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RUSHDIE'S SECULARIST NATIONALISM, AND THE LIMITS OF METAFICTION

Rushdie'nin Seküler Milliyetçiliği ve Üstkurmacanın Sınırları

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ABSTRACT

This paper first analyzes the use of metafiction in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children;* and explains how this narrative technique is connected to the novel's identity politics. Even though several Rushdie critics have justifiably praised Rushdie's work for its inclusive identity politics based on hybridity, this paper discusses the limits of Rushdie's metafiction in *Midnight's Children*, and argues that Rushdie's secularist nationalism in Jose Casanova's sense defines the limits of his metafiction, which is clearly exclusive of characters with religious orientation. Methodologically, the paper first discusses Rushdie's distinctive way of using metafiction in order to explicate how *Midnight's Children* is based on the concept of hybridity. The following part connects Rushdie's novel to his theory: through an analysis of his *Imaginary Homelands* and a 2011 interview, I trace the novel's secularist nationalism as shown in Rushdie's theory. The conclusion provides a comparative analysis of Rushdie's work regarding metafiction, secularism, nationalism, identity and belonging.

Keywords: metafiction, secularist nationalism, stereotyping, Rushdie, novel.

ÖZ

Bu makale ilk olarak Salman Rushdie'nin *Geceyarısı Çocukları* adlı romanında üstkurmaca kullanımını analiz etmekte ve bu anlatım tekniğinin romanın kimlik politikalarıyla nasıl bağlantılı olduğunu açıklamaktadır. Birçok Rushdie eleştirmeni, yazarın eserini melezlik kavramına dayalı kapsayıcı kimlik siyaseti nedeniyle haklı olarak övmüş olsa da, bu makale Rushdie'nin *Geceyarısı Çocukları*'nda üstkurmaca tekniğinin kültürel sınırlarını tartışmaktadır. Daha somut olarak bu makale, Jose Casanova'nın teorisinde tarif ettiği seküler milliyetçiliğin, Rushdie'nin dini yönelime sahip karakterleri açıkça dışlayan üstkurmacasının kültürel sınırlarını belirlediğini savunmaktadır. Metodolojik olarak, makale ilk olarak *Geceyarısı Çocukları*'nın melezlik kavramına nasıl dayandığını açıklamak için Rushdie'nin üstkurmacayı kendine özgü kullanma biçimini tartışmaktadır. Bir sonraki bölüm Rushdie'nin romanı ile teorisi arasında bağlantı kurmaktadır: Makale, *Imaginary Homelands* adlı eserinin analizi ve 2011 yılında yapılan bir röportaj aracılığıyla, Rushdie'nin teorisinde gösterildiği şek-

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liyle romanın seküler milliyetçiliğinin izini sürmektedir. Sonuç bölümünde Rushdie'nin eserinin üstkurmaca, sekülerizm, milliyetçilik, kimlik ve aidiyet bağlamında karşılaştırmalı bir analizi yer almaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: üstkurmaca, seküler milliyetçilik, stereotipleştirme, Rushdie, roman.

Introduction

This paper contends that the claimed hybridity of *Midnight's Children*'s contradicts religio-national exclusivism in the book. In this aspect, Rushdie's metafiction is exclusive based on its depiction of Pakistani and religious characters as either members of a corrupt collective identity, businessism or as submissive characters lacking intellectual capacity. Additionally, in dialogue with Rushdie critics, this paper discusses that the religio-national exclusivity of Rushdie's metafiction can be analyzed historically, when time literally stands still in the Pakistan chapters; and geographically, in the literary border Rushdie draws between the pure Pakistan and the pluralist India. In discussion of exclusivist use of metafiction in *Midnight's Children*, this paper goes into dialogue with Casanova's theory of secularism as well as Anderson's nationalism.

1. Rushdie's Metafiction and Hybridity

Rushdie has an inventive way of employing the literary technique of metafiction. *Midnight's Children* has a complex narrative of memory, body, sexuality, and time. Throughout the analysis, this study consults Bhabha's concept of hybridity, in order to show the limits of Rushdie's "hybridity" and its "exclusivity". According to Bhabha, hybridity "entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (1994: 4), and it occupies "a liminal space, a pathway between the upper and lower areas, each of which was annotated with plaques referring to blackness and whiteness" (1994: 3). Thus, the hybrid is a cultural and political agent that is "in - between [in terms of] history and sexuality" (1994: 14), and it is "a difference within" (1994: 13). Bhabha underlines that the hybrid is "a political object that is new, neither the one nor the other, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very forms of our recognition of the moment of politics" (1994: 25). He also writes that collective national identities are not compatible with hybridity (or vice versa), as hybridity is "transnational and translational" (1994: 5).

The concept of "hybridity" originally refers to a biological process and, hence, comes from the discipline of biology: Brian Stross writes: "in Latin the *hibrida* was the offspring of a (female) domestic sow and a (male) wild boar. The semantic range of the word 'hybrid' has expanded in more recent times to include the offspring of mating by any two unlike animals or plants" (1999: 254). Regarding this quotation and the term "hybridity" as defined by Bhabha, there are three significant points to highlight. First, as Ten Kortenaar notes, Rushdie's fiction has been frequently read as "the literary expression of cultural hybridity" (2003: 17) based on Bhabha's definition of the term. For instance, Theo D'Haen writes that Rushdie's midnight children "literally give voice to an entire subcontinent" (1995: 198) through the hybridity of the novel. Similarly, Eva Aldea writes that Rushdie's novel is "considered culturally hybrid, in the sense of syncretizing cultures, and that coexistence of the magical and the real was seen as the expression of this hybridity," and therefore, she continues, "*Midnight's Children* is indeed a novel about the search for individual and collective identity" (2006: 159). These critics read the novel through the concept of plurality, in-betweenness, or hybridity. This paper challenges such reading of Rushdie's work.

The second significant issue is that the term "hybridity" in Rushdie's criticism actually refers to "cultural hybridity" (Stross, 1999: 254), which is defined as "engender[ing] new fertile and creative contexts in which new things can come into being ... by virtue of modifying the environment" (Stross, 1999: 264). The term "cultural hybridity" is not limited to the conception of nationalism and the nation-state, because the concept is used in many related fields, "from anthropology to literature, from geography to art history, and from musicology to religious studies," according to Peter Burke (2009: 5).

