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Modernist Engagements in Postcolonial Literature

Abstract: This article delves into the often-neglected nexus of postcolonial literature and Modernism, addressing a critical research gap in literary studies. The primary goal of this paper is to elucidate how Salman Rushdie and J. M. Coetzee ingeniously incorporate and contest the legacy of modernism into their literary works. The findings of this research unveil the impact of modernism on postcolonial narratives, offering a nuanced understanding of how these authors utilize experimental tendencies to interrogate colonial legacies and redefine cultural identities in a transnational context. The article demonstrates that the fusion of distinct literary movements, along with the authors' cultural hybridity, yields unique narratives that challenge conventional categorizations, enriching the discourse on postcolonial literature.

Keywords: Postcolonial Literature; Modernism; Postmodernism; Salman Rushdie; J.M. Coetzee; Colonial Legacies; Cultural Identities.

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The article examines how modernism, seen as a global rather than a Western literary movement, and postcolonialism intersect and inform each other in the works of J. M. Coetzee and Salman Rushdie[1]. This study elucidates how these writers skillfully interweave modernist and postmodernist narrative techniques into their postcolonial literature. Doing so, they transcend the conventional boundaries of postcolonial and modernist aesthetics, offering readers an interdisciplinary perspective on contemporary writing.

Set in a modernist tradition, their texts' polyvocal narratives and manifold structures reveal a constant need for innovation and change. "I do not believe that novels are trivial matters"[2] says Salman Rushdie in one of his essays. "The ones I care most about are those which attempt radical reformulations of language, form, and ideas, those that attempt to do what the word novel seems to insist upon to see the world anew"[3]. These words reveal what Andrew Teverson calls the author's "modernist project of making the novel 'new' – of trying to extend what the novel is capable of doing, and, therefore, what it is capable of saying"[4]. What results, as we shall try to

demonstrate in this study, is a combination of techniques and ideas that serve different agendas.

Drawing on Rajeev Patke's argument that "modernist writing is better read in a broadly transnational rather than a narrowly European or Western context"[5], we focus on the work of two authors with different geographical, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds to show how they carve their identities at the intersection of diverse aesthetics, cultures, and languages. By highlighting their shared concerns and mixed literary and cultural influences[6], we also argue for a more inclusive understanding of modernist aesthetics that accounts for its manifestations in various cultural, temporal, and geopolitical settings. This involves examining how modernist techniques and themes are adapted and transformed in postcolonial contexts.

Specifically, the study uncovers how their experimental narrative techniques challenge the enduring legacies of colonialism and, at the same time, of Eurocentric modernism by configuring hybrid cultural and literary identities, reshaping the discourse on postcolonial literature from a transnational perspective[7]. Their writing, albeit distinct in ways reflective of their different backgrounds and unique narrative styles, is seen as a critique of power structures and cultural hegemonies rooted in colonial and neocolonial thought.

In expressing their transnational experience, contemporary postcolonial writers alter both the space and the literary tradition from which they write, creating new modes of self-expression. Here, we allude to Homi Bhabha's iconic Third Space theory. The theorist provides a conceptual framework that helps articulate a space where cultural blending is key to envisioning new sites of collaboration and negotiation in the process of identity construction:

> The theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualising an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. It is the in-between space that carries the burden of the meaning of culture, and by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves.[8]

The essential feature of these in-between spaces is the cultural hybridity that challenges the modern concept of the nation-state. Hybridity addresses the condition of the postcolonial subject as living in societies characterised by culture-mixing. Bhabha defines hybridity as the creation of transcultural forms in zones of contact that reject specificity or homogeneity and, at the same time, promote their own ambivalence. His work anticipated and helped in articulating a shift in literary and cultural studies towards transnationalism, calling attention to the "counter-narratives of the nation"[9]. The novels we are going to examine illustrate the transformations that result from the intermigling of distinct cultures, ideas, and aesthetics, celebrating hybridity, multiplicity, and impurity.

Salman Rushdie & J.M. Coetzee: Rewriting Modernism in Postcolonial Literature

Rajeev Patke's volume *Modernist Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (2013)

provides a revisionary account of modernism through the lens of postcolonialism. By combining these two fields of study, Patke proposes an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the complexities of modern literature produced in colonial and postcolonial contexts. That implies investigating how modernist literary techniques intersect with postcolonial themes, such as the construction of (post)national identities and the complexities of belonging in a postcolonial world. As suggested by Patke, a pluralist approach to modernism helps us move beyond a narrow, mono-cultural understanding of modernist practices. He, therefore, refers to "alternative modernisms"[10] which can reflect plural experiences of dwelling in a globalized world. Patke examines the intersection between modernism and postcolonialism in a few case studies, including a reading of Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out* (1915) alongside Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). Also, he perceives Kafka's allegories as a precedent for contemporary postcolonial authors in search for alternative modes of narration to realism and naturalism. His case studies are relevant to our discussion as he argues for a global understanding of modernism as a body of practices that can transcend time and national geographies.

