

Biopolitics and Race in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

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Abstract:

Salman Rushdie's fiction has often been investigated with regard to its depiction of the psychological and violent effects of racism based on skin colour (phenotype). However, augmenting this analysis by considering additionally how Rushdie represents biopolitical technologies reveals that he engages with race more widely and variously than has been supposed. This paper argues that because his novels, especially *Midnight's Children*, portray these technologies as animated by racialization which the state constructs based on any criteria it desires, they suggest consistently the inevitability of suffering and discrimination as an effect of multiple racisms. Attempts by his characters to transcend race and escape race-thinking prove invariably incomplete and provisional because of a conjunction of biopolitical state operations and the racism of those members of the population who perceive the racializing biopolitical state as guaranteeing their freedom, security and species.

Michel Foucault's foundational analysis of how biopower and race, especially his arguments regarding 'a superrace and a subrace', are reticulated outlines usefully the methods by which regimes of biopower seek to securitize themselves by constructing subraces. His thought that informs this paper's exploration of the ways in which Rushdie depicts the various racisms of twentieth-century biopolitical states and their deleterious effects on the subraces these states constructed. However, Foucault's theory of race lacks detail regarding the complementary role that non-state actors play in oppressing subraces. Rushdie's novels suggest consistently the persistence of – and difficulty of resisting – racethinking of multiple types within modern states and populations alike requires a theory of race and biopower that goes beyond Foucault. By outlining how twentieth-century civilian groups of all phenotypes internalized the hierarchies that earlier colonial governments and discourses instituted, and through engaging with the specific character of non-state actors' phenotypical, biocultural and ethnicist racisms, this theory reveals a greater pervasiveness of racism in Rushdie's fictional worlds than has been supposed. It works towards a new conception of race and biopower appropriate to a biopolitical literary criticism of state and non-state racisms in the fiction of Rushdie and others.

Key Words: biopolitics, race, racialization, securitization, superrace, subrace, *Midnight's Children*

Introduction: Biopolitics and Race

Rushdie's fiction has often been investigated with regard to its depiction of the psychological and violent effects of racism based on skin colour (phenotype) (see Brennan; Afzal-Khan; Teverson). However, augmenting this analysis by considering additionally how Rushdie represents biopolitical technologies reveals that he engages with race more widely and variously than has been supposed. This paper argues that because his novels portray these technologies as animated by racialization which the state constructs based on any criteria it desires, they suggest consistently the inevitability of suffering and discrimination as

an effect of multiple racisms. Attempts by his characters to transcend race and escape race-thinking prove invariably incomplete and provisional because of a conjunction of biopolitical state operations and the racism of those members of the population who perceive the racializing biopolitical state as guaranteeing their freedom, security and species.

Governments use discriminately the biopolitical technologies that Rushdie's novels describe, not just because the state possesses limited resources but because biopower must racialize in order to regulate and optimize a population effectively. Biopolitics operates extensively by identifying sections of the population that require extra biopolitical surveillance and proceeding to racialize them. Phenotype may function as a means by which a group can be racialized easily, or as a complementary signifier of otherness making it possible to identify an already racialized group, but the state racializes primarily through discourses of security, economic efficiency and civic order. As Michel Foucault argues, the biopolitical state practices "the splitting of a single race into a superrace and a subrace" (*Society Must Be Defended* 61). The government asserts a hierarchy between the superrace of those it deems worthy of protection and the racially-othered subrace(s) from which the superrace of the better-behaved, more valued population must be shielded biologically and politically.

The state produces subraces either because these communities prove difficult to assimilate within its categorizing, homogenizing biopower or because they resist the state's attempts to optimize life actively, becoming what David Nally calls "human encumbrances" (16). As Michael Dillon observes, "where life is improvable, biopolitics specifies continuous revision and reform. Where life is however obdurately resistant to biopolitical revision, biopolitics specifies correction and punishment" (168). Rushdie's novels suggest frequently that states construct subraces in this way. *Midnight's Children* (henceforth *Midnight*) refigures the Indira Gandhi government's biopolitical sterilization programme as an attempt to destroy alternatives to the Prime Minister and her dynasty as symbols of the Indian nation. In *Shalimar the Clown* Rushdie portrays the Indian government's military crackdown against Kashmiri rebels as a racializing operation in which "every Kashmiri was [considered] a militant" (292). Rushdie indicates consistently that the racism of modern biopolitical states exceeds phenotypical form in its securitizing efforts.

This paper further argues that, by engaging with a second securitizing function of biopower, Rushdie's fiction depicts the frequently phenotypical racism displayed by civilian members of superraces as an adjunct to a biopolitical state control more likely to be based on other constructions of racial difference. The state identifies rebellious bodies in order to secure itself against their resistance via surveillance, but also so that it may impress upon the rest of the population the alterity of these bodies and thus justify – and make more efficient – their correction, punishment or even their elimination. The state not only persuades the superrace to complement biopolitical technologies by obeying commands to optimize its health, productivity and orderliness, but to legitimize and abet the government's state-securing racialization. It thus renders resistance by both subrace and superrace even more unlikely. Rushdie explores this dynamic in *The Satanic Verses* (henceforth *Verses*) when describing a British government which racializes immigrants from its former colonies. His fiction indicates that the conjunction of multiple racisms by the biopolitical state and the superrace it constructs prevents the formation of a pluralist, inclusive *polis* – what Esposito calls *communitas*, the "locus of plurality, difference, and alterity" (55) – and virtually precludes the possibility of resistance to and escape from racialization.

Foucault's foundational analysis of how biopower and race are reticulated outlines usefully the methods by which regimes of biopower seek to securitize themselves by constructing subraces. His thought informs this paper's exploration of the ways in which Rushdie depicts the various racisms of twentieth-century biopolitical states and their deleterious effects on the subraces these states constructed. However, Foucault's theory of race lacks detail regarding the complementary role that non-state actors play in oppressing subraces. Arguing most effectively that Rushdie's novels suggest consistently the persistence of – and difficulty of resisting – racethinking of multiple types within modern states and populations alike requires a theory of race and biopower that goes beyond Foucault. By outlining how twentieth-century civilian groups of all phenotypes internalized the hierarchies that earlier colonial governments and discourses instituted, and through engaging with the specific character of non-state actors' phenotypical, biocultural and ethnicist racisms, this theory reveals a greater pervasiveness of racism in Rushdie's fictional worlds than has been supposed. It works towards a new conception of race and biopower appropriate to a biopolitical literary criticism of state and non-state racisms in the fiction of Rushdie and others, augmenting the valuable insights that Foucault offers, particularly in *Society Must Be Defended*.

