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## Imagined Identities

### Locating the Subject in the Nation

“Imagined Identities” owes a great deal to Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*.<sup>1</sup> The fact, however, that I substitute identities for communities acts both as a tribute to Anderson’s work and as its critique. Anderson defines the nation as an imagined political community, while I define the identity of the subject “responsible” for imagining the nation as an imagined category. Anderson envisages the nation as a community based on a collective experience, while I concentrate on the subject who imagines this community, questioning the possibility of understanding the nation solely as a shared and collective image.

I argue that the subject is both the agent who imagines the community Anderson is talking about, and a construct imagined by the nation in turn: the nation acts as an image created (imagined) and desired by the subject, and as a power that aims to locate and define him or her. This twofold process of “imagining and being imagined” determines the subject’s relationship with the nation and writes his or her identity.

My paper consists of three sections. First I discuss the concept of identity, emphasising the psychological and social processes involved in its construction. In section two I examine the national dimension of identification, which I regard as one particular site of the subject’s identity, not as a transcendental determining factor of a community inherited from generation to generation. Finally, I discuss literary works, Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and *Shame*, analysing how

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991.

these texts contribute to the debate of imagined communities, how they narrate the subject and the nation, and what they tell about the relationship of these two categories.

*I IDENTITY AS A BLIND SPOT*

The term identity is so frequently used in various disciplines, it seems to mean so many different things that it is almost threatened with becoming empty and ending up as signifying a vague set of notions that range from self-identification to political and cultural identities. In common sense, of course, the term causes no problems: what could be more evident than to identify one thing with another, or to assume that all human beings have identities that differentiate them from each other? Is it not obvious that different nations have different national identities, that we are Hungarians while others are English? Identity is so obvious, it seems to be so “innocent” – as Terry Eagleton would say – that it is surely something else than what it appears to be, it surely means something else than what it “hides.”

For defining identity, the starting point might be this discrepancy between what the term seems to mean and what it actually conceals. The fact that the problem of definition is usually overlooked and the meaning of the term is taken for granted implies that identity belongs to the terrain of ideology, as it is defined by Althusser and Eagleton.<sup>2</sup> Following their argument, we cannot consider identity as a self-image, a character trait or as an essentially internal, psychic process. Identity can rather be conceived as a process of defining the subject, as an effort to grasp the boundaries of the subject as it is located in the social context.

Stuart Hall defines identity and approaches the problem of identification on a theoretical basis, enumerating the different uses and applications of the term. In his “Introduction” to *Questions of Cultural Identity*, he combines Lacanian

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<sup>2</sup> “Ideologies are sets of discursive strategies for displacing, recasting or spuriously accounting for the realities which prove embarrassing to a ruling power; and in doing so, they contribute to that power’s self-legitimation” (Terry Eagleton. “Ideology.” In: Stephan Regan ed. *The Eagleton Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998, p. 234) “For Althusser, ideology works primarily at the level of the unconscious; its function is to constitute us as historical subjects equipped for certain tasks in society; and it does this by drawing us into an ‘imaginary’ relation with the social order which persuades us that we and it are centred on and indispensable to one another” (Eagleton, p. 240).

psychoanalysis with Foucault's theory of the subject to elaborate his long definition of identity. As he writes,

I use 'identity' to refer to the meeting point, the point of *suture*, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate,' speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of a particular discourse, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be spoken. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us. They are the result of a successful articulation or 'chaining' of the subject into the flow of the discourse, what Stephen Heath, in his path-breaking essay on 'Suture,' called an 'intersection' (1981:106). 'A theory of ideology must begin not from the subject but as an account of suturing effects, the effecting of the join of the subject in structures of meaning.' Identities are, as it were, the positions which the subject is obliged to take up while always 'knowing' (the language of consciousness here betrays us) that they are representations, that representation is always constructed across a 'lack,' across a division, from the place of the 'Other,' and thus can never be adequate – identical – to the subject processes which are invested in them. The notion that an effective suturing of the subject to a subject position requires, not only that the subject is 'hailed,' but that the subject invests in the position, means that suturing has to be thought of as an *articulation*, rather than a one-sided process, and that in turn places *identification*, if not identities, firmly on a theoretical agenda.<sup>3</sup>

It is clear that Hall is trying to work out a theory of identity which is both scientific and psychic, offering an answer to the question posed by Avatar Brah: "how is the link between social and psychic reality to be theorized?"<sup>4</sup> Hall combines "the rudimentary levels of psychic identity and the drives" with "the discursive formation and practices that constitute the social field"<sup>5</sup> and emphasises the peculiar combination of the two at the point of what he calls suture, or intersection, or joining together. Obviously, this theory goes back to Foucault's definition of the subject as a discursive practice, the effect (and affect) of particular social and obviously external discourses.

<sup>3</sup> Stuart Hall. "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?" In: Stuart Hall & Paul du Gay eds. *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage, 1996, pp. 5–6.

<sup>4</sup> Hall, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Hall, p. 7.

According to Foucault, the body of the subject, its gestures, discourses and desires constitute and identify the individual, and the whole process of identification is the result of the mechanisms of power.<sup>6</sup> This mechanism is what Hall calls interpellation or a process of hailing us “into place as the social subjects of a particular discourse.”<sup>7</sup> This part of his definition is evident; the problem, as Hall himself acknowledges,<sup>8</sup> starts when he moves to the internal spheres of subjectivity.

To begin with, it is not clear at all what he means by the second component that constitutes identity, that is, “the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken.’”<sup>9</sup> It seems to me that he acknowledges the existence of a kind of internal or psychic dimension of identity throughout his essay,<sup>10</sup> but he still tries to exclude it from his definition, since it might make it impossible to place identification “firmly on the theoretical agenda.”<sup>11</sup> It is clear that discursive practices construct subject positions, it is also evident that the subject is chained into a flow of discourse and has to take up positions which are representations, but when Hall returns to the question of subject processes which are invested in these representations, he does not go on to explain what these processes are and how they function.