Another significant point is that "cultural hybridity" is the opposite of "cultural homogeneity" (Kraidy, 2005: 75). "Cultural pluralism" and the acceptance of "cultural difference" are the core values inherent in cultural hybridity. There are some limitations in the "hybridity" of Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. Specifically, I maintain that the duality of "homogeneity vs. hybridity" is a central theme in Rushdie's novel, and his work does not always and fully accept cultural hybridity due to its selective secularist perspective. Before challenging the traditional Rushdie criticism that praises the novel for its hybrid scope, and prior to discussing the exclusivism buried in the grammar of Rushdie's metafiction, I provide my analysis of

Rushdie's clever use of metafiction. Next, the paper explains why Rushdie's critics frequently champion *Midnight's Children* as an outstanding example of hybridity.

When Bhabha calls Rushdie a "hybridizing" author (1990: 6), he refers to the complex literary structure that Rushdie employs. As a start, the storytelling in *Midnight's Children* is multifarious: the autobiography of the protagonist, Saleem Sinai, is historically and physically attached to India. Saleem is born in Bombay, "at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence," "mysteriously handcuffed to history," his "destinies indissolubly chained to those of [his] country". From the very beginning, Saleem makes sure that readers understand that they are not only reading Saleem's story, but also the story of all of India. He states that "[c]onsumed multitudes are jostling and shoving inside me" (3, 4). In terms of Rushdie's use of metafiction, such a narrative is consequential: Rushdie is literally playing with the dualities of and the distinctions between "story and history," "microcosm and macrocosm" (Frank, 2008: 164). Rushdie blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction.

For this reason, the genre of the novel is classified as "historiographic metafiction" (Lee, 1990: 36). Vilashini Cooppan writes that the genre "problematizes the truth-claims of national history through processes of narrativization such as unreliable narration, intertextual allusions and embeddings, parody, and falsification, and a general ideology of plurality" (2009: 48). Rushdie's *Midnight Children* is a novel on modernity, national identity, and multilayered belonging, all of which are discussed through self-reflexive narration. Rushdie's novel has the grand desire to narrate the complexity of modern national belonging through writing.

Correspondingly, Saleem Sinai, the narrator of *Midnight's Children*, attempts to remember and write everything, that is, all the history and stories of India. However, he can never do it satisfactorily: either Padma interrupts him, or he fails to concentrate and write, similar to when he fails to have sexual intercourse with her (20, 38). Therefore, writing (or the inability to write) to depict the nation is one noteworthy trait Rushdie's metafiction. Rushdie turns the act of writing about the nation into a *messy* business. Through this *messiness* of metafiction, the novel implies that identities and belonging in the nation-state are always complicated, and multilayered, but never *unisonant*. Such a formal construction of the novel is an indirect response to the uniform or unisonant nationalism depicted by Anderson

(1998: 145). Therefore, the first and foremost element that makes *Midnight's Children* hybrid is this narrative technique.

Memory and remembering are the other factors that make the novel hybrid, because neither memory nor remembering is homogeneous or linear. Saleem expresses that the narration is "guided only by the memory of a large white bedsheet with a roughly circular hole", which is never reliable and is frequently "going", "com[ing] back", exposed to "the corruption of clocks," and which is also the source of "morality, judgement and character", as well as that of "the truth" (4, 11, 485, 138, 241, 242). Saleem explains why memory (and hence, identity) is never homogeneous, as memory "selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end, it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events" (242). When Saleem loses his memory and becomes "memoryless," he also loses his identity, and becomes a soldier in the army of Pakistan (397). This chapter, called "The Buddha" is no longer narrated by Saleem but rather the novel shifts to third-person narration (Kortenaar, 2003: 157). Thus, Rushdie's metafiction regarding memory implies that the individual and collective identities in *Midnight's Children* are formed through memory and remembering: when there is no memory, there is no self or identity. For instance, in the following chapters Saleem is reduced to a dog in the Pakistani army, which shows the conflict between the two national-religious identities of India and Pakistan. Accordingly, another element that makes Rushdie's fiction hybrid, then, is its resistance to homogeneity through memory and remembering: Saleem's memory (and also the lack of it) gives him identities, or takes them back.

The storytelling and the storyteller(s) are the additional factors contributing to the so-called "hybridity". The metafiction of Rushdie has a repeated question regarding the storytellers, as the narrative strongly asks this same question in quite different ways: who are we? Saleem asks this question through the literary construction of the narrator: the narrative thus aims to emphasize that the answer to this question is loud and clear: Saleem Sinai is structurally a mixture of the religious, cultural and historical identities of India.

Before proceeding with an explanation of how Saleem is both a mixture and a representative of India, it is useful to make a distinction between the structural representational capacity of the protagonist Saleem Sinai (that is, how he embodies all the historically and culturally constituent elements of India) and the extent and the way in which he represents them. The dis-

tinction is this: it is true that the novel's metafiction is structurally inclusive of most of the class- and culture-based identities, but, as I will argue in the next section, Rushdie's metafiction is still exclusive in the way the novel "elects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies" identities (242). To state this in the language of the novel, "in the end it creates its own reality," which is an identity limited by the secularist nationalism that posits noteworthy limitations on the alleged hybridity of the work.

Saleem Sinai starts narrating the novel giving the impression that he is the son of a well-off couple, Mumtaz (later, Amina) and Ahmed Sinai (68). However, the plot takes a sharp turn when we learn that the nurse Mary Pereira "change[s] the name-tags on the two huge infants" in the hospital, "giving the poor baby a life of privilege and condemning the rich-born child to accordions and poverty" (130). By doing so, Mary Pereira swaps the baby-tag of Saleem with that of Shiva, but the parents of the babies make the plot much more complicated than a simple change of characters from different social classes of India. At this point, the plot construction makes the readers assume that the real parent of Saleem is the poor street artist Wee Willie Winkie and his undereducated wife Vanita. In another plot twist, we learn that the Britisher Methwold sends Wee Willie away and seduces his wife (113-114), which makes the Britisher Methwold and poor Indian Vanita the biological parents of Saleem through this extra-marital affair.

Saleem's surrogate parents are also significant in terms of the narrator/protagonist's resistance to homogeneity. He states that "Ahmed Sinai, Hanif Aziz, Sharpsticker Sahib, General Zulfikar have all been pressed into service in the absence of William Methwold; Picture Singh was the last of this noble line" (490). In addition to the biological mother Vanita, Amina and Mary are Saleem's mothers that raise him together (144). Saleem Sinai is proud of his "gift," which is "the gift of inventing new parents for [him]self whenever necessary, [t]he power of giving birth to fathers and mothers" (120). These unexpected shifts in the plot are some of the factors that make Saleem Sinai a hybrid character and representative of India, according to several Rushdie critics.

