Anca Apostol[*]

FICTITIOUS TRUTHS AND TRUTHFUL FICTIONS IN RUSHDIE'S MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN *AND CHANDRA'S* RED EARTH AND POURING RAIN

Keywords*: memory; story-telling; fabulation; performance; fiction.*

Abstract*: According to Western thought, truth and reality are generally seen as being diametrically opposed to fiction. This paper advances the idea that Rushdie's* Midnight Children *and Chandra's* Red Earth and Pouring Rain *reconfigure the widely-held, Western view on the nature of reality and truth. It is shown that they do so through the lens of a South-Eastern myth-ritual shrine which largely relies on fiction and departs from our familiar truth(s). Most importantly, still, it becomes apparent that their truth-values represent not lesser versions of the Western counterpart, but legitimate archetypal ones; although superficially unfamiliar, they are consistent with the mental forms acknowledged in the West. To this end, three salient dimensions of the novels are examined – performance, fabulation, and memory. The first criterion encompasses the vast and intricate artistic outlets of the Indian people, which expand and infuse every field of their existence, lending mundane experiences the magnitude and theatricality of staged performances. Then, through the lens of fabulation, drawing on Bergson's and Durand's theories, these literary works are shown to actually gain profundity and truthfulness from their cultivation of fiction and alternative facts. Finally, memory represents both the fuel and the mechanism of the Indian story-telling tradition. Although often dismissed as unreliable, it is not so with Rushdie and Chandra; there is "memory's truth…its own special kind" (Rushdie 211).*

The notion of truth has always been controversial, especially in the case of cultures situated at geographic and mental antipodes. The idea of a multi-faceted truth seems disconcerting to many, but, as cultural monoliths disintegrate, so must our reluctance to accept a plurality of personal and collective conceptions. It is with this idea in mind that I shall endeavour to prove that Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Chandra's *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*, as embodiments of the fictionalized Indian ontology, build alternative realities and truths out of a South-Eastern myth-ritual shrine. Most importantly, still, it will become apparent that their truth-values represent not lesser versions of the Western counterpart, but legitimate archetypal ones. It is my belief that they are completely consistent with the mental forms acknowledged in the West, albeit in different garb. To prove this, I will consider three salient dimensions of the novels, structuring the Indian imaginary scheme – performance, fabulation, and memory. The first criterion encompasses the vast and intricate artistic outlets of the Indian people, which expand and infuse every field of their existence, lending mundane experiences the magnitude and theatricality of staged performances. Then, through the lens of fabulation, drawing on Bergson's

[*] University of Bucharest; Romania.

and Durand's theories, these literary works will be shown to actually gain profundity and truthfulness from their cultivation of fiction and alternative facts. Lastly, memory represents both the fuel and the mechanism of the Indian story-telling tradition. Although often dismissed as unreliable, it is not so with Rushdie and Chandra; there is "memory's truth…its own special kind" – which I seek to discover (Rushdie 211).

Thus, it is paramount that the idea of performance should be examined, seeing as the works of both authors are delivered, in the notorious, advertised, fashion of Chandra's setting or the contained, but dramatic, private show of Rushdie's, as prodigious spectacles. This is not altogether surprising, for Indian identity emerges from a tradition of numerous theatrical performance genres, among which the Kathakali dance-drama. Kathakali incorporates dancing, acting, and storytelling, but its focal point are the intricately regulated hand gestures and eye movements, conveying a vast spectrum of emotions by means of elaborate, codified, make-up within an operatic spectacle. By convention, it must begin at sunset and extend through the night, being first announced by drums and cymbals which summon the public, drawing it towards the courtyard where the stage is set. As Barba describes it, the stage resembles the Greek *skene*, having no significant props, except for a solitary oil-lamp in the centre (38).

This call to participation, the intimacy and primacy of the story-telling act, and the role of the spectator as evinced here greatly stimulate the development of the two novels as well. In fact, to Rushdie's narrator, Saleem Sinai, the absence of his confidante seems inconceivable. The energy of accumulated stories threatens to accelerate the disintegration of the narrator: "A balance has been upset; I feel cracks widening down the length of my body; because suddenly I am alone, without my necessary ear". Thus, Padma constitutes the receptacle and one of the driving forces of his momentous epic without which the act becomes futile:

> How to dispense with Padma? How give up her ignorance and superstition, necessary counterweights to my miracle-laden omniscience? (…). I have become, it seems to me, the apex of an isosceles triangle, supported equally by twin deities (…) but must I now become reconciled to the narrow one-dimensionality of a straight line? (Rushdie 149-50)

A theatrical performance cannot exist without its audience. In the case of *Midnight's Children,* the woman satisfies the condition.

