QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN
NEVER LET ME GO AND
MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN

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PREFACE

Throughout most of the 20th century, literary criticism and common culture viewed identity as an archaeological project. For many years we have envisioned the Self to be a buried treasure, a static essence that has been suppressed by social pressures and traumatic events. The prevailing psychological model that emphasizes depth rather than continuity, posits that who we are is our internal essence as opposed to an external performance. This book contests this notion. It assumes that identity is not a psychological problem to be analyzed; however, it is a narrative to be presented, and it is a fluid process.

The central argument developed in this book is that the Self is created through the stories we tell about ourselves, and these stories are fundamentally temporal. By developing time into stories, we humanize time by establishing a beginning, a middle, and an anticipated ending. Therefore, the creation of identity is an effort to apply order to the unrelenting and impersonal flow of existence. However, the established frameworks that previously supported this "proleptic drive" (expectation of attaining a stable conclusion) have disintegrated. As we enter the new era of neoliberal instability and post-colonial reckoning, the "ending" is broken. This is no longer a promise of resolution and compromise, but often a threat of annihilation or chaotic noise and fragmentation.

This study examines this crisis through the lens of what I call the "Temporal Turn" in identity research. By shifting the analytical focus from the hermeneutics of depth (what's inside?) to the hermeneutics of time (how much time is left?), we can understand the modern subject more clearly. To illustrate this, I examine two distinct but complementary manifestations of the temporal crisis in the works of Kazuo Ishiguro and Salman Rushdie.

In *Never Let Me Go*, Ishiguro illustrates the "stalled" subject. The clones of Hailsham face a future without possibility; their lives are defined solely by a predestined countdown to "completion". Unable to project themselves into the traditional Bildungsroman structure, the clones are forced to project themselves sideways, developing a "lateral" identity. Kathy H. doesn't narrate to discover a hidden self; she narrates to establish a waiting pattern. Kathy uses the remnants of the past (tapes, memories) to build a bridge over the uncertain and fragmented nature of her future. Kathy's passivity is not a flaw of her character, but rather a strategic means of surviving a world that will deny her a future.

On the other hand, Midnight's Children represents Rushdie's examination of the "extreme" subject. Saleem Sinai is not denied a future, he is flooded with it. His life, intertwined as it is with the moment of Indian independence, is linked to the collective fate of the nation. Saleem's problem is not a lack of meaning, but an excess of meaning; he becomes a vessel for countless others, and is split apart physically and psychologically by the demands of his own fragmented biography. Unlike Kathy, Saleem's response is not cyclical, but spiral, a frantic attempt to deal with a

multitude of competing voices within a single, fractured autobiography.

Despite their stylistic differences, both characters engage in "Narrative Postponement". This concept suggests that identity is the act of postponing the end. Like Scheherazade, these characters use narrative not merely to record the past, but to delay the silence of the clock. Whether through Kathy's hesitation or Saleem's exaggeration, they construct a shelter out of language.

As such, this theory provides a new way to view contemporary literature and the modern condition. Rather than continuing to pursue the "multi-faceted character", this theory encourages us to shift our focus toward the analysis of "temporal strategies." If we continue to view identity through a psychological lens, we risk attributing fragmentation to personal deficiencies. On the contrary, when we view identity through a narrative lens, we attribute fragmentation not to the individual, but to the inadequacy of the narrative structure itself, which precludes a future or makes the past unmanageable.

In a sense, we are all clones awaiting completion, midnight children bound to a heavy history. The "search for identity" is not a quest for a treasure within the soul, but a structural attempt to continue the story. This book is an attempt to witness this struggle by listening to the unique rhythms, cycles and spirals, that the human subject uses to withstand the constraints of time.

CONTENTS

Contents

CHAPTER 3

THE ASYMMETRY OF SURVIVAL 91

REFERENCES

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