Time, Temporality, Narrative and Identity in Three Works of Historiographic Metafiction

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that "Time, Temporality, Narrative and Identity in Three Works of Historiographic Metafiction" is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts by Research at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

Signed: Xanya Liebenberg 10 May 2024

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Key terms

Salman Rushdie, Peter Ackroyd, Jonathan Safran Foer, time, temporality, narrative, identity, historiographic metafiction, fragmentation, patterning, intersubjectivity, syncretism, trauma

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To my husband, Bertus, and our two beautiful children, Yaaron and Lente – thank you for granting me time to heal and time to write.

In memory of Chris Esterhuysen and Ina-Mari Liebenberg.

Notes on Referencing

I have used the Modern Languages Association (MLA) citation style throughout this dissertation. Several works by the same author have been cited using the title of the text.

Primary texts have been abbreviated in in-text citations as follows:

Midnight's Children	*MC*
Hawksmoor	*HM*
Everything Is Illuminated	*EII*

Additionally, the three volumes of Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* have also been abbreviated as follows:

Time and Narrative Volume 1	*TN*I
Time and Narrative Volume 2	*TN*II
Time and Narrative Volume 3	*TN*III

Roman numerals have been used to avoid confusion with page numbers.

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1. Introduction and Theoretical Foundation

1.1. Introduction: Storytelling, Identity and Time in *Midnight's Children*, *Hawksmoor* and *Everything Is Illuminated*

In Salman Rushdie's novel, *Midnight's Children* (1981), identity is presented as made up of many different stories: identity is formed not only by the stories we tell ourselves, but by the multiplicity of stories we encounter throughout our lives, as told by others. These stories, in turn, belong both to individuals and to communities which ground their collective identity in their inherited stories. *Midnight's Children* recounts the fictional autobiography of Saleem Sinai, who with a group of other children is born close to or at midnight on the day of India's independence. Each of these children has some or other special power. Saleem, for example, not only has a very large nose but also telepathic capacities, which he loses after his nose has been "drained" (*MC* 423). Through these telepathic powers he brings the children together. The novel traces Saleem's life through a series of journeys, exile and amnesia up to the point at which he is writing this memoir. Throughout the novel, however, there is a constant shifting between Saleem's personal history and that of his country; it would seem that it is not only Saleem's fate that is intricately connected to the history of his country, but that the history of his country is tied to his life and those of the other midnight's children. Referring to himself, Saleem comments:

> […] there are so many stories to tell, too many, such an excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumours, so dense a commingling of the improbable and the mundane! I have been a swallower of lives; and to know me, just the one of me, you'll have to swallow the lot as well. (*MC* 4)

This quotation points to a view of identity as mutable and fundamentally intersubjective. It further suggests that in trying to understand someone, we are compelled not only to engage with the life story of that individual, but to "swallow the lot" of stories which constitute the complexity of the self. In this way, Rushdie foregrounds the role of narrative in understanding oneself and others within a particular social, cultural and historical context. In addition, the continual process of identity formation and self-understanding, and the sense-making of experiences realised through Saleem's many interwoven stories, are at their root temporal processes. These temporal processes are not simply grounded in a linear concept of time

whereby Saleem draws on past experiences or anticipates the future in his narrations, but it is a complex and continual interplay of different temporal planes which destabilises the assumption that the past is immutable. The role of narrative, as intrinsically temporal, both in constituting and understanding identity and selfhood, is central not only to *Midnight's Children*, but is also explored from different perspectives in Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* (1985) and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002).

In *Hawksmoor*, we are presented with two different narratives which take place in two different time periods. The first, set in the eighteenth century, is the autobiography, or so-called "history", of Nicholas Dyer – an architect and satanist. The second, set in the nineteen-eighties, takes the form of a detective story and focuses on the detective Nicholas Hawksmoor. In the eighteenth century, Nicholas Dyer builds seven churches in London. Each of these churches is linked in some or other way with pagan religions, as each is erected on the ruins of older (pagan) buildings or burial sites. Each church is also consecrated by a blood-sacrifice (a murder). In the nineteen-eighties, a series of murders is committed on the sites of these churches. These murders, in turn, emphasise the importance of space throughout the text. The murders are investigated by Nicholas Hawksmoor. Despite the nearly three centuries that separate them, the murders that Hawksmoor investigates appear to be those committed by Dyer. As Dyer relates his life story, the syncretism embodied in the churches also comes to the fore in his narrated identity. The palimpsestic temporal layering of Dyer's churches is similarly reflected in the characters of both Hawksmoor and Dyer, where Hawksmoor and Dyer may each be understood as a uniquely complex temporal manifestation (identity) of a single self, reinforcing the idea that identity is temporally malleable. Like *Midnight's Children*, this novel suggests a view of identity not as monolithic and static, but as a synthesis of the plural and heterogenous.

Finally, *Everything Is Illuminated* tells of the journey of Jonathan (not coincidently the name of the author, as the novel is based largely on an actual experience). Jonathan travels from the United States to Ukraine in order to uncover his own "lost history" (*EII* 108), which, for him, centres around the history of his grandfather during the Second World War. He employs the services of "Heritage Tours" for this trip. In this way, he meets Alex (his translator), Alex's grandfather (the "blind" driver) and the dog Sammy Davis, Junior, Junior (the "OFFICIOUS SEEING-EYE BITCH OF HERITAGE TOURS") (*EII* 29). The narrative alternates between a family history written by Jonathan, and the story of their trip written by Alex. Jonathan's

stories and Alex's communications to him are presented to the reader as an exchange of letters. Jonathan's narrative, as the product resulting from his trip and his attempt at finding out about his past is, however, fictitious as Jonathan fails to confirm or refute any evidence tied to his personal history. The stories which ensue from Jonathan's trip present us with a history in reverse: Jonathan fabricates a past (his family history), from a particular present, which in turn recasts his present in the light of this contrived past. The narrative recasting of both the past and present is therefore also an act of self-creation through imagining a lost family history. The novel probes the problematic nature of writing history with limited – or perhaps no – tangible facts or evidence to inform an account of past events, suggesting that fictional projection, at least in as far as it informs the complex process of self-understanding and identity formation, may become an alternative to historical grounding.

This trip foregrounds the way in which trauma continues to exert an influence through the transferal of memory to others, and how silences, absences and negative spaces may form part of traumatic memory and identity. For Alex, this trip, in opening up the past results in a shift in values and an acceptance of responsibility which shape a deeper, more mature and pragmatic sense of self. In this way, the novel foregrounds the manner in which Jonathan's stories construct an alternative history informed by absence and loss, and how the interweaving of various temporal threads in turn also shape both Jonathan's and Alex's sense of identity and selfhood.

Whereas *Midnight's Children* and *Hawksmoor* were both published in the nineteen-eighties, *Everything Is Illuminated* is a much more recent text (2002). Foer's novel, however, grapples with many of the same questions regarding identity, selfhood and time. Like Rushdie, Foer examines identity in relation to intergenerational narratives and he plays with an alternative historical account that foregrounds its own inventedness. Foer, however, examines identity and our relation to the past from a position of absence and loss (of evidence, facts, and witnesses), whereas Rushdie explores identity by foregrounding multiplicity: each of the one thousand and one midnight's children has a different life story, despite the children all being born close to the midnight of India's independence and despite being able to communicate with each other telepathically through Saleem. Each child's story contributes to the process of co-creating Saleem's identity.

Ackroyd's novel, most explicitly, explores notions of time and temporality on a thematic level. Like *Midnight's Children*, it relies heavily on actual historical records and tangible evidence, even in the process of subverting the supposed truth claim of these records. Despite Rushdie and Ackroyd writing their novels at the same historical moment, there are significant cultural differences which inform the various temporal strands underlying the self-narratives in each text. All three texts, however, employ some form of repetition or patterning to suggest an alternative time-consciousness to traditional, linear understandings of time. All three texts also demonstrate that concepts of selfhood and identity are inextricably bound to notions of time and temporality.

Supporting the affinity between time, temporality, and concepts of selfhood and identity, Muldoon (3) argues that the examination of time "like a flood, rushes in with other demands of equal importance, namely, a disquiet about who we are, how we should live, and whether the quest for meaning is futile or not". Although it is not my intention to consider in detail how each novel responds to the concerns identified by Muldoon, what I will attempt to examine is the manner in which views of selfhood and identity, as well as processes of self-understanding and identity formation ("who we are"), cluster around concepts of time and temporality, both thematically and as embodied in the narratives of each text. Narrative, as a temporal process, but also as an epistemological tool through which meaning is made, is central to this study. It is through narrative in general, and self-narratives more particularly, that the propinquity between concepts of time, temporality, selfhood and identity in Rushdie's, Ackroyd's and Foer's novels, are most clearly typified.

This chapter sets out the theoretical basis of this study. I start by briefly considering some prominent debates surrounding scientific, philosophical and literary understandings of time and temporality, and by outlining the perspective from which time and temporality are explored in this study. Ricoeur argues that narrative is intrinsically temporal and that time and temporality can be understood in terms of narrative. He also maintains that "the temporal character of human experience" (*TN*I 3) consists of three parts: "within-time-ness", "public time" or historicality, and fundamental or primordial temporality. In order to demonstrate how identity and selfhood are tied to narrative and time, each of these parts will briefly be examined. I then explore narrative identity and selfhood. Although a narrative approach to understanding selfhood and identity is by no means novel, by emphasising the centrality of time to narrative, and thus to selfhood and identity, I hope to demonstrate how identity is continually recreated

and renegotiated in each text. Storytelling is also a meaning-making process. For this reason, I consider the way in which narrative functions both as product (a story) and a process of meaning making and understanding. The dual character of narrative, both as product and process through which we create and make sense of identity and selfhood, allows for a complex understanding of time and temporality in *Midnight's Children*, *Hawksmoor* and *Everything Is Illuminated*. I conclude this chapter by offering an outline of the rest of this study.

1.2. Time and Temporalities: Scientific, Philosophical and Literary Perspectives

Much has already been written on the topic of time in postmodern fiction, yet the relation of postmodern writing to time remains ambiguous and troubling. In addition, various postmodern writers, particularly writers of historiographic metafiction, have returned to notions of selfhood and identity with a new sensibility and questioning of these notions, which I argue in turn problematise temporality and the ways in which we understand notions of time. Time has persistently preoccupied philosophers in Western philosophical discourse, whose lineage can be traced back at least as far as the ancient Greek philosophers. In the *Timaeus*, for instance, Plato argues that time is an imperfect reproduction of the form or idea of Eternity (Callahan 3-4), but also that time exists independently of the actions, events and processes which take place *in* time (Emery *et al*.). Augustine, working within a medieval Christian philosophic framework, maintains that time is created by God, while the created world "takes place" within it (see Melchert 246, 248).

Possibly one of the most influential theories of time, however, is the concept of absolute time proposed by the Enlightenment scholar, Isaac Newton. Newton's theory of time propounds a monolithic, universal time, independent of any external influences *in* which events take place in a linear fashion (see West-Pavlov 25). He argues that time is consistent and measurable: it is the means through which we measure motion. The concept of absolute, measurable time is the understanding of time often associated with objectivity and with the empirical sciences. Despite the admittedly oversimplified overview of the complex philosophical views presented here, all three theories presuppose the separation of time and space and suggest that time is the vessel *in* which life takes place. There are two interrelated facets of these philosophies, the implications of which I would like to consider in more depth: firstly, that time and space are distinct features of the physical world; and secondly, the proposition that time is external to and independent of us, being the receptacle in which life takes place.

Before continuing, a brief consideration of the term "reality" is necessary. In 1962, Thomas Kuhn's influential *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* was published. One of the most important contributions of this text is its undermining of concepts of neutrality and scientific objectivity. Instead, Kuhn argues, scientists work within paradigms, suggesting that their understanding of the way "reality" works is influenced by various presuppositions and beliefs. Once a paradigm shift occurs, the way in which scientists view reality changes, resulting in the incommensurability of theories and ideas. Shortly after the publication of Kuhn's text, Berger and Luckmann published *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966). Berger and Luckmann, as cited by McHale (37), argue that reality is "constructed and sustained by the processes of socialization, institutionalization, and everyday social interaction, especially through the medium of language". The importance of language in the mediation of reality was already proposed by linguists such as Benjamin Lee Whorf and Edward Sapir, who argued that the particular language someone speaks in turn influences how they think (see Benjamin Lee Whorf's article "Science and Linguistics", 1940).

Although Kuhn's philosophy focuses on the natural sciences, and Berger and Luckmann give priority to the social sciences, both theories maintain that "reality" is not neutral and objective but mediated through various processes. This understanding of reality is in opposition to the way in which the term "reality" is often employed as referring to what is neutral, objective and knowable. The notion of "reality" is further complicated by the uncritical and inconsistent use of the term by scholars and writers in which they refer to reality both as an objective independent world external to us and the culturally and linguistically mediated understanding thereof. In order to avoid such confusion, I have attempted to use the term "actuality" when referring to what is independent, objective and knowable and I have, where possible, reserved "reality" for the mediated, subjective understanding of the world.

Einstein's theories of relativity (including the special theory of relativity of 1905, and the general theory of relativity of 1916) offer an alternative to the separation of time and space in theories of time, even if they do not overturn the idea that time - and in this instance also space - are the receptacles in which life happens. The use of the term "spacetime" highlights the idea that time and space are *dependent* on each other to the extent that they cannot be considered as separate entities (see West-Pavlov 183). Time and space cannot be thought independently, because time is always measured from a particular (three-dimensional) spatial position or

context within a "four-dimensional spacetime fabric" (Overduin). Einstein's general relativity maintains that in the four-dimensional spacetime manifold, time changes or is distorted by the gravitational fields of large bodies of matter or by energy (see Hawking 32, and West-Pavlov 26). General relativity is thus a definitive move away from a Newtonian understanding of time as constant and fundamentally linear, towards an understanding of time which underscores the hypothesis that the experience of events and the measurement of time are subject to multiple contingent factors which include both temporal and spatial dimensions.

Our measurement and experience of time are influenced by our spatial positioning; time can be distorted or altered on the basis of our situation within the spacetime fabric; and time, because it is inseparable from space, is multi-dimensional and multi-directional. For the study of *Hawksmoor* this offers a very interesting perspective. When in proximity to large buildings or structures, many characters experience spatio-temporal disorientation and their identities begin to merge with the identities of others. To be fair, we need to acknowledge that the theories of relativity were formulated as scientific and mathematical theorems, not explicitly as ideas to explain how humans come to understand themselves and create meaning. Yet, Einsteinian theory, in positing the inseparability of time and space, brings us closer to an understanding of time in which various experiential processes combine and culminate in who we are at any given moment. Nevertheless, much in Einsteinian theory still suggests that spacetime is an independent feature of material existence and is the vessel in which life takes place (see Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* for an accessible discussion of Einstein's most important contributions to the philosophy of time).

Although predating the work of Einstein by more than a hundred years, Immanuel Kant's philosophy goes some way towards challenging the idea that time and space are features of the external world and the receptacles in which life takes place. Kant distinguishes between sensations and intuition, and intuition and concepts: a sensation, such as feeling an itch, may be caused by an object external to us, yet the sensation does not refer to anything other than the subject who experiences the sensation (Janiak). In other words, a sensation cannot be equated with the object which causes the sensation. Intuition, on the other hand, allows for an immediate (in other words, unmediated) awareness of things, of objects around us. Both time and space are forms of, what Kant refers to as, pure intuition, meaning that space and time are fundamental aspects of human experience (Janiak). A concept is not simply the spatio-temporal awareness of an object, but it is a mediated understanding thereof. For example, intuition

would be the awareness of an object as "*that there*" (italics in original, Janiak). A concept, on the other hand, would be recognising the properties and categories to which the object belongs, identifying it not as "*that there*", but as a rock, or a chair, or a tree for instance (see Janiak). Although his ideas are necessarily oversimplified here, Kant's argument is noteworthy in that it recognises time and space as properties of the mind.

Changing perceptions of time and space, as those initiated by Kant's and Einstein's thought, are not limited to the natural sciences and philosophy but are also evident in theories of literature. West-Pavlov (137) notes that in "postmodern culture" time and space seem to be brought back together: "Postmodern time is a temporal logic in which the suppressed aporias of absolute and universal time begin to re-emerge, often manifesting themselves in spatial form." In historiographic metafiction more particularly, we find that time is often represented in spatial terms, while space is thought of in relation to temporality. Elias (110-111), for instance, maintains that history, which is central to historiographic metafiction and to the representation of time, is "seen more in terms of 'space' than in terms of 'time'; it can be visualized – or formally represented in narrative – as a series of experiential planes" (Elias 110-111). Joseph Frank (as cited in Elias 110) considers how certain texts can be seen more in terms of their "spatial forms" than their "temporal narratives". Their spatial forms "disrupt[t] linear reading flow, justapos[e] sections of texts, suspen[d] time progression, and repea[t] image patterns". The spatialisation of time is evident in all three novels, where repetition and patterning, as noted by Frank, form the basis of an alternative temporal logic underlying each narrative.

A seminal literary theory of time and space, not as static features of a text, but as dynamic components of the fictional world of the novel, is Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the "chronotope" (meaning "space-time"). Dentith (52) notes the importance for Bakhtin in aligning his thought with contemporaneous scientific theories. Bakhtin was influenced by the philosophy of Immanuel Kant who argued that time and space are fundamental forms of human experience (Bemong and Borghart 4). Bakhtin was also influenced by Einstein's theories of relativity: like Einstein, Bakhtin posits the inherent connectedness of time and space, and recognises along with this connectedness that our sense of time and space is varied (Bemong and Borghart 4). For Bakhtin, there is an intrinsic connection between time and space which forms the foundation of the fictional world (the "chronotope"). Although Bakhtin's thought is not identical to either Einstein's or Kant's, his work is representative of a changing sense of

time and space and the way in which scientific and philosophical discourse on these topics also manifest in studies of literature.

A changing sense of time and space has implications for how we understand identity and selfhood. Muldoon (6) argues that the relegation of time to an independent aspect of material existence serves to "disengage [us] from the fabric of our own struggles with our mortality and the search for meaning in existence" – in other words, relegating time to material existence disengages us from what it means to *be*. This is not to say that the philosophers mentioned above do not attempt to acknowledge the particularly human experience of time – indeed, Kant makes a significant contribution towards acknowledging time as inherent to human experience – but that their philosophies do not adequately account for the (temporal) processes through which we make meaning of, and from, everyday existence. Neither do they account for the concepts of identity and selfhood which emerge from these processes.

The use of the words "be" and "being" encompasses not only biological existence (*zoē*), but also a particularly *human* mode of existence (*bios*) – a mode of existence, I maintain, through which we both create and understand ourselves in terms of stories (see Kearney 3, 4). Those philosophies of time which assert that time is external to us often separate *zoē* (the physical and biological) from *bios* (political, social and cultural existence). Stated differently, we are reduced either to physical and biological beings without accounting for other aspects of what being human entails, or studied from a psychological, social or cultural perspective which relegates physicality to the realm of the so-called "objective" or "neutral" sciences.

Merleau-Ponty offers an insightful approach to the difficulty of understanding ourselves both objectively and subjectively, as made up of both *zoē* and *bios*. He argues from the position that our perception, coming before any attempt to analyse, is rooted in our phenomenal bodies. The body is the space of intersection between subjective experience and objective existence (understood as relating to an object; of being "objectively present"). It (the body) is the "means of communication" between the seer and what is being perceived, or between the "sentient" and the "sensed" (*The Visible and the Invisible* 135, 138). This intersection does not supersede the tension between the objective and the subjective experience of time but posits the body as occupying the space of a "chiasm" between the object and the subject. "The chiasm" is not a simple crossing from object to subject but suggests continuity between the body or "flesh" and that which it perceives. The body is intertwined in the world in that it is physically present but,

through bodily experiences such as seeing or touching, the world is also internalised within the body, suggesting that "[t]here is reciprocal insertion and intertwining of one in the other" (*The Visible and the Invisible* 137).

For various characters in both *Hawksmoor* and *Midnight's Children*, time may be traversed through the body. Dyer, for instance, is able to hear "those other sounds of Time" (23) manifesting as snippets of speech or the caw of crows from the past and future. Saleem, in turn, is able to smell into the past. Through the senses and the bodily experiences of hearing and smelling more specifically, various experiential, temporal processes, are thus also internalised within the body. Interestingly, in *Everything Is Illuminated*, Foer writes that "JEWS HAVE SIX SENSES", "Touch, taste, sight, smell, hearing… memory" (emphasis in original 198). Memory therefore allows us to traverse time, not simply through the recalling of events from the past, but in such a way that the past becomes internalised in the body.

A problem with rooting perception, and by extension meaning-making, in the phenomenal body, as Merleau-Ponty himself points out, is the transcendental subjectivity it presupposes. In other words, in grounding perception and understanding in the subject, we run the risk of relegating all knowledge to the realm of extreme subjectivism. To overcome this predicament, Merleau-Ponty directs us towards intersubjectivity: He argues that the *Cogito*, exemplified in the well-known Cartesian axiom, "I think, therefore I am", undervalues "the perception of others" and is simply not enough to account for existence (*Phenomenology of Perception* xiv). It is when the *Cogito* (awareness and thinking) "reveal[s] me in a situation", that is, in a situation with others who are both objects and subjects (depending on the perspective) "that transcendental subjectivity can, as Husserl puts it, *be* an intersubjectivity" (xiv).

Intersubjectivity, in other words, is an awareness that we exist as objects in the world, but that our experiences are grounded in the subject: it is an awareness of others as both objects and subjects. If time and space are fundamental forms of human experience, necessary for spatio-temporal orientation as Kant argued, time and space are also inherent in our awareness of others. Intersubjectivity also entails understanding others as constituted by both *zoē* and *bios* and recognising that we are influenced by our bodily awareness *and* by the political, social and cultural facets which constitute the identities of others, through our engagement with the stories which make up their identities – stories which inherently are temporal.

The complexities of time outlined above, along with the recognition that we exist intersubjectively, necessitates a tentative definition of time and temporality as a starting point for this study. The understanding of time and temporality informing this study, even though it is still fraught with aporias of its own, stems from both Merleau-Ponty and West-Pavlov. In *Temporalities*, West-Pavlov (3) states that

> There is no "time" outside of the multiple ongoing processes of material becoming, the constant transformations, often invisible, that make up the life of apparently inert things. Every "thing" is in fact a process; all these processes taken together, make up the world as the sum total of its immanent "times".

West-Pavlov further argues that language and narrativity is "one possible manifestation of" (10) the "dynamic processes of change: to ideas, to materials, to words and ideas as materials, to the person affected by words, ideas and materials" (West-Pavlov 9). Narrative, as a temporal process effecting change, shapes identity through "words, ideas and materials". Although West-Pavlov, as evident in both quotations above, is engaged with manifestations of time and temporality, his identification of narrative as a temporal strand of becoming underscores the inseparability of narrative to the human experience of time.

Although not explicitly referring to time, there is an affinity between West-Pavlov and Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty (xiv) maintains that

> The world, which I distinguished from myself as the totality of things or of processes linked by causal relationships, I rediscover "in me" as the permanent horizon of all my *cogitationes* and as a dimension in relation to which I am constantly situating myself.

If processes and causal relationships can be understood as different manifestations of temporality (as per West-Pavlov), then time and temporality are also central to "all my *cogitations*", in turn recalling Kant's argument that time is a fundamental form of human experience.

As a synthesis of both Merleau-Ponty and West-Pavlov temporality can be understood as "the multiple ongoing processes of material becoming" which "make up the world as the sum total

of its immanent 'times'"(West-Pavlov 3) "I rediscover 'in me'" - in my sense of self and identity - "as the permanent horizon of all my *cogitations* and as a dimension in relation to which I am constantly situating myself" through narrative. *Midnight's Children*, *Hawksmoor* and *Everything Is Illuminated* draw attention to the role of language and narrativity both in shaping and understanding identity and selfhood; consequently, each text grapples with those processes and relationships which together "make up the world as the sum total of immanent 'times'" (West-Pavlov 3).

The interconnectedness between narrative and time, and the way in which narrative and time shape identity requires a deeper understanding of how time and narrative intersect. Throughout Paul Ricoeur's body of work, he presents time and narrative as inseparable and tied to concepts of identity and selfhood. He begins by identifying three dominant aporias or puzzlements which plague philosophies of time. The first aporia identified by Ricoeur concerns the problem of the relation between phenomenological time and cosmic time (the time of science, or "world time") or, our experience of time and abstract time. This aporia is grounded in St. Augustine's distinction between the time of the soul and world time (Muldoon 225-226). On the one hand, cosmic time is consistent and measurable. The measurement of motion can be understood as change, but this change is also something we can measure by understanding time as made up of discrete moments or "nows". On the other hand, our experience of time is not grounded in abstract, universal time, but in the lived experience of time. We do not experience time as discreet moments, but as continuous. Related to identity, this aporia foregrounds how we reconcile the experience of stability and continuity of identity across time with abstract moments which seen to negate continuity.

The second aporia is closely related to the first aporia and considers the tripartite division of time as consisting of a past, present and future. In this instance again, our puzzlement stems from our experience of continuity, our sense of time as a unity of which we are part, as opposed to the succession of "nows" which posit a definitive and irreversible shift from past through present to future. There is a limit to our ability to reconcile cosmic, universal time with time as we experience it. These aporias cannot simply be solved since they are inscrutable. Through narrative we are, at least to some extent, in a position further to examine the manner in which these aporias and tensions resurface in concepts of identity and selfhood.

Ricoeur maintains that we *think* narratively, and, if we maintain that time and narrative are intricately connected, this also suggests that we think temporally: "*time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence*" (*TN*I 52, italics in original). For Ricoeur, "[t]he world unfolded by every narrative work is always a temporal world" (*TN*I 3), and what is ultimately examined "is the temporal character of human experience" (*TN*I 3). In this way, there is an evolution in Ricoeur's thinking that binds together temporality, narrative and human experience through the functioning of language.

In *Aporias* (1992), instead of discussing the aporetic nature of time, Derrida discusses the aporetics of death. It is interesting to note that both Derrida, in *Aporias*, and Ricoeur, in *Time and Narrative*, are responding to aspects of Heidegger's philosophy of time in *Being and Time*. Derrida's use of the term aporia carries a range of meanings such as an "impassable path" or "impasse" and "the possibility of impossibility" (72). Traditionally, death is seen as crossing a border. Yet, death also implies an end. Derrida poses the question as to how we can think about "the impossibility of being dead, the impossibility of living or rather 'existing' one's death, as well as the impossibility of existing once one is dead" (73). When faced with an aporia, we are asked to think the unthinkable, and to consider the possibility of the impossible.

Derrida's analysis of the aporia relates not only to the question of death, but may be extended to include time, and particularly the distinction often made between being in time and timelessness (eternity, or all time as eternally present). We are, instead, faced with the impossibility of knowing eternity and this impossibility is the only possibility we know. The last chapter of *Hawksmoor* grapples with the relationship between different planes of times (instead of simply a single time) and eternity and ends with the words "and I am a child again, begging on the threshold of eternity" (271). This marks the point in the novel where Dyer's timeline and Hawksmoor's most fully and indistinguishably converge. As readers we are asked to think the unthinkable – that (following T. S. Eliot) "Time present and time past/ Are both perhaps present in time future/ And time future contained in time past" and that perhaps "all time is eternally present" (*Four Quartets*, "Burnt Norton" lines 1-4). The implications for selfhood and identity are significant: if all time(s) is(are) eternally present, as revealed in a moment of convergence, this suggests that *sub specie aeternitatis* I already am who I will be and who I was. In the context of the novel this suggests that Dyer is Hawksmoor, and that Hawksmoor is Dyer: two identities, two narrative constructions, two timelines, of a single self.

The aporias of time, like Derrida's aporia of death, highlight the seemingly incommensurable features of our experience of and thinking about time and death, but from a literary perspective also confront us with how to present the complexities of identity, time and temporality in the novel. Lyotard (132) describes the postmodern as "that which, in the modern, puts forward the unpresentable in presentation itself […]; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a strong sense of the unpresentable." For this study, what is presented as unpresentable in each novel are concepts of time and temporality and the narrative construction of identity and selfhood which cluster around time. It is therefore the "temporal character of human experience" (*TNI* 3) mediated through narrative which lies at the root of the unpresentable in each text.

In his work on time and narrative, Ricoeur draws heavily on the thought of Martin Heidegger and particularly his philosophy of time in *Being and Time*. In this influential text, Heidegger argues that time consists of three temporal layers. Although Ricoeur draws on this philosophy, he also differs from Heidegger, firstly in his inversion of the tripartite structure of time, and secondly in his rejection of Heidegger's notion of being-towards-death. For Ricoeur the three levels of time form the cornerstone of how time and narrative interrelate. Through language we gain insight into how we grapple with and calculate time: a closer examination of language directs our focus from time as a linear series of "nows" towards what Ricoeur refer to as our "within-time-ness". This is the first level of a three-part organisation of time:

> It is here that expressions such as "having time to," "taking time to," "wasting time," and so on, are most revealing. The same is true of the grammatical network of adverbs of time: then, after, later, earlier, since, till, while, until, whenever, now that, and so forth. All these extremely subtle and finely differentiated expressions point out the datable and public character of the time of preoccupation. ("Narrative Time" 173)

Ricoeur attempts to analyse the concept of "within-time-ness" in terms of narrativity. Firstly, "storytelling places the narrative 'in' time" ("Narrative Time" 175). The time of a story is still the time in which characters have time *for* this or that, or the time in which the "now" is understood as the "now that", thereby rooting time in preoccupation (see "Narrative Time"

175). Like the within-time-ness in which others exist and interact, storytelling relies on a time woven together through the interactions of characters with one another ("Narrative Time" 175).

Although the use of expressions such as "having time to," or "taking time to" is telling and alludes to how we navigate our experience of time, there is another aspect to consider. In postmodern thought there are various theories suggesting that our imbrication in language itself produces our understanding of the world. The Whorf-hypothesis, although not strictly regarded as postmodern, is one such theory (see Benjamin Lee Whorf's article "Science and Linguistics", 1940). The stories we tell and the stories we are told, through their manifestation in language, shape and are shaped by our particular social, historical and cultural positioning.

In a shift away from the linguistic determinism suggested by Whorf and others, Hayden White argues in "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" (1) that "far from being one code among many that a culture may utilize for endowing experience with meaning, narrative is a meta-code, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted". Drawing on Barthes, White (1-2) suggests that narrative functions in the space "between our experience of the world and our effort to describe that experience in language." For White this implies interpreting events as comic, satirical, tragic or romantic, yet he also directs our attention to the intrinsically "shared" nature of being through which "transcultural messages" may be disseminated. Kearney too, for instance, argues that narrative is "a quintessentially communicative act" which is a "crucially intersubjective model of discourse" and that "every story shares the common function of *someone telling something to someone about something*" (emphasis in original 5, see also Kearney 45).

Intersubjectivity, together with an awareness of our social, historical and cultural orientation, may allow us to glean the belief systems and presuppositions which pervade narratives and consequently put us in a position to expose and engage with the ideologies informing those stories we hear and tell. In *Midnight's Children* the idea of intersubjectivity is complicated by the telepathic connection of the midnight's children. This intersubjectivity not only implies telling your story to others and listening to theirs, but also *thinking* your story and the stories of others. Each novel engages with different social, historical and cultural orientations, thus producing a set of vastly different narratives, which nonetheless grapple with broadly similar

concerns. Like the within-time-ness in which others exist and interact, each novel relies on a time woven together through the interactions of characters with one another.

