, and the air was filled with the stickiness of aroused desires [7].

He preserves history by pickling chutneys, but the tastes of the chutneys are distorted by emotion—sourness representing grief, spiciness representing anger. Vishnu, as the cosmic preserver, possesses an omniscient perspective, whereas Saleem’s narrative is filled with subjectivity and uncertainty. This metaphorizes the unreliability of postcolonial historical writing, particularly the falsification of truth in official narratives. As Bill Ashcroft emphasizes in *The Empire Writes Back*, postcolonial writers seek to subvert traditional colonial narratives by “re-telling” history, but in doing so, they also expose the constructed and unstable nature of history itself.

Through the figure of Saleem as a “failed Vishnu,” Rushdie questions the redemptive fantasies of postcolonial intellectuals and emphasizes that fragmentation and uncertainty are the essence of the Indian experience. This desacralization does not negate the value of the preservative mission but reveals the vast gap between ideal and reality in the postcolonial context.

In the novel, the author undertakes a profound postcolonial rewriting of the three major Hindu deities. Vishnu, Shiva, and the Goddess Devi undergo processes of desacralization and alienation in the novel, reflecting the dilemmas of nation-building in post-independence India: Saleem’s (Vishnu’s) failed protective mission metaphorizes the powerlessness of postcolonial intellectuals, and his bodily disintegration symbolizes the direct intrusion of historical violence upon the body; Shiva’s (Shiva’s) class vengeance and political instrumentalization reveal how colonial violence is inherited by the postcolonial state; Indira’s (Kali’s) power alienation exposes the nationalist misuse of mythological resources and the continuation of colonial logic. Through these divine deformations, Rushdie questions the grand narrative of postcolonial nationalism and emphasizes that fragmentation, hybridity, and uncertainty constitute the essence of the Indian experience. Ultimately, the novel does not provide solutions to the postcolonial predicament but affirms the creativity found within fragmentation through the vitality of the narrative itself (such as linguistic hybridity, mythological parody, and the chutney metaphor).

Furthermore, the novel is written in English but extensively employs vocabulary and idioms from Indian languages, while also parodying the colonizer’s “Official English.” It uses numerous Indian language words (like Hindi, Urdu) such as “jatts” (villagers), “masala” (spice mix), “avatar” (incarnation) without providing translation or annotation. This linguistic hybridity deliberately creates reading difficulties for the English-speaking reader, subverting English’s colonial status as a “universal language.” Ashcroft terms this strategy “glossing,” where by injecting local elements into English, its colonial purity is disrupted, and a new form of postcolonial expression is created. Rushdie successfully makes English bear the weight of India, imbuing it with Indian characteristics.

Through the dual appropriation of language and narrative, Rushdie not only subverts the colonial status of English but also creates a new literary form suited to India's postcolonial reality. This

linguistic strategy works in tandem with mythological deformation, collectively constructing a narrative that is both rooted in Indian culture and critical of national disillusionment. *Midnight's Children* thus becomes a paradigm of postcolonial literature—it not only writes back to the Empire but also writes back to myth, seeking new expressive possibilities in the desacralization of deities and writing a history of postcolonial independence uniquely India's own through linguistic hybridity.

4. Historical reconstruction and national narrative

Midnight's Children intricately intertwines the personal fate of its protagonist, Saleem Sinai, with the modern history of the Indian nation, profoundly deconstructing the myth of a singular, pure national identity while simultaneously adapting to the national narrative required by Indian society in the postcolonial era.

Edward Said, in *Culture and Imperialism*, noted that imperialism was not only about the conquest of land and economy but also about hegemony over knowledge and culture. Colonizers legitimized colonial rule through their historical narratives, constructing a discourse system that portrayed the “Orient” as backward and in need of enlightenment and rule by the “West.” Therefore, for the colonized, reclaiming the right to narrate and telling their own, plural histories is a crucial step in overcoming cultural colonization.

In the novel, the protagonist Saleem Sinai, as a “midnight's child” born simultaneously with the Indian Republic, dedicates himself to writing his personal memoirs on his deathbed. This is not mere autobiography but a grand endeavor to counter the official, singular historical narrative. Saleem's narrative is filled with the deviations of personal memory, subjective conjectures, and even magical distortions—for instance, he claims to have had direct telepathic conversations with Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and to have been ultimately persecuted by her “Emergency” policies. This plot element is an artistic and literary representation of Said's theory. Saleem's memoirs reject the “authoritative” version of official history, instead exposing from a marginal and personal perspective how the colonial legacy continues to erode the soil of indigenous Indian culture. The political struggles of the newborn nation (such as religious conflicts following Partition, the high-handed rule during the Emergency) are presented as a continuation of an “internalized colonial violence,” indicating that independence was not the endpoint but an ongoing struggle with the specters of colonialism. Through this unreliable, magical narrative, Rushdie precisely questions any version of history claiming to be the “one true story,” asserting the legitimacy and necessity of the colonized telling their own stories.