Drawing on Patke's revisionary approach, we will further examine the legacy of modernism in the works of Rushdie and Coetzee. As their literature is placed at the intersection of the two literary paradigms that dominated the 20th century – modernism and postmodernism, we also refer to mixed considerations of their writing. Due to the historical context in which they write and the way they reinterpret and innovate upon modernist aesthetics, they are often read as postmodernists. In "Mind the Gap: Modernism in Salman Rushdie's Postmodern Short Stories"[11], however, Barbeito and Lozano offer a counterintuitive reading of Rushdie's *East, West* as they discuss its subjectivity in modernist rather than postmodernist terms. In this collection of short stories, more than in the author's novels which celebrate a hybrid, multicultural configuration of the Self, subjectivity is placed in the unsolvable antagonism of cultures, in the gap represented by the comma in the title, which translates into an "irreducible fracture" perceived by the two critics as modernist.

Alternatively, if Linda Hutcheon, considers Coetzee's literature as solely postmodern[12], Derek Attridge believes that the South African author is rather a "late modernist"[13], reworking modernism's methods, "since nothing could be less modernist than a repetition of previous modes"[14]. David James agrees with Attridge's assumptions, stating that Coetzee's reviving of modernist aesthetics "might further our understanding of modernism's futures"[15]. In David Attwell's words, it can be said that the two postcolonial authors "rewrite modernity"[16] and modernism beyond the Eurocentric understanding of these concepts. In reference to contemporary Black South African writing, Attwell proposes the term "experimentalism" instead of the "overdetermined categories of modernism and postmodernism"[17] to avoid being categorical, artificial or misleading.

The works of the authors we discuss in this study both align and diverge from the views of the scholars mentioned above, resisting a clearly defined categorization. Undeniably, some literary techniques that became popular in Western literature

during the historical modernist period, such as fragmentation, unreliable narration, and an abstraction of subjectivity are put into use to reflect the complexities of postcolonial experience.

As put by Tamara Katz, "modernist experiments in narrative form often take as their goal the reshaping of narrative to a newly-envisioned subjectivity"[18]. In investigating Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, Katz highlights the contradictory nature of modernist explorations of identity, where the subject is both an autonomous entity, abstracted from the social world, and a product of its cultural context. The question of what shapes subjectivity is also central in Rushdie's and Coetzee's literary texts. As their subjects are deeply marked by social oppressive forces and antagonistic cultural narratives (East vs. West, South Africa vs. the Empire, India vs. the Empire, the colonizer vs. the colonized, the Self vs. the racialized Other), they cannot escape the historical moment that shapes their identity. The authors seem to bridge modernist poetics with postcolonial, and implicitly postmodern, politics as they employ Kafkaesque allegorical modes of narration to link personal narratives with broader socio-political concerns.

On the one hand, modernist allegory is perceived by R. Patke as "a form of resistance to the dominance of realism in fictional narrative"[19]. The theorist distinguishes between an experimental type of writing associated with modernism, which is often non-realist in mode, and a more conventional type that goes back to the realist fiction of Balzac and Tolstoi. Patke sets Coetzee and Rushdie in an experimental tradition with roots in the proto-modernist work of Laurence Sterne (1713-68) and the modernist literature of Franz Kafka (1883-1924)[20] due to their interest on how the story is told rather on what a story tells:

> the Sterne-to-Rushdie tradition prioritises manner over matter, style and form over content; it foregrounds modes of representation and narration over whatever is being narrated as a 'story'. Modernist fiction and postcolonial fiction find themselves close to one another in this tradition, making common cause in their resistance to the colonising power of realism[21].

Therefore, Patke suggests that the experimental use of allegory in contemporary postcolonial literature is formally modernist. In *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), for example, Coetzee abstractly represents the dehumanizing effects of colonial rule (The Empire) and the ethical complexities of resistance (The Magistrate), foregrounding a collective self with roots in South Africa's apartheid-era. Instead of focusing on the Magistrate's individual subjectivity or the particularities of the British rule in South Africa, he universalizes the experience of oppression and engages the reader in a broader reflection on the issues of power and humanity. In *Shame* (1983), Rushdie also uses political allegory to critique the corruption and social injustices in Pakistan, which are deeply rooted in their colonial past. The protagonist's ambiguous parentage can be seen as a symbol of the confused and multifaceted identity of the nation. One of the questions that arise here concerns the political implications of the use of anti-realist modes in contemporary postcolonial writing. While Coetzee and Rushdie openly acknowledge the

legacy of Western modernist authors such as Kafka, Musil, Beckett, Faulkner or Bulgakov, they also challenge this modernist legacy by engaging with postmodernist modes of narration such as historiographical metafiction. To Linda Hutcheon, their rewriting of history places them more in line with the "politics of postmodernism"[22]. What makes us move beyond a modernist reading of postcolonial literature at this point is not the manner of world-reflection these authors choose as it is the matter of world-creation. Their approach to world-creation is self-referential, involving the construction of multiple, often contradictory realities. By playing with the idea of both fiction and history as constructs, they seem to belong to a line of postmodern experimenters.