The second level of time posited by Ricoeur is that of "public time" or historicality. There is a degree of communal meaning-making in "within-time-ness" which again manifests in this second temporal layer. When people, together, are able to say "now", we shift from the personal to the public dimensions of time, and by extension from a personal to a public dimension of storytelling. Stated differently, it is here that the co-creation of identity and history takes place. It is at this temporal level that, through the construction of our "narrative identity", we also recognise ourselves as being the same person over a period of time, despite contingencies and change ("Narrative Time" 181; *TN*III 246). At the level of historicality, Ricoeur maintains that priority should be given to the past as any action or project implies memory. We anticipate "what might be" by drawing on "what has already been" (see "Narrative Time" 181).

Each novel, rather than favouring the past (as Ricoeur does), presents the future and past as fluid, lending themselves to reinterpretation, re-imagination and change from the perspective of different presents. This idea is physically portrayed, for instance, in the bronzed body of the Kolker (Jonathan's ancestor) in *Everything Is Illuminated* (140):

> His [the Kolker's] dimensions changed slightly with each rebronzing. Over time, his arms lifted, inch by inch, from down at his sides to high above his head. The sickly forearms of the end of his life became thick and virile. His face had been polished down so many times by so many beseeching hands, and rebuilt as many times by as many others, that it no longer resembled that of the god to whom those first few prayed. For each recasting, the craftsmen modelled the Dial's face after the faces of his male descendants – reverse heredity. (So when my grandfather thought he saw that he was growing to look like his great-great-great-grandfather, what he really saw was that his great-great-great-grandfather was growing to look like him. His revelation was just how much like himself he looked.)

In this extract, Safran (Jonathan's grandfather) looks at the bronzed body of his great-great-great-grandfather expecting to see a faithful representation. Instead, through the erosion of "beseeching hands" and by being "rebuilt as many times by as many others", the bronzed body

is remodelled in the image of each subsequent generation; and through "reverse heredity", it comes closely to resemble Safran himself. In addition to the communal meaning-making suggested in this extract, it acutely calls attention to the notion that we view the past in relation to a particular present, perceiving our inherited history in terms of our present (narrative) identity.

The process through which the bronze statue of the Kolker's comes to resemble Safran, recalls the third feature of historicality (also understood as "narrative time") proposed by Ricouer, namely repetition. Narrative time includes communication between contemporaries, predecessors, and successors. It "establishes repetition on the plane of being-with-others" ("Narrative Time" 188). Heritage, tradition and repetition are always transmitted from another to oneself or to a group. The time of narrative therefore extends beyond the time between birth and death. Repetition is established as a communal act, a facet of inter-subjectivity, underscoring the extent to which the narratives of others influence our own narratives and self-understanding. Although not identical to Ricoeur's understanding of repetition, repetition and patterning are used in all three novels to embody processes of identity formation. In addition, repetition and patterning become tools for temporal organization in each text.

The final temporal level is fundamental or primordial temporality. Drawing heavily on Heidegger, Ricoeur explains that this is "the point at which temporality springs forth in the plural unity of future, past, and present" ("Narrative Time" 171)[1]. In "Narrative Time" Ricoeur, however, does not offer any further elaboration on this temporal level or how it unifies past, present and future but shifts his focus to "within-time-ness" and historicality.

The temporal levels outlined above seek to describe our embeddedness in time, without offering solutions to the aporias which plague our attempts to understand it. Yet, the levels of time alone do not account for the way in which we make meaning from the scattered fragments of everyday existence. For Ricoeur "time becomes human to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal existence" (*TN*I 3). This meaning-making process can best be understood by examining the intersection between time and narrative most clearly typified, according to

[1] Dowling in *Ricoeur on Time and Narrative* (2011) considers at length Ricoeur's indebtedness to Heidegger and those parts of Heidegger's philosophy which Ricoeur rejects. See the second chapter in Dowling's text, "Time".

Ricoeur, in the concept of the "plot": "The plot", Ricoeur maintains, "places us at the crossing point of temporality and narrativity" where "plot *makes* events *into* a story" ("Narrative Time" 171).

1.3. Meaning-making Through Narrative

From a literary perspective, plot refers to the events in a narrative. The Russian Formalists distinguished between the plot or fabula as the linear, chronologically ordered events and the story or syuzhet which entails how the story is narrated and artistically organised. It is this dynamic understanding of the organisation of events in a narrative which Ricoeur builds on (see *TN*I, ix-xii) . Ricoeur initially employs the term "plot", but later comes to replace this with "emplotment". Emplotment is active and creative, rather than the static structuralist notion of plot. Emplotment additionally highlights the "semantic innovation" which is central to Ricoeur's understanding of how meaning is created through narrative (*TN*I ix, x).

In *The Rule of Metaphor*, which according to Ricoeur was "conceived together" with *Time and Narrative* (*TN*I ix), he interrogates the metaphorical process by which meaning is created through language (see *Rule of Metaphor* 75). Meaning creation, through the use of metaphor, lies in the "semantic innovation" which allows metaphor to produce "new semantic pertinence by means of an impertinent attribution" (*TN* I ix). Stated differently, by bringing ideas together in an unlikely and unexpected (impertinent) comparison, new meaning is created which cannot be attributed to the words used alone. In *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur builds on the metaphoric process and extends it to how meaning is created through plot in narrative:

> The displacement in meaning the words undergo in the metaphorical utterance, a displacement to which ancient rhetoric reduced metaphor, is not the whole of metaphor. It is just one means serving the process that takes place on the level of the entire sentence, whose function it is to save the new pertinence of the 'odd' predication threatened by the literal incongruity of the attribution.
>
> With narrative, the semantic innovation lies in the inventing of another work of synthesis – a plot. (*TN*I ix)

Although it is beyond the scope of this study to consider all aspects of this metaphoric process in depth – as does Ricoeur in *The Rule of Metaphor* – it is important to note that for Ricoeur, the "semantic innovation" of metaphoric language and creative discourse is the foundation of how meaning is created from seemingly scattered moments. Both metaphor and narrative have a synthesising function which creates meaning by bringing together the seemingly incongruous and by reconfiguring the relationships among ideas, thereby suggesting new ways of thinking about these ideas or concepts. Through metaphor, synthesis is created between unlikely concepts or ideas, whereas through plot, "goals, causes, and chance are brought together within the temporal unity of a whole and complete action" (*TN*I ix). In both instances, the meaning which emerges, through semantic innovation, reconfigures both language and the reality of which language seeks to make sense (see Muldoon 194)[2].

In "Narrative Time", Ricoeur draws attention to the reciprocity between narrativity and temporality. He maintains that many authors, in identifying chronological time and narrative time on the surface level of grammar, have neglected the "fundamental features of a narrative's temporal dialectic" ("Narrative Time" 177). In every narrative we find a combination of the chronological and the non-chronological. Ricoeur ("Narrative Time" 178) refers to the chronological aspect as the "episodic dimension", indicating that the story is made up of a number of events. This dimension leans towards the linear representation of time in that the "then", and "and then", structure indicates an irreversible temporal order, while also suggesting that these events are external to the individual ("Narrative Time" 179). This succession corresponds, I argue, to an abstract understanding of time, removed from the human experience thereof – as seen in various philosophies of time such as in Newton's thought. The non-chronological, or "configurational dimension" ("grasping together") is what makes the story a significant whole drawn from the discrete episodic events. The plot is therefore that dimension which elicits "a pattern from a succession" (178) and imbues events with meaning within the temporal unity of narrative.

Hayden White similarly suggests that meaning is produced by the structure we impose on events through plot. Although White's examination of narrative stems from his interest in how meaning is created in the recording and writing of history, many of his ideas remain applicable

[2] This idea is supported by Jerome Bruner (*Making Stories* 25) who views stories as metaphoric models. The use of the word "reality" in this instance, reflects the idea that reality is changeable and ideologically laden.

to a literary study, and particularly a study of narrative modes of understanding. White maintains that the form (plot) we utilise when writing history influences how that history is perceived by the reader and consequently also influences the text's meaning (see *Metahistory 7*). The forms White cites are formal plot structures or genres, namely, romance, tragedy, satire and comedy (see *Metahistory* 7). If events are presented as tragic or comic, the way in which we are expected to understand these events is already implied in the form, i.e. as tragic or comic events ("Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory" 44). Events themselves are not tragic or comic, although their representation may be; representation shapes meaning by conferring a certain orientation to events. Their representation, in turn "tells us in what direction to think about the events and charges our thought about the events with different emotional valences" ("Historical Text" 91).

It is important to acknowledge that White framed his theory of plot in terms of historical narrative. The range of plot structures identified by White, namely, romance, tragedy, satire and comedy, however, has often been criticized for its limitations and poses several problems when applied to the historiographic metafictional texts of this study. *Midnight's Children*, for instance, can be regarded as an autobiography including elements of romance, tragedy, comedy and satire. The novel could also be read as a magical realist, historiographic metafictional, postmodern or postcolonial text, with each interpretation allowing for a reading and understanding of the text on a metaphoric and symbolic level. Similarly, *Hawksmoor* could be considered a detective novel, whereas *Everything Is Illuminated* might be read as an (anti)bildungsroman or autobiography. All three texts are also examples of historiographic metafiction. Even if such distinctions are understood as sub-genres of romance, tragedy, satire or comedy, this classification undermines the ways in which each novel draws on, subverts and hybridises various genres.

The extreme experimentation in postmodern and contemporary fiction has led various critics to suggest that we are nearing both the "end of story" and the "end of history"; Kearney (125) cites Baudrillard, Hempel and Fukuyama in this context. In response to these claims, Kearney (127) argues that "[t]he simple fact that story-forms mutate from age to age does not mean that they disappear" and that

> the old stories are giving way to new ones, more multi-plotted, multi-vocal and multi-media. […] But such innovative experiments are *still* linked to the extended

> narrative family, as prodigal sons are linked to forebears […] who keep some lines of communication, however tenuous, open. (Kearney 126)

Del Ivan Janik's article "No End of History: Evidence from the Contemporary English Novel", also refutes the argument that we are near or at the "end of history". Instead, he maintains, that central to historiographic metafictional novels (or the "new historical novel" for Janik) is "the nature of the relation of the individual to the past and how the pursuit of order that is implied in the word 'history' can mediate that relation" (187). Like White, Janik's argument acknowledges that events can be ordered into a hi*story*, where history is understood in the Italian sense of the word as implying both history and story. Janik also recognizes that historiographic metafictional texts approach history and our relation to the past in new, complex ways.

Nonetheless, White's understanding of plot and narrative fails to take into account evolving modes of writing, inadvertently presenting the study of narrative as static and removed from the contingency of human understanding and (self-)creation. He does, however, focus on the writing of history which is important not only for the study of *historio*graphic metafiction, but also for the role that history plays in informing the story or narrative identity of a community. Shaping events into a history, in the manner which White suggests, compels us to consider the extent to which the factual is unavoidably fictionalised. All three novels selected for this study freely blend actual historical events and details with fictional material. The influence of the authors' personal histories on their writing is especially clear in Rushdie and Foer, highlighting the interplay between factual and fictional narratives and the role of self-creation and identity in these texts.

White maintains that "the very distinction between real and imaginary events […] is basic to modern discussions of both history and fiction". This distinction, for White, "presupposes a notion of reality in which 'the true' is identified with 'the real' only insofar as it can be shown to possess the character of narrativity" ("The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" 6)[3]. This formulation implies that the perceived truthfulness of an actual event or fact is tied to its narrative representation. Elsewhere White writes that "what distinguishes

[3] The term "reality" is used cautiously here as linked to the title of the essay on which much of this section draws - "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality".

'historical' from 'fictional' stories is first and foremost their content rather than their form. The content of historical stories is real events, events that really happened, rather than imaginary events, events invented by the narrator" ("The Question of Narrativity in Contemporary Historical Theory" 27). White further, and in a contradictory fashion, maintains that "[…] events are not real because they occurred but because, first, they were remembered and, second, they are capable of finding a place in a chronologically ordered sequence" ("The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" 20). This quotation is particularly interesting for the roles White ascribes to remembering and ordering.

In *Everything Is Illuminated* Jonathan's fictional family history is not grounded in fact or in memory. Yet, events from this fabricated narrative are remembered by Alex after reading it, and fragments of this narrative resurface in Alex's own writing. Alex's reaction to listening to his grandfather's story in which he [Grandfather] narrates the invasion of his shtetl and the choice he is forced to make between identifying his best friend as Jewish, or having his wife and child killed, strongly recalls Marianne Hirsch's concept of "postmemory". Postmemory describes the transmission of "powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their [subsequent generations'] births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right" (Hirsch 103). In this way, it becomes possible to "remember" events that did not occur, at least according to White's formulation, calling into question the legitimacy of history in reporting and recording events.

Despite the inconsistency in White's various formulations of the distinction between "the real" and "the imaginary", he argues that our access to events, be they events which have actually occurred or imagined events, is filtered through narrative; the truthfulness of such events is not determined by their actually happening, but by their representation in narrative form. For this reason, "the true" and "the real", to use White's phrasing, are exposed not as neutral, but as inherently biased because narrative, far from being a "neutral discursive form that may or may not be used to represent real events in their aspect as developmental processes […] entails ontological and epistemic choices with distinct ideological […] implications" ("Preface" ix).

The circularity in White's writing regarding "truth" and "reality" is illustrative of his awareness of and grappling with the threat of extreme subjectivism and relativism in his approach. If history, like reality, is a construct, the very truthfulness of events is questioned. As a concrete example, we may consider the confrontation over Holocaust denial between David Irving and

Deborah Lipstadt. In her 1993 book *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*, Lipstadt claimed that Irving had distorted historical records and facts in a manner which amounted to the denial of the Holocaust (such as denying the use of gas chambers). Irving, in turn, took legal action against Lipstadt for defamation. When the matter went to trial in 2000, the court ruled in favour of Lipstadt. What this case foregrounds is not simply a question over historical fact and evidence, "but over how we record our past, about the sacredness of facts and the fragility of memory" (Wallop).

The charge of subjectivism and relativism is one also commonly levelled against historiographic metafiction. Linda Hutcheon (5), for instance, argues that historiographic metafiction reflects a "theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (historio*graphic meta*fiction) [which] is made the grounds for its [historiographic metafiction's] rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past." The principal question no longer concerns the empirical actuality supposedly referenced by the language of history, but how it is textualised. For Hutcheon (119), the unstable relation between fact and fiction unveils a more significant characteristic of historiographic metafiction; by raising the question of the relation between history and fiction, what postmodern novels "teach is that, in both cases, they actually refer at the first level to other texts: we know the past […] only through its textualized remains." This brings to light our inability to *know actuality* directly, and to recognise that our encounters with actuality are mediated through language.

While White recognises that the writing of history is necessarily inflected by the perspective from which it is written, he also leads us to consider what "truthfulness" and "factuality" entail, and whether we can legitimately speak of "historical truth". Acknowledging that history can be written from different perspectives and presented in different, ideologically laden ways does not deny that some facts, such as dates or archaeological findings, will remain stable and resistant to change, even if the interpretation of these facts is open to manipulation. This does, however, move us to acknowledge the limitations of factual knowledge when faced with a lack of historical evidence, hence directing my focus to the knowledge which *is* accessible to us perhaps only through narrative. The retelling and reshaping of history into a particular narrative, often for a particular ideological purpose, presents us with knowledge of a different kind: this knowledge, I argue, is knowledge about being, and about selfhood and identity, mediated through the lens of narrative.

1.4. Narrative Identity and Selfhood

In all three novels, narrative is presented as an epistemological tool that serves two central functions: firstly, narrative has the capacity to create meaning from the scattered moments of temporal existence. Our identity and sense of self are formed, even if precariously, through the coherence imposed on existence by the stories we hear and the stories we tell. This points towards the second function of narrative: narrative, as mode of understanding is a means by which we make sense of experience, and in turn, also of identity and selfhood. Narrative, therefore, is in the puzzling position of both creating meaning and being the tool through which we attempt to understand what has been created. Bruner (27) underscores the complexity of narrative as an epistemological stratagem by pointing out that etymologically the term "[…] "to narrate" derives from both "telling" (*narrare*) and "knowing in some particular way" (*gnarus*) – the two tangled beyond sorting." Despite being "tangled beyond sorting", a more nuanced consideration of narrative's ability to constitute meaning, and of our particularly human propensity to think *narratively*, is crucial to understanding how notions of identity and selfhood are presented and explored in each text.

The impulse to find and create meaning through narrative has often been advanced as essential to what makes humans *human*: In *On Stories*, Richard Kearney starts by foregrounding our intrinsic predisposition to think narratively and the role of narrative in giving meaning to our lives. He argues that "[t]elling stories is as basic to human beings as eating. More so, in fact, for while food makes us live, stories are what make our lives worth living. They are what make our condition *human*" (italics in original, Kearney 3). Supporting the primacy of narrative in constituting the human, the ethnologist, Kurt Ranke, coined the term *Homo narrans* (the narrating or storytelling human being) to refer to the human species (Attebery 175).

How, then, do we move beyond being caught up in fragmented and scattered moments towards an understanding of ourselves as a coherent, albeit changeable, identity that perdures over time? According to Kearney (4), drawing on a long lineage of philosophical inquiry from Aristotle through to Hannah Arendt, it is our narrative identity, as a product of the stories we tell about ourselves, that "coordinate[s] an existence which would otherwise be scattered over time" (Kearney, 4). "In this way", Kearney argues, "storytelling may be said to *humanize* time by transforming it from an impersonal passing of fragmented moments into pattern, a plot, a *mythos*" (Kearney, italics in original 4). Grace Marks, the protagonist in Margaret Atwood's

novel *Alias Grace*, artfully captures narrative's ability to refigure moments into a coherent story[4]:

> When you are in the middle of a story it isn't a story at all, but only a confusion: a dark roaring, a blindness, a wreckage of shattered glass and splintered wood; like a house in a whirlwind, or else a boat crushed by the icebergs or swept over the rapids, and all aboard powerless to stop it. It's only afterwards that it becomes anything like a story at all. When you are telling it, to yourself or to someone else. (Atwood 345-346)

What this implies is that through narrative – through the stories we tell and the stories we are told – we are able, not only to make sense of seemingly scattered and impersonal moments in time, but to postulate a sense of self as coherent and abiding. What I am suggesting is that telling about the self produces the self, but also that the storytelling of a community produces the identity and hi*story* of that community (see Kearney 79).

Identity and selfhood are notoriously difficult to define. Ricoeur introduces the idea of "idem-identity" and "ipse-identity" (Klepper 4). The Latin word "idem" means "same", and it is the idea of sameness or permanence over time that Ricoeur draws on here. "Ipse", on the other hand, is the Latin term for "self" (Klepper 5). "Ipse" draws on the definition of identity as the agent to whom an action belongs and "to whom then the (moral) responsibility for the action may be imputed" (Klepper 5; see also *TN*III 246). We therefore have two notions of identity i.e., identity-as-sameness and identity-as-selfhood. The difficulty arises when these two aspects of identity converge, since one ("idem") is characterised by continuity and stability and the other ("ipse") by heterogeneity and change. To overcome this predicament, Ricoeur posits the idea of "narrative identity". He maintains that "[u]nlike the abstract identity of the Same, narrative identity, constitutive of self-constancy, can include chance, mutability, within the cohesion of one lifetime" (*TN*III 246). Stated differently, narrative identity can be understood as "as the relation between the two modalities [of identity] which can only be mediated through narrative" (Klepper 5).

[4] Incidentally, *Alias Grace*, like *Midnight's Children*, *Hawksmoor* and *Everything Is Illuminated*, is an example of historiographic metafiction.

Klepper (1) suggests that

> Ricoeur's use of the *adjective* narrative complicated and enriched the analytical approach to identity and, at the same time, suggested that personal identity may be understood not as the opposite *to*, but rather as a certain temporal and precarious management *of* plurality and heterogeneity. (italics in original)

The notion of narrative identity, furthermore, "can be applied to a community as well as an individual" (*TN*III 247). Ricoeur explains:

> We can speak of the self-constancy of a community, just as we spoke of it applied to an individual subject. Individual and community are constituted in their identity by making up narratives that become for them an actual history. (*TN*III 247)

In the chapters that follow, I have used "identity" and "narrative identity" interchangeably to suggest a view of identity which overcomes the tension between continuity and change through narrative. As opposed to this, I have at times employed the words self or selfhood, understood in Ricoeur's use of "ipse-identity" as referring to a moral agent to whom an action may be attributed. The self, for the purposes of this study, is that aspect of a person which remails stable over time (compare Klepper 5 and *TN*III 246).

Several philosophers support the idea that identity relates both to the individual and to communities: Kearney (4) argues "that narrative provides us with one of our most viable forms of *identity* – individual and communal" (italics in original). Self-narratives and identity-forming stories not only constitute our own (sub)conscious views but are "also embedded in a larger historical and communal meaning-giving structure" (Zahavi 182). Muldoon (63-64) suggests that "[n]arrative identity is not grounded in some permanently subsisting substance. It is thoroughly hermeneutical in nature and arises out of our narrative practices. Narrative identity assumes our embeddedness in an ongoing history and that interpretation is a vital activity to discern identity over a life-time." Bruner (27) similarly posits that identity is a sense-making process of our "embeddedness in an ongoing history" and that "[a] narrative models […] the minds seeking to give it its meanings". What all these thinkers touch on in some manner is that narrative identity, be it individual or communal, takes shape in relation to the stories we encounter throughout our lives and to our embeddedness in history. The

quotations presented here further emphasise that the construction and interpretation of narratives are inherent in our temporal existence.

Jonathan's stories in *Everything Is Illuminated* offer interesting perspectives on the communal and individual identities formed through narrative. Foer problematises the co-creation of communal identity through Trachimbrod. Jonathan, despite being descended from inhabitants of Trachimbrod, has no direct knowledge of the people who lived there. His journey is grounded in an attempt to uncover his own lost family history, that is, his communally shaped identity. Augustine, on the other hand, who initially seems to be the only character able to assist Jonathan, is shown as unreliable in that her identity is questioned (Is she really Augustine?). In addition, she has physically compartmentalised any tangible evidence or record of the town. Although this compartmentalisation itself is a way of making sense, it also means that any knowledge of the past is also fragmented and partial. The history which does emerge from these artefacts is Jonathan's own invented version.

The uncertainty surrounding Augustine's own identity is emblematic of the annihilation of her community, as she no longer has a community in which to ground her identity. The distinction between individual and communal identity is not clearcut either, yet, through his trip and the friendship he forms with Alex, Jonathan is able to fabricate a communal identity. This is not an identity grounded in fact, but in the reciprocal sharing of stories. Even though some of these stories are wilfully fantastic, the novel explores how fictional creation can function as a surrogate version of a past without records, underscoring narrative's ability to bring together and make sense of traces of the past.

1.5. Conclusion and Outline of this Study

In this chapter I have attempted to highlight some of the most influential debates surrounding understandings of time and temporality. In several theories mentioned, time is also tied to space, often to the extent that time cannot be thought of independently; Einstein's "spacetime" and Bakhtin's "chronotope" are two examples. Drawing on both West-Pavlov and Merleau-Ponty, I argue that narrative should be considered as a temporal strand of becoming. Narrative, however, functions as a means through which we (co-)create identity and as an epistemological tool we employ to understand ourselves and the world around us. Storytelling is thus both the product (a story) and the means through which we attempt to make sense thereof.

Ricoeur suggests that "emplotment" - the dynamic and creative ordering of events into a story – allows us to make sense of our being in time. More than a deliberate attempt at creating order from the scattered moments of existence, storytelling is an intuitive, particularly human mode of understanding. Our narrative identities, however, are not formed within a vacuum, but emerge from the intersubjective sharing of stories with others. The novels selected for this study present us with (self-)narratives engaging which questions of our relation to time, selfhood and identity in vastly different ways. Selfhood, identity, time and temporality not only feature thematically but inform the very textuality of each novel.

In the following chapters, I will examine each novel from a particular perspective. In *Midnight's Children* intersubjectivity, and inter-generational narratives will be considered. In *Hawksmoor* I will attempt to interrogate the representation of time embodied in particular buildings or structures; each structure crystallizes a point of temporal convergence between different timelines and between different narrative identities. In the chapter considering *Everything Is Illuminated*, I will focus on intersubjectivity, trauma, as well as absence, loss and silence. Alex and Jonathan's trip and the subsequent exchange of letters allow them to create a (hi)story, despite absence and loss. Throughout this study I will also consider the ways in which repetition and patterning create an alternative time consciousness as opposed to a linear understanding of time. The final chapter of this study will attempt to tie together the concerns of these novels and to demonstrate the central position of time and temporality in the creation and understanding of selfhood and identity.

2. *Midnight's Children*

2.1. Introduction: Self-preservation Through Storytelling

In a race against time, Saleem Sinai narrates his life story to Padma, a worker in the Braganza Pickles factory who has devoted herself to his care. His narration, which takes three forms – written, spoken, and *pickled* – is presented not as a single story, but as a series of interrelated stories, some detailing events which happen directly to Saleem and others which happen in his absence, but which are inseparable from his life and identity. Such events include the affair between Vanita and William Methwold (Saleem's biological parents) and the deaths of various members of his family. When telling these stories, Saleem compares himself to Scheherazade, the legendary princess from *One Thousand and One Nights*, who each night tells a story that piques Prince Shahryar's curiosity and dissuades him from killing her. Saleem writes:

> Now, however, time (having no further use for me) is running out. I will soon be thirty-one years old. Perhaps. If my crumbling, over-used body permits. But I have no hope of saving my life, nor can I count on having even a thousand nights and a night. I must work fast, faster than Scheherazade, if I am to end up meaning – yes, meaning – something. I admit it: above all things, I fear absurdity. (3-4)

The reference to Scheherazade suggests that Saleem's storytelling is not only an act of (re)telling but is vital for his self-preservation. Instead of fearing that Padma, his interlocutor, will grow tired of his stories and kill him (as in Scheherazade's tales), Saleem fears he will run out of *time* before giving his life meaning through the telling of his stories.

It is through the weaving of events into a narrative – events which take place during his lifetime, reaching back in time to before his birth, and which take place in his absence - that Saleem attempts to give meaning to his life. Self-preservation therefore entails more than avoiding physical death but is a matter of "meaning […] something". Through the narration of his life, Saleem is therefore able to inscribe both purpose and coherence into events which would otherwise appear unrelated and scattered. Saleem's narration, however, is complicated by his insistence that there is a connection between himself and India. Saleem's actions have consequences for India, and what happens to (and in) India impacts Saleem's life.

The quotation above draws on two understandings of time, both of which inform Saleem's continuing identity formation: he argues that "time (having no further use for [him]) is running out" (3), suggesting, on the one hand, that time is finite and measurable. This view closely recalls the notion of absolute, abstract time briefly considered in chapter 1[5]. Saleem's formulation, on the other hand, seems to ascribe a level of agency to time by contrast with traditional understandings of abstract time; in "having no further use for [him]" it is *time* that reckons with Saleem not Saleem who reckons with and calculates time (as suggested in the thought of Heidegger and traced through to Ricouer). Saleem's formulation therefore adds a fatalistic dimension to his narrative, emphasising that his fate (because it is tied to the fate of India) is not within his control. The second understanding of time posits storytelling as a temporal process of meaning creation and of becoming: storytelling creates and sustains narrative identity which unfolds in time. Time as independent and measurable, and storytelling as a temporal process of becoming, both give us insight into the narrative identity which emerges from Saleem's tales.

In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie employs the metaphor of a cinema screen. Standing further back from the screen provides clarity and allows you to see the image on the screen in its totality. The closer we come to the screen, however, the more distorted and fragmented the image appears. In "Imaginary Homelands" (13) Rushdie provides insight into his use of this metaphor, explaining that "[t]he movement towards the cinema screen is a metaphor for the narrative's movement through *time* towards the *present* […]" (emphasis added). Past events, because of their temporal distance and, I argue, mediation through narrative, appear more coherent. The present appears fragmented and distorted, precisely because it has not yet been mediated and made sense of through storytelling. This metaphor, however, again points towards an understanding of time as linear, even if not fully measurable. Linear time in the context of the novel, although not rejected outright, is in tension with the continuous temporal processes of becoming which do not align with linear understandings of time.

Storytelling's capacity for preserving the self is not only evident in Saleem's narration and his attempts at creating a coherent sense of self and identity but is also physically embodied in the novel; as Saleem nears the end of his tale, he begins to "crumbl[e]" (3) and crack all over (645). Once again drawing on the cinema screen metaphor, Rushdie writes that "the book itself, as it

[5] See page 5.

nears contemporary events, quite deliberately loses deep perspective, becomes more 'partial'" – where "partial" is understood in the dual sense of biased and limited ("Imaginary Homelands" 13). Saleem's disintegration can thus be understood as reflecting his inability to make sense of the present, precisely because he has not yet been able to make sense of what is happening through narrative. Overlapping with this understanding, Saleem's disintegration could also be read as a symptom of his nearing the end of his story, suggesting that the end of storytelling is not only the end of a particular identity, but that the end of an identity may be just as catastrophic as a physical death. Because Saleem emphasises the inseparability between himself and India, his narrative may also suggest that we are nearing the end of a particular narrative construction of India. The physical embodiment of narrative identity is restricted not only to Saleem's cracking and crumbling but occurs throughout the novel in various forms: the Rani of Cooch Naheen, for instance, starts turning white, and both Saleem's bowed knees and Shiva's strong knees hint at their narrative identities. The physical embodiment of narrative identity is a theme that will recur throughout the discussion in this chapter.

In this chapter I hope to demonstrate how Saleem uses narrative, as a temporal process, to inform and create his sense of self and identity in *Midnight's Children*. Saleem's narration, however, is not a straightforward matter of emplotting life events into a coherent whole. Rather, there are several intriguing devices employed by Rushdie which complicate the retelling of Saleem's life story. Firstly, Saleem's ability to smell into the past foregrounds intergenerational memory and identity. The notion of intergenerational memory and identity is problematised through the fact that Saleem narrates events to which he had not been privy, and which were not shared with him in any other way than through his olfactory abilities. I will explore the notions of intergenerational memory and identity from the perspective of Saleem's attempts at determining both his beginning and his origin. I do so against the backdrop of Derrida's notion of *différance.* We see in Saleem's quest a constant deferral and postponement of identifying any point of origin or beginning. Saleem's exploration into his family's past is also problematised by the circumstances surrounding his conception and birth: Ahmed and Amina Sinai are not his biological parents; although Vanita is his biological mother, Wee Willy Winkie is not his biological father, but William Methwold.

Secondly, underlying Saleem's stories is the almost fatalistic connection between India and Saleem: Saleem narrates his life story as being inextricably bound to and mirroring the life of India; what happens to him affects India and what happens to India, in turn, influences him.

This connection also becomes evident through the changes Saleem undergoes, both in terms of his identity and his sense of time when travelling to Pakistan and in the Sundarbans. Through an explosion in Pakistan which leaves Saleem with amnesia, he loses his name – a very important marker of identity. The loss of his name in turn, influences his sense of time to the extent that the Sundarbans embody a place of timelessness in Saleem's narration. For this reason, I will consider how identity is tied to and influenced by time, temporality and place.

Lastly, the voices of the other midnight's children – the children born at or near the midnight of India's Independence – also feed into Saleem's storytelling. In this instance, the intersubjective recognition of another as being both object and subject is complicated: Saleem can hear the voices of the other children in his head. More than that, he learns to probe their minds for the stories – or parts of stories – that they do not freely share. Saleem's ability to "look into the hearts and minds of men" (*MC* 277) reveals an India far removed from the idea of a united, single cultural identity. Instead, his probing exposes, as the novel often reinforces, that there are as many Indias as there are Indians, and in doing so questions the notion of a single shared cultural identity.

It is important to bear in mind throughout this chapter that the assortment of stories which ensue from Saleem's storytelling takes place *in time*. Storytelling is both a temporal process of becoming *and* a temporal epistemological process of meaning-making and understanding. The discussion which follows attempts to consider both these functions of narrative (creating and understanding that which has been created), while acknowledging the complexity of narrative as an epistemological stratagem which takes place in time.

