

From Saleem to Haroun: Cultural Memory through the Child's Voice in Salman Rushdie's Fiction

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of the child's voice in shaping and preserving cultural memory in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. Rushdie's fiction engages extensively with history, displacement, identity, and memory, while the child narrator offers a distinctive perspective through which individual experiences are transformed into stories that acquire wider cultural significance. Through a close comparative reading of the two novels, the paper draws on Jan Assmann's concept of cultural memory to examine how personal memories acquire collective meaning through narration and storytelling. The analysis focuses on Saleem's bodily recollections, his dictation to Padma, and his practice of "chutnification," a creative process of preserving, combining, and transforming fragmented memories into a layered narrative, alongside Haroun's encounter with a city that has forgotten its name, his experience of personal loss, and the eventual recovery of the name Kahani. These incidents reveal two distinct ways in which memory is preserved and renewed. Saleem constructs memory through confession, bodily experience, and the narrative reconstruction of history, whereas Haroun encounters it through quest, storytelling, and communal restoration. The comparison demonstrates that the child's voice functions not merely as a narrative device but also as a medium through which personal experiences are connected to collective histories and cultural identities. The study argues that Rushdie's contrasting portrayals of childhood narration reveal how cultural memory can endure through both the preservation of individual experience and the restoration of shared stories. By bringing these two child narrators into direct comparison, the paper contributes to postcolonial memory studies by foregrounding the relationship between childhood, storytelling, cultural memory, and the possibilities of renewal in Rushdie's fiction.

Keywords: Salman Rushdie, child-narrator, cultural memory, Jan Assmann; *Midnight's Children*, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, postcolonial fiction

1. Introduction

Postcolonial literature encompasses works created by authors emerging from nations once ruled by colonial authority or who work within the cultural consequences of such rule. This genre engages the transformation of identity, language, and history as individuals strive to redefine themselves in resistance to a former colonial authority while navigating a new national framework that often involves themes of displacement, hybridity, and the renovation of silenced voices. Salman Rushdie's literary fiction is emblematic of this tradition, introducing a unique narrative device: a child who embodies, recounts, and defends memory. Child narration places storytelling in the hands of a character who has not yet acquired the

cautiousness typical of adulthood, a significant choice in dislocated worlds shaped by migration, partition, or exile, where adult narrators often bear the burden of their own complicity in the dislocation. A child narrates through direct experience, allowing fantasy and fact to coexist without concession, and is driven by curiosity and unfiltered feeling rather than cause and justification. Saleem Sinai recounts the birth of a fractured subcontinent as an adult reconstructing a childhood he can only partly trust, while Haroun Khalifa narrates, from within his boyhood, the disintegration and restoration of his father's storytelling prowess. This paper interlinks the two as children entrusted with too large a memory, differentiating Saleem's retrospective account

from the unfolding, present-tense voice through which Haroun narrates his story.

2. Research Gap

Existing scholarship on Rushdie's child-narrators is divided along the lines of the novels themselves. Readers of the novel *Midnight's Children* concentrate on Saleem's unreliability and his allegorical status. Readers of *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* tend to read the novel biographically against the 1989 fatwa or through its debt to Indian and Persian storytelling. Assmann's distinction between communicative and cultural memory has occasionally been applied to one novel but rarely to both within a single comparison. Where memory is discussed, the discussion usually stays at the level of theme rather than descending into specific incidents, images, and stylistic choices. The possibility that Saleem and Haroun trace one coherent movement, from a private, embodied labour of memory towards a public, communal defence of it, remains unexamined in the necessary textual detail. This paper addresses that gap by reading the two child narrators as two positions within a single evolving practice of remembering, grounded first in the novels' own scenes and sentences, with the theoretical vocabulary used to describe them being only a secondary concern.

3. Theoretical Framework: Cultural Memory and the Child's Voice

The central theoretical framework of this paper is Jan Assmann's concept of cultural memory, most notably expressed in his 1995 essay, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity" (Assmann, 1995). Assmann builds on Maurice Halbwachs's foundational argument that individual remembering is shaped by the social frameworks within which individuals and communities participate (Halbwachs, 1992). Extending this understanding of socially situated remembrance, Assmann distinguishes between two analytically distinct yet interconnected modes of collective memory: communicative memory and cultural memory. Communicative memory is informal, interpersonal, and relatively short-lived, typically extending across the lifespan of those who experienced or transmitted an event through direct communication. Cultural memory by

contrast, is institutionalised and symbolically encoded, enabling memories to persist beyond the lifespan of individual witnesses and across generations. Its continuity is sustained through cultural practices such as rituals, texts, symbols, and deliberate forms of transmission. This difference provides a useful framework for examining how the child's voice in Rushdie's fiction functions not merely as a narrative perspective but also as a medium through which individual experiences are transformed into and carried within broader forms of cultural remembrance.

