

Acknowledgements

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We dedicate this work to

Our beloved parents, sisters, brothers, and all our friends

And to you passionate readers

With all our love

Farah and Cherif

Abstract

The research paper is a comparative study of Salman Rushdie's "*Midnight's Children*" and Chinua Achebe's "*A Man of the People*". To carry on this study, we have relied on some concepts from Achille Mbembe's "*On the Postcolony*" and Franz Fanon's "*The Wretched of the Earth*". In our research, we have dealt with the similarities between the two novels by comparing the themes and the characters of the two societies (India and Nigeria). This dissertation is divided into five sections: an introduction, a section for method and materials, a result and discussion section, a conclusion and a biography. After a substantial analysis of the two novels, we have come to some conclusions. The first conclusion indicates that there are two opposed classes, one dominates and the other is dominated, as well as the decadent features of post-independent societies such as corruption, bribery and deception. The second conclusion indicates the disillusionment that the people faced after a long period of struggle and hope. The last conclusion reached in this study is that the two societies feature the same problems which involve class stratification on the one hand and women's representation on the other hand.

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I. Introduction

The present dissertation falls within the trend of comparative literature it attempts to study Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966) and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) by focusing in the period after independence of Nigeria and India. This comparative study of the two novels aims to consider the shared affinities between them. The assumption is that being two former colonies of Britain, post-independent Nigeria shares many resemblances with post-colonial India. Hence, we chose to study these two authors to draw parallels between the way they see their newly independent nations after the end of colonization. What makes the study of the two authors interesting is the fact that they originate from different geographical spaces and belong to different cultures. Thus, we aim to show the similarities that are displayed in the two novels despite the differences in terms of space and culture.

It is important to point out that India gained its independence in 1947 after a long fight led by Mahatma Gandhi, who used nonviolent civil disobedience against the British colonizers. *Midnight's Children* is devoted to India's transition from British colonialism to independence and the subsequent partition of British India. Narrated by Salaam Sinai, the main character, S. Rushdie, expresses his view, though in an implicit way, about post-colonial India by adopting the magical-realism as a mode in his fiction. The novel showcases how India after Independence continues to be under the influence of the colonizers and how it reflects on the multi-ethnicity and the different faiths that existed there at that time. It is represented in the novel through the author's description of the main character's lifestyle.

Just like India, Nigeria gained its independence from Britain in 1960 through constitutions that were legislated by British colonialism. In his novel, *A Man of the People*, Chinua Achebe describes in a fictional and satiric way post-independent Nigeria by describing what

characterizes the newborn nation. The central character, Odili narrate how the conditions and struggles of neo-colonial Africa are caused by governmental corruption and multi-ethnicity conflicts.

The reason that encouraged us to do this research is our interest in these kinds of works that study the same subject and share the same themes. Even though the novelists belong to different areas that are widely separated geographically, they can produce artistic works with common features. It is also of interest to compare these two literary narratives because of the great similarities found in the two works such as the conditions that the two countries lived through after gaining their respective independence from Britain. It is also important to examine the real reasons that led the two writers to produce their great works. The Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe wrote, *A Man of the People*, in a period which can be compared with the socio-historical context which characterizes the writing of Salman Rushdie, mainly his novel, *Midnight's Children*.

I.1. Review of the Literature

Right after their publications, Chinua Achebe's and Salman Rushdie's selected novels received a large amount of criticism from various literary reviewers. Some of them have carried out research on both novels, and their studies were done from different perspectives. As an illustration, Mavis Thokozile Macheke has compared AyiK weiArmah's first novel, "*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*" (1968), with Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*. The author analyses mainly how Achebe and Armah suggest a reflection on most African political leaders, who have shifted from democratic leadership to an autocratic type of governance¹. The two authors also point out that the African "elites" adopt many forms of corruption that let them depart from cherished values and the revolutionary ideals for which African peoples have struggled². The reviewer also refers to Achebe's and Armah's denunciations of the leaders' use of their positions in the newborn states to enrich themselves

rather than contribute to the development of their nations. The critic examines how both authors deplore the sad aspect of current African politics, its people tend to put all the blames on the colonial encounter for all its misgoverning, when in reality, local factors such as government corruption, nepotism, media manipulation, mass apathy, politics of lies, demonization of democratic values, politics of deception and self-aggrandizement, ethnicization of politics, and naturalization of election violence are rather the real sources of underdevelopment³. For the author, Achebe and Armah describe faithfully how the black people's quest for shared power and freedom has been disillusioned by the post-colonial African governments. The two authors show how the misuse of power causes the offices of African leaders to be sources of evil and wealth creation for a few selected individuals.

A Man of the People is studied from a different angle, and in a paper entitled, "*The Early Swedish Reviews of Chinua Achebe's 'Things Fall Apart' and 'A Man of the People'*", Taiwo Adeltunji Asinubi comments on Chinua Achebe's misrepresentation of women. The author attracts the reader's attention to the novel's sexist aspects by analysing Achebe's negative portrayals of women within his narrative⁴. According to this feminist critic, Chinua Achebe misses the mark in describing the active roles played by women as dynamic participants in the construction and organization of the Igbo community. Though postcolonial authors, including Achebe, contest the multiple forms of subordination and are preoccupied with leadership cultures, which gave a response to colonization and continued into the postcolonial nation-state, in the process, they undervalue women's experiences in the decolonization process⁵. For the critic, the novel centres on dramatizing the material conditions of such reduced opportunities through its cast of plain-spoken characters. The women in the story are neglected, misunderstood, and blocked in their ability to engage in national politics as a result of the examination of the aesthetic cultures, where we find that the

whole story is based on the duality of a contest between Odili Samalu, the narrator-protagonist, and Chief Nanga, the corrupt and inefficient political antagonist.

Another interesting review is written by the literary critic, Raoul Granqvist, who calls into question Achebe's critical reception by Swedish reviewers. Granqvist maintains that, following the Western literary tradition, the Swedish reviewers focus their critical attention on the negative aspects of Africa. They consider Achebe's first novel, "*Things Fall Apart*", as the embodiment of African backwardness. The reviewers "repeat and, involuntarily, re-inculcate clichés about African life". In so doing, they fail to see the real vision of the author as well as the novel's ideology⁶. They missed paying attention to the vision of an Igbo community, that looks forward. The author adds that the same negative review is devoted to Achebe's *A Man of the People*, described as a reflection of its author's disillusionment and pessimism. Granqvist adds that "Pessimism and disillusionment permeate reviewers' view of the future of Africa". Therefore, the Swedish reviewers limit their reading of the novel to the contrast between African cultures, which are considered by definition weaker when compared to the superiority of their modern and Western counterparts⁷.

Like the majority of other famous writers, the Indian novelist Salman Rushdie and his novel *Midnight's Children*, has been the subject of a wide range of criticism and the target of many studies. Timothy Brennan's article entitled "*Salman Rushdie and the THIRD WORLD // ANTI-COLONIAL LIBERALISM*" analyses the book in his concept provocative characterization of "third-world cosmopolitanism". According to her, one characteristic of this "creative community" of third-world cosmopolitan writers is its advocacy of "cultural hybridity", which is claimed to offer certain advantages in negotiating the clashes of language, race, and art in a world of widely divergent peoples forming a single if the not exactly unified world⁸. This "cosmopolitan embrace" appears to have cost Brennan the ability to distinguish between the complexity of historical events and the ambiguity of

representation, resulting in a “lowering of influences, which construct themselves, as it were, on the same plane of worth”. Brennan’s characterization of cosmopolitanism helps to name what happens to the Anglo-Indian experience in *Midnight’s Children*, he claims: While Rushdie undoubtedly draws from the historical specificities of Indian history; his indiscriminate use of those specificities produces a sense of the loss of the experiences of those who do not share his particular cultural hybridity. He also takes *Midnight’s Children* as an allegory of Third-World literary production and identifies a type of corruption in the protagonist’s first-person narrative, which he sees as representing the corruption of the postcolonial (“neo-colonial” in Brennan’s words) national elite. Furthermore, Brennan seeks to demonstrate not only that the collapse of the newly independent nation is the responsibility of the domestic elite⁹.

M. Keith Booker has recently drawn attention to a common tendency in the interpretive criticism of Salman Rushdie, and indeed of many post-colonization works of literature: the tendency to assume that any deviation from “linear” narrative is disruptive of colonialist hegemony. Booker claimed from analyzing the novel that Salman Rushdie mixed Marxist anti-colonial history with imperial propaganda. And that he conflates the anticolonial postmodern tales with any meandering, paranoid, racist history¹⁰. As an addition; Humanists write through and commented on the distinction between “linear” and “nonlinear” narrative. However, they asserted that the story is narrated by using varying degrees of interpretive adequacy and there is not a single tale that explains everything which is the case of *Midnight’s Children* where Kashmir and the Politics of Identity that one is best able to change a political or economic system when one understands nothing at all about it¹¹.

