To Mean a Multitude of *Somethings*

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Abstract: *Starting from Z. D. Gurevitch's perspective on otherness as appearing under the most familiar circumstances and as being essential to dialogue, we consider the case of Salman Rushdie's* ***Midnight's Children*** *and the stress on a multitude of perspectives as a complex interplay of positive and negative consequences on the representation of the self and other .*

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In the opening of his article: "The Other Side of Dialogue: On Making the Other Strange and the Experience of Otherness," Z.D. Gurevitch declares that he intends "to show how strangeness appears in the midst of the most ordinary relationships and how it diverts a relationship from its usual course. Moreover, strangeness engenders otherness. The other person emerges, at a distance, as a separate self. […] Every attempt to communicate entails acknowledgment (however implicit) of the other. The appearance of strangeness is considered in the present study as an exposure to real distance, which may be experienced either as a terrifying abyss or as a "dialogic span" that motivates the desire to know the other, as well as the self, and fosters movement and change." [1] He then lists a series of encounters with the other which occur in common situations. Thus, he proves that otherness need not be associated only with exotic circumstances or far-away places, but, by the contrary, it marks our experience on a daily basis. As mentioned above, the focus is on dialogue and its dependence on this familiarity-strangeness interplay.

This perspective on the essence of dialogue and human experience or interaction seems to lay at the basis of many a novel by Salman Rushdie. More often than not, the reader is taken on the road towards this particular revelation by a narrator character, whose life experience is a tapestry of othering encounters.

In **Midnight's Children**, for example, Saleem Sinai re-considers ideas of unified selves throughout his story, while facing impending disintegration. In Fury, Malik Solanka is so shocked by the 'monster' threatening to overpower him that he runs away and tries to hide, but there's no escape from himself and he is forced into self-analysis and into facing encounters with multitudes of reflections and narratives of his self. In Shame, the self must face its ultimate lack of importance and perpetual marginality, a situation felt by the previously mentioned narrator-characters as well. Here the feeling is stronger since none of the main characters are allowed to tell their own story and, although the narrative revolves around their lives, they 'succeed' in remaining marginal to it. Out of these examples, the first seems to be the most complex one.

Midnight's Children was Rushdie's first critical success. It brought him the Booker prize in 1981 and it was sold in countless copies around the world. The most common praise brought to the novel is connected to its treatment of official and personal history and the connection made with fictionality and chronology, which should not come as a surprise, considering the postmodern interest in the historiographic metafiction and the textuality of history.

Considering the fact that the events of the novel are closely connected to India's passage from colony to independent state, one's first impulse might be to see Midnight's Chidren as a postcolonial writing, respecting the tradition of overthrowing colonial versions of facts and coming up with new perspectives.

History is the victor's version of events. This is a reality that society has been aware of for quite a while. And in the hands of the conqueror history becomes thus a

means of justifying itself and wrapping the intrusion, the occupation, the violence, and all the other negative aspects of its actions in the hide of a noble endeavour. As Leela Gandhi reminds us [2], Hegel used the term 'history' in connection with 'civilization', associating them both with Western Europe. The result is that colonialism was to be seen, and it was often said to be, a civilizing mission, an attempt to awaken the savage and less fortunate peoples of the world to the blessings of Western social organization; from here the division between superior and inferior, even between human and non-human. This would more than justify an attempt to counterbalance this tendency and come with another version of history.

And this seems indeed to be one of the novel's intentions, since it comes with a deconstructive force from within the tradition of colonialist historical recordings and it shatters the preconceived ideas already in place in the mind of a colonial, or even an early postcolonial reader. In the words of Edward Said: "The conscious effort to enter into the discourse of Europe and the West, to mix with it, to transform it, to make it acknowledge marginalized or suppressed or forgotten histories is of particular interest in Rushdie's work"[3]

This voyage in, as Said calls it, is taken in *Midnight's Children* through the pen of Saleem Sinai, the most suitable representative of a multitude of voices on the background of an India confronted with the colonial experience. He declares his identity to be like a receptacle full of other people's tales that flow into him: "There are so many stories to tell, too many, such an excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumours, so dense a com-mingling of the improbable and the mundane! I have been a swallower of lives; and to know me, just the one of me, you'll have to swallow the lot as well." [4] Using western ideologies and theories, Rushdie makes Saleem, the narrator and 'author' in the novel, turn tables and move the centre where some of the most recent postcolonial theorizers believe it should be, that is, somewhere in between cultural identities and otherings, playing a game of mirrors in which the focalizer is also the focalized and identity is created from pieces, as a multi-cultural puzzle. The levels on which this game is played are various: textual, historical (basically textual through writing and re-writing), implying racial, gender, social, political, religious considerations.