The significance of Saleem and Padma's ritual transpires, however, through the perceived magnitude of the process. Its initiator views it as a vital endeavour – the preservation and encapsulation of memory in jars of chutney under the auspices of his "personal neon goddess", Mumbadevi, hung outside the factory, along with that of his other personal mundane "Lotus Goddess; the One Who Possesses Dung; who is Honey-Like, and Made of Gold, whose sons are Moisture and Mud (…) one of the Guardians of Life, beguiling and comforting mortal men while they pass through the dream-web of Maya". He himself embodies Ganesh (by virtue of his nose and, as he goes on to add, of his elusiveness, unpredictability, and garrulousness), patron of the arts, sciences, and wisdom. In this capacity, Saleem weaves the tale of his country's undoing, in which he is inextricably bound. The circumstances of his act are as stringent as those of the ancient theatrical performances. It occurs at a type of dimly-lit witching hour, in festive array, with the aid of special, secular, mudras and totems: "dressed up to the nines, I greet Padma as she rushes to my desk, flounces down on the floor beside me, commands: 'Begin'. I give a little satisfied smile, feel the children of midnight queuing up in my head (…) I clear my throat, give my pen a little shake; and start" (142).

Similarly, *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* overtly emulates traditional theatrical epic sessions, transcending the macrocosmic encapsulation of Saleem's chronicle. Sanjay, a version of Scheherazade, strikes a bargain with Yama, the Lord of Death, deferring his dissolution through narration. Just as before, the satisfaction of his public is paramount to the success of his feat; if he loses a part of his listeners, he is cast to the bottom of the sea. What begins as a private ceremony gains momentum, attracting greater numbers of "necessary ears", as those of Padma. The story is amplified for the over- and ever-filling maidan to hear. Thus, in accordance with Arendt's theory, Sanjay transgresses the private sphere, emerging into public space as a political entity engaged in a discourse with collective ramifications. The maidan comes to represent a form of *agora*, where one relinquishes the comfortable confines of anonymity and exposes oneself to the daunting, contentious pluralities which threaten to destabilize truths held in private. Saleem undergoes a similar process, the difference being that his tales are actual reflections of a common life upended by the tumult of politics and history.

The narrator thus becomes an actor, a forger of individual and collective history, by this engagement in the *vita activa.* Ultimately, his act corroborates what Arendt states in *The Human Condition*: "every activity performed in public can attain an excellence never matched in privacy" (49). Arendt also explores the issue of storytelling itself in relation to public life, namely its potential to actually *create* the social being. The subjective experiences recounted during storytelling are worked into the fabric of reality, gaining public recognition. In fact, by participating in the act of creation, one seizes the reins of the process of history-writing, dismissing the need for an intermediary (such as a historian) and avoiding the distillations accompanying this form of mediation. It is in the *polis* that one's life "will not remain without witness and will need neither Homer nor anyone else who knows how to turn words to praise them" (Arendt 197).

The ritual mentioned above is complemented by chutney imbued with the feelings of the cook, which they relish ravenously during interludes ("green chutney on chilli-pakoras, disappearing down someone's gullet; grasshopper-green on tepid chapatis, vanishing behind Padma's lips. I see them begin to weaken, and press on"). The pragmatic, traditional, Padma yields, indulging into the convoluted narrative concocted by Saleem. The two enter into a pact whereby the notion of truth is relativized: Padma concedes that "every man must tell his story in his own true way" (253). As far as Sanjay's storytelling is concerned, the entire neighbourhood is dynamized and bewitched by it. As a result, feuds arise between members of different factions, on one hand, while a sense of solidarity emerges, on the other, the general goal being the perpetuation of the event. Indeed, this event blooms into a secular-mercantile fair or festival, where "translations [are] being sold, or rather retellings of our stories in other languages, written by hand and copied on cheap coloured paper" (178) and entrepreneurs bribe their way to the story-teller with sweets, so that he may "tell everyone [they're] official sweet supplier to the miraculous monkey" (Chandra 252).

