Overtones Ege Journal of English Studies

Vol. 4 (2025)

Research Article

Citation: Yaşayanlar, Gamze. "Unravelling Lost Memories and Digging Deep into Meaning in *Midnight's Children*." *Overtones* 4 (2025): 37-44.
Received: 14 September 2024
Accepted: 13 December 2024
Corresponding Author: Gamze Yaşayanlar, School of Foreign Languages, Ege University, Türkiye.
ORCID: 0000-0001-5501-4838

Unravelling Lost Memories and Digging Deep into Meaning in *Midnight's Children*[1]

Gamze Yaşayanlar

Abstract: As one of the most significant authors blending the East and the West, and reflecting his concerns on fragile issues such as the clash of cultures, beliefs, identities, postcolonial and postmodern practices, Salman Rushdie presents a multi-layered novel with a fragmented structure which is very similar to human essence. *Midnight's Children* is a fine example of retelling individual and collective memories, and the human struggle to find meaning in life. The narrator, Saleem delves into his childhood memories and recounts his family saga to his audience with the belief that stories, whether fragmented or distorted, materialize and become more real when narrated. Thus, as Saleem feels that his body is about to collapse, he rushes to complete his stories before he dies. He believes that a life narrated and made meaningful is a life worth living. In this context, Rushdie frames painful historical events present in the nation as fiction and unravels the hallmarks of both individual and collective memory. The aim of this article is to discuss how meaning is conveyed through storytelling and memory in a nation where truth and fragmentation collide but plurality and multiple realities embrace progressive perspectives.

Keywords: memory, meaning, narration, postcolonialism, postmodernism, food, duality, *Midnight's Children*

Introduction

The Indian born British American author Salman Rushdie is one of the most noteworthy authors integrating Eastern and Western social and traditional practices while expressing his concerns about the clash of cultures, societies, beliefs, postcolonial issues of diaspora and migration with a touch of philosophical examination of the human condition. As one of the most prominent authors known worldwide, Rushdie is the winner of the *Booker Prize* for his second novel *Midnight's Children* in 1981. The novel, following an epic structure with the hero Saleem Sinai's quest for meaning, can be seen as a postmodern and postcolonial example of literary theory with its style and narration. The novel opens up an opportunity for the people living on the margin. Their voices reflecting the idea, attitude and feelings of the periphery find a chance to be heard. Rushdie draws a metafictional frame for his novel as the narrator's stories develop with interruptions and postponed endings. The disruption of truth, the slippery ground between fiction and reality, the made-up historical moments and incidents foregrounding the play of memory which operate by selection and manipulation, contribute to its fragmented structure. The

[1] This article is produced from my doctoral dissertation entitled "Storytelling: Remaking Meaning Through Collective Memory and Language" defended in April 2023 at the Department of English Language and Literature, Ege University.

objective of this article is to discuss how the human being attains meaning in a world lacking unity and order, and how this meaning is attained through memory. Rushdie skilfully achieves this end by exploring involuntary triggers which take the narrator to his childhood memories, highlighting the importance of narrating stories for perpetuation and meaning for the following generations and questioning the dual nature of human essence. While exploring these concerns, Rushdie also draws attention to the use of local words and phrases when the English language seems to be insufficient to convey the feelings of the postcolonial experience.

A Postmodern Narrative Framing History as Fiction

Establishing a multi-layered postmodern novel by granting different voices to various characters, Rushdie gives a vivid description of Saleem's past and present life. He presents a world of fragmentation in the history of the nation and memories of the people through the voice of Saleem and his complex yet powerful narration of his story. Saleem's story covers the history of his family in relation to the history of the nation with its rise and fall. His narration depicts a world of intertextual features, relativity of truth, unreliable memories, constructed meanings, political and religious remarks told, discussed and evaluated. This identification is in line with the French philosopher and literary theorist Jean François Lyotard's description of the postmodern condition as:

> The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unpresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unpresentable. (Lyotard 248)

As in postmodernism, every form of depiction or representation is reclaimed and approached with doubt while Saleem seeks to tell his life story and explore all the reliable and unreliable details by bringing bits and pieces together in a self-reflexive way. The literary critic Linda Hutcheon in *Narcissistic Narrative* states that "self-reflective narrative often presents the story of its own coming to life, its own creative processes" by employing "the act of reading into one of active 'production', of imagining, interpreting, decoding, ordering, in short of constructing the literary universe through the fictive referents of the words. Reader and writer both share the process of fiction-making in *language*" (86) (emphasis original). Thus, Saleem believes that the narration of his stories, either distorted or factual, imagined or constructed, is the only way to keep them alive and when he gets the listener's consent to continue his story, he goes deep into every detail.