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<sup>6</sup> As Foucault writes, “[i]l ne faut donc pas, je crois, concevoir l’individu comme une sorte de noyau élémentaire, atome primitif, matière multiple et muette sur laquelle viendrait s’appliquer, contre laquelle viendrait frapper le pouvoir, qui soumettrait les individus ou les briserait. En fait, ce qui fait qu’un corps, des gestes, des discours, des désirs sont identifiés et constitués comme individus, c’est précisément cela l’un des effets premiers du pouvoir; c’est-à-dire que l’individu n’est pas le vis-à-vis du pouvoir, il en est, je crois, l’un des effets premiers. L’individu est un effet du pouvoir et il est en même temps, dans la mesure même où il est un effet, un relais: le pouvoir transite par l’individu qu’il a constitué” (Michel Foucault. “Cours du 14 janvier, 1976.” *Dits et écrits*. Paris: Gallimard, 1994, Vol. 3, p. 180).

<sup>7</sup> Hall, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> “The term identity – which arises precisely at the point of intersection between them [i.e. psychic identity and the discursive formations that constitute the social field] – is thus the site of difficulty. It is worth adding that we are unlikely ever to be able to square up these two constituents as equivalents – the unconscious itself acting as the bar or cut between which makes it ‘the site of perpetual postponement deferral of equivalence’ (Hall, 1995) but which cannot, for that reason, be given up” (Hall, p. 7).

<sup>9</sup> Hall, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Hall, quoting Jacqueline Rose: “the question of identity – how it is constituted and maintained – is therefore the central issue through which psychoanalysis enters the political field” (Hall, p. 6).

<sup>11</sup> Hall, p. 6.

There seems to be a gap where the external and the internal meet and constitute identity, and the result is neither the common sense assumption of the triumph of the internal, nor the reductionist view of an exclusive social dominance over the subject. As Hall claims, the representations of identities “can never be adequate – identical – to the subject processes which are invested in them,”<sup>12</sup> and whatever he means by subject processes, it seems that identity is not entirely the result of socially preconditioned subject positions. Or, as Althusser writes, ideology subjects us in a double sense, constructing our subjectivity by persuading us into *internalising* an oppressive Law. Thus, he also regards subjectivity as the effect of an external oppressive Law, but at the same time he uses the phrase “internalising,” which suggests the transformation of this law at the exact moment when it exercises its effect. The subject recognises him/herself in external models, and s/he is also constructed by these models, but at the moment of internalising them s/he transforms and changes the external laws instantaneously. The process of internalisation itself creates difference and different identifications, though this difference is not the humanist differentiation of individuals on the basis of their “genuine character traits.” Instead, it is rather what Homi K. Bhabha – relying on Derrida’s *différance* – calls difference,<sup>13</sup> which, besides denoting the incommensurable difference of cultures, might also be used to refer to the incommensurable ways of internalising the external.

In order to illustrate the process of internalising the external, we might take Catherine Belsey’s theory of perfumes<sup>14</sup> as an example.<sup>15</sup> Belsey shows how the subject is affected by advertisements that “draw on the cultural stereotypes of femininity,”<sup>16</sup> associating a particular smell with a particular type of woman, with the help of codes that are already part of our knowledge. For example, an Estivalia advertisement presents a woman “in a long white dress gazing off to the left. Soft focus photography and the absence of bright lightning connote twilight

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<sup>12</sup> Hall, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> “The difference of cultures cannot be something that can be accommodated within a universalist framework. Different cultures, the difference between cultural practices, the difference in the construction of cultures within different groups, very often set up among and between themselves an *incommensurability*” (Homi K. Bhabha. “The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha.” In: John Rutherford ed. *Identity*. London: Lawrence, 1990, p. 209).

<sup>14</sup> Based on Judith Williamson. *Decoding Advertisements*. London: Marion Boyars, 1978.

<sup>15</sup> Catherine Belsey. *Critical Practice*. London: Routledge, 1994, pp. 47–52.

<sup>16</sup> Belsey, p. 49.

and romance,” and the caption reads: “for daydream believers.”<sup>17</sup> The subject becomes a reader and is “invited to construct a miniature narrative, a ‘daydream story’ which takes account of the mysterious figure, the woman and the setting, to perform the ‘daydreaming’ endorsed by the advertisement.”<sup>18</sup> This is what Belsey calls the construction of the meaning of Estivalia; that is, the impression “that we create an individual daydream out of our own subjectivity,” while “in practice the range of probable narratives is constrained by the particular semes juxtaposed in the photograph.”<sup>19</sup>

The advertisement constructs the stereotype of the daydreamer in which – seeing the advertisement – the subject recognises itself. However, this recognition is the point when the game of subject and power begins: that particular type of femininity which the advertisement calls daydreamer does not produce a unified or transcendental daydreamer image in every single subject seeing the advertisement, but creates millions of different versions, depending on different internalisations. As Belsey argues, the familiarity of signifiers predetermines the signified that is produced, but it can predetermine only one side, one part of it, and the signified cannot entirely be controlled by it. Every subject creates its own Estivalia until it is not possible to distinguish what the external “semes juxtaposed in the photograph”<sup>20</sup> were, and what was added to them in the process of internalisation. The subject can transform, appropriate, internalise and produce a signified that is a mixture of various processes, and their origins would be difficult to determine. In this way, power cannot totally control its effect; instead, it starts a chain of interrelations between the subject and itself. The result of those interrelations can never be predicted, and it might also turn against power – in this case represented by the advertisement – itself.

How can we grasp identity within this framework? We might try to define it as a blind spot between discourses of power and a desired image or ego ideal “grounded in fantasy, in projection and idealization,”<sup>21</sup> or, to put it in another way, as the place where the process of internalising the external takes place. I call it a blind spot because the subject is not aware of the existence of a place like this at all, and because s/he unconsciously corrects, complements this

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<sup>17</sup> Belsey, p. 48.

<sup>18</sup> Belsey, p. 48.

<sup>19</sup> Belsey, pp. 48–9.

<sup>20</sup> Belsey, p. 49.

<sup>21</sup> Hall, p. 3.

spot by external reference models and creates an image of identity, just as the eye is able to overlook the blind spot and create a full picture with the help of the surrounding objects. And just as the eye never supplements the blind spot quite correctly – we cannot see little insects hiding there – the subject is also wrong to assume that this image of identity is an integrated presence, as it appears to be on the surface.