Furthermore, some scholars see the destabilization of the real as a haunting topic of postmodern fiction[23], which is more in tune with the crisis of representation discussed in seminal theoretical works on postmodernity written by Jean Baudrillard, Jean-François Lyotard, and Frederic Jameson. Additionally, Coetzee's fiction is marked by affinities with Derrida and Foucault, often dealing with the constructed nature of both history and fiction. From a postcolonial perspective, his "undoing" of realism can also be seen as a form of resistance to imperialist power structures. For Coetzee, it is the Empire who "created the time of history". Therefore, the author uses alternative modes of narration to compete with the Empire's mono-cultural historical discourse.

Elisabeth Costello (2003), for instance, is a self-referential novel incorporating metafictional elements and an awareness of the limitations of language and narrative. By employing multiple perspectives and narrative voices (Elisabeth Costello is a cosmopolitan author, while Emmanuel Egudu, one of the other authorial figures in the novel, is exemplary of orientalism and exoticism in African literature), Coetzee's work reflects a postmodern skepticism towards singular, authoritative viewpoints. It is by no coincidence that the novel begins with a lecture on Realism. In her speech, the protagonist suggests that conventional realism can no longer reflect the reality of the world she lives in. By alluding to Stendhal's definition of the novel as a mirror carried along a high road, Elisabeth Costello rhetorically says:

> The bottom has dropped out. We could think of this as a tragic turn of events, were it not that it is hard to have respect for whatever was the bottom that dropped out—it looks to us like an illusion now, one of those illusions sustained only by the concentrated gaze of everyone in the room. Remove your gaze for but an instant, and the mirror falls to the floor and shatters.[24]

Throughout their novels, Rushdie and Coetzee embrace but also contest modernist modes of exploring the Self and the Nation. By engaging with questions of identity, history, and power dynamics, their novels incorporate postmodern elements such as multiple perspectives, metafictional elements, and intertextual references that challenge unitary notions of identity, be it national, racial, or merely artistic. As shown by Andrew Teverson, Rushdie self-consciously places elements of the Euro-American novelistic tradition "in new

conjunctions with elements of the Indian (or Arabic) story-telling tradition in order, firstly, to see how one tradition might productively transform the other and, secondly, to show how fictions have been brought into new hybrid relations in his own experience, as a migrant intellectual working in increasingly globalised, post-colonial arenas"[25].

Coetzee also problematizes the constraints of ethnicity in defining one's identity as a writer. *Elisabeth Costello* (2003) is particularly illustrative of these concerns, discussing the ethnic novel through the protagonist's lectures and interactions with other authorial figures. In the chapter titled "The Novel in Africa", Emanuel Egudu, the Nigerian co-lecturer of Elisabeth Costello, speaks of his "essence" as an African writer and the challenges he faces as a postcolonial writer in "these days of fleeting identities"[26]. Costello's second "lesson" presents the African writers' struggle to maintain their cultural identity while seeking recognition on a global market dominated by Western standards. Particularly, she illustrates the postcolonial writers' role as cultural translators, "interpreting Africa to their [foreign] readers"[27], mirroring Coetzee's own condition as a South African writer living in Australia and writing in English for a Western readership. Writing in the colonizer's language is a source of anxiety explored in his fictionalized confessions. The postcolonial writer is trapped in a certain doubleness, a state of in-betweeness which is characteristic of their migrant experience. While their multicultural, diasporic subjectivity is indicative of the postmodern historical time and space they inhibit, their sensibility appears to be modernist due to the fractured, and alienated self beyond their narratives.

As we shall further explore, in their writing, Rushdie and Coetzee address significant questions of memory, loss, language, and reinvention of identity in contemporary fiction in a mixture of forms and styles that speak for the hybridity of their literary identity[28].

J. M. Coetzee and the Grand Myth of Fiction

J. M. Coetzee is one of the most prolific postcolonial authors in world literature and recipient, among others, of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003. His autobiographical and essayistic work deals with complex themes of truth, self-expression, and identity. In *Elisabeth Costello* (2003), for instance, rather than presenting a straightforward, factual account of a life, the novelist uses the character of Elizabeth, a fictional female author, to delve into philosophical and existential questions. Elisabeth serves as a vehicle for Coetzee's reflections, making the novel a hybrid of autobiography, fiction, and essay.

Coetzee challenges traditional autobiographical conventions by interweaving fictional narratives with autobiographical elements, complicating the relation between author, narrator, and protagonist, as well as the reality- fiction binary. Conventionally, according to the French theorist Philippe Lejeune, "we call autobiography the retrospective narrative in prose that someone makes of his own existence when he puts the principal accent upon his life, especially upon the story of his own personality"[29]. Coetzee breaks what Lejeune terms as "the autobiographical pact" between writer and reader as he chooses to dismiss the identity between author and narrator and "confess"

in the third person. In *Elisabeth Costello*, he creates a multilayered narrative in which his fictional alter-ego voices many of his intellectual concerns and experiences as a postcolonial author.