This distinction provides a specific terminology for understanding the narrative activities of Saleem and Haroun. Saleem's narration is addressed to a single listener Padma, and is clearly constrained by the countdown of his failing body; it therefore occupies the fragile, orally transmitted register of communicative memory. However, the birth of a nation at the stroke of midnight, the central subject of his narrative yearns for the stability associated with cultural memory. Haroun's mission is different in kind. He is not trying to preserve his own account of events rather he is defending an already existing and collectively shared collection of stories, the *Ocean of the Streams of Story*, on which an entire community depends. His task, therefore, belongs more clearly to the register of cultural memory a public inheritance under external attack than to a personal reconstruction under internal pressure.

Three further theorists help to sharpen this picture without displacing Assmann's central distinction. Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory refers to the inherited and mediated memories of a generation that did not directly experience a founding rupture. This idea is particularly useful for understanding Saleem's situation. His narration of Partition and independence is constructed from fragments, family rumours, and later interpretations rather than from direct adult experience (Hirsch, 2012). Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* refers to sites where memory becomes concentrated because it can no longer be sustained through everyday communal practices. This concept helps us understand both Saleem's dictated narrative and Haroun's *Ocean*. Each

function as an improvised site of memory, created because the community it serves can no longer take shared remembrance for granted (Nora, 1989). Rushdie's essay "Imaginary Homelands" provides a third and more personal perspective. In the essay, he describes migrant memory as a broken mirror. Its fragments are not without value simply because they are incomplete. On the contrary, their fragmented nature gives them a sharper and more urgent significance because they remain as traces of what has been lost (Rushdie, 1991). These ideas do not compete with Assmann's distinction. Instead, they add texture and complexity to it. They allow the following analysis to move between theory and text without reducing either one to a simple illustration of the other.

One further reason why the child narrator matters to this framework deserves to be stated clearly. In Rushdie's fiction, a child has not yet learned the practiced evasions available to an adult narrator. Therefore, paradoxically the child is both a less reliable witness to facts and a more transparent witness to feelings. Saleem's factual errors and Haroun's innocent, literal-minded questions are not simply comic devices. Instead, they are the means through which each novel makes the workings of memory visible to the reader. A child narrator cannot easily conceal the gaps between what actually happened and what is merely believed, hoped, or feared to have happened. When cultural memory theory is applied to an adult narrator, it may remain a purely descriptive vocabulary. When applied to a child narrator, however it becomes something closer to a diagnostic tool, exposing the precise point at which private feeling is asked to stand in for shared history.

4. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, comparative method grounded in close textual reading. The primary texts are Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) and Haroun and the Sea of Stories (1990), read in full rather than through summarised plot points. The analysis proceeds in three stages. First, each novel is read independently for the specific scenes, images, and habits of prose style through which its child-

narrator performs an act of remembering: bodily description, direct address to a listener, recurring metaphor, and the rhythm and register of individual sentences. Second, these textual observations are read against Jan Assmann's distinction between communicative and cultural memory, used not as a template imposed on the text but as a vocabulary tested against what the text has already accomplished. Third, the two sets of observations are compared and contrasted to identify points of convergence and divergence between Saleem's and Haroun's modes of remembering, with particular attention to how each novel's imaginative world and narrative voice, rather than its theme alone, produces a distinct kind of memory work.

This method deliberately limits the number of secondary critical sources used. Where earlier scholarship on Rushdie is cited, it serves to establish the existing critical division between readings of the two novels, not as a substitute for direct engagement with the primary texts. The evidence in this paper is drawn primarily from the novels themselves, quoted briefly and analysed at length, on the understanding that a comparative claim of this kind is best supported by sustained attention to specific incidents not by an accumulation of secondary discussion.