However, this hesitant blind spot, which I am not even able to define adequately, is the place where the process of constructing identity happens. The subject speaks, articulates what s/he thinks identity means or shows, while in the background there is always the blind spot where identification hides, thus concealing its double nature and ambiguous origin. Only what I distinguished as the two component parts that constitute identity might be analysed: either the illusion of what identity means to the subject, or the power discourses that indeed constitute these ego-ideals, with the help of stereotypes, models, and several other means of conditioning the subject. The blind spot, however, where the process of identification effectively happens, is blind because only the result of the conditioning can be seen, never the transformation itself. What the subject conceives as his identity is an illusion, what we analyse as his identity is an external mechanism which is betrayed and challenged by difference. Thus, we might as well restrict our analysis to revealing the game between these different sites, without attempting to uncover entirely what the blind spot hides.

## *II NATIONAL IDENTITY*

If identity is a blind spot, can we consider national identity as a national blind spot? Do we get any closer to the location of the subject by introducing that term? According to Hall, national identity is something like the translation of the traditional concept of identity to the stage of culture, which in itself suggests the essentialising nature of the term and the belief that there is a “collective or true self hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed ‘selves’ which a people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common.”<sup>22</sup> If we accept its common sense meaning, national identity seems to be an even more arbitrary category than the identity of a particular subject; that is, if we imagine members of a nation as a unified presence and categorise them according to what

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<sup>22</sup> Hall, pp. 3–4.

we regard as collective history or collective habits, it is not likely that we shall get beyond common sense generalisations. Thus, national identity might be understood as a strategy of power discourses to define subjects as belonging to the same umbrella category, trying to hold them together by slogans of belonging and sameness. The presence of ideology is so evident in this notion that we might apply Fredric Jameson's definition of ideology – an “imaginary relationship to transpersonal realities such as the social structure or the collective logic of history”<sup>23</sup> – to define national identity as well.

However, there is another way to understand national identity, and, in this version, we may regard it as something different from what Hall calls a collective or true self. This is because it would be arbitrary to separate national identity from the identity of the subject, as these notions intersect and overlap with each other: it is difficult to think about national identity as something separate from other types of identifications, or to conceive the identity of a particular subject without being aware of its nationality or location. I would rather regard national identity as a specific terrain, one specific site of the subject's identity – or blind spot – that is constituted through its relation to the nation and other related notions, such as culture and history. Thus, while national identity in its common sense meaning is an ideological construct that exists outside and above subjects, we cannot deny that there is a phenomenon – which I would rather call national identification – that is indeed part of the subject's blind spot.

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In order to understand national identification first we have to discuss the concept of the nation and its relation to the subject. The nation is another category that might be approached from different angles, but which – quite similarly to the subject – always eludes an all-inclusive definition. Ernest Gellner emphasises the two main approaches to the nation, the first a voluntaristic, the second a cultural one. According to the first one, nations can be defined as “the artefacts of men's convictions and loyalties and solidarities”;<sup>24</sup> that is, nations can be viewed as constructs created by men's will to nationhood. As for the cultural approach, it takes another extreme, claiming that it is not the will to nationhood that creates nations but a common culture; as Gellner writes, “[t]wo men are of the same

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<sup>23</sup> Fredric Jameson. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. London: Methrum, 1981, p. 30.

<sup>24</sup> Ernest Gellner. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1983, p. 7.



nation if and only if they *share the same culture*, where culture in turns means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating.”<sup>25</sup>

It is Benedict Anderson who gives a definition that eludes both approaches outlined above. As he argues, the nation can only be defined as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”<sup>26</sup> His cannot really be called a cultural definition, as no common culture or common myths are mentioned, and the only noun that reminds us that he is talking about a collective phenomenon is community. Neither can his approach be classified as purely voluntaristic, since the will-to nationhood theory seems to be left out; instead of emphasising people’s power to create the nation, he uses the passive voice in his definition (*imagined communities*), and it does not become clear at all *who* imagines the communities he is talking about. Thus, Anderson is trying to elude the question of the subject, but the passive voice used in his definition implies its existence.<sup>27</sup>

Let us examine Anderson’s definition in more detail. He calls the nation a community and argues that it is so because “the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.”<sup>28</sup> He argues that it can only be understood as an imagined community, “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”<sup>29</sup> He also discusses the implications of the words *limited* and *sovereign*,<sup>30</sup> and the only term Anderson does not explain is *political*, which he leaves out from the title of his book (*Imagined Communities*) as well. Anderson seems to take the meaning of *political* for granted, as if it were unnecessary to explain an attribute that is so obvious. He

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<sup>25</sup> Gellner, p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Anderson, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> Anderson usually uses terms like “the people,” “they” or “readers” to refer to the subjects of imagined communities. For instance, discussing the role of print languages, he assumes that these “laid the bases for national consciousness” as “fellow-readers, to whom *they* were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined communities” (Anderson, p. 44, emphases added).

<sup>28</sup> Anderson, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> Anderson, p. 6.

<sup>30</sup> Anderson claims that “the nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them [...] has finite, if elastic, boundaries” and that “[i]t is imagined as *sovereign* because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution was destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical realm” (Anderson, p. 7).

combines terms that are familiar to us from psychology (imagination) and aesthetics (he is talking about the different styles of imagined communities<sup>31</sup>) with political categories, such as sovereign, without giving any suggestions of how a political imagination might be conceived of. He talks about an image that lives in the minds of the members of the nations, thus strongly implying the notion of subjectivity that determines nationhood, but he presents this image elsewhere as a shared national consciousness,<sup>32</sup> which eludes subjectivity again and calls to mind Hall's notion of "subjectless" national identity. The problem with his approach is that he does not differentiate between – what Bhabha calls – the people as "objects of a nationalist pedagogy" and the people as subjects, "the present, living creatures,"<sup>33</sup> who intervene in that pedagogy, and thus he does not separate different imaginings of communities from imagined community, or national consciousness as a myth. In other words, Anderson takes the pedagogical version of the nation for granted and ignores the intrusion of the performative subject into this image. Thus, he ignores the very category of the subject, while he is applying terms from psychology that are based on this phenomenon. His definition is neither voluntaristic, nor cultural, if we follow Gellner's distinction, but it appears to be an unexplained mixture, which touches upon more issues than it is able to deal with.

