Questioning the Limits of Humanity in Midnight's Children by Salman Rushdie and Animal's People by Indra Sinha

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Abstract

Midnight's Children by Salman Rushdie and *Animal's People* by Indra Sinha are novels pertaining to the body of postmodern Indian literature written in English, that which uses various investigative means and literary techniques to create paths for intercultural understanding and, even more broadly, that of the understanding of the world itself. Due to the complexities involved, scientific debates on these two novels generally explore topics which can be articulated by the use of instruments drawn from the framework of the postcolonial theory. In this article, it is sustained that politics does indeed play an important role in both of these novels, specifically because it opens up transformative pathways for both protagonists, causing dissolution of their human dimension followed by Saleem's and Animal's literary evolution into heterogeneous subjects. These two characters, each for their own reasons—be it political ideals or the impact of technology—stumble on the human and cultural levels of their existence, and acquire transhuman, animalistic characteristics. This provides grounds for them to be viewed in the theoretical context of *posthumanism*.

Keywords

Posthumanism, Posthuman, Animalistic, *Midnight's Children, Animal's People*

1. Introduction

Questioning the limits of humanity in relation to nature and in relation to the technological context which seems to be penetrating, with a growing force, into natural but also into our social, political and cultural surroundings, has become a topic of amassed interest when it comes to contemporary debates in human

and social sciences. Important discoveries in the fields of biotechnology, medicine, veterinary science, behavioural and cognitive studies of animals etc., all influence our daily technological surroundings and make us question the problem of individuality, identity and subjectivity. The construction and constitution of *self* is thus no longer so much queried in relation to other human beings, but rather in relation to non-human beings and entities, be it animals, cyborgs or hybrid subjects as crossbreeds of human and/or animalistic and/or technological identity traits. These debates often raise issues such as the "return of the animalistic" or "the rule of cyborgs and human machines", thus aiding in the construction of a new direction of scientific enquiry known under the label of *posthumanism.* The dominant interest of the enquiry into the posthuman is to unveil processes of dehumanization not only of man, but also of culture and society, and to warn of the fact that we have already stepped into a time of radical change when it comes to traditional notions of what is usually understood as human condition.

Studies into the posthuman often feed on and grow on theoretical foundations pertaining to the postmodern and poststructural frame of thought, applying a multitude of perspectives which may be of a psychoanalytic, feminist, postcolonial or some other origin, and questioning these in relation to the notion of Other understood as non-human being or entity, *i.e.* of the construction of "self" in relation to Other and/or into some form of Other. With such a focus, they distance themselves from anthropocentric definitions of culture and society, suggesting a need to review numerous commonly assumed dualities, such as human vs. non-human, male vs. female, nature vs. culture, true vs. false, body vs. mind etc. If we scratch more deeply into these dualities, boundaries between them seem to become more fluid and more instable, if not in a state of disappearance, which points to processes of integration and blending between and/or amongst their lines of distinction.

2. Defining the Notion of Posthumanism from a Literary Viewpoint

To facilitate understanding of the discussion on a literary topic, which follows, it is important to present assumptions weaved into the underpinnings of the ever more influential direction of poststructural thought that has become known as posthumanism. Videlicet, posthumanism needs to be understood as both theory and practice of determining humanity across biotechnological mediation, and it is important to distinguish between biological and postbiological forms of living intelligence in order to perceive the distinction between the notions of "human" and "posthuman" [1].[1] Hence, the key distinction which influences the entire

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[1]Let us just point out that the concept of biopolitics was introduced into human and social sciences by Michel Foucault, as part of his poststructuralist discussion on the end of humanity. Foucault believed that the power of science and technology to affect life leads to biopolitics which cannot be separated from disciplinary institutions (political, military, economic) whose aspiration to manage life and death will not cease to exist.

theoretical scenery of posthumanism and sheds new light on traditionally assumed dichotomies becomes that which confronts biological and postbiological intelligence. While in the traditional view the human (biological) state, mainly under the influence of enlightenment, relates to rationality, free will, autonomy, self-consciousness, the "posthuman" ("postbiological") is constructed across information patterns from within the biological frame (body) [1].

