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*Midnight's Children* and *Cracking India* as Film

When most people read a book and then see the film rendition of it, their first response is “the book was better,” which a lot of times it is. A book can be as long as the author wants it to be and can have as much detail as he or she wants. The movie, however, typically has to be under 3 hours, which is way too short an amount of time for someone to read an entire novel. Again, I say most cases are like this. However in my perspective, both *Cracking India* by Bapsi Sidhwa and *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie are exceptions to the norm.

As I read *Cracking India* I found myself getting lost in the story line because of the inconsistency of the narrator's voice with her age. It was hard to remember throughout the story that this story was taking place while she was a young girl rather than as a 40ish-year-old woman. A great example of this confusing level of language use is the first paragraph of the story: “My world is compressed. Warris Road, lined with rain gutters, lies between Queen's Road and Jail Road: both wide, clean, orderly streets at the affluent fringes of Lahore” (Sidhwa Ch. 1). Words like “compressed,” “orderly,” and “affluent” are generally not in the vocabulary of a 4-year-old, which is her age in the first chapter.

In the movie rendition of *Cracking India*, called *Earth*, while the language of the narrator is still elevated, it is a lot easier to picture it as an older woman telling a story of

her past, in the point of view of her younger self. You see young Lenny (the main character) and you can picture this as a memory, which is ultimately what it is. Going back to the first few lines, the movie starts with the narrator speaking, only she make it clear that this is a memory: "I was eight years old, living in Lahore in March of 1947, when the British Empire in India started to collapse. Along with talks of India's independence from Britain came rumblings about its division into two countries, Pakistan and India" (*Earth*). This beginning is much different from the books because rather than going into a metaphor that a 4-year-old could never have come up with, the narrator goes into a description of the world around an 8-year-old, which she may very well have been exposed to.

As stated in my introductory paragraph, many people would argue that the book is always better. I believe the main reason for this is that when the film version comes out it is usually changed in some way, and a lot of times it is a big change that others don't agree with. The main change from *Cracking India* to *Earth* is the ending. *Cracking India* still had a lot more story left at the point where *Earth* ended its. In the end of *Cracking India*, Lenny does find Ayah and their family does rescue her from Ice Candy Man and send her back home to her family, to which he follows and begs for her forgiveness. In the end of *Earth*, however, the movie ends abruptly at the point when Ayah is betrayed by Ice Candy Man and is taken. The movie simply ends with an older Lenny, the narrator, saying that she never saw Ayah again and that while there were rumors, no one ever found out what happened to her for sure.

*Midnight's Children's* biggest drawback on the books end was the confusion of time throughout the whole novel. It was very hard to follow and often times jumped at

times when I wasn't expecting it to. I had trouble deciding at what point in Saleem's life we were in and who we were learning about.

The movie rendition of *Midnight's Children*, however, was much easier to understand and follow because, being a movie, it was required to have some kind of linear fashion to it. The movie solely focused on Saleem's life rather than that of the people around him, and because he was the base of the story and we only saw his view of things, it was a lot easier to follow.

The main drawback of the film *Midnight's Children*, however, was the removal of an important character from the book. Padma, Saleem's lover and listener from the book, doesn't exist in the movie version. Instead of showing him eventually marrying Padma, the end of the movie is him finding Parvati's son and taking him in as his own to take care of. While I think that's still a happy ending, it would have been happier to know that he did find someone to be the boy's mother and who loved him.

As explained in my introduction, *Midnight's Children* and *Cracking India* were both great books, however they were also both much easier to understand and follow as movies rather than as text. The narrator in *Cracking India* and the time management in *Midnight's Children* were both very confusing in the books, but were clarified nicely in the movies. However as all movie renditions of books do, they also had the drawbacks of cutting out important parts of the story.