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Respectus Philologicus, vol. 42, núm. 47, 2022

Vilniaus Universitetas, Lituania

Disponible en: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=694473607007>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15388/RESPECTUS.2022.42.47.109>



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The Subversion of the Meanings of Food Tropes in Salman Rushdie's Novel "Midnight's Children"

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Respectus Philologicus, vol. 42, núm. 47, 2022

Vilniaus Universitetas, Lithuania

Recepción: 10 Enero 2022

Aprobación: 05 Julio 2022

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15388/RESPECTUS.2022.42.47.109>

Redalyc: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=694473607007>

Abstract: The article investigates the subversion of the meanings of food tropes in Salman Rushdie's novel "Midnight's Children". The research is carried out within the theoretical framework of Postethnic Narrative Criticism, which postulates that historical and political contexts are relevant for understanding and interpreting the postethnic literary work; however, literature should not be perceived as an accurate representation of reality outside the world of fiction or interpreted as such. The article provides an analysis of the key connotations of the tropes in the description of Doctor Aziz and his family, emphasizing that food-related tropes are restricted to the private life of the characters discussed and are mainly associated with female characters. In portraying the Azizes' children, the initial meanings of the tropes are subverted and undermined. The process of subversion is determined by societal changes which impact the main characters' public and private lives.

Keywords: Rushdie, Midnight's Children, subversion, food tropes, postethnic literature.

Introduction

The article analyses Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* within the theoretical framework of Postethnic Narrative Criticism, applying the methodology of analysis proposed by Frederic Aldama in his book *Postethnic Narrative Criticism* (2003). The aim of the research is to reveal how the meanings of food tropes are subverted in the novel. To achieve the aim, the following objectives are set: to discuss theoretical implications underlying Postethnic Narrative Criticism and the methodology of its application to literary works; to present an analysis of the novel which elucidates how initial meanings attributed to the tropes of food are subverted to produce a postethnic narrative.

1. The critique of the post-colonial literary theory

The term **postethnic** was introduced by David Hollinger in his book *Postethnic America* (1995) to define the phenomenon of multiculturalism in the USA. Having distanced themselves from a political discussion surrounding Hollinger's book, literary theorists have recently started using the term **postethnic** in their critique of the application of the post-colonial literary theory to the interpretation of literary works. This

article surveys theoretical insights about postethnic literature proposed by Aldama (2003) and Sedlmeier (2012). The theory of Postethnic Narrative Criticism proposed by Aldama has been selected for this research, as it focuses on the interpretation of literature within the field of magic realism, to which Salman Rushdie's works are attributed; a discussion of Sedlmeier's ideas about postethnic literature is presented since it substantiates the claims which Aldama makes, offers a different perspective on the problems raised and adds insights into several questions regarding the concept itself not covered by Aldama.

The concept of postethnic literature emerges in response to the problems within the post-colonial literary theory. Aldama sees the emergence of Postethnic Narrative Criticism as a result of the confusion of ethnic and literary components within the field of post-colonial studies (2003, p. 2). He claims that over the years of research in the field, the balance between ontological and narrative components of the study has been damaged by a shift from literary to social: "since magical realist narratives – novels, autobiographies, and films – gravitate around the ethnic and/or postcolonial subject's identity formation and experience within larger hegemonic structures, it is not surprising that the anthropological has subsumed the literary" (Aldama, 2003, p. 2).

Deliberating on the concept of literature, Aldama states that confusion between the world of a literary text and the real world hinders the fundamentals of interpreting a literary text. He claims that

a text is a piece of literature when and only when the community of readers does not regard it primarily as a source of information or as a conveyor of truth or falsity, but, instead, reads it as a narrative with its own kind of rationale. The error of confusing the contents (dialogues, plot, theme, etc.) of literary texts with such and such aspects of the empirical world is the same error as confusing realism with an "objective" report of events taking place outside of literary texts. (Aldama, 2003, p. 7)

Aldama (2003, p. 7) argues that, historically, confusion between a literary text and objective reality has led to the establishment of false narratives about colonial spaces based on fictional texts. From his point of view, currently, the post-colonial literary theory continues this tradition by claiming the superiority of the political agenda over the artistic freedom of the writer.

Similarly, Florian Sedlmeier argues that the post-colonial literary discourse presupposes a superiority of communal representation over the creative freedom of the writer. In "Rereading Literary Form: Paratexts, Transpositions and Postethnic Literature around 2000" (2012), Sedlmeier claims that

the paradigm of communal and cultural representativeness is based upon the interlinked assumptions that ethnic writers write about their ascribed ethnic identities, subordinate their authorship to a communal purpose, and produce more authentic, or at least more legitimate, representations than writers who are not considered to be part of the respective community (pp. 213–214).