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Anderson does not exploit fully the implications of the term "imagined," which calls to mind Lacan's Imaginary and Althusser's "imaginary relationship." However, both of these are crucial in outlining the subject's ambivalent relationship with the nation, and for grasping the much-abused concept of national identity.

For Althusser, the imaginary is something that is necessarily false. He combines it with the notion of ideology, and claims that "[w]hat is represented in ideology is [...] not the system of real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of these individuals to the real relations in

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<sup>31</sup> "Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the *style* in which they are imagined" (Anderson, p. 6).

<sup>32</sup> See Chapter 3, "The Origins of National Consciousness" (Anderson, pp. 37–46).

<sup>33</sup> Homi K. Bhabha. "DissemiNation." In: Homi K. Bhabha ed. *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge, 1990, p. 297.

which they live.”<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, Lacan gives a more subtle definition of the Imaginary, taking an entirely different approach to it. His basic assumption is that between the ages of six and eighteen months – which he calls the mirror stage – “the subject arrives at an apprehension of both its self and the other – indeed, of its self *as* other.”<sup>35</sup> In contrast to Althusser, Lacan conceives of this apprehension as something that is imaginary, but *not illusory*.<sup>36</sup> As he argues, the subject sees an image of itself in the mirror, an image that is both ideal (a unified whole) and inaccessible (external). This image, true, remains external to the subject, but this does not mean that it is entirely illusory or non-existent for that reason. Lacan takes a further step and claims that the logic of this identification cannot be restricted to the mirror stage, but it also characterises other types of identifications that the subject afterwards creates. “This form would have to be called the Ideal-I, if we wished to incorporate it into our usual register, in the sense that it will also be the source of secondary identifications [...]”<sup>37</sup> Or, as Coward and Ellis summarise the issue, “the imaginary wholeness which is identified in the mirror, is an identification which is retained as the prototype for all identifications as the child enters cultural and specific social formations as a language using subject.”<sup>38</sup> However, the imaginary in this sense is not something that is false and has to be corrected, but something with which the subject lives together in the social sphere.

The reason why I diverged from my argument on national identity was to prove how many different notions Anderson’s definition, however unconsciously, implies. His use of *imagined* indicates that the nation belongs to the terrain of both ideology and psychoanalysis, quite similarly to the notion of identity, as I have discussed it in section one. Anderson’s use of *imagined* implies the bipolarity of this phenomenon, suggesting, on the one hand, that the nation can be understood as an ideological construct that imposes a national identity upon its subjects by creating imaginary relationships, which in reality do not exist. On the other hand, the nation can also be understood as the image in the

<sup>34</sup> Louis Althusser. *Lenin and Philosophy*. London: New Left, 1971, p. 155. Quoted by Rosalind Coward and John Ellis. *Language and Materialism*. London: Routledge, 1977, p. 75.

<sup>35</sup> Kaja Silverman. *The Subject of Semiotics*. New York: Oxford, 1983, p. 157.

<sup>36</sup> “The Imaginary is the order of mirror images identifications. The imaginary is *not* the same as the illusory in that the phantasmatic construction comprising the Imaginary order are highly durable and can have effects in the Real” (Madan Sarup. *Jacques Lacan*. London: Harvester, 1992, p. 187).

<sup>37</sup> Jacques Lacan. *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. London: Routledge, 1977, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Coward and Ellis, p. 76.

mirror, total and desired, with which the subject wishes to identify him/herself and create his or her national identification. National identity is not necessarily something entirely external and something that should be regarded as a myth, but is an ambivalent phenomenon that both threatens and includes the subject who belongs to this category. In other words, the subject is aware of the fact that the mirror image of national identity is the projection of him/herself, but s/he knows that this image also threatens him/her as the Other which wants to locate and define him or her. What matters is the angle from which we approach this category.

If the subject conceives of the nation as the image in the mirror, it is no wonder that s/he talks about it in aesthetic terms. Once the nation is seen as something that is ideal and unreachable, the associations this category brings are necessarily taken from an equally high domain. To return to Anderson, we can see that besides distinguishing nations on the basis of the style in which they are imagined, his very definition is an aesthetic category, which suggests that he is not able to talk about the nation "as it is." Indeed, "imagined community" is a metaphor, though quite a blind one; the tenor of the trope is the nation, the ground of comparison is the community of the people, "the many as one," while the vehicle is the hesitant image I discussed, the image of communion that lives in the minds of the members of a nation. Instead of explaining the category of the nation, Anderson displaces it with a metaphor.<sup>39</sup> We can also take an example from Gellner. Similarly to Anderson, he also understands the nation as an invention and considers nationalism as the agent of that invention; as he argues, "nations, as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long-delayed political destiny, are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: that is reality, for better or worse, and in general an inescapable one."<sup>40</sup> However, what is peculiar here is that when he is talking about the nation, Gellner uses similes like "political destiny" and "God-given way of classifying men," and while talking about nationalism, he uses a metonymy. Nationalism that invents cultures obviously stands for the invention

<sup>39</sup> Bhabha also refers to the process of distancing and displacing the nation; as he writes, "[i]t is the mark of the ambivalence of the nation as a narrative strategy – and an apparatus of power – that it produces a continual slippage into analogous, even metonymic, categories, like the people, minorities, or 'cultural difference' that continually overlap in the act of writing the nation" (Bhabha, "DissemiNation," p. 292).

<sup>40</sup> Gellner, pp. 48–49.

of the people, the invention of the subject, whose very existence is displaced but implied here by this trope; the case is altogether very similar to Anderson's use of passive voice in "imagined communities."