The family saga starts with Saleem's highlighting that he was born at midnight, on 15 August 1947, the exact date of the independence of India from the British rule. The novel gives a description of the destructive partition of the country into India and Pakistan when the British withdrew. The majority of the Hindu population was in India while Muslim majority formed Pakistan. However, it was mostly confusion and sadness for millions who were hesitant about which part of the country they were in. Most of them were also resentful to find out that some important Muslim districts had gone to India and Hindu places to Pakistan. Rushdie highlights the suffering of the refugees and the migrants who could make their way from Pakistan to India and vice versa. It was much more pain and misery for the ones who could not cross the border. Considering all this intense suffering, Saleem believes that his life is mostly linked to the fate of his country, India, as every significant incident or event related to the subcontinent finds a place in his life.

Reflecting on Food and Memory

Featuring voluntary and involuntary memory to attribute meaning to his life, Saleem's purpose is to reach every bit of individual and collective memory related to his family and the nation. With his friend and the baby Aadam, they go to Bombay to challenge one of the snake charmers who declares himself as the greatest charmer in the world. They go to a club where the competition takes place and they are served food accompanied by some chutney. At that instant Saleem recalls the flavour of the chutney and he tracks down the address of the factory where it is produced so that he can get something related to his past. In parallel, Loftus brilliantly reminds her readers that "there is a fascination with anything that succeeds in recalling the past" and quotes Marcel Proust's tea episode in *Swann's Way* to exemplify her statement (33). Consequently, Saleem is not mistaken as he finds out that they are Mary Pereria's chutneys, the nanny he was brought up by. Saleem's taste of the chutney and his

feelings which take him back to his childhood coincide with the same nostalgic feelings reminiscent in the tea episode. Proust describes "involuntary memory" as related to senses which reflects the stages of a sensory trigger, awakening memory through recognition and realisation (Tukey 397). Involuntary memory is highlighted as the "intellectual consciousness without a deliberate seeking or desire for the past, the sense of unity supplied by the first taste of *madeleine*", or in Saleem's experience the chutney, "a puzzling after the sensation departs—not indifference, but rather an effort at memory and heightened self-consciousness, and then, with the identification of the taste and association with" Saleem's childhood memories with his nanny Mary Pereria, "the completed self-consciousness and memory" are attained (Tukey 398) (emphasis original). It is important to note that "[o]ur memories of certain objects are governed by our past knowledge of comparable objects or of situations similar to the one we are experiencing. Our memories are *prejudiced*, in the full sense of the term, by our past history and beliefs" (Damasio 104) (emphasis original). Thus, "[t]he brain holds a memory of what went on during an interaction, and the interaction importantly includes our own past […]. The fact that we perceive by engagement, rather than by passive receptivity, is the secret of the 'Proustian effect' in memory, the reason why we often recall contexts rather than just isolated things" (104-5). Quite similar to Saleem's experience, Proust describes his reflection of the Madeleine as follows:

> And once I had recognized the taste of the crumb of Madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime flowers, which my aunt used to give me […] immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like the scenery of a theatre to attach itself to the little pavilion, […] and with the house the town, […] the Square where I was sent before luncheon, the streets […] the country roads we took when it was fine. (in Loftus 33)