Saleem's storytelling and his connections to other stories and storytellers reveal the novel's approach to the homogeneity of identities: Saleem Sinai is not a simple observer/narrator. On the contrary, he both narrates and shapes what he has in his memory. As a storyteller, Kortenaar explains, Saleem builds his narrative on the stories of Tai and Mary, and his sources

are "the Bible, the Mahabharata... and the Arabian Nights" (21), and he compares himself to Moses, Ganesh, and Scheherazade (21-22). In spite of this seeming inclusivity and despite the Muslim background of the Sinai family, the *Quran* is not among the sources of Saleem's stories.

So far, this paper discussed the protagonist's relationship to the whole nation of India, as well as some aspects of the storytelling, such as the use of memory and its connection to other "relevant" sources/storytellers. All of these contribute to the emphasis that the novel places on the structural homogeneity of the nation and identity. Another factor is Saleem's depiction of his body and sexuality. Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* uses such tropes of impotence and writing to discuss identity in the nation-state. The novel uses the tropes of manly sexual power and the lack of it, that is, impotence, to criticize the orthodox and exclusivist identities in the nation-state. Such criticism is along the same lines as Edward Said's statement that "the assertion of identity is by no means a mere ceremonial matter" (1994: 37).

Similarly, Rushdie's novel uses *impotence* to show the opposition between the collective identity and individuality in the nation-state. In the following self-reflexive address to the readers, Saleem clearly articulates this distinction: "Did children of less than four thousand days discuss identity, and the inherent conflicts of capitalism? Having got through fewer than one hundred thousand hours, did they contrast Gandhi and Marxlenin, power and impotence? Was collectivity opposed to singularity?" (293). Thus, Rushdie's metafiction and the use of the trope of impotence does not provide Saleem with the sort of power to claim a "unisonant" or "uniform" national identity of the kind that is described by Anderson, criticized by Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1994: 37).

In other words, the internal, external, cultural and historical influences are so varied and multiple that they make it impossible for Saleem to claim one unique national or religious identity. On top of this, these influences are so contradictory to each other (that is, in conflict with each other, such as class, religion, ethnicity, language, and geography-related issues) that it cracks Saleem's body up (35). Saleem, therefore, is "physically falling apart," because his body is "buffeted by too much history" (36). He is "disintegrating" and at the end, Saleem says, he will "eventually crumble into (approximately) six hundred and thirty million particles of anonymous, and necessarily oblivious dust" (36). The pessimist tone of Saleem is obvious, but still, he states that this is the very reason he decided to write: "This is

why I have resolved to confide in paper, before I forget. (We are a nation of forgetters.)" (36). This last quotation is a reference to Anderson's theory of the nation-state, and his chapter on "Memory and Forgetting." As Anderson writes, nations forget and remember just like human beings (1998: 205). But unlike Anderson's nationalism, Rushdie's novel and its protagonist reject a unified nationalism: at the end, Saleem predicts that, "six hundred and thirty million particles of anonymous dust" will be left: this is an example that shows Rushdie's imagination of nation is by no means a uniform nation.

The third factor contributing to the hybridity of Rushdie's novel is its approach to the concept of "time". The narrative deliberately departs from linear time and narration, which is an attitude that is critical of the unified, progressive, national time as described by Anderson. Anderson states that "[a]wareness of being embedded in secular, serial time, with all its implications of continuity, yet of 'forgetting' the experience of this continuity... engenders the need for a narrative of 'identity'" (1998: 205). The time in *Midnight's Children* is neither serial nor progressive for that matter. To begin with, the novel starts when Saleem is a 31-year-old adult (3), and there is no linear narrative. The "corruption of clocks" works against Saleem (37). In the chapter called "Tick Tock," time does not flow or go forward, but rather it "count[s]down" (118).[1]

The conflict between the two different understandings of time is obvious in *Midnight's Children*: on the one hand is timeless Tai who has "watched the mountains being born... seen Emperors die" (11), and on the other hand is the "inoperative" clock tower (121) left by the colonial British. The midnight's children partake in both: they are the products of both the old and timeless India, as well as the now-inoperative clock tower of the British. This is why Kortenaar writes that "[n]either in the world nor in Rushdie's novel are England and India pure entities with characters that are stable and known in advance" (2003: 24). Thus, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* rejects the uniformity of the nation-state through the syncretic (and/and, not or/or) use of time. This is another factor that contributes to Rushdie's alleged "hybridity".

The three main factors I have discussed above: the protagonist's identification with India, the novel's use of memory and the unique storytelling techniques, are all significant elements of Rushdie's metafiction that un-

[1] The other functions of the countdown are to "build suspense" until Saleem's birth, and to show that time is "misleading" and unreliable (118).

dermine the homogeneity of the narrative and the nation. Thus, Rushdie's metafiction blurs the lines between several dualities, some of them being the colonizer and the colonized, traditional and modern, East and West, lower class and upper class, Indian and English, and certainly, fact and fiction. Having discussed the unique ways that Rushdie's metafiction favors multiplicity over homogeneity, now the next step is to discuss exclusivity and challenge the "hybridity" of *Midnight's Children*.

2. Rushdie's Secular(ist) Nationalism in *Midnight's Children*

Casanova's theory of secularism endorses a *stadial* perspective. Finding a strong relationship between modernization and *stadial* secularism, Casanova writes that "[i]n places where such secularist historical stadial consciousness is absent or less dominant, as in ... most non-Western postcolonial societies, processes of modernization are unlikely to be accompanied by processes of religious decline" (2013: 26). What Casanova means is that there is always a potential which "processes of religious revival may accompany" if secularism does not have a stadial view (2013: 26). In another essay, Casanova defines this stadial consciousness as "anthropocentric change in the conditions of belief as a process of maturation and growth, as a 'coming of age' and as progressive emancipation" (2014: 23-24). Thus, Casanova states that modernization is possible through a maturation process of religious decline. Casanova's view of secularism is also compatible with Anderson's nation-state theory that explains the rise of the nation-state as occurring with the decline of religiously imagined communities. In detail, Anderson's account of historical nationalism gradually replaces religious structures and institutions. A similar perspective can be found in Casanova, particularly through the concepts of emancipation and maturation. Such a transformation, this paper argues, can also be observed in the fiction of Rushdie.