Michel Foucault: *Society Must Be Defended*

Foucault described perceptively and influentially the means by which biopolitical governments use racism to justify their ordering of society. His thought proves critical to a thorough investigation of how Rushdie depicts modern biopolitical states and the effect of their technologies on the racialized. Foucault's most detailed exploration of the biopolitics of race comes in his *Society Must Be Defended* lectures, published in 2004, in which he traces a genealogy of race-thinking within the biopolitical state. Foucault argues that "from the seventeenth or eighteenth century onward, the human body essentially became a productive force" (*Society Must Be Defended* 31) within technologies and economies of biopower. However, the widespread use of this productive force to institute a biopolitical regime of securitizing racism began in the nineteenth century. For Foucault this was the century where racism and the state became symbiotic (254). Foucault claims that before the nineteenth century theories of race primarily animated an emancipatory race war discourse (*discours de la guerre des races*) which, in David Mutimer's words, "argued that society was split, the state represented but one side of that split and it was an instrument of oppression, therefore it had to be overthrown by the oppressed race" (167). Whereas race war discourse constructs the nation's population as two warring races, the securitizing form of state racism (*racisme*) which developed in the nineteenth century affirms the existence of a national population constituted by an essential racial oneness and beset by multiple alien races, causing "the splitting of a single race into a superrace and a subrace" (Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* 61).

Foucault calls this racism "the postrevolutionist theme of the struggle for existence" (*Society Must Be Defended* 80) because the superrace, frightened by racially-othered outsiders and racially-othered sections of its own *polis* (human encumbrances who resist biopower or prove difficult to order), no longer prioritizes overthrowing the state. Instead, the superrace's fear of the racial Other that the biopolitical state constructs leads it not just to accept the state's racist oppression of the Other but to participate in its own concomitant oppression and optimization. Perceiving "the imperative to protect the race" (81), the superrace now views the state as a vital security apparatus rather than an oppressive fetter. Through racism the biopolitical state immunizes the superrace from the subrace, and immunizes itself simultaneously against mass resistance.

Foucault argues that the state's criteria for acceptance into the superrace are not based necessarily on phenotype or biology. The biopolitical state secures the superrace against bodies constructed discursively as non-normative and hence as a threat to national security, whether in terms of sexuality, nationality, physical health or phenotype. Anybody can be ejected from superrace into subrace, in what Foucault calls "the internal racism of permanent purification" (*Society Must Be Defended* 62). Foucault's concept of porous and malleable superracial and subracial categories enables a reading of Rushdie's novels which suggests that the pervasiveness of the biopolitical state's racism – and hence the difficulty of resisting its effects – results from this racism being based on a theoretically limitless array of signifiers.

However, considering how Rushdie represents the complex dynamics of racism by states and constructed non-state superraces alike demands a theory of race that goes beyond *Society Must Be Defended*. Foucault focuses overwhelmingly on the relationship between state power and its construction of race. As Mary Beth Mader argues, these lectures do not constitute "a genealogy, history or typology of race and racisms [...] race is treated only as a part of a genealogy of state power and not as a focus of investigation in itself" (98). Rushdie's novels indicate that the self-securing subjects living within biopolitical governmentality augment the state's racist ordering with biopolitical race-thinking and discourses of their own. In *Midnight* he fictionalizes and excoriates the state racism of the Indira Gandhi government's sterilization campaign, but also criticizes the phenotypical racism of ordinary Indians which he portrays as a legacy of British colonialism. In *Verses* his characters are assailed by racists in the employ of the British state, but also by racist citizens including street traders, hooligans and advertising executives. However, Foucault only gestures towards the superrace's part in racialization in his writings on "[g]overnment's limit of competence" (*The Birth of Biopolitics* 40), which concentrate on the ways in which superraces optimize their health and productivity under governmentality rather than the ways in which their race-thinking complements that of the state. Understanding fully the severity and pervasiveness of biopolitical oppression in Rushdie's fictional worlds – and in those of other writers – requires complementing Foucault's perceptive genealogy of European state racism with genealogies of para-state racisms, which Rushdie's novels suggest continue to be shaped by the legacy of colonialism.

The Biopolitics of Race Beyond Foucault

Rushdie's novels describe a number of different racisms – phenotypical, ethnicist, culturalist and bioculturalist – within and outside biopolitical state apparatuses. Although Foucault's theory of race illuminates the ways in which Rushdie represents state biopolitics, a concept of racism that goes beyond Foucault's Eurocentric, state-centric thought proves necessary to analyze how Rushdie's novels depict other racisms, including some forms of government racism that Foucault declines to examine.

Foucault's treatment of race concerns the European state almost exclusively. He notes that "[r]acism first develops with colonization, or in other words, with colonizing genocide" (*Society Must Be Defended* 257), but fails to explore how conquered spaces, foreign subject populations and racial hierarchies and othering(s) are interrelated. As Paul Gilroy argues, "[a] fuller appreciation of specifically colonial input into modern statecraft promises an altogether different sense of where bio-political procedures and anthropological hierarchies might fit into an amended history of modernity" (*After Empire* 48). Considering how colonialism stimulated biopolitical government's development allows an extension of the analysis of state biopower in Rushdie's novels to his fiction's non-European locales, and an examination of

how he represents racism among the superraces constructed by colonial and neo-colonial states alike. Rushdie depicts consistently how the contemporary state's race-thinking often augments phenotypical racism with discourses of culture or ethnicity, or eschews phenotypical racism altogether. He thus mirrors Foucault's notion that the state racializes based on any criteria it wishes. However, he also explores the race-thinking of the superrace the state constructs, which *Midnight*, *Verses*, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (henceforth *Ground*) and *Fury* portray as more likely to be based on a more straightforward assertion of phenotypical difference influenced by a legacy of colonial racism that he suggests has continued to characterize neo-colonial government. Hence, a genealogy of the different racisms present in the twentieth-century colonial and neo-colonial polities that Rushdie fictionalizes complements Foucault's state-centric thought in illuminating how Rushdie represents race.

The Legacy of Colonial State Biopolitics

Rushdie's novels explore colonial racism and its psychological and political effect on humans, from figures such as Ahmed Sinai in *Midnight*, Saladin Chamcha in *Verses* and Darius Cama in *Ground* – Indians who perceive Britishness (and sometimes even whiteness) as preferable to their own race – to the internally colonized non-white people of Britain in the latter two novels. Analyzing in detail how Rushdie represents racism requires an awareness (absent from Foucault) of the continuities between the British Empire's racializing colonial biopower, governmental racism in post-independence societies and race-thinking's persistence amongst constructed superraces in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century history upon which Rushdie draws.