5. Saleem Sinai: Memory as a Disintegrating Body

Saleem's narration begins with an act of dating so precise that it immediately announces the central argument of the novel. He was born, he insists, not merely in Bombay but at the stroke of midnight on 15 August 1947, the exact moment of India's independence, so that his own arrival and that of the nation are made to coincide (Rushdie, 1981). He describes this coincidence as a form of captivity, claiming that his private destiny had become inseparably bound to that of his country before he was old enough to understand what either destiny meant. As Saleem interprets "...thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, p. 2). The claim is deliberately extravagant, and Saleem is aware of its extravagance both the humour and the

vulnerability of the novel depend on the reader recognising the gap between the actual helplessness of a newborn and the immense historical significance he retrospectively assigns to his birth.

What makes this opening claim more than a rhetorical flourish is the way Assmann's distinction between communicative and cultural memory is reflected in Saleem's narrative situation. Saleem writes at night in a room lit by a single anglepoise lamp. He addresses his narrative to Padma, a woman who cannot read, and who repeatedly questions his need to write down his story. Expressing her impatience, she asks, "But what is so precious," Padma demands, her right hand slicing the air up down up in exasperation, 'to need all this writing-shiting?' (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, p. 20). He frequently threatens to leave if he does not make progress in his story. This situation represents communicative memory in its most immediate form an oral, face-to-face transmission between two individuals that depends entirely on Padma remaining present and Saleem remaining alive long enough to complete his account. Yet the content of what Saleem transmits the birth of a nation, the Partition of a subcontinent, and the fate of six hundred million people belongs to the register of cultural memory, an account intended to outlast any individual teller or listener. Saleem's project is therefore doubly precarious. He must reconstruct a fractured personal past for a listener who may not have the patience to hear it to the end, while simultaneously attempting to fix that reconstruction as a record with the durability of national history.

The urgency behind the act of narrating is not metaphorical, it is bodily. Saleem explains to Padma the physical effects of carrying too much history, "I mean quite simply that I have begun to crack all over like an old jug—that my poor body, singular, unlovely, buffeted by too much history, subjected to drainage above and drainage below, mutilated by doors, brained by spittoons, has started coming apart at the seams" (Rushdie *Midnight's Children* p38). He expects eventually to crumble into some six hundred and thirty million particles of dust, a number that pointedly echoes

the population of the country whose story he is trying to preserve.

The image does more than dramatise mortality. It fuses the fate of Saleem's individual body to the fate of the collective his narration is meant to serve, so that his disintegration and the nation's fragmentation become the same event viewed from two angles. Saleem even compares his own race against time to Scheherazade's, insisting that he must work faster than she did if his crowded, embroiled life is to add up to something more than absurdity. The comparison is telling. Scheherazade tells stories to postpone her own death Saleem tells his story to postpone meaninglessness, which he treats as an almost equivalent threat.

Padma's presence in the room is not incidental to this project; it is central to the way Saleem's narrative takes shape. She interrupts him, mocks his self-indulgence, and demands a straightforward account of "what happened next". Saleem acknowledges that her scepticism has begun to enter his prose, influencing its rhythm even as he continues to resist her demands. This interaction is significant because it demonstrates Assmann's concept of communicative memory in practice: memory is not presented as a private act of recollection but as a negotiated and dialogic process, shaped as much by the listener's responses as by the teller's intentions. Saleem's celebrated claim that he must be understood as "the sum total of everything that went before" him, containing multitudes in the same way that each of the "now six-hundred-million-plus" Indians contains a multitude, becomes more meaningful when considered alongside his repeated struggle to hold Padma's attention on his own terms. Cultural memory, as Saleem's narrative demonstrates, is therefore never simply deposited or preserved; it must be continually asserted and negotiated, sentence by sentence, before a listener who is under no obligation to accept it.

Two further incidents anchor this reading in specific textual detail rather than in paraphrase alone. The first is Saleem's discovery, at the age of nine, of his grandfather's perforated sheet, hidden in a locked trunk and originally used to examine his grandmother medically, one small section of her body at a time, before the couple had ever

seen each other's whole face. Saleem uses the sheet as a costume in a children's New Year play, provoking such rage from his grandparents that, as he recalls, "Between them, the one booming at me in the voice of a forgotten boatman, the other conveying her fury through vanished lips, they reduced the awesome ghost to a weeping wreck" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* p. 30). The scene matters because the sheet is itself a kind of private cultural memory, an heirloom whose meaning has been passed down informally and incompletely. Saleem's crime is not disrespect so much as premature, unauthorized access to a family memory he has not yet been given the context to understand. The second incident is the revelation, made many years later by the family servant Mary Pereira, that she switched Saleem's name tag with another baby's at the hour of his birth, out of a private wish to please the man she loved. Saleem's entire identity as the midnight's child of destiny turns out to rest on someone else's small, self-interested act, which he only learns of as an adult. Rushdie does not resolve the irony; he lets it stand so that the reader understands Saleem's grand claim to embody the nation's memory as something built, from its very first hour, on a private deception he did not choose and could not have prevented.