It also needs to be said that a significant number of theorists defend an optimistic, positive view on the symbiosis between man and machine, but also that there are no fewer of them who see such changes as deviant and even catastrophic when it comes to the discussion on consequences. For example, Katherine Hayles points to positive features, especially those related to the developmental potential which arises from within the posthuman condition, that which opens up pathways to life endowed with faultless machine intelligence [2]. In such a context, she claims, there is no essential difference between bodily existence and computer simulation, or between a cybernetic machine and a biological organism. Hayles considers the posthuman subject to be an amalgam of heterogeneous elements which will not fully override the human component and are in fact more likely to improve it. Donna Haraway also adopts a positive, yet somewhat different approach. In her famous essay, *A Cyborg Manifesto*, she points to three crucial moments that in her view define the relationship between man and machine: 1) social behaviour, language, thought processes and likewise cannot influence the separation between man and biology; 2) the distinction between human organisms and machines is an unstable one due to ambiguities regarding distinctions between nature and artificial environment; 3) the boundaries between the physical world and the non-physical one lack precision [3]. Haraway continues by positioning posthuman theory into the theoretical context of feminism, hence exploring differences between unity and diversity, between otherness and the self, between the body and the mind, between culture and nature, providing arguments that a subject cannot but be in a dialectical relationship with the Other [3].

Somewhat less faith in such an oncoming condition can be found in the writings of Jean-François Lyotard, who warns of dangers of dehumanization caused by the synergy between technology and capitalism. Lyotard retains that the technocrats are assuming lead in the society due to society's inability to recognize its own needs, especially in the context of new technologies [1]. Many other authors deal with topics directly or indirectly related to the concept of posthumanism, approaching the central issue of body-mind dualism from different angles. William S. Haney II, for example, sees human nature as basically bimodal, related to consciousness as such, but also to the content of what is said to be the very state of consciousness. In the context of mind, human nature evolves constantly, thanks to continuous interaction with the environment [4]. Along these lines it is also relevant to mention Eastern philosophy, the accent being put on the first element of the mentioned dichotomy, with further emphasis on tran-

scendentalist principles, being represented as the foundation of entire knowledge. In a different key yet along the same pole of the dichotomy, authors of the Western circle, such as Forman, Shear, Deikman and others, refer to consciousness as to the subtlest of all the dimensions of human nature [4].

From an interpretative point of view, posthumanism is largely based on authors' faith in the artificially improved evolution, not exclusively rooted in the ontological nature of human society, but primarily understood via changes of bodily nature [1]. Many authors found links between posthumanism and classical theories, for example Marx' critique of fake universality of the bourgeois morality, or Nietzsche' critique of Christian ethics, democracy and socialism, or Heidegger's critique of metaphysics [1]. Some authors on the other hand sustain that *posthumanism* is not to be understood as critique of humanism, but rather as its internal critique [1]. On a general level, three different approaches have emerged: 1) the critique of humanism and its definition of the human subject; 2) analysis of the development of science and technology applied to the concept of human body; 3) analysis of the developmental aspect of reproductive technologies, biotechnology and genetics [1]. Posthumanism develops the topic of posthuman life, and the concept of posthuman life is rooted in the fundamental conceptual constructing of a cyborg, *i.e.* on the reversal of changes between the "external environment" (nature, society, planet) and the "internal environment" (human body and consciousness [1].

This brief account reveals another important fact which characterizes posthumanism on a broader scale, which has to do with different disciplines which take interest in it, such as philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, but also with the disciplines which can provide concrete incentives for further investigation into the topic, such as biotechnology, biology, neuroscience, veterinary science, computer sciences etc. All these areas tend to meet and merge, with emphasis on a notable tendency to discard Cartesian dualism in favour of a more materialistic view. Posthumanistic study of mind exemplifies this at many levels, since it relies on the achievements of bio-engineering to show relations between humans and technology, stresses cognitive activities and aspires to the strengthening of computational answers of the human nervous system.