Most recently, Isabela MerLOãa wrote an article entitled “*CHANGING TEXTUAL IDENTITIES IN SALMAN RUSHDIE’S MIDNIGHT’SCHILDREN*”, in which she claimed about the fate and the birth of Saleem Sinai which is symbolically connected to India after

independence. So, according to her, the voyage of Saleem explores many notions such as periphery and centre, identity and otherness, oneness and division¹². However, India's destiny is related to the one of Saleem in each change in multiple perspectives on the idea of a nation. Due to its concentration on constructing a compact and well-defined sense of identity, "the myth of the country" becomes the excuse for the manifestation of postcolonial attitudes and errors¹³. MerLOăa believes that the suitable representative of the multiple cultural voices in the background of an India confronted with the colonial experience. So, in the novel Saleem declares his identity to be like a receptacle full of other people's identities that flow into him:

"There are so many stories to tell, too many, such an excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumours, so dense a 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 well¹⁴".

MerLOăa suggests, that from analyzing the novel by using western ideologies and theories, she finds that Rushdie shifts the tables on Saleem and moves the centre to where some of the most recent postcolonial theorizers believe it should be. In addition to Saleem, the author used another character who is Adam Aziz to examine the many cases such as national, political, social as well as personal experiences¹⁵. After a long period spent in Germany as a student, he adopted some of the mental structures of the European west.

I.2. Issue and Working Hypothesis

*The review of the literature about the two writers and their fictions has made it clear that many studies have been directed to Chinua Achebe's A Man of the People and Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children and then we noticed that no one dealt with the two works together. For this reason, this research attempts to fill in this gap in research by comparing Chinua Achebe's A Man of the People **and** Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children.*

Regard that the two authors belong to postcolonial societies that were colonized by Britain. They had written about the disillusionment that was faced by the people in their native

countries after independence and the failure faced by the political leaders. So, the objective of this work is to show the affinity shared between the two novels concentrating on similarities.

Our interest in the issue stems from the fact that neither the geographical distance nor the cultural or language barriers prevented these authors from dealing with the same postcolonial issues which are the corruption of the political leaders in both countries and the struggle faced by the two societies. Throughout our investigation, we will try to analyze the social and political context in which Chinua Achebe and Salman Rushdie produced their novels, and we will attempt to answer the subsequent questions; which affinities appear in the two novels? How do the two stories show the struggle of ordinary people in both societies?

I.3. Methodological Outline

Following the IMRAD system, we divided our dissertation into five sections. It starts with an introduction that states the objectives of the dissertation. It provides a review of some of the literature on both Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) and Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966). It also gives the Issue and Working Hypothesis. In the Methods section, we will summarize some concepts of the theories we intend to apply in our analysis of the two novels. The Materials section presents the biographies of Salman Rushdie and Chinua Achebe with a synopsis of *Midnight's Children* and *A Man of the People*. The Result section is centred on the findings of our research. Our Discussion section consists of three chapters. In the first chapter, we will try to discuss the wiliness of destruction and creation in the two selected novels through an analysis of the main characters. The second chapter will be devoted to the analysis of the issue of Betrayal. Finally, in the third chapter, we shall discuss "Class Stratification" and "Women's Representation" in the two stories.

Endnote

¹Mavis, ThokozileMacheka. "An Evaluation of Post-Colonial African Leadership: A Study of AyiKweiArmahs *the Beautiful Ones Are Not yet Born*, and Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*." *International Journal of English and Literature*, vol. 5, no. 1, 31 Jan. 2014, pp. 14–18, 10.5897/ijel11.087.Accessed 21 June 2021.

²Ibid

³Ibid

⁴Osinubi, TaiwoAdetunji. "The Sex of Omission: Obscured Feminism in Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*." *College Literature*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2017, pp. 88–115, 10.1353/lit.2017.0003.Accessed 22 June 2021.

⁵Ibid, p 89

⁶Granqvist, Raoul. "The Early Swedish Reviews of Chinua Achebe's 'Things Fall Apart' and 'A Man of the People.'" *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1984, pp. 394–404, www.jstor.org/stable/3819664.Accessed 21 July 2021.

⁷Ibid, p, 398

⁸Brennan, Timothy. "Pitting Levity against Gravity." *Salman Rushdie and the Third World*, 1989, pp. 143–166, 10.1007/978-1-349-20079-5_6.

⁹Ibid p 146

¹⁰ Hogan, Patrick Colm. "'Midnight's Children: Kashmir and the Politics of Identity.'" *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2001, p. 510, 10.2307/3175992.Accessed 2 Mar. 2020.

¹¹Ibid

¹² Merilă, Isabela. "Changing Textual Identities in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*." *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 63, Oct. 2012, pp. 81–84, 10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.10.014.

¹³*Ibid*, p 82

¹⁴Salman Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*. London Vintage, 1981.

¹⁵ Merilă, Isabela. "Changing Textual Identities in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*." *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 63, Oct. 2012, pp. 81–84, 10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.10.014.

II. Methods and Materials

II. 1. Methods

We found that Achille Mbembe's "*On the PostColony*" and Franz Fanon's "*The Wretched of the Earth*" (the third chapter "*The Pitfall of National Consciousness*") are ideal for studying the subject because both concepts investigate the position, condition, and failure of the postcolonial political system, which has failed the majority of postcolonial third-world countries, whether African or West Indian. Both authors are from postcolonial societies that have been colonized by European powers. Besides, we will start this part by giving a short introduction about the two authors and short summaries of the two books.

II.1.a. Achille Mbembe

Achille Mbembe is a public intellectual from Cameroon. He specialized in African politics and history in general, as well as post-colonial issues that arose after independence in particular. The growth of "Afro-cosmopolitan culture" and the attendant artistic practices piqued his interest¹.

"*On the Postcolony*" is a book written by Achille Mbembe. It was published in 2000. The book examines the political economics and phenomenology of the African continent after colonialism. He discussed the ways that the Africans used to fight to impose the neoliberal concepts of good governance and civil society. Mbembe claims that "Africa is the globe par excellence of everything that is incomplete, broken, and unfinished" because of its lack of participation in history. He claims that the colonial period, which followed the slave trade, was marked by phallic control. The use of violence rendered the colonial subject devoid of humanity. Mbembe uses grotesque images and drawings to depict the bizarre in the African colonial experience. According to him, the post-colonial African leaders were absolute

autocrats, who did not hesitate to employ force to crush opposition, crush uprisings, or carry out *coups d'état*, to stay in power.

A thoughtful and imaginative tour of postwar Africa is offered to readers in the book "*On the Postcolony*". It acts as a staging ground for more serious ideas about power and subordination. Where a recognized regime of violence is created by several corporate and governmental bodies that make it up. Due to his interest in how state power constructs a universe of meanings unique to itself through administrative and bureaucratic acts², Mbembe concentrates on Cameroon as the topic of his investigation in his work. The author shows us the role of violence and "arbitrariness" done by the colonizer against the colonized without justification and the complicated behaviours of people in postcolonial Africa in six chapters and a brief introduction³.

As a result, applying Achille Mbembe's theory "*On the Postcolony*" would allow us to go deeper into understanding postcolonial notions and better examine the postcolonial issues shared by the two books, such as the failure of the political system and the people's situation.

We have noticed that some of its concepts are related to the two stories of *A Man of the People* and *Midnight's Children* at the level of themes and historical, political and social conditions that the native citizens had lived after independence.

II.1.b. Franz Fanon

Frantz Fanon is a French West Indian psychiatrist and political philosopher from the French province of Martinique. His work has become influential in the fields of postcolonial studies, critical theory, and Marxism. In addition to being an intellectual, Fanon was a political radical, Pan-Africanist, and Marxist humanist concerned with the psychopathology of colonization and the human, social, and cultural consequences of decolonization⁴. He

examined the psychological impact of colonialism on both the colonizer and the colonized. This will provide us with a better understanding of India and Nigeria after independence.

“The Wretched of the Earth” is a book written by Franz Fanon. It is acclaimed as “The Handbook for the Black Revolution”. It provides a thorough analysis of colonization, an interesting description of the process of decolonization, and a prophetic analysis of independence movements throughout the globe.

In *“The Wretched of the Earth”*, Fanon offers specific recommendations for individuals and collectives who continue to work for cultural and national liberation. This book offers a look into Fanon’s expansive view of international and intercultural relations. Fanon’s conclusion emphasizes the significance of this effort for the emancipation of Africans and African Americans, to be sure, but it also urges Africans in the Diaspora to take the initiative in establishing a new, more compassionate global order. *“The Wretched of the Earth”* is a collection of four comprehensive writings that are linked together. As a trained psychiatrist, Fanon also provides a “series of case studies” of mental illnesses connected to liberation battles.