Saleem's narration also carries a second, quieter claim to authority: he states, "I, Saleem Sinai, possessor of the most delicately-gifted olfactory organ in history," and explains that he has "dedicated [his] latter days to the large-scale preparation of condiments" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* p. 38), suggesting that his heightened sense of smell allows him to reconstruct, almost by smell alone, decades he did not personally experience. This olfactory gift is not presented as flawless. Saleem admits that his father's poor sense of direction has "dripped into" him, occasionally clouding his ability to sniff out, in his words, "the true road" through his narrative. This admission is significant because it keeps Saleem's narration honest about its limitations even as he makes an outsized claim for its authority; cultural memory, in this reading, is never simply inherited in its entirety but assembled through a mixture of genuine sensitivity and inherited error, filled in, as

Saleem puts it, by "the trick of filling in the gaps" wherever direct knowledge runs out.

Saleem's own name for his narrative method, "chutnification", gathers these threads together. He works by day among the pickle vats of a factory and by night among his papers, and he describes, "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" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, p. 39) The metaphor is domestic and slightly absurd, which is precisely its strength. Saleem does not claim to offer his readers unmediated history; he offers them a prepared, seasoned, deliberately partial version of the past, sealed the way a jar of chutney is sealed, and he trusts that the "authentic taste of truth" can survive a certain amount of spicing. In Assmann's terms, this is Saleem's communicative, embodied memory reaching, quite consciously and without pretending otherwise, towards the condition of cultural memory: something made, preserved, and handed on, rather than simply lived and forgotten.

6. Haroun Khalifa: Memory as a Voice Under Siege

Haroun and the Sea of Stories begins not with a date but with an act of forgetting. The city in which Haroun lives is described as, "There was once, in the country of Alifbay, a sad city, the saddest of cities, a city so ruinously sad that it had forgotten its name" (Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, p.15) portraying forgetting as a defining condition of the city. From the opening paragraph, the novel's fairy-tale cadence, marked by short declarative sentences and playful, punning place names, signals a very different kind of memory story from Saleem's. Whereas *Midnight's Children* begins with a narrator insisting on the precision of a date, *Haroun* begins with an entire community that has lost the single fact its name that would enable it to locate itself within time and history. The forgetting is presented as a symptom rather than a cause the city's sadness comes first, followed by the loss of its name, as though a community that becomes too unhappy to remember itself will eventually lose the ability to recognise and define itself.

Haroun's father, Rashid, is a professional storyteller, known affectionately as the Ocean of Notions and mockingly as the Shah of Blah. When Haroun's mother leaves the family for a neighbour who despises stories and dismisses their value with the question, "What's the use of stories that aren't even true?" (Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, p. 17). Haroun repeats the question to his father in a moment of grief and anger. Soon afterwards, while speaking at a political rally, Rashid opens his mouth and finds that nothing comes out except a single, humiliated sound. The loss of Rashid's storytelling ability is not presented as writer's block in any ordinary sense. Within the novel's own logic, it represents a disconnection from a shared external resource the Ocean of the Streams of Story, to which storytellers subscribe in much the same way that a household subscribes to a supply of running water. This makes Assmann's concept of cultural memory particularly concrete. The community's store of stories exists beyond any single storyteller, preserved within a shared reservoir from which individuals draw and to which they contribute, yet from which they can also be cut off under unfavourable conditions.

Haroun's journey to recover his father's gift takes him, guided by the Water Genie Iff and the mechanical Hoopoe named Butt, to the Ocean itself, described as containing "a thousand thousand thousand and one different currents," each one a distinct tale, all capable of joining with one another to form new stories. The description matters stylistically as much as thematically. Rushdie renders the Ocean not as an archive in the dry, institutional sense but as something alive, plural, and constantly recombining, closer to Rothberg's later idea of memory as shared and additive than to any image of a fixed, finite record. When Haroun first tastes the Ocean's water and finds himself inside a half-remembered Princess Rescue story, he discovers that the water has been poisoned. The antagonist Khattam-Shud has begun manufacturing "anti-stories," synthesised specifically to cancel out and ruin existing tales, "But when it's Plugged! Ah, then the Ocean will lose all its power to resist my anti-stories, and the end will come very soon" (Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, p. 161). Khattam-Shud's own explanation of his motive is direct and chilling in its

plainness, he tells Haroun that "the world is for controlling," and that stories are dangerous to him precisely because each one contains "a world" he cannot rule. Where Saleem's threat comes from within, from his own body's decay, Haroun's threat comes from outside, from a figure who determined to silence an entire community's capacity to speak.