In this section, I argue that religio-national exclusivism in *Midnight's Children*'s undermines the "alleged" hybridity of the novel. In this regard, Rushdie's metafiction is exclusive, such that the Muslim characters in the novel are portrayed as people of "submission" who lack intellectual faculties, or as members of a corrupt collective identity of "businessism". In addition, I maintain that the religio-national exclusivity of Rushdie's metafiction can also be observed spatially, as in the duality Rushdie creates between the pluralist India and pure Pakistan, as well as chronologically, when time literally comes to a halt in the Pakistan chapters. In detail, I dis-

cuss how Rushdie's secularist nationalism has an exclusive grammar similar to Casanova's secularism.

In terms of its genre, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is a historical autobiography. Therefore, it is not possible to understand Rushdie's work without fully comprehending the historical context of the novel. As Aruna Srivastava explains, Rushdie's work "mark[s] out an important period in the history of the Indian polity, that of the breakdown of the Nehruvian secular consensus" (1991: 2). According to Srivastava, the "breakdown" from Nehruvian secularism became prominent in the 1975-77 Emergency, and turned into "an alternative national ideology, Hindutva, based on the supremacy of Hindu religion and culture" (1991: 2). Srivastava writes that Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* can be read as a response to the religious conflicts, Emergency rule under Indira Gandhi, and the following ethnic and religious claims of power (1991: 2).

The starting point is the clear distinction between India and Pakistan because this duality determines the geographical, cultural, and national limits of India in Rushdie's metafiction. To begin, India has its midnight's children who are all gifted, different, and colorful. According to Saleem, these "infants with powers of transmutation, flight, prophecy and wizardry" (2006: 229) are the special kids who "were born within the frontiers of the infant sovereign state of India" (2006: 224). Rushdie's metafiction separates the two countries into cultural and political opposites, and Pakistan is India's national "other". The special children of India are "endowed with features, talents or faculties which can only be described as miraculous" (2006: 224). Thanks to the birth of the new Indian generation with extraordinary skills, "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" (2006: 224). Rushdie is certainly ironic in these lines, and this passage creates a dramatic irony, as the children fail to meet any of the expectations of Saleem at end of the novel. Still, there is a "limited" India, as defined by Anderson, which is geographically and culturally separated from Pakistan in Saleem's imagination. This India is not inclusive of Pakistan and its culture. In the following passage, Saleem clearly states that there is a border separating the two countries, and he does not have any knowledge of the other side: "If a similar miracle was worked across the border, in the newly-partitioned-off Pakistan, I have no knowledge of it; my perceptions were, while they lasted, bounded by the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal, the

Himalaya mountains, but also by the artificial frontiers which pierced Punjab and Bengal." (2006: 225).

The geographical description of Saleem is both inclusive and exclusive: he defines "his" India that leaves out both Pakistan and (today's) Bangladesh, both of which are lands with Muslim majorities. In this passage, Saleem is depicting 1957, whereas Bangladesh was established in 1971. Therefore, Saleem's definition is exclusive to the eastern and western parts of India with Muslim majorities.

In *Midnight's* Children, Saleem states that "there are as many versions of India as Indians" (2006: 308), but Pakistan creates a contrast to this multiplicity and variety of India. The same Saleem defines Pakistan as "the Land of the Pure," a uniform community in contrast to the plurality of India (328). The difference between the two becomes more apparent when Saleem's family moves to Pakistan in 1963 (349), and when subsequently Saleem joins the Pakistani army (2006: 377).

The reason that the Sinai family moves to Pakistan is significant: in the exclusivist political climate following the Partition, Ahmed Sinai finds out that all his assets are frozen (153), just like his testicles get frozen (2006: 154). Dr. Narlikar defines it as "bad times" and says that the government chose to "freeze a Muslim's assets and... make him run to Pakistan, leaving all [the] wealth behind him" adding that "[t]his so-called secular state gets some damn clever ideas" (153). This passage may appear to be an example of Rushdie's criticism of the harsh secularist politics and exclusivism of India, but there is more to it. Rushdie's metafiction blames the Muslims, Jinnah and their separatist vision of India based on religion/Islamic identity, more than he criticizes India's secularist policies and the decision to confiscate Muslim assets. This can be traced in the following quotation that is critical of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, "the President of Pakistan" (2006: 91, 367). In the passage below, Saleem makes a striking comparison between several dualities, including India and Pakistan, multiplicity and singularity, the potential and the failure, all connected to the duality of Nehruvian inclusive secularism vs. Jinnah's religious separatism:

> How many things people notions we bring with us into the world, how many possibilities and also restrictions of possibility!– Because all of these were the parents of the child born that midnight, and for every one of the midnight children there were as many more. Among the parents of midnight: the failure of the

> Cabinet Mission scheme; the determination of M. A. Jinnah, who was dying and wanted to see Pakistan formed in his lifetime, and would have done anything to ensure it– (120-121).

As Rakesh Ankit explains, the event Saleem mentions here, the Cabinet Mission, is a series of negotiations in 1946 that took place among the British, and the leaders of political parties of India (2016: 16-17) prior to the Partition. The Cabinet Mission finished with an "unsatisfactory end" (Ankit, 2016: 17) and the idea of a "united India" of Gandhi and Nehru eventually failed (Gandhi, 1997: 248). In the passage above, Rushdie's novel holds Jinnah as the one mainly responsible: Rushdie implies that Jinnah's agenda to establish a Muslim country led India to the Partition. Similarly, the duality of "possibilities and restrictions" is parallel to Rushdie's depiction of India as the land of plurality and possibilities, and Pakistan as the country of singularity and purity throughout the novel. For Rushdie, Jinnah is "a parent of midnight;" therefore, this passage is of critical importance in terms of understanding why Rushdie's metafiction has such a hostile tone while portraying Pakistan. Saleem abhors the Partition; thus, he believes and implies that Jinnah's religious communalism undermines all other attractive possibilities in/of India.

After the Sinai family moves to Pakistan, Rushdie's secularist nationalism and its specific Pakistan narrative become clearer. Pakistan, or in the novel's language, "country built especially for god" (317), changes Saleem considerably. Once Saleem is in Pakistan, Pakistan "jammes" him. He says:

> [i]n Pakistan, my second period of hurtling growth came to an end. And, in Pakistan, I discovered that somehow the existence of a frontier "jammed" my thought transmissions to the more-than-five-hundred; so that, exiled once more from my home, I was also exiled from the gift which was my truest birthright: the gift of the midnight children (325).