For our discussion it is of interest how Haney II [4] links the mentioned research with his own investigation into the ways in which short stories influence human cognitive abilities and concludes that this genre tends to activate a certain cognitive status via aesthetic contemplation. In other words, he highlights literature, i. e. research into the literary phenomenon, relevant for this topic, as crucial to the understanding of neurobiological phenomena related to emotions, imagination and perception. Leaning on Pinker, he refers to art as to a technology of pleasure, but whilst various artistic forms (such as short stories) may induce pleasurable stimuli and lead towards emotions, the pleasure itself does not come from external forms but from the witnessing of consciousness or, more precisely, from a state of *empty consciousness*, as labelled by the French playwright and theorist Antonin Artaud [4]. This state is that of capability to re-

flect—to the point of reification—on the entire mental activity: thoughts, sensations, memories, emotions and moods. Following this thread, Haney makes references to modern literary artists such as Joyce, Carver, Chopin, Carver, Borges and others, pointing out that not only their characters, but at certain level also the readers, experience a certain form of epiphany, since the literary experience prompts a level of consciousness that induces connectedness to the transcendental perception of time, space and culture [4]. Contemporary technology aims at the stimulation of this kind of experience both mechanically and electronically, in the form of telepresence or virtual presence in cyberspace. Literary techniques thus produce effects comparable to the effects of technology on the human mind, such that enable the transcending of boundaries both in space and in time, which produces distance between the literary world and its representatives from their primary human nature and human forms, in the posthuman sense of the world. Examples illustrative of this thesis will be demonstrated in course of the next stage of this discussion.

3. Politics as Trigger to the Development of the Posthuman in Two Novels, *Midnight's Children* and *Animal's People*

Both novels hereby discussed, *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie and *Animal's Children* by Indra Sinha, belong to the postmodern corpus of Indian literature produced in the English language. It needs to be emphasized that the Indian novel in English significantly differs from Western novels, that it initially adopts realism, and further down the line also the magical realism, which is a uniqueness deriving from the Indian tradition and Indian cultural surroundings from which the writers have sprung. Having been raised listening to Indian myths, legends and epical poetry; having become familiar with Indian poetic norms; having come from a different relation to space and time, from within a different worldview and relationship to religion, they would not have been able to create novels to reflect the Western ones [5]. It is in fact the virtue of the postmodern novel in English that the essence of what is Indian is deconstructed on a scale between arbitrariness and contingency [5], and its unique features seem to have much to do with the narrative that evolves across literary techniques which open up and create space for intercultural understanding. As Romić justly points out, Indian literature is hybrid in itself, since India as a whole inherits hybridity drawn from its entire history, *seeing that it was continuously undergoing the process of constructing its unity on top of its internal fragmentation, difference, and, in fact, divisions* [5].[2]

Otherness, difference, hybridity and fragmentation are furthermore the very categories which will need to be called upon later in this discussion, when we will seek to gain deeper insight into the protagonists of the mentioned two nov-

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[2]Sunil Khilnani writes: "Indian history has shown to big possibilities in facing diversity; a theoretically untidy, improvising and pluralistic approach, or tidy, rationalist and purifying exclusivism. Indian history, also, for the first time in a thousand years of its inscrutability, gave responsibilities to the present generation of young Indians, to make that choice". All these facts make part of the legacy of the Indian novel n English which "nativized' the English language to express Indian sensibility" [5].

els. For all these reasons it seems only logical to propose that both novels be viewed alongside contemporary speculative fiction and dystopic literary prose, *i.e.* within the same body of contemporary literature that evidences and reflects topics and problems of posthumanity, which *while showing the worlds of the imagined future most often build on their political realities and use the current symptoms to diagnose forthcoming endings. Speculative fiction reveals a particular inclination towards "endistic" topics, bioethically and biopolitically highlighted, above all because it continuously questions the boundaries of humanity in a biological sense, while imagining that the annihilation of boundaries between species also implies redistribution of power within the anthropocentric life hierarchy* [6]. Likewise, these literary texts – and in that sense Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* can be singled out for more than good reasons—foreground the enquiry into *humanism and humanity in the ethical sense* (by which they) *imply the existence of "inhuman humanity" in a society which lacks empathy* [6].