The leniency these worlds display leads us to consider their carnivalesque nature. Tracing the history of carnival from its Ancient spring to the time of writing, Bakhtin identifies the unstifled elemental drive for utmost physical and mental freedom. As theorized in *Rabelais and His World*, the space of carnival is a site for universal laughter, boundless imagination, uninhibited behaviours, and an overall cancelation of the norms and taboos governing the extra-carnival realm. Life as commonly known is reversed, it becomes topsy-turvy. Hierarchical distinctions between participants are erased and gay, absolute, freedom is unleashed.

With this comes the licence for violence and offensive behaviour as well, all under unifying, transformative, merriment. One element which reveals the carnivalesque attributes of the novels is the space. The marketplace appears as the most prolific sphere for such liberating communion to occur. In *Red Earth,* it is replicated precisely, the maidan representing a mirror-image of the medieval mundane festival site. Moreover, the commercial affairs blossoming of their own accord approximate the two even further, signalling, on one hand, the inevitable baseness surfacing at such times. On the other, they prove that carnival has truly settled in and that Bakhtin's triumphant laughter of freedom is attainable. "The collective ancestral body of all the people" (19) now revolves around and is fomented by the stories. Food is crucial in theories of carnival, as it symbolizes the primitive instincts of human beings and it emphasized the grotesque aspects of the body, while reinforcing its general enlargement, hyperbolism, abundance, and fertility (279). If in Sanjay's circle, the feast incorporates Indian sweets, "laddoos" shared with a village of listeners in a queue, and music "from all directions" (Chandra 432), it is Padma's essential chutney, engulfing the entire history of India as presented by Saleem, which draws the events into the realm of carnival.

The most important outcome of the carnival scene is that these elements of relativity and ambivalence encourage the production of an alternative truth. This is the truth which is usually unrecognized, suppressed, or marginalized by the mainstream, but brought to the fore within a favourable space of germination. Frankness and abundance are said by Bakhtin to nurture a utopian community, where "a special type of communication, impossible in everyday life" flourishes (10). The symbolic banquets in which the narrators engage serve to "consecrate inventive freedom, to permit the combination of a variety of different elements and their rapprochement, to liberate from the prevailing point of view of the world, from conventions and established truths, from clichés, from all that is humdrum and universally accepted" (34).

Therefore, not only is there a specific Indian form of truth paralleling the Western one, but it is made perfectly acceptable by its conditions. The operatic performance derived from traditional theatre, the dependence on audience-response, and especially the carnivalesque removal of barriers foster the production of truth which is rendered universal – "the people's unofficial truth" (Bakhtin 90). The idea that storytelling is a performative act, in the pragmatic sense of the word, perfectly reflects Arendt's view that it builds social realities.

The second dimension of my inquiry examines the value of storytelling as an imperative necessity. Through fabulation, it seems, narrators respond to the profound human instinct of survival and, precisely, the postponement of death. Imagination once again plays a crucial role, in that it functions as an instrument of resistance against metaphysical –but also physical – finitude. Furthermore, the concept of fabulation endorsed here, undergoing a shift from the Bergsonian version, and incorporating Deleuze's and Durand's readings, is shorn of the unreliable mysticism which led Bergson to associate it with merely a side of the rational-irrational antinomy. The latter sunders the products of imagination and divorces the (lesser) 'myth-making' moral-religious type from the more genuine and prolific artistic or scientific inventions (Bergson 89). He calls the first "phantasmic representations" (88) and hallucinations (98), the moral profile of a tribal form of closed society which fashioned gods so as to unconsciously stimulate social cohesion within closed societies. As Bogue clarifies, in this sense, "the purpose of fabulation is to impel humans to act in accordance with religious dictates, which themselves come into existence in order to ensure socially cohesive action" (95). Nevertheless, Bergson acknowledges at a certain point that "to this faculty are due the novel, the drama, mythology together with all that preceded it", merging the two strains of imagination he delimited in the first place (Bergson 89). My insight, extending the meaning of the term beyond Bergson's, is anticipated by Stenner in his *Liminality and Experience*, who pursues it in relation to Deleuze's usage of the term. Fabulation is, according to Deleuze, not a superstitious escape into the realm of magic and deities or the primitive mind-set of a traditional society, but a means through which communities create themselves and the people to come.