By moving from India to Pakistan, Saleem not only crossed the physical borders of the two countries, but he also crossed the cultural borders of Rushdie's secularist nationalism, as Rushdie's secularism and nationalism are both at work here. What follows are the six consequences and implications of Saleem's border-crossing and its relationship with the secularist nationalism of Rushdie's metafiction. First, Saleem no longer grows or develops in Pakistan. If we accept the analogy that Saleem is the whole of India, Pakistan falls outside the borders of the country/nation, and therefore

Saleem's all (India) encompassing skills (he is "All-India-Radio") do not work in this geographical and cultural land of Pakistan.

Second, Saleem cannot communicate with "his" people, the midnight's children anymore. The "thought transmission" comes to a halt, as there is no "thought" in the sense that India has it. This perspective of Saleem Sinai (or Rushdie's fiction) fits the stereotype of Pakistanis (General Zulfikar, his family, and other Muslims, who are all flat characters). Third, Saleem Sinai is in exile in Pakistan and this limit or border reveals a worldview: this passage clearly shows the limits of the nationalism of Rushdie's fiction. Rushdie's novel and its inherent Indian identity, just as Anderson explained, cannot (or does not) escape from the principles of sovereignty and the limitedness of the nation-state. The limits just become more apparent when Saleem comes to Muslim Pakistan. Fourth, there is no way Saleem can avoid coming here, because India and Pakistan were not separate entities before the partition, and therefore, a major part of Saleem's family still lives in this Muslim part. Yet, the novel's preferred way of portraying or criticizing the Islamic culture of Pakistan is making it ridiculous or irrelevant: Rushdie achieves this mainly through stereotyping the land and Muslim characters, as well as via hyperbole.

Fifth, Pakistan is the religio-national entity against which the new Indian identity is placed. After midnight of the Partition, Saleem and many children born that night, that is, the people of the new and promising nation of India, all acquire supernatural gifts. Yet, as Saleem states, none of these powers has any use in Pakistan. Rushdie cannot articulate the new Indian nation, without articulating its opposite, enemy, or its *other.* Sixth, Rushdie's selective secularism is the main force that shapes his understanding of nationalism. It is not surprising that several characters in the novel are plastic, fluid—that is, they change: they are round characters. However, this is not the case for the Muslim characters of Pakistan: there is always a strong and obvious ironic tone that makes them look ridiculous, which exaggerates the defects of these "caricature-like" stereotypes.

It is not only the geography of Karachi that repels Saleem, but he is also equally disgusted by its people: according to Saleem, "Karachiites had only the slipperiest of grasps on reality, and [were] therefore willing to turn to their leaders for advice on what was real and what was not" (2016: 353). I argue that Saleem's dislike for the city is not an ordinary choice, because it is shaped by the stadial secularist and nationalist perspective of Rushdie's metafiction. In his comparison between Bombay and Karachi, Saleem

states that Karachi is "beset by illusionary sand-dunes and the ghosts of ancient kings, and also by the knowledge that the name of the faith upon which the city stood meant 'submission,'" and he Saleem also states that his "new fellow-citizens exuded the flat boiled odors of acquiescence, which were depressing to a nose which had smelt—at the very last, and however briefly—the highly-spiced nonconformity of Bombay (353).

In the above passage, Saleem's India-Pakistan comparison is based on the smells, histories, and people of the aforenamed cities and countries. In this analogy, Pakistan reeks of "acquiescence" to Saleem, as he implies that Pakistani Muslims all lack individuality. He also thinks that the people of Pakistan are historically and culturally used to the idea of "submission," as expressed via the "ghosts of ancient kings," which implies that the kings are still influential over the allegedly backward people of Pakistan. Saleem's comparison finishes with clearly defining which side Saleem favors: the smell of Pakistan is "depressing for him," because he already knows the "highly spiced nonconformity of Bombay." In this expression, Saleem implies two more critical points. First, according to Saleem, India's Bombay is an inherently pluralistic and more colorful city, traits that Pakistan's Karachi lacks. Second, he equates the submission of Pakistani Muslims to conformity; or in other words, the pluralist (or we may call this hybrid) people of India think, whereas the conforming people of Pakistan "submit."

What do all of these implications have to do with Rushdie's selective secularism or his nationalism? Another relevant question is whether Rushdie's fiction still displays hybridity, as argued by several critics in the previous section's discussion. To answer these two questions, I first emphasize that Rushdie's fiction is self-consciously using the exclusivist "us-them" language. While doing so, the novel is generalizing and stereotyping Muslim communities. For this reason, Rushdie's work does have a sense of nationalism, determined by geographical, cultural, and religious borders. In this regard, there are some individuals, traditions, religions, and cities that fall within the borders of Rushdie's nationalism, and there are those that do not. Pakistan's Karachi and its Muslim community is an example of the latter. I also note that Rushdie is not hostile to all religions and/or all religious ideas. The novel regards Hindu myths as richness, and they are among the main components of *Midnight's Children*. In contrast, the myths of Islamic culture are not conceived or represented in the novel in a similar way. For this reason, I contend that Rushdie's fiction has a selective secularist per-

spective. Rushdie's secularism is also stadial, because of its selectivity of religions: Rushdie sees Indian myths and religions as richness and uses them as the components of his novel, whereas he refuses to do the same or similar when it comes to Islamic mythology (Kortenaar, 2003: 22). This is why Rushdie's metafiction, I argue, also has a stadial perspective, as it makes a distinction between the backward religions, and more mature ones. In this sense, Rushdie's fiction takes on secularism in Casanova's sense. The more time Saleem spends in Pakistan, the deeper his stereotyping becomes. He consistently keeps comparing India to Pakistan, and finds the latter to be,

> a country where the truth is what it is instructed to be, reality quite literally ceases to exist, so that everything becomes possible except what we are told is the case; and maybe this was the difference between my Indian childhood and Pakistani adolescence– that in the first I was beset by an infinity of alternative realities, while in the second I was adrift, disorientated, amid an equally infinite number of falsenesses, unrealities and lies. (373).

This passage contains two of the recurring themes of *Midnight's Children*, particularly regarding the way that Rushdie's fiction sees Pakistan and Muslims. The novel consistently repeats the following: how Pakistani Muslims are shaped by the idea of submission, and hence, how they do not have individuality; also how the country is based on a falseness, and that "reality ceases to exist" in Pakistan; and that there is just one strictly hierarchical cultural and political structure where no one thinks, but rather people just obey, submit and survive. At the other end of Rushdie's spectrum is his India, which offers/offered a variety of "alternative realities." The significance of this passage comes from the way Rushdie's metafiction positions the narrator and the narration: the narrator/protagonist Saleem views Pakistan from a very specific vantage point: his India. This vantage point determines the criteria against which Pakistan is measured, because what does not fulfill the expectations of Saleem (and in this case, it is the rich alternative realities of India), is defined as "falseness, unrealities and lies." Once Saleem is outside of the limits of his India, he becomes "adrift" and "disoriented." Whether one agrees with Rushdie's presentations of the ideologies of India or Pakistan is totally another matter, but in terms of storytelling, Rushdie's metafiction comes to have a narrator that is far from being hybrid: when Saleem comes to Pakistan, his vantage point becomes loud and clear. For this reason, I argue that the minority position of Saleem is just a

disguise, particularly when he is in Pakistan: as soon as he steps into Pakistan, Saleem the storyteller loses the pluralist view he once had in India.