As Kenan Malik notes, for early Victorians "race was a description of social distinctions, not of colour differences" (91). However, by the end of the nineteenth century the development of a sustained discourse of scientific racism, which held that non-whites were biologically inferior as well as biologically different from whites, had engendered a widespread belief in the homology of phenotype and race. This race-thinking provided a convenient rationale for the conquests of European empires, whose rule over non-white populations began to be perceived more concretely at their imperial centres as the natural order of things. Lawrence Blum argues that the need to justify colonial (bio)power was what necessitated biological racism in the first place: "It was only when the European powers turned definitively to conquest, subjugations, displacement of native peoples, and slavery that they began to develop rationalizations in which the latter were viewed as inferior and subhuman" (112).

During the nineteenth century the British Empire became able to order and administer its colonies increasingly efficiently on the basis of these racial distinctions, through biopolitical technologies such as mapping, sanitation and statistical surveys which made easier the construction and surveillance of subraces. For Arjun Appadurai the British imperial state, particularly in India, treated the non-white bodies it governed as "inherently both collective and exotic, set[ting] the stage for group difference to be the central principle of politics" (130). Indigenous populations were racialized simultaneously at the level of representation and, through the empire's more expansive use of technologies of biopower, biopoliticized at the level of administration: "The modern colonial state brings together the exoticizing vision of orientalism with the familiarizing discourse of statistics. In the process, the body of the colonial subject is made simultaneously strange and docile" (133). These theories and technologies of race fed back from the colonial periphery, animating the

biopolitical governance of other races within the central nation-state in the nineteenth century and beyond (see Gilroy, *After Empire* 8).

Rushdie's novels emphasize the lasting effects of these racializing technologies, and the new racisms that have come to inform them discursively, in the post-imperial societies of the formerly colonized and their former colonizers. In *Midnight* previously colonized populations retain the psychological trauma of racializing colonial discourses that stressed their inferiority to whites. India's post-independence economic and political elite in the novel thus prioritizes attaining whiteness and Britishness over constructing a new Indian national identity. Similarly, Rushdie suggests in *Verses* and *Ground* that immigrants from former colonies into erstwhile imperial centres are likely to find themselves racialized by both state and civilian actors who even after decolonization seek to securitize themselves against non-white bodies. However, by exploring racisms based on criteria other than skin colour his fiction indicates that colonialism's spread of efficient technologies of biopower in the nineteenth century – as described by Foucault (*Society Must Be Defended* 254) – and the rise of phenotypical racism are roughly contemporaneous, but not homologous. The racisms that govern technologies of biopower evolve independently of the technologies themselves, as do racisms amongst the superraces that these techniques construct. Beyond the phenotypical, a form of racism that he indicates has persisted even after its scientific discrediting in the twentieth century, Rushdie examines the devastating impact of culturalist, bioculturalist and ethnicist racisms on subraces inside and outside former imperial centres, and inside and outside biopolitical state apparatuses, be they colonial, post-independence or neo-colonial. Considering how his fiction engages with biopower's securitizing technologies and discourses reveals that it depicts more varieties of race-thinking than has been supposed, and therefore evokes a more attenuated potentiality of escape from race-thinking.

The Twentieth Century's Multiple Racisms

Rushdie's novels depict the persistence of multiple types of race-thinking in twentieth-century society despite the discovery that race has no basis in biology, as Victorian colonizing biopoliticians supposed. Whereas the nineteenth century saw a growing scientific belief that the white race was superior biologically, a new consensus emerged in the mid- to late twentieth century. In Robert Blank and Samuel Hines' words, "emphasis began shifting to the micro level within biology" (52). Biologists began to analyze humans not by phenotype but by genotype. One of the first, Richard Lewontin, argued in his 1972 article "The Apportionment of Human Diversity" that "human races are remarkably similar to each other, with the largest part by far of human variation being accounted for by the differences between individuals" (397). Scientific investigations into epigenetics led to the widespread acceptance within the field of human biology that phenotypical difference arose from environmental factors and that human beings were virtually identical genotypically (see Gill 481). It has become an almost unanimously held view within the scientific community that, as John McLeod asserts, "all constructions of racial difference are based upon human invention and not biological fact" (110).

However, in the mid- and late twentieth-century societies that Rushdie fictionalizes, the lack of credible scientific evidence that biological difference causes variations in skin colour did little to end phenotypical racism. As Sara Upstone argues, "[r]acism exists within a system where, as for colonial control of space, sight is essential" (95). For the state, phenotypical racism remained an effective measure of security because it was surveyed easily, and because most humans even towards the century's end continued to perceive it as a

signifier of racial difference (see Masters 128), thus making constructed superraces more likely to abet the state's securitizing operations.

Rushdie's fiction, on the few occasions that it engages directly with contemporary epigenetics, represents the persistence of phenotypical racism in twentieth-century societies in spite of scientific discoveries, rather than indicating the possibility that these theories will find widespread acceptance outside the scientific community in the future. In *Ground Ormus Cama*, who dreams of transcending race and escaping from race-thinking, uses contemporary epigenetics to justify his claim that this escape is possible: "He had taken to quoting biologists, geneticists. Human beings are just about identical, he'd say. The race difference, even the gender difference, in the eyes of science it's just the teeniest-tiniest fraction of what we are. Percentage-wise, it really doesn't signify" (Rushdie, *Ground* 413). However, he remains racialized phenotypically by both biopoliticians and civilian subjects. Rushdie, even in the novel in which he suggests most vividly the possibility of opposing racist biopolitical technologies and discourses, offers only an attenuated potentiality of effective resistance.

In Rushdie's novels phenotypical racism persists because constructed superraces continue to consider skin colour a signifier of racial difference. It also endures because biopolitical governments, while ceasing to racialize explicitly on the grounds of phenotype, absorb phenotypical racism into similarly exclusionary discourses of ethnicity or culture that securitize the state by appealing to the superrace's enduring phenotypical racism. Rushdie further suggests, particularly in *Verses*, that this securitization proves effective because the resistance of these subraces to biopolitical oppression entrenches the superrace's belief in their ungrateful intransigence and thus in their racial inferiority. By depicting how multiple forms of racism animate biopolitical technologies and protect the state from race war discourse by persuading the superrace of a threat from the subrace's otherness, Rushdie's fiction consistently indicates the near impossibility of escaping race-thinking and racism.