After discussing the figures that Anderson and Gellner use, I would like to introduce my own. It seems that I am not able to talk about national identity "as it is" either. In my view, national identity can only be understood as a synecdoche. This is because a kind of synecdochic logic works when the subject imagines the whole nation on the basis of a few specimens and a few character traits that s/he knows and experiences. The part stands for – and in the place of – an imagined whole and claims that it represents the whole, which is logically impossible, because it always excludes some other parts and traits. The referent of the subject's utterance wants to be the whole, but in reality it can only be the part, and, for that reason, the imagined whole can never be adequately represented. The imagined whole works according to a logic that is similar to Lacan's imaginary, since the totalised (and distorted) national identity acts as the image with which the subject identifies itself.

The Hungarian national anthem, the *Himnusz*, might be taken as an example to show how the synecdochic logic works in constructing national identity.<sup>41</sup> "Bal sors akit régen tép / Hozz rá víg esztendőt, / Megbűnhődte már e nép / A multat s jövődöt" (emphases added), runs the text of the anthem, thus creating a totalised image of Hungarian national identity, which is based on the notion of suffering. It is not difficult to realise that this identity is indeed synecdochic, as it is chosen from thousands of possible identities that might have been narrated; besides the Hungarian who is suffering misfortune, the text might have presented many other, different images of Hungarians, like the Hungarian who is flammable, the Hungarian who is Messianic, and so on. It is also interesting to note that only the first stanza of Kölcsey's poem became the popular anthem, which is – except for the last stanza – the darkest stanza in the *Himnusz*. The other stanzas, reflecting on Árpád and Mátyás, do indicate a heroic identity and Messianic belief, which is totally absent from the popular version.

Furthermore, the anthem also underlines the blind-spot nature of national identifications. The identity of the suffering Hungarian is imaginary in the

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<sup>41</sup> Obviously, anthems are texts that create imagined communities, imagining subjects as if they belonged to homogeneous categories like the English or the Hungarians. "Singing the Marseillaise, Waltzing Matilda, and Indonesia Raya provide occasions for unisonality, for the echoed physical realisation of the imagined community" (Anderson, p. 145).

Althusserian sense, as it indeed acts as an ideal and official image of the Hungarian that power imposes upon the subject: if I recognise myself as a Hungarian who is suffering misfortune I take a position that is offered by the text, considering Hungarians as a nation that is suffering and locating myself as one of its members. The process is quite similar to Belsey's theory discussed earlier, as accepting this position is not far from accepting that I am a daydreamer for whom Estivalia is the perfect scent.

Nevertheless, as I argued in section one, this official image can never entirely determine the subject. First, we should not forget that the very image of the suffering Hungarian is created by the subject itself: the text involves both the desire of the subject to articulate the community s/he imagines, and the effect of power that shapes this image and its articulation.<sup>42</sup> Second, though a subject – a suffering Hungarian – is imagined by the text, it can never be the same as the subject who internalises this image; I might take the position of the suffering Hungarian, I might even totalise this image as a national characteristic trait, but, to put it in very simple terms, it is very unlikely that I consider the events of 1526 or the atmosphere of the 1820s as the reason for this suffering. What is important here again is the game between the external and internal, and the chains of interrelations between these two. National identity is based on the subject's power to create the imaginary Hungarian and objectify it in the text; it is the result of the text's – and institution's etc. – power to impose it upon the subject who internalises the anthem; and finally, it also depends on the subject's power to transform and displace it, creating its own synecdoche of the suffering Hungarian.

### III NARRATING IMAGINED COMMUNITIES

Let us turn to literary works and examine how they deal with the issues I have been discussing so far; namely, let us see how Salman Rushdie's novels, *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* narrate imagined communities, the subject, and what they tell about the relationship of these categories.

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<sup>42</sup>As Hayden White assumes, the text mixes and mediates our desire for the imaginary with the imperatives of the real, thus narration and narrativity are indeed "the instruments with which the conflicting claims of the imaginary and the real are mediated, arbitrated, or resolved in discourse" (Hayden White. *The Content of the Form. Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1987, p. 4).

*Midnight's Children* and *Shame* are both novels of the nation, Timothy Brennan says, distinguishing *Midnight's Children* as the historical novel of British India, and calling *Shame* a modern fairy-tale, the novel of Pakistan.<sup>43</sup> *Midnight's Children* presents two allegories of the nation and attempts to create a kind of collectivism, but this collectivism, on the one hand, is situated in the domain of magic, and, on the other, depends on the subject who is introduced here as the location of this phenomenon. Thus, Saleem's narrative wishes to defend the Andersonian view, but is not able to proclaim this option as a route that could be followed.<sup>44</sup>

At first sight, the basic assumptions of *Midnight's Children* seem to be fairly simple. The narrator of the novel, Saleem Sinai, was born on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1947, right "[o]n the stroke of midnight" (p. 9),<sup>45</sup> simultaneously with the independent Indian nation. The course of his life is set right at the beginning, as it is clear for him that he is destined to become the allegorical figure of the nation; as Saleem says, "thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my nation" (p. 9). After his birth, Saleem's photo appears in a newspaper, together with a letter from Nehru, in which the president welcomes Saleem as "the newest bearer of that ancient face of India, which is also eternally young," and, "[w]e shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, *the mirror of our own*" (p. 122, emphasis added). The reflection of Saleem's body in the mirror becomes something like a totalised Lacanian image of India, thus establishing the first allegory of nation in the novel.<sup>46</sup>

Together with the children born at midnight, Saleem founds the Midnight's Children's Conference where he himself takes the position of the

<sup>43</sup> Timothy Brennan. *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation*. New York: St. Martins, 1989, pp. 119–122.

<sup>44</sup> Some critics mention that Anderson's theory might be compared to the presentation of the nation in *Midnight's Children* (Catherine Cundy. *Salman Rushdie*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996, p. 37; Brennan, p. 4; Stephen Connor. *The English Novel in History 1950–1995*. London: Routledge, 1996, p. 30), though none of them goes on to elaborate on the issue.

<sup>45</sup> Salman Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*. London: Vintage, 1995. All the parenthesised references to *Midnight's Children* are to this edition.