Hence, writers are impeded by being limited by their ethnicity with regard to the problems and topics selected for their works and the means

used for their artistic purposes. Overall, Aldama raises an important concern regarding the interpretation of a literary text with the focus on the facts of the empirical world as practised by post-colonial literary theorists. He proposes that such a view disregards the fundamental principles of literature which, despite referencing the realia of life, creates the world governed by its inner principles. In the same vein, Sedlmeier asserts that the post-colonial literary theory imposes limitations on writers who are supposed to become subordinate to their ascribed ethnical identities.

2. The postethnic approach to literature

The postethnic approach to literature applies to a specific group of texts characterized by the writer's approach towards established literary conventions. In his discussion of a literary text which could be attributed to the field of postethnic literature, Sedlmeier emphasizes the level of freedom within a specific text, manifesting itself through the writer's choice of stylistic devices and writing strategies. To quote Sedlmeier, these are "the intertextual allusions, the shifts between artistic and medial registers, as well as the play upon conventions, which constitute a specific texture that I call the postethnic literary text" (2012, pp. 223–224).

Another important feature of the postethnic literary work is the writer's engagement with the established narrative, which surrounds the creative process through the choice of a critical rather than a conformist point of view. As Sedlmeier (2012, p. 216) explains it,

I conceive of postethnic literature as a kind of literature that develops from within and against the modes of production and reception, from within and against the practices of publishing and the institutionalized strategies of reading, which comply with the paradigm of cultural representativeness.

Hence, a critical approach to the convention is supposed to permeate the postethnic literary text from the selection of writing strategies to the writer's attitude to the narrative surrounding the creative process.

Postethnic literary criticism aims to provide a close reading of a selected text without disregarding the context the text is written in. Both Sedlmeier and Aldama point out the relevance of balancing attention between the literary means of creating a text and a meta-narrative surrounding it. As Sedlmeier (2012, p. 219) asserts, a literary critic needs

to reconsider the singularity of a literary text, conceding a textual articulation that is, despite its reliance upon conventions and representational repertoires, always a specific configuration in the sense that it produces a range of textual effects, which remain firmly embedded in the realm of the political yet without spelling out a distinct politics of cultural identity.

Aldama makes a similar assertion about the role of the postethnic literary critic, stating that "[t]he postethnic narrative critic does not confuse his or her task with that of the social or political scientist or historian. While these areas of scholarship can help the postethnic narrative critic enrich a reading of theme and event, they are not to

overwhelm what should be primarily an aesthetic-based method of analysis” (2003, p. 106). In addition to emphasizing the importance of aesthetics, Aldama elucidates other elements of importance in the process of a close reading of a text, such as knowledge about the composition of a literary text as well as the established literary canon which the postethnic literary text subverts and transforms.

As far as the interpretation of a literary text is concerned, Aldama points out that “[t]he postethnic critic also formulates a hypothesis based on prior knowledge of, for example, genre, mode, language, character, and point of view to build, revise, and transform our understanding” (2003, p. 105). As it is typical of a postmodern text to undermine and transform the conventions of text-creation, it is essential for a critic to understand these conventions in order to identify when a transformation occurs. Regarding the literary tradition, Aldama claims that “[a]nother necessary ingredient for postethnic narrative criticism is to fully realize the subversive power of ethnic- and postcolonial-identified texts, in its careful analysis of a given text within a larger constellation of like genres” (2003, p. 106). Thus, in the works of Sedlmeier and Aldama, the postethnic literary work is identified within the field of postmodern literature as a work which is rooted in the established literary tradition but tends to destabilize these conventions by undermining and subverting them. Historical and political contexts are relevant for understanding and interpreting the postethnic literary work; however, literature should not be perceived as an accurate representation of reality outside the world of fiction or interpreted as such.

3. Interpretations of the trope of food in Rushdie’s novel *Midnight’s Children*

As Rushdie’s novel *Midnight’s Children* is one of the most critically acclaimed of this writer’s works, multiple academic articles and books have been written about it from a variety of perspectives. The trope of food has also received much attention in these discussions. The subversion of traditional connotations attributed to food as a metaphor is often mentioned with regard to different directions of interpretation.