It is therefore hardly surprising that numerous studies which investigate Rushdie's literary techniques prefer to view *Midnight's Children* from a standpoint of postcolonial criticism. The perspective adopted by critics is justified even by the explicit plane of the novel since it discusses Great Britain's political and historical involvement in India, India's pathways to liberation, the position of Hinduism in Indian society etc. Furthermore, the main event in the novel overlaps with one of the most significant dates in Indian history, the 15th of August, 1947—the date of India's long awaited independence. This is the date on which, only a minute after midnight, the key protagonist of Rushdie's novel, Saleem Sinai, was born. As Teresa Heffernan (2000) points out, Saleem Sinai is defined by the revolutionary legacy of apocalyptic nationalism, which is a frame from within which the character reports on the Indian struggle for liberation [7]. This is why *Midnight's Children* is often viewed as a form of a *national allegory* where storytelling shifts from the level of individual experience to the level of collective narrative [7]. Saleem's birth and upbringing, the rises and the falls which he undergoes with his family during his live, all this at the macro-level corresponds with the birth and with the maturing processes of modern India, both in the political and in the economic sense of the word. From the very beginning Saleem identifies himself with his nation, since he pursues the meaning of his life in the same way in which India pursues visions of its future. His internal turmoil corresponds with events on the national political scene, which is further complicated by the issue of authenticity instigated by the fact that two boys, Saleem and Sheeva (whose role is also that of Saleem's other self) were swopped at the moment of their birth. Thus, it is by accident that Saleem becomes the leader of the midnight children, and that he needs to endure the weight of the prime minister's letter. Much is expected of Saleem, and in that sense Heffernan's observation on Saleem's authenticity as being analogue to the authenticity of India can be said to be a point interestingly raised. Furthermore, liberation from colonialism, from the influence of foreign customs, culture and

beliefs, all this is in itself evocative of national identity, bringing about issues relevant to national mythology.[3] *I shall have to write the future as I have written the past, to set it down with the absolute certainty of a prophet* [7]. Heffernan goes on to sustain that Saleem, as his nation's chronicler, insists on the notion of community which he perceives as *a mixture of voices* within its area of being, and it is along these lines that he writes: *To understand just one life, you have to swallow the world* [7].[4] On top of this, and in the jargon of postcolonial theory, one is led to conclude that a postcolonial subject can hardly be exempt from the discourse of oppression, this tendency being exactly that which leads in the direction of political oppression [8].

Similarly, Susie O'Brien sees connections between *Animal's People* and a view on existence of a strategy that demeans the past and creates a future, that which—founding itself in capitalism and colonialism—moves towards the idea of globalisation, presupposing a relentless process of developing a new complex system which is referred to as the world [9]. We might therefore say that Bhopal (Khaufpur)—the site of *Animal's People*—is represented as *a unique space* (*world market*), suggesting *a transition from metabolic into virtual time of endless progress* (*future as equivalent of a new "now"*) *and physical transparency of mass as quantity of energy…* [10]. It is of relevance here to disclose that the novel *Animal's People* is based on a true event that took place on the 3rd of December 1984 in Bhopal. This event was an ecological catastrophe which happened due to a leakage of poisoned gas from a plant belonging to a transcontinental company called *Union Carbide* (which held a monopoly over the pesticide market in India). In a single day more than eight thousand women, children and men were killed, and thousands more were left blind, crippled and/or suffering from severe and chronic consequences. It was later revealed that some 25 thousand tons of toxic waste were left to lay in the immediate area of the plant, and the consequences of this tragedy are still felt today [11].[5]

Sick, damaged and impoverished citizens of Khaufpur, a fictional city in Shina's novel, who strive to resolve their dispute with the Company (*Union Carbide*) via legal channels, are depicted as typical representatives of the subdued class of people in India. The Company, on the other side, is represented by characters whose inclination to oppression is screened by their talk of equality and by their false dedication to repeal any discrimination on the basis of culture, race, class and gender, while in fact they act in a manner that keeps all such ad-

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[3]… nation-states are widely conceded to be "new" and "historical", the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past… it is the magic of nationalism to turn chance into destiny [7].