In this last reading, therefore, a marked social component is used to refine the original term. Deleuze's concern with invention and the creation and identification of the individual with collectivities also informs *Anti-Oedipus*, where he and Guattari view the subject as associating itself with "all the names of history". This, then, prompts them to believe it "hallucinates and raves universal history" (Guattari qtd. in Bogue 97). They also attribute it the very significant "power of the false", especially as reflected by Deleuze's analysis of the films of Pierre Perrault, where one notices the self-assertion of the Québécois when faced with oppression from both Anglophone and French culture. What emerges is "the becoming of the real person as he sets himself to 'fictioning', when he begins 'legending in *flagrante delicto*'" – that is, according to the Québécois film director, in the process of forging collective knowledge (Deleuze qtd. in Bogue 100). In this sense, fabulation functions as an instrument of resistance which harbours the empowered collectivities of the future and enables the creation of an authentic identity, albeit one diverging from conventional truths and expectations. This transcendence of the mainstream narrative and subsequent evolution into a self-standing entity presupposes the crossing of a border. Stenner identifies in this experience of transition, as in a rite of passage, the paramount phase of disturbing separation, which triggers the creative insight and has the potential to generate novel ideas. Thus, the essential contribution of Deleuze's argument is the vindication of such ideas born of fabulation as a transitional experience bridging the preliminary self and the regenerated collective, dynamized by the stage of becoming into a state of volatile, endless, potential.

The histories of Post-Independence India and Pakistan and, respectively, 19th century India in the midst of colonial infiltration both represent legitimate, documented, realities, forming the background of Saleem's and Sanjay's stories. It is in the narrators' apparently improbable departures from the established thread that fabulation is thought to occur, that their truth ceases to tally. The interwoven elements of fantasy (telepathic connections among superhuman children, the notion of the destiny of one person paralleling and actively intervening in that of a country; a poet-soldier reincarnated as a story-telling monkey three hundred years later, magical conception by way of traditional sweets, to name the most conspicuous) fill in the "interstices" of the binding nationalist pedagogy theorized by Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (8). The grand narratives of independence and partition, although rendered undeniably gruesome even by official sources and acknowledged nationally as being so, are shown as broad generalizations in comparison with the individual, grass-roots level, whose mouthpiece is Saleem. His fantasy is not truth-bending, but the unbridled expression of a pervasive undercurrent entrenched in the being of an Indian. He is the archetypal Indian reconciling the depth of his own trial against the homogeneous backdrop of official histories. Fabulation becomes necessary because everyone contains "the sum total of everything that went before" and "anything that happens after". If past, present, and future are a continuum embodied by a person, only fabulation, with its liminality and continuous aspect, allows it to remain open.

Likewise, the guiding principle in *Red Earth* is that of the mingling of all things, of a universal melting into one, in keeping with the Indian ontology: "life feeding on life (…) each part of some web: 'Everything is the eater and the eaten'" (104). Abhay may actually be considered a metaphorical representation of the people to come, seeing as he embarks on a type of apprenticeship in nation-building narration under Sanjay. He reluctantly starts to recount his seemingly incompatible modern college experience in America, growing more at ease until, at the end of the monkey's life, he acknowledges the fact that life continues only as long as the story does: "Will I wander barefoot in the streets of Delhi, will you exile me from this city I love? Will you listen to me? Will you stone me, will you imprison me? I cannot care, I must tell a story. Listen. I am about to tell a story. I will tell you about wives, and good doctors, soldiers, poets, tribesmen (…)" (519).

Another relevant theoretical reading of fabulation belongs to Gilbert Durand. He too explores the transcendental aspects of this inclination, describing it, much like Bergson, as a shield against the stultifying, neutralizing, anticipation of death and putrefaction. One finds refuge in the creative richness of the imaginary – in myths, legends, fables –, transposing oneself into a plane where death is excluded: "this negation is a sovereign power of the freedom of the soul, it is only spiritual negation, a complete rejection of the existential void represented by time and the desperate alienation of the literal objective". It is not mere "vulgar release", but an "essential safeguard" (Durand 400, my translation). This interpretation suits the two novels particularly well, seeing as the entire process of narration revolves around the postponement of death and the detachment from obliterating temporality. When he links himself to the destiny of the "sister-nation" and sees himself as the trigger of all significant actions, on small and grand scale alike (from the washing-chest accident, to the "endless series of parents" he gave birth to, to the thirty jars of chutney corresponding to episodes from Independence to Emergency), Saleem reinforces the illusory nature of the passage of time and emphasizes the influence of individual perspective on the course of events. Furthermore, his unique act of storytelling is different from the mainstream narrative not because it is untrue, but because the narrator recounts through the use of vital euphemism; vital because, as Durand maintains, it supports the functions of the imaginary, counteracting the dismal thoughts of annihilation – be it physical or spiritual, at individual level or encompassing a nation. Most importantly, this is once again a revelation of truth: "this improvement is not some empty objective speculation, for the reality manifested at its level is creation, the conversion of the world of death and things into that of truth and life" (404, my translation).