2.2. Différance, Identity and Temporality

The thought of Jacques Derrida is valuable in highlighting the problematic nature of beginnings and of origins not as centres of meaning, but as elements of an ever-evolving nexus of stories. In "Semiology and Grammatology" Derrida argues that Western thought traditionally presupposes a centre of meaning where truth is evident and present to the knower (Derrida and Kristeva 22). Through the use of a linguistic sign, it is assumed that we "allow the concept to present itself as what it is, referring to nothing other than its presence" (22). Stated differently, in Western thought, words are considered as referring directly to actuality. The centre of meaning and truth is therefore *present* in the linguistic sign. Notions of truth and reality,

however, are not unproblematic[6]. Derrida claims that this understanding, which forms the foundation of Western philosophical thought, is just a "lure" (22). Language, he maintains, is "not innocent or neutral […] and it carries with it not only a considerable number of presuppositions of all types, but also presuppositions inseparable from metaphysics, which, although little attended to, are knotted into a system" (19). We are therefore unable to separate philosophical concerns from the very textuality and language of a text.

To better understand the problems that plague traditional and uncriticized notions of presence and of meaning creation through language – problems inherent in Western metaphysics – Derrida introduces the notion of *différance*. On the one hand, *différance* suggests "differing" (as being opposed to or different from), and on the other hand, it suggests "deferring" (putting off or postponing), where the former is associated with spatiality and the latter with temporality. The notion of *différance* therefore entails that the meaning of a word as a linguistic sign is never fully present when it is used, but is "deferred" – that is, related to other words in which truth is not evident and present either, but again deferred and postponed in an endless play of differences. For Derrida, we are compelled to view "every process of signification as a formal play of differences (*différance*), that is, of traces" (26). If we do so, the play of differences, of syntheses and of deferrals, prohibits

> that a simple element be *present* in and of itself, referring only to itself […] This interweaving results in each "element" – phoneme or grapheme – being constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements of the chain or system […] Nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces. (Derrida and Kristeva 26, italics in original).

What this quotation highlights is that meaning is never fixed, but is deferred, delayed and postponed through a process of signification. Instead of constituting a centre of meaning where meaning is unmediated and knowable, each signifier is simply a trace of other signifiers which, in turn, are also only traces. The concept of the trace is both complex and challenging. It is neither presence nor absence, but "rather the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself" (Derrida, "Différance" 156). Traces may be understood as

[6] See page 6, 21-23 on reality and truth.

that which is left of each "centre" (understood as a point of unmediated and knowable signification) after substitution upon substitution has taken place. We can therefore no longer conceive a structure on the phenomenological (and traditional Western) idea of presence versus absence, or of a centre of meaning which is always present and knowable. Rather, signification occurs through "the systematic play of differences, of the traces of differences, of the *spacing* by means of which elements are related to each other" (Derrida and Kristeva 27).

The "*spacing*" between elements and through which structures are related underscores the inherently temporal dimension of the process of signification. Spacing, however, also recalls the spatial dimension of textual representation, where letters or words are spatially represented on a page. Through deferral, differing and postponement, the web of signification is revealed as a *temporal* network. This temporal deferral again undermines the notion that meaning is immediate, present and knowable in the *present*. Instead, each signifier refers to other signifiers (or the traces of those signifiers) in different temporal contexts:

> the *a* of *différance* also recalls that spacing is temporization, the detour and postponement by means of which intuition, perception, consummation – in a word, the relationship to the present, the reference to a present reality, to a *being* – are always *deferred*. Deferred by virtue of the very principle of difference which holds that an element functions and signifies, takes on or conveys meaning, only by referring to another past or future element in an economy of traces. (Derrida and Kristeva 29, italics in original)

The notions of *différance* and the trace, initially offered as a critique of logocentric and ethnocentric Western metaphysics, have evolved into a complex theory extending to the understanding and undermining of social and political institutions. Derrida's thought not only contests fixed meanings, but challenges and disrupts hierarchical structures and binary oppositions, many of which have been exposed as foundational to [Western] political and social establishments. Consider, for instance, the following well-known binaries: white and black, self and other, man and woman. These binaries do not simply reflect pairs of related concepts, but also an inherent hierarchical structure against which one term is viewed as inferior to the other. Edward Said's well know argument in *Orientalism*, for example, sets forth the premise that the West has historically depicted the Orient as exotic and backward. The self and other, or West (Occident) and Orient binaries are therefore exposed as inherently value-laden

classifications. *Midnight's Children*, as a text written by a British Indian author and dealing with the theme of hybrid and plural identities, grapples with many of these inherent power dynamics and presuppositions. Derrida's thought therefore offers a useful starting point for understanding how the novel challenges dualistic thinking about concepts of selfhood and identity, but also how these concepts are in a constant temporal process of becoming.

The interesting dynamics of Rushdie's being a British Indian author, writing about India in English, have not gone unnoticed. Karamcheti (82) argues that Rushdie "writes within a [Western] tradition which denies his literary authority" and which compels him "to use the existing [Western] stories while correcting or modifying them". Rushdie is thus deemed to use and modify these stories in order to "create[e] an alternative and competitive mythology for India and its literature" (82). "Mythology" is in this instance understood as a collection of stories and beliefs which shape and inform cultural identity. *Midnight's Children*, as I hope the analysis in this chapter will demonstrate, does more than create a "competitive mythology for India", but rejects the dualistic thinking ingrained in setting an Indian cultural identity (or mythology, as Karamcheti argues) against a Western cultural identity. Instead, the novel exposes cultural identity as undergoing constant change, creating and recreating narrative identity and self-understanding, and narrative identity in turn transforming cultural identity.

In his article "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" Stuart Hall identifies two ways in which to think about cultural identity. On the one hand, cultural identity is often seen as being characterised by a single "true self", an essence, belonging to people with a shared history, hidden beneath "superficial or artificially imposed "selves"" (223). Cultural identity, understood in this way, is reflective of shared "historical experiences and […] cultural codes" which provide for us "stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history" (223). This view of cultural identity has been foundational in reshaping the way we think and speak about identity in postcolonial discourse, and particularly in recovering a sense of identity other than colonially inflected representations of marginalised groups. For this reason, this perspective should not be disregarded. This is also the perspective of cultural identity which appears to inform Karamcheti's argument and which would suggest that Rushdie's purpose in *Midnight's Children* is to recover a lost Indian essence or "true self", as encapsulated in Karamcheti's use of the term "mythology". This view of cultural identity, although relevant from a postcolonial perspective, does not offer sufficient

grounds for the complex and intriguing ways in which Rushdie embodies the process of identity formation in *Midnight's Children*.

Hall's second way of thinking about cultural identity, although cognisant of shared experiences and convergences, also recognises that there are "points of deep and significant *difference*" informing who we are (Hall 225). Identity is not simply a matter of discovering a "true self" hidden beneath our differences. Rather, "identities are the names we give to different ways we are positioned by, and position ourself within, the narratives of the past" (225); "[f]ar from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past", Hall argues, "[cultural identities] are subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture and power" (225). Cultural identity is not only a matter of "being" (informed by our past) but importantly, also of "becoming" (oriented towards the future) (225).

Hall's description of cultural identity ties in with West-Pavlov's (3) understanding of time and temporality: "There is no "time" outside of the multiple ongoing processes of material becoming, the constant transformations, [which are] often invisible […]". Understanding cultural identity as characterised by a "true self" or essence recalls a view of time as abstract and absolute: just as a "true self" or essence is separate from the contingencies which make someone an individual and which identify them as part of a cultural community, abstract time also has an essence (measurable, constant) and is separate from the various temporal strands of everyday life which characterise our temporal existence.

Hall's second understanding of cultural identity, in contrast to the first, recalls the complex and interwoven temporal strands of becoming which create and sustain a narrative identity not as an essence or "true self", but as an identity that is reshaped and reformulated through storytelling. Cultural identity, understood in this second sense, is grounded "in the *re-telling* of the past" (italics in original, Hall 224), just as Saleem grapples with the events that shape his life, in the process creating and sustaining his identity through the re-telling and reconfiguring of both his own and India's past.

As already noted, Rushdie's being a British Indian author who writes about India in English, offers a complicated perspective on identity which spills over into *Midnight's Children*. In "Imaginary Homelands", Rushdie comments that "[o]ur identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two

stools" (15). While recognising that narrative identity cannot be reduced to dualistic thinking which posits identity (in this instance) as either British or Indian, Rushdie still grapples with deeply ingrained presuppositions and conflicts which resist the assimilation of British and Indian identity into a seamless whole. Instead, as he notes, "we fall between two stools" suggesting that the identity which emerges is neither one, nor the other, but a new identity which is characterised by incongruity, conflict, hybridity, pluralism and syncretism.

In *Midnight's Children* Rushdie continues to grapple with dualistic views of identity, but as Dayal argues (432), "[t]he force of [the novel's] narration lies in its rejection of simple dualistic thinking or of hegemonic configurations". Dayal further maintains that in order to overcome dualistic thinking, Saleem attempts to find a "third principle" (see Dayal 432) which is not simply a synthesis or convergence, but a celebration and embodiment of hybridity and heterogeneity. I would like to nuance this perspective by exploring how Saleem's stories and the identity which emerges from these narrations embody hybridity and heterogeneity. In addition, I would also like to consider how his stories posit identity as mutable and evolving in the light of our narrative reconfiguration and sense-making of the past, and through our imbrication in the stories of others[7]. Through Saleem's many stories, he positions himself in relation to the past, but this is not a monolithic past reserved for a small group of people who identify as Indian; it is a fantastical, and at times magical, past which draws on rich narrative traditions (Indian, Western and other). Following Hall and positing that cultural identity is the "different ways we are positioned by, and position ourself within, the narratives of the past" (225) allows us to consider a view of both cultural and individual identity as plural, heterogeneous and always in the process of becoming. Saleem starts his retelling and reconfiguration of the past by turning to the story of his grandfather, Adam Aziz.

2.3. Intergenerational Narratives: Beginnings, Ends and Origins

In an article entitled "Grandparents, communicative memory and narrative identity", Anna Green maintains that many people start the narration of their life story with their grandparents, as this is "the furthest back [they can] reach in terms of living memory or direct personal knowledge" (82). In Saleem's case, many of the stories he tells, and which take place before

[7] Narrative *re*configuration and sense-making will always apply to past events (both near and distant). As the prefix "re" suggests, it is a new configuration, a new sense-making of what has already been experienced even if not fully understood.

his birth, are not simply retellings of stories told to him by his grandfather. Green distinguishes between two categories of family stories which affect narrative identity, namely, micro stories which are stories about "shared family events" and exo stories, "refer[ing] to events prior to the life of the children" (82; see also 85). In Saleem's life story, both micro and exo stories come to the fore, but in both instances Saleem's narrative is reflective of deeper and more personal knowledge of others than can simply be attributed to shared stories or shared experiences. In fact, many of Saleem's stories are of a very personal nature (for instance, concerning the sexual relationship between his grandfather and grandmother), prompting him to ask: "Why have I invaded my grandfather's privacy?" (64). Instead of relying on retelling or personal knowledge, Saleem uses his nose as a "narratological guide", to adopt Dayal's (438) term, to *smell* into the past and to try to determine where he began. Notions of origins and beginnings, however, are not straightforward, and are further obscured in the novel by Saleem's complicated lineage.

Karamcheti (81), drawing on the thought of Edward Said, maintains that there are two ways in which to approach the notion of beginnings in *Midnight's Children*, particularly as they are tied to identity. Firstly, Saleem's beginning can be understood as denoting the instant of his birth, which is also the moment of India's independence. This understanding ties "identity to the instant, to the first, the initial, to initiative", and links Saleem's beginning to the chronological time of his physical birth (81). This interpretation accords priority to Saleem's birth: he is born at the exact moment of India's independence, and consequently he is given, at least in his own account, "the greatest talent of all – the ability to look into the hearts and minds of men" (277). Secondly, Saleem's beginning is also found in his origin, that is, "the cause and significance of beginning or becoming, rather than only chronology" (Karamcheti 81). Stated differently, Saleem exists as someone within a particular family, and within a particular cultural and historical context, whose identity and sense of self have roots in a time before his birth. Karamcheti argues that Saleem's "obsession with beginnings is also the obsession with identity" and, conversely, that his attempt at understanding who he is, is therefore largely a quest to find out "*when* [he] began" (81, italics in original). Instead of supporting the idea that we can link identity and selfhood to a particular chronological instant or to origin, I argue that Saleem's attempts at finding out *when* and *why* he began (chronologically and in terms of causes of becoming) underscore his inability to do so.

One of Saleem's futile attempts at finding out *when* and *where* he began situates his origin in the Vale of Kashmir in 1915, where we are introduced to the thirty-two-year-old Aadam Aziz, Saleem's grandfather. In the novel, numbers are significant: one thousand and one is the number of midnight's children. One thousand and one also recalls Scheherazade's tales. Four hundred and twenty "has been, since time immemorial, the number associated with fraud, deception and trickery" (272), stemming from the Indian Penal Code 420, but also recalling the 1955 Bollywood film, *Shree 420*[8] (Mishra 156-157). Thirty, thirty-one and thirty-two, as discussed below, represent both beginnings and ends. This does not suggest that the notion of origin is qualified by that of telos, that is, as having a certain aim or goal as endpoint, as even endings in the novel are suspect and never final. *Midnight's Children*, has thirty chapters, with the last chapter like the last jar of pickles, remaining empty since that which has not yet happened (the future) cannot be preserved (see Mishra 57).

Saleem, at the point at which he narrates his life story, is thirty-one and nearing his thirty-second birthday. He anticipates that he will not survive until then. Paradoxically, he also comments that after his birthday "no doubt a marriage [to Padma] will take place" (645). His thirty-second birthday, therefore, represents an ending, but at the same time undermines an end. Instead of pointing towards a physical death (which Saleem also does at times), it seems rather to suggest the death of part of what makes Saleem *Saleem* – i.e., the death or end of a particular story after which a new story (Saleem's marriage to Padma, for instance) will continue. Having the narration of Aadam Aziz's story start *in medias res* at the point at which Saleem's story ends undermines the concept of origin as traceable and knowable past event(s). Instead, recalling Derrida's notion of *différance*, there is a temporal deferment, where meaning is created and conveyed "only by referring to another past or future element [read 'story'] in an economy of traces" (Derrida and Kristeva 29).

The repetition of numbers throughout *Midnight's Children*, but also throughout Rushdie's larger body of work has further temporal significance. Through the repetition and interweaving of numbers, symbols and events, Rushdie's text embodies a sense of time other than linear, measurable time clock time. Mishra (59) argues that

[8] As quoted in (Mishra 156 – 157), the Indian Penal Code, section 420 reads "420. Cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property. – Whoever cheats and thereby dishonesty induces the person deceived to deliver any property or any person, or to make, alter or destroy the whole or any part of a valuable security, or anything which is signed or sealed, and which is capable of being converted into a valuable security, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years, and shall be liable to fine".

> [n]umerology triumphs over dates and history; numerology – with its basis in synchronicity, in an acausal orderedness connected to simultaneity and meaning – does not link up with time in the historical sense of the word, and yet it functions as "quantums" of time/energy through which a civilization remembers/writes its own history.

The sense of time ordering the novel and Saleem's many stories is, therefore, not based on a linear understanding of time which moves from past to present and future. Rather, the sense of time informing the novel is influenced by an alternative time-consciousness grounded in repetition (of names, symbols, images and numbers), synchronicity, and the interlacing of past, present and future.

The repetition of names in the novel functions not only as an ordering device but also points towards the significance of naming for identity formation (see Valentine 37). Valentine, drawing on Bourdieu, argues that through names we "impose recognition of [our] identity upon others", but just as significantly names also "impose others' identity upon [us]" (Valentine 38). In other words, our names tell others about our identity, but the names we give others (real names and nicknames) also impose identity onto them. Examples of this can be seen in the novel through the nicknames given to Saleem, but also the names given by Saleem to several other characters. These nicknames often relate to physical attributes such as Saleem's being called "Snotnose", "Sniffer" (*MC* 324) or "Cucumber-nose!" (213) with reference to his colossal nose, or his sister being referred to as "The Brass Monkey" (186) or simply "The Monkey" (406, 407) because of her "thick thatch of red-gold hair" (205). Other examples include Saleem's peers – "Glandy Keith Colaco", "Fat Perce Fishwala", "Eyeslice", "Hairoil" and "Cyrus-the-great" (212). Saleem's huge nose, earning him various nicknames, functions as an identity marker linking him to his (non-biological) grandfather, Adam Aziz. The use not only of nicknames, but also of family names, functions as an identity marker and a means of identity formation.

Saleem's inability to pinpoint exactly when and where he began is evident in the name of his grandfather, Aadam Aziz. The name Aadam links the grandfather to the biblical first man, Adam. The surname, Aziz, in turn, creates an intertext between *Midnight's Children* and E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. In the latter text, a character is named Dr Aziz. The intertext

between the two novels underscores the pervasive power of dualistic thinking and ideological convictions: in Forster's novel, Dr Aziz, despite his qualifications and expertise, still faces prejudice because he is Indian. He is treated with suspicion and contempt and wrongfully accused of sexually assaulting a British woman, Adela Quested. Although he is innocent and eventually exonerated of the accusation, the event leaves Dr Aziz disillusioned. Dr Aziz in Rushdie's text is a medical doctor trained in the West (in Heidelberg, Germany) (see 16-17). The assumption that the West, and by inclusion also Western medicine, is superior to Indian (or Oriental) medicine, recalls Said's argument regarding the binary oppositions present in representations of the Occident and the Orient. Aziz returns home and is treated, on the one hand, with respect and veneration (as by Naseem's father, Ghani), and on the other hand with resistance and denigration (as by the boatman, Tai).

Tai is particularly caustic about Dr Aziz's medical training claiming that despite his "big bag full of foreign machines, […] he's still as silly as an owl" (18). Yet, it is not only Dr Aziz's "foreign machines" (such as his stethoscope) which upset Tai, but what the bag represents: the bag, made from pig's skin represents all that is unclean, and which defiles one "just by looking at it" (18). Dr Aziz's Western training and the ideological interpolation that takes place as a result of this training therefore also alienates him from the Kashmiri people. He is neither Western, nor Indian anymore, but in some manner both – a chimera, with both sets of DNA, but an entirely new being none the less. Glimpses of this tension can be seen in his request to his wife Naseem, for example, to remove the clothing related to her purdah and later on when they are no longer living in Kashmir, in his insistence on taking over the education of their daughters. Both examples can be seen as rejecting ingrained beliefs and, from Tai's perspective, corrupting the "purity" of Kashmiri-Indian identity.

The biblical intertext recalled by the name Aadam is extended further and suggests that Kashmir is a place of origin – an Eden. Like the biblical first man, Adam, in the Garden of Eden, Aadam represents the novel's first man, in Kashmir. Dayal identifies an alternative point of origin arguing that "the midnight moment of postcolonial India's birth […] takes on the significance of a primal scene" (432). Although this scene is described as far from Edenic, it represents another point of genesis in the novel, again complicating the concept of origin. The biblical intertext is echoed throughout the novel: Mary Pereira, Saleem's *ayah* or nurse, is responsible for switching him with Shiva at birth. Mary, who is in love with Joseph D'Costa, a man who sees himself as a revolutionary, views the switching of babies at the midnight hour

as "her own private revolutionary act" (157). In this way, Mary and Joseph (recalling the biblical couple), figuratively give birth to Saleem Sinai, who is born into a new family with a new name because of this act. The switching of babies by Mary further creates a parallel between Saleem and Jesus, reinforced by the age "[w]hen Jesus began his work," which was when "he was about thirty years old" (Luke 3.23)[9]. This age corresponds roughly to when Saleem's narration of Aadam Aziz's story starts and when Saleem anticipates that his own story will end. The biblical intertext in Saleem's story, which creates a parallel between Eden and the Vale of Kashmir, ties Saleem to his Christian heritage and connects him to his biological father, the Brit, William Methwold. Instead of simply appropriating the biblical genesis story, Rushdie uses the parallel to undermine the idea of a single point of origin, thereby also challenging the Western religious narrative through its intersections with the Orient.

Probing Saleem's narrative search for beginnings, ends and origins has implications for attempting to understand the nature of time and temporality as embodied in the text. Saleem's own stories undermine the notion of traditional plot structure with a clear beginning, middle and end, as he is himself unable to determine exactly where and when he began; there is also a suggestion that he will live on after his death (as when he refers to his marriage to Padma). In doing so he questions the concept of time as strictly linear and immutable and, perhaps more profoundly, his stories also shed light on the interweaving of various temporal strands constituting the process of identity formation and becoming. The process of becoming, as I use the phrase here, does not suggest a teleology – that is, movement towards a distinct end point – but rather points towards an ongoing process of identity formation and self-understanding in which we are also enmeshed in the life narratives of others. Identity formation and self-understanding as ongoing temporal processes are reinforced through the imagery of rebirth and cyclicality that is evident throughout the novel.

The imagery used to describe Kashmir at the start of the novel is that of a bird's breaking out of its shell (5):

> The world was new again. After a winter's gestation in its eggshell of ice, the valley had beaked its way out into the open, moist and yellow. The new grass bided its time underground; the mountains were retreating to their hill-stations for the

[9] Saleem refers to the announcement of his birth as his "annunciation" (100), thus strengthening the Biblical parallel.

> warm season. (In the winter, when the valley shrank under the ice, the mountains closed in and snarled like angry jaws around the city on the lake.)

Although this image suggests a new beginning, it also presupposes the cyclicality inherent in generation – a chicken lays the egg (but which comes first: the chicken or the egg?), and after death (winter) comes birth. By Saleem also naming his son Aadam, Rushdie foregrounds cyclicality, and suggests that even in birth, or what we traditionally understand as beginnings, there is a reference to the past which was (is) another beginning. Saleem muses:

> once again a child was to be born to a father who was not his father, although by a terrible irony the child would be the true grandchild of his father's parents; trapped in the web of these interweaving genealogies, it may even have occurred to me to wonder what was beginning, what was ending, and whether another secret countdown was in progress, and what would be born with my child. (580)

This quotation emphasises the notion that birth is both a beginning and an end, but that birth is more than simply a repetition of the past. Something new and unknown "would be born with [Saleem's] child" (580). Each (re)birth, beginning, or end is therefore also a reconfiguration, exemplified in the change of last names - Aadam *Aziz* becomes Aadam *Sinai*.

The change of last names from Aziz to Sinai once again evokes a biblical and Islamic intertext, highlighting the tensions between beginnings and endings, while undermining linear concepts of time. The name Sinai recalls the revelation at Mount Sinai in which the Lord speaks to Moses and in which the Ten Commandments are given to the Israelites (see Exodus 19-20). In *Midnight's Children* Saleem compares himself to "Musa or Moses" and "Muhammed the Penultimate" (suggesting that Saleem himself is the last) who "heard voices on a hill" (225). The story of Sinai in the Bible (Old Testament) precedes the story of Jesus (New Testament), while the lives of both Muhammed and Jesus occur at different times from the revelation at Mount Sinai. Saleem, however, is not identical to the prophets (biblical or Islamic) preceding him. When he tells his family about the voices he hears, he is punished rather than revered as God's messenger (225). He is also still a child ("nearlynine", 227) and not an adult. In addition, Saleem is brought up in a relatively secular family, without much talk of religion or worship,

despite references to several deities throughout his stories[10]. The similarities between Saleem and the prophets preceding him therefore do not lie in his age, ethnicity, or other physical markers of identity (besides sex), but in cyclicality and the recurrence of events (such as "hear[ing] voices on a hill", 225).

The cyclicality unearthed through Saleem's futile attempts at identifying a point of origin also extends to his physical identity. As a marker of identity, Saleem's appearance hints at his origin in the form of his resemblance to his forebears, but the concept of origin is again subverted. His nose is described as a "monstrous", "rampant cucumber of a nose" (169) and for those who do not know of the switching of Saleem and Shiva, his appearance clearly identifies him as Aadam Aziz's grandson. Saleem says:

> I wish to place on record my gratitude to this mighty organ – if not for it, who would ever have believed me to be truly my mother's son, my grandfather's grandson? – this colossal apparatus which was to be my birthright, too. (9)

Saleem claims Aziz's nose as his "birthright" (9). This birthright is shared by members of his family, thus creating a sense of affinity among them, despite having no direct biological relation to them. The nose also assumes a different appearance in relation to each face. Saleem comments:

> On Aadam Aziz, the nose assumed a patriarchal aspect. On my mother, it looked noble and a little long-suffering; on my aunt Emerald, snobbish; on my aunt Alia, intellectual; on my uncle Hanif it was the organ of an unsuccessful genius; my uncle Mustapha made it a second-rater's sniffer; the Brass Monkey escaped it completely; but on me – on me, it was something else again. (10)

It is intriguing that the Brass Monkey, Saleem's sister Jamila, "escape[s]" the nose, thus denying any physical resemblance between the siblings, and between Jamila and the rest of her family. Saleem, after falling in love with his sister, uses the argument that they are not biologically related to justify that his feelings are not incestuous. In emphasizing the physical

[10] Rushie ("Imaginary Homelands" 16) tells us that "*Midnight's Children* enters its subject from the point of view of a secular man" and that "Saleem Sinai makes use, eclectically, of whatever elements from whatever sources he chooses." Although Saleem compares himself to prophets, he is a secular prophet drawing on any mythology or religion that suits his needs, thereby expanding his narrative scope.

dissimilarity between himself and Jamila, Saleem manipulates his narrative to reflect a version of reality for which he desperately wishes. Shiva, the biological grandson of Aadam Aziz, also escapes the nose. Instead, he is born with "knees larger and knobblier than any policeman's" (307). When the man Shiva believes to be his father, Wee Willie Winkie, tries to smash his knees with a hammer (so that he "can always earn money begging" 307), Shiva snaps the assailant's wrist by using his knees. Hands raised in supplication can be regarded as a symbol for begging; by breaking Wee Willie Winkie's wrists, Shiva rejects the life of destitution so symbolized. His knees are therefore emblematic of his rebellious and defiant nature, but also of his obstinate rejection of so-called fate. In Saleem's narrative, Shiva's strong knees hint at the life (Saleem's life) which might be considered Shiva's actual birthright. Saleem's legs, in turn, are described as "irretrievably bowed" (205), hinting at the life of poverty which Saleem would have experienced as the son of Vanita and Wee Willie Winkie, if not for Mary Pereira's moment of rebellion. Rushdie thereby complicates both his narrative and Saleen's by interweaving counterfactual possibilities.

Aadam Sinai (Saleem's son, Shiva's biological child and Aadam Aziz biological great-grandson) does not inherit Aadam Aziz's nose either. Instead, he is born with "colossally huge" ears (586). Despite the young Aadam's not inheriting the family nose, Saleem still manages to link him to both himself and the old Aadam Aziz, thus establishing young Aadam as his (Saleem's) son in terms of narrative identity. When Aadam Sinai is born, his ears are so big that the triplets who help to deliver him "had thought, for one bad moment, that it was the head of a tiny elephant" (586). "Doctor Aziz's nose", again, is "comparable only to the trunk of the elephant-headed god Ganesh" (9). Saleem refers to himself as the "mammoth-trunked, Ganesh-nosed" (270). Through Saleem's description of Aadam Sinai's ears, and both Aadam Aziz's and his own nose, great-grandfather, grandson and great-grandson are linked to the elephant god, Ganesh – who, intriguingly, is also the god of beginnings (Brown 1; Dwyer 263).

The relevance of the elephant-headed god Ganesh extends even further. In Hindu mythology, Ganesh is the son of Shiva and Parvati, where shiva is associated with war and destruction and Parvati with harmony and love (see Mishra 161). In the novel, Aadam Sinai is the biological son of Shiva and Parvati-the-witch. Ganesh is also referred to as the "Lord of Obstacles" (Dwyer 264) who places obstacles, physical and spiritual, before those who do not call on him, but removes obstacles for those who do. As the narrator of the many stories which comprise the novel, Saleem is also in the privileged position of placing or removing the obstacles facing

his characters. The deterministic undertones of the text, however, undermine Saleem's autonomy by suggesting that Saleem has little control over the events that constitute his experience. More significant perhaps is the story of how Ganesh got his elephant head. According to Dwyer (264), one version of the story tells how Shiva killed Parvati's child. Parvati entreated Shiva to bring him to life again, but he could not do so using the child's own head. Instead, Shiva asked to be brough the head of the first animal his followers encountered, which happened to be an elephant. He then transplanted the elephant's head onto the body of the child. Following this, Dwyer (267) suggests that Ganesh "in some sense […] is not quite his parents' biological son, he is created from part of his mother's body and his father gives him his head". This recalls Saleem who is also not his parents' biological son, yet still inherits (is given) the family nose, which is also the nose of Ganesh thus making Saleem, once again, a chimera: as a chimera, Saleem harbours different sets of DNA within himself, yet he cannot be reduced to any one set.

In trying to justify the appearance of his nose, despite lacking any blood relationship to Aadam Aziz, Saleem hints that he may have inherited his "monstrous" nose from his biological father, William Methwold. Saleem describes Methwold's nose as "[p]rominent? Yes, it must have been, the legacy of a patrician French grandmother […]" (126). His description, unlike that of Aadam Aziz's nose, is tentative and uncertain. As Saleem has no firsthand knowledge of Methwold's physical appearance, this description is speculative. It privileges an indebtedness to Aziz for the appearance of his nose, linking Saleem's identity more tightly to Adam Aziz and his family while downplaying the biological debt to Methwold. Saleem's nose, tying him in terms of appearance both to Aadam Aziz and to William Methwold, highlights that identity is partly based on your genetic makeup (Methwold), but that it is also, and perhaps more importantly, constituted by more than genetic makeup. Identity, to a very large extent, derives from the stories we tell about ourselves, and the stories we are told[11].

Through Saleem's endeavour to situate his origin in his grandfather's story, he stresses the cyclicality inherent in generation and unearths an intertextual web which overthrows his venture. Saleem shows how the origin of his identity reaches temporally both backwards and forwards past Aadam Aziz, and intertextually and metafictionally beyond his story and beyond *Midnight's Children,* making any origin impossible to pinpoint. The presence of a knowable

[11] This perspective offers a variation on the "nature versus nurture" debate.

beginning or cause suggested in the uncritically accepted notion of origin is revealed as "the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself" (Derrida, "Différance" 156). Saleem's inability to locate an origin suggests that origin is everywhere – in the stories of others, in the contexts in which we find ourselves and in the narrative (re)constructions and (re)configurations of our own stories.

The view that identity is more than your genetic makeup is echoed throughout the novel. When Saleem's parents find out that he is not their biological son, he is initially exiled and sent to live with his Uncle Hanif and Aunt Pia. Five weeks later, he returns home to find that "'[his] position in this household, […] ha[d] been usurped.'" (350) His sister, in turn, had been "elevat[ed] to the role of favoured child" (351). It is Saleem's grandmother, Naseem Aziz, who cements Saleem's position in the family, not necessarily as "favoured child", but as recognized member of the family, when she says to Amina "Take your children, I say, whatsitsname – *both* your children,'[…] clutching [him] to her bosom" and "[o]nce Reverend Mother had legitimized [him], there was no one to oppose her […]" (394). Saleem's legitimacy as member of the Aziz/Sinai family is thus not a matter of biological relatedness, but of narrative belonging. Retrospectively, Saleem muses that his parents' acceptance of him reflected something very important:

> It's this: when we eventually discovered the crime of Mary Pereira, we all found that it *made no difference*! I was still their son: they remained my parents. In a kind of collective failure of imagination, we learned that we simply could not think our way out of our pasts. (158, italics in original)

This quotation underscores the primacy of narrative identity, suggesting that imagination is inextricably intertwined with narrative and that narrative continuity trumps biological considerations. The narrative construction and sense-making of the past has a legitimacy and power which may outweigh so-called scientific (biological) fact.