Through Elizabeth Costello's struggles with her identity, Coetzee questions the possibility of capturing the "true" self in writing. He also engages in philosophical inquiries about the nature of truth and the limits of representation in contemporary literature. His paper "Truth in Autobiography" is indicative of his preoccupation with the issue of truth telling in self-referential writing.

His protagonist's thoughts and lectures, mirroring his actual lectures and academic papers[30], become a platform for the South African author to examine the relationship between truth, language, and human experience. As many of Costello's lectures are grounded on papers Coetzee had previously published, there seems to be a new contract needed between writer and reader. Since the writer discloses the fictionality of the truth and the truth of fictionality in his writing, it strikes us that this novel belongs to the paradigm of paradoxes and relativization of truths called postmodernism.

Therefore, we are aware of a deconstructive force behind the narrative, interrogating the role of the Author (not solely the ethnic one in the particular context of African literature), as well as the construction of meaning in contemporary literature. These issues reflect postmodern concerns with the instability of language posed by Derrida in his theoretical works[31], as well as the collapse of grand narratives discussed by Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition*.

Postcolonial authors share a metafictional obsession with storytelling, discussing the act of writing and the writer's role as a cultural mediator, underscoring the constructed nature of fiction. J. M. Coetzee's novel exemplifies how autobiographical writing can transcend traditional boundaries by breaking the "autobiographical pact" conceptualized by Lejeune, creating at the same time a self-reflective form of literature.

To sum up, Coetzee's sparse prose, combined with formal experimentation, creates a unique literary style that draws on the modernist tradition of linguistic and formal innovation while also engaging with postmodern issues of representation and postcolonial critique of language as a tool of power.

Coetzee's literature transcends easy classification, offering a rich, multilayered reading experience that bridges the intellectual and thematic concerns of modernism, postmodernism, and postcolonial literature. His literature opens new avenues for analyzing how modernist aesthetics are both reified and contested in contemporary postcolonial texts, enriching our understanding of how modernism is rewritten in contemporary writing.

Hybrid Identities, Hybrid Forms: Transcending Polarization in Rushdie's Literature

Similarly to the work of J. M. Coetzee, Salman Rushdie's literature defies categorization within the frameworks of modernism or postmodernism. For instance, in "Mind the Gap: Modernism in Salman Rushdie's Postmodern Short Stories", Barbeito and Lozano explore the intersection

of the two paradigms in Rushdie's short stories, highlighting the hybrid nature of his literary style. They reveal how Rushdie's short stories can be analyzed through modernist literary traditions, thus challenging the simplistic interpretations of his work as solely postmodern[32]. By incorporating postmodern techniques, such as hybrid style, fragmented and nonlinear narratives, intertextuality, metafictional elements, parody and irony and multiplicity of perspectives, Rushdie's writing exemplifies the rich interplay between modernist and postmodernist elements.

As the article will demonstrate through examples, Salman Rushdie's work proves the fusion of modernism and postmodernism with postcolonial studies through his narrative techniques and exploration of postcolonial themes such as the clash of cultures, the search for identity, cultural hybridity, nationalism, and transnationalism. By using modernist and postmodernist techniques like fragmentation, stream-of-consciousness, intertextuality, and metafiction[33], Rushdie challenges conventional and dominant narratives and amplifies marginalized voices contributing to postcolonial literature, as well. His characters have multiple cultural identities, that provide insights into the fluid human condition in contemporary society.

To explore the intersections between different cultural traditions, Salman Rushdie disrupts linear chronology, exploring the power of imagination and the fluid boundaries between past and present, reality and fiction. He has many intertextual references; for instance, in *Midnight Children* (1981), he uses references from Indian mythology, folklore, political history, Western literature, and philosophy; in *The Satanic Verses* (1988), he refers to Islamic theology, Persian literature, and Western cultural icons.

This paper will emphasize that Rushdie rethinks modernism by adapting its techniques (fragmentation, stream-of-consciousness, intertextuality, and metafiction) and themes of fluid identity to the specific contexts of postcolonial societies. Through these adaptations, we will show how Rushdie challenges dominant cultural narratives and reflects the hybrid, multifaceted nature of postcolonial identities, thereby enriching the discourse of postcolonial literature. This approach is evident in works like *Midnight* Children and *The Satanic Verses.* At the same time, we argue that modernist techniques also highlight the limitation of modernist forms supporting colonial legacies and hegemonic narratives. Rather than adhere to modernist notions of fixed and stable identities, Rushdie's narratives destabilize established power structures and amplify marginalized voices. He challenges modernist conventions and the Western literary hegemony and brings forward the diversity and hybridity inherent in postcolonial cultures. He celebrates the multiplicity of perspectives and truths and undermines the modernist quest for universal certainties.

For instance, fragmentation, a modernist technique par excellence[34], is used in Rushdie's work to expose the multiplicity of identities within postcolonial societies. In *Midnight Children* (1981), Salman Rushdie uses a fragmented narrative structure to reflect the complex and multifaceted identities within postcolonial Indian society. The novel shifts back and forth in time, intertwining the personal history of the protagonist, Saleem Sinai, with the

broader history of India's transition from colonial rule to independence.