In the third chapter, *“The Pitfalls of National Consciousness”*, Fanon reiterates the inherent tension between the national bourgeoisie and the middle class. He rearticulates the inherent conflict established by the national middle class which seizes control following the collapse of the colonial government and is unprepared to lead the nation. Nation states are still financially reliant on and owe money to the colonial. Fanon criticizes the national middle class for generating this reliance more than just for being unprepared. Fanon claims that this middle class becomes nothing more than the “business agent” of the Western bourgeoisie. In this regard, Fanon offers an insightful observation: these commercial representatives for the Western bourgeoisie usually disregard the nation he refers to as the “brothel of Europe”.

National leaders replicate the hegemony of the Western colonial powers by flashing their expensive automobiles, homes, and possessions. In this article, Fanon also proposes concepts connected to “cultural violence”: racial myths and views about the imagined victim. These ideals are assimilated by the national bourgeoisie, who subsequently abandon the rural interior and imitate the colonial powers.

II.2. Materials

II.2.a. Synopsis of *Midnight's Children*

Midnight's Children (1981) is a story that begins with a countdown. On August 14, 1947, a woman goes into labour as the clock ticks towards midnight. Across India, people wait for the declaration of independence after nearly 200 years of British occupation and rule. A restless child and two new nations are born in perfect synchrony at the stroke of midnight; these events are about the foundation of *Midnight's Children*. Saleem Sinai, the novel's protagonist, is a baby who is the same age as the country. He goes back and forth in time to recount and structure thirty years of his life, pondering a family secret and deep-seated mysteries, including the greatest mystery of all: Saleem possesses superhuman talents. Like Parvati the witch, a conjure, and Saleem's antagonist Shiva, a talented warrior, all children born at or around the stroke of midnight have extraordinary powers.

With his power of telepathy, Saleem forges connections with a vast network of the children of midnight, including a figure who can step through time and mirrors, a child who changes their gender when immersed in water, and multilingual conjoined twins. Saleem acts as a delightful guide to magical happenings and historical contexts alike. Although his birthday is a day of celebration, it also marks a turbulent period in Indian history.

In 1948, the leader of the Indian independence movement, Mahatma Gandhi, was assassinated. Independence also coincided with partition, which divided British-controlled India into two nations, India and Pakistan. The Indo-Pakistani wars broke out in 1965 and

1971 as a result of this. Saleem walks into all of this and more, including Bangladesh's founding in 1971 and Indira Gandhi's emergency rule.

II.2.b. Synopsis of *A Man of the People*

"*A Man of the People*" (1966) is a novel by Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe. It is narrated by a man named Odili, a young and educated narrator, about his conflict with Chief Nanga, his former teacher, who enters a career in politics in an unnamed fictional 20th-century African country.

Odili's journey began when he received an invitation from his former instructor, Chief Nanga. Nanga is one of those political survivalists whose professional morality is based on seat manoeuvring. What exactly is a powerful and corrupt minister? He is designated as "A Man of the People". His responsibility as a minister is to safeguard the traditions and culture of his country. But, regrettably, he used his position to steal money meant to serve the community and, instead, utilized it to expand his riches and accomplish his own interests.

The conflict begins when the minister gets close to Odili's girlfriend and betrays him, which leads to him seeking revenge. However, Odili, in turn, persuaded the minister's fiancé, and he agreed to live in a position of power in the face of feelings of pride and violent rites, and there has been a military coup.

The story ends when Odili goes to his inaugural campaign meeting, where he is identified and beaten up. He learned that his friend Max had been killed, and then the government fell and the country was taken over by the army, which arrested Nanga and Odili; and Edna received their fathers' blessings to marry.

As a conclusion to this section, we may claim that *A Man of the People* and *Midnight's Children* are historically linked with many common themes such as corruption,

betrayal, and disillusionment. They are both dealing with the same post-colonial conflict. The protagonists are regular people attempting to oppose the ruling power (the leaders). They were also told from the same point of view to allow the reader to participate.

II.2.c. Biographical Background of Salman Rushdie

Sir Ahmed *Salman Rushdie* (born June 19, 1947) is a British Indian essayist and writer. He was from a well-educated family. His father, Anis Ahmed Rushdie, was a lawyer who graduated from Cambridge University and had his own firm. Negin Bhatt, his mother, was a teacher. In Mumbai, he attended the Cathedral and John Connon School, as well as Rugby School in England. His undergraduate institution was King's College, and for graduate studies, he moved to Cambridge University, where he received a Master's Degree in History in 1968, just like his father⁵.

Rushdie published his first novel in 1975. "*Grimus*", a science fiction novel based on the Sufi poetry "*The Conference of the Birds*" from the 12th century, was completely overlooked by reviewers and the general audience. Rushdie's creative fortunes turned around in 1981, when his second novel, *Midnight's Children*, was published, bringing him international recognition and praise⁶.

Rushdie has received a long list of accolades and distinctions, including honorary doctorates and fellowships from six European and American colleges. He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 2007. Rushdie received the PEN/Pinter Prize in 2014. The yearly prize honours British writers for their body of work and was established in memory of the late Nobel Laureate playwright Harold Pinter⁷.

II.2.d. Biographical Background of Chinua Achebe

Chinua Achebe was born in 1930 in Nigeria. He is a graduate of University College, Ibadan, and was raised in the huge community of Ogidi, one of the original centres of

Anglican missionary activity in Eastern Nigeria. His early radio career ended abruptly in 1966 when he resigned from his position as Director of External Broadcasting in Nigeria during the national unrest that culminated in the Biafran War. Achebe joined the Biafran Ministry of Information and travelled across the world, representing Biafra on diplomatic and fundraising trips. He became a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and began giving lectures all over the world. He was the Charles P. Stevenson Jr. Professor of Language for almost 15 years before moving to Brown University as the David and Marianna Fisher University Professor and Professor of Africana Studies⁸.

In the 1950s, Achebe was a founding member of a Nigerian literary movement that drew on the indigenous peoples' traditional oral culture. *“Things Fall Apart”* was released in 1959 as a reaction to works like Joseph Conrad’s *“Heart of Darkness”*, which portray Africa as a primitive and cultureless counterpart to Europe. Achebe wanted to communicate a greater grasp of one African culture and, in doing so, give voice to an overlooked and oppressed colonial subject⁹. He was tired of reading white men’s tales of how primitive, socially backward, and, most importantly, languageless native Africans were.

Achebe is widely regarded as the founder of contemporary African literature, an essayist, and a professor of English literature at New York’s Bard College. But it is Achebe’s dominance in Nigeria’s intellectual culture, as well as its literary and political institutions, that best reflects his accomplishments¹⁰.

We can figure out from the two biographies that Chinua Achebe and Salman Rushdie are two nationalist figures who took western education. They appeared to fight and emphasize the need to secure the rights and lives of all the ethnic groups in their own countries after gaining independence from Britain.

However, they used their education as a weapon to correct the image that the colonizer had destroyed by using English (the language of the colonizer) to deconstruct colonial discourse and demonstrate their own self-image. Furthermore, Chinua Achebe and Salman Rushdie are deeply affected by important historical events and by the socio-political environment in their countries. They gave a global image of the period following independence, known for the disillusionment, destruction, corruption and neo-colonialism which emerged in the colonies.

II.2.e. The Historical Context of India after independence

The British presence in India goes back to the early part of the seventeenth century. But by the end of 1947, India had achieved independence. The nation has faced religious violence, casteism, naxalism, terrorism, and regional separatist insurgencies, moreover, the subcontinent was partitioned along religious lines into two separate countries: India, with a majority of Hindus, and Pakistan, with a majority of Muslims¹¹. From the 1950s to the 1980s, India followed socialist-inspired policies. Extensive regulation, isolationism, and public ownership all had an impact on the economy, resulting in widespread corruption and slow economic growth. India has unresolved territorial disputes with China, which led to the Sino-Indian War in 1962, and with Pakistan, which led to wars in 1947, 1965, 1971, and 1999¹².

In 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru became the country's first prime minister. Despite the difficulty of uniting a vast population that was diverse in culture, language, and religion, he was able to establish various economic, social, and educational reforms that earned him the respect and admiration of millions of Indians. Nehru bared his sinister intentions in full view of the nation just one year after independence in 1948 when he rejected a resolution on "Standards of Public Conduct" adopted by the annual Congress jamboree. He even blackmailed his own party by threatening to resign if the resolution was not rejected. Following that, instances of corruption began to appear at regular times¹³.

Indira Gandhi India's prime minister made catastrophic changes to India's political, social, and religious views that still have negative repercussions today. The Indians seem to be confused about the definition of the government style. However, it is the duty of the people to have faith in their country to do the right thing. Indira Gandhi manipulated the people of India by legitimizing the repression. She was convicted of election corruption during her successful 1971 campaign. Despite calls for her resignation, Gandhi refused to relinquish India's highest office and eventually declared martial law in the country¹⁴.

II.2.f. The Historical Context of Nigeria after independence

Nigeria had taken its independence from Britain in 1960 after a long period of colonisation. When independence was granted, Nigeria first became a republic in 1963 but succumbed to military rule three years later, after a bloody coup d'état. It suffered from the corruption and the rules that were created by the European colonialists, which consisted of different ethnic groups, religions, and interests¹⁵. After a brief honeymoon period, Nigeria's long-standing regional stresses, caused by ethnic competitiveness, educational inequality, and economic imbalance, again came to the fore in the controversial census of 1962–63 in an attempt to stave off the ethnic conflict¹⁶.