In novels such as *Ground*, in which the British state asserts the otherness of non-white races without invoking phenotype explicitly, Rushdie depicts the ways in which complex and multiform discourses of ethnicity and culture have offered new ways for mid- to late twentieth-century biopolitical states to construct subraces and segment the populations they govern. After the atrocities committed by the Nazis – whose bio/thanatopolitical nature Foucault, Giorgio Agamben and Roberto Esposito examine – it became less acceptable for politicians to assert racial or phenotypical hierarchies overtly, particularly in Europe. Increasingly, racializing post-war biopoliticians referred not to race but to ethnicity. They disavowed the explicit race-thinking now associated with the Third Reich's genocide while continuing to practice racial othering. In order to justify their continued discursive scission between superrace and subrace, these politicians eschewed the socially constructed conception of ethnicity posited by academics (see Maiello 99), instead asserting its primordialism. In Gilroy's words, "[t]hese formations [were] treated as if they spring, fully formed, from their own special viscera" (*The Black Atlantic* 4).

The post-war racializing state's culturalist discourses have proven similarly likely to emphasize primordial ties, or at the very least the fixity of cultural groups within society. For Gilroy "[t]he logics of nature and culture have converged, and it is above all the power of race that ensures they speak in the same deterministic tongue" (*After Empire* 6). Even those who accept that humans are near-identical biologically may still construct superraces and subraces on the grounds that the different customs, behaviour and history of other nationalities, colours or socio-economic groups make them inassimilable within the nation-state's safe, securitized biopolitical order. These discourses, which cloak racism in apparently more benign shrouds

of authenticity and belonging, strengthen the biopolitical government by indirectly condoning the superrace's state-securitizing phenotypical racism. Rushdie frequently depicts, as in *Verses* and *Ground*, how the racializing aspect of biopower persisted in twentieth-century politics even as discourses of government abjured overt racial hierarchizing in favour of asserting ethnic and cultural alterity.

Rushdie's fiction suggests the difficulty of resisting this multiple racialization through resistance organized along racial lines, and thus the endurance of the categories of superrace and subrace. Gilroy argues that "[f]or many racialized populations [subraces], 'race' and the hard-won, oppositional identities it supports are not to be lightly or prematurely given up" (*Between Camps* 12). However, he warns that these often essentialist "postures of resistance" (13) risk reifying the very racial categories which the biopolitical state uses to justify its punitive actions. In *Verses* efforts to reclaim blackness and the demonic as badges of pride cannot prevent the British state and the white superrace it constructs from viewing these signifiers as marks of unruliness and racial inferiority. Rushdie's novels indicate frequently that this kind of oppositional (sub)race-thinking only fortifies (super)race-thinking.

Yet attempts by Rushdie's characters to resist racist biopolitical oppression not by asserting racial identity but by eschewing it also fail. Michael Dillon argues that "[i]f you biopoliticize you will racialize" (188). As in *Midnight*, which portrays the Indian government's sterilization programme as a targeted attempt to destroy alternatives to Indira Gandhi as the symbol of the nation, Rushdie's novels suggest not only the prevalence of interrelated phenotypical, culturalist and ethnicist racisms in twentieth-century politics but mirror Foucault by showing that a state may use any criteria it desires to construct a subrace from which the superrace must be securitized. However, Rushdie also indirectly problematizes Foucault's Eurocentric, state-centric conception of biopolitical racism and government. His fiction explores the enduring influence of colonialism on many of the state's racisms, and the ways in which the often phenotypical racism of superraces enables the state better to securitize itself. A biopolitical reading reveals that Rushdie imagines a greater plethora of racialization, prejudices and (often violent) identitarian conflicts than critics have supposed, and thus affirms more firmly than ever that his fiction indicates the near-impossibility of constructing a non-racializing *communitas*. It therefore asserts the necessity of an incorporative theory of biopolitics and race, if biopolitical literary criticism is to analyze fictional depictions of biopower as comprehensively as possible.

Through their depictions of multiple racialization and failed attempts to resist them, Rushdie's novels demonstrate the difficulty of moving beyond the phenotypical "frontier of the skin" (*Ground* 413) or beyond the concept of race and its effects in general. Race-thinking pervades biopolitical nation states in his fiction: from the phenotypical racism and biopolitical state sterilization programme he represents in *Midnight*; to the rampant racial prejudice of the British state and public in *Verses* and *Ground*; to *Fury*'s descriptions of ethnic conflicts and racial discrimination that countermand *Ground*'s nascent suggestion that the frontier of the skin can be transcended. Rushdie criticizes the racism of twentieth-century states and superraces scathingly, while portraying consistently their vast capacity and ability to discriminate on the basis of gender, wealth, sexuality, race, ethnicity, culture or whatever constructed category they wished.

Biopolitics and Racism in *Midnight's Children*

In *Midnight's Children* (1981) Rushdie offers an encomium to the pluralist, egalitarian ideal of the Indian nation. However, he also criticizes the racialization, enacted on the bases of phenotype, gender, nation and region by India's people and its biopolitical

nation-state alike, that he suggests have increasingly prevented this ideal from animating India's daily life and politics since independence in 1947. As the narrative unfolds India progressively becomes a space whose hugely numerous and diverse social groups racialize and are racialized in turn. Consequently, the possibility wanes that India may become an inclusive *communitas* that accepts these groups' differences.

Early in *Midnight* Rushdie explores how colonial biopower influenced the racism of Indian civilians. He depicts a fictional post-independence Indian socio-economic elite that continues to prize whiteness and behaviours associated with their former British rulers. The novel's later chapters focus more on how the central government's increasingly racializing practices after independence diminished the potentiality of *communitas* in India. Rushdie fictionalizes the gradual erosion within the nation's politics of the pluralist ideals of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first post-independence Prime Minister. Nehru wrote of "the mass of the Indian people, in their infinite diversity and yet their amazing unity" (35). He advocated "equal opportunities for all and no political, economic, or social barriers in the way of any individual or group" (521). Nehru associated national stability and worth with a pluralist acceptance of diversity, a politics that *Midnight's* protagonist Saleem Sinai shares.