<sup>46</sup> The allegory is also underlined at the end of the novel when Saleem, after the loss of his magic abilities, perceives himself in a mirror and realises that he is "transformed into a big-headed, top-heavy dwarf" (p. 447); his self-recognition, however, is immediately displaced ("I saw in the mirror of humility a human being to whom history could do no more" [p. 447]) and starts to designate India's dwarfism as its national characteristic trait.

chairman; after discovering that his midnight gift is the ability to summon the children's voices in his head, Saleem starts to act as an all-India radio. What midnight's children create is a peculiar community that models the nation itself, and what we may regard as the second allegory of the nation in the novel. The Midnight's Children's Conference appears as an imagined community par excellence, but if we examine the structure of this community, it reveals the paradoxes that are involved in Anderson's thesis.

In *Midnight's Children*, the stage of the imagined community is the head, Saleem's mind, which indicates both the imaginary nature of the nation, and its ambivalent relationship with the subject. The head itself is quite a complicated metaphor, because, though it is traditionally considered to refer to humanity, logic, knowledge, rationality, and so on, in *Midnight's Children* it seems to be just another hole in the range of different holes.<sup>47</sup> There are several instances in the novel that indicate the head-hole parallel, showing that the voices in Saleem's head occupy a place that has previously been empty. As Saleem once says, when pondering on the role of women in his life, "[w]omen have fixed me all right, but perhaps they were never central – perhaps the place which they should have filled, *the hole in the centre of me [...] was occupied too long by my voices*" (p. 192, emphasis added). The head-as-hole also appears later in the novel, when Saleem compares a Pakistani politician's head to a globe – naturally empty inside – that his sister, the Brass Monkey squashed in the garden: "And out of the last car came a man, with an astonishingly round head, round as a tin globe although unmarked by lines of longitude and latitude, planet headed, he was not labelled like the orb which the Monkey had once squashed" (p. 288). The politician's head is quite similar to the hole in the perforated sheet in chapter one (through which Saleem's grandfather, Aadam Aziz examined his patient and future wife, Naseem) and to the hole in Aadam himself, caused by his loss of religious belief: after hitting his nose on one Kashmiri morning, while attempting to pray, Aadam "resolved never to kiss earth for any god or man. This decision, however, made a *hole* in him, a vacancy in a vital inner chamber, leaving him vulnerable to women and history" (p. 10). By becoming the home of imagined communities, the head-as-hole indicates that the nation can be understood as something like a magical act of summoning voices in an empty space. This act, as the novel shows, depends on the subject who is destined to be the location of this phenomenon.

<sup>47</sup> For the analysis of holes in the novel see Tamás Bényei. *Apokrif iratok: Mágikus realista regényekről*. Debrecen: Kossuth EK, 1997, pp. 243–250.



Let us take a look at Saleem's body as the first allegory of the nation. Besides the head, there are several other parts of the body that appear in *Midnight's Children*, constantly violated, mutilated, similarly to the Indian nation Saleem stands for. The first violation is done to his eyes, which were always open, "too blue to blink" (p. 125), until his mother, together with the ayah, forces them to close. Saleem immediately attributes metaphorical meaning to this action, saying that "I learned the first lesson of my life: nobody can face the world with his eyes open all the time" (p. 125). The mutilation of his body continues with his legs, which remain bowed throughout his life (since he gets on his feet too early), and with his left ear, which becomes defective after his father slaps him on the face (unwilling to believe that Archangels have started to talk to his son). One of his fingers is mutilated, his nose is drained, and the peak of his mutilation is the "stupefying operation" ordered by the Widow, as a result of which "the children of midnight were denied the possibility of reproducing themselves" (p. 439). The mutilations of Saleem's body take place simultaneously with political events, which confirms that Saleem's body is seen as the body of the nation, reflecting India in the mirror.

The two allegories of the nation, however, make the sorting out of to sort out the subject's relationship quite complicated. Saleem is part of the Conference, as *one* of its members, while the *whole Conference* is located in his head, which is only *one* part of his body, whereas the *whole body* stands for the nation, just like the whole Conference. The whole is part of the subject, while the subject is also part of the whole, which suggests that wholeness can never be grasped in its totality, but any attempt of articulating it starts a chain of interrelations that complicates matters as much as Saleem's situation complicates them. Furthermore, we should not forget that what is destined to mirror the whole nation is Saleem's body, while the Conference is located in his head, which is the place of the mind. This suggests that the mind imagines the community, while the body reflects it, as if Saleem's body were something like the Lacanian image of the nation that his mind constructs. In other words, Saleem's narrative suggests that the mind creates the nation of which the body itself is the mirror, as if a reciprocal process of mirroring existed between subject and nation, which is determined by the subject, but which also determines the subject in turn.

The *Midnight's Children's* Conference shows very well how the subject's image of the nation is determined by external categories. First, it should be observed that though the Conference is located in Saleem's mind, it is not Saleem

who originates it, and it is not him who controls it either. His head is just the terrain where the voices come together, which are not his voices, and his voice is just one among the many; the voices are external, even though they fill up the most internal space of Saleem's head. Even the voice of Shiva (Saleem's greatest rival) is inside Saleem's head, which suggests that at the exact moment of creating the imagined community, Shiva's voice is there, as the minus in the origin, showing that the original has never been complete. It is Saleem who enables the transmission of these voices, and he also has the power to articulate them – i.e., to narrate – but this role casts him only as the medium, not the authentic originator of the imagined community. While it is true that Saleem imagines the community he is talking about, he is also imagined and created by the children's voices, and neither exists on its own. Without the voices Saleem's head is a mere hole, an empty space, but the voices cannot create a community on their own either, as they are summoned together and narrated only by Saleem.

In this way, the subject cannot achieve a real triumph in *Midnight's Children*, as many critics claim.<sup>48</sup> Readers of the novel usually argue that Saleem's narrative itself is a proof of this triumph, since it gives an alternative (individual) approach to the official (external) version of history, thus creating his own story and his own version of events. As Mujeebuddin Syed writes, for instance, "Saleem's attempt at rewriting history and in so doing resisting the state apparatus of ideologies, both in colonial and post-colonial contexts is in fact an attempt at his 'open[ing] the universe a little more' – an assertion at the same time of his own self and self-worth."<sup>49</sup> In my view, while it is true that Saleem's narrative is a threat to the official history, and it might be understood as Bhabha's performative intrusion into the pedagogical version of the nation,<sup>50</sup> this intrusion, far from being a triumph, is itself subject to a critique; besides the external categories that determine the subject's mind, the limits of his actions are also firmly marked out by the novel.