Saleem Sinai begins his story as a person hand-cuffed to history, a representative of India's destiny as a new-born state.

> *This year [August 15th, 1947] there was […]a new myth to celebrate, because a nation which had never previously existed was about to win its freedom, catapulting us into a world which, although it had five thousand years of history, although it had invented the game of chess and traded with Middle Kingdom Egypt, was nevertheless quite imaginary; into a mythical land, a country which would never exist except by the efforts of a phenomenal collective will – except in a dream we all agreed to dream; it was a mass fantasy shared in varying degrees by Bengali and Punjabi, Madrasi and Jat, and would periodically need the sanctification and renewal which can only be provided by rituals of blood. [5]*

There is a sense of irony in the whole paragraph and in the whole affair, so to speak. What comes to be called 'the Indian world' had existed long before colonization, guided by its own rules and exhibiting variety and multiplicity on every level of its existence. The paradox is that the so-called independence is actually a passage to a type of organization that is not specific to it, but still characterizing Western thought. It is not a return to the previous state of facts, which actually seems to be impossible, but it rather

looks like an attempt to gain recognition in a Eurocentric world. If we were to compare this with a personal experience, Aadam Aziz's case is relevant, since, after his years as a student in the West, when returning 'home', he attempts to return to his previous perception of it, "his childhood's springs in Paradise" [6], but he is unable to do so. Just as Aadam Aziz's decision to come to terms with his newly created, and not very well culturally-determined self, is marked by blood and tears, India's decision of finding a new place for itself into a world in which it has no choice but to enter will be marked by blood and tears. Saleem's narrative underlines this situation as being one of the causes for the troubles (and failure even) of new-born India of acquiring a sense of unitary and stable national self.

The other cause for the failure may be the mistaken presuppositions on which it is based. Saleem records a fragment from Nehru's discourse at the moment of India's birth: "A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new; when an age ends; and when the soul of a nation long suppressed finds utterance… […] We end today a period of ill-fortune." [7]

The first thing that comes to mind is a question: can one actually speak of an Indian nation, and, by extension, of an Indian nation-state? The fragment also shows the level of great expectations that everybody has from the new state, the responsibility of the inheritors of this postcolonial transformation to find a way of detaching it from its colonial past. And since most often than not, this is supposed to be done by a complete removal or by overlooking any colonial influence, the operation reveals itself to be impossible. No one can erase and rewind. However, in Rushdie's novel, this is shown at the level of national history and politics through the perspective of personal history, as already mentioned.

Therefore, **Midnight's Children** does not question only colonial representations of the colonized, but also the self-representations of a people that are eventually confronted with the reality of the fact that the postcolonial prefixation is inevitably connecting, not separating. The realisation settles in, due to the participation in the events through the eyes of the narrator-character Saleem Sinai, who tries to set himself at the centre of things but is constantly faced with his own marginality.

The narrator prepares his readers (with Padma as a representative within the text) for the birth of the one, the child born on August 15th, 1947, at midnight. He wraps his narrative in almost mythical hues (he is prophesized in a manner which may remind us of great religious teachers), but he also never forgets to undermine it and 'trivialize' it at the same time (after all, 'no one is a prophet in his own country'). His coming is seen as the first sign of a new country and it is recorded as such by the reporters of Times of India and by a letter from Nehru – "we shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own." [8] He is the son of Ahmed and Amina Sinai and he stopped a Hindu from being lynched before being born, even before being announced to his father, when his pregnant mother decided to offer sanctuary in her house to the hunted man. As a reward, the latter takes her to his cousin, Ramram Singh, the seer, who is overwhelmed by the complexity of his vision. The child, he says, will have "two heads – but you shall see only one – there will be knees and a nose, and knees […] He will have sons without having sons! He will be old before being old! And he will die… before he is dead." [9] Amina is left for a long time without an explanation, and only life will make her understand in reverse what the prophecy meant.