Instead of the unified national identity, Rushdie's narratives often depict a fractured and fragmented reality, the fragmented nature of postcolonial identity. He weaves multiple interconnected narratives in his novels, each representing a different facet of the immigrant experience and postcolonial identity. Characters like Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha navigate a fragmented world where reality blurs with fantasy. In Rushdie's world, Gibreel, for instance, creates such a disjointed world where he believes to be the archangel Gabriel, and his fantastical experiences, for example flying over London, challenge the reader's perception of reality. Similarly, Saladin's transformation into a demonic figure after surviving a plane crash adds to this disjointed and fragmented reality, making the boundaries between reality and fantasy increasingly unclear.

By using such modernist techniques like fragmentation (or disjointed narratives), we can better understand the complexities of identity in postcolonial societies. Rushdie uses these techniques in novels like *Midnight Children* and *The Satanic Verses* to illustrate the fragmented and multifaceted nature of postcolonial identities, shaped by diverse cultural influences and historical contexts. The characters' experiences of migration, cultural dislocation, and the struggle to reconcile their dual identities are themes of postcolonial literature. Individuals navigate these complex identities shaped by both colonial legacies and contemporary cultural dynamics.

In other words, Rushdie uses modernist techniques as a means of decolonization. He challenges the binary oppositions inherent in both modernist and colonial thought. He celebrates the hybrid and fluid identities that emerge from postcolonial encounters. In *Midnight Children*, the protagonist Saleem Sinai often narrates his thoughts in a stream-of-consciousness style. His interior monologue mingles his childhood memories with the external events, making the reader understand his complex psyche and creating a picture of his fragmented identity. Saleem's hybrid nature of his identity is also visible through the intertextuality technique Rushdie uses. His personal story is connected to a broader cultural and historical context through the references from Indian mythology, such as characters and events from *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, as well as references to historical figures like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.

The Satanic Verses employs fragmentation extensively. The narrative is divided into multiple, interwoven storylines that shift between the lives of Gribreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, their backstories, and their fantastical experiences. Rushdie uses metafictional techniques by having Gibreel, who is an actor, surreal visions where he believes he is the Archangel Gabriel. These visions serve as a commentary on the nature of storytelling and reality.

These techniques allow Rushdie to challenge binary oppositions inherent in both modernist and colonial thought, offering a more inclusive, hybrid vision of identity and diversity that reflects the intersection of multiple cultural influences in a globalized world. Saladin in *The Satanic Verses* represents such a hybrid identity as well. As an Indian expatriate living in England, he struggles with his cultural identity, trying to assimilate into British society

while grappling with his Indian heritage. His transformation into a demonic figure symbolizes the clash between his dual identities. Through Saladin's experiences, Rushdie explores the fluidity and hybridity of postcolonial identity, where traditional binaries of East and West, tradition and modernity are blurred.

Moreover, Rushdie employs irony to show the complexities of postcolonial identity and the persistent inequalities within society. In *The Satanic* Verses, Gibreel Farishta's character embodies this irony. While believing he is the archangel Gabriel, he also remains powerless in overcoming this societal discrimination. He lives in a society that perpetuates inequality and discrimination, in which he is both revered for his professional achievements and marginalized for his racial, religious, and social identity, reflecting the contradictions and enduring legacies of colonialism in postcolonial India. He is simultaneously a national icon with his success in the film industry and a marginalized individual due to racial, religious, and social factors, because he is of South Asian descent, a Muslim from the Islamic faith and has a lower socioeconomic status (working-class background). Despite Gibreel's fame, ironically, he is marginalized by society and feels alienated and displaced.

These examples demonstrate Rushdie's skill in employing irony to criticize societal norms and highlight the multifaceted nature of identity. Intertextuality is another technique Rushdie employs to challenge traditional notions of nationalism and identity and construct hybrid identities, blending elements from various cultural, religious, and literary traditions. By referencing myths, legends, popular culture, and the pressures of celebrity, Rushdie illustrates how identity formation in a postcolonial context is a dynamic and complex process. His characters, by navigating multiple cultural influences, embody hybrid identities that challenge traditional notions of nationalism and cultural purity. Rushdie uses references to literary mythology and popular culture, as well as works from various cultural traditions. For instance, Gibreel Farisha's name is a combination of names that reflects his hybrid and multifaceted identity, with Islamic, Persian, and South Asian cultural influences. Farisha is named after the angel Gabriel and the Persian poet Fariduddin Attar. Rushdie incorporates myths and legends from diverse cultural backgrounds into the narrative, such as the story of Muhammad's revelation[35] used in a contemporary context. Popular culture is present through film, music, and celebrity icons. While Gibreel's career reflects India's vibrant film industry, Saladin's transformation into a demonic figure shows the dehumanizing effects of celebrity and the pressure to conform to societal norms.