The first republic, which existed from 1960 to 1966, was characterised by ethnic conflicts, a weak government, and corruption. In 1967, Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, nearly dissolved. When its eastern part declared independence as the Republic of Biafra. Biafra was defeated and reintegrated into Nigeria after two and a half disastrous years. The majority of Biafra's inhabitants, the Igbos, made peace with Nigeria's military administration or fled into exile. After the war, the Biafran cause became insignificant in Nigerian politics, especially given the other, more formidable threats to Nigeria's unity that developed in the 1980s and 1990s¹⁷.

Corruption was used by plotters to support military coups in 1966 and 1967, which triggered a civil war in the country. Both the coups and the war set the basis for nearly three decades of military dictatorship, which was only temporarily halted from 1979 to 1983 when General Olusegun Obasanjo restored the country to a civilian administration. Shortly after, General Muhammadu Buhari's 1983 coup guaranteed that the military retained control of the political authority in Nigeria until 1999 when democracy was restored¹⁸.

Nigeria was politically and economically devastated during its military administration. Under military authority, corruption, which had been growing among early politicians, was established, and a class of anti-intellectual politicians emerged.

Our review of the backgrounds of both India and Nigeria post-independence found similar challenges, ranging from ethnic warfare to corrupt regimes. It also demonstrates how the leaders of India and Nigeria captivated and exploited their societies. In the discussion section, this will be further discussed.

Endnotes:

¹“Achille Mbembe | Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research.” *Wits.ac.za*, 2011, wiser.wits.ac.za/users/achille-mbembe.

²Mbembé, J.-A.. *De la postcolonie : essai sur l'imagination politique dans l'Afrique contemporaine* (2000-01-01)

³*Ibid*

⁴Wikipedia Contributors. “Frantz Fanon.” *Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation*, 14 Apr. 2019, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frantz_Fanon.

⁵. *The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica*. “Salman Rushdie | Biography, Books, & Facts.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 17 Jan. 2019, www.britannica.com/biography/Salman-Rushdie.

⁶*Ibid, P*

⁷ “Salman Rushdie | Biography, Books and Facts.” *Www.famousauthors.org*, www.famousauthors.org/salman-rushdie. Accessed 17 Feb. 2022

⁸ *The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica*. “Chinua Achebe | Biography, Books, & Facts.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 17 Mar. 2019, www.britannica.com/biography/Chinua-Achebe.

⁹*Ibid*

¹⁰*Ibid*

¹¹BAUMAN, CHAD M. “Hindu-Christian Conflict in India: Globalization, Conversion, and the Coterminal Castes and Tribes.” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 72, no. 3, 2013, pp. 633–653, www.jstor.org/stable/43553529. Accessed 18 Feb. 2022.

¹²Metcalf, Barbara D.; Metcalf, Thomas R. (2012), *A Concise History of Modern India*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 265–266, ISBN 978-1-107-02649-0, archived from the original on 14 February 2020, retrieved 27 December 2019

¹³*Ibid*, P 232-233

¹⁴*Ibid*, P 253-254

¹⁵ J.F. Ade Ajayi, and Reuben KenrickUdo. "Nigeria | Culture, History, & People." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 16 Jan. 2019, www.britannica.com/place/Nigeria.

¹⁶Hamilton, Anthony, and J.F. Ade Ajayi. "Nigeria - Independent Nigeria." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 16 Jan. 2019, www.britannica.com/place/Nigeria/Independent-Nigeria.

¹⁷ "Unfinished Business: Biafran Activism in Nigeria Today." *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 7 Apr. 2021, gja.georgetown.edu/2021/04/07/unfinished-business-biafran-activism-in-nigeria-today/.

¹⁸ Hamilton, Anthony, and J.F. Ade Ajayi. "Nigeria - Independent Nigeria." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 16 Jan. 2019, www.britannica.com/place/Nigeria/Independent-Nigeria.

III. Results

Our exploration of the two selected works has revealed that despite the geographical distance and the different socio-cultural backgrounds of the two authors, they produced the same literature. Indeed, like Salman Rushdie, Chinua Achebe wrote his novel around the idea of a post-independence crisis, even though the authors belong to different countries and cultures; and speak two different languages. To achieve our aim of showing the similarities shared between the two novels despite the differences, we are going to use the theory of Achille Mbembe's "*On the Postcolony*" and the third chapter, "*The Pitfall of the National Consciousness*", of "*The Wretched of the Earth*" by Franz Fanon as a concept.

In the first chapter, entitled "The Dominant Power and the Resistance", we have analyzed the characters of both novels in relation to their wiliness to create and to destroy. We've drawn analogies between Odili Samalu's and Saleem Sinai's as representative of the resistance of the two societies. Then we drew analogies between Chief Nanga and Shiva to exhibit their power and dominance. Throughout our research, we discovered that there was a conflict between two factions in both post-independence Nigeria and post-independence India. One side is striving to build the country, while the other is fighting to ruin and destroy it.

In the second chapter, we looked at the two novels from the perspective of disillusionment and loss of hope felt by the two people (Indian and Nigerian) by looking at how national leaders compromised the ideas of independence in both stories to extract the numerous sections where betrayal occurred. In our analysis, we noticed that leaders in both countries tend to compromise the ideas of freedom after gaining independence.

In the last chapter, entitled "Class Stratification" and "Women's Representation", we compared Indian society and Nigerian society as portrayed by Rushdie and Achebe. We have discovered that the populations of the two nations shared the same way of life, where the rich

get richer and have all the power, whereas the poor become poorer with no authority. We have also analyzed how the two authors portrayed women in their stories, and find that they were represented in the same way: under the patriarchal dominion and objectified by their bodies.

We have concluded from our analysis of both works that both authors bridged the geographical, temporal, and cultural differences to achieve similar effects on the reader. Even though there are certain stylistic and genre distinctions (Magical Realism versus Satire), the two stories contain many similarities, such as themes, narrator and point-of-view, and conflict.

IV. Discussion

This section of our work is concerned with the analysis of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*. It includes three chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the comparison of characters in the theme of the dominant power versus resistance. In the second chapter, we shall discuss disillusionment and the loss of hope as the main theme in the two stories. In the third chapter, we shall discuss class stratification and women's representation in the selected works. We aim to highlight the literary affinities between Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*.

Chapter One: The Dominant Power and Resistance in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*

Midnight's Children and *A Man of the People*, as postcolonial novels, share one significant point. It is the battle of the post-independence states. In the two narratives, two philosophies are at odds: the yin and the yang, morality and authority or hegemony vs. counter-hegemony. M'bembe writes that the battle of Hegemonic authority and resistance in the postcolonial states is highly telling and it is a quite dramatic stage on which the bigger themes of subjugation and its counterpart, discipline, are played out¹. He stated that:

“Strictly speaking, this process does not increase either the depth of subordination or the level of resistance; it simply produces a situation of disempowerment (impouvoir) for both ruled and rulers²”.

Such a battle is mainly displayed through the two main protagonists of the novels.

1. Saleem vs. Odilli

Saleem Sinai is one of a thousand and one children born on the eve of India's independence from England. He tells the story of *Midnight's Children* (15 August 1947). *Midnight's Children* is regarded as promising children burdened with nationalist

expectations. All of them are said to possess supernatural talents. For instance, Saleem has the ability to hear the voices of the other 1000 children who were born at midnight.

The character Saleem is endowed with powers of telepathy and a preternaturally acute sense of smell, which allow him to find the other children of midnight and create the “Midnight Conference”. He uses his power to communicate with them and tries to unify them to create what is best for the future of India. He always seeks and looks for peace and freedom: “*I shall have to write the future as I have written the past, to set it down with the absolute certainty of prophet*³”. Saleem is the narrative voice of the nation, He conveys the idea of community as a “*polyphony of voices*⁴” in an enclosed space. He states: “*To understand just one life, you have to swallow the world*⁵”. Saleem uses the metaphor of “swallowing” as inclusion; he faces the problems of boundaries, supremacy, and marginality that hinder the building of the ideas of a modern nation⁶.