As Rushdie’s works are shaped by Western and Eastern cultures, the trope of food has been investigated from both perspectives. To begin with, Shakuntala Ray’s article on the influences of the Vedic concept of cooking on the presentation of food in *Midnight’s Children* will be briefly overviewed alongside Sara Upstone’s discussion of the parallels between the concept of the Victorian house and the portrayal of space in the novel.

In her article, Ray notes that food occupies an important part in Vedic texts, as it is seen “as a site of transformation and transcendence” (2018, p. 3). Following this tradition of the use of the concept of food, Rushdie introduces a number of textual elements that correlate with the Vedic tradition, such as the master cook, whose function is to induce transcendental experiences in those affected by his food. Another Vedic concept which emerges in Rushdie’s text is that of “cooking

the world' through sacrifice" (Ray, 2018 p. 4): the protagonist Saleem Sinai disintegrates, leaving jars of his chutnified history for future generations, thus, making the ultimate sacrifice to ensure that the process of regeneration will not be stopped.

As *Midnight's Children* is a postmodern novel, traditional interpretations of the trope are subverted in the text. Ray points out a number of ways in which Rushdie undermines the Vedic interpretation of the concept "master cook". To begin with, Saleem does not attempt to preserve purity and perfection, which are obligatory features of Vedic cooking; on the contrary, Rushdie chooses to replace the elevated concept of cooking "with the mundane and ordinary process of chutnification – as a very human and uncertain endeavour" (Ray, 2018, p. 11). In addition, Saleem himself does not represent an ideal Brahmin cook who strives for perfection, as he is "a willing and inescapable source of imperfection, impurity and ambivalence... 'a grotesque creature', a freakish hybrid being, or a profane cook" (Ray, 2018, p. 12).

If Ray's close reading of the novel focuses on the subversion of traditional Indian concepts of food and preparation of food, Sara Upstone's article "Domesticity in Magical-Realist Postcolonial Fiction" (2007) includes a discussion of food on a broader overview of the concept of post-colonial space in *Midnight's Children*. Drawing parallels between the Victorian house and the post-colonial dwelling, Upstone regards the jars of chutney as representing the essence of the latter space.

Discussing the concept of the Victorian house as a representation of the colonial value system, Upstone refers to Homi Bhabha to claim that "the house never really represented what it was but rather acted metaphorically for the colonial project itself" (2007, p. 261). As a result, a standard of an ideal house is implemented in colonies, which implies that: "orderly, clean, and well-kept dwellings serve to maintain the colony's order on the scale of the individual family" (Upstone, 2007, p. 162). The political agenda behind the Victorian house in the colonial space is undermined in the post-colonial discourse, which attempts to depoliticize domestic space as well as introduce an element of chaos to replace a strict hierarchical order imposed through the implementation of colonial policies.

In the analysis of the concept of post-colonial space in *Midnight's Children*, Upstone argues that the trope of food, namely, the image of the jar, is key to understanding the post-colonial concept of the house, as "[t]he transformation within the pickle jars is, on a smaller physical scale, the same transformation from negative to positive space, of incongruous significance and capacity, that typifies the domestic structure." Upstone compares an act of filling jars with an act of resistance and a surge in optimism and points out that the content of jars stands for a creative act which enables a positive change (2007, p. 277).

In addition to Western and Eastern influences, critical articles on the topic propose varied interpretations of the trope of the food itself. Ray and Upstone present different points of view on this question. Ray believes that it is the world that is represented through the trope of food;

hence, Saleem Sinai cooks the world: history is chutnified and preserved for future generations. By contrast, Sara Upstone believes that food represents creativity, which is generated through the process of cooking to fill the negative space created by the colonial system.

Another interpretation of food that Upstone offers is “a signifier of being”, a substance which represents the post-colonial identity reclaimed in the process of eating (2017, p. 119). Interpretations of the trope are not limited to the above. For example, in the article “Engendering Cuisines: Food as a ‘Magico-Realist Agent’ in Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*”, R. K. Gairola analyses the image of food as an emblem of an intersection between real and magical in the novel and states that “the food operates as a magico-realist agent by serving as the portal, the textual interface, between the “real” historical events and the magical occurrences in the novel” (2014, p. 45).

Overall, the theorists discussed in this chapter assert that Rushdie subverts and undermines traditional connotations attributed to the trope of food, especially with regard to the process of making food. The focus of the above contributions is on the discussion of the main character of the novel, Saleem Sinai, and his connections with food tropes. The aim of this research is to investigate how the writer plays with the meanings attributed to the trope of food, subverting and undermining them in the portrayal of two generations of Saleem Sinai’s family, his grandparents and his parents.