Saleem's feelings when he recognizes the distinguished flavour of the chutney confirm Proust's experience of the Madeleine soaked in tea. When the cues or hints are given to help trigger the memory, remembering the past experience or recollection of a past event takes place. Thus, "the recollective experience of the rememberer depends on the way in which a memory is retrieved" (Schacter 25). Saleem is bewildered by confusing feelings and can scarcely compose himself. In astonishment, he states: "[I]t carried me back to a day when I emerged nine-fingered from a hospital and went into exile at the home of Hanif Aziz, and was given the best chutney in the world" (*MC* 637). He believes that "the taste of the chutney was more than just an echo of that long-ago taste – it was the old taste itself, the very same, with the power of bringing back the past as if it had never been away" (637). To Proust, smells and tastes are fragile and "uniquely effective cues for an elusive but powerful memory" (Schacter 27). Proust defines this memory process as follows:

> [W]hen from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, taste and smell alone, more fragile but more enduring, more immaterial, more persistent, more faithful, remain poised for a long time, like souls, remembering, waiting and hoping, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unflinchingly, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection. (in Schacter 27)

David Sutton believes that Proust highlights "the power of sensory parts", and directs us "to return […] to the whole, of the unsubstantial fragment to reveal the vast structure" while he also "points us to the emotional charge of the moment of consumption for keying, involuntarily, these associative memories" (84). Similarly, Saleem questions after the maker of the chutney with such an excitement that he cannot control himself but bursts out. Saleem's experience of the chutney taking him back to his childhood as a reminder of his past coincides beautifully with Proust's explanation of the sensory triggers in life as Proust states, "the smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us, waiting and hoping for their moment, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unfaltering, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection" (in Loftus 33). This process can be likened to a retrieval of information or experience from the long-term memory. When the individual has enough cues to remind him of his past, as the taste of the chutney in Saleem's case, or any smell, sight or hearing, they become the triggers, the cues of retrieval and all of a sudden, quite unexpectedly, they rise to the surface.

Long-term memory is the place and district of all information. When some information comes to the surface involuntarily, there is no place for fallibility of memory because "in the process of involuntary memory sensation imitates discovery of a truth […] [which is] purely […] conceptual thought; and the effort of the intellect

interpreting, assimilating, integrating from sensation is the essential ingredient of involuntary memory" (Tukey 399). Thus, in involuntary memory, Proust's purpose is to gain insight and the union of this experience with past time is prominent for him. The consequence of involuntary memory is "a changed life, a life exhibiting greater goodness, enlightenment and purity", directed "toward eternal union with the divine in some afterlife" (399). This is what happens in Saleem's story and his reunion with the experience of the past. Saleem wants to see the brand of the chutney or the address possibly written on the chutney jar so that he could search for the factory and trace the taste of his childhood. He does so and there at the factory, he finds his nanny, Mary Pereira, "the only mother [he] had left in the world" as the owner of the chutney factory (*MC* 639).

Saleem starts working at the factory with a job to choose "[r]aw materials, obviously – fruit, vegetables, fish, vinegar, spices" for the pickling process, chutnification (*MC* 643). He finds a symbolic value in the process and draws a correlation between the pickling of food and memories. He believes that the pickling process is meaningful because it is a process which preserves the fresh and raw food and extends the period it can be edible. It prevents its being rotten and going bad. In this sense, chutnification of food is similar to narrating a story as it is being preserved in the memory of the collective. In chutnification, food is preserved for later use, and through the narrating process, memory, and consequently beliefs, culture and history are passed on to the next generations.

Attaining Meaning through Storytelling

Rushdie makes Saleem speak and he tries to achieve this end to his story. He wants to transfer all the turmoil the nation goes through in relation to the changes in his personal life through narration. He comments: "[M]y chutneys and kasaundies [tomato chutney] are, after all, connected to my nocturnal scribblings – by day amongst the pickle-vats, by night within these sheets, I spend my time at the great work of preserving. Memory, as well as fruit, is being saved from the corruption of the clocks" (*MC* 44). In line with this viewpoint, the philosopher of literature Peter Lamarque emphasizes that "to narrate is to tell a story", and "fictional narration" is "the telling of stories that are 'made up', 'invented', 'products of the imagination'" (133). Thus, Saleem revisits his past, shapes his experiences and narrates his story as storytelling is an inherent part of all human beings. He depicts not only history, society or culture but also reimagines the past, the present, and the future. Hannah Meretoja summarizes American philosopher and political theorist Hannah Arendt's perspective on storytelling by stating that it is "a process of sharing experiences in such a way that helps us bear both our pain and our joy" (198) and quotes Arendt's argument that stories lead to a way in which "particular facts lose their contingency and acquire some humanly comprehensible meaning. It is precisely true that 'all sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them,' in the words of Isak Dinesen" (Arendt in Meretoja 198). Thus, especially sorrow, suffering and agony become more tolerable when put in words in a story. The philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin also acknowledges that people are "storytelling beings who desire to be framed and narrativized into coherence, to be characters in a novel" (in Meretoja 185).