Nation and nationality boundaries are legitimized by the demand of destiny in the shape of endless and holy historical legends⁷. As soon as he begins his country’s history, that of the new nation, the battle for control of the centre is bloody, and Saleem finds himself opposed by politicians such as "Indira". The protagonist tries to change the tensions that arise from Shiva’s comments — public versus private, community versus individual, centrality versus marginality — that destroy the modern nation. At times, the sense of nation and nationalism can be an obstacle to peace and humanitarian feelings. Therefore, any type of border may and should be crossed according to the needs of the time and location. Furthermore, Rushdie’s narrator, Saleem, is conscious of a new “*nation that had never previously existed*⁸”, “*Saleem must be India*⁹”. The pressures for unity lead Saleem to have faith that he is part of the mechanisms of the world. He thinks that there is nothing beyond his knowledge, and there is no boundary that cannot be crossed. Meanwhile, he recognizes that this belief is self-justifying: “. . . *an instinct for self-preservation*¹⁰” is real. In the modern world, “truth” has

nothing to do with the fierce competition over opposing narratives of the nation. By using the power of telepathy, Saleem Sinai creates what is called “Midnight’s Conference”. He tries to unify all the children, who were born on the night of India’s independence and makes plans for the future. His actions shape him as a creator and a peacemaker. Through the novel, Salman Rushdie shows the process when Saleem claims:

“The thing is, we must be here for a purpose, don't you think? I mean, there has to be a reason, you must agree? So, what I thought, we should try and work out what it is, and then, you know, sort of dedicate our lives to¹¹”.

The above passage illustrates the way of thinking of the characters and his will to work for the development of his country.

However, we can recognize that through the story, Saleem stands for resistance (the power of creation). He always tries to unify the members of the midnight conference, hoping to convince them to use their power as a weapon to create a better and more independent nation. Moreover, through this character, Salman Rushdie uses the method of characterization to express the will of creation among the Indian people and their hope for the best for their country.

Just like Saleem, Odili in Achebe’s *A Man of the People* stands as a resisting character in post-independent Nigeria. He is the protagonist and the narrator of the story. He represents the power of creation. He is described as being around characters that belong to the middle class. His good education defines him as a privileged member of his society. He is an activist and revolutionary who fights against the corruption of the political leaders in Nigerian society. He tries to reform what was left behind by the former colonizer.

As a teacher, Odilli decides to teach children in the rural school, Anata Grammar School. He decides to return to his country to teach the peasants, who are ignorant and unsophisticated in comparison to him and are mostly objects of pity and compassion. He might easily rise

through the ranks of the government. This explains why he prefers loyalty and value to wealth and power. He also decides to engage in politics by creating a political party that will oppose Chief Nanga in the coming election. It is a way to end his greed and corrupt methods of governance. Through the process, he aspires to remedy all the corruption in the ruling class. Furthermore, he engages in the creation of a new party and starts to enlighten people by exposing the real face of Chief Nanga and his deeds. He tells the people about the public money that he has taken for personal projects. The following passage illustrates the point:

“A common saying in the country after Independence was that it didn't matter what you knew but who you knew. And, believe me, it was no idle talk. In fact, one reason why I took this teaching job in a bush, private school instead of a smart civil service job in the city with a car, free housing, etc., was to give myself a certain amount of autonomy¹²”.

We understand from the above excerpt that Odili wants to change these things in his country by denouncing the misrule of the politicians. Odili tries to convince Edna, *“the Minister's bride-to-be, of cancelling her marriage to Nanga by exposing his scandalous political career to her¹³”*. The fight heightens to the point that Nanga tries to kill Odili to stop the electoral competition, and Max is killed as well. The government has fallen. So, a military coup takes over the country.

Chinua Achebe describes Odili as a committed man who always seeks the well-being of his community. The author manages to give the reader a certain image of the realities of the Nigerian people and their commitment to the nation as shown in the passage below. Odili always chooses his integrity over fortune, and he never neglects his culture by showing his pride in being an African.

“Let us now and for all time extract from our body-politic as a dentist extracts a stinking tooth all those decadent stooges versed in text-book economics and aping the white man's mannerisms and way of speaking. We are proud to be African¹⁴”.

The excerpt illustrates the character's integrity and his good education.

As representatives of the resistance social category, Saleem and Odili all over the two narratives struggle to fight the authority of Shiva and Nanga. According to Mbembe, this category “*has a rich and complex consciousness; that they are capable of challenging their oppression; and the power*¹⁵” though Odilli and Saleem represent the peasants who contribute by their revolutionary spirits to reform and change the political and social establishment order and seek to put an end to the oppression of any kind.

They are also described by F. Fanon. The persecuted party says that they have no choice but to seek safety on the edges of towns and in rural communities. They attempt to rally the country’s people against the “*traitors of the seashore and the crooked politicians of the capital*¹⁶”.

The next comparison between Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and Achebe’s *A Man of the People* is devoted to the antagonists of the two novels.

2. Shiva vs. Nanga

In *Midnight’s Children*, Shiva represents hegemonic power, abusive authority, and devastation, and he is called after the Hindu God of destruction¹⁶. He represents India’s other negative side: impoverished, Hindu, and hostile. He is the leader of a street gang, and maybe he was a killer as a young child. He is motivated by a fierce individualist outlook and grows up unable to develop human bonds. He is a sad man, injured and formed by the forces of history and class while being a violent character¹⁷. During the 1971 war between India and Pakistan, Shiva lived up to his name and became a war hero.

He was promoted to the rank of a major. Shiva, in addition to his military prowess, becomes a well-known lover among Indian high-class women, fathering several illegitimate offspring. Shiva also apprehends Saleem and delivers him to one of the camps set up during Indira Gandhi’s emergency. Saleem, along with the other midnight children, is given an operation

that leaves him infertile. Shiva contributes to annihilating the Children of Midnight. The following passage is an illustration:

“Yah, little rich boy: one rule. Everybody does what I say or I squeeze the shit outa them with my and authority that!’ Desperately,’ ‘Rich kid,’ Shiva yelled, ‘you don’t know one damn thing! What purpose, man? For what reason you’re rich and I’m poor? Where’s the reason in starving, man? God knows how many millions of damn fools living in this country, man, and you think there’s a purpose!’¹⁸”.

As shown in this passage, Shiva is portrayed by Rushdie as a symbol of power and oppressive authority. He rejects and hates others. He uses force to impose himself on others. He is also described as selfish because he uses his power (a warrior) to keep and defend (rising his social status) rather than work for the benefit of his nation.

Parallel to Shiva is Mr Nanga, who is known for his annihilation of the social norms and political rules of Nigeria after independence. The character has been named Chief the Honourable M.A. Nanga. He represents the privileged class of people in society. Similar to Shiva, he is described as a corrupt, selfish, and irresponsible leader. As a Minister of Culture, he is called *A Man of the People*. He uses his wealth to bribe other officials, the police, and other officials in his attempts to amass more political power and wealth. The subsequent excerpt proves the points:

“The surprises and contrasts in our great country were simply inexhaustible. Here was I in our capital city, reading about pails excrement from the cosy comfort of a princely seven-bathroom mansion with its seven gleaming silent action, water-closets!’¹⁹”.

The passage reveals the different privileges that politicians enjoy in their luxury homes.

Mr Nanga is one of the corrupt leaders who followed the same practices as the colonizer. Like it occurred in many African countries, the technique is used by politicians to follow their colonizers indirectly. Somehow, all the corrupt leaders appear with specific characteristics and create specific codes for administrative and bureaucratic practices. Furthermore, they set up ceremonies to show off their magnificence while the population joins in and applauds. Mbembe calls this kind of “cooperation conviviality” with a celebration of the power²⁰.

It is important to point out that in the 1970s, Nigeria was subject to intensive exploitation of rare resources such as oil, which catalyzed growing disparities. It also contributed to the development and augmentation of state authority, and the distribution of utilities, increasing the lives of those in power while the population gets poorer and poorer.

The leaders share the benefits of the ex-colonizer to raise their social situations, as shown through the description of Chief Nanga in the following excerpt:

“Chief Nanga, who had himself held the portfolio of Foreign Trade until two years ago, had been guilty of the same practice and had built out of his gains three blocks of seven-story luxury flats at three hundred thousand pounds each in the name of his wife and that these flats were immediately leased by British Amalgamated at fourteen hundred a month each²¹”.

The shown passage displays how Chief Nanga is a corrupt man and how he illegally uses the money of the people to enrich himself. Therefore, if Chinua Achebe portrays Chief Nanga with all the evils and viciousness, it is to express and show the defects of the political figures of Nigeria after independence. The author emphasizes their negative practices to show how corrupt leaders destroy the culture, language, and beliefs of the people. It is also shown in the novel through the use of language by Mr Nanga, who prefers to use English rather than his mother tongue with his children, who continue their studies in expensive private schools run by Europeans at the expense of the states and with public money.

From our analysis of the two novels, we can see that there are other similarities in addition to the ones mentioned; the two authors also use the same technique of characterization that is defined by Cheikh Beye as:

“The techniques of characterization constitute the core in many genres of literary productions. This facet allows the writer to incorporate numerous varieties of methods to tell the story and guide the reader to understand how the character is and how he or she thinks and reacts²²”.

This technique is used to portray the real events that Saleem and Odilli lived through after independence and how the people in post-independent India and Nigeria have lost hope and given up on their countries' prospects for improvement.