Rushdie contrasts Nehru's tenure as Prime Minister with that of his daughter Indira Gandhi, particularly during the period of "Emergency" (*Midnight* 597) between 1975 and 1977 in which democratic norms including elections and habeas corpus were suspended. By depicting the biopolitical sterilization campaign that her government carried out during this period as a targeted attempt to remove perceived threats to India's security, Rushdie suggests that India's central government in the post-independence era has become marked increasingly by the autocracy, racism and technologies of biopower that characterized British colonial rule. He presents the possibility of an inclusive nation by establishing Saleem and his diverse collective of magical children as symbols of a desirable pluralist India. However, *Midnight* emphasizes most of all the prevalence of racially-othering discourses and practices in India. Rushdie stresses the perseverance of colonial-influenced phenotypical racism, and by describing the ways in which Indira Gandhi's government uses discourses and technologies of biopower to racialize, persecute and eventually sterilize the children in the novel, he indicates that the post-independence Indian nation-state has disavowed pluralism and tolerance.

White Equals Might: Phenotypical Racism in *Midnight's Children*

The sterilization of Saleem Sinai and his fellow magical children towards the end of *Midnight* constitutes the novel's most vivid description of the racializing biopolitics that Rushdie suggests has come increasingly to characterize Indian central government since Nehru's death. However, in its early chapters *Midnight* also depicts the pervasiveness of race-thinking outside state apparatuses in twentieth-century India. Rushdie represents racism among ordinary Indians as the legacy of British colonialism. Similarly, to the late nineteenth-century biologists whose work provided a rationale for colonial expansion and biopolitical administration, many of Rushdie's Indian characters in *Midnight* think of themselves not only in terms of race but in terms of phenotypical hierarchies. Members of Saleem's family talk openly of white skin's desirability. After independence his father Ahmed Sinai forms part of a socio-economic elite which seeks to imitate behaviours associated with the British and which not only prizes whiteness but achieves it. Rushdie uses the literary device of imagining a supernatural post-independence India in which gaining wealth turns people white, in order to evoke the difficulty of eradicating colonial race-thinking and racial hierarchies that associate whiteness with success, beauty and power from post-independence Indian society.

The British colonized India through a conjunction of biopolitical technologies and a discursive racism that fed into them. One such technology was the British-run education system which, characteristically of the optimizations of life that biopolitical states enact, was established to aid India's colonial government's smooth running rather than for altruistic reasons. Thomas Babington Macaulay's notorious "Minute on Education" of 1835 betrays these administrative concerns. Macaulay argued that the British Empire in India needed to establish "a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern – a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (601). In *Midnight* Rushdie explores this racializing biopolitical discourse's lasting effects on twentieth-century India. He indicates that because the white-dominated colonial government sought to create a class of interpreters through behavioural conditioning and racializing discourse, India's post-independence socio-economic elite, despite being no longer answerable to the British Empire, continued to prize the morals, opinions and even the phenotype of their former rulers. By suggesting that the transfer of power from British to Indian hands left colonial racism intact, *Midnight's* early chapters evoke the difficulty of overcoming these associations psychologically and politically.

In *Midnight* the behavioural continuity between old and new elites means that colonial discourses of Eurocentrism and racialization persist in India after independence. Rushdie uses allegory to suggest that the conditions for Indian self-rule, set by a British imperial machine characterized by discursive racism, biopolitical technologies and economic neoliberalism, led to a post-independence nation run along similar lines. The sale of William Methwold's estate at the precise moment of India's independence to a group of wealthy Indian families, including Saleem's, on the proviso "that the entire contents be retained by the new owners" (*Midnight* 126), represents the handover of India in miniature. As Macaulay advised, Methwold selects a class of interpreters to take over, ensuring that they will conduct themselves in much the same way as their predecessors:

'My notion,' Mr Methwold explains, staring at the setting sun, 'is to stage my own transfer of assets. Leave behind everything you see? Select suitable persons – such as yourself, Mr Sinai! – hand everything over absolutely intact: in tiptop working order. Look around you: everything's in fine fettle, don't you agree? Tickety-boo, we used to say. Or, as you say in Hindustani: Sabkuch ticktock hai. Everything's just fine.'

'Nice people are buying the houses,' Ahmed offers Amina his handkerchief, 'nice new neighbours...that Mr Homi Catrack in Versailles Villa, Parsee chap, but a racehorse-owner. Produces films and all. And the Ibrahims in Sans Souci, Nussie Ibrahim is having a baby, too, you can be friends...and the old man Ibrahim, with so-big sisal farms in Africa. Good family.' (128)

In this section of *Midnight* Rushdie evokes the historical transfer of power from British hands and its attendant creation of a post-independence Indian elite that felt bound to respect and imitate the political practices and social mores of the British colonists. As Methwold watches the sun set on the British Empire – here Rushdie plays on the well-worn phrase that argued for the impossibility of this occurrence – he outlines his intention to "[s]elect suitable persons" (128) to take over the house and its contents, meaning the rich and well-connected. By juxtaposing Methwold's plan with Ahmed Sinai's assessment of his putative new neighbours, in which his characterization of the Ibrahims and Catracks as "nice" and "[g]ood" (128) appears occasioned entirely by their wealth and business interests,

Rushdie criticizes the way in which post-independence India became ruled by a wealthy, British-influenced elite.

Rushdie further indicates the influence of Methwold and British colonial discourse when he details the gradual assimilation of the house's occupants into behaviours associated with the British. Rather than shaping their space they become shaped by it, taking on "imitation Oxford draws" (131) and growing to enjoy evening cocktails and budgerigars. Through "the subtle magic of Methwold's Estate" (132) Rushdie suggests allegorically how in order to take their place among the post-independence socioeconomic elite, Indians have often imitated the colonizers' behaviour. However, the traits of Rushdie's middle-class Indian characters which arise from the positive qualities they ascribe to the British colonisers exceed a desire to emulate their behaviour. The post-independence socio-economic elite in *Midnight* also crave whiteness. In the case of businessmen such as Ahmed they achieve it supernaturally through the effort of taking their place at the forefront of India's economy. They thus contribute further towards preserving colonial hierarchies and discourses of race.

Rushdie depicts colonial-influenced phenotypical racism amongst Indians both before and after independence. This racism proves rife within Saleem's wealthy family prior to their becoming part of India's British-imitating post-independence elite. Saleem's cousin Zohra demonstrates a mixture of pity and contempt towards darker pigmentations: "How awful to be black, cousinji, to wake every morning and see it staring at you, in the mirror to be shown proof of your inferiority! Of course they know; even blackies know white is nicer, don'tyouthinkso?" (89-90) That Saleem's mother Amina later sees a white beggar, and feels "embarrassment, because he was white, and begging was not for white people" (106), indicates the veracity of Zohra's statement. Saleem's family associate whiteness with wealth, beauty and superiority. Similarly, to their racializing colonial administrators, they perceive a natural order of white elites and black subraces. Moreover, *Midnight* uses the supernatural disturbingly to suggest this racial hierarchy's immutability even after independence.