The physical embodiment of narrative identity is not limited to Saleem's nose. Dr Aziz's mother, for example, breaks out in rashes and boils after having to remove clothing associated with her purdah which for many years had been integral to her identity (17, 18). Saleem's nose, when smelling into the past, fills with a "vinegary force" which is his great-grandmother's embarrassment at being seen (17). Although there is no medical reason for this reaction, Dr

Aziz claims that "such complaints often begin in the mind…" (17), reinforcing the notion that narrative identity can manifest physically, at least in *Midnight's Children* and in the realm of metafiction. Other examples include both Ahmed Sinai and the Rani of Cooch Naheen turning white because of the influence of the British: "[T]he Rani of Cooch Naheen, […] was going white in blotches, a disease which leaked into history and erupted on an enormous scale shortly after Independence… 'I am the victim,' the Rani whispered, […] 'the hapless victim of my cross-cultural concerns. My skin is the outward expression of the internalization of my spirit" (54). What this quotation suggests is that the Rani's interest in British (Western) politics and culture in turn facilitates a change in herself. Her identity (her "spirit") starts to change and to become "white" (British, Western). This change is not gradual but happens in "blotches", suggesting that different aspects of her identity do not meld together seamlessly. Ahmed Sinai, apart from turning white, also has another, more peculiar physical marker of his narrative identity. His genitals become frozen when his business runs into trouble and his assets are frozen. He is thus emasculated through his commercial failure. Even after his assets are released, his genitals never fully thaw, and the smell of failure (according to Saleem) hangs around him.

2.4. Partial Perception, Sense-making and Temporality

Understanding identity in terms of fragments, as embodied through a nose, or white blotches on skin, suggests that we are made up of many syncretic aspects. Coherence (in terms of identity) is not achieved through the seamless blending of those particles into a whole, but through their narrative reconfiguration into an identity that allows for hybridity, syncretism and tension. In "Imaginary Homelands" (12) Rushdie touches on a significant epistemological dimension of how we think and perceive narratively:

> […] human beings do not perceive things whole; we are not gods but wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable only of fractured perceptions. Partial beings, in all the senses of that phrase. Meaning is a shaky edifice we build out of scraps, dogmas, childhood injuries, newspaper articles, chance remarks, old films, small victories, people hated, people loved; perhaps it is because our sense of what is the case is constructed from such inadequate materials that we defend it so fiercely, even to the death.

Rushdie echoes a sentiment found in *Four Quartets* in which Eliot suggests that our partial knowledge and inability to see things as wholes is a result of our embeddedness in time. Our temporal imbrication, however, is not a flaw, but saves us from the debilitating effects of a godlike perspective of seeing, experiencing and knowing everything at once, because "[H]uman kind", he writes, "[c]annot bear very much reality" ("Burnt Norton" I, lines 42-43). Our mortality and embeddedness in time shield us from the supramundane, which as humans we "cannot endure" ("Burnt Norton" II, line 36). Eliot writes

> Yet the enchainment of past and future
> Woven in the weakness of the changing body,
> Protects mankind from heaven and damnation
> Which flesh cannot endure.
>
> ("Burnt Norton" II, lines 33-36)

Whereas Eliot points towards the shielding effects of time, Rushdie offers a slightly different perspective. Rushdie does not suggest that time protects us from seeing and knowing everything at once, as does Eliot. Instead, time in the form of narrative protects us from "absurdity" (*MC* 4) and meaninglessness. Through narrative, which is fundamentally temporal, and through the process of (re)telling and (re)configuring the shards of our "fractured perceptions", we make meaning[12]. Eliot's and Rushdie's wrestling with concepts of time and temporality, however, converge on other points namely, the rejection of outright linearity and the concept of cyclicality.

For Eliot, temporal imbrication does not suggest that we are caught up in linear, teleological time. Instead, time can be understood as an ever changing and evolving pattern. The understanding of time embodied in Eliot's poetry, particularly in the *Four Quartets*, shares similarities to the thought of Henri Bergson on whose thought Eliot completed his Master's study. Eliot also attended lectures by Bergson in 1911 at the Collége de France, and for some time described himself as converted to "Bergsonism" (*T.S.Eliot: A Life* 40-41). Although Eliot later rejected Bergson's philosophy, correspondences may still be drawn between their respective theories of time. Bergson interrogated the inclination to understand time as absolute

[12] Consider Ricoeur's understanding of "semantic innovation" and emplotment on page 18.

and measurable, arguing that there was no quantifiable difference between discrete sensations, but rather an unbroken passing (Muldoon 70). The linear view depicts man as governed by natural laws, whereas the latter emphasizes human cognition and intuition. It is to time as intuitive that I would now like to shift my focus.

Time as intuition suggests that sensations are experienced as chaotic and disordered, but through intuition and perception we come to see an underlying structure or patterning to the chaos and disorder (see Muldoon 74-75). In the *Four Quartets* Eliot patterns moments through, for instance, the structure of the poem's imitating a musical quartet. The repetition of images, motifs and phrases throughout also serves to create a sense of patterning and order, often suggesting cyclicality and regeneration. Thematically, cyclicality and regeneration also feature as significant tropes in the *Four Quartets*. "East Coker", for instance, represents cycles of harvest, birth, death, creation and destruction. Various seasons or cycles can thus be understood as temporal patterns. Eliot's reversal of Mary Stuart's motto, "In my end is my beginning" into "In my beginning is my end" also suggests, as does Saleem's own narrative, that endings presuppose beginnings and that beginnings cannot start without ends[13].

The fragments and shards of everyday life to which Rushdie alludes (the "scraps, dogmas, childhood injuries, newspaper articles, chance remarks, old films, small victories, people hated, people loved" ("Imaginary Homelands" 12) gain meaning through Ricoeur's account of the "semantic innovation" of plot (see Ricoeur *TN1* ix). Narrative has a synthesizing function and reconfigures fragments and shards of perception into new relationships. Instead of simply imposing meaning, however, narrative brings the shards of everyday life into new and surprising correspondences. Narrative, or storytelling itself, thus functions as a "temporal unity" (see Ricoeur *The Rule of Metaphor*, ix) or pattern, although not a pattern rooted in a linear concept of time, but as has been suggested earlier, a pattern or "temporal unity" grounded in simultaneity and repetition.

There are several instances in *Midnight's Children* which illustrate the capacity of narrative and the imaginative reconfiguration implied in narrative to aid human understanding and create meaning. The "perforated sheet" through which Aadam Aziz treats Naseem's ailments and falls in love with her is a metaphor for our fractured perception. Each part is "[g]lued together

[13] Saleem also echoes this motto stating that "[e]ven ends have beginnings" (469).

by [..] imagination" (26). After Aadam Aziz and Naseem have married, and he is able finally to see her whole, he finds that he "has made the mistake of loving in fragments" (47). The "perforated sheet" through which Aadam Aziz treats Naseem recurs in altered form throughout the text as the sheet with a hole in it through which Jamila Singer (previously the "Brass Monkey") performs, the hole which Amina sees forming in Aadam Aziz's centre, and the hole Saleem feels forming at the centre of himself. Instead of serving merely as a "surreal and supernatural symbol" (Shepherd 38), the perforated sheet functions as a device which provides a temporal order for the novel. This temporal ordering is influenced by an alternative time-consciousness grounded in repetition (of names, symbols, images and numbers), synchronicity, and the interlacing of past, present and future. In this way, the various manifestations (repetitions) of the perforated sheet serve to impart a sense of time, other than linear time, to the text.

The metaphor of the perforated sheet can also be extended to Amina's being unable to love her husband, Ahmed, except by focusing on different parts of him. Although she does not employ a physical sheet,

> she divided him mentally, into every single one of his component parts, physical as well as behavioural, compartmentalizing him into lips and verbal tics and prejudices and likes… in short, she fell under the spell of the perforated sheet of her own parents, because she resolved to fall in love with her husband bit by bit. (87)

The conscious partitioning of Ahmed in Amina's mind is indicative of our inability to comprehend things in their totality. It may also be indicative of fragmented imperfection, which through its acceptance enables us to love. These examples suggest the process through which we make sense of the world around us. Fragments, shards and partial perceptions are given meaning through their (re)configuration in narratives, but also because they function as *traces* in the Derridean sense of the word.

2.5. Storytelling as *Pickling*

To concretize the process of narrative meaning-making from fragments or disparate parts, Rushdie employs the metaphor of pickling or what is commonly described as "chutnification"

in *Midnight's Children* (see Dayal, Thiara). Whereas all the elements in a story are bound together in the temporal unity of plot, while the plot takes on meanings which cannot be attributed to its constituents alone, the process of pickling serves a similar function. Fruit and vegetables, when combined with other ingredients and pickled together, take on a flavour that cannot be attributed individually to any of the ingredients. Pickling is not simply implied but is explicitly paralleled with Saleem's storytelling. He declares:

> …Rising from my pages comes the unmistakable whiff of chutney. So let me obfuscate no further: I, Saleem Sinai, possessor of the most delicately-gifted olfactory organ in history, have dedicated my latter days to the large-scale preparation of condiments. But now, 'A cook?' you gasp in horror, 'A khansama merely? How is it possible?' And, I grant, such mastery of the multiple gifts of cookery and language is rare indeed; yet I possess it. You are amazed; but then I am not, you see, one of your 200-rupees-a-month cookery johnnies, but my own master, working beneath the saffron and green winking of my personal neon goddess. And my chutneys and kasaundies are, after all, connected to my nocturnal scribblings – by day amongst the pickle-vats, by night within these sheets, I spend my time at the great work of preserving. Memory, as well as fruit, is being saved from the corruption of the clocks. (44)

In this extract Saleem compares his writing to his pickling. Both serve the function of preserving, but both also create new configurations and relationships between "[m]emory, as well as fruit" (44). The comparison is extended even further: memories and fruit are subjected to "the corruption of the clocks" (44) since memories may fade and fruit starts to decompose. Saleem's evocation of time's passing also underscores the difference between the time "of the clocks" (linear, calculable time) and storytelling as the interweaving of various temporal strands. Whereas clock time corrupts, the temporal process of narrative sense-making and reconfiguration preserves.

Memories have further temporal significance. Understood as traces, memories are what is left after "substitution upon substitution" has taken place. Memories are therefore not merely photographic snapshots of the past. They mark neither the presence of any event of which we were part, nor its absence, but evoke what is left in consequence of the temporal displacement inherent in our position as temporal beings. Stated differently, because memories recall past

events, we are temporally distanced from what has happened. An event, in the present moment, cannot yet be remembered (or narratively configured), and as soon as it passes into memory, it is no longer present. Despite this, we can remember only from our situatedness in the present. In addition, further displacement and deferral take place when we attempt to (re)present memories or the fragments of memories through language, as understood through Derrida's notion of *différance*.

In "Imaginary Homelands" Rushdie describes *Midnight's Children* as "a novel of memory and about memory" (10). He further asserts that "[t]his is why [he] made [his] narrator, Saleem, suspect in his narration; his mistakes are the mistakes of a fallible memory compounded by quirks of character and of circumstances, and his vision is fragmentary" ("Imaginary Homelands" 11). Rushdie, recalling memories of a period in Bombay, asserts that

> it was precisely the partial nature of these memories, their fragmentation, that made them so evocative for me. The shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance, because they were *remains*; fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane acquired numinous qualities. ("Imaginary Homelands" 12, italics in original)

Rushdie here suggests not only that we create meaning from fragments through narrative, but that the fragmentation or remains in themselves are instilled with a particular significance and meaning precisely because they are remains. They have been singled out through a process of forgetting as shards of the past left behind, but also transformed in and through the present.

2.6. Time and Identity as Bound to Place

Throughout the novel, memories, forgetting and identity also interact with place – not only physical place, but the socio-political context of place. The most obvious example is seen in Saleem's insistence on the connection between himself and India, starting with the moment of his birth which coincides with the birth of a new, independent India. His actions also have direct consequences for India: his song singing leads (according to his narrative) to the conflict which results in the capital of Maharashtra's becoming Bombay; Saleem also ties his adolescence to the partition of India and Pakistan; even his son's birth is connected to the Emergency declared by Indira Gandhi (Shepard 39). In the last example, we once again see

the narrative continuity between father and son, as evident in Saleem's linking himself and his son to the elephant-headed god Ganesh. Saleem's connection to India manifests in his son through the coincidence of his birth and Indira Gandhi's Emergency, tying the fate of India to the life of Saleem's son just as the concurrence of his own birth with India's Independence creates a tie between Saleem and India.

The Partition of India followed India's independence from British rule 1947. British India was divided into two new nation-states, namely Pakistan and India along sectarian lines (see Jana 334 and Marston 469). Predominantly Muslim states became Pakistan and those states which were predominantly Hindu became (independent) India (Marston 469). This division resulted in (often forced) mass migration of minority populations between the two nation states and many violent, bloody conflicts even before the official partitioning (Jana 334). The impact of the Partition can also be seen long after the official divide; Jana (334) argues that "[t]he violence that characterized the Partition continues to inflect ideas of nationhood, citizenship, and belonging espoused in many South Asian nations." For Saleem, the impact of the Partition is most acutely felt not in the direct wake of India's Independence, but in the years following and in his own adolescence which coincides with his time in Pakistan.

The physical Partition, as imagined by Rushdie, creates a border which hinders Saleem from communicating with the midnight's children. Saleem writes that the "existence of a frontier" "'jammed' [his] thought-transmission" so that he was also barred from "the gift of the midnight children" because of the border between Pakistan and India (394). This occurrence is noteworthy, while the significance of the midnight's children for Saleem's identity needs further consideration. Saleem is not simply a transmitter (although he describes himself as "All India Radio") but can communicate with the other children who are all over India. The Biblical intertext of the name "Sinai", as discussed earlier, is also telling. The children of midnight, through the intertextual reference to Mount Sinai and Saleem's self-proclaimed status as prophet, can be considered as the chosen people, "a people dedicated to me [read India] alone" (Exodus 19:6). Each of the children of midnight, as India's "chosen", comes to embody a particular narrative configuration of India, separate but linked to the physical fissure imagined by Rushdie.

In "Imaginary Homelands" (10) Rushdie writes that "'my' India" was just "a version and no more than one version of all the hundreds of millions of possible versions" ("Imaginary

Homelands" 10). Throughout *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie also echoes the sentiment that "[t]here are as many versions of India as there are Indians" (373). Each of the midnight's children could therefore be viewed as a particular manifestation of India: Shiva presents a militarized India whereas Parvati embodies a magical and mysterious India (at least in the way that Saleem choses to depict them). Saleem himself could be seen as an India of diversity, hybridity and syncretism, harbouring within himself the voices of the many. It is interesting that the two most powerful children, Saleem and Shiva, represent such vastly different versions of India. Shiva's India is violent, militarized and forcefully controlled. Saleem's India, on the surface, is democratic and all the children are apparently given a voice. Despite the seemingly democratic nature of the Midnight Children's Conference, many of the children start to question its purpose or stop attending the midnight meetings once Saleem excludes Shiva. One the one hand, this could suggest that India should be understood in all its diversity, plurality and hybridity. If we exclude or ignore particular versions of India, we risk losing other versions as well. On the other hand, it might suggest that India cannot escape its legacy of militaristic domination.

Even after some of the midnight's children stop joining the midnight meetings, traces of each of the children become part of Saleem's identity because they are preserved and *pickled* in his stories. Saleem's exclusion of Shiva and entering into the minds of other children without their permission points towards another aspect of narrative identity, namely intersubjectivity. The intersubjective co-creation of narrative identity is hinted at throughout the novel through the metaphor of "leaking": Saleem comments that certain events in his grandfather's past, such as Lubin's suicide, "leaked" into Aadam Aziz (44). Saleem's grandfather's past also "leaks" into him, as does Padma (44). Despite claiming that he cannot leak into Padma as a result of being castrated by the Widow, Padma's absorption in Saleem's narrative suggests that he has caught her attention and that he is, in fact, leaking into her, albeit through a different kind of relationship. Saleem maintains "'Things – even people – have a way of leaking into each other,' […] 'like flavours when you cook. […]'" (44). The past's "leaking" into the present suggests that this process has a temporal dimension. We are not only influenced by what happens to us in the present, but more importantly we are also influenced by events in the past which continue to "leak" into the present and influence who we are and who we become.

Because Saleem communicates with the midnight's children telepathically, the intersubjective connection to the other children and their ability to "leak" into him is heightened: he has access

to thoughts and ideas the children do not willingly share. Saleem's narrative identity is therefore influenced by his telepathic connection to the children, making all the more important the break in this connection and the metaphorical loss of connection to the many versions of India embodied in the children. According to Parashkevova (58) the rupture created by the Partition is represented as "a tectonic fissure in the earth that breaks cities apart and one that will be continually eroded and deepened". In other words, Rushdie imagines the Partition not only as an invisible political and geographical border line, but as a physical rupture of the earth. In this way, the invisible rupture caused by the Partition is concretized through its narrative representation. At the same time, the Partition acts as what Parashkevova (58) describes as a "catoptric boundary". The concept of a "catoptric boundary" suggests that the boundary acts as a mirror of sorts, not simply reflecting Saleem's image back to him, but showing us his identity and sense of self *without* the influence of the other midnight's children.

After the break in telepathic connection to the midnight's children and his arrival in Pakistan, the link between Saleem and India is also silenced, if not broken. For four years Saleem believes that his "unseen hand" is no longer involved in any historical occurrences involving India, and "in [his] life, nothing changed either" (407): "Four years of nothing.// Except growing into a teenager" (405). This first "exile" to Pakistan, however, does not leave Saleem unchanged: on returning to India because of news that his father is ill (410), Saleem attempts to revive the Midnight Children's Conference. The children see the change in Saleem most clearly. Parvati-the-witch tells Saleem "'God knows what that Pakistan has done to you; but you are badly changed'" (414). The four years in Pakistan have allowed Saleem to erect barriers in his own mind, shielding the secret of his birth from the other children. Saleem's exclusion of Shiva, because of this secret, also causes suspicion. The four years have also effected a change in how Saleem thinks about Shiva: instead of simply disliking him, "he [becomes] a sort of principle; he [comes] to represent, to [Saleem's] mind, all the vengefulness and violence and simultaneous-love-and-hate-of-Things in the world" (415). Saleem realizes that Shiva, like himself, "was connected to history", thus allowing him "to affect the passage of the days" (415). Pakistan creates a fissure, or barrier in Saleem's mind, which moving back to India does not change. The physical partition has resulted in a partition of the midnight's children, and in a breakdown of communication and trust between them. The loss of connection to the midnight's children is made final when Saleem's parents have his nose "drained" in a sinus-clearing operation (see 421-423), which again coincides with his family's

second move to Pakistan. In separating India from Pakistan, the Partition damages the capacity for intersubjectivity and undermines mutual understanding and friendship.

In Pakistan, Saleem realises that he has developed a new ability: the ability to smell what others cannot. His new sense of smell allows him to frame his family's move to Pakistan in a new light. Saleen now sees himself as an invader, "armed (if that's the right word) only with a new manifestation of [his] nasal inheritance" giving him "the powers of sniffing-out-the-truth, of smelling-what-was-in-the-air, of following trails; but not the only power an invader needs – the strength to conquer my foes" (427). Despite no longer being tied to India through the midnight's children, Saleem maintains this link by positioning himself as outsider and invader, thereby aligning himself once more with India.

Saleem's newfound sense of smell is so sharp that he is able, for example, to smell his aunt Alia's hypocrisy and the "vengeful odours leaking out of her glands" (426), the "quick-fading perfume of new love, and also the deeper, longer-lasting pungency of hate" (427). It is significant that each emotion is in some way a manifestation of the past – a past which Saleem is able to smell. His aunt's hypocrisy and vengefulness are a result of being thwarted by Saleem's father Ahmed many years earlier. Instead of marrying Aunt Alia, Ahmed Sinai marries Mumtaz Aziz, whom he renames (as a marker of changed identity and belonging) Amina Sinai[14]. Similarly, both love and hate can be seen as being informed by the past. Saleem's hatred for Shiva, for example, harkens back to their being switched at birth by Mary Perreira. This hatred is intensified when Shiva challenges Saleem in the Midnight's Children Conference. Saleem's recognition that both he and Shiva are tied to the history of India again suggests that his feelings regarding Shiva have a deep temporal dimension. Love, similarly, is grounded in complex interactions and emotions. Once the family has realized that Shiva and Saleem were switched at birth, Saleem's grandmother legitimises him as her grandson despite the absence of blood kinship. This act of love is grounded in the past and in his family's incapacity to "imagine it otherwise". The inability of his family to "imagine it otherwise" is perhaps not simply an indication of imaginative insufficiency, but suggests bonding through a shared family history, which becomes inflected by love. Saleem's ability to smell emotions is therefore also an ability to smell the past and to smell *into* the past, as he does when writing the history of his grandfather.

[14] Saleem similarly renames Parvati-the-with when they are married. Parvati becomes Laylah Sinai.

Saleem undergoes several more changes during his second "exile" to Pakistan. Apart from his newfound sense of smell, he also becomes reckless, riding through the streets on his Lambretta (438, 458), and "pick[ing] up the women of the street" (442). One of these women, Tai Bibi, despite her toothlessness and old age ("she claimed to be five hundred and twelve" (443)) especially intrigues Saleem because of her smell. Tai Bibi had the ability to "alter her bodily odours to match those of anyone on earth", thus arousing Saleem's "sense of history" rather than his sexuality (443). This arousal is heightened not only by her apparent age, but by the correspondence of name between Tai, the Kashmiri boatman, and Tai Bibi the prostitute – a correspondence of which Saleem himself is cognizant (443). The repetition of the name "Tai" intensifies the sense of time in the novel, which is not structured linearly but grounded in repetition and patterning. In Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*, a similar sense of patterning can be discerned through the repetition of names as an alternative temporal ordering device[15].

The importance of names for identity and self-understanding becomes a key motif in Pakistan, again underscoring the rift with India. During their first stay in Pakistan, Saleem's sister, the so-called "Brass Monkey" undergoes a change, becoming demure and obedient. Instead of the "Brass Monkey", she is renamed as "Jamila Singer". Saleem, however, is not renamed: he returns home from riding the streets and seeking out prostitutes to discover the bombing of his family's house, which had become "his parents' funeral pyre" (477). In the aftermath of the explosion, with debris still flying around, Saleem is hit on the head by a silver spittoon. The silver spittoon has its own history, being the same spittoon that Mumtaz Aziz (Saleem's mother's name, before being renamed by his father) and Nadir Khan play "hit-the-spittoon" with when Khan is in hiding. Mumtaz Aziz takes this spittoon with her as a reminder of her previous life and name after being married to Ahmed Sinai. In a process which Saleem describes as his "purification", he is "stripped of past present memory time shame and love", becoming "empty and free" (477) through a blow to the head delivered by the spittoon[16]. In the process, he also forgets his name.

The loss of "past present memory time shame and love" as well as his name, which Saleem argues "contain[s] our fates" (423), is also a loss of Saleem's narrative identity. He no longer

[15] See pages 73, 77-78 on the repetition of names in *Hawksmoor*.
[16] Interestingly, the spittoon is the only reminder of his past life that Saleem retains after the explosion. He carries it with him in the Sundarbans and back to India.

knows who he is as he has lost all the stories which make him *himself*. Like Saleem's loss of telepathic connection to the children of midnight, which corresponds to his move to Pakistan and the consequent changes in his identity, Saleem's loss of name is also accompanied by a change in physical location. Saleem finds himself as part of the "Canine Unit for Tracking and Intelligence Activities" (484) in a "camp in the hills" which "will be found on no maps" (483). The mystery surrounding the camp site further emphasizes the loss of his "past present memory time shame and love". Identity is tied not only to names, but also to *place*. Finding himself in a place without name which cannot be found on a map, and without his own name and memory, calls into question Saleem's humanity: instead of being a tracker in the unit, Saleem is described as a "man-dog" (486). His loss of name and identity, coupled with his acute sense of smell (which he did not lose), suggests that Saleem has also lost a part of what makes him human.

Saleem's sense of smell, and "fate" which "has never been unwilling to lend a hand" (500), finally lead him to the Sundarbans: "a jungle so thick that history has hardly ever found the way in" (501). In this jungle, Saleem's loss of name and narrative identity culminates in an altered sense of time. The altered sense of time is not only experienced by Saleem (or rather "not-Saleem" (502)) but shared by members of the Canine Unit in his team (Ayooba, Shaheed and Farooq), which he had led into the Sundarbans. In the jungle, days "dissolve[e] into each other", the men forget the "purpose of their journey" and they succumb to the surreal and "absurd fantasy" of their environment (506). The altered sense of time is not a loss of time but is described, initially, as "the time of punishment" (507). The so-called "time of punishment" in an almost Coleridgean fashion, presents the men firstly with a change in weather (the monsoon) and then with apparitions and ghosts not only of those whom they had killed, but of the "monkey-gibbering of children left fatherless by their work" (507) [17]. The "time of punishment", when the jungle "had punished them enough", transitions into a time of nostalgia (507). They are reminded of their past lives, but this time also reminds them of who they were before the India-Pakistan war. In this way, "the magical jungle, having tormented them with their misdeeds, was leading them by the hand towards a new adulthood" (508). Saleem, having lost his memories and name, is initially immune to the power of the jungle, but finally also

[17] The three trackers are killed or die soon after returning from the Sundarbans. It is only Saleem, like the lone survivor of Coleridge's haunted ship in *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*, who "lives to tell the tale". Instead of narrating this event to a group of guests at a wedding feast, Saleem tells the story, perhaps also partly as a warning, to his interlocutor Padma.

succumbs and starts telling stories which allow him to reclaim "all lost histories, all the myriad complex processes that go to make a man" (509), all "lost histories", that is, except his name.

The trials that the men are subjected to in the Sundarbans do not end with Saleem's recollecting his "lost history". Instead, they are faced with one final trial. In the forest the four men meet four identical women who seduce them and hold them captive for a time which none of them is able to keep track of. Time in the Sundarbans, after all, "followed unknown laws" (512). It is only when they start noticing that they are becoming transparent that the spell is broken. The insects, snakes and leeches too are transparent and Saleem (still "not-Saleem") surmises that the jungle has worked its magic on them as well. This translucency is not caused by a lack of sunlight; rather, the jungle plunders their imagination and fools both the men and the other creatures into "using up their dreams" (512). Going through a process of punishment, regression (to their earlier lives and childhood) and being seduced into surrendering their dreams leaves each of them a changed man. It is only Saleem, perhaps because he entered the jungle without name and history, who leaves with more than he came. Although he still lacks a name, the jungle has restored versions of Saleem contained in the stories which he tells throughout the novel: "Snotnose, Stainface, Baldy, Piece-of-the-Moon" (516).

Saleem never recalls his name; instead, it is given back to him. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the names we give to others confer a sense of identity on them. It is therefore significant that Parvati-the-witch, one of the children of midnight and one of Saleem's biggest supporters during the time of the Midnight Children's Conference, gives Saleem back his name. Parvati, as a member of a magician's troupe entertaining the Indian Army, sees Saleem and by calling out his name gives it back to him (529). Parvati is an integral part of Saleem's identity, not only because they are acquaintances but also because both are children of midnight, both are tied to India, and both have shared a telepathic bond. Their stories and narrative identities are thus interwoven. In calling out Saleem's name, Parvati not only restores his name but provides him with the link which ties together all the other versions of Saleem and all the significant moments of Saleem's life. Saleem's name therefore functions, as do stories, plots and metaphors, as a synthesizing tool which serves as a point of convergence for the temporal strands which together make up Saleem's identity.

The losses Saleem experiences in the move to Pakistan (his link to the midnight's children, his family, and his name) are in some manner restored on his return to India. The move back to

India restores his link to Parvati (though not all the children of midnight), he finds a sense of family among the magicians, and he regains his name. In this way, Saleem's return to India can be seen as spiral, which in turn serves a temporal ordering or patterning function in the novel. Although he returns to the point at which he began, his narrative identity has been altered by his experiences. Drawing on Rushdie's own experience of alienation in "Imaginary Homelands" (10), "we [read Saleem] will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; […] we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind".

2.7. Conclusion

In this chapter I have aimed to demonstrate how *Midnight's Children* embodies storytelling both as a process of becoming and as a temporal epistemological process of meaning-making and understanding. I now turn briefly to Rushdie's own writing on *Midnight's Children* and his elucidation of the multiple stories which constitute the novel. In reaction to the opinion that the novel is despairing, Rushdie ("Imaginary Homelands" 16) writes:

> The story of Saleem does indeed lead him to despair. But the story is told in a manner designed to echo, as closely as my abilities allowed, the Indian talent for non-stop self-regeneration. This is why the narrative constantly throws up new stories, why it 'teems'. The form – multitudinous, hinting at the infinite possibilities of the country – is the optimistic counterweight to Saleem's personal tragedy.

Saleem's stories therefore serve to (re)create, reconfigure and make sense of his narrative identity which is constantly being self-regenerated in light of an otherwise tragic tale. Storytelling, as seen in the parallel Saleem draws between himself and Scheherazade, also preserves. Regeneration is thus not simply making new, but also preserving something of the past so that a sense of continuity (vital for the self as opposed to identity[18]) can be maintained.

Self-preservation and self-regeneration, however, is an intersubjective process. The process of (re)creating and (re)configuring through story also involves the life stories of others. In

[18] See page 25-26 on narrative identity and the self.

Midnight's Children the children born near or at midnight on the eve of India's Independence share a telepathic connection through Saleem. The parts of their stories they freely share, and those they do not, but which Saleem pries from their minds, are therefore also "leaked" into Saleem. In a similar fashion Saleem "leaks" into their identities. Intersubjectivity also extends to inter-generational narratives and identity.

Saleem's identity is largely influenced by the stories shared by his family and how he sees himself within the family. Through narrative he constructs an identity which irrefutably marks him as a member of the Aziz/Sinai family not through biological relatedness, but through narrative identity and which suggests that the sense of familiality is constituted more by narrative that by blood relationships. Saleem is also able to smell into the past. Initially, he attempts to find out when and where he began, that is, to locate his point of origin by smelling back into the life of Aadam Aziz, his grandfather. His attempts to locate a point of origin, however, prove fruitless. Instead, what emerges from Saleem's endeavours is a complex network of stories, each constituting a nexus of temporal strands, and each also referring to other stories from different times and places. While each story contributes to the identity which emerges from Saleem's stories, each also constantly defers and displaces meaning by referring to other stories in a complex process of meaning creation.

Throughout the novel repetition, simultaneity and patterning also function as ordering mechanisms, suggesting an alternative understanding of time. Instead of viewing time as progressing from past to present and through to future in a measurable and constant fashion, time is rather made up of the interweaving of various temporal strands brought together through narrative.

Although not an inter-subjective process of meaning creation, the almost fatalistic connection which Saleem argues exists between himself and India is also significant. Each of the midnight's children is in some manner also tied to the history of India, and each child constitutes a particular (even if mutable) version of India. Saleem's altered identity and changing sense of time when he moves to Pakistan are therefore significant, emphasizing that identity is also bound, to a large degree, to the socio-political contexts of place. When Saleem loses his memories (his past) and his name in the bombing that kills his family, he (as narrator) initially describes this as a process of purification which returns him to a state of innocence. As the novel soon shows, however, we cannot escape the past and "[w]hat you were is forever

who you are" (513). The past, it would seem, is what constitutes identity, as the present has not yet been made sense of through storytelling. Storytelling gives coherence and meaning to the past, which the present does not yet possess.