That vantage point of Saleem pushes him to start to create categories and eventually to categorize others accordingly. Similar to his narrative of India, Saleem continues to narrate Pakistan through his immediate family. In the following passage, he explains the relationship among his aunt, Pakistan's education system, and how Pakistan turned out to be what it is:

> My aunt Alia's contribution to the fate of nations—through her school and college— must not be minimized. Having allowed her old-maid frustrations to leak into the curricula, the bricks and also the students at her twin educational establishments, she had raised a tribe of children and young adults who felt themselves possessed by an ancient vengefulness, without fully knowing why (378).

How does Aunt Alia "contribute" to the fate of Pakistan's education and the past, present and future of the nation? To be able to answer this question, I must first explain how Rushdie's fiction stereotypes Muslim characters: Saleem's Aunt Alia is one of the several Muslim stereotypes in Rushdie's novel, which are reduced to one specific trait such as fundamentalism, submission, businessperson, spinster, etc. and are depicted through the continuous hyperbole/exaggeration of a specific personality flaw. In this example, Alia wants to marry Ahmed Sinai, but her sister marries him, not Alia (67), after which Alia remains "silent" and "bruised," (67) never marries again, "turns into spinsterhood and bitterness and finally bursts out in deadly revenge" (120). Her "embittered virginity would last until a bomb split her in two over eighteen years later," (123). "All on her own, [she] go[es] to Pakistan—even she is making a decent life, teaching in a fine school" (157); [she] becomes "head-mistress" (176); she still has "undimmed envy" (176); "Alia's spinsterhood filled the air and ruined [their] food" in Pakistan (215); she remains "bitter" (311); she "spread[s] her ancient, dusty disappointment through the air" (313). When Alia meets the Sinai family in Pakistan, Saleem notices that his "headmistress aunt had acquired the heavy-footed corpulence[2] of undimmed jealousy; the thick

[2] The "heavy-footed corpulence" is not an accidental phrase; on the contrary, it continues a stereotype Rushdie's fiction uses. In the earlier stages of the narration, Saleem informs us that "Alia had inherited her mother's tendency to put on fat. She would balloon outwards with the passing years" (57). In the above quotation, Rushdie's novel merges Alia's physical deformity with her psychological imbalance and social failure, which would later influence Pakistan's

dark hairs of her resentment sprouted through most of the pores of her skin" (351). On the docks of Karachi, Saleem sees once more that Alia "had knitted her hatred," and that she is "possessed by revenge-lust," and he can also "smell the vengeful odors leaking out of [Alia's] glands" (351). Saleem and his family have got nothing to do, as they are "powerless to protest; [they are] swept into the Datsun of [Alia's] vengeance and driven away down Bunder Road to her house at Guru Mandir—like flies, only more foolish, because [they] celebrate [their] captivity" (351).

At this point Saleem merges the two themes that stereotype Muslims: "the long accusing shadow of the minaret of the local mosque" is on Alia's house, which makes Saleem confess he "never forgave [ugly] Karachi for not being Bombay" (352). He "studie[s] history at [his] Aunt Alia's college; but not even learning could make [him] feel a part of this country devoid of midnight children" because his "fellow-students took out processions to demand a stricter, more Islamic society—proving that they had contrived to become the antitheses of students everywhere else on earth" (355). Saleem keeps on merging the different stereotypes. In Pakistan, soon he merges "[the] uglier smells of... the bitterness of Aunt Alia, and the hard unchanging stink of my fellowstudents' closed minds" (361). In the meantime, Alia begins to "wreak her awful spinster's revenge," (377) and Alia's "hatred of the man who had abandoned her and of the sister who had married him gr[ows] into a tangible, visible thing, it s[its] on her living-room rug like a great gecko, reeking of vomit" (377). In short, Alia's character is one of the Muslim stereotypes[3] in Rushdie's fiction.

Similar to the depiction of Aunt Alia, Rushdie's novel chooses one personality trait, exaggerates it, and turns a human being, a religion, and/or a country into a one-dimensional idea, an overexaggerated flaw, a caricature. Maria DiBattista writes the following on caricaturizing, flat characters, and stereotyping:

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education system destructively. This is a noticeably disturbing example, because Rushdie's metafiction takes on a completely different tone: the characters in Pakistan are not hybrid or plural, unlike the ones in India. Rushdie's metafiction not only stereotypes the Muslim characters, but also narrates them as scapegoats. Rushdie's metafiction is hybrid only insofar as Saleem is in his India. In other words, Saleem's metafiction is shaped by his selective, stadial secularism and nationalism. This narrow and exclusivist view pushes Saleem to reduce people to stereotypes and scapegoats. There is nothing plural or hybrid in this perspective.

[3] Reverend Mother is a noteworthy stereotype, for instance. She is the embodiment of two of the recurring personality traits Rushdie's fiction ascribes to Muslims: submission, and businessperson.

> The stereotype, as the literal origins of the word indicates, is typecast, prefabricated, and pre-assigned to solid and fixed forms. It thus expresses a more mechanical, standard, and less differentiated vision of human beings than the word character, which retains important associations with the art of engraving... But flatness may also serve more sinister designs... A kind of perceptual contagion may result, in which the character who either is or simply feels threatened by loss of distinction, begins "flattening" those beneath or beside him, becomes the agent as well as target of ridicule and prejudice... Such reasoning at once unites and divides (2010: 172-173).

DiBattista points to a significant relationship between flat characters/stereotyping and ridiculing and prejudice: this is exactly what is happening in Rushdie's fiction regarding Pakistan. The characters I mentioned above do not change in Rushdie's plot. Instead, Rushdie's metafiction chooses one absurd personality trait, and it keeps growing uncontrollably bigger and bigger, like a metastasis taking hold of the rest of the body. The parts and the whole are one main theme in Rushdie's metafiction. The process explained above is an example of the relationship between the parts and the whole in Rushdie's novel in the sense that the awkward part being portrayed attempts to possess the rest of the body.