The novel repeatedly tests Haroun's own capacity for memory and concentration in ways that echo in miniature, the larger crisis of the Ocean. Since his mother's departure, Haroun has found that his concentration lasts for exactly eleven minutes before wandering away, a private, almost comic wound that maps his mother's leaving at eleven o'clock onto every subsequent act of concentration he attempts. This detail becomes crucial when Haroun is given a bottle of Wishwater and told that the harder he concentrates, the more powerful his wish will be. He tries to wish for his father's storytelling gift to be restored, but his mind keeps sliding toward his absent mother instead, and after exactly eleven minutes his concentration collapses and the wish fails. The failure is not presented as a moral flaw. It represents that, for a child, personal grief and public responsibility cannot be easily separated. Haroun cannot simply put aside own communicative loss and immediately undertake the task of cultural restoration.

He succeeds only later, and only by combining several small, hard-won resources rather than through a single act of will: the Bite-a-Lite secretly given to him by Iff, the wrecked brain of the Hoopoe, which he reconnects through trial and error, and a second attempt at the Wishwater. This time, he succeeds through eleven minutes of sustained concentration, wishing for the entire moon to turn towards the sun. The wish works because, by this point in the novel, Rushdie has shown the reader the effort such concentration demands from a grieving child. Haroun's earlier failure is therefore not simply undone but answered through his later success. The sunlight that follows melts Khattam-Shud's Dark Ship and dissolves his shadow army because, within the novel's logic, a tyranny sustained by silence and

darkness cannot survive exposure to the very brightness it seeks to suppress.

The war between Gup and Chup, waged over both the kidnapped Princess Batcheat and the poisoned Ocean, extends this argument about memory into a question of political style. The Guppee army wins not despite its constant, undisciplined arguing but because of it, Rushdie notes that "all those arguments and debates, all that openness," had built real bonds of loyalty among the Pages of Gup, while the silent, secretive Chupwalas turn out to be a "disunited rabble" whose members distrust one another and sometimes end up fighting their own detached shadows. The Shadow Warrior Mudra, who has broken with Khattam-Shud and communicates only through a formal gesture-language called Abhinaya, embodies a third possibility within this scheme, a figure of few words who is nonetheless fully able to remember, negotiate, and keep faith, suggesting that Haroun's argument is not simply that speech is good and silence bad, but that memory and community depend on openness of a particular kind, rather than on volume of speech alone.

The novel's ending deliberately returns to its opening image of forgetting. After Khattam-Shud is defeated, rain falls over the sad city, and a general sense of happiness follows. During the celebration, a passing policeman reveals that the city has finally remembered its name: Kahani. As Rushdie explains in the glossary appended to the novel, Kahani simply means "story." The city's cultural memory, therefore, has been preserved in its name all along. It is lost through sadness and recovered through the same communal capacity for storytelling that Haroun has spent the novel defending. In the final scene, Rashid tells the assembled crowd in the Valley of K the very story the reader has just finished reading. The crowd recognises Khattam-Shud's cruelty in the thinly disguised figure of the corrupt politician Snooty Buttoo, and this recognition becomes the means through which Buttoo is finally driven from power. Storytelling in *Haroun* therefore does more than represent political change; within the world of the novel, it becomes a force that actively brings about that change.

7. Two Modes of Remembering: A Comparative Reading

When compared directly, Saleem and Haroun occupy two distinct positions within what this paper identifies as Rushdie's evolving use of the child narrator. Saleem's position is retrospective, adult, and compromised. He narrates as a grown man reconstructing a childhood that he can only partially trust. His account is directed towards a single listener and constrained by the pressure of his failing body. He therefore accepts distortion as an unavoidable part of transforming personal experience into historical narrative. Haroun's position, by contrast, is immediate, childlike, and comparatively unclouded. He acts within the unfolding present of his story rather than narrating events from a later perspective. His task is also protective rather than self-justifying, as he seeks to restore something that belongs to the wider community as much as it does to him. In Assmann's terms, Saleem's communicative memory reaches towards the durability associated with cultural memory while remaining vulnerable to distortion in the process. Haroun's task, however, begins within the register of cultural memory itself, as he defends an inherited and shared reservoir of stories against an external attempt to silence it.