3. *Hawksmoor*

3.1. Introduction: Temporality and Identity as Tied to Space

In many ways *Hawksmoor* is a novel concerned with the preservation of identity, but not identity as a coherent and stable entity. Rather, both communal and individual identity can be understood as made up of syncretic particles accumulating in and around, and perhaps also being drawn together by, certain spaces over time. In the novel, characters from the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, the two main time periods in *Hawksmoor*, share the same names or variations on these names, while events taking place in their lives are often also very similar. Throughout the novel the boundaries between past, present and future dissolve, allowing different timelines to permeate one another. Characters from both centuries also frequent the same locations around the city of London, tying identity and time to space and presenting these characters as archetypal figures who "become the guardian spirits (as it were) of each place" (*HM* 101). *Hawksmoor* therefore confronts us with concepts of individual and collective identity and time as profoundly influenced by space while grounded in repetition, patterning and simultaneity.

Ackroyd's exploration of time in *Hawksmoor* presents a complex understanding of what identity and selfhood entail. Nonetheless, the novel offers no fixed view or final word on how identity is formed and constantly renegotiated over time – suggesting only that repetition, patterning and simultaneity can be seen as cornerstones of what makes us who we are. Instead, Ackroyd presents the reader with various philosophies of time, resulting in a text which is itself syncretic and which embodies the syncretism manifested in the novel's characters and spaces. London, furthermore, where the novel is set, appears as a force or energy which exerts an influence on the characters to the extent that their identities are inextricably linked to its space.

In this chapter I will briefly consider the influence of T.S. Eliot's thought on Ackroyd's sense of time in *Hawksmoor*. In the *Four Quartets*, Eliot grapples with our embeddedness in time in relation to eternity, suggesting that fragmented vision and patterning shield us from the god-like perspective of seeing, knowing and experiencing everything at once[19]. Ackroyd draws on what he understands as Eliot's sense of time as bound to the space of London. In *Hawksmoor*,

[19] See pages 49-50.

the repetition and patterning of events, images, motifs and details from the lives of various characters (such as recurring names) serve as tools for temporal organization, recalling the use of repetition and patterning in both Eliot and Rushdie. Like Rushdie in *Midnight's Children*, Ackroyd also draws on numbers and their symbolic connotations, as well as repeating motifs and images to embody a sense of time grounded in synchronicity and "an acausal orderedness connected to simultaneity and meaning" (Mishra 59). Each instance of repetition or, in some instances, "doubling" leaves a trace of itself, and in so doing becomes the foundation on which temporality, identity and space interact. For this reason, I will examine patterning and repetition as the bridge between identity, temporality and space.

The premise that both time and space exert an influence on the identities of individuals and communities is foundational to this chapter. Psychogeography offers a useful starting point from which to consider how characters are drawn to certain spaces over time, often resulting in spatio-temporal disorientation and changes in their behaviour. Their sense of time is altered as they come closer to or move further away from particular structures, such as Dyer's churches or Stone Henge. The identities of the inhabitants of an area, in turn, also feed back into that space and into different times. The concept of spacetime, although developed as a scientific and mathematical theory, offers another useful basis for attempting to understand how time changes near large bodies or buildings. For this reason, I will examine Dyer's churches, focusing specifically on Little St Hugh. I will also consider Stone Henge and the influence it exerts on Nicholas Dyer, Sir Christopher Wren, and the twentieth-century vagrant, Ned.

Although not within the cartographic delimitations of London, Stone Henge embodies a similar atmosphere to Dyer's churches, suggesting that the peculiar sense of time associated with the churches is perhaps not solely tied to the space of London. Instead, as sites of ritual and liminality where past, present and future intersect, these churches share a common aura. Additionally, each "threshold" in the novel represents a liminal space, a space of ritual where identity and selfhood are negotiated. Each crossing of a "threshold" signifies the start of a rite of passage where characters move toward a different sense of time and place. The "threshold" asks us to think the impossible in relation to time (that all time is perhaps eternally present), and in relation to death (that perhaps there is no death, only repetition and simultaneity). If death is negated through repetition and through spaces which embody past, present and future, this raises further questions regarding an understanding of the relationship between continuity and change as fundamental to narrative identity.

3.2. The Influence of TS Eliot on *Hawksmoor's* Sense of Time

In 1984, the year preceding the publication of *Hawksmoor*, Ackroyd published a biography of T.S. Eliot, *T.S. Eliot: A Life*. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Ackroyd's study of Eliot may have influenced the views of time explored in the novel[20]. Eliot was both a writer and a philosopher deeply interested in the intersection of time and religion. Although *Hawksmoor* is littered with religions references and repeatedly juxtaposes the supposedly sacred and profane, it would be difficult to class Ackroyd as a religious writer. Yet, *Hawksmoor* shares many of the same concerns as Eliot. In an interview with Wolfreys Ackroyd explains:

> I think the main influence there [referring to Eliot], for me, as far as I was concerned, was his conception of time; I think only in London could Eliot have imagined the sense of time, of time past, time present and time future, in London […]. (Wolfreys and Ackroyd 105)

Ackroyd, however, does not elaborate on what Eliot's sense of time entails but, referring to his own writing, explains that "it's not something I can really talk about […] this quality of time in the city emerges and I don't understand where it comes from" (Wolfreys and Ackroyd 105). Far then from presenting a coherent understanding of time, Ackroyd offers the reader a philosophical, yet tentative exploration influenced in part by Eliot's philosophy.

Like both Rushdie and Ackroyd, each of whom approaches time differently, Eliot suggests that patterning, simultaneity, and repetition may be an alternative to linear, teleological understandings of time. The *Four Quartets*, for example, explores the notion of time both structurally and thematically through patterning. Each of the quartets consists of five cantos, where each canto represents a different stage in a meditative process on the nature of time (Grant 92). A further pattern can be identified in each quartet's correspondence to one of the four elements: "Burnt Norton" corresponds to air, "East Coker" to earth, "The Dry Salvages" to water, and "Little Gidding" to fire (Grant 91). Eliot similarly uses the elements as a structural tool in *The Waste Land*. Although Ackroyd does not employ the same patterns used by Eliot,

[20] At times, however, Ackroyd denies the influence of Eliot on *Hawksmoor*, arguing that he forgot about writing T.S. Eliot's biography as soon as he had finished it (Ackroyd and McGrath 45).

both Eliot's and Ackroyd's texts are tightly and meticulously structured resulting in forms and patterns which exemplify the concerns of their texts.

Hawksmoor consists of twelve chapters, corresponding to the physical representation of time as seen on an analog clock, where each chapter indicates the passing of a unit of time. The chapters alternate between the eighteenth century and the twentieth century, imitating the movement of a pendulum thus reinforcing the idea of time passing. Each of these alternating chapters shifts between an emphasis on space, as seen in the chapters narrated by the architect Dyer, and an emphasis on time in the chapters set in the twentieth century concerning Hawksmoor's murder investigations. Interestingly, each chapter's ending anticipates the start of the next chapter, suggesting continuity rather than a stark separation between the novel's two time periods: chapter two, for example, ends with the words "And when he looked up he saw the face above him" (49) and chapter three starts with "The face above me then became a Voice" (50). Although not identical, the ending and beginning of each chapter can be seen as examples of repetition across the two separate time periods. Finally, in chapter twelve, as the novel nears its end, the timelines appear to converge representing the point at which structurally, a new cycle will begin.

In *Hawksmoor*, both its structure and the recurrence of images reinforce a cyclical view of time. Time as cyclical is also explored in Eliot's *Four Quartets.* In "East Coker" Eliot considers the cycles of harvest, birth, death, creation and destruction. Eliot contemplates "The time of the seasons and the constellations/ The time of milking and the time of harvest/ The time of coupling of man and woman/ And that of beast… / Eating and drinking. Dung and death" ("East Coker" I 42-46). In *Hawksmoor*, Eliot's "time of […] constellations" or the movement of the heavenly bodies informs the designs of Dyer's churches, functioning not simply as a marker of time but as time connected to the occult. The cycles of life and death are also explored in *Hawksmoor*, where life (understood in this instance as identity) is not preserved through (re)birth, but through repetition. Although the cyclical view of time, for both Ackroyd and Eliot, is but one theory within a larger meditation on time, Ackroyd ultimately rejects this understanding. For Ackroyd, the time of London, and therefore also the time of the novel can be understood

> [as] spiral; I used to believe in the cyclical theory of time, but it's much more complicated, the sense of time in London is quite unlike any other place I've ever

> been, it's so specific that it's almost impossible to describe it, there's nothing with which to compare it. (Ackroyd and Wolfreys 105)

Ackroyd offers no elucidation on time as spiral. In addition to this, there are no scientific theories which sufficiently explore spiral time. Eliot possibly offers insight into Ackroyd's understanding of time as spiral. In "East Coker" II, lines 31-37, Eliot writes

> There is, it seems to us,
> At best, only a limited value,
> In the knowledge derived from experience.
> The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies,
> For the pattern is new in every moment
> And every moment is a new and shocking
> Valuation of all we have been.

In this extract Eliot suggests that knowledge itself imposes a pattern on experience, although knowledge is also partial. Such a patterning could, for example, be the recognition of the cycles of life such as birth, death and rebirth, or harvests. Yet, Eliot also suggests that "the pattern is new in every moment" and every moment, in turn, is determined by "all we have been". Eliot's formulation appears to suggest a kaleidoscopic understanding of time, where each cycle or turn creates a new configuration of all the moments that have been. This formulation points to an understanding of time informed by non-identical repetition; although "every moment is new", it is also a repetition of the past, set in a different arrangement. It is this understanding of time which *Hawksmoor* embodies, despite never claiming that it is the only way in which to understand time. It is a view of time which allows for continuity *and* change through repetition and patterning.

3.3. The Patterning of Ideas

Patterning in *Hawksmoor* functions on different levels: firstly, the symbols or images which occur throughout the novel create a thematic patterning or patterning of ideas. We find, for instance, numerous references to light and darkness, dust, time, labyrinths and even *patterns*. There are also several references to the wheel of time or the associated image of a snake biting its own tail (the mythical ourobóros), or numerological references, such as in the recurrence of

the number seven. Each of the symbols Ackroyd employs can be traced to ancient cultures and their mystical and magical traditions. The occurrence of symbols such as the labyrinth or the ourobóros in the history of ancient cultures is widespread and diverse. Because of the varied occurrence and widespread use of these symbols throughout history, the accumulated meanings that have come to be associated with these symbols are echoed in Dyer's churches and in the identities of characters in the novel.

Secondly, through the (often slightly varied) repetition of names and occurrences, we find a patterning which questions concepts of selfhood and identity, foregrounding the problem of continuity versus change and compelling us to reconsider what narrative identity entails when associated with particular spaces across hundreds of years. Finally, Ackroyd also makes use of spatial patterning, accentuating the already unusual cartographic layout of the actual London churches, and adding an additional layer of spatial patterning by making Dyer's churches and his sacrifices the sites of Hawksmoor's murder investigations.

One of the most pervasive images throughout the novel is dust. References to dust function as persistent reminders of our mortality. Dust recalls the funeral rite quoted by Walter Pyne, "For Dust thou art and shalt to Dust return" (17), and echoed by Dyer, Vanbrugge and Hawksmoor (200), among others. Dust is a tangible manifestation of the past persisting in the present, and in this way, it is also associated with immortality[21]. Characters in both the eighteenth and twentieth centuries are constantly observing the dustiness around them, wiping dust from their clothes or from cupboards, playing in the dust, or landing with their feet in the dust, as does Sir Christopher Wren when climbing from an overturned carriage (71). The paradoxical character of dust as symbolizing both mortality and immortality, change and permanence, mirrors the puzzling nature of identity and selfhood as embodying both change and continuity. Dyer, when discussing the nature of dust, tells Walter "Then we are all Dust indeed, are we not?" (17), suggesting not simply that we are made up of particles of matter, but that we are also composed of fragments from the past persisting in the present and future.

The number seven also recurs throughout the novel and is particularly prominent in the sections narrated by Dyer: as a child Dyer meets the leader of a satanic cult, Mirabilis, and stays with

[21] Civelekoğlu (84) underscores this dual character of dust in *Hawksmoor* by arguing that dust "convey[s] the dichotomy of life/death, and thus mortality/immortality."

him for seven days and seven nights (24); Mirabilis teaches Dyer that when a virgin boy is selected for sacrifice, he is to sit in darkness for seven days and seven nights (24); the Spitalfields church bell strikes seven when one of the victims in the twentieth century, Thomas Hill, is discovered to be missing (48); he is missing for seven days before his body is found (153); Dyer observes one of his colleagues, Hayes, for seven days and determines he [Dyer] is being followed (158). Although there are numerous references to seven, the most detailed of these comes from Dyer's description of his churches' designs. Dyer draws on the astronomical and particularly the astrological significance of seven:

> Let him that has Understanding count the Number: the seven Churches are built in conjunction with the seven Planets in the lower Orbs of Heaven, the seven Circles of the Heavens, the seven Starres in Ursa Minor and the seven Starres in the Pleiades. Little St Hugh was flung in the Pitte with the seven Marks upon his Hands, Feet, Sides and Breast which thus exhibits the seven Demons […]. I have built an everlasting Order, which I may run through laughing; no one can catch me now. (232)

Dyer's "everlasting Order", grounded in the number seven, appears to be his own syncretic mythology which amalgamates biblical and occult symbolism, blurring the boundaries between the so-called sacred and the occult. The number seven furthermore connects each church to the creation myth as, in the Bible, God created the universe in seven days.

The symbol of the ourobóros, among its many connotations, is also symbolic of creation. Dyer describes time by drawing on the image of the snake biting its own tail: "Truly Time is a vast Denful of Horrour, round about which a Serpent winds and in the winding bites itself by the Tail […] a beginning continuing always ending" (75). In their article "The Ourobóros as an Auroral Phenomenon", Van der Sluijs and Peratt trace the history of the ouróboros and examine both its representation in art and the possible meanings which can be attributed to these representations. In one of its Gnostic manifestations the ourobóros carries inscriptions representing the planets, suggesting that the planetary orbits are being held together by the snake (16), recalling Dyer's "everlasting Order". For the Fon people of Benin, the ourobóros forms part of their creation myth: When the earth was created it was too heavy. Aido Hwedo, the serpent, was asked to coil itself, with his tail in his mouth, and lie beneath the earth thereby carrying its weight (13). The ourobóros also personifies both time and eternity: for the Warao

people of the Orinoco, the ourobóros' breathing regulates the tides; the snake's association with the ocean also suggests that it is a state of constant flow (16). The form which the snake takes, coiled in a circle with its tail in its mouth, suggests a continuous cycle tying the symbol to "such abstract concepts as union, eternity, immortality and infinity" (18). Van der Sluijs and Peratt emphasize the "syncretistic nature" of the ourobóros, furthermore linking it to darkness and light, to creation and to the underworld, and to time and eternity (8, 16, 18).

The sinister links to creation in the designs of Dyer's churches are echoed in the twentieth-century sections of the novel. In this timeline, we trace the process through which Edward Robinson forgets his name and his memories, becoming the vagrant known as Ned. The narration of this section recalls the biblical creation myth. Ned starts "to see a pattern taking shape ahead of him" (89) and when his clock's alarm sounds he exclaims "'My God! My God!'. *And so the first day passed."* (emphasis added 89, compare Genesis 1:5). The subsequent paragraphs each outline the events occurring on the days that follow. For example, he becomes confused about the time and buys a small wristwatch, yet his temporal confusion is replaced by spatial disorientation, and he only accidentally finds his way home (91). As each day continues, Ned becomes more disorientated and forgetful, until he leaves his room for the last time by "step[ping] over the threshold" (91), signifying the start (or creation) of his life as a vagrant on the streets of London. Although this section recalls the biblical creation myth, it is also accompanied by loss which could be understood as the opposite of creation. Ned loses his name and his memories, thereby also losing part of his identity.

Dyer's description of the design of his churches recalls the creation myth in Genesis (the first book in the Bible) through its emphasis on the number seven, but also links intertextually with the Book of Revelations (the last book in the Bible). The description of the design itself therefore embodies circularity through its intertextuality with both the first and last books in the Bible. Although drawing on biblical intertext, Dyer also distorts the imagery and symbolism by presenting an occult or satanized version of biblical numerology. The Book of Revelations reads (1:20): "This is the secret meaning of the seven stars that you see in my right hand, and of the seven gold lamp-stands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lamp-stands are the seven churches." Dyer refers to seven stars and seven churches, but instead of seven angels, the wounds on Little St Hugh's body are representative of seven demons. Both Dyer's description and the biblical intertext appear to associate this number with light, while demons and the occult are associated with darkness.

The opposition of light and darkness has often been equated with binaries such as good and evil, knowledge and ignorance or joy and melancholy. *Hawksmoor*, however, subverts these binaries by allowing us to think about light and darkness, knowledge and ignorance and even time and eternity in different ways. At the start of the novel, Dyer recalls his childhood and the deaths of his parents who had contracted the plague. He tells of the gravediggers who had "discharg'd [bodies] into the Darkness" with "much Merriment" (15). Similarly, when the eighteenth-century Thomas Hill slips from the scaffolding of Dyer's church and falls to his death, Dyer "could hardly refrain from smiling at the Sight" (27). In both these examples, death which is associated with darkness, is countered by unnerving lightheartedness. Light and darkness are also used for the purposes of characterization. Whereas the eighteenth-century Thomas Hill is described as "fair" and "in great good Humour" (26), his twentieth-century counterpart is bothered by light, looking for "the shadows which the sunlight cast" (43). Dyer, on the other hand, through his association with satanism and the occult, can be seen as a dark figure, whereas both the architect Sir Christopher Wren who is "all for Light and Easinesse" (3) and Nicholas Hawksmoor who "consider[s] himself as a scientist" (190) are associated with light through their belief in reason, logic and causality.

Dyer's name ties him to death and suffering, and in this way also to darkness. The Online Oxford English Dictionary provides one definition of "dyer" as "One who dies; one who suffers, or is liable to, death." Both Dyer and Hawksmoor are also associated with the devil and with time through an abbreviation of their first name, Nick. "Old Nick", for instance, is often used to refer to the Devil, whereas the phrase "in the nick of time" suggests that something occurs without time to spare. Although the names of characters which have their origin in actuality may be coincidental, Ackroyd exploits these similarities. The name Nicholas or the abbreviated "Nick", for example, also juxtaposes the characters of Dyer and Hawksmoor with Sir Christopher Wren: Whereas "Nick" may be associated with the devil, the name Christopher ties Sir Christopher Wren to Christianity and to the figure of Christ. This juxtaposition again draws on the light and darkness dichotomy, as well as the opposition between En*light*enment reason, which Sir Christopher represents, and the occult or pagan, as embodied in the character of Nicholas Dyer.

Interestingly, through the motif of light and darkness, Dyer is associated with the Thomas Hill of the nineteen-eighties: both characters are described predominantly in terms of darkness.

Like Dyer who hears "those other sounds of Time" (23), Thomas Hill hears voices that seem to be coming from the eighteenth century such as children chanting (31), or the encouragement shouted to the eighteenth-century Thomas to "'Go on!'" climbing the pyramid shortly before his death (34). He hears the "screeching of a cat, although it might have been a human cry" (43) recalling Dyer who, as a child in the house of Mirabilis "seemed to hear screeching, much like that of a Catte" (20). Thomas also dreams of building churches and finds comfort in stone (32). He builds model houses from cardboard and plywood resembling a "labyrinth" (41). Similarly, Dyer designs and builds scale models of his churches, and he refers to his churches as labyrinths (15, 26). Like Dyer who reads *Doctor Faustus* (10) and is called "*little Faustus*" by Mirabilis (italics in original, 57), Thomas reads *Dr Faustus and Queen Elizabeth* (36). Light and darkness can therefore be seen as aspects of identity which manifest in characters in different ways, creating ties between characters within the same time and characters who live centuries apart.

The interplay between light and darkness is furthermore evident in Dyer's churches. Dyer's churches are built near or on the mass burial pits of plague victims or on the ruins of places of worship and sacrifice predating Christianity in Brittain. The foundations of Dyer's churches may therefore be understood as dark, drawing on the symbolic association of both death and the occult with darkness. Nonetheless, the darkness of Dyer's churches is ambiguous: when dictating a letter to the Commission in charge of rebuilding churches in London, Dyer is careful to insert phrases which speak to the Christian requirements of the Commission. He tells Walter Payne to write "I have us'd the manner of building the Sepulture as it was in the Fourth Century, in the purest time of Christianity" and "this also in the manner of the Early Christians" (25). In an Eliotian fashion, darkness can be associated with Christianity and with God. In "East Coker" III, lines 12-13, for example, Eliot writes "I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you/ Which shall be the darkness of God". Eliot's use of darkness suggests that darkness is a prerequisite for light, just as ignorance is a prerequisite for knowledge. Instead of simply viewing Dyer's churches as dark spaces disguised as light, their syncretism forms a pattern of both light and darkness.

Dyer's last church, Little St Hugh, is the only one that is entirely imaginary with no corresponding church in actuality. Although initially described as dark, once Hawksmoor embraces the darkness and "allow[s] it to grow dark" around him, it becomes a place of "half-light" (270). As both characters come closer to meeting at Little St Hugh, they start

experiencing a sense of temporal and spatial disorientation (like Ned), suggesting that space and time in this church follow a different set of rules – rules governed not by natural laws, but by imagination. This church, being a place of neither light nor darkness but in some sense of both, is also a space where the past, present and future interact. Dyer and Hawksmoor appear to meet and their identities converge so that we are unable to "say where one had ended and the other had begun" (271). Dyer's remark earlier in the novel that "Time cannot be restored […] unless it be in the Imagination" (157) is therefore pertinent. In being entirely imaginary, Little St Hugh becomes a space where time is restored, to the extent that it is present all at once, and where the darkness of Dyer's character and the light of Hawksmoor's, through their unification, become "half-light". In undermining the light and darkness binary, along with the various associated binaries, the novel unmasks the familiar as strange, adding to the experience of the uncanny which pervades the text.

Whereas Dyer is connected to Hawksmoor through their association with darkness and light (the idiomatic "two sides of the same coin"), they also share the same first name: Nicholas. Although Ackroyd claims that "[a]ny relation to real people, either living or dead, is entirely coincidental" (272), the similarities are too obvious to overlook. Nicholas Hawksmoor was a well-known architect commissioned to build fifty churches after the Great Fire of London in 1666 (Jaén 31), although he designed important buildings in other parts of England too. Hawksmoor successfully designed and oversaw the building of six churches in London, which despite Ackroyd's denial, inform the novel's setting. Jaén argues that the historical architect, Nicholas Hawksmoor, is divided into the two characters of Nicholas Dyer and Nicholas Hawksmoor respectively: Hawksmoor, the detective, shares both his first name and surname with the eighteenth-century architect, but not his occupation or historical period. Nicholas Dyer, on the other hand, shares his first name, but also his occupation with the actual eighteenth-century architect and they live at roughly the same time. Both the actual Nicholas Hawksmoor and Dyer are apprenticed to a person named Sir Christopher Wren (also a well-known architect) and they share a similar architectural style (see Self, vi-vii).

The similarities between Nicholas Hawksmoor and both the architect and detective in Ackroyd's novel are reinforced by the novel's preface (xiii). The preface recalls the actual commission for the rebuilding of churches after the Great Fire of London in 1666. The preface explains: "Thus in 1711, in the ninth year of the reign of Queen Anne, and Act of Parliament was passed to erect seven new Parish Churches in the Cities of Londen and Westminister"

(xiii). Although the details, such are the number of churches, are not identical, the similarities in historical occurrences between the novel and actuality reinforce the connection between Nicholas Hawksmoor the architect, Nicholas Dyer, and the detective Nicholas Hawksmoor.

As the detective investigating the murders which appear to be committed by Dyer, Hawksmoor is the agent working to effect Dyer's downfall. In this way, Hawksmoor can be understood as Dyer's nemesis. Yet, Hawksmoor can also be understood as a particular temporal manifestation of Dyer himself. Dyer narrates his so-called "History" by relaying stories from his childhood. It becomes evident that the plague, which left him an orphan, as well as his meeting with Mirabilis and his initiation into a satanic cult, inform his narrative identity. Hawksmoor, however, does not provide us with any account of his childhood. In fact, the first three chapters which take place in the nineteen-eighties tell the stories of the young boy, Thomas Hill, and the vagrant, Ned. The first mention of Hawksmoor, interestingly, occurs only in Chapter five, not in his own time but in the eighteenth century when his arrival is anticipated by the lunatic in the asylum which Dyer and Sir Christopher Wren visit. The lunatic says to Dyer "Hark ye, you boy! I'll tell you somewhat, one Hawksmoor will this day terribly shake you!" (123). Hawksmoor therefore lacks the narrative foundation which Dyer's stories provide for his character. The narration of the stories of Thomas and Ned, although lacking the specificity of Dyer's narrations, shape Hawksmoor's narrative identity. These stories leave traces of Dyer in Hawksmoor through Dyer's association with the nineteen-eighties Thomas, both of whom are described in terms of darkness.

3.4. "Doubling" as Repetition

Whereas concepts of selfhood and individual identity usually refer to a single person across his or her lifetime, *Hawksmoor* complicates this understanding by suggesting that two characters, living almost three hundred years apart, are in some way the same person and that traces of several others also manifest in them. In Sigmund Freud's paper "The Uncanny", he refers to the phenomenon of the "double" (Freud 234). The "double" can be seen as another form of repetition, patterning and simultaneity. Although Freud discusses repetition and doubling in relation to the feeling of the uncanny, this doubling also offers insight into identity and selfhood. The uncanny can be understood as the familiar or homely which becomes unfamiliar

and strange, such as the self's becoming unfamiliar and strange to it*self*[22]. Freud explains ways in which doubling or repetition manifests as follows:

> […] we have characters who are to be considered identical because they look alike. This relation is accentuated by mental processes leaping from one of these characters to another – by what we should call telepathy –, so that the one possesses knowledge, feelings and experience in common with the other. Or it is marked by the fact that the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own. *In other words, there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self*. And finally there is the constant recurrence of the same thing – the repetition of the same features or character-traits or vicissitudes, of the same crimes, or even the same names through several consecutive generations. (Freud 234, emphasis added)

Ackroyd draws on all these forms of repetition or doubling in *Hawksmoor*. The repetition of names as well as the murders which appear to be the same as those committed in the eighteenth century constitute forms of doubling. So, for instance, we have the repetition of Thomas Hill in both centuries. The eighteenth-century Thomas falls to his death from one of Dyer's churches (26-27). In the twentieth century, Thomas goes into a crypt in a church yard. He slips and is injured after which he is unable to escape. His death is described ambiguously, suggesting that he loses consciousness, but also that there is someone (Dyer?) present at this moment (49). Although the boys do not die in the same manner, they both serve as sacrifices to consecrate Dyer's churches.

We also find the repetition of names, which, despite minor differences, are uncannily similar: Walter Pyne is Dyer's assistant, whereas Walter Payne is Hawksmoor's assistant. Mrs West is Hawksmoor's landlady, whereas Mrs Best is Dyer's landlady. Yorick Hayes works alongside Dyer and is ultimately killed by him when Dyer suspects that Hayes has been plotting against him. He is found "beneath the Pipes new laid by St Mary Woolnoth" (211). In the chapter which follows this murder, Mathew Hayes, a young boy, is found murdered in the nineteen-eighties. The name Yorick from the eighteenth-century character additionally creates an intertextual link with both William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Laurence Sterne's *Tristram*

[22] See Freud's full article "The Uncanny" (pp. 219-252).

Shandy. In *Hamlet* Scene 5, Act 1, lines 174-185, which takes place in a churchyard, Hamlet and Horatio speak to a gravedigger. Hamlet looks upon a scull, and in recognizing the scull as belonging to the King's jester exclaims "Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio" (line174). In *Tristram Shandy*, a character's gravestone is marked with the inscription "Alas, poor YORICK!" (Sterne 25). In all three instances, the name Yorick refers to a character who has died, but it also serves as a reminder for the place where the physical remains of this character are buried or found, namely, a churchyard. In this way, naming functions intertextually, linking all three characters to space.

Jaén (34) points out that names are repeated not only between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, but also within the same time and for different victims. The name Thomas is found in the name Thomas Hill, a character in both centuries, as well as Thomas Robinson – Dyer's fifth victim. The surname Robinson belongs to Dyer's victim but is also the forgotten surname of the twentieth-century vagrant Ned. Jaén (34) maintains that the repetition of names "strongly suggests the interchangeability of the victims". I maintain, however, that this repetition more strongly contributes to a sense of shared identity between characters across time. Although the names are not identical, the similarities suggest that traces from characters from the past, such as names, persist and are reincarnated into future characters.

As another form of "doubling", there are numerous references throughout the novel not only to Dyer and Hawksmoor, but to an array of other characters wearing dark coats: In the seventeenth century, Mirabilis picks up his "dark Coat" (60), and Dyer is often described as wearing a "dark coat" (157). In the twentieth century, Thomas Hill looks out of a window and finds "what seemed to be a figure in a dark coat looking up at him" (41); later a figure walks ahead of Thomas "wearing some kind of dark top-coat or over-coat" (44); a tramp questioned as part of Hawksmoor's investigation recalls seeing a man in a "dark coat" yet he cannot remember when (80); and Hawksmoor takes off his "dark coat" (191). A coat, as a piece of clothing that can be worn or discarded at will, suggests a fragment of identity, a part of a story, which various characters assume but which does not seem to belong solely to any individual character. The wearing of a coat, however, is not always entirely voluntary. After leaving his home, the twentieth-century Ned, for example, wants to remove his coat, but realizes that he is wearing only a pajama jacket underneath (92). Ned is therefore compelled to take up the proverbial mantle of the wanderer, the vagrant, the murderer, the detective and the architect despite feeling uncomfortable assuming these identities.

Doubling also occurs, as Freud mentions, through "mental processes leaping from one […] character to another" (234). We certainly find examples of this doubling or repetition, such as Dyer's deciding to dress like a tramp and wander the streets, and Hawksmoor's having a compulsion to do the same. Yet, we also find characters speaking to one another across different timelines and similar memories being shared by different characters. The lunatic in the asylum, for instance, speaks to Dyer of Hawksmoor, whereas Hawksmoor's father speaks to him of events which occur in the eighteenth century. The conflation of mental processes can perhaps most clearly be seen when Hawksmoor starts thinking and behaving more like Dyer over the course of his murder investigations culminating in the two characters arriving at the same church. This concurrence supports the notion that Dyer's churches, and particularly Little St Hugh, are spaces where past, present and future merge, and where through the effacing of time, individual identity becomes communal identity tied to space.

The same type of characters, often sharing the same names, are always to be found within the same spaces. Although the novel describes them as "the guardian spirits (as it were) of each place" (101), these characters also function as Jungian Archetypes: they have always existed in some form, and are part of our collective unconscious, or at the very least, the collective unconscious of people sharing the same spaces, such as the space of London, throughout time. The names of characters, their patterns of behaviour, the spaces they live in, and even their scant possessions (such as Ned's single photograph) are repeated to the extent that they appear always to have been the same. Whereas some characters still appear to have their own identities linked to memories, the identities of the vagrants in the novel become so enmeshed with space that they can no longer separate their identities from the spaces they inhabit.

Identity, as suggested above, is explicitly linked to memory. While in thought, Dyer becomes "lost in the wastes of Time" and it is only when "the Particles of Memory gather around [him] that [he is himself] again" (57). This suggests that memories make us who we are. The vagrants, on the other hand are "lashe[d]" with "Forgetfullnesse" (81). Their names lack specificity and instead of being distinguished by their surnames, they are known for the places they frequent: Watercress Joe can be found near St Mary Woolnoth, Black Sam is often seen near Whitechapel and Limehouse; Harry the Goblin is associated with Spittalfieds and Artillery Lane whereas Mad Frank is linked with Bloomsbury, while Italian Audrey can "always be found in the dockside area of Wapping" and Alligator "never moved from Greenwich" (101).