[4]According to Frederic Jameson, this relates to the representation of a community which distances the Third World literature from the fragmented, individualistic and fragmentary narrative typical of American literature [7].

[5]Union Carbide is presently owned by Union Carbide the Dow Chemical conglomerate, which refuses to take responsibility for the catastrophe and bear expenses for the cleaning of the plant. By the deal made in court with Union Carbide, made in 1989, the plant is now owned and supervised by Madhya Pradesh who does not wish to finance the recovery of waste project on her own. The problem remained unsolved on October 8, 2010, on the day of Obama's visit to India, when the survivors of Bhopal organized a rally [11].

versities alive. Although postcolonial issues are not a major focus of this discussion, it is clear that both Saleem in *Midnight's Children* and Animal in *Animal's People* voice the needs of the oppressed Indian society. Both of them are physically as well as psychologically marked, and they both challenge the widespread notions of normality in their respective environments, acting as contrasts to much stronger and much more powerful representatives of the other side, where voices are not silenced and are perceived as "normal". "Normality" is thus laid out to represent false empathy, deceit, lack of sincerity, and above all, a desire to dominate.

… What really disgusts me is that we people seem so wretched to you outsiders that you look at us with that so-soft expression, speak to us with that so-pious tone in your voice… [16], (pp. 184).

Both representatives of borderline social positions exist at the very edges of history, race and gender [8], inhabiting social spaces which only they have access to and within which they can act independently and deliver a deep critique of everyday life and of culture in general. That space enables their transformation into creatures of a new kind, such that distance themselves from their primary humanity and acquire posthuman shape and characteristics. For this very reason we will set aside other challenging directions which one might be tempted to pursue in the process of reading and interpreting these two novels, such as hyper-political reality, religious fundamentalism etc., that emerge from contemplative passages in both novels. An example of which are Animal's thoughts, as in the following citation:

I'm not a Muslim, I'm not a Hindu, I'm not an Isayi, I'm an animal, I'd be lying if I said religion meant a damn thing to me. Where was god the cunt when we needed him? [16], (pp. 14).

However, one cannot but admit that politics does indeed play the role of a trigger to human disintegration of Saleem and Animal as literary characters and representatives of postmodernity, which places them alongside other characters in world literature which in different ways reveal possible effects of manifold processes of human transformation that seem to be typical of a contemporary frame. These cases do in fact point to politics and to technology as primary causes of uneasiness and anxiety in modern societies, thus undermining the illusion of undisturbed human development in the times of globalization. Stumbling on their paths through life, be it due to the influence of their political ideals or to technology, these characters separate themselves from the meanings pertaining to the notions of culture and humanity, and they adopt transhuman, even animalistic characteristics that set them apart from traditional patterns of human existence [10].

Both novels are discursively constructed in ways which *concentrate and plot around certain nods; most often around issues relating to space, language and origin* [11]. In the case of Animal, this fact is even more emphasized by his tragedy and by its very nature, inseparable from biotechnological interventions into

his environment and his life, and from the transformative power of the tragic event which took place. Hence, both Saleem and Animal transgress the boundaries of humanity making obvious the crises of the status quo and that of the state failing to resolve it. There seems to be no other exit from the inescapable condition but that from the humanity itself, and within the realms of the constructed literary world the characters find their way out by slipping into a post-condition of a kind. The very appearance of these characters, and of the way they think, along with their abilities and powers, makes them the new representatives of posthumanity that has—as Katherine Hayles might put it—a deconstructive effect on the liberal human subject [2] [4]. They function not as humans but as cyborgs, largely in ways which recall those described by Haraway; they are disassembled and reassembled, and, in course of this process, they take on new forms of individual and collective identity [2] [3] [4]. As such, they belong only to "here" and to "now", since their existence points to a crisis of historical narratives furthermore suggesting that something very dangerous is going on in the present, something that causes all levels and dimensions of possible pasts and futures to reset [2] [4].