The two heads are of particular interest here. As we have seen, Rushdie has a knack for reversing, or rather perpetually revolving dualities. The case of the constructed history, which is shown to be false not only when the author is the 'outsider' but also when the author is the 'insider', is one example. Connected to it is the myth of the nation: the belief in the unifying force of the 'we' vs. the others, which is believable in the presence of the

English, but turns within with their departure. As Lifafa Das says: "Soon they will all go; and then we'll be free to kill each other." [10] Saleem spends his childhood building an image for himself only to see it fall apart gradually as he grows. He believes, for example, his parents to be Amina and Ahmed Sinai, but the second head appears and Saleem feels robbed of his rightful place, while knowing he is the actual robber.

Again, this also undermines the authority of history. A historical event is twisted by the actions of one individual. The birth of the nation and its celebration of the symbolic child are undermined by Mary Pereira, who replaces the true son of the Sinais with the boy of a poor Indian woman. Her actions are meant to be a protest against class segregation, but it acquires wider significance when we are revealed the true identity of the father. He is not Vanita's husband, the interestingly called Wee Willie Winkie, but an Englishman, William Methwold, allegedly the descendant of an officer. Therefore, as Padma is quick to exclaim, he is an Anglo-Indian, and he is being hailed as the true symbol of new-born India.

The irony comes from the fact that, although the child was actually switched at birth and he is twice 'marked', being illegitimate and a hybrid, the truth of Nehru's words remains, Saleem being the true mirror of the nation's identity, but not in the way the others expected him to be. However, in the best tradition of popular Indian cinema (and not only), no one is aware of this in the first years of his life.

Saleem's existence is wrought with fear of failure. Becoming aware of the representations people have of him, he feels overwhelmed by the responsibility of proving them right and by the feeling he will disappoint them. When one of his most avid followers, Purushottam, the sadhu, who had spent his time living close to the Mubarak – He who is blessed – loses his healing powers, Saleem immediately feels this to be a sign of his own failure to come up to the holy man's expectations: "The sadhu Purushottam suddenly lost his magic. Water had worn a bald patch in his hair; the steady dripping of the years had worn him down. Was he disillusioned with his blessed child, his Mubarak? Was it my fault that his mantras lost their power?" [11] It is a haunting fear of failure that equally characterizes the young government of India.

Actually, the narrator manages to twist and connect events in such a manner, that most of what is going on seems to be his fault. When his father succumbs to djins (a play upon words that gives a combination of spirit, djinn, djenun, chaytan and gin), it is his fault, because he usurps Ahmed's place as centre of the family. When commander Shabarmati kills his wife and her lover, this happens due to a note from Saleem. And since the lover was the main financial contributor to the filmic dreams of Saleem's uncle, the latter committing suicide comes as a new reason for the narrator to feel guilty. When his sister disappears, he imagines this to be due to her becoming a protester after hearing of his supposed death in Bangladesh. His fault again. And his influence does not extend only over the fates of the members of his family or close connections. When a language march turns to violence, it is his 'innocent' rhyme that starts it all. When the actions of the Widow turn against the inhabitants of the ghetto, it is his conviction he is the one she is after. And the examples could go on.

Therefore, his guilt may be a symptom of his vacillation between a central place in hi(s)tory and the margins. On the one hand, he wishes to believe that he is destined for great things, as others seem to believe in his early years; on the other hand, he is afraid of the responsibility this entails. On the one hand, he is sceptic of his own powers and part to play in the world; on the other, he is convinced he is to make out a meaning for his existence in the end.

These are as many dilemmas to haunt not only a grown-up Saleem, but the child as well. And his inner torment prepares him for the breaking into multitudes of the voices

inside his head. What finally unleashes the otherness within are a series of encounters with the otherness of people he has come to depend on. And the most important is the transformation of his mother. Amina, who was the most important protector of her son, together with the ayah, Maria Pereira, starts to behave 'strangely'. She is no longer only a mother, but she becomes a woman in love with a man other than her husband. This deviation from the accepted rules of behaviour shocks Saleem and presents Amina in a new light. The shock is even greater when the son is exposed to his mother's sexuality and the undeniable proof of her mother's sentimental duplicity. It is this discovery that opens his brain to the voices of everyone around. He can hear everyone's thoughts and he must learn to control the amount of access he exercises on them.