The novel tells us that "it is not known whether they chose the area, or whether the area itself had called them and taken them in" (101), suggesting that the area exerts an influence on the individuals living there.

3.5. Psychogeography and Spacetime

The curious character of the six London churches which were designed and whose construction was overseen by the actual seventeenth and early eighteenth-century architect, Nicholas Hawksmoor, serves as a source of inspiration for *Hawksmoor* (see *HM* 272). In the Acknowledgements to *Hawksmoor*, Ackroyd identifies Iain Sinclair's poem, *Lud Heat* (1975), as the source "which first directed [his] attention to the stranger characteristics of the London churches" (272). The churches, for example, appear to be built in the form of a hexagram (six-pointed star) – a symbol often associated with the occult. Additionally, the actual Hawksmoor's architectural style is reminiscent of the Baroque, and not necessarily the architectural styles common at the time, making the appearance of the churches anachronistic. Self (vi) also refers to "Nicholas Hawksmoor's unique architectural syncretism", anticipating the syncretism which Dyer designs into his churches in *Hawksmoor*. In the novel, Dyer's general resistance to more modern architectural styles (from the perspective of the eighteenth century), his resistance to dominant Christian iconography, and his aversion to the so-called "rational" and "scientific" methods of the Royal Academy more specifically are reflective of his resistance to linear notions of time.

Hawksmoor has frequently been discussed in relation to psychogeography. Guy Debord's often quoted definition describes psychogeography as "[t]he study of the specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals" (Debord, as quoted by Coverley 10). Key to psychogeography, according to Coverley, is the "activity of walking" (12), the *dérive* or "drift" through an urban environment. Debord (62) describes the *dérive* as an activity whereby "one or more persons […] let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there". Yet, because "cities have psychogeographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones," the *dérive* is not simply a matter of chance (Debord 62). Instead of simply "drifting" through urban spaces, the path which the "dériver" takes is influenced by the city itself. Debord (63) further contends that "the first psychogeographical attractions discovered by dérivers may tend to fixate them around

new habitual axes, to which they will constantly be drawn back." Debord's observation, highlighting the way in which people are drawn to places, relates to the way in which characters fixate around places over time in *Hawksmoor*.

Debord's understanding of the *dérive* underscores the influence that the city has on the characters in Ackroyd's text, particularly those who walk through the city, as seen in Baudelaire's figure of the *flâneur*, the stroller or solitary walker (Coverley 19-20), a figure closely related to the *dérive*. As Will Self (ix) highlights in his introduction to *Hawksmoor*, apart from a few carriage or sedan chair trips, we follow Dyer on foot through the spaces of London. Hawksmoor, on the other hand, travels by car but as he becomes more engrossed in his investigation of the murders, "he too is driven out of doors to wander, a dead man walking, along the Commercial Road" (Self ix). Dyer, and to a lesser extent Hawksmoor, each therefore becomes a version of "[t]he wanderer, the stroller, the flâneur and the stalker" (Coverley 12).

The act of walking allows both Dyer and Hawksmoor to explore "those marginal and forgotten areas often overlooked by the city's inhabitants" and in doing so "to challenge the official representation of the city" (Coverley 12). The "marginal and forgotten areas" contribute to the sense of the uncanny which pervades the novel. Approaching buildings from different locations may, for instance, reveal the familiar characteristics of the urban landscape as strange. When investigating the murder of the boy found at St Mary Woolnoth, Hawksmoor decides to cross the street:

> From the corner there, he could see the front of the church entrance: he had passed it before but had never looked at it, and now it seemed startlingly incongruous in its setting despite the fact that other buildings so pressed in upon it that it was almost concealed. He imagined that very few people who passed its walls realized that they were the walls of a church and as a result the building, massive though it was, had managed to disappear from sight […] this church had grown larger and more distinct in the face of death. (193-194)

Through the activity of walking and viewing the church from a different angle, the church itself becomes clearer to Hawksmoor, taking on a corporeality it had lost. Not only his altered position, however, but the death of the boy compels Hawksmoor to see the city, which is familiar to him, afresh.

Self (viii) notes that by comparison with the eighteenth-century sections of the novel, Hawksmoor's London "seems etiolated, attenuated – … confusingly insubstantial"; only the tramps and street urchins, Self argues, "have an aura of reality about them" [23]. The contrast between eighteenth-century London coupled with the use of the present tense, and the nineteen-eighties framed by the past tense, evokes the past of the novel (Dyer's London) as more substantial and tangible than the novel's present (Hawksmoor's London). Dyer uses the metaphor of a pen's being dipped into ink which is dark and clear at the beginning, but fades and becomes light and illegible towards the end (112). Rushdie, employing his metaphor of the cinema screen, similarly suggests that the past is often clearer than the present (see "Imaginary Homelands" 13). Dyer's churches in the twentieth century also appear more intangible and lost in the maze (or labyrinth) of buildings which constitute London. Each murder, however, accentuates Dyer's churches to the extent that each one, like St Mary Woolnoth described above, becomes "larger and more distinct in the face of death" (194).

Psychogeography directs our focus to the manner in which space exert an influence on characters, drawing them in and altering their behaviour. For Ackroyd, however, the *dérive* takes on another dimension. It is not only a drift through the urban landscape, but through time. For Ackroyd "it is a circumambulation through time as well as place: a widening gyre that exposes the very timelessness of this two-millennia-old city" (Self viii)[24].

Einstein's theories of relativity maintain that time and space cannot be considered as separate entities because time is always measured from a particular three-dimensional spatial position or context within a "four-dimensional spacetime fabric" (Overduin; see also West-Pavlov 183). In both special and general relativity, absolute space and absolute time are called into question. Hawkings (17-18) provides an insightful explanation of the conundrum of absolute space as challenged by Newtonian science and which Einstein used to advance his theories of relativity: if the same experiment were to be carried out on a moving body as well as somewhere stationary, both iterations would still be subjected to the same (Newtonian) laws. For example, if ping-pong were played on a moving train, the ball would move subject to the train and passengers, whereas if someone were to play-pong on a table next to the train track, the ball

[23] The use of the word "reality" in this instance denotes the actual, or refers to a more tangible, concrete representation of London.
[24] This recalls Yeats' theory of history and time where he draws on the idea of two gyres.

would move relative to the table and track. The movement of the ping-pong ball is shown to be relative to the space (whether moving or not). From this we can deduce that space is not absolute, but, particularly when measuring time and motion, that space is relative. Oversimplifying of necessity considering the complexity of both Newton's and Einstein's thought, we can think of events as taking place on a four-dimensional grid: this includes the three dimensions of space and the fourth dimension of time, all of which are relative to one another. The general theory of relativity further maintains that in the four-dimensional spacetime structure, time can be distorted by the gravitational fields of large bodies of matter or by energy (see Hawking 32, and West-Pavlov 26). It is on this idea that I would like to focus, particularly in relation to how characters are drawn to large structures such as Stone Henge.

According to Greaney, Stone Henge was built in stages. The first stage dates back to roughly 2500BC, with several burial mounds nearby. At a later stage, about two to three hundred years later, the bluestones in the centre were altered "to form a circle and inner oval", which was later changed again to resemble the shape of a horseshoe. There is evidence of further work being done to the monument between 1800BC and 1500BC. Additionally, the area surrounding the monument tells the rich history of the inhabitants of the area over thousands of years. Stone Henge has often been studied as a sacred place where rituals were performed and sacrifices made, creating a link to Dyer's churches, which serve a similar function.

An object which recurs throughout the novel is a compass, a device that orients one in terms of place or space. On the journey that Dyer undertakes with Sir Christopher Wren to Stone Henge, Sir Christopher decides to conduct an experiment: he places the compass on the carriage floor. His experiment, however, is disrupted by the carriage's going over the side of a bridge, forcing the passengers to exit through a window (71). Sir Christopher climbs out of the window and "dropp'[s] into the Dust" (71). A disruption in place therefore also leads to a disruption in time. Through this accident, Sir Christopher loses his compass which is found again in another time (the nineteen-eighties).

Upon arriving at Stone Henge, Dyer describes the "short grass" as "seem[ing] to spring [them] forwards to the great Stones" (71), reminding us of the gravitational pull of large masses or bodies. Around the stones Dyer hears "the Kaw of a Crow" which fills him with terror as "it was not of this Time" (72). The crow's caw is echoed throughout the novel, linking Stone

Henge to other sacred places, but also to other times. At the beginning of the novel, while Dyer is lost in thought, "a Crow calls" suggesting "those other sounds of Time" (23). In the nineteen-eighties, Ned's trail in the grass while walking near Stone Henge fades and it is as though "a gust of wind bl[ows] him towards the circle" (92). In addition, "[a] crow call[s] somewhere above him" while "voices swirl[…] around him" (92). In particular, he hears his father saying "'I had a vision of my son dead'", (93) almost identically echoing Sir Christopher's words in the eighteenth century. Although in folklore birds are seen as messengers, the crow is often regarded with superstition[25]. The crow may be seen as a bad omen, associated with death, but intriguingly it is also said to have prophetic powers (see Phipson 186). The caw of the crow, scattered throughout the novel, therefore functions as a (prophetic) voice bringing news of death, as in the case of Sir Christopher's son, but also as a voice speaking across different times, being tied to liminal, ritual spaces. The crow's caw is thus indicative of the changing sense of time which characters experience near Stone Henge. It is heard only in spaces where the boundaries between different times become permeable and where characters can no longer distinguish the sounds of the present from those of the past or future[26].

Although the grass and wind seem to edge Dyer and Ned towards the stones, there is also a psychological dimension to the pull that Stone Henge exerts on the characters. Dyer, for example, rushes forward in order to reach the stones before Sir Christopher, although he does not give his reason for doing so. Stone Henge, in this way, exerts an influence on Dyer's actions, compelling him to act in a certain way. Dyer's eagerness to reach the stones before Sir Christopher may partially be understood through his awareness that stones serve as conduits for time and that they harbour knowledge of the past and future – knowledge which Sir Christopher would not grasp because of his emphasis on the rational and observable. When leaning his back against a "great Stone", for example, Dyer

> Felt in the Fabrick the Labour and Agonie of those who erected it, the power of Him who enthrall'd them, and the marks of Eternity which had been placed there. [He] could hear the Cryes and Voices of those long since gone […].

[25] Consider, for instance, the dove and the raven in the biblical story of Noah. Although the dove does not speak, it brings back a message in the form of an olive branch.

[26] Both Ackroyd and Rushdie make use of the senses as a means of traversing time. Saleem Sinai is able to smell into the past, whereas Dyer and a few other characters can, at times, hear the past and future. This may suggest that time should be understood phenomenologically, or through our bodily experiences, rather than through logic and reasoning.

The stones of Stone Henge, as well as the stones used to build Dyer's churches, therefore contain the stories, or fragments thereof, of those who had worked with the stone and been associated with these ritual spaces in some capacity in the past. De Lange (151-152) argues that stone "becomes a symbol of the enduring and eternal", but more importantly he highlights that by becoming stone, Dyer is also able to traverse the fourth dimension, namely time. At Stone Henge, Dyer explains:

> I was struck by an exstatic Reverie in which all the surface of this Place seemed to me Stone, and the Sky itself Stone, and I became Stone as I joined the Earth which flew on like a Stone through the Firmament. (72)

By becoming stone, Dyer absorbs the voices from the past, fragments of their stories, and in this way, becomes part of the collective identity tied to Stone Henge.

When the rays of the sun shine through the columns of Stone Henge, the words "the Banks where wild Time blows" (74) are brought to Dyer mind. Although the archaic language used in the eighteenth-century sections of the novel may confuse the meaning of the word "time" (that is, being either "time" or "thyme"), Dyer's hearing of voices and his contemplation of the sun as a marker of time suggest that he is referring to Stone Henge as the place where wild, uncontrolled and untamed, *time* blows. Additionally, the reference to "the Banks where wild Time blows" alludes to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In Act 2, Scene 1, lines 269 – 288, Oberon explains to Puck where to find Titania. Line 270 reads "I know a bank where the wild thyme blows", where Shakespeare plays with the word "thyme" to suggest both the herb, but also "time". This allusion draws a parallel between Stone Henge in Ackroyd's novel and the woods in Shakespeare's play, where the woods serve as a magical, other-worldly place where time follows a different set of rules. Linley (212) explains that "[t]o the Elizabethans woods and forests were places of ancient forces, connected with mystery, the spirit world, magic, evil and the misperceptions that can come in the dark." Woods and forests, like Stone Henge and Dyer's churches, were also places of "ritual customs" (212).

A Midsummer Night's Dream, it is also within the woods that we find a disruption of time, particularly the times of waking and of sleeping, and where the dream world and actuality become enmeshed. Through the use of the juice of a magical flower which Puck places on the

eyelids of sleeping characters, they fall in love with the first creature they see when awakening. The mischief caused by Puck while doing Oberon's bidding results in both Lysander and Demetrius falling in love with Helena instead of both men being in love with Hermia, as at the start of the play. They fall asleep again and Puck places a restorative juice on Lysander's eyelids. The characters wake and think of the events as a strange dream, yet the play calls into question the boundaries between the actual and the illusionary. Demetrius' altered affections suggest that dream states have an influence on the actual, making these dream states concrete through the manifestation of their influence. In the novel, dreams appear to be conduits for transferring knowledge, knowledge not restricted to the past, but also including the future. Dyer explains the design of the Spittle-Fields church to which Walter Pyne, Dyer's assistant, responds that he had "Dream'd of this" (17). Furthermore, in the novel, as in Shakespeare's play, what occurs in ritual, liminal spaces, despite the dreamlike quality of these events has repercussions for what happens beyond the boundaries of these spaces.

3.6. Crossroads, "Thresholds" and Aporias

The repetition of events in the same spaces is significant in Ackroyd's exploration of time. Ackroyd explains that

> there's a topographical power, a topographical spirit, and it has nothing to do with ley lines[27], nothing to do with any of that, but it does have to do with what happens on any one spot over and over again. (Ackroyd and Wolfreys 101)

The physical patterning of Dyer's churches becomes part of the larger pattern of the murders which Hawksmoor investigates. As a detective, Hawksmoor "never neglected the opportunity of studying the pattern of murder" (143). Strangulation, for instance, was common in the eighteenth century, whereas poisoning was common in the late nineteenth century (143). Regarding the investigations of the murders committed on the sites of Dyer's churches, the usual pattern no longer seems to fit: the means of murder is better suited to the eighteenth century and the murders seem "to be taking place at the wrong time" (143). The connection

[27] Coverley (18) defines ley lines as "those alignments linking sites and objects of prehistoric antiquity that provide a means of reading the landscape." Ley lines are discussed in relation to psychogeography whereby the lines connecting objects and places are understood as exerting an influence on those around them. Ackroyd's comment also ties in with Freud's observations regarding the phenomenon of doubling, where similar events or crimes are repeated in the same place over time.

between the murders and the churches is not initially evident to Hawksmoor. During his investigations, a scrap of paper is brought to his desk along with all the mail received from various sources connected with the case. The words "DON'T FORGET" are printed across the top (207). The paper also contains a drawing of four crosses, connected so as to resemble an arrow. Hawksmoor comes to the realization that the crosses may represent the location of the four murders which had occurred up to this point, with each cross as the conventional sign for a church, although he does not realise that the churches were all designed by Dyer.

The words "DON'T FORGET" (207), although commonly found on memorandum pads, serve as a reminder to Hawksmoor. Dyer frequently exclaims that his churches will not be forgotten. He remarks, for instance that "[t]hey do not sing my Praise now but they will never, never forget my Work." Hawksmoor's initial oversight in failing to link the churches to the murders in some manner is a forgetting of Dyer's churches, and in so doing he also starts to forget part of the identity of London.

The crosses, additionally, represent the intersection of two lines. Dyer's churches are often built at crossroads: Dyer's church at Spittle-Fields, for instance, stands "where three roads meet" (11; 34), as does his Limehouse church, where a "Congregation of Rogues or Vagabonds" live (76). "Crossroads", Johnston (217) reminds us, "are liminal points or transitional gaps between defined, bounded areas, that is, between roads or between the areas of land that roads define". Although crossroads are spatial points of convergence, in the novel they also come to represent spaces of temporal convergence. In folklore, crossroads are places of ritual, superstition, where the veil between the natural and the supernatural is lifted. Johnston (217) further maintains that crossroads are liminal points, like "doors, gates, rivers and frontiers", and that they are places of uncertainty which "require[e] special rituals" (217). Liminal spaces resist classification: when roads meet, the crossroad can no longer simply be identified as either of the roads. Similarly, a doorway or threshold is neither inside, nor outside (see Johnston 217).

Characters in the novel survive their own deaths to the extent that fragments of their identities continue to exist in various configurations in the future. For Derrida, death is enigmatic in that we are unable to *think* our own death: dying is "the impossibility of being dead, the impossibility of living or rather "existing" one's death, as well as the impossibility of existing once one is dead" (73). In other words, once we are dead, we cannot think about death, and

while we are still alive, we are unable to think about or understand what death truly means. Death is an impasse; it is both a passage and a nonpassage. It is a limit that cannot be crossed. Yet, death is also a limit that must be crossed. Recalling the recurrence of "thresholds" throughout *Hawksmoor*, death is, according to Derrida an "impassable border, thresholds that no step could pass". The threshold signifies a point of no return, a point at which a change is inevitable, yet the exact point of crossing cannot be identified. For all characters who cross a "threshold", the threshold also signifies their approaching death.

In the nineteen-eighties, Thomas Hill "open[s] the door and crosse[s] the threshold" (44). This marks the last time he leaves his home before he dies. Still in the nineteen-eighties, Ned "step[s] over the threshold" of his room and "passe[s] the threshold" of the Wapping church, in the presence of the church becoming a vagrant while leaving his previous life and identity behind (91). Before Ned seems to die, he "crosse[s] the threshold" for the last time (105). In this last instance, Ned hears a whisper sounding like "'I' or 'me'", echoing Dyer's "*Ay me*" after killing Ned in the seventeen-hundreds (80, italics in original). Yet, death in all these instances is ambiguous as fragments of these characters are repeated and reincarnated in different times and characters, making them immortal in some way, and so suggesting that past, present and future, which are all contained in the past, are also eternally present.

Liminal spaces can be understood as "in between" spaces, spaces of transition and change where individuals undergo rites of passage. Thompson (22) lists three criteria of rites of passage, namely: "the spiritual/symbolic need of the participants are addressed through engaging in a ritual or ceremony which allows for a 'new' construction of self"; a community of witnesses is formed; and participants are challenged or "conditions are presented as a test of character" allowing them "to pass through to the next life phrase". Examining the meeting between Dyer and Hawksmoor in Little St Hugh as a rite of passage provides interesting insights.

The ritual, as Thompson notes, "allows for a 'new' construction of self", a self, in this instance, belonging to both Dyer and Hawksmoor. Secondly, although the novel makes no mention of any other characters being in the church of Little St Hugh in the last chapter, the vagrants who have come to occupy the spaces near Dyer's churches and who have lost their sense of both time and place, become witnesses to the process through which Dyer's and Hawksmoor's identities converge. In this way the vagrants underscore intersubjectivity and the co-creation

of identity. Lastly, Dyer and Hawksmoor are presented with a test of character. Hawksmoor's test more closely resembles the traditional quest, where he is led from one church to the next in his murder investigation and where each stage of his investigation challenges him to see the pattern created by Dyer. His recognition that Dyer's churches form a pattern that anticipates where the next and last murder will take place allows him "to pass through to the next life phase", suggesting that Hawksmoor becomes the murderer's last victim. The novel also suggests that Dyer is both murderer and, like Hawksmoor, the last sacrifice. He crosses a "threshold" and acknowledges that he "had run to the end of [his] Time" (261), presenting him with the challenge of his own death, and allowing him to continue into the next life phase through partial reincarnation.

Jaén (41) describes the meeting in Little St Hugh, coupled with repetition and patterning in the novel, in terms of a ritual of reincarnation. He argues

> that the duplication of characters and the repetitions of situations and actions acquire overall meaning, as it helps explain the otherwise baffling existence of Hawksmoor: Dyer, who must experience all kinds of human situations in order to achieve his long sought-for essential transformation, has to be both murderer and victim, but also criminal and criminal hunter. This he achieves by the suggested reincarnations in the tramps and children and by his identification with the person who, according to the Demoniack's warning, 'will this day terribly shake you'. (41)

Characters are therefore reincarnated in fragments throughout different times. These fragments manifest within different characters, not as coherent identities but as syncretic particles which add to the creation and renegotiation of new identities.

Dyer's churches, and Little St Hugh more particularly, as well as Stone Henge are spaces which embody aporias of death and aporias of time. Ricoeur identifies the irreconcilability between phenomenological time (or the experience of time) with absolute time (as time which is consistent and measurable) as the dominant aporia of time in philosophy (see Muldoon 59)[28]. In *Hawksmoor*, we are presented with a different aporia. The novel presents us with the

[28] See page 12-13 on aporias.

paradox of time as experienced, that is, as time in which events occur, in which stories unfold and in which identities are created and renegotiated, as coinciding not with cosmic, absolute time but with time as simultaneity where all temporal strands of becoming are present at once. In the opening lines of Eliot's *Four Quartets*, "Burnt Norton", lines 1-5, Eliot presents us with a similar paradox:

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.

Yet, *Four Quartets* and *Hawksmoor* seem to reach different conclusions. Although hinting at spiritual alternatives, in *Four Quartets* Eliot suggests that the simultaneity of time would necessarily imply that "All time is unredeemable", indicating that the paradox remains unresolved. For *Hawksmoor*, temporal restoration is facilitated by the presence of an imaginative person in ritual, liminal spaces such as Little St Hugh.

The restoration of time entails that time is repossessed or re*lived* in some way, highlighting the particularly human aspect of time. Through the constant reconfiguration of identity, we are able to redeem time, not as a coherent whole, but as syncretic and fragmented, embodied in our narrative identities. Narrative identity, however, belongs just as much to the collective who inhabits spaces, such as in the city of London, as it does to individuals. In feeding back into the identities of its inhabitants, the people most closely associated with spaces in the novel (such as vagrants and children) come to resemble a collective, no longer identifiable through individual character traits, but through character traits which are repeated throughout time and which recur in these characters in different narrative configurations.

3.7. Conclusion

The sense of time embodied in Ackroyd's London is time grounded in repetition, simultaneity and patterning. Instead of suggesting that time is cyclical, however, *Hawksmoor* embodies a time of non-identical repetition where traces of the past manifest in the present and future in new configurations, culminating in new narrative identities. The syncretic accumulation of

fragments of the past are exemplified in Ackroyd's use of symbols, Dyer's churches, and the identities of characters throughout the novel.

Additionally, the novel explores how both time and space exert an influence on the identities of characters by drawing them in, altering their behaviour, and distorting their sense of time and place. Both psychogeography and Einsteinian spacetime provide a framework from which to understand the interaction between space, time and identity.

Lastly, Dyer's churches, Stone Henge and various "thresholds" throughout the novel function as liminal, ritual spaces where characters are able to cross the "threshold" separating the past and future, and where fragments of their identities are reincarnated in future characters. These liminal spaces compel us to consider the possibility that death is overcome through repetition and simultaneity. We are therefore asked to consider the impossible – that perhaps one can "exist" one's death and that perhaps all time is present as the present is simply a new configuration of the traces and the fragments of the past.

4. *Everything Is Illuminated*

4.1. Introduction: Identity Through Shared Memory

At the age of twenty, Jonathan Safran Foer, the author of *Everything Is Illuminated*, embarked on a journey to Ukraine to find out more about his family history. This journey, however, did not provide any new insights into his family's past. Foer explains that he "didn't even find the kind of absence [he] was anticipating. It wasn't an evocative absence, it wasn't a moving experience, it was just nothing" ("Jonthan Safran Foer interview"). Against the backdrop of this "nothingness", *Everything Is Illuminated* was written. The novel details the journey of a Jewish American, who like the author is also named Jonathan Safran Foer, and whose grandfather he believes was saved from the Nazis by a woman presumed to have been named Augustine. The novel, instead of providing a factually accurate historical account of the past (within the framework of the fictional world of the text), juxtaposes a realist version of the trip undertaken by Jonathan, Alex (Jonathan's translator), Alex's grandfather, and the dog Sammy Davis Junior, Junior, with a magical realist account of Jonathan's ancestors who lived in the Trachimbrod shtetl. In the absence of any tangible evidence to support or refute details regarding his family's past, the fictional Jonathan Safran Foer creates his own history based on his contemporary experiences.

Everything Is Illuminated presents us with a narrative made up of different interwoven stories and perspectives, across different times, told not by a single narrator but from the perspectives of two protagonists taking on different narratorial voices. The novel takes the form of an exchange of letters between Jonathan and Alex in which Jonathan's fictional family history constitutes only one narrative strand. This epistolary form reinforces the temporal distancing and deferment throughout the novel through our awareness of the time that lapses between letters – an awareness shared by Alex who writes to Jonathan that "[w]e have always communicated in this misplaced time" (218). Each of Alex's letters to Jonathan is accompanied by an account of their trip, written by Alex, and Jonathan's letters (which we are never shown) are accompanied by chapters from his fictional family history set in a distant, mythical past. Although written in the present tense, the different narrative strands are set in different times, and the temporal distance and interweaving between each section reinforces a view of time as a network of interwoven temporal strands.

Although on the surface *Everything Is Illuminated* tells the story of the trip undertaken by the three men along with the dog, on a deeper level the novel also explores the way in which trauma informs identity. For Jonathan, the trip is an attempt at uncovering a past tied to the history of his grandfather during World War II. The novel, however, never reveals details of Jonathan's grandfather's past, and instead traces the influence of this unknown past on Jonathan. Stated differently, the novel presents us with the effects of trauma, instead of with a representation of the traumatic event itself. As opposed to the absence of specified events, Alex's grandfather (referred to as Grandfather), also a survivor of the war, reveals the details of a particular traumatic event in which he was forced to choose between protecting his friend and saving his wife and child from death. This event shapes not only his identity, but through the transferal of traumatic memory, continues to inform Alex's narrative identity.

In this chapter I will explore the manner in which stories feed into our identities and offer a means of negotiating, although not denying, the past. I will focus not on the representation of traumatic events as such, but on how the trauma of these events manifests in the identities of those who experienced the events directly, and in those to whom traumatic memories have been transferred by others (such as from grandparents to grandchildren). For this reason, I will offer a brief definition of "trauma", considering the implications of trauma on time, identity and narrative. When confronted with the task of representing historical trauma through narrative, we are also reckoning with time, although time in this instance may be understood as fractured and dislocated. Because of the interconnectedness between time, temporality, narrative and identity, a fracture or disruption in time suggests a concomitant challenge to identity and narrative understanding.

By drawing on the thought of Marianne Hirsch, I will briefly consider the notion of "postmemory", understood as the way in which the traumatic memories of the past are transmitted to descendants of those who experienced the actual traumatic event. These memories are not always explicitly shared, but are passed down through behavioural patterns, through artefacts such as photographs, through fragments of stories and through silences. The silences and absences which permeate stories should, I argue, be understood as silences or rests in a musical composition. A silence is nothing in itself. It is not a sound (a vibration at a certain frequency), but it is surrounded by sound. It is therefore a "negative" or "absence" which is defined by the sound which precedes and comes after it. Yet, as a whole, the musical composition is just as dependent on the silences as it is on the sound. In stories, that which we

omit, whether consciously or not, or that which finds expression in behaviour rather than in language for instance, is therefore still important.

Derrida's notion of "cinders", which I will also briefly consider, presents us with another way of understanding traces or fragments of the past manifesting in the present, and which constitute neither absence nor presence. Cinders have the curious nature of seeming to present something that was, but is no longer, that which is left after something or somebody has been consumed by fire. Yet, we are prompted to ask, is a cinder something in itself, or is it that which has been "consumed" or "destroyed" by fire? Fragments of identity and of the stories which constitute identity, I maintain, function as "cinders". In being transferred to others, fragments of the (traumatic) past undergo a change: they are consumed not by fire, but by the process of transferal. In this way, each fragment, each trace of the past, is inherently changed by the way in which it manifests in the identities of those to whom it has been transferred. The Trachimbrod shtetl can also be viewed as a cinder, which despite its physical destruction remains as an emblem of its past.

Lastly, Foer employs the metaphor of strands or strings to show our connectedness to the stories of others from different times and contexts, as well as the stories which connect us to our contemporaries. Instead of linear time, time is imagined as a network of strings which cross, knot, weave together, entrap and unravel. I will examine how these strings, as remnants of stories, as silences, as memories, are temporal strands of becoming which weave together identity.

4.2. Trauma

The word "trauma" comes from the Greek *trauma*, meaning "wound" or "injury inflected on the body" (Caruth 3). "Trauma", however, has also come to be understood as a wound inflicted on the mind. Engaged in an appraisal of Freud's writing on trauma, Caruth explains that

> the wound of the mind – the breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world – is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that […] is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to by fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor […] so trauma is not

> locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on. (3-4 italics in original)

There are two ideas in this extract that I would like to turn my attention towards. Firstly, the claim that trauma is "the breach in the mind's experience of *time*, *self*, and the world" (emphasis added); and secondly, that trauma is located not in the "original event" but in the way that this event "returns to haunt the survivor later on".

Throughout this study thus far, I have argued that time, temporality, narrative and identity are inextricably linked. Narrative is, by its very nature, an inherently temporal epistemological stratagem through which we make sense of our embeddedness in the world around us. If trauma, as claimed in the extract above, is a "breach in the mind's experience of time", trauma also presents a challenge to narrative understanding. Because identity is formed through narrative, trauma, through the disruption of time and narrative also disrupts identity and the associated concept of the self.

The "breach in the mind's experience of time" created by a traumatic event can be understood in terms of the shock or incomprehensibility of the event as it occurs ("too soon, too unexpectedly"), resulting in the one who experienced the original event lacking the ability to comprehend the occurrence in the present. In this way traumatic events are not different from everyday events in our lives which, to greater or lesser extents, we may belatedly make sense of through narrative. Yet, in the instance of traumatic events, it is our continued inability to fully comprehend the implications of the event which manifests as trauma. In other words, although the traumatic event itself may be something that we can factually relate and understand, such as relating the details of a motor vehicle accident, it is the experience of this event, our near brush with death, that defies immediate understanding and representation: "What returns to haunt the victim […], is not only the reality of the violent event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known"[29] (Caruth 6).

For Caruth, the traumatic event is relived and manifests as "nightmares and repetitive action" (Caruth 4). Commenting on the thought of Caruth and van der Kolk in this regard, Leys argues

[29] Reality in this quotation refers to the actual.

that for both scholars "the traumatic flashbacks and nightmares are veridical memories of past traumatic events, and they both believe that those symptoms are literal replicas or reproductions of the trauma that as such stand outside all representation" (Leys and Goldman 666). There is no consensus concerning the debate surrounding whether or not trauma can be represented, and if it can be represented what form it should take. For some scholars, the fictionalizing of the past is a degradation of the past, whereas for others the Holocaust is seen as an event which defies representation and understanding, as Leys suggests both Caruth and van der Kolk do (Eisenstein 84 provides a useful summary of the most prominent debates). My intention, however, is not to engage with the complexity of this debate, but instead to work from the premise that Foer's novel constructs a narrative framework in which some, albeit limited, representation and understanding of trauma is possible. Although we may present factually accurate accounts of past events, what the novel explores is the effects of those events (the trauma) on the identities not only of those who have a lived experiences and living memory thereof, but also of those who are impacted by traumatic events more indirectly. I thus argue that trauma – that is, the grappling with and sense making of traumatic events – may find expression in narrative identity.