It is also important to stress how complex *Midnight's Children* is thematically, stylistically and structurally, which makes it viewable in three ways at least: as a family saga (the story beings with recollections of Saleem's grandfather and other important moments in the history of his family); also, as a historical account (Saleem's life reflects his nation's ordeals in many ways), finally—and also most relevantly from the point of view of this discussion—as a psychological study of an individual (Saleem's personality and his understanding of reality) [8]. *Animal's People* is no less complex, narratively, since it is constructed on the very boundaries between the planes of real and surreal, human and human-like, past and present, traditional and modern. The mentioned categories intertwine constantly, some of them sometimes retreating only to emerge again, which is why the critics characterized it, just as they did in the case of *Midnight's Children*, as a stylistic function of magical realism.[6] Whatever the case, both novels take interest in dissecting and addressing concepts of humanness; they both explore the gap between the private sphere and the public one; they both use all these elements to construct the plot and to weave the story. Saalem and Animal are, no doubt, both hostages of the same dichotomy, resulting in their weakness on the grounds of reality and on their amazing strengths when it comes to surpassing the real. They are representatives of the so called *new human*.[7]

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[6]Literary critics or inclined to analyse Sinha's literary expression within the framework of magical realism, also seeing this writer as a follower of Rushdie's poetics. However, Shina totally disagrees with such classification of his work since his inspiration for Animal comes from a real event and a real person—his personal friend Sunil Kumar who suffered from schizophrenia. Therefore, he considers his novel to be purely a realistic one [11].

[7]Fukuyama said: What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government [7].

Reality is a question of perspective; the further you get from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems—but as you approach the present, it inevitably seems more and more incredible [12], (pp. 228).

Saleem is also the leader of all children who recall monstrosity, born after midnight on the 15th of August 1947, this feature of the novel being a *slippery category that can hardly be boxed within a firm classification* [6]. This leads Rushdie in the direction of coquetry with the fantastic, with the imaginary and with the dreams, which the author is, judging by the following sentences, well aware of:

So: there were knees and a nose, a nose and knees. In fact, all over the new India, the dream we all shared, children were being born who were only partially the offspring of their parents—the children of midnight were also the children "of the time": fathered, you understand, by history. It can happen. Especially in a country which is itself a sort of dream [12], (pp. 158).

4. The Heterogeneous Subject in *Midnight's Children* and in *Animal's People*

It seems worthwhile to recall some, until recently, very popular postmodern discussions on a self-aware subject actually becoming "the subject" thanks to the feature of his or her's openness to external reality [13]. It is that very reality, and human relations to changes by which it is occupied, that becomes the area of questioning of posthuman studies. Since our current reality is so extensively influenced by the impact of technology, Wamberg i Thomsen (2106) point out that the human body is turning into a hybrid body, and that it can no longer be considered as only and exclusively human [14]. Such bodies may be weaker or stronger, and if they are weaker, this leads to drastic changes in their way of life, since such subjects are born into a state of dependency on technology, and the lack of technology is felt as a handicap. It is the technology that can determine whether we live longer or die sooner, whether we become more or less mobile, whether our memory will be enhanced or not; when and if aided by technology, the posthuman subject can indeed be seen as a stronger version of man. If strengthened by all this, the posthuman subject also creates a new environment, such that can no longer be easily understood in terms of the so called *postmodern condition*, as anticipated by Lyotard in the seventies of the 20th century. In tracing the footsteps of Žarko Paić, we are inclined to use past tense when referring to the postmodern, highlighting also a new requirement, the one to place the discussion on subjectivity into a defined social, political and, above all, cultural context.[8] The individual appears as *hybrid identity (…) he/she is fragmented and pluralised, at the same time cosmopolitan and dedicated to an*