His first reaction, no doubt under the influence of the tales about his prophetic birth, is to associate his experience to that of the Prophet. But the crucial importance of such an event is brought to dust by the reactions of his family, culminating with his father knocking him down. Quite a shameful turn of events for a religious or ideological leader… It is also the first moment the family looks at him as if he were a stranger and he is forced to deny the truth of his revelation in order to be accepted back.

At this point we would like to rest a while on the presence of the Children of Midnight and the (at least) dual interpretation they might be given.

On the one hand, since the children live in different corners of India, reunited they speak an impressive number of languages, not to mention that they belong to different classes and religions. They are all born, like him, around the hour of independence and are endowed with special powers that are stronger if their moment of birth is closer to midnight, and weaker if it is later. It seems relevant that after Saleem manages to identify their voices among others and he tries to contact them, he does so by eliminating language from communication: "language faded away, and was replaced by universally intelligible thought-forms which far transcended words…[12] As Rubinson points out: "The real potential of Saleem's magic […] is this utopian notion of a place where different languages and cultural traditions do not inhibit communication; where diversity does not divide but connects; where 'masses' and 'classes' freely mix." [13]

Therefore, one may speak of a movement from outside within. To reduce everything to Saleem, all the versions of himself that are served to him in his first years of life, all the possible identities he can embrace become interiorized by a game of mirrors. The result is that the two-headed child announced by the Hindu seer actually hides within him a multi-headed monster. By being a radio for these voices he is both central and marginal: central because it is his presence that occasions their interaction and marginal because he has no actual power over them. When he does try to gain power over them and to shape himself into a leader he ends up destroying everything.

His attempted supremacy faces a most violent opposition due to his teacher, Mr. Zagallo, who causes him to lose part of his hair and a finger. This leads to his parents finding out he has neither one's blood type. The suspicions fall on the mother, but the one who is plunged even deeper into a sense of otherness is Saleem, who is also sent into his first 'exile', at his aunt and uncle's. Thus, the boy goes from familiar to stranger or at least strange in the eyes of his relatives. From this time forward it is only downhill for the boy 'who would be king' over his idea of self. When he is finally received back in his home, he discovers that his place as favourite was taken by his sister, the Brass Monkey and that he is constantly avoided by his father. Therefore, he passed from son to guest.

On this note, Mary Pereira's confession about switching the babies comes more like a confirmation of his being a complete 'other' than who he thought he was, and not as a complete shock. These outward shifts in his identity correspond to his losing control over the voices of the Children. Mirroring the evens in India, with people marching for division

into states according to languages, the MCC (**Midnight Children's** Conference) is shaken by disagreements as well:

> *Children, however magical, are not immune to their parents; and as the prejudices and world views of adults began to take over their minds, I found children from Maharashtra loathing Gujaratis, and fair-skinned northerners reviling Dravidian 'blackies'; there were religious rivalries; and class entered our councils. The rich children turned up their noses at being in such lowly company; Brahmins began to feel uneasy at permitting even their thoughts to touch the thoughts of untouchables; while among the low-born, the pressures of poverty and Communism were becoming evident… and on top of all that, there were clashes of personality, and of he hundred squalling rows which are unavoidable in a parliament composed entirely of half-grown brats. [14]*

One may say that Rushdie identifies the belief in the possibility of a whole, unified self with childhood. The adult is quick to consider otherness, within and without, from a social perspective, which pushes him into various reactions. Similarly, young India believed that all its subjects are happy to live in harmony together, since they finally got what they hoped for: a place in the world, supposedly on equal standings, an identity of their own. However, in time, the state is gradually confronted with inner dissensions and a perpetual process of redefining its own essence.

The impression of the young state about what it should be is partly induced by a false perception of the other, the colonist, for example. In support of this idea one could remember Chamcha's permanent surprise in the Satanic Verses at discovering England other than he had imagined it and the words he repeats all throughout the novel: 'This isn't England'. An incident that seems to originate in the same mistaken representation of the world of foreign white colonists is to be found in Midnight's Children. Amina Sinai's encounter with a white beggar on her way to Ramram Singh is marked by shock, pity and incredulity. She feels "embarrassment, because […] begging was not for white people. […] Wait, white woman, just let me finish my business, I will take you home, feed you clothe you, send you back into your own world." [15] As if the beggar were a lost child who has to be sent back home, because being in her own country would solve all problems.