Saleem gives the titles of the chapters of the novel to the chutney jars as they reflect his autobiography. He symbolically fills in the jars with his memories of his family, the nation, unrest, disorder, love and magic. What he also believes to be pickled is "the hidden languages […] its humours and messages and emotions" (*MC* 643). Moreover, he includes "memories, dreams, ideas, so that once they enter mass-production all who consume them will know what pepperpots achieved in Pakistan, or how it felt to be in the Sundarbans … believe don't believe but it's true. Thirty jars stand upon a shelf, waiting to be unleashed upon the amnesiac nation" (643). Considering the thirty chapters in the flow of the story, Saleem "chutnifies" all the chapters which comprise his life story. He feels that his stories can have a value of immortality only if they are narrated. Thus, he identifies narration of his stories with the sense of attributing form and essence to them. He explains as follows:

> To pickle is to give immortality, after all: fish, vegetables, fruit hang embalmed in spice-and-vinegar; a certain alteration, a slight intensification of taste, is a small matter, surely? The art is to change the flavour in degree, but not in kind; and above all (in my thirty jars and a jar) to give it shape and form – that is to say, meaning. (I have mentioned my fear of absurdity.). (*MC* 644)

Saleem knows that there may be distortions or deformation of meaning in the stories since it is innate to human nature to add or eliminate some facts and being selective in the narration of stories. The process of narration

includes the potential of blurring the past experiences and events on the one hand and revealing its unseen parts on the other. Thus, storytelling embodies power in its definition as it breaks "the monopoly of established reality […] to *define* what is *real*" (Marcuse in Freeman 276) (emphasis original). The aim of the storyteller then as expressed by Schachtel, is to "fight constantly against the easy flow of words that offer themselves" (in Freeman 276) with the purpose of finding "those that will say something new and valuable, something that moves beyond the cliché, the stale sentiment, into a region of truth" (Freeman 276). Saleem continues to narrate his story as it is the only way to give shape and meaning to his memories and life.

Saleem's craving to tell his story is Rushdie's concern to reach everyone outside the nation. Rushdie "chutnifies" the history of the nation and Saleem puts it in jars for the next generations. He believes that "[o]ne day, perhaps, the world may taste the pickles of history. They may be too strong for some palates, their smell may be overpowering, tears may rise to eyes; I hope nevertheless that it will be possible to say of them that they possess the authentic taste of truth" (*MC* 644). There is only one empty jar which cannot be pickled as it is about the future. Saleem comments: "I shall have to write the future as I have written the past, to set it down with the absolute certainty of a prophet. But the future cannot be preserved in a jar; one jar must remain empty … What cannot be pickled, because it has not taken place" (645).