Rushdie's narratives intertwine with conflicting concepts related to nationhood's historical and political forces, such as a sense of belonging, citizenship, and loyalty. The author explores the complex relationship between nationhood and individual identity within postcolonial societies through his characters. In *Midnight Children* (1981), for instance, the protagonist, Saleem Sinai, shapes his identity by questioning such concepts and reflecting on his connection to the newly independent India. In *Midnight Children,* both Saleem Sinai as the protagonist and Saleem as the narrator shape his identity. There

is a continuous interaction between the protagonist and the narrator. As Saleem narrates his story and the history of India, the shaping of his identity is both a lived experience (as the protagonist) and a constructed narrative (as the narrator). For example, Saleem's detailed recounting of his birth is connected to the nation's rebirth after independence. As observed by Linda Hutcheon, Rushdie challenges traditional notions of subjectivity and history as "Saleem Sinai would like to reduce history to autobiography, to reduce India to his own consciousness"[36]. Not only that he cannot do it (reduce the multitude subjectivity to a single one) as he looses his personal and historical consciousness thorugh the loss of memories, but he also comes to acknowledge that it was history that shaped his story:

> I am the sum total of everything that went before me, of all I have been seen done, of everything done-to-me. I am everyone everything whose being-in-the-world affected was affected by mine. I am anything that happens after I've gone which would not have happened if I had not come. Nor am I particularly exceptional in this matter; each "I," every one of the now-six-hundred-million-plus of us, contains a similar multitude.[37]

His destiny is chained to that of his country as his birth coincides with the birth of independent India. In other words, Rushdie's fragmented narrative mirrors Saleem Sinai, the protagonist embodying India's fragmented history and diverse cultural heritage. Born on 15 August 1947, the day of India's independence from British rule, Saleem's life connects to the nation's tumultuous journey towards self-discovery. This synchronicity makes Saleem's destiny unique, linking his fate to the destiny of India and the newly formed nation. Saleem discovers that he shares a telepathic connection with other children born in the first hours of India's independence. For instance, he has this special connection with Shiva, even before they meet in person, as if their spirits had always talked to each other. Saleem shares the same connection with Parvati, a midnight child who becomes known as the Witch of Kanya-Kumari. Despite being physically separated, they communicate telepathically, sharing their destiny, joys, fears, visions, and dreams.

As Saleem grapples with an identity crisis throughout the novel, India struggles to define its national identity amidst cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. He is the sum of everything. His mixed heritage reflects the hybridity and complexity of Indian identity in a postcolonial context. Saleem struggles to reconcile his dual identity as both Indian and Anglo-Indian. Despite being born into a wealthy Indian Muslim family, Saleem's Anglo-Indian roots make him feel alienated from both communities, unable to embrace either identity fully. His mixed heritage becomes a source of internal strife. Is he Indian? Is he Anglo? Is he both or neither? His identity crisis becomes evident when he visits his ancestral home in Kashmir. He reflects on his family's past and his sense of displacement, dislocation, and uncertainty regarding his hybrid heritage and cultural identity. He recognizes the colonial legacy of the house yet feels disconnected from its history and the past due to his hybrid heritage.

Saleem mixed heritage and uncertain ancestry reflect the hybridity and complexity of Indian identity in the postcolonial context. His identity crisis is India's crisis as well. The author thus highlights the hybridity and complexity of postcolonial identities versus the monolithic national identities.

While the observation that nationalism in postcolonial contexts can be exclusionary and divisive might seem common knowledge, Salman Rushdie's work provides specific examination and illustration of how nationalism affects individual lives and societal structures and how this contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between modernist and postcolonial writing. In *Shame* (1983), Iskander Harappa appeals to the nationalist sentiments and patriotism of the crowd to suppress dissent and maintain his control.

Furthermore, Rushdie's critique of nationalism in *Midnight Children* (1981) and *The Satanic Verses* (1988) explores how nationalist ideologies intersect with religious, cultural, and ethnic identities, leading to further social divisions and conflicts. *The Satanic Verses* (1988) challenges traditional notions of nationalism and identity, offering a multifaceted exploration of postcolonial identity and inviting readers to reconsider identity's fluid and dynamic nature in the modern world. Characters like Gibreel Farishta embody this hybridity, blurring the lines between national, religious, and cultural identities.

Rushdie applies modernist techniques to postcolonial contexts. He uses fragmentation and multiplicity as modernist techniques to reflect the fragmented nature of postcolonial identities. For instance, in *Midnight Children*, the narrative's fragmented structure mirrors the disjointed reality- of post-independence India, illustrating how national and personal identities are interwoven and constantly evolving.

Rushdie also uses intertextuality and hybridity to highlight the hybrid nature of postcolonial identities, for instance, the interplay in *The Satanic Verses* of different cultural influences, such as Islamic theology or Persian literature on identity formation.

Last, but not least, Rushdie uses metafiction to critique nationalistic narratives. For example, in *The Satanic Verses*, Gribreel Farishta's hallucinations and dreams blur the lines between reality and fiction, questioning the authority of cultural and religious narratives.