In the two novels, Salman Rushdie and Chinua Achebe use characterization to allow the reader to discover the morality in the characters. In this way, the protagonists and antagonists of the two stories are shaped to symbolize hegemonic power and resistance to it. From this angle, in a way, Mbembe comments about the two contrasted words of domination and resistance, and by considering domination as being the destruction and the side of the resistance as being the creation, he claims that:

“to colonize is to put to work the two-faceted movement of destroying and creating, creating by destroying, creating destruction and destroying the creation, creating to create, and destroying to destroy. To this extent, to colonize is par excellence, a gratuitous act. To colonize is also to deploy a subjectivity freed of any limit, a subjectivity seeing itself as absolute but which, to experience that absolute, must constantly reveal it to itself by creating, destroying, and desiring the thing and the animal that it has previously summoned into existence²³”.

We understand from this quote that Mbembe divides the people into two different kinds: those who seek to create and those who seek to destroy.

It appears that Mbembe's division can be applied to the Indian and Nigerian post-independent societies. The next comparison between the two novels is concerned with the comparable themes in the following chapter.

Endnote:

¹ Mbembé, J.-A.. *De la postcolonie: essai sur l'imagination politique dans l'Afrique contemporaine*(2000-01-01)

²*Ibid*

³Salman Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*. London Vintage, 1981.

⁴*Ibid*

⁵*Ibid*

⁶ Hogan, Patrick Colm. "'Midnight's Children: Kashmir and the Politics of Identity.'" *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2001, p. 510, 10.2307/3175992. Accessed 2 Mar. 2020.

⁷*Ibid*

⁸Salman Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*. London Vintage, 1981.

⁹*Ibid*

¹⁰*Ibid*

¹¹*Ibid*

¹²Chinua Achebe. *A Man of the People*. New York, Anchor Books, 2016.

¹³*Ibid*

¹⁴*Ibid*

¹⁵ Mbembé, J.-A.. *De la postcolonie: essai sur l'imagination politique dans l'Afrique contemporaine*(2000-01-01)

¹⁶ "Shiva Character Analysis in *Midnight's Children*." SparkNotes, www.sparknotes.com/lit/midnightschildren/character/shiva/. Accessed 18 Feb. 2022.

¹⁷*Ibid*

¹⁸Salman Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*. London Vintage, 1981.

¹⁹Chinua Achebe. *A Man of the People*. New York, Anchor Books, 2016.

²⁰ Mbembé, J.-A.. *De la postcolonie: essai sur l'imagination politique dans l'Afrique contemporaine*(2000-01-01)

²¹ Chinua Achebe. *A Man of the People*. New York, Anchor Books, 2016.

²² Beye, Cheikh. "(PDF) *Techniques of Characterization in Petals of Blood by NgugiWaThiongo and A Man of the People by Chinua Achebe* | CheikhBeye - Academia.Edu." *Academia. Edu-Share Research*, https://www.academia.edu/44297284/Techniques_of_Characterization_inetalsof_Blood_by_Ngugi_wa_Thiongo_and_A_Man_of_the_people_by_Chinua_Achebe. Accessed 16 Nov. 2021.

²³ Mbembé, J.-A.. *De la postcolonie: essai sur l'imagination politique dans l'Afrique contemporaine*(2000-01-01)

Chapter Two: Disillusionment and the Loss of Hope as Theme in *Midnight's Children* and *A Man of the People*

This chapter of our discussion is devoted to the analysis of the main themes. Betrayal is detected especially in the social and political aspects of the colonized countries after they declare their independence. In the selected novels, we are going to prove it through characters. We aim to draw parallels and show the affinities between the two narratives through themes. *A Man of the People* and *Midnight's Children* are two novels where the two authors focus on the aftermath of the independence of their own countries, as we mentioned previously. They use betrayal as an important theme to show the disillusionment caused by the corrupt African leaders and their influencers to destroy the political and social structure of the government. Such a situation is described by the presence of this phenomenon in the daily lives of the characters.

As we mentioned before, when British colonization ended, the two remaining British colonies (Nigeria and India) decided to form a nation-state under a new political regime. Some nationalists pretended to serve as presidents and provide for their people's needs. But the dream did not come true because some events, such as coups d'état, disrupted their plans. Some of the Nationalists were killed, while others were imprisoned or exiled. Therefore, the period following independence was marked by despair, anger, disillusionment, and a lack of freedom. Such a worse situation was caused by the betrayal of the selfish and corrupt leaders who, when they took over power, applied the same methods that the former colonizer had practised. They did the same things but in different ways. Ngugi denounces such practices by African leaders; he writes:

“To the majority of African people in the new state, independence did not bring fundamental changes. It was independence with the ruler holding a begging bowl and the ruler holding a shrinking belly. It was independence with a question mark¹”.

In this passage, Ngugi stresses that colonization has taken new forms in the independent period. He writes that the leaders of the new Africa were dishonest, dictators, and liars; they took and gave bribes, embezzled government funds for personal benefits, manipulated elections, imprisoned their opponents, and did everything illegal to keep their high positions. This situation is well described in Rushdie's novel.

Midnight's Children turns around the theme of disillusionment and the loss of hope that the Indian people lived after gaining their political independence. The goals that were planned to apply in India post-independence were not achieved. The notion of freedom is absent in the political, social, and religious spheres of Indians. In other words, there is a betrayal of the principles of the freedom struggle, which in turn suggests that the notion of freedom is non-existent and has become extinct. This lack of freedom is referred to by Mbembe and Fanon.

For Mbembe, nothing had changed between the colonial and post-colonial periods; African people had the same living circumstances and suffered from dominance. Oppression continued, as did violence. He states that "*both the asserted denial and the reaffirmation of that humanity now look like the two sterile sides of the same coin*"². Similarly, Fanon writes that the people who had seen and heard these men for years, who had watched their battles with the colonial authority from afar like a kind of dream, naturally put their faith in those patriots. Before independence, the leaders usually represented the people's hopes for independence, political liberty, and national dignity. However, as soon as independence is gained, the leaders disclose their true intentions, and they become the general president of the national bourgeoisie, a company of eager profiteers³. They only think to keep their interests, forgetting those of the people who had chosen them as their leaders.

According to him, the leader brutally punishes the masses' ingratitude when he begins to feel that his authority is reviled and that the services he has delivered to his country are being

questioned, and with each passing day, he positions himself a bit more decisively on the side of the exploiters. As a result, the political leaders unwittingly become accomplices to the young bourgeoisie's descent into the mud of corruption and pleasure⁴.

Rushdie's narrative shows that most of the national leaders are betrayed by the principles of the freedom struggle. One of the characters is Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi in *Midnight's Children* and Chief Nanga in *A Man of the People*. It is the betrayal of these political leaders that the text comparison is about.

1. Jawaharlal Nehru

Jawaharlal Nehru can be placed at the forefront of these leaders. He was chosen as the first Prime Minister of India as a reward for his yeoman service in the freedom struggle. It is said that Mahatma Gandhi himself recommended Nehru for the premiership, and he was considered a freedom fighter of high grade⁵. Furthermore, the narrative shows that he has not remained faithful to the principles of the freedom struggle⁶. Nehru's image as a person concerned with the well-being of the nation is narrated to illustrate the process in which he causes a setback to the notion of nationalism. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote:

"Dear Baby Saleem, My belated congratulations on the happy accident of your moment of birth! You are the newest bearer of that ancient face of India which is also eternally young. We shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own⁷".

The passage reveals that Jawaharlal Nehru fails to remain faithful to his revolutionary ideas.

B. Metcalf and Th. Metcalf writes that his governing time was darker and more negative than that of his predecessors:

"Overall, despite the hopes unleashed by the green revolution, the 1960s brought about no fundamental change in the working of the Indian polity. This decade, by contrast with the optimistic expectations of the Nehru years, was a darker and more pessimistic era⁸".

In Rushdie's novel, the political leader emerges as a self-centred politician by appropriating the power vested in him by the people. His only objective is to keep his position, for which he

goes to such lengths as to engage in election booth capture. It is narrated in the passage as follows: “*On Election Day, 1957, the All-India Congress was badly shocked*⁹” as the communist ruler had another decade of war, famine, and political turmoil waiting for India.

We understand from the quote that the political leader deviates from the ideas of his people’s struggle; he works for his own interest instead of that of his country.

The next corrupt and oppressive post-independent leader described by Rushdie is Indira Gandhi.

2. Indira Gandhi

Through the novel, Rushdie depicts the deterioration of the ideology of the freedom struggle in the episode of Mrs Indira Gandhi, the heiress of the government after Jawaharlal Nehru. Mrs Indira Gandhi is another face of political brutality and corruption. In his narrative, Salman Rushdie portrays her as a widow¹⁰. During her time in office, she is accused of abusing power to proclaim an emergency, depriving citizens of their rights to assemble and speak. In some ways, it amounts to a betrayal of the Freedom Movement’s values. The incarceration of people who are in the midst of a state of emergency is described. Although there is substantial disagreement on the number of “political” prisoners taken during the Emergency, statistics show that between thirty thousand and a quarter of a million people lost their freedom¹¹. On June 12th, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was accused of fraud by Judge Jag Mohan Lala Sinha of the Allahabad High Court, During the 1971 election campaign, Parvati-the-witch (now Layla Sinai) was charged with two counts of campaign misconduct¹².