4. The subversion of the connotations of food tropes in the novel

Food tropes are extensively used in the novel *Midnight’s Children* in the portrayal of the life of one family. Several generations of the same family are depicted, a change from one generation to another coinciding with a significant transformation in the society they live in. The tropes of food are used in connection to family life throughout the novel; nevertheless, through a connection to certain family members, their usage extends from the private to the public sphere, which triggers a further play with the meanings.

4.1 Doctor Aziz and Reverend Mother: maintaining traditions

The family of Doctor Aadam Aziz and Reverend Mother is created out of love but based on the different expectations of family life. The Western-educated husband assumes that both partners will participate in public life and share the burden of everyday chores in their private life. In contrast, Reverend Mother is raised in a conservative environment and is used to the tradition of a woman having a clear role at home, whilst her participation in public life is non-existent.

It is the trope of food that reveals a conflict between the spouses, triggered by their differences. Regarding the space within the family

house, the mother identifies the rooms related to storing and preparing food as her territory, which symbolizes a traditional gender-based division of the family living space; reverend Mother transforms it into a battlefield when opposed by the husband: "[p]antry and kitchen were her inalienable territory; and she defended them ferociously... when Aziz approached the kitchen, she emerged from it with a metal pot in her hands and barred the doorway... A fortress may not move" (Rushdie, 2006, pp. 48–49).

Preparation and serving food to family members transform into war strategies as a result of the conflict: to the mother, food becomes a means to express her dissatisfaction with the head of the family ("Aziz and the children ate what she dished out...she never once permitted him to choose his food, and listened to no requests or words of advice." (Rushdie, 2006, p. 49)) or even a lethal weapon ("A war of starvation which began that day very nearly became a duel to the death. True to her word, Reverend Mother did not hand her husband, at mealtimes, so much as an empty plate. Doctor Aziz took immediate reprisals by refusing to feed himself when he was out." (Rushdie, 2006, p. 51)). The conflict is only resolved when the doctor reconnects with the family through a peace offering Reverend Mother makes through their daughter Alia – a bowl of chicken soup, which is compared to "the olive branch" (Rushdie, 2006, p 52).

The meanings that the food trope acquires in the description of Doctor and Reverend Mother's family life are similarly processed in other parts of the novel depicting the life of other generations of the family. First, the trope of food serves as a means to react to a conflict caused by a change in the social structure of the society: a traditional way of life represented by Reverend Mother is challenged by Western influences permeating the traditional way of life as represented by Doctor Aziz. Hence, a traditional division of home into male and female spaces, with those related to cooking assigned to women, is threatened, as, under Western influences, the previously divided spaces are expected to merge, crossing gender-related boundaries.

Second, war references reinforce a negative denotation of the trope in the family history. Third, the perception of food as a way to communicate with other family members, transmitting intended or subconscious messages, is preserved throughout the novel, although it acquires new meanings in this respect. Fourth, the image of a life-saving soup introduces the motif of liquidity, which reemerges in the novel as a variety of liquids such as milk or water, marking a dangerous disruption of family connections which can be compensated with food of a liquid substance.

4.2 Amina Sinai and her sisters: a fusion of private and public life

Doctor Aziz and Reverend Mother have five children whose family stories commence a new narrative enriched with new connotations of the food tropes. A division between public and private life typical to Doctor Aziz and his wife's life is erased; thus, food tropes leave the space of the kitchen

and enter the economy, politics and entertainment, being undermined in the process.

One of the first references to food in the narrative about the life of the Azizes' children is related to Amina's husband's business:

rice tea lentils – he hoards them all over the country in vast quantities, as a form of protection against ... the public, which, if given its heads, would force prices so low in a time of abundance that godfearing entrepreneurs would starve (Rushdie, 2006, p. 92).

An ironic description of a businessman who manipulates the prices of staples for his benefit and decides to withhold commodities to increase their prices relates back to the behaviour of Reverend Mother when she starves her husband to express her point of view. However, it subverts its initial meaning of withholding food because it is not kept secret from the public, creating a false message about shortages.