When this illusion of uniting multitudes into one is shaken, one reaction is to separate those elements that are held responsible for the instability.

Recording Saleem's plunge into otherness we saw him turning into a disappointment (because of his incident with his mother and his supposed blasphemy), then into a problem/doubt (because his parents don't know how to interpret his biological difference from them) and finally into a stranger (on being revealed as not their biological son). Besides facing constant re-definition in his family circle his sense of a stable self is also shaken by renewed displacement when he is forced to move to Pakistan.

Once here Ahmed and Amina try to take back their son, but not by accepting the change and moving on from there. They act as if nothing has happened; no one told them anything about Saleem. The silence setting over the past sets inside Saleem's mind as well. He is denied any part of otherness. And the removal of the intrusive multitudes is described in a violent way. However, just as he could not be a prophet, he cannot be a martyr. The gravity of the tone is combined with the undermining nature of the activity.

> Silence inside me. A connection broken (for ever). Can't hear anything (nothing there to hear).

Silence, like a desert. And a clear, free nose (nasal passages full of air). Air, like a vandal, invading my private places

Drained. I have been drained. The parahamsa, grounded.

(For good.) [16]

A most terrible thing has happened… he's had his sinuses drained…

For a novel that means to question the authority of religious texts as well as that of national representations, of overpowering dualities and of history's claim of objectivity, it seems only fitting for it to undermine its own gravity of tone.

The facts remain that after this event Saleem loses contact with the voices of the Children. The apparently radical removal of any element of alterity from their son, however, does not mark his return to them, but an even greater separation.

An anthropological study comes to mind, in which the author, Dorinne K. Kondo [17] sharing an American and Japanese cultural background, describes her experience while doing research in Japan and being included in a Japanese family. One of the effects of their cohabitation was the fact that she felt pressured to cultivate those elements of her identity that made her 'look Japanese' in the eyes of the family, while silencing those aspects that were associated with an American way of life. The result was that she eventually felt frustrated and fragmented, which determined her to leave the family and find a place of her own.

Could this case be compared to Saleem's? His experience seems to surpass fragmentation at this moment in his story. By losing first his identity as a Sinai and then his alterity as a child of midnight he is, supposedly, left with nothing. His ultimate experience in Pakistan is losing most of his family under the bombs of the Indian army, together with his own memory and thus with any sense of who he is. He is an empty pickle jar.

His next years find him in the army as a tracking dog called the buddha while facing a third exile, to Bangladesh this time. His most interesting experience is his (and his three companions') days in the jungle. Just like the woods that stand for a reversal in the rules of the world outside it, a labyrinth in which one might face oneself transformed, the jungle in Rushdie's novel is a place where the world is shown reversed, not on the vertical, but on the horizontal. But for this his character-narrator needs to behave like an old shaman and go into a trance. He uses neither smoke, nor turning round and round, but snake poison. Just as poison has cured him of typhoid as a child, it now brings him back his memories. While sitting under a tree and meditating – not under a bodhi tree, like the other Buddha, but a sundri-tree – a snake comes and pours his venom into the buddha's heel (clearly a weak spot that is not reserved exclusively for Greek heroes). Consequently, "for two days he became rigid as a tree, and his eyes crossed, so that he saw the world in mirror-image, with the right side on the left; at last he relaxed and the look of milky abstraction was no longer in his eyes. I was rejoined to the past, jolted into unity by snake-poison, and it began to pour out through the buddha's lips." [18] He gained back his memories but his journey is not over. His 'revelation' is incomplete. Besides the fact that he does not remember his first name, he also has no contact with the **Children of Midnight.**

The encounter with one of them, Parvati, the witch, brings back this last piece of information as well and he is returned to India in a basket, thus completing a successful re-birth. Could one speak of a type of katabasis and anabasis in Saleem's case? Perhaps; one in which the darkest descent was into the depth of the forest and of his own unconscious.

The story remains true to its parallelism between Saleem's destiny and India's and it is the latter's turn to be forced to renounce those elements that are felt to be foreign or

hostile to the national consensus. The Widow, who did not manage to kill him in the bombing of Pakistan, is after him again. She declares "National Emergency", suspends fundamental rights, and organizes "voluntary" sterilization campaigns. The reason Saleem gives for it? She is the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, the man who wrote Saleem a letter on the eve of Independence proclaiming him the beacon of the nation and connecting him to the latter's destiny. Since Indira wants to be Mother India now and the only God in a polytheist country, she must first get rid of Saleem. And she does, but the moment of his incarceration is actually his moment of reunion with the children of midnight. It is the final stage of him accepting who he is, in all of his complexity, unpredictability and sometimes incomprehensibility.