B. Metcalf and Th. Metcalf points out that Mrs Gandhi’s new political approach culminated in populist authoritarianism, sometimes known as plebiscitary democracy, in which her image was the only one that mattered¹³. Mrs Gandhi abandoned the tradition of choosing party leaders based on their popularity in their districts. Instead, she opted for a policy of picking

“loyalists” who were reliant on her favour. The slogan “Indira is India, and India is Indira” perfectly expressed this emphasis on the leader’s persona¹⁴.

Mrs Gandhi, like her father, was only interested in staying in power at the expense of the people. Because she was envious of their power, she ordered their imprisonment when she discovered the children’s amazing skills. Just like Salman Rushdie, Chinua Achebe’s “*A Man of the People*” is based on the Nigerian people’s despair and lack of optimism following their country’s independence, stressing the subject of betrayal in a political setting to indicate how post-independence Nigeria political officials utilized governing privileges for their own advantage rather than caring about Nigerians’ well-being. One of the corrupt is the one described as the chief.

3. Chief Nanga

In reality, rather than alleviating people’s poor living situations, phenomena such as corruption became an obvious problem and cause of concern created by leaders. African citizens were betrayed by their leaders. As a result, independence lost its utility for people while becoming a source of grace and blessing for leaders. In the novel, a man named Mr Nanga chose to be a minister of culture. The corrupt leader used his position to enrich himself and his family instead of helping the people and providing them with what they needed.

In the narrative, Chief Nanga expresses his desire to maintain his supremacy without being challenged. Nanga keeps in touch with the electoral commission using unscrupulous means to win the elections¹⁵. It might even be claimed that Nanga’s goal in awarding Odili a scholarship can be interpreted as a covert means of luring him away to foreign nations so that he could continue his corrupt leadership style without facing any criticism from intellectuals like Odili Samalu¹⁶. This practice demonstrates how African politicians continue to work in collaboration with various dictatorships while leading the populace in the wrong direction.

According to Mbembe, we could argue that by dancing publicly for the benefit of authority, the “post-colonized subject” is demonstrating his or her loyalty by compromising with the corrupting control that state power tends to exercise at all levels of everyday life. The subject is reaffirming that this power is unquestionable -all the more reason to play with and modify it whenever possible¹⁷. Consequently, Achebe draws his readers' attention to the fact that once Nigeria gained its independence, unprepared and incompetent political officials adopted one of the most crucial positions in the political sphere, which is a leadership position. Post-independent Nigeria was so corrupt that the natives became famous in January 1966 for anticipating the army coup that occurred barely hours after the novel's publication, thanks to their critical assessment of Nigerian public life and apparent demand for a military takeover. The start of a significant power struggle in the region, which culminated in the Biafran War, was characterized by a brutal anti-corruption crackdown carried out by a group of nationalist army commanders¹⁸. In this perspective, Christopher Heywood describes the post-independent Nigeria as a “cesspool of corruption and misrule¹⁹”. This statement can be related to the idea supported by Vachaspati Dwivedi who maintains that:

“The disillusionment with the ruling elite is to be found in the recent works of most African writers. Achebe's A Man of the People reflects his distaste for post-independence Nigeria as a place where leaders who had fought for independence became traitors after attaining power, and sacrificed their country in exchange for middle-class comfort²⁰”.

These two quotations imply that selfish leaders seek to exploit independence to the greatest extent possible, resulting in a slew of leadership issues such as nepotism, corruption, materialism, and so on, all of which wreak havoc on the people of that region.

These practices are common to the two selected novels. The next comparison will be devoted to class stratification and women's representation in the two novels. They will be the main concern of the next chapter.

Endnote:

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² Mbembé, J.-A.. *De la postcolonie: essai sur l'imagination politique dans l'Afrique contemporaine*(2000-01-01)

³Fanon.*The Wretched of the Earth*.1961.Cape Town, Kwela Books, 2017.

⁴*Ibid*, P 166

⁵Salman Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*. London Vintage, 1981.

⁶*Ibid*, P122

⁷*Ibid*, P122

⁸Metcalf, Barbara D.; Metcalf, Thomas R. (2012), *A Concise History of Modern India*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 265–266, ISBN 978-1-107-02649-0, archived from the original on 14 February 2020, retrieved 27 December 2019

⁹Salman Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*. London Vintage, 1981.

¹⁰*Ibid*, P

¹¹*Ibid*

¹²*Ibid*

¹³*Ibid*

¹⁴Metcalf, Barbara D.; Metcalf, Thomas R. (2012), *A Concise History of Modern India*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 265–266, ISBN 978-1-107-02649-0, archived from the original on 14 February 2020, retrieved 27 December 2019

¹⁵Chinua Achebe. *A Man of the People*.New York, Anchor Books, 2016

¹⁶*Ibid*

¹⁷ Mbembé, J.-A.. *De la postcolonie : essai sur l'imagination politique dans l'Afrique contemporaine* (2000-01-01)

¹⁸ Morrison, Jago. "Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*: The Novel and the Public Sphere." *Scandalous Fictions*, 2007, pp. 117–135, 10.1057/9780230287846_7. Accessed 20 Feb. 2022.

¹⁹ Heywood, C. ed. *'Perspectives on African Literature'*. London (1975).

²⁰ Dwivedi, Vachaspati. "Aspects of Realism in Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*." *African Study Monographs* 29 (2008): 1-13.

Chapter Three: Class Stratification and Women's Representation in the Selected Works

This final chapter is devoted to “class stratification” and “women's representation” in the two selected novels by focusing on how the two authors represented the post-independent societies in their countries. Thus, we aim to draw parallels and show affinities between the two authors' shaping of their societies.

As far back as man's creation, there has been a class divide. Class stratification is one of the most intriguing social variables that is influenced by people's economic standing. The economic element reveals class differences that shape and modify social stratification, which is a pattern of social inequality¹. It also refers to the distribution of societal resources. This occurs on a large scale, with regularity, and along the lines of some distinct, discernible traits (race, class, and gender)². Karl Marx described class struggle as the material manifestation of class consciousness in response to given material conditions and their contradictions³. It occurs in opposition to the capitalist class relation, which operates on two levels: a more fundamental level and a level at which the effects of the logic of the class relation are manifested and produce effects such as low wages, unemployment, and so on⁴.

1. Class Stratification in the Two Novels

We mentioned that India and Nigeria, as former British colonies, shared similar social, political, and economic circumstances following their independence. During the post-colonial era, the colonizer maintained tight contacts with post-colonial communities through corporations and organized resources with governments, so power and brutality were handed out in indirect ways. The situation led to the collapse of the economies of the countries as well as the emergence of different classes in society. The era is called by Mbembe “the space of entanglement”. He writes:

“This other aspect could be summed up in one word: entanglement. But that notion must not only include the coercion to which people are subjected, and the sufferings inflicted on the human body by war, scarcity, and destitution, but also embrace a whole cluster of re-orderings of society, culture, and identity, and a series of recent changes in the way power is exercised and rationalized⁵”.

From this passage, we can see that Mbembe describes the post-colony as being a place of entanglement and displacement where everything is mixed. He claims that the Western powers consider themselves to be the “Self” and African people to be the “Others”, and they describe them by their weaknesses and by what they think they are by using imagination. Moreover, when we relate the concept of the theory to the two novels, we can notice that Mbembe also describes the post-colonial period as being a time of entanglement, a place of nonlinear experiences where the past, present, and future are combined.

Chinua Achebe and Salman Rushdie reveal the presence of some of the principles of class division in their works, *A Man of the People* and *Midnight’s Children*. They describe social stratification as a characteristic of society during and after independence. In this sense, Mbembe stresses the fact as follows:

“Further, the notion of civil society refers to a theory of social stratification and the procedures by which a minimum of acceptance of that stratification is established. As J. Leca explains, what is critical is the tension, never resolved, between the reality of inequality and the fact that to be legitimate, power must be based on inclusion and equality (be it only formal) among citizens⁶”.

According to Achill Mbembe, J. Leca indicates from the quotation that the phrase “civil society” refers to a concept that promotes inequality among citizens and hence creates a debased society.

It appears in Chinua Achebe’s *A Man of the People* that poverty reduced people’s ultimate goals to food and money. It has also reduced people’s interest in social reforms or fundamental political change, which has demolished all foundations of equality among citizens due to political power abuse that has shattered the governing regime’s legitimacy.

Achebe introduces the corrupt responsible individual who has no concept of political morality and exploits their position, such as the honourable Chief Nanga, Minister of Culture⁷. He is called by his people *A Man of the People* as an ironic reference to the true nature of the corrupted man. Fanon claimed: *“In the underdeveloped countries, however, the leader represents the moral force behind which the gaunt and destitute bourgeoisie of the young nation decides to grow rich⁸”*.