The two novels also enact this difference stylistically, rather than only at the thematic level. Saleem's sentences are long, self-interrupting, and dense with parenthetical asides and italicised emphasis. His prose performs the very disintegration he describes, as a body "coming apart at the seams" is narrated through sentences that themselves seem to threaten to come apart. Haroun's prose, by contrast, is shaped by short declarative sentences, nursery rhyme, and wordplay, with a narrator who occasionally addresses readers directly, as though telling a bedtime story aloud. The Water Genie's habit of stringing together rhyming synonyms, along with the recurring joke of characters named Bolo, Chup, Gup, and Khattam-Shud, whose Hindustani meanings are explained only in an appendix, presents language as playful and communal rather than private and confessional. Whereas *Midnight's Children* asks readers to work towards

reconstructing a fractured consciousness, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* invites readers to enjoy a story that is, quite openly, about the value of enjoying stories. This difference in narrative approach also reflects a difference in the kind of memory each novel seeks to protect.

Both novels, however, converge on a single underlying claim, and it is this convergence that makes the comparison particularly significant: on the texts' own terms, a self or a community without a story remains incomplete. Saleem is driven by the fear of dying before the many experiences of his life can come together to form a meaningful whole, while the Ocean of the Streams of Story is quite literally poisoned and brought to the brink of death. Thus, in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, the loss of narrative is not merely a background theme but the central concern of the entire plot. Both novels also end, pointedly, not in loss but in celebration. Saleem's narration closes with his sister's wedding and the promise of his son's birth, framed by a determined and slightly defiant sense of joy, while *Haroun* ends with rain, a recovered name, the return of his mother, and a birthday. This shared turn toward celebration, rather than mourning, is what most clearly distinguishes Rushdie's treatment of memory from the more elegiac register that dominates much of trauma-centred memory studies. In both novels, remembering ultimately becomes an act of festive affirmation as much as an act of survival. It is this affirmative register, conveyed through the specific incidents and distinctive prose styles of the two novels, rather than through theoretical vocabulary alone, that constitutes the central comparative claim of this paper.

8. Conclusion

Analysing Saleem Sinai and Haroun Khalifa together brings into focus something that individual analyses of *Midnight's Children* and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* can easily overlook. Rushdie's fiction develops a sustained and evolving concern with how memory is created, preserved, and passed on, and this concern becomes particularly visible through childhood. Saleem's compromised adult retrospection and Haroun's unfolding quest are not merely two different narrative techniques employed by the novels.

When viewed through Jan Assmann's distinction between communicative and cultural memory and examined through the specific incidents, images, and prose styles that shape each novel, they can instead be understood as two stages in a broader argument about what storytelling owes to memory, family, and the community that receives it. Across both works, Rushdie's fiction presents narrative as inseparable from survival. It also suggests that whoever controls the ability to tell stories whether through a fractured individual memory or through an external power that seeks to censor them controls something close to the capacity of the self or the community to exist. The comparison further shows that a memory-studies analysis of Rushdie need not be limited to thematic interpretation. The closer the analysis remains to particular scenes, such as Saleem's cracking body or Haroun's eleven-minute concentration, the more effectively Assmann's theoretical vocabulary can be tested against the fiction itself. Ultimately, the comparison proves how Rushdie uses childhood, storytelling, and memory to explore the fragile relationship between individual experience and collective history.

9. Limitations and Future Scope

The present study is primarily centred on Assmann's distinction, with additional concepts drawn from Halbwachs, Hirsch, and Nora. The exploration focuses on selected aspects of cultural memory and does not extend extensively into trauma theory or reader-response approaches. As the study examines the texts in English, questions of translation and reception within other linguistic traditions remain outside its present scope. The comparative discussion is based on interpretations of the selected primary texts and therefore offers one possible reading of the relationship between memory, narrative, and cultural identity.

Future research may extend this study by bringing trauma theory and reader-response standpoints into closer dialogue with cultural memory theory. Further studies could also explore the selected texts across different linguistic and cultural contexts, particularly through translation and reception studies. Comparative research involving a wider range of Rushdie's works may provide

additional perspectives on the relationship between individual memory and shared cultural memory. Such studies could further develop and refine the interpretations offered here and contribute to a broader understanding of memory, narrative, and cultural identity in Rushdie's fiction.

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