Rushdie represents the fixity of discursive associations of whiteness with political and economic power by describing magical phenotypical transmogrifications. Multiple characters in *Midnight* find their phenotypes altering from dark to white. These transformations countermand Macaulay's argument that a body can be defined as "Indian in blood and colour" (601), and the similar claims of nineteenth-century racializing biologists. Rushdie suggests that environment rather than innate biological characteristics produces phenotype, as epigeneticists discovered in the late twentieth century. However, because the phenotypical transformations of India's post-independence socio-economic elite in the novel occur as a result of their increasing influence and wealth they leave received discourses of white superiority intact.

Saleem's businessman father Ahmed Sinai not only imitates the behaviour of British colonials on Methwold's Estate, but his growing power in post-independence India transforms him supernaturally into a white man. Characteristically of his family members, Ahmed associates whiteness with power, wealth and superiority, arguing that "[a]ll the best people are white under the skin" (*Midnight* 247). He reifies colonial notions of subrace and superrace, a self-loathing that Frantz Fanon argues was common under colonialism: "For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white" (12). In *Midnight* this destiny proves not only desirable but achievable in post-independence India, thus constituting a further reification. After 1947 a second wealthy white elite replaces its departed predecessor. Saleem attributes the phenotypical change to the effort of seizing control of the country. He thus augments the novel's description of Methwold's Estate in indicating a continuity

between India's post-independence socioeconomic elite and their former colonial masters: "the gargantuan (even heroic) efforts involved in taking over from the British and becoming masters of their own destinies had drained the colour from their cheeks" (*Midnight* 248). Having been convinced by British colonial discourse of the white race's superiority and that of the British tastes and morals that Macaulay lionized, the businessmen of post-independence India leave the nation's racial hierarchy virtually untouched. They do so partly because they emulate the behaviour of the white British colonials and prize whiteness, but also partly because they are forced supernaturally into a white phenotype. Rushdie criticizes British colonial racializing but, through his novel's supernatural elements, affirms the extreme difficulty of altering perceptions of whiteness as aesthetically desirable and socio-economically beneficial.

Rushdie suggests in *Midnight* that the continuing discursive and economic strength of whiteness is neither the only impediment to *communitas* in post-independence India nor the most severe. Racethinking proves prevalent psychologically and discursively amongst the new socio-economic elite in the novel's fictional version of India. However, post Nehru, it also comes pervasively to inspire the (bio)politics of the nation's government, which possesses far more ability than ordinary citizens to affect the lives of constructed subraces. Rushdie maps a trajectory in which Nehru's pluralist, inclusive politics gives way to intensely biopolitical government under his daughter Indira Gandhi. Saleem's plural, diverse collective, which attempts to resist state biopower, falls victim to a biopolitical campaign of sterilization through which the state asserts its power over their bodies and numbers. Rushdie thus indicates the veracity of Foucault's argument that state biopower's strength arises from its ability to construct race using any criteria it desires and to use these racializing discourses to animate powerful biopolitical technologies.

Jawaharlal Nehru's Pluralist Politics

Rushdie's novels and essays alike demonstrate his affinity with the pluralist, inclusive politics of India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. In *Imaginary Homelands* (1992) Rushdie argues that "Nehru represents the [Indian] dream's noblest part, its most idealistic phase. Indira Gandhi, always the pragmatist, often unscrupulously so, becomes a figure of decline" (48). *Midnight* depicts this perceived decline within India's post-independence politics by contrasting Nehru's attempts at constructing a democratic, egalitarian nation with his daughter's autocracy and biopolitics.

The chapters of *Midnight* that Rushdie sets before India's independence chart the nascent coalescing of multiple identities into Indian nationhood. Rather than representing the often violent thanatopolitical methods by which India retained possession of Kashmir, as he does in *Shalimar*, Rushdie uses the character of Saleem's grandfather Aadam Aziz to emphasize how Kashmiris embraced the Indian nation voluntarily within the inclusive Nehruvian framework. By tracing Aadam's progression from Kashmiri to Kashmiri Indian, Rushdie suggests the Indian nation's theoretical ability to include even those at its geographical margins within its polity. From the beginning of the novel Aadam perceives "the narrowness, the proximity of the horizon" (*Midnight* 5) in Kashmir and prizes a diverse, hybrid community that incorporates many regions, peoples and races. He rejects the philosophy of Tai the boatman, "the living antithesis of[...]belief in the inevitability of change" (11). He prefers to put his faith in the Nehruvian ideal of a modern, inclusive Indian nation. His experiences at the Amritsar Massacre in 1919 produce an allegiance to the multiplicitous Indian nation attempting to resist British rule. Years later he remembers, "I started off as a Kashmiri and not much of a Muslim. Then I got a bruise on the chest that turned me into an Indian" (47).

Through Aadam's affiliation with Nehru's political project – albeit an affiliation characterized by support for the anti-Partition Free Islam Convocation rather than Nehru's Congress – Rushdie depicts how in the years before independence even people from India's most contentiously held region affiliated themselves with Nehru's conception of the nation and thus became Indian.

Rushdie further accentuates the desirability of Nehru's pluralist ideal by having Saleem argue for a connection between himself and the Prime Minister in his idiosyncratic historiographical narrative of post-independence India. Rushdie juxtaposes Saleem's birth with Nehru's "Tryst with Destiny" speech made at the moment of India's independence:

So I was brought to my mother; and she never doubted my authenticity for an instant. Ahmed Sinai, toe in splint, sat on her bed as she said: 'Look, janum, the poor fellow, he's got his grandfather's nose.' He watched mystified as she made sure there was only one head; and then she relaxed completely, understanding that even fortune-tellers have only limited gifts.

'Janum,' my mother said excitedly, 'you must call the papers. Call them at the Times of India. What did I tell you? I won.'

'...This is no time for petty or destructive criticism,' Jawaharlal Nehru told the Assembly. 'No time for ill-will. We have to build the noble mansion of free India, where all her children may dwell.' A flag unfurls: it is saffron, white and green. (157-8)

Having underscored Nehru's pluralist exhortations to build a nation "where all her children may dwell" (158), Rushdie then establishes further parallels between Nehru and his protagonist through a fictional letter that the Prime Minister sends to the newborn Saleem: "My belated congratulations on the happy accident of your moment of birth! [...] We shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own" (167). While Nehru is not aware of Saleem's magical powers, Saleem takes the Prime Minister's apparent interest in him as proof of a great destiny. When Saleem discovers the "exotic multiplicity of [the *Midnight's Children's*] gifts" (275), which Rushdie associates closely with the flowering of India's independence and which represents a diverse profusion of India and Indians that tallies with the author's preferred hybrid national ideal, he views the children as a mirror of the nation. He attempts to realize his perceived destiny by shaping this multiplicitous collective along inclusive, Nehruvian lines into a political movement to change India for the better.