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<sup>48</sup> As Brennan writes, for instance, all of Rushdie's writing is "dedicated to recovering individual expression, and to weakening the power that various politicians as 'salespersons' hold over us" (Brennan, pp. 140–41).

<sup>49</sup> Mujeebuddin Syed. "Midnight's Children and Its Indian Con-Texts." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* (1994/2) 95–108, p. 103.

<sup>50</sup> Once, when he is talking about midnight's children, Saleem claims that 1001 stands for their miraculous birth, which is "the number of night, of magic, of alternative realities – a number beloved of poets and detested by politicians, for whom all alternative versions of the world are threats" (p. 217).

The situation here is quite similar to the case of the subject created by the Estivalia advertisement and that of the anthem: the subject has the power to imagine and construct, but in turn s/he is also constructed by external means. Saleem is constructing throughout the novel, trying to rearrange history, but the result of his actions is never quite successful. For instance, there is an episode in the novel when Saleem decides to teach his mother – and every unfaithful woman – a lesson by sending a note, compiled of newspaper headlines, to inform Commander Sabarmati of his wife’s infidelity: “[f]rom GOAN LIBERATION COMMITTEE LAUNCHES SATYAGRAHA CAMPAIGN I extracted the letter ‘COM’; SPEAKER OF E-PAK ASSEMBLY DECLARED MANIC gave my second syllable, ‘MAN’” (p. 259). He continues like this until he glues his note on to a sheet of paper (“Commander Sabarmati, why does your wife go to Colaba Causeway on Sunday morning?” [p. 260]), completing his “first attempt at rearranging history”(p. 260).<sup>51</sup> Saleem, whom newspapers determine and create (he was predicted by newspapers even before his birth<sup>52</sup>), is delighted to see his power turn the newspaper against itself, but his jubilation does not last: the note that he compiled becomes the cause of a scandal that affects the whole country, and it turns against Saleem’s own aims. Sabarmati, angered by the letter, wounds his wife and kills her lover, his case reaches the Supreme Court, and the whole affair turns out far from Saleem’s original intention to punish infidelity: “Commander Sabarmati was only a puppet; I was the puppet-master, and *the nation performed my play – only I hadn’t meant it!*” (p. 262, emphasis added). Saleem rearranges history from the periphery, quite literally, since he compiles his note in the bathroom; he is the agent of the forthcoming events, but he is not able to control those events, just as he is not able to master the voices of the children inside his head. The result of his performative intervention into history does not

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<sup>51</sup> For the analysis of this episode and for rearranging history see David W. Price. “Salman Rushdie’s ‘Use and Abuse of History’ in *Midnight’s Children*.” *Ariel* 25.2 (1994) 91–107. Cf.: “By tearing out portions of the newspaper in order to construct his own truth, Saleem wields the Nietzschean knife of critical history” (Price, p. 102).

<sup>52</sup> As for Saleem’s birth, we learn about the competition for the status of the midnight’s child from newspapers: “When the Bombay edition of the *Times of India*, searching for a catchy human-interest angle to the forthcoming Independence celebrations, announced that it would award a prize to any Bombay mother who could arrange to give birth to a child at the precise instant of the birth of the new nation, Amina Sinai, who had just awoken from a mysterious dream of flypaper, became glued to newsprint” (p. 99). It is also a newspaper that announces Saleem’s birth and Nehru’s greeting letter (p. 122).

reveal a "truer version of events," as we would expect from a critical historian; it is only an awkward attempt, a disruption, which indicates how interdependent the categories of subjectivity and external power mechanisms are.

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If we look at the other novel I proposed to discuss, *Shame*, the first thing that strikes us is the novel's deliberate attempt to profess the synecdochic nature of the imagined community. Whereas *Midnight's Children* struggles between belief and disbelief, calling the Indian nation an "imaginary" and "mythical land," "a country which would never exist except by the efforts of a phenomenal collective will" (p. 112), *Shame* condemns Pakistan as a country that is "insufficiently imagined" and remains "full of irreconcilable elements," and which might be described as "a failure of the dreaming mind" (p. 87). While Saleem's – however naive – desire in *Midnight's Children* is to create a narrative that is total<sup>53</sup> and to preserve the "multitudes" that are "jostling and shoving inside" (p. 9), *Shame* quite didactically claims that no one is able to give a full picture of reality as "one is obliged to see the world in slices" (p. 116).<sup>54</sup>

What makes the novel interesting is that *Shame* claims this thesis of "seeing the world in slices" on more than one level, and besides the essayistic parts of the book, there are several episodes that comment on imagined communities. Imagined communities, and any kind of collectivism are presented in *Shame* as false, unnatural and arbitrary. For example, the family of the novel's peripheral hero, Omar Khayyam, is a peculiar notion of collectivism, since it consists of three mothers. The three girls, called Chhunni, Munnee and Bunny Shakil, are connected by some secret and magic bond (just like the midnight's children): when one of them gets pregnant, the two others start to display the same symptoms of pregnancy, thus sharing her shame. Nobody ever discovers who the real mother is, not even the child, as this artificial motherhood is sustained throughout Omar's upbringing. As the narrator says, a kind of "communal mind" works behind their behaviour (p. 20), just as behind imagined communities, and it also characterises the microcosm they make out of their house; because of their

<sup>53</sup> See Bényei, pp. 240–41.