The deferral of death appears, thus, as a continuous human endeavour, manifested at the level of every mundane activity. It is then, to be expected that this struggle should be represented at the level of narrative development as well. Therefore, not only do we subsist on the workings of imagination in point of content and theme, but the orchestration of both a reader's and a narrator's processing of narrative reflects this life-preserving tendency. The highly digressive and constellated character of the two accounts stands in opposition to the Western formulation of what constitutes a well-formed narrative. The theoretical foundations of the plot, chiefly that of Aristotle in his *Poetics*, established it as linear, cohesive, and climactic. Its unfolding was a matter of advancement, especially in temporal terms. As a teleological race for a satisfying, or, conversely, devastating, endpoint, it was meant to generate a feeling of *catharsis* in the audience. This notion is shown as a metatextual concern throughout the novels, Rushdie's and Chandra's narrators alike expressing their disavowal of orderly progression. *Midnight's Children* is punctuated by the voice and influence of Padma, who decries the disjointed and protracted evolution of the story: "but here is Padma at my elbow, bullying me back into the world of linear narrative, the world of what-happened-next: 'At this rate,' Padma complains, 'you'll be two hundred years old before you manage to tell about your birth.'" (44). In a similar fashion, *Red Earth* explicitly mentions Sanjay's coming into contact with Aristotle's work during his apprenticeship at Markline Orient Press:

> That week, Sanjay studied the book: the sense was clear enough, if limiting for the maker of art; there seemed to be an insistence on emotional sameness, on evoking one feeling from the beginning to the end of the construction, as if unity could be said to be defined as homogeneity or identity; there seemed to be a peculiar notion of emotion as something to be expelled, to be evacuated. (Chandra 281)

This encounter underlines the young man's general ambivalence towards this tradition, seeing as he does not find it altogether alien and discordant. He is prone to an infusion of Western elements which might not prove fruitful in the feat of storytelling for survival. Thus, he has to be reminded by Hanuman about the essence of Indian storytelling: "Straightforwardness is the curse of your age, Sanjay. Be wily, be twisty, be elaborate. Forsake grim shortness and hustle. Let us luxuriate in your curlicues" (20).The prolongation of life lies in these "curlicues", shunned by the Aristotelian model and fostered by the Indian one. Actually, an overt acknowledgement of the inherently teleological and pleasure-driven nature of the narrative, as well as of our own need for gratification, as readers, is rendered by Brooks in *Reading for the Plot*. In his view, people throughout history have shown a dependence on and an avid consumption of narrative, invested in every human enterprise and interaction. Consequently, if narrative represents the articulation of our personal and social realities, then plot must be the syntactic arrangement of events – the "subterranean logic connecting these heterogeneous meanings" (12). The word is not, however, synonymous with the *syuzhet* of the Russian Formalists, or the "plot" (as opposed to "story") found in English usage, for in Brooks' understanding it engages both notions (*fabula* and *syuzhet*, "plot" and "story"), plot being the cognitive key to unlocking the story as an intelligible unit.

A crucial observation that he makes, gleaning the works of Genette, Ricoeur, Benjamin, is that plot is inextricably bound with the notion of temporality. Space within a story, he argues, can be disregarded, while the dimension of time cannot. The unfolding of events always occurs across time; the narrative progression of stories consists of systematic delays, accelerations, erasures, and extensions; and our own reading experiences involve an awareness of the passage of time. A natural conclusion would be that, insofar as temporality, or "time-boundedness", haunts our pursuit of narratives, "plot is the internal logic of the discourse of mortality" (22). Durand's theory of fabulation (a necessary component of storytelling) for survival is once again confirmed. Furthermore, "death" here does not signify the biological end of human life alone, but the entire endlessly thwarted pleasure-seeking process which spurs us forward towards the end of narratives, the promise of retrospective meaning, and the possible "knowledge of death which in our own lives is denied to us" (95). For these reasons, fabulation and fiction are inseparable. Like euphemism, they contribute to the creation of a truth which is life-affirming and liberating.