What are the literary, cultural, or political implications of establishing such a relationship between the whole and a part, in which the latter takes over the former? Aunt Alia's "spinsterhood" turning into the "educational establishments" and her "raisi[ng] a tribe of children" (378) are not only stereotyping and scapegoating, but they are also a form of fearmongering. Rushdie's metafiction does not narrate all identities within a span of time, and thus does not equally show the readers how they happened to be, as well as how they may change over time. For instance, in Rushdie's metafiction Alia's "spinsterhood" demolishes the education system and turns Pakistan into a "tribe," which is one of the several examples of Rushdie's stereotyping of the other. Below is an analysis of similar characters of the same sort, which supports my argument that there is a stereotyping and an exclusivist pattern in Rushdie's novel. This undermines the dominant Rushdie criticism that his novel is an accomplished example of hybridity.

As I discussed prior, Rushdie's stereotyping is not limited to one or two Muslim characters. Rather, Rushdie's novel implies that it is Pakistan (or the Muslim culture) that changes people and makes them greedy capitalists. I

will explain this through two examples: The Reverend Mother and Jamila the Singer. When the whole family of Saleem meets in the "Buckingham Villa" in India (310). Reverend Mother gets very angry with Saleem's Aunt Pia, on the basis that she does not mourn or cry for her deceased husband, Hanif: "Pia remain[s] still, dry-eyed, and anticlimatically composed" (312). In response, Reverend Mother threatens Pia: "[u]ntil that woman shows my son's memory some respect, whatsitsname, until she takes out a wife's true tears, no food will pass my lips. It is shame and scandal, whatsitsname, how she sits with antimony instead of tears in her eyes!'" (312). Pressured by the Reverend Mother, Pia cries and mourns so much that she "t[ears] her garments and her hair" (312). Then the family moves to Pakistan, to "the Land of the Pure" (2016: 349). The same Reverend Mother who had scolded Pia for not mourning for her husband Hanif properly, "purchase[s] a concession on the long-dreamed-of petrol pump" (2016: 375) and Reverend Mother,

> never mentioned Aadam Aziz, nor would she grieve over him; it was almost as though she were relieved that my querulous grandfather, who had in his youth despised the Pakistan movement, and who in all probability blamed the Muslim League for the death of his friend Mian Abdullah, had by dying permitted her to go alone into the Land of the Pure. Setting her face against the past, Reverend Mother concentrated on gasoline and oil. The pump was on a prime site, near the Rawalpindi- Lahore grand trunk road; it did very well. (375).

What does Rushdie's metafiction show through this example? The Reverend Mother in India was one that scolded Pia for not mourning, whereas the Reverend Mother in Rawalpindi/Pakistan does not even mention her husband, let alone grieve over him. The passage clearly shows that Reverend Mother is happy to be rid of her husband Aadam Aziz, who had "despised Pakistan" and kept her away from not only "the Land of the Pure," but also from her "long-dreamed of petrol pump" (375). In short, Reverend Mother is one of the typical Muslims in Rushdie's fiction, particularly when she is in Pakistan: an untrustworthy investor who lacks even the most basic human values. This is another example of the connection Rushdie's secularist nationalism finds between the fundamentalist/"pure" Pakistan and "business."

A similar character that Pakistan *hones* is Jamila the Singer. I deliberately use the verb "honing," because Pakistan just sharpens that one nega-

tive or destructive potential in these "Muslim" characters. For instance, Reverend Mother was already depicted as a fundamentalist, racist and bigot at the very beginning of the novel.[4] In the end, she reaches Pakistan and becomes a businessperson and the business "[does] very well" (375). A similar pattern can be observed in Jamila the Singer. She, too, just like Reverend Mother, has a past of religious "fanaticism" (290).[5] She first becomes a Christian, and according to Saleem, she chooses this religion for her "elevation to the role of favored child" and "to regain her old, comfortable position in the family doghouse" (290). In her Pakistani years, the collective identity of Pakistan takes over Jamila, but as in other examples, it is business: she is told that her "voice will be a sword for purity; it will be a weapon with which we shall cleanse men's souls," so she "dedicate[s] herself to patriotism" (360). Therefore, her singing, according to Saleem, becomes instrumental in promoting, endorsing, or making propaganda for Pakistani-type religious nationalism. Saleem says that such a,

> ...virus subjected her to the exaggerations and simplifications of self which are the unavoidable side-effects of stardom, so that the blind and blinding devoutness and the right-or-wrong nationalism which had already begun to emerge in her now began to dominate her personality, to the exclusion of almost everything else. Publicity imprisoned her inside a gilded tent; and, being the new daughter-of-the-nation, her character began to owe more to

[4] Naseem (Reverend Mother) is a bigot, and she sees the world as black or white, through the lens of Islam. When Aadam Aziz ousted the religious tutor, she reveals her exclusivist and fundamentalist attitude. She alludes to Aadam's education in Germany and "marry[ing] ...daughters to Germans:" she feels uncomfortable at having married Aadam with his foreign education: "Man without dignity! she cursed her husband, and, 'Man without, whatsitsname, shame!' Children watched from the safety of the back verandah. And Aziz, 'Do you know what that man was teaching your children?' And Reverend Mother hurling question against question, 'What will you not do to bring disaster, whatsitsname, on our heads?'-But now Aziz, 'You think it was Nastaliq script? Eh?'-to which his wife, warming up: 'Would you eat pig? Whatsitsname? Would you spit on the Quran?' And, voice rising, the doctor ripostes, 'Or was it some verses of 'The Cow?' You think that?'... Paying no attention, Reverend Mother arrives at her climax: 'Would you marry your daughters to Germans!?' And pauses, fighting for breath, letting my grandfather reveal, 'He was teaching them to hate, wife. He tells them to hate Hindus and Buddhists and Jains and Sikhs and who knows what other vegetarians. Will you have hateful children, woman?'" (42).

[5] Saleem says that Jamila "mounted to extremes of religious fervor, reciting the Our Father morning and night, fasting in the weeks of Lent instead of during Ramzân, revealing an unsuspected streak of fanaticism which would, later, begin to dominate her personality" (290).

the most strident aspects of the national persona than to the child-world of her Monkey years." (359).