The Nature of Duality

As Saleem, the narrator and the creator of the family saga and national history struggles to comprehend and communicate his story with the jars of chutney, he runs into his double in wicked Shiva, the warrior who also adds to Saleem's purpose of making sense of his life**.** Salem and Shiva born on the night of India's independence from the British, at the stroke of midnight which enables them with the most magical powers among the children born then. Saleem is born to a needy family and Shiva's parents are wealthy but as Mary switches the babies at birth, they live a life which endows them with unexpected fortunes and difficulties. This switch indicates that Saleem "is 'really' Shiva, and Shiva is 'really'" Saleem, "so that the polar opposition is severely problematized" (Booker 978). Moreover, when pregnant Amina visits the soothsayer, she has a prophesy declaring that "[t]here will be two heads – but you shall see only one – there will be knees and a nose, a nose and knees" (*MC* 114). Amina is confused and sorrowful as she thinks that she will give birth to a child with two heads. However, the soothsayer is not mistaken as Amina's biological child is Shiva but as the nanny switches the babies at birth, Amina looks after Saleem as her real son. Both Shiva and Saleem complete each other as opposites. In Indian mythology, Shiva is "the god of destruction, who is also most potent of deities; Shiva, greatest of dancers; who rides on a bull; whom no force can resist" (*MC* 306). Saleem, as the more compatible one, is "afraid of Shiva" because he believes he is the "[m]ost ferocious and powerful of the Children, he would penetrate where others could not go" (393). Saleem is uncomfortable with Shiva's existence and the fact that he has kept his birthright a secret. Behaving like a bandit, Saleem hears "of drowned bodies floating like balloons […] or trains set on fire, or politicians killed, […] it seems to me that the hand of Shiva lies heavily over all these things" (415). In line with the misfortunes millions had to face in history, Shiva depicts a picture of the violent actions as a result of the Partition. Nonetheless, Saleem represents the opposite characteristic of Shiva and he tries to bring the Midnight's Children together for the future of the nation as they "can be made to represent many things […] they can be seen as the last throw of everything antiquated and retrogressive in our myth-ridden nation, whose defeat was entirely desirable in the context of a modernizing, twentieth-century economy; or as the true hope of freedom, which is now forever extinguished" (*MC* 278).

Another deconstruction of dualism is presented by Saleem. In the Sundarbans, Saleem gets injured by a spittoon that hits his head in an explosion and this results in an amnesiac situation as he loses his memory. Ironically, it was the only thing that connected him to his past, the only memorable possession. During this time, he is at a military camp in Pakistan and his duty is to smell any danger such as movements of the opposing groups, bombs or troops as he has an unusual and unique sense of smell. He is the "man-dog" hired by the "Canine Unit for Tracking and Intelligence Activities" when he loses his memory and starts to live like an animal (*MC* 484). He has a very large nose and "he can follow any trail on earth!' […] 'Through water, […] across rocks! Such a tracker […] 'And he can't feel a thing! […] Numb […] head-to-foot numb! You touch him, he wouldn't know – only by the smell he knows you're there!' – 'Must be the war wound!'" (*MC* 486-7). He works for the Pakistani army and his duty is to be in that unit to track and "[t]o root out undesirable elements" depicted as "[s]neaky and well-

disguised" as he has "[t]o obey unquestioningly; to seek unflaggingly; to arrest remorselessly" (485). Moreover, the officials who train him call him "buddha" which means "old man" in Urdu because they were younger than him and "there hung around him an air of great antiquity. The buddha was old before his time" (487). Buddha, though pronounced differently, also refers to "a prince, unable to bear the suffering of the world, became capable of not-living-in-the-world as well as living in it; he was present, but also absent; his body was in one place, but his spirit was elsewhere" (487). Thus, Saleem as Buddha, presents a dual nature which also gives clues about how memory, meaning and identity manifest themselves.

Saleem is called the "man-dog" among the soldiers and likened to Buddha who was sitting under a tree with empty eyes and mind. Saleem talks of the buddha as "he" in the third person since he was memoryless and did not present or prove an identity; that is, he could not narrate his own self. When he is bitten by a snake, with the venom being "poured" into his body, the soldiers around him wait for his death, but "[f]or two days he became as rigid as a tree, and his eyes crossed […] [He] was rejoined to the past, jolted into unity by snake-poison […]. The child-soldiers listened, spellbound, to the stories issuing from his [buddha's] mouth" (*MC* 508-9). During this ephemeral state, Saleem was unravelling all his lost memories and histories.