Hence, when Indira Gandhi has the children sterilized during her biopolitical Emergency, Rushdie suggests that she largely excises symbolically from the public sphere the incorporative, pluralist and nebulous Nehruvian conception of Indianness that *Midnight's* early chapters lionize. Rushdie represents Nehru's India as a nation – and a nation-state – that strives to include as many different bodies as possible within its *bios*. However, this inclusivity wanes under Nehru's daughter, who seeks instead to eject Indians from this *bios* into subracial categories that her government constructs. She does so through a campaign of sterilization whose stated aim – to eliminate poverty – masks a securitizing, racializing biopolitical operation aimed at destroying the symbols of Nehruvian pluralism that countermand her construction of herself and her family as the embodiment of India.

The State Biopolitics of Sterilization

Although *Midnight* lauds Nehru's pluralist politics, Rushdie's fictional portrayal of post-independence India also criticizes his failings. The nation-state that Nehru established after independence included mechanisms liable to turn biopolitical and racializing in the

wrong hands. As Paul Brass observes, “the power to declare a national emergency that, in effect, may convert the country into a unitary state” (63) – Indira Gandhi’s biopolitical use of which Rushdie depicts in *Midnight* – was written into India’s constitution under Nehru’s watch. Nehru’s distribution of power within the political system was much less egalitarian than his identity politics. In *The Discovery of India* (1946) he argued that “[t]he idea of planning and a planned society is accepted now in varying degrees by almost everyone” (501). He advocated “equal opportunities for all” (521), but saw the state as the vehicle for implementing these opportunities. He thus invested large amounts of power within central state mechanisms. In *Midnight* Rushdie criticizes Nehru’s planned economy by having Saleem Sinai describe the mixed success rate of the government’s Soviet-style Five Year Plans (285). Saleem also hints occasionally at incipient autocratic tendencies within Nehru’s government. For example, he details how Congress hires a gang of toughs to “encourag[e] the electorate to use its vote with wisdom and care” (308) in the 1957 election. Rushdie depicts the Indian nation-state under Nehru as a potent tool for inclusivity, pluralism and socialism, but also as an apparatus whose bias towards centralization enabled Indira Gandhi’s future biopolitical oppression.

However, Rushdie emphasizes Nehru’s willingness to compromise and his inclusive rhetoric far more than his government’s abuse of power. *Midnight*’s later chapters contrast Nehru’s pluralist politics favourably with the government of his daughter Indira Gandhi, who Rushdie presents as much more willing to utilize the totalitarian potentiality within India’s central state apparatuses. He does so most vividly through the episode in which her government has the *Midnight’s Children* sterilized. Indira Gandhi militates against the diversity and pluralism of the Nehruvian ideal that the children represent symbolically by constructing them as a subrace and using biopolitical technologies to prevent them from reproducing. She complements this process through a supernatural programme that seeks to entrench her own dynasty’s power through cloning her family members. By showing how his fictionalized Indira Gandhi uses state apparatuses to destroy magical symbols of pluralism and replace them with magical symbols of autocracy, Rushdie mirrors Foucault in indicating the devastating power of securitizing biopolitical technologies based on infinitely variable and malleable racial criteria.

The historical sterilization campaign upon which Rushdie’s novel draws employed the categorizing and organizing technologies of central planning and statistical methods through which biopolitics aims, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue, at “an absolute and total ordering of[...]social subjectivity and social life as a whole under a unified sovereign power” (161). The deleterious effects of these technologies were felt overwhelmingly by India’s poor. Brass writes that during the sterilization programme’s height – the Emergency of 1975-1977 – government employees in some states were “given quotas to fulfil to have ordinary members of the public sterilized” (42). In order to achieve these quotas, officials began to use increasingly coercive methods. Because India’s poor were less mobile than the middle classes and less able to bribe officials to avoid being vasectomized, they suffered disproportionately from these biopolitical statistical measures (see Tarlo 149). The state’s sterilization programme constituted, in Stephen Legg’s words, “an exceptional biopolitical stripping of the urban poor” (281).

However, Rushdie’s novel deviates from this conception of the biopolitical sterilization programme during the Emergency as a campaign that harmed the poor in a misguided quota-driven attempt to improve their lot. Instead he evokes the historical Indira Gandhi’s autocracy by depicting the programme that her fictional equivalent institutes as a deliberate,

targeted effort to create new symbols of Indianness by replacing the *Midnight's Children's* multiplicity and magic with clones of her family through a campaign of state racism that uses similar quotas. Hardt and Negri define state racism as

discussions of demographic explosions and population crises[...]which] are not really oriented toward either bettering the lives of the poor or maintaining a sustainable total global population in line with the capacities of the planet but are rather concerned primarily with which social groups reproduce and which do not. (166)

In *Midnight* Indira Gandhi identifies the magical *Midnight's Children* as a social group which should not reproduce. As Saleem argues, "the truest, deepest motive behind the declaration of a State of Emergency was the smashing, the pulverizing, the irreversible discombobulation of the children of midnight" (597). The privileged group whose reproduction must, conversely, be encouraged numbers only the Prime Minister and her family. Through this state racism she attempts to entrench herself as the symbol of the Indian nation, a megalomania which Rushdie indicates through the election slogan, "India is Indira and Indira is India" (587). She does so by using biopolitical practices to prevent alternative symbols of Nehruvian multiplicity and pluralism from producing further potentially magical offspring, and by using a mysterious supernatural cloning technology to bolster the numbers of her dynasty.