<sup>54</sup> This claim is also the subject of Salman Rushdie. "Imaginary Homelands." *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991*. London: Granta, 1991. As he argues, the India presented in *Midnight's Children* is his version and "no more than one version of all the hundreds of millions of possible versions" (Rushdie. "Imaginary Homelands," p. 10). He claims that what he offers is a "stereoscopic vision [...] in place of 'whole sight'" (Rushdie. "Imaginary Homelands," p. 19).

shame, they resolve to live in isolation, and create something like a glass-house that is based on their sameness. Omar is trapped in this unnatural world for twelve years, until he starts to have nightmares, gives up sleeping, and becomes something like an enchanted prince in an “entropical zone” (p. 30). One night, however, (when he completely loses his way in the labyrinth of their house) he gets to a room through the walls of which he glimpses the outside world for the first time. In this place he catches sight of “the shocking promise of daylight streaming through the *hole* [on the wall]” (p. 32), a hole at the very centre of the artificial microcosm, which upsets the balance of entropy, and questions the authenticity of any imagined community based on the logic of all-exclusive sameness.

Another episode that awakes images of collectivism is the description of Bariamma’s empire. A kind of community is created and ruled by the blind Bariamma (great-grandmother of Sufiya, Omar’s future wife), which is no less ironically presented than the microcosm of the three sisters. The house is described as a “bloodjungle” (p. 74), in which the paternity of children is no more certain than that of Omar, where two sisters have eleven legitimate sons and three brothers have innumerable illegitimate offspring. The main thing that keeps the family together is the recurrent communal story-telling, the actual basis of imagined communities, since “such stories were the glue that held the clan together, binding generations in webs of whispered secrets” (p. 76). However, the family-tales in Bariamma’s empire are not about their heroic past, but they recall “smuggling deals, opium-taking poets, pining virgins, curses, typhoid, bandits, homosexuality, sterility, frigidity, rape” (p. 76), and so on. As the narrator remarks, the stories are not even about the original events, since they are altered in the retellings, but when a final version is created (or imagined) “after that nobody, neither teller nor listener would tolerate any deviation from the hallowed, sacred text” (p. 76). In Bariamma’s imagined community, both the subjects and their stories are confused and altered before they are totalised as sacred texts and sacred members, with the “rite of blood” (p. 77).<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> It is interesting to observe that the figures that are connected to collectivism in *Shame* (that is, the three mothers and Bariamma) are all archetypal mother figures. The three mothers are said to be united only by motherhood, while the grandmother Bariamma actually reminds one of Ursula from *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The mothers that create imagined communities thus might be seen as creators of the *mother country*. The mother as country parallel is underlined later in the novel as well, when Rani complains that it is her fate “to get mistaken for *people’s mothers*” (p. 189, emphasis added).

Unlike *Midnight's Children*, *Shame* sees no real subjects who imagine the nation, and the novel has no central hero either, since Omar can by no means be called a protagonist, and the other characters that appear take an equally peripheral part in the plot. If there is an allegorical figure of the nation in the novel, it is Sufiya Zinobia, the retarded, mentally defective wife of Omar, who is described as "the wrong miracle" (p. 72), similarly to the nation she stands for and whose shame she carries.<sup>56</sup> After her marriage to Omar, Sufiya becomes "his wife and not his wife" (p. 210), as every night Omar replaces her with the willing Shahbanou, the ayah, not wanting to do any damage to Sufiya, who is still a twelve-year-old girl in a woman's body. However, Sufiya is very much aware of what's going on in Omar's room after she is sent to sleep, and knows that "something must be wrong" (p. 215). Finally, the long repressed "things that are locked up in her mind" (p. 213) come to the surface (as Omar's deed was the last straw in the chain of exclusions and repressions that was started with her very birth), and Sufiya starts to take her revenge. First, she rapes and kills four children, and then she becomes the allegorical figure of cruelty that threatens the whole country, killing hundreds of children. What is interesting, however, is the method she uses to commit her crimes: after raping the children, she cuts off their heads, and what later the police finds are just the headless bodies, never the heads themselves. The whole country fears the threat of the "headless murders" (p. 259), and Sufiya, turned into a beast, becomes "the collective fantasy of a stifled people, a dream born of their rage" (p. 263).

In *Midnight's Children*, the head symbolises the location of imagined communities, the empty space where the voices that constitute the nation come together. In *Shame*, however, Sufiya even denies the existence of a hole where the nation might be located. Headlessness dominates, indicating that the very location of imagined communities, the subject is missing here, and what we have instead of it is its absence (*headless*), which is not just an empty but a negative space.

Despite its steady argument against imagined communities, *Shame* is not entirely able to get rid of them. For instance, the notion of shame itself appears as something that is collective: "the shame of any one of us sits on us all and bends our backs" (p. 84), claims the narrator. The novel is full of mirrors that witness and reflect shame, and with "whom" politicians share the shame of their greed for

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<sup>56</sup> The "insufficiently imagined" Pakistan is described as "a picture full of irreconcilable elements, midriffbaring immigrants saris versus demure, indigenous Sindhi shalwar-kurtas, Urdu versus Punjabi, now versus then: a miracle that went wrong" (p. 87).

power (p. 62, p. 94). As I argued before, Saleem himself becomes the reflection of the Indian nation, and, in my view, the mirrors in *Shame* also work in a similar logic; Pakistan itself is turned into a “looking-glass” (p. 88), and the “mirrorshiny disgrace” (p. 170) of Sufiya’s cruelty might also be seen as the “collective fantasy of a stifled people” (p. 263) turned into their totalised reflection. The novel is true to itself in the sense that many of its mirrors are broken,<sup>57</sup> but it actually forgets that the creation of national identity – that is, identification with the image in the mirror – works in the case of broken mirrors as well, no matter how distorted the image they reflect is. The novel is not able to get rid of the desire to totalise (even though it totalises shame), which is the basis of imagining communities.

As I intended to show in the theoretical sections of my paper, the subject is the central category of imagined communities. However we try to elude his or her existence, s/he intervenes in our discourse, whenever we talk about the nation. Tropes both eliminate and reveal this intervention, underlying the assumption that the subject is subjected to the nation and acts as its creator at one and the same time. The literary texts I discussed emphasise this twofold process of imagining communities yet being imagined by them in turn, making a statement for the subject’s performative intervention in the discourse of the nation, yet limiting the scope of his or her actions.

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<sup>57</sup> “I am forced to reflect that world in fragments of broken mirrors, the way Farah Zoroaster saw her face at the bollarded frontier” (p. 69).