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[8]Instability of gender roles, the mystery of sexuality as the last utopia of the Western world, the disintegration of authority amongst different generations, the rising phenomenon of narcissism and depression and psycho-social illness in the society of the spectacle—all these are the results of an unfinished process of separation of the identity of a postmodern subject and his cultural identity from his natural environment [10].

imaginary national space, neutral in the sense of gender, ideologically unstable [10].

Animal, Saleem and all children born in the night of the 15th of August of the year 1947 can be viewed as hybrid subject whose transformation is not into cyborgs or some other form of technological body, but who transform parts of themselves into animalistic forms, if not visibly then through their speech and behaviour, while the transformation is caused by unfortunate circumstanced related to industrial and technological surroundings. These protagonists show that strength can be found in course of the transformative process, and their bodies, despite weaknesses, physical impairment or detrition, can rise beyond the limits of humanity and become empowered:

… O eternal opposition of inside and outside! Because a human being, inside himself, is anything but a whole, anything but homogeneous; all kinds of every which thing are jumbled up inside him, and he is one person one minute and another the next. The body, on the other hand, is homogeneous as anything. Indivisible, a one-piece suit, a sacred temple, if you will… Uncork the body, and God knows what you permit to come tumbling out. Suddenly you are forever other than you were; and the world becomes such that parents can cease to be parents, and love can turn to hate… [12], (pp. 327, 328).

Both Saleem and Animal learn from experience, and their cognition is of empirical nature, while their selves, producing that experience, are inseparable from their bodies. Therefore, it is through their bodies and in the interaction with the bodies that they acquire knowledge and wisdom. *As I body. I am, so to speak, a* "*cosmos within a cosmos*": *I am simultaneously a self, i.e., an exclusive, determinate, self-contained, closed reality, and I am a part-actually, a participant—in a larger world, and thus open* [13]. The body is, Russon continues, both the self and external to self, open and closed at the same time, material and aware (the same). The strength of the body is in the body itself. The experience from which Saleem draws his strength stems from the experience of his birth, and his body as well as all his other capabilities gain in strength in course of his coming of age. This can be illustrated by the episode when he was attacked by typhus, when the only hope which had remained after all failed attempts of medical treatment, was in the consumption of snake poison, which finally did cure him. All other midnight children are similar in that respect, because they all have subhuman properties, and these appeared to be greater the closer their moment of birth was to midnight. It is their subhuman capacities which save them from disintegrating from exhaustion or panic. The strength which they possess gets transformed into a spiritual force, and this makes them hybrid entities, typical subjects of the posthuman era, disrupted both externally and internally [15]. This is also why Saleem closes his eyes to reality:

… I learned: the first lesson of my life: nobody can face the world with his eyes open all the time [12], (pp. 171).

And it is with his eyes closed that Saleem finds strength to make his way through the battle which was imposed onto him from and by the moment of his

birth, and this is way he revives the monster which he knows to be set within him. In Animal's case, the situation is similar. The twenty-two-year-old boy with a mutilated body rises above his tragedy and becomes a human animal.

I used to be human once. So, I'm told. I don't remember it myself, but people who knew me when I was small say I walked on two feet just like a human being [16], pp. 1.

Therefore, Animal's capabilities extend to the questioning of all dualities encompassed by the nature-culture dichotomy, and he uses his experience in a way which suggests disintegration of hierarchies of power and domination. Animal is not a human machine, but he does bear characteristics of a cyborg who rises, as Haraway describes, from the very point in which boundaries between humans and animals are drawn [3]. Although cyborgs lack human or otherwise natural descent, Saleem and Animal are cyborg-like in the sense of confirming their otherness in relation to the artificiality that inhabits their social environments, as well as by their action and existence as such, since they, too, enable differences between the natural and the artificial, between their bodies and their mind, between self-construction and external design, to crystallize [3].