Rushdie describes the government's move against the *Midnight's Children* not as an act of political oppression aimed at securitizing the nation against human encumbrances which threaten its safety and stability, but as an effort to securitize Indira's personal power by erasing Nehruvian political pluralism and replacing it with a personality cult based around her and her dynasty. Often Rushdie's fiction re-imagines historical oppressions by regimes of biopower "where life", in Michael Dillon's words, proves "obdurately resistant to biopolitical revision, [and] biopolitics specifies correction and punishment" ("Security, Race and War" 168). Rushdie suggests, as when he depicts the British government's response to the race riots of the early 1980s in *Verses*, that twentieth-century biopolitical governments tended to represent political dissidents as a subracial threat to the population on account of their unruliness and resistance. However, by the time the *Midnight's Children* are sterilized their political movement has long since disintegrated. Rushdie establishes the children as a symbol of a politics that welcomes free and frank discussion of a wide range of viewpoints through their debates in "the lok sabha or parliament of [Saleem's] brain" (*Midnight* 314), and through their destruction evokes the possibility of a new, as yet unthought form of pluralist politics. Yet the *Midnight Children's* Conference fractures without accomplishing anything tangible in resisting state biopower. If Rushdie's Indira Gandhi feared political dissent from the children, she would simply have imprisoned them along with her major political opponents. Her targeted sterilization campaign against them demonstrates that she aims to remove them from the gene pool. Rushdie portrays the children's sterilization as an act of state racism, an attempt to prevent "the very essence of multiplicity" (317) from producing yet more multiplicity. He depicts further state racism through the government's concomitant programme of cloning its Prime Minister's family supernaturally.

In describing the government's raid on the Magicians' Ghetto, Rushdie juxtaposes these two aspects of Indira Gandhi's state racism:

there were figures descending from vans: a brightly-coloured tent was being hastily erected, and there were camp beds and surgical equipment...and now from the vans there poured a stream of finely dressed young ladies of high

birth and foreign education, and then a second river of equally-well-dressed young men: volunteers, Sanjay Youth volunteers, doing their bit for society...but then I realised no, not volunteers, because all *the* men had the same curly hair and lips- like-women's-labia, and the elegant ladies were all identical, too, their features corresponding precisely to those of Sanjay's Menaka[...]I was shown once again that the ruling dynasty of India had learned how to replicate itself; but then there was no time to think, the numberless labia-lips and lanky-beauties were seizing magicians and old beggars, people were being dragged towards the vans, and now a rumour spread through the colony of magicians: 'They are doing nasbandi – sterilisation is being performed!'[...]the air is thick with yells and missiles and the elegant labia-lips and lanky-beauties are retreating before the harsh fury of the illusionists; and there goes Picture Singh, leading the assault against the tent of vasectomy...Parvati or Laylah, disobeying orders, is at my side now, saying, 'My God, what are they –', and at this moment a new and more formidable assault is unleashed upon the slum: troops are sent in against magicians, women and children. (599-600, original emphasis)

Rushdie uses the "stream" or "river" of volunteers, which sweeps the slum dwellers swiftly along and uses the biopolitical tools of "camp beds and surgical equipment" (599) to sterilize them, to evoke the government sterilization programme's efficiency. A "new and more formidable assault" (600) of soldiers crushes any resistance. Rushdie compares the slum dwellers' helplessness against this biopolitical operation with the disenfranchising symbolic power of the Gandhi dynasty that enacts it. He communicates this superrace's might by hinting at a mysterious government cloning programme. "The Sanjay Youth Movement [which] was particularly effective in the sterilization campaign" (588) lives up to its name literally by comprising entirely clones of Indira Gandhi's son Sanjay and his wife Menaka. Saleem writes, "all *the* men had the same curly hair and lips-likewomen's-labia, and the elegant ladies were all identical, too, their features corresponding precisely to those of Sanjay's Menaka[...]I was shown once again that the ruling dynasty of India had learned how to replicate itself" (599). Through the italicized '*the*' Rushdie emphasizes the sameness of the men involved in the "civic-beautification and vasectomy programmes" (603). Menaka's presence affirms the fertility of Indira Gandhi's family as opposed to the sterility of the subraces it constructs. In this section Rushdie contrasts the replication of the same few bodies of an elite with its efforts to prevent a larger, more multiplicitous social group from producing more multiplicity.

Rushdie indicates the devastating strength of the Indian state's biopolitical operations by detailing the destruction and numerous sterilizations that the raid on the Magicians' Ghetto causes. However, the clones' assault against the slum proves a "diversionary manoeuvre" (603) to mask a targeted operation of state racism not against the poor but against the *Midnight's Children*. As Saleem argues, "those who would be gods fear no one so much as other potential deities" (612). In *Midnight* Indira Gandhi's biopolitical Emergency represents an attempt to use biopolitical technologies to extinguish a potent symbol of Nehruvian multiplicity while associating her family with the idea of the Indian nation. This act of state racism constitutes the final point on the trajectory of decline from pluralism to racializing biopower that Rushdie's novel identifies in India's post-independence politics. In suggesting the veracity of Foucault's argument that biopolitical governments wield effective oppressive

technologies animated by an infinitely malleable racism, *Midnight's* portrayal of India evokes little hope for escape from race-thinking by the end of the novel.

Midnight does not excise completely the potentiality of effective resistance to biopolitical racialization. By showing that Indira Gandhi loses power, Rushdie disproves the idea that "Indira is India" (587). Through describing the disintegration of Saleem and the Midnight Children's Conference, and the possible dissemination of Saleem's narrative indictment of the Emergency, the novel gestures towards the possibility of an as yet unthought future form of pluralist politics. However, Rushdie depicts racism as prevalent amongst post-independence India's population, and biopolitics as enduring within its state apparatuses. Characters discriminate on the grounds of phenotype throughout the novel, and Rushdie portrays Nehru's pluralist government as a lull between racializing British colonial biopower and racializing Indian state biopower. Just as Rushdie uses Ahmed Sinai's phenotypical racism to suggest a continuity between colonial and post-independence views of whiteness, *Midnight* reveals a technological continuity between the British Empire's racializing biopower and that of Indira's Congress. It thus indicates the severe difficulty of eradicating biopower and racism in twentieth-century polities.

In *Verses* Rushdie charts a similar continuity between technologies and discourses of colonial and neo-colonial biopower. Biopolitical technologies have been feeding back from the colonies to the metropolitan centre since the nineteenth century (see Gilroy, *After Empire* 8). Rushdie suggests in his fictional exploration of race relations in post-imperial Britain that because of increased immigration the British state has been able to racialize as it did in the days of the British Empire by using these technologies to subjugate a new, internally colonized, non-white population. Moreover, he describes the buttressing of the state's racism by the phenotypical and bioculturalist racism of the white superrace it constructs. Whereas *Midnight* invites a biopolitical reading informed primarily by Foucault's conception of state biopolitics as animated by a theoretically infinite variety of racisms, *Verses* depicts civilian racism more vividly as an adjunct to the smooth operation of the state's biopolitical technologies. Delineating accurately the lesser potentiality of resistance to racism that the novel evokes thus requires – and hence indicates the utility of – a biopolitical literary criticism that augments Foucault's state-centric political philosophy with genealogies of para-state racisms.

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Biopolitics and Race in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

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