Another reference to food is made in relation to politics. The portrayal of the Sinais' life in Bombay starts with a description of traditional food in the area: "in this primeval world before clocktowers, the fishermen ... caught pomfret and crabs, and made fish-lovers of all of us ... There were also coconuts and rice" (Rushdie, 2006, p. 121). The period of colonization, first by the Portuguese, then by the English, undermines the established order: "Coconuts have done best of all. Coconuts are still beheaded daily on Chowpatty Beach ... Rice has not been so lucky; rice-paddies lie under concrete now ... Of all the inhabitants, the Koli fishermen have come off the worst of all. Squashed now into a tiny village (Rushdie, 2006, p. 123). A change in the popularity of certain food signals an overall transformation of everyday life: the landscape of the city ("tenements tower where once rice wallowed" (Rushdie, 2006, p. 123), "you'll find them [fishermen] trapped between the naval base and the sea" (Rushdie, 2006 p. 124)) and religious life ("As for Mumbadevi – she's not so popular these days, having been replaced by elephant-headed Ganesh" (Rushdie, 2006, p. 123)). Hence, the transformation of people's daily diet becomes a reflection of a wider societal change under a political transformation of the country.

The Sinais' relocation to Bombay is related to one more episode connected to the motif of food: an acquisition of the cocktail hour alongside accommodation. The Sinais purchase a house from an Englishman who sells it under a special condition: new owners have to keep all of his possessions in the house for two months and follow a tradition he has kept for twenty years: "You'll take a cocktail in the garden? Methwold is saying, 'Six o'clock every evening. Cocktail hour'" (Rushdie, 2006, p. 126). Amina Sinai foresees a future problem in accepting a foreign tradition as a part of a family way of life: "And drinking so much, janum ... that's not good" (Rushdie, 2006, p. 127).

Later in the novel, facing psychological problems due to the birth of his first child ("with my birth, everything changed for Ahmed Sinai. His position in the household was undermined by my coming" (Rushdie, 2006, p. 179)), Ahmed compensates the loss of affection with a drink. The liquidity of the chicken soup, which has saved his father-in-law from

starvation by being handed by one family member to another, is replaced with the liquidity of alcohol which undermines the healing function of liquid. Consumed in isolation, it deepens a rift between the father and the rest of the family.

The narrative about the destructive function of alcohol seeps from the private to the public sphere. Ahmed's drinking problem coincides with the prohibition of alcohol in Bombay. As a result, one has to be officially diagnosed as an alcoholic to be able to obtain a limited amount of alcohol. The involvement of the state in the solution of the problem has a negative effect on an individual as well as on the most vulnerable part of society, the poor. Facing restrictions, Ahmed's need for alcohol grows: "but the permitted ration was too small for my father's needs; and so he began sending his servants along too, and gardeners, bearers, drivers ... even old Musa and Mary Pereira" (Rushdie, 2006, p. 180). The problem which was once solved with a bowl of soup now requires an increasing amount of liquid to be temporarily resolved. The negative impact of the state's involvement affects not only Ahmed and his immediate family but also his household in general: "the poor, having little else to peddle, sold their identities on little pieces of pink paper; and my father turned them into liquid and drank them down" (Rushdie, 2006, p. 181). Drawing a parallel between the episodes which depict withholding a staple in warehouses and obtaining alcohol in the times of prohibition, it must be noted that a shift from private to public sphere subverts the connotation initially attributed to the function of withholding food. Introduced as a means of communicating one's message within the family, it becomes a way of manipulating others for one's benefit, disregarding their needs or interests.

The narrative about the Sinai family contains one reference to a metaphoric function of transferred from public to private life. Hanif Aziz, Amina Sinai's brother and a film director, creates a concept of an indirect kiss in one of his films. Under the political circumstances which prohibited actors from touching each other in films, he used a food item as a substitute for physical contact: "Pia kissed an apple, sensuously, with all the rich fullness of her painted lips; then passed it to Nayyar; who planted, upon its opposite face, a virilely passionate mouth" (Rushdie, 2006, p. 195). The symbolism of the apple as a forbidden fruit applies to the artistic message about forbidden expressions of love in the film and the state's interference in the private, most intimate sphere of its citizens' life.

The concept of the indirect kiss, which symbolizes forbidden love, is transferred from cinematography to personal life. Amina Sinai replicates the kiss on a secret date with her former husband Nadir: "my mother's hands raising a half-empty glass of Lovely Lassi; my mother's lips pressing gently, nostalgically against the molted glass; my mother's hands handling her glass to her Nadir-Qasim; who also applied, to the opposite side of the glass, his own, poetic mouth" (Rushdie, 2006, pp. 301–302). The symbolism of the apple introduces an element of sin in the episode of the film; in contrast, the choice of a milkshake in the scene of the secret date emphasizes the innocence or even childishness of the people involved in

the relationship. Thus, a shift from the public to the private undermines the function attributed to the trope of food by recreating only the visual representation of the metaphor rather than the symbolic implication behind it.