Lastly, the idea of memory in relation to truth is equally relevant in the context of the two novels, reflecting, at the same time, a prevalent issue of the Western and Indian ontology/metaphysics. While often represented as a source of, or presenting the potential for, unreliability, memory and the processes connected to it serve a leading function in the narrative logic of both Rushdie and Chandra. After all, their storytelling acts hinge on a ritual practice of remembrance which stresses its sacramentality. Still, this practice, while stemming from the intangible sphere of ritual, acquires worldly dimensions through its psychological, social, and political implications. It is this blending of recollection and imagination with the actualization of history that Saleem professes when he states "I told you the truth . . . Memory's truth" (292). His entire chronicle and the parallel process of chutney-making are mutually dynamized in an attempt to reconcile the facts of private recollection and the dictates of history in the metaphorical procedure he calls "the chutnification of history". This is part of his project to convert the "passive-literal" and the "passive-metaphorical" modes of connection in which he and India were shrouded – essentially, a state of paralysis, hence the passivity – into the "active-metaphorical" one. In this mode, the minute events of his life are reproduced at the larger scale of the country and its history; it "groups together those occasions on which things done by or to me were mirrored in the macrocosm of public affairs, and my private existence was shown to be symbolically at one with history" (Rushdie 331). The act of recollection transmutes memory into the fabric of a social reality more attuned to personal tribulations, which thereby gain exposure and outward recognition. It produces a substitution of the (relatively marginal) individual for the "grand" characters corresponding to the grand narratives widely disseminated.

The chutney-making ritual complements and amplifies the effect of this act because it implies physical and metaphorical preservation. In the same way that food is spiced so as to be preserved, the products of memory are seasoned and enlivened by the curlicues of the performance. Thus, not only does Saleem relativize the official narrative by adding the piquancy of personal experience, but he also ensures that his version does not expire. Once again, this attests to the life-affirming value of fabulation, as the preservation of one's story amounts to an extension of life.

Literature and memory are inevitably linked because the former represents the most fertile ground where the latter can develop. Seeing as the workings of memory rely on a paradigmatic selection and a syntagmatic juxtaposition of events (as proposed by structuralist narratologists), it is only within a literary product, with its characteristic affordances and flexibility, that it is fully asserted. As Erll points out in *Memory in Culture*,

> Literature fills a niche in memory culture, because like arguably no other symbol system, it is characterized by its ability – and indeed tendency – to refer to the forgotten and repressed as well as the unnoticed, unconscious, and unintentional aspects of our dealings with the past. It...actualizes elements which previously were not...perceived, articulated, and remembered in the social sphere. (Erll 153)

In what seems like an echo of the theory of carnival, which states that fairs reunite the suppressed voices of the margins of society, Erll adds that "elements from various memory systems and things remembered and forgotten by different groups are brought together in the literary text". Sanjay and Saleem provide an articulation of these voices, and indeed of their own minor events which were disregarded by or demoted from the mainstream narrative. They employ storytelling as the foremost outlet of memory, one which mirrors its syntagmatic and paradigmatic formulation.

Memory and history (the grand, mainstream, narrative) are antithetical, Nora argues in *Between Memory and History.* They represent opposite polarities because the latter tackles the past and remains lodged within it, while the former is anchored and actively created in the present moment. Memory belongs to the living, it is "life borne by living societies founded in its name". Unlike history, which is the problematic "reconstruction" of former events, memory evolves continuously; it is "open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformation, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived" (Nora 8). It is a matter of constant evolution centered on the individual, instead of the universal; a democratic impulse which endangers the totalizing pretensions of historiographies. Because "there are as many memories as there are groups" and "memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual", it upholds the promotion of the lesser-known truths (9). This, I believe, is what Rushdie regards as "memory's truth".

All in all, an exploration of the dimensions of performance, fabulation, and memory, in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Chandra's *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* reveals their inherent quest for the affirmation of truth and life under the oppressive constraints of historical, social, literary, and general aesthetic norms. The prevalence and immanence of these dimensions in the Indian ontology can only be seen as a celebration of the truths they convey or engender. Although problematized, because confronted with the conventional ones, these truths form the foundation of a seemingly parallel belief system which is fine-tuned and liberating. They capture the spirit of discrete individuals and the whole of their society alike, as opposed to the totalizing neutralization of difference and unpopular opinion led by their Western counterpart. The values magnified by Rushdie and Chandra are upheld naturally and unapologetically by their culture, and they are compatible with the mental forms of our own. The only difference is that our theories present such values as marginal, while their cultural products revel in their centrality.

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