Rushdie's works reveal the interplay between modernist and postcolonial writing by showing how the above-mentioned modernist strategies can be adapted to critique and explore postcolonial themes. Moreover, this approach highlights the exclusionary nature of nationalism in postcolonial contexts but also celebrates the modernist, hybrid and dynamic identities that emerge from these cultural intersections.

The many references to other literary, mythological, and cultural sources highlight Rushdie's concept of the fluid and hybrid nature of identity in a globalized world, where boundaries between cultures and traditions are constantly blurred. Rushdie's collection of essays entitled *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* discusses the notion of "cultural hybridity" which is central to his exploration of identity culture, and postcolonial condition. This concept refers to the blending and merging different cultural, ethnic, and historical influences, resulting in fluid

and multifaceted identities. The author defines himself as a hybrid, a "mongrel self":

> I was born an Indian, and not only an Indian, but a Bombayite — Bombay, most cosmopolitan, most hybrid, most hotchpotch I of Indian cities. My writing and thought have therefore been as deeply influenced by Hindu myths and attitudes as Muslim ones (and mymovie star Gibreel is also a figure of inter-religious tolerance, playing Hindu gods without causing offence, in spite of his Muslim origins). Nor is the West absent from Bombay. I was already a mongrel self, history's bastard, before London aggravated the condition.[38]

His portrayal of fluid identities intersects with modernist themes such as fragmentation and multiplicity. For instance, in *Midnight Children* (1981), Rushdie uses a fragmented narrative to reflect the disjointed nature of postcolonial Indian identity. Similarly, in *The Satanic Verses* (1988), Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha embody cultural hybridity through their experiences of migration, displacement, and the blending of multiple cultural influences.

Rushdie's narratives often transcend narrow nationalist frameworks, embracing transnational perspectives. In this way, he challenges the primacy of the nation-state. He highlights the interconnectedness of global cultures and the absorbent nature of national boundaries. Rushdie explores transnational themes, depicting characters whose identities are shaped by multiple cultural affiliations and global movements. His characters' lives transcend narrow nationalist frameworks, highlighting identity's fluid and dynamic nature in a globalized world marked by cultural exchange and mobility.

We have mentioned how, in *Midnight Children* (1981), Saleem Sina's identity connects to India's history. His journey towards self-discovery coincides with India's journey after obtaining independence. However, Saleem's narrative transcends the confines of national borders as he grapples with questions of belonging and loyalty in a rapidly changing world. For example, Saleem's family background reflects his multicultural heritage (diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds), which contributes to Saleem's sense of transnational identity, blurring the boundaries between national and global affiliations.

Similarly, in *The Satanic Verses* (1988), Rushdie explores transnational themes through Gabriel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, whose identities are shaped by migration, displacement, and cultural hybridity. For instance, Gibreel's journey from India to England mirrors the broader phenomenon of transnational migration, highlighting the interconnectedness of diverse cultures and the fluidity of identity in a globalized world. Additionally, Saladin's transformation into a demonic figure symbolizes the fragmentation of identity in the diasporic experience, where individuals navigate multiple cultural worlds and struggle to reconcile conflicting commitments.

Rushdie's narratives incorporate modernist elements and techniques, inviting readers to reconsider traditional notions of identity and belonging. Some of the frequent modernist techniques he uses are: fragmentation, steam-of-consciousness,

intertextuality, and multiplicity. In Midnight Children, the narrative is fragmented, shifting back and forth in time. This reflects the disjointed and multifaceted nature of postcolonial Indian identity and history. Rushdie employs stream-of-consciousness techniques in *The Satanic Verses* to show the psychological complexities of his characters. Gibreel Farishta's inner turmoil and fragmented identity appear through her inner monologues and hallucinations that blur the lines between reality and imagination. Rushdie uses intertextuality to reflect the hybrid nature of postcolonial identity in *The Satanic Verses* through diverse cultural elements such as Islamic theology, Persian literature, and Western cultural icons. Multiplicity is another modernist technique Rushdie uses to show the fluid and dynamic nature of identity. For instance, *Midnight Children* has multiple voices and perspectives, including Saleem Sinai's reflections and broader historical commentary. His characters navigate thus multiple cultural identities, reflecting the tensions inherent in nationalist ideologies and the ongoing process of identity formation in a globalized world.

Conclusively, both Coetzee's and Rushdie's engagement with postcolonial themes may resist easy categorization within Modernism and postmodernism frameworks. Their approach to literature and the geopolitical particularities of their postcolonial experiences are complex and ambiguous, incorporating but also challenging conventional interpretations of literary movements and identity formation. Their works invite readers to reconsider the boundaries between tradition and innovation, reality and fiction. Ultimately, they are an invitation to engage critically with the legacies of Eurocentric norms, (neo)colonialism, and the complexities of cross-cultural identities in the modern world.

As they rethink questions of identity, nationalism, and storytelling, they offer new perspectives on how postcolonial authors integrate modernism in their works. By reconsidering the nation-based premises of unity and belonging, they reshape the aesthetics and politics of contemporary literature, bridging the gap between modernism and postcolonial studies. The novel characteristics of their literature reside in the experimental narrative techniques they use and in the importation of their cultural and linguistic heritage. By embracing their past and culture instead of leaving them behind, they create powerful multilayered stories that challenge the hegemony of one nation, language, culture, identity, and literary movement. At the same time, they carve out new possibilities for cross- and trans-cultural self-expression and representation for authors of mixed origins in the globalized era.