Amina Sinai's family inherits Reverend Mother's ability to communicate with family members through food. Nevertheless, if her mother embeds her message in the way she selects and serves her dishes, in Amina's case, the message is transmitted through the content of the food. Initially, emotions are stirred into food unintentionally:

Reverend Mother doled out the curries and meatballs of intransigence ... Amina ate the fish salans of stubbornness and the birianis of determination ... Mary's pickles had a partially counteractive effect – since she had stirred into them the guilt of her heart, and the fear of discovery (Rushdie, 2006, p. 190).

As a result, this kind of food has an impact on its consumers: “the diet provided by Reverend Mother filled Amina with a kind of rage, and even produced slight signs of improvement in her defeated husband” (Rushdie, 2006, p. 191). Finally, the food that triggers Amina into action, providing the family with a temporary solution to a problem faced at the time. Overall, the cooks of the family tend to be able to transmit their emotions to family members (“the same guilt which seeps into us all every time we eat her [Mary's] chutney” (Rushdie, 2006, p. 236), “Amina stirred her disappointment into a hot lime chutney which never failed to bring tears to the eyes” (Rushdie, 2006, p. 242)), but fail to make a long-lasting impact as the cooks do not target the impact of their food on its consumers.

However, it is the case of Amina's older sister Alia who transforms the metaphor of food as emotion from accidental to intentional as the food filled with emotions is served directly to people who have caused the feelings. The narrator admits the mastery of Alia, stating that she had “raised to the level of an art-form: the impregnation of food with emotions” (Rushdie, 2006, p. 459). Plagued by a yearning for revenge on her younger sister Amina for marrying her fiancé, Alia provides shelter to Amina's family and feeds them the dishes of her hatred: “the birianis of dissension and the nargisi koftas of discord” (Rushdie, 2006, p. 459). As Alia's food is supplemented with her hatred for the sister's family, the ones eating the food, the impact of her food is long-lasting: “Amina was reduced to talking to invisible washing chests and Ahmed ... was capable of little more than dribbles and giggles, while I glowered silently in my private withdrawal” (Rushdie, 2006, p. 460).

The narrative about the second generation of Adam Aziz and Reverend Mother's family, their children Amina, Alia and Hanif, includes multiple food tropes. In many cases, the meanings of these tropes originate in the story of their parents; however, most of them are undermined. A key change observed in this narrative is a transition from private to public and vice versa. Food which was associated with family life is now referred to in the contexts of economics, politics and popular culture. The original meanings of the tropes are subverted in the process of the shift. Although the public domain is still dominated by male characters, whilst women are

mainly restricted to functioning in their households (the only noticeable exception is the realm of culture): the metaphor of food as a forbidden substance is transferred from the public to the private domain by a female character, the use of food tropes in the public field demonstrates first signs of change in male and female roles.

Conclusion

Tropes related to food are extensively used in Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* to portray the transformation of the concept of the family and family relations as well as the structure of society. The narrative about several generations of one family illustrates the change in traditional male and female roles, the means of communication within a family and a division into private and public spheres through the subversion of the connotations attributed to the tropes of food.

The portrayal of Aadam Aziz and his wife's life introduces the main meanings of the trope, which are subverted mainly in the narratives depicting their children. References to food are restricted to the private life of the family. Food and actions related to food, such as preparation and serving, function as messages and ways to communicate messages. As Doctor Aziz represents a Westernized person, while his wife follows a traditional way of life, sharing food and communicating with each other are depicted using the concept of war to emphasize a conflict emerging as a result of a difference of opinions on how the family should organize its life. As Reverend Mother succeeds in ensuring that the family should lead the life she prefers, references to food remain within the realm of family life, and a traditional division of home space into male and female is preserved.

The second generation of the family changes the meanings of the trope introduced by their parents. As roles assigned to genders begin to merge, the applications of the tropes of food cross the boundaries of the private domain and enter the public sphere through political, economic and cultural contexts. Food acquires a meaning of commodity; its popularity and decline are determined by historical factors; food also becomes an element of culture through its inclusion in the film. As far as private life is concerned, food is still an important means of communication; however, this generation attaches more importance to the emotional aspect of interpersonal relationships. As a result, isolation from the family appears to be more damaging, which is emphasized through the usage of liquid-related food imagery.

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