If we trust Saleem, there is a strong correlation between Jamila's "blinding devoutness" and her "nationalism," which Saleem defines as a "virus." This virus in/of Pakistan motivates her to leave behind the "last relic of her old flirtation with Christianity," and thus, she becomes the "Bulbul [Nightingale] of Faith" (361).[6] Saleem clearly states that Jamila's singing in Pakistan is a career: "Jamila had been launched on the career which would earn her the names of "Pakistan's Angel" and 'Bulbul-of-the-Faith'" (350). As Jamila, "Jamila s[ings] of holiness and love-of-country" (2016: 364), and in Saleem's words, uses her voice as "a weapon," "a sword," that is meant to "cleanse men's souls." To reiterate: even before Jamila becomes "the Bulbul of Faith," Rushdie's fiction lets the readers know that she will be a part of show business: "Major (Retired) Alauddin Latif" is a "darn good friend" of General Zulfikar, who used to "be with [Zulfikar] in the Border Patrol Force back in '47" (2016: 356). Let me note that Rushdie's narration implies that Latif is at least as corrupt as General Zulfikar, as he was "with Zulfikar... in 47" while Zulfikar was organizing the smuggling across the border. In addition, after leaving the army, Latif "enter[s] showbusiness" (357). Zulfikar's colleague from the army, Latif, promises Ahmed Sinai that he (Latif) "will just rub [his] jolly old lamp and out pops the genie bringing fame and fortune" (357).

What brings all these characters together? What are some of the similarities among Aunt Alia, General Zulfikar, Reverend Mother, Latif and Jamila the Singer? All of these characters are Muslim, and all are connected to and shaped by Pakistan, as well as its religious nationalism. This religious nationalism of Pakistan is narrated through two main concepts: submission and businessism. In this regard, neither Pakistan, nor the Muslim characters in Rushdie's metafiction have the depth expected from a full character in the sense that Forster explains. In other words, I argue, Rushdie's metafiction depicts the Muslim characters and Pakistan as carica-

[6] The reference of "bulbul" is literal and historical: in the Persian/Middle Eastern/Islamic Diwan Poetry, the poems and stories of the rose and the nightingale (aka the bulbul) are famous. The *bulbul* sings beautifully, and the rose has extraordinary beauty, but the two can never unite physically in this *cihan* or *alem* (the world). The lover, bulbul, can never attain the rose, the beloved, (as the rose has thorns). Therefore, a dervish (a follower of Sufi tradition), as a suffering lover, must leave behind the worldly love (just like Jamila) and pursue a transcendental, Godly love. This is what Rushdie's secular metafiction refers to, in a quite critical fashion.

tures, or stereotypes: all of these characters are somehow corrupt and incompetent, and when they reach Pakistan, their corruption, incompetence, greed, submission, or businessism just peaks.

These Muslim characters do not change, but Rushdie's metafiction does: in this section, I argue that Rushdie's self-reflexive narrative has quite different approaches to India as the "Homeland" and "Pakistan" as "the Land of Pure." Clearly, this shift in the narrative shapes and is shaped by the stadial secularist perspective and nationalism of Rushdie. It is stadial in Casanova's sense, because as Kortenaar writes,

> the story-telling in Rushdie's novel has several traces from "... the Mahabharata. and. especially, the *Arabian Nights.* Saleem explicitly compares himself to Moses... Ganesh... and Scheherezade... the narrators or supposed writers of those books, (he compares himself to the Prophet as well) ...but the Quran, of course, does not display the same drive to narrative" (2013: 21-22).

Thus, Rushdie's metafiction has stadial tones: Islam is, "of course," not one of the cultural sources of the novel. On the contrary, Islam in Rushdie's metafiction is Pakistani Islam, which is represented through the stereotypes or caricatures of "submission" and "businessism". The exclusive grammar of his secularism, as represented in his use of metafiction, determines the limits of the inclusivity and/or exclusivism of his nationalism. As the above examples show, the cultural and political borders of Saleem's India are not inclusive enough to call the fiction "hybrid".

Conclusion

Salman Rushdie's clever use of metafiction in *Midnight's Children* has limits regarding hybridity. Specifically, the novel uses the exclusivist grammar of nationalism and stadial/secularist secularism. This study also compares the structural hybridity and the complex heritage of Saleem to the exclusive grammar of the narrator. The storyteller Saleem and his narrative have a specific vantage point, particularly with respect to the depiction of Pakistan and Muslims. There is also a noteworthy narrative shift between India and Pakistan: the plurality and richness in the narration of India, this study argues, leaves its place for the singularity and corruption of Pakistan. In addition, Rushdie's metafiction depicts the Pakistani or Muslim characters in a distinctive and negatively separatist way. Regarding them, I maintained that there is a pattern in the novel's depiction of Muslim characters: Rushdie's work portrays Muslim characters in one or some of the

following categories: "corrupt," "submissive" or "businessists". Following that, this study also connects Rushdie's secularist nationalism in his fiction and to the exclusivist grammar in his *Imaginary Homelands* and his 2011 interview.

Politically, what is the problem with secularist nationalism in Rushdie's sense? In other words, why does it matter? Srivastava provides an answer to this question by explaining Indian secular nationalism, and its effects on the India-Pakistan relationship:

> But our concern is more with the faultlines of Indian secular nationalism after Independence and Partition. What secular nationalism effectively did to a significant part of the Indian population (the part which then became Pakistani citizens) was to turn them into non-Indians (and today the propaganda of the Hindu right attempts to depict Indian Muslims as 'non-Indians.'" (1991: 40).

The problem with Rushdie's nationalism is the non-inclusive grammar of the discourse. As Srivastava argues, the secular(ist) nationalism of Rushdie creates clear cultural and political borders, and whatever falls beyond the borders of the homeland is depicted in the form of stereotypes of one sort or another. In *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie has an outstanding passage on the shortcomings of nationalist discourses. He writes:

> There is one last idea that I should like to explore, even though it may, on first hearing, seem to contradict much of what I've so far said. It is this: of all the many elephant traps lying ahead of us, the largest and most dangerous pitfall would be the adoption of a ghetto mentality. To forget that there is a world beyond the community to which we belong, to confine ourselves within narrowly defined cultural frontiers, would be, I believe, to go voluntarily into that form of internal exile which in South Africa is called the "homeland" (1992: 19).

Rushdie is quite right regarding the elephant traps and cultural borders: first, he is extremely aware of the pitfalls of what he calls "the ghetto mentality," and the second is that his Midnight's Children contradicts the ideals stated in the above passage. With the expression "ghetto mentality", Rushdie possibly targets bigotry and religious fanaticism. Yet, Midnight's Children must be both praised for its clever use of metafiction, but a reader must also be aware of the limitations of the secular-nationalist perspective implicit in the narrative, as the narrative has exclusivist overtones.

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