Although we may recall the details of a traumatic event in narrative form, i.e. as a straightforward plot with beginning, middle and end, our inability to reconcile the event with the experience thereof may, as in *Everything Is Illuminated*, manifest as a narrative which repeats, renegotiates and reforms the experience of trauma in various ways. In the novel, Alex, for instance, is told the story of how his grandfather had to choose between his wife and child, and his best friend Herschel. Grandfather explains how the Nazis invaded Kolki: "[I]n the most darkest time of the night" they came with four tanks, summoning everyone to the synagogue (247-248). The townspeople were forced to identify Jews or to face death themselves. To protect his wife and child, Grandfather identified his best friend, Herschel, as a Jew. Herschel was taken to the synagogue, which was set alight with other Jews inside. Although Grandfather acknowledges that Herschel would have been killed "with or without [him]" (247), he still thinks of himself as responsible for Herschel's murder. This story, which is central to the novel and to this analysis, may be retold in a linear fashion. Yet, Grandfather's grappling with the experience of this event suggests a different, dislocated sense of time experienced in relation to the past.

Grandfather's role in the novel differs from that of Jonathan and Alex, largely because he has a living memory of the events of the war. His part in Herschel's death calls into question whether he should be identified as an unwilling bystander, victim, perpetrator, or a combination of all these classifications – classifications which are central to his narrative identity. Feuer (45-46), for example, considers Grandfather from the perspective of a perpetrator, suggesting that the relationship between Alex and Jonathan is inflected by the victim-perpetrator distinction. Feuer (45), however, also complicates this classification by arguing that Grandfather may, in fact, also be a Jew.

In the novel, Alex, Jonathan, Grandfather and Sammy David Junior, Junior, set out to locate not only Trachimbrod, but to find the woman presumably named Augustine, who Jonathan believes saved his grandfather from the Nazis during the raid of the shtetl. Despite identifying herself as Lista later in the novel, the men continue to think of her as Augustine. This recalls Saleem's family in *Midnight's Children*, who through a "failure of imagination" could not help but think of him as their son, even when knowing he was switched with Shiva at birth[30]. Throughout this chapter I have therefore continued to refer to her as Augustine, not in disregard for the name she uses to identify herself with (Lista), but to reflect the manner in which naming also confers identity onto others[31].

Augustine tells the story of Eli and Herschel, where Eli betrayed Herschel resulting in his death. When she starts to tell the story, Grandfather becomes upset and tells her to keep her "not-truths to herself" (152). As the reader we are led to infer that Eli is Grandfather who now goes by the name of Alexander, masking his Jewish identity. Alex, as a perpetrator descendent, Feuer argues, seeks friendship and reconciliation with Jonathan, a descendant of a survivor, which Jonathan is unable to grant Alex. Doise (99) offers a slightly different perspective on Grandfather's role, suggesting that Grandfather is a perpetrator not because of his actions, per se, but because he self-identifies as Herschel's murderer. No matter how we decide to describe Grandfather's role, it is evident that the events related to the war manifest in Grandfather's behaviour in several ways.

[30] See page 47.
[31] See pages 37- 42 of this dissertation in reference to the way naming confers identity onto others.

As Augustine continues sharing details of the lives of the inhabitants of Trachimbrod and Kolki, Grandfather asks her "How can you do this?" (153) When they reach the site where Trachimbrod used to be, she continues narrating devastating stories of the shtetl's destruction and the killing of its inhabitants to which Grandfather again responds "This is not true" (185). Grandfather's reaction to Augustine's stories does not suggest a disbelief in what she says, but rather reflects a strong feeling that events should have been otherwise, a desire shared by many who have experiences horrific traumatic events. In finally telling his story, Grandfather acknowledges the "need to remember [his] own forgetfulness" (Kearney 53).

Trauma dislocates us from both the present and the past through dreaming and waking. In reliving a traumatic event through dreaming thereof, we are displaced, as it were, from the present back into the past. Yet, waking itself, Freud argues, is "*another fright*" (Freud as quoted in Caruth 64). On waking up we find that we are not in the past, but in the present, and this itself is a form of shock or fright. We are faced in that moment with the "incomprehensibility of [our] survival" (Caruth 64, drawing on Freud). In the novel, for instance, Grandfather falls asleep while waiting for Alex and Jonathan at the Lvov train station at the start of their journey. Grandfather, after being woken by Alex, does not know where he is and asks "Anna?", referring to his wife who had died two years earlier (34). In this way, his dream transports him to a different time in which Anna is still alive, and the fright of waking up is also the realisation that she is no longer alive, although he still is. Grandfather's shock in this moment may therefore be interpreted as a rupture in his experience of time, dislocating him from the present, and resulting in him reliving the past through the activity of dreaming.

Grandfather's story brings to the fore two further considerations with regards to trauma. Firstly, drawing on Caruth (7), we may view Grandfather's story as a "double telling". His story "oscillat[es] between a *crisis of death* and the correlative *crisis of life*: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival." Grandfather's memory of the past, therefore, may be said to oscillate between the possibility of his own death, as well as the possible deaths of his wife, child and best friend in the past, and his survival of this event, both of which instances are "unbearable". This "double telling" is also evident when Augustine says "[w]e were the not-lucky ones" and that "[y]ou should never have to be the one remaining" in response to Alex calling her "lucky" for surviving (153). In both examples, the so-called survivors – Grandfather and Augustine – grapple not only with the traumatic events of the past, but with them having survived when others did not. It reflects

two of the "sadnesses" identified by Brod, namely, "Sadness of remembering; Sadness of forgetting" (212). Secondly, and linked to the "double telling", Grandfather's trauma is bound to the trauma of another. Herschel's trauma, his death, his voice, are contained within Grandfather's memory of the past (compare Caruth 8). Augustine, who witnessed the destruction of the shtetl, similarly, carries the traumas of others within her. Complicating the way in which trauma is bound to the trauma of others, Grandfather's memory of this event is transferred to his son (Alex's father, although never explicitly), Alex, and to Jonathan in several ways.

4.3. Postmemory

The history of the Jewish people in Ukraine is marked by violence and loss. Even before World War II and the killing of millions of Jewish people, many Jews were killed in eastern European pogroms during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These deeply traumatic events not only impacted the survivors, but the memories of these events were transferred to the descendants of survivors through, amongst other means, stories (or fragments of stories), photographs and certain modes of behaviour (see Hirsch 106). Jonathan, for instance, recalls his grandmother's hugging him when he went to visit her and again when he left. He comes to realise that the hug shared between grandmother and grandson was a means of weighing him to ensure he picked up weight. This action is informed by her past when perhaps there was not enough to eat and thrive. In this way, behaviour becomes a vehicle through which memories are transferred to others. Although Jonathan has no actual memory of the events which led his grandmother to behave as she did, part of her trauma is carried over to him and her memories become part of his identity too.

The concept of postmemory, introduced by Marianne Hirsch (103) can be defined as "the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right." Hirsch nuances this definition by introducing the concepts of familial and affiliative postmemory. Familial postmemory describes "intergenerational vertical identification of a child and parent occurring within the family" whereas affiliative postmemory includes a broader "web of transmission" which is the "result of contemporaneity and generational connection with the literal second generation combined with structures of mediation that would be broadly appropriable, [and] available" (Hirsch 114-115). This "web

of transmission" could, for instance, include images shared by the media which are therefore "appropriable, [and] available" even though not shared directly from parent to child as in the instance of familial postmemory. Affiliative postmemory, according to Hersch's definition, may also include contemporaneous connections, such as Jonathan and Alex transmitting memories to each other or Jonathan sharing the photograph of the woman, referred to as Augustine, with Alex and Grandfather.

Although Alex is not his grandfather's child, Grandfather's memory of what he sees as his role in Herschel's death is still shared with Alex by someone in his family who has a living memory of the event. The novel suggests, however, that Grandfather withholds this memory from his son as an attempt to shield him from the past and hide the guilt and shame he feels for his role in Herschel's death. Despite never explicitly revealing his past to his son, Grandfather believes his past, through the behaviour meant to shield his son, has shaped his son's identity. He explains to Alex:

> […] I did not want your father to grow up so close to death. I did not want him to know of it, and live with it. That is why I never informed him of what occurred. I wanted so much for him to live a good life, without death and without choices and without shame. But I was not a good father, I must inform you. I was the worst father. I desired to remove him from everything that was bad, but instead I gave him badness upon badness. A father is always responsible for how his son is. You must understand. (247)

Grandfather's explanation indicates that he feels responsible for who his son is: an abusive, alcoholic father. In telling the story to Alex, Grandfather breaks the silence, and in turn perhaps also seeks to bear responsibility for Alex's and Little Igor's (Alex's brother) abuse.

Although Alex hears this story directly from Grandfather, the process through which he makes sense of what he hears is not immediate (recalling the definition of trauma as our inability to comprehend the impact of an event as it occurs). He writes to Jonathan that he has "been putting on a high shelf what [he knows he] must do, which is point a finger at Grandfather pointing at Herschel" (178). Alex considers the possibility of changing the past through narrative. He writes to Jonathan:

> We are being very nomadic with the truth, yes? The both of us? Do you think that this is acceptable when we are writing about things that occurred? If your answer is no, then why do you write about Trachimbrod and your grandfather in the manner that you do, and why do you command me to be untruthful? If your answer is yes, then this creates another question, which is if we are to be such nomads with the truth, why do we not make the story more premium than life? […] I do not think that there are limits to how excellent we could make life seem." (179-180)

Eisenstein (91) underscores that Alex's dilemma in being faced with the choice of "mak[ing] the story more premium than life" emphasises the "freedom against which traditional historiography and survivor testimony attempts to guard" – a freedom which opens the gates for Holocaust denial and the negation of history[32]. If Alex is permitted to be "nomadic with the truth", what is to keep historians from disregarding veracity in the same way? Eisenstein, however, suggests that the way to understand this conundrum, within the context of the novel, is to frame it as a choice which both Alex and Jonathan, to different degrees, are confronted with. Foer in "withholding from Jonathan the witness and archival materials" creates a situation in which both Alex and Jonathan are confronted with the freedom "to write, remember, and believe as they wish" (Eisenstein 83). Jonathan's story, however, through its overt fictionality and fantastic magical realism underscores the fact that the trip unearthed no witnesses or evidence of the past. Jonathan's fictional history, therefore, is not a disregard for facts and truth, but an act of writing in the absence of such knowledge as facts and truth would permit.

Alex, however, is faced with a more serious ethical dilemma, namely, the choice to remain as truthful as possible to the past, or to make it "more premium than life" in the light of Grandfather's testimony. Although this choice is Alex's to make, he urges Jonathan to "save Grandfather" and to "try to find some other option" (224) by creating a narrative alternative to the past. Alex, however, comes to realise that rather than "saving" grandfather, with a "story more premium than life", he may be able to "save Grandfather" through retelling, through making the story his own, and by acting as witness to a past which demands remembering against Grandfather's desire to forget.

[32] See pages 22-23 in this regard.

Through retelling, Grandfather's story becomes Alex's story. When Alex claims that the "hair, lips, arms, legs" of the man in the photograph "*were* mine" (225-226), he is not merely referring to the fact that he looks like a younger version of his grandfather. Instead, traces of Grandfather are present in Alex, including traces of his shame and guilt. Understood as Derridean traces, Grandfather's guilt and shame do not manifest in Jonathan in the same way as which it forms part of Grandfather[33]. For Grandfather, his feelings regarding the past have roots in his lived experience and memory. For Jonathan, this trauma is transferred to him more indirectly, and although constituting part of his identity, the feelings of guilt and shame manifesting in Jonathan refer not to the presence of an original event, but to the traces of that event in Grandfather. In this way, a network of traces is formed wherein the original event is absent.

Alex also becomes Grandfather in another sense. When looking at the photograph, he is looking at himself, or rather, assuming the identity of Grandfather by imagining himself as Grandfather in the past. In this way Alex is displaced, but to an as yet unknown time, place and context. It is only when Grandfather starts attempting to offer an explanation, that the photograph itself becomes an emblem for Grandfather's trauma, and the trauma inherited by Alex through Grandfather.

4.4. Language and the Negotiation of Identity

Alex's use of language allows us to see the ways in which he consciously and subconsciously reshapes his identity. Grandfather's testimony, along with Jonathan's fictional history which he sends to Alex in instalments, serve as catalysts effecting change in Alex's narrative identity. Alex's peculiar use of English adds a comic dimension to the otherwise weighty subject matter of the novel. For instance, Alex refers to Sammy Davis, Junior, Junior as "received" from the home for "forgetful dogs", instead of the home for forgotten or lost dogs (5). The dog belongs to Grandfather who claims to be blind, and who has tried very hard to forget his past. The dog, however, Alex admits, is "not only for blind people but for people who pine for the negative of loneliness" (5). Alex's choice of words, "the negative of loneliness", foregrounds Grandfather's loneliness and isolation in a way which simply indicating that the dog kept him company would not be able to do. His supposed blindness may also be a crafty way of avoiding participating in the business ventures of "Heritage Tours". In adopting the dog, Grandfather

[33] See pages 32-32 on the Derridean "trace".

has retrieved something forgotten which he claims helps him to see better. In this way Alex's error is not simply a comic blunder, but demonstrates the multivocal nature of language, which allows for different interpretations of narrated events – a process which is further embedded within the narrative structure of the novel.

Alex's investment in learning English initially seems to stem from his attempt at identifying with what he understands to be American identity and his wish to move to "that ennobled country America" (3). This wish, in turn, may be the manifestation of a desire to endear himself to Jonathan and to seek friendship. At the start of the novel, for example, Alex introduces himself as "Alexander Perchov. But all of my many friends dub me Alex, because that is a more flaccid-to-utter version of my legal name" (1). In this example, the word "flaccid" adds a comic dimension to this introduction, but Alex also indicates from the start that he has "many friends", which acts as an invitation to Jonathan to join their numbers. As Alex believes that he is using correct English, his narration is both "intentionally and unintentionally humorous" (Feuer 26).

As argued by Derrida, however, language is "not innocent or neutral" (Derrida and Kristeva 19)[34]. Alex's use of language reflects a shift in the way he understands himself within his family, and in relation to Jonathan, corresponding with a shift in language from comic, towards assuming tragic undertones. In his article "Almost Friends: Post-Holocaust Comedy, Tragedy, and Friendship in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated*", Menachem Feuer considers how Foer's novel present us with both a comic and a tragic approach to trauma and memory. Drawing on Aristotle, Feuer (30) reminds us that recognition or anagoresis is common to both comedy and tragedy. It is the revelation of some unknown. Grandfather's revelation regarding his role in Herschel's death, functions as anagoresis and indicates the point at which Alex's understanding of himself also appears to shift.

The conversation between Alex and Jonathan, under the canopy of stars at the site where Trachimbrod used to be, is telling. Jonathan explains:

> I used to think that humor was the only way to appreciate how wonderful and terrible the world is, to celebrate how big life is […]. But now I think it's the

[34] See pages 32-34 on Derrida.

> opposite. Humor is a way of shrinking from that wonderful and terrible world. (158)

The so-called "failure of comedy" in the novel (Feuer 27), then, is suggestive of Alex's embracing of the "wonderful and terrible world", as opposed to his "shrinking from" it. Embracing the terrible, however, is not an easy task. In his written account to Jonathan, Alex explains that "You cannot know how it felt to have to hear these things and then repeat them, because when I repeated them I felt like I was making them new again" (185). Alex's retelling of Augustine's and Grandfather's stories grapples with and recreates them in two ways. Firstly, as recognised by Alex, the process of retelling makes the traumatic memories "new". These memories no longer belong solely to Grandfather or Augustine but are now transferred to Alex. Through their being retold, not simply through being heard, the memories are new to Alex and become ingrained in his identity. Stated differently, it is through the sense-making process of narration and (re)telling, not simply through listening, that stories are made "new".

Alex's writing additionally reflects the "inadequacy of language" and "the need to go beyond language to express grief and pain" (Safer 120). At the point where he records Grandfather telling his story, he writes without using punctuation and words are strung together (relating to the metaphor of string which Foer uses throughout). His writing also shifts from a retelling of what Grandfather said in direct speech, to Alex's speaking in his own voice without any indication that the speaker is now Alex and no longer Grandfather. The absence of punctuation therefore creates a retelling in which the voices of Grandfather and Alex are fused. Starting in the voice of Grandfather, Alex writes:

> […] I held him with somuchforcethathecried because I loved him so much that I madeloveimpossible and I am sorry for you and sorry for Iggy and it is you who must forgive me he said these things to us and Jonathan where do we go now what do we do with what we know Grandfather said that I am I but this could not be true the truth is that I also pointedatHerschel and I also said heisaJew and I will tell you that you also pointedatHerschel and you also said heisaJew and more than that Grandfather also pointedatme and said heisaJew and you also pointedathim and said heisaJew and your grandmother and Little Igor and we all pointedateachother so what is it he should have done […] he is stillguilty I am I am Iam IamI? (252)

In this extract, Alex implicates Grandfather, Herschel, Jonathan, Little Igor, Jonathan's grandmother and himself, where each character points at all the other characters and identifies her or him as a Jew. This is not to say that each character is guilty of murder, but that each one is part of "*the same story*" (italics in original 214). Alex recognises that through the traces of the past which manifest in others, we are all implicated and called to bear witness.

Alex's recognition that we are "*working on the same story*" extends to include the fictional along with the actual (in the context of the novel) and includes all the narrative strands of the text. Gaining insight into the process of co-creation of identity through story, he writes:

> *We are talking now, Jonathan, together, and not apart. We are with each other, working on the same story, and I am certain that you can also feel it. Do you know that I am the Gypsy girl and you are Safran, and that I am Kolker and you are Brod, and that I am your grandmother and you are Grandfather, and that I am Alex and you are you, and that I am you and you are me?* (italics in original, *EII* 214)

What Alex is able to recognize is that both he and Jonathan are in the process of co-creating a complex, shared story, and that the stories which make up the identities of the characters in their writing also feed back into the stories and identities of Jonathan and Alex. Instead of suggesting that each character has a single identity, Alex recognises how stories, as the building blocks of identity, are created and renegotiated through our encounters with the life stories, or fragments of stories, of others.

4.5. Absences, Silences and Cinders

As third generation descendants, the relationship which Alex and Jonathan have to the memories of their grandfathers, in particular, is shaped by the temporal distance between the actual traumatic events and the ways in which remnants of the memories of these events filter down. Berger (151) argues that "[t]he third generation illuminates a cognitive darkness that was not present among the survivors and their children". The traumatic memories of the past are transmitted to them in a way that they "'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up". They "remember" not through "recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation" (Hirsch 106 - 107).

The different narrative strands in the novel underscore the absences which permeate the text. For example, although Alex and Jonathan provide critical commentary on each other's writing, our only access to Jonathan's letters is through Alex's responses. The missing letters become a haunting presence in the way Alex thanks Jonathan for feedback, responds to suggested changes, or explains his reasons for deciding not to follow Jonathan's advice. Jonathan's letters, in their absence, reinforce our awareness of other absences and silences. Jonathan's journey to Ukraine, for example, starts with absences and silences: the absence of knowledge about his family's past, silence from his grandmother, and the missing or absent woman, Augustine. In Jonathan's imagined history, his grandfather Safran notes that "the origin of a story is always an absence […]" (*EII* 230) and the beginning of Jonathan's fictional history starts with the absence of Trachim B's body. In Alex's family history, Grandfather's past including memories of the Nazi raid of his town and his role in his best friend's death, is kept secret from his son and only shared with Alex when he is already a young man. Both Alex and Jonathan are therefore shaped, not only by what is said and what is known, but by the absence of evidence or knowable facts of their family history and through the absences and silences transferred to them through fragments of stories.

The trip on which Jonathan embarks to uncover his lost family history is grounded in absence and "multiple uncertainties" (Doise 96). He comes to Ukraine with a photograph of a family and on the back, written in Yiddish, are the words "This is me with Augustine, February 21, 1943." (60) Jonathan admits that he is unsure whether the woman's name really is Augustine, whether she is the one who saved his grandfather, and even whether the note had been written by his grandfather. The trip therefore starts with uncertainty and absence. Doise (96) argues, however, that we should "view these omissions as evidence of a trauma passed down through generations. In fact, these absences should not be viewed as a shortcoming but as an illustration that witness literature's most defining characteristic is not its immediacy but its distance."

The absences which pervade both Alex's and Jonathan's narratives are vital to their identities through the "negative space" left by what is missing, lost or never was. Abate (290) describes negative space as "simultaneously an absence and a presence. It is paradoxically invisible and the most visible element in a drawing, painting, or photograph." This formulation bears strong similarities to Derrida's notion of the "trace" as neither presence nor absence. Negative space would be the areas around and between the main subject or content matter, which despite often being disregarded has the important function of accentuating the main subject. Although

Abate's description focuses specifically on negative space as a design principle in visual arts, the concept of negative space, I argue, can be transferred to the reading of *Everything Is Illuminated*. Negative space may be thought of as the spaces between objects, but also the space left by something which is no longer there, or the space which might have belonged to something. In the novel it becomes bound to actual and invented memories of the past. Negative space is the persistence of the past within the present, not through *presence*, but through the absence created by loss and perpetuated through silence.

Yankel, Brod's adoptive father, fabricates a wife for himself, not by drawing on the actual woman who left him but by constructing an adoring wife who dies "– *painless, in childbirth*" (48 italics in original). Brod, unaware of the circumstances of her birth and that Yankel is not her biological father, listens to stories of their romance, is told how much she looks like her mother, and reads letters supposedly written by her mother to her father but which are actually written by Yankel himself using his left hand (48). Despite this wife's never having existed, Yankel "wake[s] from sleep to miss the weight that never depressed the bed next to him" and "long[s] for the un-weight of her un-arm slung over his too real chest, making his widower's remembrance that much more convincing and his pain that much more real. He felt that he had lost her. He *had* lost her" (48-49 emphasis in original). Although Yankel's wife, like Jonathan's family history, is an imaginative creation of a past which might have been, he feels an acute sense of loss and longing for her. Her absence becomes part of his identity in that he thinks of himself as a "widower" and her death, despite its fictionality, becomes an actual loss. Yankel's imaginary wife and the negative space she leaves suggest that the past is in effect negotiated and created from the present, and that events which never happened, together with people who never existed, can still form part of our memories and identities through processes of "imaginative investment, projection, and creation" (Hirsch 106 - 107).

In the context of the novel, it remains important, however, that the actual is still distinguished from the fabricated or imaginary. Yankel imagines an alternative past which makes his life more bearable. Yet, Yankel is a fictional character in Jonathan's invented family history. Jonathan's family history, in turn, is written in response to his need for a sense of historical identity and to fill the gap (its own negative space) left by the absence of facts or evidence shedding light onto his family's past. In both these examples a need is met through fictionalising. The novel also shows us the limits of fictionalising. Grandfather's suicide at the end of the novel is a stark reminder that the past cannot be erased through imagination or

through wishing it otherwise. Fiction, may however, help us to come to terms, or cope with the past, without denying that events in the past did actually occur.

Negative space is metaphorically also present in the novel through the image of a "disembodied bird" (*EII* 46). In the chapter "THE BOOK OF RECURRENT DREAMS, 1791", one of the dreams Didl reads aloud is "4:517 – *The dream of disembodied birds (46)*" (italics in original 38):

> I'm not sure if you would consider this a dream of a memory, because it actually happened, but when I fall asleep I see the room in which I mourned the death of my son. For those of you who were there, you will remember how we sat without speaking, eating only as much as we had to. You will remember, those of you who were there, how it jerked its wings before dying, and left a spot of blood on the floor after it was removed. But who among you was first to notice the negative bird it left in the window? Who first saw the shadow that the bird left behind, the shadow that drew blood from any finger that dared to trace it, the shadow that was better proof of the bird's existence than the bird ever was? Who was with me when I mourned the death of my son, when I excused myself to bury that bird with my own hands? (*EII* 38)

"*The dream of disembodied birds*" functions as a memory and a dream, and as a dream of a memory. The memory of mourning is interwoven with the death of a bird and the negative image it leaves in the window. In many cultures birds are seen as harbingers of death as well as being messengers (see, for instance, Moreman's article "On the Relationship Between Birds and Spirits of the Dead" in this regard)[35]. In "*The dream of disembodied birds*", however, it is not the bird itself which is present, but the negative space left behind. That which is "present" therefore, is an "absence". Recalling Abate's description, the purpose of the negative space may be to direct focus to the main subject or content of a specific image which in the novel, may be the memory of a son's death. The memory therefore not only becomes "better proof of the bird's existence than the bird ever was", but memory itself becomes the evidence we are left with in the face of loss and death. Memory, therefore also functions as the "absence" of a "presence"/ "present". In *Everything Is Illuminated*, the memory of the Holocaust is captured

[35] Also see page 83 in relation to crows and omens associated with birds in *Hawksmoor*.

most profoundly not in facts and evidence (or what is *present*), but in the memories that remain, "[drawing] blood from any finger that dare[s] to trace it" (38).

In Alex's poignant retelling and writing of Grandfather's story, he includes dialogue in parentheses which reveals on the one hand, the multivocal nature of language, but on the other hand, also its limitations. Alex says to Grandfather "I do not understand", yet in parenthesis includes "(I understand.)" (227). The words "I do not understand" reflect Alex's growing understanding, sense-making and desire for an alternative as seen in the words "(There must be some explanation.)" (227). In the process of transcribing and narratively reconfiguring this event, Alex attempts to create meaning not from the traumatic event itself, but from Grandfather's trauma.

Alex uses parenthesis for other purposes as well, not to reveal the unstated implications of words, but to create entirely new sections of dialogue between himself and his grandfather. These insertions can be read as questions Alex wished to ask Grandfather, but could not, together with Grandfather's imagined responses. The parentheses represent moments of silence which carry a profound weight. Although not directly referring to the Holocaust, the dialogue imagines a moment in which both Alex and Grandfather reveal their vulnerabilities and acknowledge that they carry ghosts of the past – memories of traumatic events whether gained from experience or transmitted to them by others. In the spoken conversation, however, this dialogue is simply a silence. Alex wants to ask:

(You have ghosts?)
(Of course I have ghosts.)
(What are your ghosts like?)
(They are on the insides of the lids of my eyes.)
(This is also where my ghosts reside.)
(You have ghosts?)
(Of course I have ghosts.)
(But you are a child.)
(I am not a child.)
(But you have not known love.)
(These are my ghosts, the spaces amid love.) (246)

In one of his letters to Jonathan, Alex offers an interpretation of Brod's words in Jonathan's fictional family history, who declares that she does not love the Kolker. Alex explains "*[l]ove in your writing, is the immovability of truth. Brod is not truthful with anything. Not Yankel and not herself. Everything is one world in distance from the real world*" (italics in original, 103)[36]. If love is "*the immovability of truth*" then Alex's response that his ghosts are "the spaces amid love" could be interpreted as the spaces amid or between the truth. Grandfather, for instance, is at the same time a good person whom Alex loves, a bystander, victim and perpetrator. Alex's father is both his father, a person who should care for and protect him, but he is also an abusive man. Alex's ghosts, I suggest, are found in the conflict between seemingly incompatible truths which Alex needs to reconcile. The parentheses are evidence of Alex's wrestling with conflicting truths.

Silence, however, is not only significant as an absence or empty space but is also necessary for something to be said and heard. In the novel, there is an interplay between silence and speaking exemplified through the characters of Jonathan and Alex. Jonathan can be characterised as silent, at least initially, because of his inability to understand and speak Russian or Ukrainian. His knowledge regarding his family's past also leaves him silent: there is not much for him to tell Alex, because so little has been directly shared with him. The enormity of his family's traumatic past may also be perceived as silencing his own memories and identity.

Jonathan's silence is disrupted by Alex who "[gives Jonathan] a space to fill" with "[his own] silence" (158). What Jonathan tells Alex does not appear at first glance to relate to the trauma of his family's past. Jonathan recalls sitting under his grandmother's dress and running his "hands up and down her varicose veins" (157) as well as the sense of "[s]afety and peace from not-safety and not-peace" which sitting under her dress provided (158). In light of Alex's boasts about his sexual exploits, Jonathan may covertly also be showing off his own sexual precocity. Although the memory of sitting under his grandmother's dress is Jonathan's own, the associated feelings experienced by Jonathan suggest a need for security.

Traces of Jonathan's memory of sitting under his grandmother's dress are transferred to Alex. Alex draws on this memory in describing how he and Jonathan lay in the grass in the field

[36] Alex's response recalls Plato's philosophy, namely, the allegory of the cave ("*one world distance from the real world*") and the association between love and truth or knowledge.

where Trachimbrod used to be, the darkness making it possible to see the stars. Alex describes this "as if we were under a large umbrella, or under a dress" (190) suggesting that he felt a sense safety and peace in that moment and showing how Alex had internalised Jonathan's memory. In addition to this, Alex's description can be interpreted as his desire to be friends with Jonathan, where the use of this memory depicts an eagerness to emulate Jonathan. This moment under the stars again recurs in one of Alex's letters. He asks Jonathan, "Do you not comprehend that we can bring each other safety and peace? When we were under the stars in Tachimbrod, did you not feel it then?" (214) Jonathan's memory, in being written into Alex's account of their trip as well as being hinted at in his letter, becomes part of him in the same way that the stories of others are internalised and become part of our identities.

Trachimbrod can be seen as another site of absence and silence. When the group finally arrives at the place where the shtetl used to be, Alex experiences a profound sense of "nothingness" and attempts to imagine absence as the inverse of presence:

> There was nothing. When I utter "nothing" I do not mean there was nothing except for two houses, and some wood on the ground, and pieces of glass, and children's toys, and photographs. When I utter that there was nothing, what I intend is that there was not any of these things, or any other thing. (184)

The silence of this site is significant. Alex tells the woman they call Augustine that they are searching for Trachimbrod. She starts crying and responds, "You are here. I am it." (118) Most of the inhabitants of the town were killed by the Nazis and the woman is the last survivor of the shtetl. The town has therefore literally been silenced. Everything that physically remained of the town has been collected by Augustine, categorised and stored in boxes in her house; she herself becomes the storehouse of the last living memories of the town.

Derrida's writing on archiving in relation to the Holocaust offers insight into the way in which Augustine's collection and categorisation of physical remains of Trachimbrod can be seen as an act of "relativization and forgetting" (Derrida and Ben-Naftali 11). In an interview with Michal Ben-Naftali, Derrida considers Yad Vashem (The World Holocaust Remembrance Center), which is a project designed not to forget names and dates, against the backdrop of the Holocaust's "attempt to erase the names, to erase the proper names, not only to put [people] to death, but to destroy the archive" (10). This "remembering", however, is disconcerting:

> When an archive such as Yad Vashem is established and kept up, an act of piety and of memory is performed to prevent this from being erased. But at the same time, which is ambiguous and horrifying, it is the very act of archivizing which contributes somehow to classification, relativization and forgetting. Archivization preserves, but it also begins to forget. (11 sic.)

In archiving, Derrida maintains,

> [t]here is always the risk, and that is the ambiguity of the concept of archive […], one always runs the risk of losing [what] one keeps and of forgetting precisely where memory is objectivized in acts of consignment, in objective places. (11)

In a contradictory fashion, therefore, Augustine's archiving of the physical remains of the town, although intended as a way to remember the past, at the same time also begins to erase the past.