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Notes

1. Coetzee and Rushdie are two prominent postcolonial authors that have more in common than their internationally recognised literary accomplishments. At the intersection of distinct cultures, languages, and literary paradigms, they rethink the relation between national identity and storytelling and set precedents for newer generations of migrant authors in perceiving their identities beyond national constraints.
2. Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 981–1991*, London, Vintage, 2010, p. 393
3. *Ibidem.*
4. Andrew Teverson, *Salman Rushdie,* Manchester University Press, 2008, p. 54.
5. Rajeev S. Patke (ed.), *Modernist Literature and Postcolonial Studies*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2013, p. xxv.
6. Their writing and identity are deeply impacted by their mixed origin and experience as bicultural cosmopolitan expatriates.
7. The transnational approach to literary texts and the postcolonial framework discussed in this paper intersect briefly. However, they are not always interchangeable, as both methods of theoretical inquiry result in a nuanced and sometimes even discordant understanding of literature in the greater context of the world we inhabit. As conceptualized by Paul Jay, transnational literature is "the literature of our own time, a time marked by the profoundly uneven forces of decolonization, globalization, postmodernity, and electronic technologies, forces that have simultaneously created possibility and havoc, order and chaos, and which have pitted the romantic ideals of global citizenship against the dark violence of resurgent nationalisms".

8. *Ibidem,* p. 37.
9. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London, Routledge, 1994, p. 149.
10. Rajeev S. Patke, *op. cit*., p. 26.
11. J. Manuel Barbeito and María Lozano, "Mind the Gap: Modernism in Salman Rushdie's Postmodern Short Stories," in Jorge Sacido (ed.), *Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Short Story in English*, New York & Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2012, p. 175-206.
12. Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism,* London and New York, Routledge, 2002 [1989].
13. Derek Attridge, *J. M. Coetzee & the Ethics of Reading*, Chicago & London, The University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 2.
14. *Ibidem*, p. 5.
15. David James, *Modernist Futures: Innovation and Inheritance in Contemporary Fiction*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 96.
16. David Attwell, *Rewriting Modernity: Studies in Black South African Literary History*, Athens, Ohio University Press, 2005, p. 3. Here, the author perceives modernity as "the currently governing concept of what it means to be a subject of history".
17. *Ibidem*, p. 175.
18. Tamara Katz, "Modernism, Subjectivity, and Narrative Form: Abstraction in 'The Waves'", *Narrative*, Ohio University Press, no. 3, v 3, 1995, p. 232-251.
19. *Ibidem*, p. 109.
20. *Ibidem,* p. 53.
21. *Ibidem.*
22. Both Rusdhie and Coetzee are referenced in Hutcheon's *The Politics of Postmodernism* in relation to postmodern historiographic metafictive processes. See Hutcheon, *op. cit*., p. 62-65.
23. Jesús Benito, Ana Mª Manzanas, Begoña Simal (eds.), *Uncertain Mirrors. Magical Realisms in US Ethnic Literatures*, Amsterdam & New York, Rodopi, 2009, p. 53.
24. J.M. Coetzee, *op. cit*., p. 19-20.
25. Andrew Teverson, *op. cit*., p. 47.
26. J.M. Coetzee, *op. cit*, p. 43.
27. *Ibidem*, p. 51.
28. We refer here to the mixed origins and influences that shape the authors' writing.
29. Philippe Lejeune, cited in Sidonie and Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 2001, p. 1.
30. A version of Costello's first "Lesson", *Realism*, was published by Coetzee under the title "What is Realism?" in 1997. Similarly, a version of the second chapter appeared as a paper with the same title, "The Novel in Africa", at the University of California at Berkely, in 1999.
31. Jaques Derrida, "Writing and Difference" (trans. by Alan Bass), University of Chicago Press, 1980.
32. J. Manuel Barbeito and María Lozano, "Mind the Gap: Modernism in Salman Rushdie's Postmodern Short Stories," in Jorge Sacido (ed.), *Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Short Story in English*, New York & Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2012, p. 175-206.
33. In *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988), Hutcheon discusses how metafictional strategies disrupt the illusion of reality in postmodern literature, inviting readers to critically engage with the text, questioning the relationship between fiction and reality. Rushdie uses metafiction to challenge conventional narratives, exploring the complexity of identity in postcolonial contexts.
34. Fragmentation is seen as a defining feature of modernist literature by Astradur Eysteinson in *The Concept of Modernism* (1990). He explains how modernist writers employ fragmentation to break away from traditional narrative structures and represent the fractured reality of contemporary existence.
35. A foundational Islamic narrative.
36. Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, p. 161-162.
37. Salman Rushdie, *Midnight Children,* New York, Random House, 1981, p. 383.
38. Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, p. 404.