This state of being physically there but mentally not there complies with "Damasio's theory of self which expresses the idea that "a sense of self [is] an indispensable part of the conscious mind" as Damasio defines it as "a feeling of knowing" and "a feeling of what happens" (in Eakin 7). According to Eakin, Damasio names "*self*" as "the feeling of awareness or knowing that these events are taking place. To be conscious is to be endowed with this feeling of knowing that is self" (7) (emphasis original). Buddha is nothing without his story. He is not conscious and he cannot confirm his identity. During memory loss, he lacks his abilities of judgement or being involved in a conversation. Thus, his loss of memory means a fragmentation in his identity as it leaves many plots related to his life story incomplete.

The English Language

As Rushdie foregrounds diversity and ambiguity preserved by memory and meaning, he is also sensitive to the language he uses in the novel. Rushdie aims to illustrate "the process of regaining identity through literature, to confront the realities of the past, to be aware of the collision of reality and fiction, and to start an emancipating process through the pre-adaption of the own language or dialect" (Schröttner 130). Saleem not only "chutnifies" history but the English language as well which he believes will meet his objective of meaning in capturing the essence of the Indian culture and historical memory. English and Indian lexical structures in both receptive and productive skills reveal diverse thinking styles and nuances. In some instances, standard English or the colonising language is not adequate to illustrate the intricacies of postcolonial experience. Indian culture could only be reflected by a blend of grammatical rules, vocabulary, English, Hindu, Urdu, Persian and Arabic words displaying the multiplicity and richness of the culture. Rushdie merges the syntactic and semantic rules into the English language and creates a new blend which is very similar to the people and events that are influencing, merging and leaking into one another.

Saleem feels that one cannot change things easily in the country. He uses words from other languages which seems like "chutnification" of English. He reads on the wall of a mosque "*Hartal*! Which is to say, literally speaking, a day of mourning, of stillness, of silence. But this is India in the heyday of the Mahatma, when even language obeys the instructions of Gandhiji" (*MC* 37) (emphasis original). The words or expressions Rushdie uses include "'ekdum' (at once), 'angrez' (Englishman), 'phut – aphut' (in no time), 'nasbandi' (sterilization), 'dhoban' (washerwoman), 'feringee' (the same as 'angrez'), 'baba' (grandfather), 'garam masala' (hot spices), 'rakshasas' (demons), 'fauz' (army), 'badmaas' (badmen), 'jailkhana' (prison)" (in Thomas 11). He also makes compounds such as "'updownup', 'downdowndown', 'suchandsuch', 'noseholes', 'birthanddeath' […] 'blackasnight'", "godknowswhat" or "whatsitsname" (11). One can assume that when these words are examined, they are generally written in a language other than British English because English is not adequate to convey the feeling or the spirit of the country and the people experiencing them. When the Chinese forces attack the Indian army, Saleem's father comments, "this country is finished. Bankrupt. Funtoosh" (*MC* 419). He feels that the words "bankrupt" and "finished" in English are not enough to express the emotion. He describes the situation with a slang word "Funtoosh" in his own language. It is quite significant that these words are used in the local language of the people in order not to lose their significance and materiality when translated. That may be one of the reasons why Rushdie

chooses to use the vernacular or a blend of the languages. At times, he writes the words in capital letters displaying his inner screams, thoughts and emotions as he states: "Roundandroundand […] I heard her shouting: 'The brake! Use the goddamn brake, ya dummy! – but my hands couldn't move, I had gone rigid as a plank, and there LOOK OUT in front of me was the blue two-wheeler of Sonny Ibrahim, […] OUTA THE WAY YA CRAZY" (*MC* 258).

Rushdie also deliberately uses misspelled words or those that do not comply with the grammatical rules on different occassions. He wants to indicate the language used by the locals. This is crucial in the sense that one cannot find pureness in a language as it is always being affected by the experience, knowledge and perception of its people. When there is hybridity in the nation and its traditional and cultural way of life, it is also reflected in its language. Rushdie, in his *Imaginary Homelands*, discusses the appropriateness of the English language to Indian subject-matter. He holds the idea that it is not possible to "simply use the language in the way the British did; that it needs remaking for our own purposes" (17). Rushdie further indicates that the writers "who do use English do so in spite of our ambiguity towards it or perhaps because of that, perhaps because we can find in that linguistic struggle a reflection of other struggles taking place in the real world" (17). Rushdie argues that the Indian writers face the problem of definition as he identifies them as "translated men" (17). Thus, Rushdie believes that "[t]o conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free" (17). He states that the British Indian writer does not refuse the English language, he does not have that option of refusal since his children will inevitably speak it and assert an identity. Therefore, despite the struggles and the tension between regional languages, Rushdie recognizes the English language as a unifying language.