The novel also embodies Homi Bhabha's theory of “hybridity” in its national narrative. Bhabha critiques the rigid binary oppositions in colonial discourse (e.g., East/West, colonizer/colonized, pure/polluted). He argues that in the zone of cultural contact between colonizer and colonized, a “Third Space” emerges. This space is characterized by hybridity, negotiation, and generativity. It belongs to neither side exclusively yet contains elements of both, thereby giving rise to new identities and discursive possibilities that transcend binary oppositions. The protagonist Saleem Sinai himself is the perfect metaphor for “hybridity.” His origins are exceedingly complex: nominally the illegitimate son of a British colonist and a street singer, he is switched at birth and raised in a wealthy Muslim merchant family, only to later discover his lineage might actually stem from a Hindu street performer. This mixed, uncertain pedigree thoroughly challenges the myth of “purity” in Indian national identity. He is neither purely Hindu, nor purely Muslim, nor British, yet his existence precisely represents the true state of most postcolonial subjects—a fluid, hybrid identity formed under the pull of multiple cultural forces.

Saleem's life embodies the struggle caused by this hybridity. As the leader of the midnight's children, he possesses the telepathic ability to connect all of them, symbolizing the ideal of a unified, harmonious new India. However, in reality, the children are internally fractious, with diverse abilities, and ultimately succumb to disintegration under political pressure. This symbolizes India's own seemingly intractable divisions—communal conflicts, linguistic strife, and class disparities. Saleem fails to achieve self-unification, just as the nascent India struggles to integrate its inherent diversity and contradictions. He is constantly swept along and torn apart by the torrents of history, moving from Bombay to Pakistan, to Bangladesh, and finally back to India. His fragmented journey is a microcosm of the postcolonial nation's turbulence and search for self.

However, the "Third Space" proposed by Homi Bhabha does not become a complete utopia in the novel. Rushdie's male perspective exposes the "incompleteness" of this theory in practice, particularly evident in the fate of female characters.

The experience of another "midnight's child," the female character Padma, is highly representative. She comes from the subaltern class and possesses magical powers. When Saleem is exiled to Pakistan, it is Padma who uses her magic to smuggle him back to India, giving him a chance for rebirth. Padma is independent and powerful, seemingly occupying an active, negotiatory space. However, the novel's resolution sees her ultimately united with Saleem, her primary function being co-opted as the companion who saves and perpetuates the male protagonist's life. Thereafter, her radiance quickly diminishes, and she is even marginalized by the narrator Saleem:

Padma - our plump Padma - is sulking magnificently. (She can't read and, like all fish-lovers, dislikes other people knowing anything she doesn't [7].

This plot profoundly demonstrates that in the interstices of the struggle for macro-narrative rights and the definition of national identity, women's voices and subjectivities often face the fate of being "re-effaced." The so-called "Third Space" fails to fully escape co-optation by patriarchal structures in the gender dimension. Padma does not become a subject who dialogues equally with Saleem and jointly defines the future; instead, she becomes an instrument serving the male protagonist's narrative arc. This critically points out that the discursive liberation of the postcolonial is incomplete if it does not simultaneously involve an examination of internal gender power structures. The space of hybridity itself can also reproduce new inequalities and silences.

Midnight's Children, through Saleem's memoir-writing that rewrites official history, through his hybrid and torn origins and destiny symbolizing the complexity of postcolonial identity, and through Padma's ultimately co-opted fate revealing the incompleteness and gender blindness of "Third Space" negotiation, collectively constitutes its profound postcolonial writing. Rushdie does not offer a simple solution but, through the clamorous, magical narrative itself, forcefully demonstrates India's pluralistic nature.

5. Conclusion

Midnight's Children combines magical realism with the postcolonial context, weaving the national birth pangs of post-independence India and individual destinies into a narrative epic full of tension. This paper, from the three dimensions of body politics, linguistic hegemony, and historical reconstruction, has revealed the novel's profound deconstruction and reflection on the postcolonial predicament: Saleem's transgenerational "deformed nose" is both an imprint of colonial power's discipline on the body and a metaphor for postcolonial identity hybridity; his fall from "savior" to "instrumentalized individual" serves as brutal evidence of the continuation of colonial violence in new forms; Rushdie's "appropriation" of English and the embedding of local languages break the hegemonic purity of the colonial language, carving out a space for autonomous expression of Indian

culture in the interstices of linguistic hybridity; and Saleem's memoir narrative, with its subjective, magical qualities, counters the singularity of official history, simultaneously exposing the complexity and uncertainty of postcolonial historical writing while reconstructing national memory.

For literary studies, the postcolonial writing of *Midnight's Children* provides multi-dimensional perspectives for interpreting Third World literature. Its interconnected consideration of the triple dimensions of "body-language-narrative" also opens up pathways for subsequent postcolonial literary criticism. Furthermore, the novel's explorations of national identity, cultural hybridity, and the continuity of power remain relevant in the global context—it reminds us that any definition of "identity" should not fall into the trap of essentialism. Only by acknowledging difference and embracing plurality can we truly escape the shadow of the colonial legacy and build a more inclusive culture and society.

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