5. Conclusions

It can be concluded that Saleem's body, as well as Animal's, signalizes what makes each of them an eminent sign of a culture and of a time which they represent, at the same time bearing traces of ritual and mythical identities. Their bodies will not annihilate the past, but they will, rather, retrieve it and revive the courses dating back to times prior to civilization, and be strengthened by transformation, enabling the characters to defy unfortunate circumstances of their present. What in some other case may be signified by technology, in the case of Saleem and that of Animal, the function shifts towards animalization, aiming towards transparency and total embodiment. That's why their physical and mental capabilities strengthen and grow, and the process of transformation fills their entire bodies and psyches.

I am an animal fierce and free
in all the world is none like me
crooked I'm, a nightmare child
fed on hunger, running wild
no love and cuddles for this boy
live without hope, laugh without joy
but if you dare pity me
I'll shit in your shoe and piss in your tea [16], (pp. 172).[9]

Saleem Sinai and Animal inhabit worlds which, to the fullest extent, unveil

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[9]These verses provide a clear example of physical and mental strength developed in the process of transformation undergone by the literary subject. They are an expression of subjective sensations of freedom, fierceness (*I am an animal fierce and free*) and superiority (*in all the world is none like me*) that enable Animal to overcome the downsides of his personal history (lack of love, lack of hope, lack of joyous laughter), and to refuse pity on the grounds of his newly discovered strength, as dramatically expressed in the punchline (*but if you dare pity me/I'll shit in your shoe and piss in your tea*).

what appears to be the process of disintegration of a modern subject. In this new space, *there are no longer any strict restrictions, taboos or powerful Fatherly Laws that act above the human self, be it in the organic form of a family, nation-state or some patriarchal extension of family at the level of societal community* [10]. At the moment of his birth, when exchanged with Shiva, Saleem's ties with his family were broken; at the moment of castration, he was denied any possibility to insert himself in any kind of a traditional, national or cultural standard. Animal's situation does not differ in significance, since he, too, was constrained to live his otherness from the moment of his birth, feeling no need to establish his self against the difference and in relation to the other. They both embrace the possibility to create their own temporal frames within which they can act and confirm their posthumanity. This is a world of the fantastic, inhabited by illnesses, foetuses placed into jars, by the Brass Monkey, children with rotting teeth, monkeys, mongooses, girls with exposed nipples, the witch doctor, the bone assembler, snakes, a German Shepard's puppy that dies of syphilis, and more…

… I contented myself with discovering, one by one, the secrets of the fabulous beings who had suddenly arrived in my mental field of vision, collecting them ravenously, the way some boys collect insects… I plunged whenever possible into the separate, and altogether brighter reality of the five hundred and eighty-one [12], (pp. 274).

Saleem's true world is inhabited by midnight's children, all of which are half human and half unhuman, creatures with subhuman capabilities able to change sex and be transformed into werewolves, giants, witches, etc.

In light of these impressive examples we are inclined to propose further research into the topic of posthumanity, having evidenced that the notion need not refer exclusively to the creation of human machines, but can also refer to a contemporary condition which alters humanity in ways which reflect the situations of Saleem and Animal, and, in all likelihood, a myriad of others. Such transformations have a lot to do with breakdowns and sufferings, with ambiguities, contradictions and symbolic practices of contemporary humans seeking to find hope and to survive. It may be paradoxical that the literary characters live their transformation and become subhuman while in effect they only seek to save their humanity and to mellow down the effects of hardships which they must endure. These hybrid creatures, built from culture and nature, humanness and animalism, only reflect the state of their surroundings. Midnight's *Children* and *Animal's People*, are a reflection of circumstances which give rise to such a phenomenon, and they project an idea of a world in which *the disappearance of human beings at the end of history is no cosmic catastrophe* since human beings *remain alive as animals, which in fact they are, fighting nature and their given way of being…* [10].

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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