Conclusion

Rushdie puts emphasis on the cultural diversity and richness of the country while giving a critique of the upheavals related to political and social structure. He achieves his purpose of attributing meaning and value to the experience of a postcolonial nation through stories, memories and life events of his narrator, Saleem. The similarity of and the parallelism between the chutnification of food and preservation of his stories in memory need to be underscored as well, as Rushdie knows that the stories and the act of storytelling function as indispensable elements both for a nation's historical and cultural identity, and his own self. He also reflects fragmentation in the stories and the unreliability of the narrator as he does not fail to underline that parts of the stories could be distorted since it is an innate characteristic of human nature. With this point in consideration, Rushdie reflects that there is plurality and multiple realities as there are not many truths for the human being to rely on in a postmodern world. Rushdie believes that these stories, whether they are distorted to some extent or not, form the cultural identity of the nation and serve as an idea to raise awareness, establish an environment of inquiry, insight and understanding while making life more meaningful not only for India and its people but also for the Western world and its practices.

Works Cited

Booker, M. Keith. "Beauty and the Beast: Dualism as Despotism in the Fiction of Salman Rushdie." *ELH* 57.4 (1990): 977-97. https://doi.org/10.2307/2873093. Accessed on 24 August 2022.

Damasio, Antonio. "An Architecture for Memory." in *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain*. New York: Pantheon, 2010. 102-22.

Eakin, Paul John. *Writing Life Writing: Narrative, History, Autobiography*. London: Routledge, 2020.

Freeman, Mark. "Telling Stories: Memory and Narrative." in *Memory*: *Histories, Theories, Debates.* Eds. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz. New York: Fordham UP, 2010. 263-78. https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1c999bq.22?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents. Accessed on 30 November 2024.

Hutcheon, Linda. *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*. Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 1980.

Lamarque, Peter. "Narrative and Invention: The Limits of Fictionality" in *Narrative in Culture: The Uses of Storytelling in the Sciences, Philosophy, and Literature.* Ed. Christopher Nash. London: Routledge, 1990. 133-55.

Loftus, Elizabeth. *Memory: Surprising New Insights into How We Remember and Why We Forget.* London: Addison-Wesley, 1980.

Lyotard, Jean-François. "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?" in *Philosophers on Art from Kant to the Postmodernists: A Critical Reader*. Ed. Christopher Kul-Want. New York: Columbia UP, 2010. 237-49.

Meretoja, Hanna. *The Narrative Turn in Fiction and Theory: The Crisis and Return of Storytelling from Robbe-Grillet to Tournier*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight's Children*. London: Vintage, [1981] 2008.

———. "Imaginary Homelands." in *Imaginary Homelands*: *Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. London: Granta Books, 1991. 9-21.

Schacter, Daniel L. "On Remembering: 'A Telescope Pointed at Time'." in *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind, and the Past.* New York: Basic, 1996. 15-38.

Schröttner, Barbara T. "Review of *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie (Reseña de *Midnight's Children* de Rushdie, Salman." *Revista de Paz y Conflictos* 1 (2008): 130-2. https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=205016386011. Accessed on 28 November 2024.

Sutton, David E. *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory*. Oxford: Berg, 2001.

Thomas, Deepa. "The Chutnification of English in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*: A Stylistic Analysis." *Asian Review of Social Sciences* 8.1 (2019): 10-2. https://arssjournal.org/index.php/arss/article/view/1502/6519. Accessed on 25 October 2022.

Tukey, Ann. "Notes on Involuntary Memory in Proust." *The French Review* 42. 3 (1969): 395–402. http://www.jstor.org/stable/386277. Accessed on 24 August 2022.