> *I no longer want to be anything except who I am. Who what am I? My answer: I am the sum total of everything that went before me, of all I have seen done, of everything done-to-me. I am everyone everything whose being-in-the-world affected was affected by mine. I am anything that happens after I've gone which would not have happened if I had not come. Nor am I particularly exceptional in this matter; each 'I', every one of the now-six-hundred-million-plus of us, contains a similar multitude. I repeat for the last time: to understand me, you'll have to swallow a world. [19]*

And so he decides to re-assert himself (and the nation) by writing, or re-writing his story and history, thus the inclusion of *Midnight's Children* within the category of historiographic metafiction. The narrator includes in his tale all the cultural definitions of self and otherness within himself that he believes to be strongly connected to the cultural kaleidoscope that defines his country's identity. The young Saleem heard voices, the old Saleem puts them into writing to preserve them and thus give them continuity. He declares several times that the story he writes is for his son, who is not actually his son, but who is the true grandson of his parents. Genealogies are never what they seem in Rushdie's fiction.

The Bombay he returns to seems ready for his story, bursting itself with multitudes. Therefore, Saleem may be given the chance to achieving the purpose stated in the beginning of the tale: "time (having no further use for me) is running out. I will soon be thirty-one years old. Perhaps. If my crumbling, over-used body permits. But I have no hope of saving my life, nor can I count on having even a thousand and a night. I must work fast, faster than Scheherazade, if I am to end up meaning – yes, meaning – something. I admit it: above all things, I fear absurdity." [20]

The reference to Scheherazade's tales can be related to several aspects of the narrative. First, since the legendary story-teller's purpose for telling her stories was the preservation of her life and that of other possible victims of Shah Ryar, Saleem's story may be said to acquire, by association, vital importance as well. Second, it points at one of the most important symbols of the story, the night, a time of dreams, fantasies, but also a time of passage, of mystery, all the things that define the coming into existence of the Indian nation and of its first progenies. And third, it is only one of the numerous intertextual references which may hint at the relative and fragmented nature of narratives in general (not to mention the fact that the example used itself includes so many digressions and frame-stories that it is difficult to place them into clear-cut categories).

Saleem is essentially not a hero, but rather an anti-hero. He does not act, things are done to him. Therefore, while he sometimes acquires the tone of a chronicler recording exemplary events, at the same time he 'undermines' it by associating it with the most common of events, or with ironic remarks, or by the presence in the text of a narrattee-

reader, Padma. She seems a more traditional reader who is shocked out of her pre-conceived ideas about what proper narrative should be. Besides the moments when Saleem himself admits not to be a 'reliable' historiographer – "I have discovered an error in chronology. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi occurs, in these pages, on the wrong date. But I cannot say, now, what the actual sequence of events might have been; in my India, Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time." [21] – there are also moments when Padma shatters his 'reliability' even more (when she points out, for example, that his illness or his feelings affect his writing). These are as many clues that no actual history or historiographer can be defined as objective, reliable or impartial.

Not even religious texts are allowed the possession of the ultimate saying in a matter. Ahmed Sinai believes, for example, that "When Muhamed prophesied, people wrote down what he said on palm leaves, which were kept any old how in a box. After he died, Abubakr and the others tried to remember the correct sequence; but they didn't have very good memories." [22] Accordingly, it is his life's ambition to reorder the sacred text according to chronology.

The authors of Saleem's identity are also dead and/or gone: his mother, father and his whole family, the sadhu under the tap, Evie, Nussie and the inhabitants of the Methwold estate etc. With 'the death of his authors,' Saleem is free to mean a multitude of somethings and write his own text, a text inviting all encounters with and faces of otherness within it. Therefore, it is a type of writing in reverse, where the 'authors' become characters, or where books enclosed within the literary tradition are given new voices thanks to intertextuality and metafiction. The process of othering is not associated only with strangeness in a negative sense, but with the possibility of continuing the dialogue, the exchange of perspectives.

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