The fragmentation suggested through the process of archiving may also be discerned in Jonathan's fictional family history. Jonathan's great-great-great-great-great-grandmother, Brod, is orphaned by the crash of Trachim B's wagon in the river. She is taken to the synagogue where only men are permitted. An "egg-sized hole" is cut into the synagogue's wall through which the curious women of the shtetl take turns looking at her. The hole, however "wasn't even large enough to show all of the baby at once, and they had to piece together mental collages of her from each of the fragmented views" (20). Because of this "unknowability, her untouchability", they learn to hate her (20). They see her as "a sign from the devil himself" (20). Although partial and fragmented perception, in this example, does not erase the past (as in the process of archiving), it does suggest that the women hate, or perhaps even fear, that which they cannot fully perceive.

Fragmentation, in contrast, may also enable love. Brod's husband, the Kolker, has an accident which results in a circular sawblade lodging itself into his head (126). Although he appears physically unharmed, he starts have increasingly violent outburst. For her own safety, Brod cuts a small hole in the wall between her bedroom and the bedroom to which the Kolker had "exiled himself" (134). Through this hole they experience "the deepest intimacy, that closeness

attainable only with distance" and the silence between them becomes another form of intimacy, "that of words without talking" (134). This hole is described as another negative space:

> They lived with the hole. The absence that defined it became a presence that defined them. Life was a small negative space cut out of the eternal solidity, and for the first time, it felt precious – not like all of the words that had come to mean nothing, but like the last breath of a drowning victim. (135)

The hole in the wall becomes a "negative space", allowing Brod, if not to love the Kolker, to at least find something "precious" in the intimacy of this space. In *Midnight's Children*, the perforated sheet through which Aadam Aziz first sees parts of Naseem also allows for an intimacy which seeing her as a whole does not.

Another way in which to understand absence, loss and silence in *Everything Is Illuminated* is through the notion of "cinders". Whereas "traces" may be understood as that which is left of each "centre" (understood as a point of unmediated and knowable signification) after substitution upon substitution has taken place[37], the idea of the "cinder" offers an exploration of the complex interplay between presence and absence, being and non-being, in more concrete terms.

Derrida's 1987 book *Feu le cendre* (translated into English as *Cinders*, 1991), presents the challenge of defining and understanding the cinder. Is the cinder that which has been consumed or destroyed by fire, in other words, the original something or somebody, or is a cinder something it itself? Derrida does not provide a straightforward answer to this question but further explores and complicates the notion of cinders: "One might dream that the word 'cinder' was itself a cinder in that sense, 'there', 'over there,' in the distant past, a lost memory of what is no longer here" (31). The cinder is "that which preserves in order no longer to preserve" (35). Derrida's consideration of cinders also implies that there is a spatial dimension: He claims that "[t]here are cinders only insofar as there is the hearth, the fireplace, some fire or place" (41, see also 37).

[37] See pages 32-34 on "traces".

In *Everything Is Illuminated*, the space where Trachimbrod used to be can be understood as related to cinders. Like a cinder, the physical space is no longer Trachimbrod, yet it has been altered in such a profound way that the emptiness is instilled with meaning: the emptiness is a testament to the shtetl's destruction. Echoing Derrida's line of questioning, we can ask, is the space that which was before – i.e. Trachimbrod? Is the space reduced to its destruction and therefore constitutes nothing? Is this nothingness a 'something'? Or can the space be seen as "a lost memory of what is no longer here" (Derrida 31). The novel offers some insight into how to understand "Trachimbrod", not as space but as memory. Augustine's response "You are here. I am it." (118) highlights the way in which the identity of a place is created by those who live there and remember. Whereas in *Midnight's Children* Saleem's identity is influenced by place, in this novel, place is determined by the collective identity of people.

Trachimbrod, for this woman, is no longer the empty field where the shtetl once stood. Instead, as the last survivor and curator of both memories and physical remains, she has become Trachimbrod. The only record of the town is a monument erected in its memory. Yet, like the act of archiving, this monument, in its attempt to remember "THE 1,204 TRACHIMBRODERS/ KILLED AT THE HANDS OF GERMAN FASCISM" (emphasis in original 189) is also the start of relativizing and forgetting. The emptiness of the physical space where the Trachimbrod shtetl used to be, as well as the silence of any other witnesses apart from Augustine, provide Jonathan with another space to fill in with his own fictional family history against this profound emptiness and silence.

The empty field also carries symbolic significance. Jonathan collects a sample of the soil, evidencing its importance. The town and its people have been reduced to dust (soil), and this too finds its way into Jonathan's fictional history in the figure of the shtetl's "deceased philosopher Pinchas T, and "his only notable paper, "To the Dust: From Man You Came and to Man You Shall Return"" (11) which echoes as a refrain throughout Jonathan's story. The title of Pinchas T's paper, however, plays on the biblical formulation. In the Bible, humans are created from dust and then return to dust in death. By replacing the "dust" with "man", Jonathan foregrounds and questions the role of human agency in acts of violence and destruction, such as befell the shtetl's inhabitants.

Although I have argued that absences and silences are necessary for the creation of Jonathan's fictional family history, his family history is also a way of working through the silences he has

inherited. Doise (93-94) proposes that "[b]ecause works considered creative allow artistic license, they in turn may grant witnesses the freedom to be, as Alex says, flexible with the truth in the manner necessary to work through the silences they have inherited." Jonathan's story of Trachimbrod is a way of negotiating the silences he has inherited.

By contrast with Jonathan's initial silence and the silence and absence of Trachimbrod, Alex is depicted as someone who does not struggle to speak, although this outpouring of speech may also, at times, cloak his inherent sense of inadequacy and cover his fear of speaking. He speaks Ukrainian, Russian and unidiomatic English. He becomes the voices of Grandfather, Augustine/Lista and Jonathan in that he acts as translator. He also creates tall stories regarding his own sexual prowess, dispensing of money and visits to popular night clubs. He struggles to remain silent and, when giving Jonathan space to speak, he needs to remind himself "Be silent, Alex. You do not have to speak." because "[he] ~~understanded~~ understood that the silence was necessary for him [Jonathan] to talk." (157). In most of these instances, though, Alex does not speak in his own voice. As translator, he acts as an intermediary and relates the stories of others. When he tells his tall tales, he projects a version of himself which he believes will impress others, particularly his father and Jonathan. Even in relating Grandfather's story, it is initially in Grandfather's voice that he speaks. When Alex remains silent to allow Jonathan to speak, he starts finding his own voice and reshaping his identity through (shared) narratives.

The novel ends with a letter to Jonathan from Grandfather. This letter also functions as Grandfather's suicide note in which he describes to Jonathan how Alex gave his father his savings and told him to leave. In Alex's standing up to his father and protecting his brother and mother, his identity becomes aligned with his name – a name he shares with both his father and Grandfather. Although Alex has been brought up to believe that this family name has a long history which "brings [him] tremendous honour" (5), it is a name, which grandfather notes, has only belonged to him (and his family) for a number of years. Grandfather writes to Jonathan "I put my hand on his cheek and remembered when my cheek was like his cheek. I said his name, Alex, which has also been my name for forty years" (275). After identifying Herschel as a Jew and thus becoming complicit in his murder, the reader infers that Grandfather changes his name. He is no longer called Eli, but Alexander. As a marker of identity, Grandfather's choice of name is significant. The name "Alexander" means "protector of men" (Stoneman). In the light of Grandfather's inability to protect Herschel, he takes a name which

embodies his regret and identifies him not as a murderer, but as a protector of his wife and child.

The novel opens with Alex explaining his many names. His "legal name is Alexander Perchov. But all of [his] friends dub him Alex" (1). His mother calls him "Alexi-stop-spleeing-me!" and his father calls him "Shapka". His brother calls him "Alli" and his grandfather calls him "Sasha". His different names and nicknames suggest different relationships with friends and family and different aspects of his identity which come to the fore in these relationships. For example, the name "Shapka, for the fur hat [he] would don even in the summer month" (1) is a name he dislikes as it sounds "boyish" to him, even if perhaps he wears the hat in an attempt to look manly. The name is therefore indicative of the power dynamics between father and son, where father sees himself as a "man" and where Jonathan will remain a "boy".

At the end of the novel, however, the different, seemingly irreconcilable facets of Alex's identity exemplified in his different names are reconciled. Grandfather speaks Alex's name and explains to Jonathan that "[he] had never been so proud, or so certain of who [Alex] was" (275). Alex comes to the realisation that his wish to live his version of the "American Dream" was juvenile. Alex confronts his situation and accepts his responsibilities, although he still yearns to escape from Ukraine. He is not "Alexi-stop-spleening-me!" (1). He is also no longer a boy, unable to stand up to his father, suggesting that "Shapka" is a name which no longer forms part of his identity either. Alex, in the moment in which he stands up to his father and protects his brother and mother, becomes a "protector of men", embracing the name "Alexander".

Grandfather's suicide note cum letter to Jonathan is found and translated by Alex for Jonathan to read, but it also narrates the story of Alex's standing up to his father as observed by Grandfather. The letter includes dialogue from Jonathan's diary which Alex read while on their trip, indicating that Jonathan's fictional dialogue becomes Alex's actual dialogue which is in turn rewritten by Grandfather, translated by Alex and again read by Jonathan who is the original author of this section. Towards the end of the letter, a shift takes place. Grandfather is no longer speaking to Jonathan but writing a suicide note in which he speaks directly to Alex. The ending of the letter suggests that Grandfather commits suicide not because he cannot live with himself, but because his death will enable Alex to break with the trauma of his grandfather's past and to become a true protector, something Grandfather was unable to do, despite choosing

the name Alex for himself. The letter is therefore a complex interweaving of voices ending with the convergence of multiple (temporal) strands of becoming as seen through the traces of stories and fragments of the past. The ending of Grandfather's letter also marks the ending of the novel. It closes with another, more final, point of absence and silence. Grandfather writes: "I will walk without noise, and I will open the door in darkness, and I will" (276). The novel therefore trails off into silence.

4.6. Strings

At the end of his letter to Jonathan, Grandfather notes that Little Igor and Alex "must begin again. They must cut all of the strings, yes? […] Sasha has started it, and now I must finish it." (275) Instead of translating Grandfather's words as "cutting the ties", Alex translates them as cutting the "strings". Throughout the novel, strings are used as a metaphor to embody the relationship between past, present and future, as seen in the relationship between the different stories or fragments of stories which shape our identities. Strings also trace the transfer of memory and of identity. Although Hirsch, in her work on postmemory, maintains that postmemory is a "*generational* structure" of memory and not an "*identity* position" (Hirsch 114, italics in original), the memories which are transmitted from one generation to subsequent generations contribute to identity formation and self-understanding. Strings can therefore be understood as the temporal strands of becoming which bind us to others.

Grandfather's suicide could be seen as a severance between his past, shrouded in guilt, and a new future for Alex and Little Igor "without violence" (275). In cutting the "strings" with Jonathan, with their father and "with everything they have known" (275), Grandfather believes that it is possible for Alex and Little Igor to know peace. One way in which to understand Grandfather's reason for implicating Jonathan, is through the victim-perpetrator classification. Grandfather, who through his feelings of guilt and shame self-identifies as a perpetrator, also passes parts of this identity to Alex and Igor. Jonathan, on the other hand, is the descendant of a victim. The only way for Alex and Igor both to be free from Grandfather's legacy, would be to break the tie with Jonathan. As an alternative interpretation, we could argue that in addressing the letter to Jonathan, Grandfather seeks redemption and forgiveness for his past actions. As there is no response from Jonathan that we are shown, the novel's ending may also

be read as an open-ended questioning of the complexity of redemption and forgiveness, particularly for third-generation survivors of the Holocaust.

The autobiographical aspects of the novel complicate the analysis of strings. "Jonathan Safran Foer", although a character in the novel, is also the name of the novel's author. In addition, the novel can be traced to a trip which the author took to Ukraine to learn more about his family's past, just as the character Jonathan does in the book. Jonathan, the character, also creates a novel from his trip – a fictional family history in response to the absence of any information which might have supported a factual account of his family's past. *Everything Is Illuminated*, therefore functions as the author's fictional family history, just as Jonathan's story which tells the fictional history of the shtetl Trachimbrod functions as the character's fictional family history. The metaphorical and physical strings which tie together different characters, objects and ideas within the novel can therefore be metafictionally extended beyond the novel.

According to Carroll (35), "strings or string-like devices" bind "participants through memory's cyclicality and inescapability". Jonathan's fictional story of origin functions as a site where different strings or strands emerge (literally emerge from the water) and can be traced throughout the rest of Jonathan's fictional history, even throughout the sections of the novel narrated by Alex. Although the exact details remain uncertain and are rooted in fictional invention (it "either did or did not" happen, (8)), Trachim B's double-axle wagon crashes into the Brod River. A kaleidoscope of objects rises to the surface and "[i]n the middle of the string and feathers […] was a baby girl, still mucus-glazed, still pink like the inside of a plum" (13). This baby is Jonathan's great-great-great-great-great-grandmother, who takes her name from the river and is called Brod. Although found "in the middle of the string and feathers", this baby, miraculously, has no umbilical cord (16) or *string* metaphorically tying her to a past life and to the collective identity of a family and community. She is a baby born *ex nihilo*, allowing Jonathan to fabricate a point of origin within his fictional family history, while at the same time recognising that there can be no absolute point of origin in actuality.

The absence of an umbilical cord, a baby severed from all ties to the past, becomes a fragment from which Jonathan's family history emerges. For a hundred and fifty years after this event, the shtetl hosts an annual Trachimday festival to commemorate the crashing of Trachim B's wagon into the river. Drawing on Nora, Assmann and Assmann, Carroll (36) notes that "collective memory exists within and through artifacts of objectivized culture such as texts,

images, rites, buildings, monuments, recitation, practice, or observance." At each Trachimday festival, a number of practices or rites are observed: floats from nearby shtetls participate in a parade; Ukrainian and Polish folk songs are sung; the "float queen" throws a sack of gold coins into the river; men compete to find the coins and bring them to shore; objects from the original crash are tied together with string. Through these observances, the Trachimday festival becomes a site of memory through the ritualisation of the plunge of Trachim B's wagon, "enabl[ing] people not present during the crash to develop memories of the incident and contribute to the group's collective memory" (Carroll 36).

The remains, objects or artifacts which surface after the accident are also significant. At each of these festivals, the remains from Trachim B's wagon which had surfaced after the accident are tied together with string creating "[c]anopies of thin white string span[ning] the narrow dirt arteries of Trachimbrod" (92). The strings can be traced throughout the shtetl, being tied to objects in the houses of the various inhabitants who have all come to own part of the wreckage from Trachim B's wagon. The strings locate and identify the objects as artifacts from the past (and therefore become lines which trace the past within the present), serving as a map of the traces binding the objects to each other and back to the River Brod. The strings become a metaphor for the way in which memories, as fragments of stories situated in the past, can combine to create a larger story (a "canopy") which becomes the identity of a group of people "bind[ing] generationally distant townspeople, making string a tool of remembrance" (Carroll 36).

Brod is also tied to Yankel D, her adoptive father, through string. The "disgraced usurer Yankel D" wears an abacus bead on a string around his neck as a proclamation of his guilt (8). In an attempt to make Brod feel as though she belongs, he ties an abacus bead on a string around her neck as well. Carroll (38) underscores how the perspective of townsfolk changes from viewing Brod as an innocent baby to labelling her as a girl of loose morals in consequence of the transfer of Yankel's guilt through the string with the bead around her neck.

The intersubjective nature of identity formation is evident in the way in which string functions as a tool of remembrance between different generations. The mad squire, Sofiowka, also uses string as a tool of remembrance. What he remembers, however, is not the "terribly important" something he initially set out to remember, but only the string. Sofiowka

> tied one [string] around his index finger to remember something terribly important, and fearing he would forget the index finger, he tied a string around his pinky, and then one from waist to neck, and fearing he would forget this one, he tied a string from ear to tooth to scrotum to heel, and used his body to remember his body, but in the end could remember only the string. (15)

The string used by Sofiokwa to remember, does not tie him to anyone else (as Yankel's abacus bead string does) or anything other than himself (such as the remains from Trachim B's wreck). As a result, he becomes caught up in his own act of remembering and is "bound in white string" (15). Sofiowka's inability to remember is one of the ways in which he is separated from the community, and he is found hanging with severed hands attached to his feet with string after raping Brod (see Carroll 39). String therefore physically incapacitates Sofiowka because he is unable to tie the string to other people or other objects.

The act of remembering itself is an important keystone of Trachimbrod: "*The* what, Didl said, *is not so important, but that we should remember. It is the act of remembering, the process of remembrance, the recognition of our past*..." (italics in original 36). Contrary to the case of Sofiowka, the act of remembering takes place intersubjectively. The Slouchers, for example, record their dreams in *The Book of Recurrent Dreams*, and together review the entries (37). Dreams, however, are not actual (although they may be based on actual events) and having a dream is not a shared event. What *The Book of Recurrent Dreams* records is individual memories of events which never took place (like Jonathan's own fictional family history); these become, through their recurrence, recording and recitation, part of the collective memories of the townspeople: "The recurrence of strings posits the act of remembrance as inseparable from and reliant on others, while simultaneously reflecting the cyclicality and self-referential nature of collective memory." (Carroll 40)

According to Collado-Rodriquez (59) through the ritualisation of Trachim B's crash, the event's "location in mythical time is sanctioned", creating a sense of time separate from Alex's account of the trip and the exchange of letters between Alex and Jonathan. Any truth about his past which Jonathan tries to access "belongs *in illo tempore*, a truth lost in a past that cannot be accessed in any sound epistemological way" (Collado-Rodriquez 59). As an alternative to Collado-Rodriquez's claim, I would like to reiterate the claim made throughout this study that narrative is a dominant epistemological tool. Even though Jonathan's and Alex's access to the

past is tenuous, fragments of the past are transferred to them through story. Jonathan's history is no exception. Although entirely fictional, the metaphoric use of string and the interweaving of narrative strands allow us to trace fragments of Jonathan's story in Alex's letters and his account of their trip.

In the same way as the townspeople of Trachimbrod are connected by memory, embodied in Foer's use of string, Alex and Jonathan are also tied together, creating new configurations of memories and shaping new identities through the tying together of their stories. Alex writes to Jonathan that "I have attempted to think about America in regard to where I am on the beach. I imagine a line, a white line, painted on the sand and on the ocean, from me to you." (215) This imaginary line can be interpreted as a bond which Alex attempts to establish with Jonathan after his (Jonathan's) return to America leads to a physical distancing between the two. The different narrative strands (the letters between Alex and Jonathan, Alex's account of the trip, as well as Jonathan's fictional family history) create a network of string which together form the novel. The fragments of the past transferred to Alex and Jonathan, and the different strands of their interwoven narrative also become a network or "canopy" of string, creating meaning and refashioning identity.

4.7. Conclusion

What *Everything Is Illuminated* presents is not a factually accurate account of the past, nor is it a narrative testimony which has any claim to factual accuracy. Instead, the novel traces the impact of trauma on later generations despite the absence of a knowable past. It examines how fictional creation may become history not through verisimilitude but through the transmission of stories and traces of the past which shape identity. Jonathan's fictional history becomes part of his history and of his identity by being retold – even through the process of acknowledging its fictionality. Acknowledging this fictionality, however, recognises that the material past may be erased, and that memory may also be suppressed.

Trauma, in creating a rupture or break in our experience of time, also results in challenges to narrative understanding and identity. Traumatic memory, in turn, may be transferred to others and in this way it compels us to renegotiate our identities in light of the past. The transferal of memory and trauma, however, is also the transferal of absences, silences, and negative space,

suggesting that perhaps “silence itself communicates more and better” (Wiesel as quoted in Kearney 49).

Lastly, *Everything Is Illuminated* posits time as a network of interconnected strings. The metaphor of string connects us to the stories of others across different times and context, as well as binding us to the stories of our contemporaries (such as between Jonathan and Alex). Strings, as the remnants of stories, and as embodying memory, are the temporal strands from which identity is woven.

5. Conclusion: Time, Temporality, Narrative and Identity

In attempting to answer the age-old question, "What is time?", many philosophers have argued that time is that in which life "takes place", or relegated time to a feature of the external world (Plato, Augustine and Newton are but three examples). Time, viewed from these perspectives, disregards the particularly human experience of time. Instead, my central argument in this dissertation is that the human experience of time can best be understood through narrative, which in turn, shapes both our individual and collective identities and functions as an epistemological tool which is integral to making sense of our temporal existence. Narrative, understood as a temporal strand of becoming, draws together within its temporal framework various experiential and causal processes which together create and sustain identity (compare West-Pavlov 9-10).

In *The Rule of Metaphor*, "Narrative Time" and all three volumes of *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur maintains that semantic innovation or the "grasping together" of em(plot)ment allows us to make sense of the scattered and fragmented moments of temporal existence. This sense-making process along with identity formation, however, not only take place on the level of the individual, but collectively through our embeddedness in the stories of others. Ricoeur, drawing on Heidegger, posits that time consists of three levels: within-time-ness, public time or historicality, and primordial temporality ("Narrative Time" 171, 185). Intersubjectivity is essential to both within-time-ness and public time or historicality. It is at these levels that we exist and interact with others, and where our "narrative identities" are formed. Notions of selfhood and identity, however, present us with challenges regarding how to understand change and continuity (recognising someone as the same person over time). It is only through narrative identity that this tension can be overcome.

Throughout this study I have considered how concepts of selfhood and identity cluster around notions of time and temporality in *Midnight's Children*, *Hawksmoor*, and *Everything Is Illuminated*. Each novel explores the process of narrative identity formation, that is, of *becoming*, through our encounters with the stories, or fragments of stories, of others. Additionally, each novel foregrounds the temporal processes that infuse narrative by engaging with time and temporality thematically, as well as embodying these temporal processes in various ways throughout each text.

Whereas the first chapter in this dissertation provided a theoretical foundation for my study, each of the subsequent chapters attempted to examine the interlacing of time, temporality, narrative and identity from different perspectives. In the second chapter, I focused on inter-generational narratives and intersubjectivity in *Midnight's Children*. In the third chapter I examined the embodiment of time in particular buildings or structures, namely Dyer's churches and Stone Henge. Different spaces in the novel serve as points of temporal convergence between different timelines and between different narrative identities. In the fourth chapter, I once again considered the role of intersubjectivity, and focused my attention on the transmission of trauma through absence, loss and silence. There are, however, many similarities in the way these three novels grapple with concepts of time, temporality, narrative and identity.

Both *Midnight's Children* and *Everything Is Illuminated* suggest that knowledge is necessarily partial and fragmentary. In *Midnight's Children* the perforated sheet through which Aadam Aziz initially sees Naseem is one example of this fragmentation. The wall with a hole in which physically separates Brod from The Kolker's violent outbursts, or the boxes containing the remains of Trachimbrod in Augustine's house in *Everything Is Illuminated*, similarly suggest that knowledge is fragmentary and partial. In *Midnight's Children* such partial, fragmented vision neither constitutes a shortfall nor does it simply indicate our human limitations; rather, it is reflective of the manner in which traces of the past remain in the present through memory and the process of forgetting. In *Everything Is Illuminated*, the categorization and boxing of the objects rescued from Trachimbrod are in themselves attempts at imposing order and understanding on the past, yet this process of archiving, I argued by drawing on Derrida, is also the start of forgetting. In each text however, fragmentation is also tied to time and identity. Identity is shown to be constituted by fragments of stories we encounter throughout our lives through our embeddedness in the stories of others.

In *Midnight's Children*, storytelling functions as a means of self-preservation through constant self-regeneration: each of Saleem's stories affirms his identity, while at the same time negotiating and making sense of events in his life – that is, his being in time. The stories of others, such as those of the other midnight's children and his family narratives, feed into his narrative identity and underscore the intersubjective nature of identity formation and self-understanding.

Intersubjectivity and intergenerational narratives are furthermore central to identity formation in both *Midnight's Children* and *Everything Is Illuminated*. Saleem, for example, attempts to situate his origin in his grandfather's past, as does Jonathan. In both instances, however, these attempts at locating a point of origin are undermined. Saleem not only draws on the facets of his grandfather's past shared with him by his family but is also privy to intimate details which cannot be attributed to shared family stories. He legitimizes this knowledge through his self-professed ability to smell into the past. Intriguingly, in *Hawksmoor* characters traverse time by hearing the past or future, whereas in *Everything Is Illuminated,* the past is traversed through memory, which the novel describes as the sixth sense of the Jews. Foregrounding the body as medium through which time is both experienced and overcome, suggests that the body itself becomes what Merleau-Ponty refers to as "the chiasm".

Saleem's colossal nose, shared by members of the family to which he is not biologically related, serves as a physical manifestation of narrative identity reinforcing his relatedness to Aadam Aziz. Yet, what Saleem's stories present is a constant deferral and postponement of the presence of any point of origin, as understood in the Derridean sense of *différance*. Saleem's narrative identity is shown to be caught up in a complex network of traces, spanning both temporally and spatially past Aadam Aziz, and intertextually and metafictionally beyond the novel itself.

In the absence of tangible evidence or facts to support or refute any knowledge of his grandfather's past, Jonathan, in *Everything Is Illuminated*, invents a family history. In this history, he creates his own story of origin – that of Trachim B's wagon crashing into the Brod River, with his great-great-great-great-great-grandmother floating among the debris of the wreckage. She is found drifting among string – an important device in the novel – and she is born without an umbilical cord (a string of sorts), therefore lacking any connection, physically and metaphorically to a life before Trachim B's crash. This origin story, however, is undermined by the fantastic narration of Jonathan's family history, suggesting that the notion of origin itself is an invention. Through the repeated use of strings or strands which tie characters together across its different narrative (temporal) strands, the novel reinforces each characters' embeddedness in the stories of others, thus subverting the idea of an origin and reinforcing the co-creation of narrative identity.

The stories which feed into Jonathan's and Alex's narrative identities are characterized by absence and loss (of facts, evidence and of witnesses) and permeated with silences and negative spaces. The novel, however, demonstrates that meaning can still be conveyed and transmitted through silence and absence, especially as seen in the case of traumatic memories. The concept of postmemory, initially introduced by Marianne Hirsch, suggests that traumatic memories can be transmitted to others who did not experience the actual traumatic event in such a way that it is as if the memories become their own.

As opposed to silence, loss and absence, *Midnight's Children*, foregrounds multiplicity, plurality and abundance. There are one thousand and one midnight's children, and each of the other children's narrative identity "leaks" into Saleem through the shared peculiarity of their birth and through their telepathic connection. Multiplicity is furthermore underscored through repetition and patterning; instead of relying on a few selected and repeating concepts, Rushdie draws on a vast storehouse of images, motifs, names, numbers and intertextual links to create a network of meaning within the novel, as well as beyond the limits of the text. This network of meaning in turn suggests an alternative time consciousness grounded in simultaneity, repetition and patterning which subverts linear representations of time, thus resulting in narratives which also undermine linearity.

Midnight's Children and *Hawksmoor* are more closely aligned in the way each text uses simultaneity, repetition and patterning as organizational tools. Like *Midnight's Children*, *Hawksmoor* draws on an extensive body of images, symbols and motifs, both from within and beyond the West. In *Hawksmoor*, Dyer recasts images and symbols with occult connections adding additional layers of meaning which draw on the history of each symbol, thereby creating a network of symbols that is syncretic in nature. The identities of characters in the novel, as well as the seven churches designed by Dyer, depict the same syncretism layering. I argue that this syncretism suggests that identity is made up of the repetition of fragments and traces of the past, but also of traces from the past and future that exist within the present. As an illustration of the future existing in the past and present, we may recall the lunatic in the asylum who warns Dyer that "one Hawksmoor will this day terribly shake you!" (*HM* 123) From an eighteenth-century perspective, this can be seen as a warning from the future, yet from the perspective of the twentieth century, the actual warning occurs in the past. The novel therefore complicates notions of time and temporality, by suggesting that time is relative. By drawing on Einstein's theories of relativity and spacetime, I have attempted to show how Ackroyd brings into question

teleological, linear time, positing time grounded in repetition, simultaneity and ritual as an alternative.

Names as markers of identity are repeated throughout each text. In *Hawksmoor*, Dyer and Hawksmoor share the same first name – Nicholas. Other characters also share names across different temporal planes, such as the eighteenth-century Thomas Hill and his twentieth-century counterpart. Additionally, characters share parts of names within the same time period, such as Thomas Hill and Thomas Robinson. The repetition of names occurring both within the same time zone and across different times suggests that identity is formed through our engagement with the stories of our predecessors and through the influence of the life stories of contemporaries. Moreover, characters are tied to places through naming. In *Hawksmoor*, vagrants are known not by the specificity of surnames, but by the places they frequent.

The intersection between time, identity and space is explicitly foregrounded by both Dyer's and Hawksmoor's occupations. Dyer, as an architect, works with spatial organization, but in the novel, his churches also have to do with temporal organization as each church is built on the ruins of other, older buildings or ritual sites. Hawksmoor, as a detective, is concerned with the temporal organization of events to determine how and when crimes were committed, but each of the murders he investigates is also linked to Dyer's churches, again emphasizing space. Throughout the novel Dyer's churches, as well as Stone Henge and crossroads, are shown to be places where time and space intersect, but these churches also mark where the boundary between different temporal planes seems to disappear. Because of this temporal distortion, characters hear voices across time, and the identities of characters become indistinguishable in these spaces. Time and identity are therefore tied to space, reinforcing the Einsteinian position that time and space cannot be thought independently. Stated differently, we cannot begin to understand our experience of time, without also attempting to understand our existence within a certain space.

In *Midnight's Children*, characters are not linked to places explicitly through naming, as in *Hawksmoor*, yet names are still tied to place. Saleem is born at the midnight of India's independence, establishing a connection between him and the history of India. Throughout his life, it appears as though Saleem's choices and actions have repercussions for India, but also that events in India have a supernatural influence on Saleem's life. His personality, for instance, starts changing after crossing over into Pakistan. Moreover, Saleem loses his memories and

his name in a bombing accident which occurs in Pakistan, yet he regains both his name and his memories when returning to India. Although it is not the crossing itself which causes his severance from the other midnight's children or his amnesia, these events are tied to moving to Pakistan.

In *Everything Is Illuminated*, Alex's grandfather also loses his name, but in another sense; he chooses a new name for himself which hides his past and disguises his Jewish identity. When his town is raided by the nazis, he is forced to choose between his wife and child, and his best friend. He is haunted by his decision and never returns to the town, leaving his name behind. He rejects the name Eli, and instead renames himself Alexander, a name meaning "protector". The change in name suggests that Grandfather constructs a new set of narratives, while rejecting narratives identifying him with his past. In this way, facets of identity are shown to be grounded in deliberate choice and action, such as in the rejection of one name in favour of another. Grandfather's decision, however, also entraps family (his son and grandsons) and others (Jonathan) in these new narratives. Alex's and Jonathan's uncovering of Grandfather's past has implications for their identities, underscoring how identity is formed through our embeddedness within the narratives of other.

Individual identity, collective identity and the identity of place are shown to intersect in *Everything Is Illuminated*. The identity of a place is revealed to reside not solely in the physical space, but within its people. As the last survivor of Trachimbrod, Augustine stores its physical remains in boxes within her house, while within herself she stores the last fragments of stories or memories of the inhabitants of the shtetl. Augustine therefore *is* Trachimbrod to the extent that the identity of a place is formed not by physical space, but by those who remember its stories. Serving as a living embodiment of the shtetl, Augustine's personal identity is shown to be intersubjectively formed through the life stories of others which outlive their physical deaths.

This study, I believe, maps the ways in which, through narrative, time and temporality inform identity in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated*. The inverse, however, is also true: this study, I believe, has shown how identity and self-understanding reveal the time consciousness of each text. Although I have focused specifically on three works of historiographic metafiction, a genre which problematizes understandings of time from the outset, I believe that an approach

which foregrounds narrative as an epistemological tool, may allow for insights into time, temporality and identity in other genres and texts as well.

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