From this quote, Fanon shows the evilness of the bourgeois class (leaders) when they use status and power to enrich themselves at the expense of the benefits of their countries.

In the narrative of Chinua Achebe, the ordinary people of Nigeria cannot be rich if they are not corrupt and selfish. It is demonstrated in the novel that when corruption spreads throughout a location, it affects the personalities and spirits of everyone who lives there. It reaches the corrupted and the upstanding, the wealthy and the poor, the good and the bad, the forgiving and the vengeful. For example, it is mentioned in the novel that Chief Nanga, an upper-class man, is extravagant in his money spending. The excerpt shows it clearly:

“The first thing critics tell you about our ministers' official residences is that each has seven bedrooms and seven bathrooms, one for every day of the week. All I can say is that on that first night there was no room in my mind for criticism. I was simply hypnotized by the luxury of the great suite assigned to me⁹”.

Whereas the other part of the society lives in poverty and misery, such as Edna's father, who forces his daughter to marry Chief Nanga even though she suffers from him and she doesn't really love him. It is mentioned in the story:

“He told us that chief Nanga had paid a bride price of one hundred and fifty pounds for his daughter and another one hundred pounds on her education and other incidentals. Is that all thought? 'Our custom' said my father firmly¹⁰”.

The passage reveals that he paid a bride price of one hundred and fifty pounds for his daughter and another hundred pounds for her education and other incidentals.

Just like in *A Man of the People*, *Midnight's Children* exposes the sad reality of class struggle in Indian society. The author portrays the two sides (upper class and lower class) in opposition, which is shaped by the protagonist and antagonist. In his novel, Salman Rushdie depicts the post-independence class struggle in India as one of the main reasons for the willingness to the destruction of Shiva and the will to creation of Saleem to become real¹¹. As a matter of fact, the circumstances favour the anarchism of Shiva and the wisdom of Saleem.

On the one hand, Saleem comes from a well-off upper-middle-class family with a nice home and enough money to get through. The good prosperity is due to the capitalistic lifestyle brought over by British Imperialism¹². However, his parents died when India entered the war, and his social position deteriorated. Saleem gave up on ever being welcomed into a civilized society. This situation helps him fight and become a symbol of peace in the story. This passage is an example from the book: *"Anything you want to be, you can be; you can be just what-all you want!" It had already occurred to me that our family believed implicitly in good business principles¹³*.

From this quote, we can say that Saleem had decided to follow his path despite the different problems that he faced. On the other hand, Shiva, as Saleem's opponent and counterpart, is deprived of his affluent heritage and raised in extreme poverty after being switched at birth with Saleem. The impoverished Hindus and aggressive India are shown in this picture. Shiva is the leader of a street gang and is suspected of murdering children. He is driven by an intensely individualistic mindset and has grown up unable to form any social relationships¹⁴. He is a sad figure, injured and shaped by the forces of history and class. While being a violent character, he tracks down Saleem and hands him over to everyone in Indira Gandhi's emergency camps where at the end he wants to take revenge by his presence in the magicians' ghetto¹⁵. We can conclude that class stratification (hierarchy) shapes the two narratives in

similar ways. However, the affinities between the novels can be traced to women's representation.

2. Women's Representation

Men's dominance in society has been observed in numerous places around the world since the dawn of time. They saw themselves as having been established to dominate and subjugate women and to keep them under control. Women, on the other hand, have been ostracized and mistreated as a result of their emotional vulnerability. This way of thinking limited women's roles to being housewives. In this sense, Achille Mbembe writes:

“To exercise authority is, furthermore, for the male ruler, to demonstrate publicly a certain delight in eating and drinking well, ...The male ruler's pride in possessing an active penis has to be dramatized, through sexual rights over subordinates, the keeping of concubines, and so on. The unconditional subordination of women to the principle of male pleasure remains one pillar upholding the reproduction of the phallocratic¹⁶”.

We understand from the quote that all men, especially the rulers, considered power and better living to be dominant, having food, drink, and sexual pleasure.

In Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, women have power over their homes and families, which are commonly referred to as the domestic sphere (the private sphere of domestic life, childrearing, housekeeping, and religious education)¹⁷. Women's power shifts throughout time as their duties shift from childhood to adolescence to becoming a wife and mothers. The power manifests itself in their ability to govern their own lives and the lives of others around them after they reach the home sphere. For example, the transformation of Naseem Ghani into a mother and Mumtaz into Amina exemplifies how women gain and lose power in Indian society, as described by Salman Rushdie. Naseem Ghani is a young woman who is owned by her father and had little or no power in her childhood because she was seen as an object to be traded as a wife in exchange for a dowry¹⁸.

Her partner is in the same situation. Naseem is seen through a hole in a sheet held by three female bodyguards one section at a time. The objectification of Naseem by Aadam Aziz reveals that she is viewed as a part rather than a whole person. Aziz sees Naseem as a “*badly-fitting collage of her severally-inspected bits*¹⁹” that he assembles with his mind. By placing her under the patriarchal dominance of males, Rushdie demonstrates how little power she had when she was an unmarried woman in her father’s household. When Naseem Ghani marries, her body no longer serves as an object, and her power grows as a result of her enhanced ability to affect her living conditions²⁰.

Likewise, the audience is introduced to several female characters in *A Man of the People*. The reader discovers a range of patterns and commonalities through the presence of these ladies. Even though the narrative is delivered from Odili’s point of view, the narrator rarely refers to the female characters directly. Instead, their viewpoints and ideas are presented in a way that minimizes their importance, as with Mrs Nanga, who is easily pushed to stop her schooling and marries Chief Nanga, who humiliates and oppresses her, and she has no control over her husband’s womanizing behaviour.

Achebe refers also to another form of male domination through the characters of Elsie and Edna, who are both conquest targets for Chief Nanga and Odili; the reader does not know about their personal lives. So, he perceives Odili, Chief Nanga, and other masculine figures as the only fully developed, completely formed characters in the stories due to the intended superficiality of their representations²¹. Women are routinely chastised or blamed for the unfortunate circumstances in which many men find themselves. However, Odili notices Edna’s apprehension over her engagement when he comments on it. He holds her responsible for the engagement, although her social status and gender restrict her from opposing it. Odili is forced to contemplate the oppression of women and its pervasiveness in his culture when Edna astutely answers, “*This is the world of women*²²”. Eunice, Max’s wife, is the only

woman who challenges this restricted definition of femininity. So, he notes how equal her collaboration is as well as how she makes use of her academic and professional power.

Finally, we can deduce from our comparison of the two novels that women characters in Indian and Nigerian society suffer from male dominance. They live under patriarchal norms in the period after independence.

Endnotes

¹ Kiuranov, Chavdar. "Social Classes and Social Stratification." *International Journal of Sociology*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1982, pp. 1–100, www.jstor.org/stable/20629869. Accessed 20 Feb. 2022.

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³ *Ibid*

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ Mbembé, J.-A.. *De la postcolonie : essai sur l'imagination politique dans l'Afrique contemporaine* (2000-01-01)

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⁷ Chinua Achebe. *A Man of the People*. New York, Anchor Books, 2016

⁸ *Ibid*

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¹¹ "Shiva Character Analysis in *Midnight's Children*." *SparkNotes*, www.sparknotes.com/lit/midnightschildren/character/shiva/. Accessed 18 Feb. 2022.

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¹³ *Ibid*

¹⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁶ Mbembé, J.-A.. *De la postcolonie: essai sur l'imagination politique dans l'Afrique contemporaine* (2000-01-01)

¹⁷ Salman Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*. London Vintage, 1981.

¹⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁹*Ibid*

²⁰*Ibid*

²¹*Chinua Achebe. A Man of the People. New York, Anchor Books, 2016*

²²*Ibid*

V. General Conclusion

In conclusion, *Midnight's Children* and *A Man of the People* have conditions for a comparative study through characters and themes. Through our analysis of Rushdie's and Achebe's novels, we noticed that they are post-colonially connected. The two novels share the same experience of colonization, which makes the themes historically linked. Furthermore, we relate the two novels with some concepts from Achille Mbembe's "*On the Post Colony*" and Franz Fanon's "*The Wretched of the Earth*". By comparing the two novels, we came up with some conclusions shared between these two works. Therefore, we found that both share significant similarities at the level of themes and characters. Even though the two stories took place on different continents with two different cultures and traditions, our analysis revealed that the images drawn by Rushdie and Achebe about the two previous British colonies (Nigeria and India) are quite comparable in many ways.

Achebe paints post-independence Nigeria as a corrupt country where citizens live in extreme poverty and politicians get rich by abusing the trust of the people and the lives of revolutionary martyrs. The misadventures of the protagonist reveal the same experience in India.

To sum up, this research has shown the same issues exposed by Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. However, as a result, we encourage other students to delve further into both writers' works from different angles. In reality, the postcolonial tactics employed in both works appear to be comparable. Thus, we recommend students analyze both works in light of other contemporary critical theories.

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