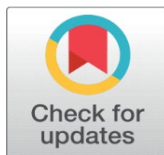
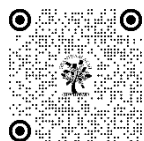


POSTMODERN STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO SELECT WORKS OF SALMAN RUSHDIE

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ABSTRACT

Salman Rushdie's writings have their own stand in the field of postmodern studies. The basic claim is that because Rushdie's "Midnight's Children" employs a variety of postmodern literary devices, including magical realism, intertextuality, and ambiguity, it is a fine example of a postmodern novel. In addition, the author uses such techniques to discuss a few themes that relate to modern Indian culture and history. The culture has been examined through a line of postmodern criticism that began with the critic use of Irving Howe (1959), Leslie Fiedler and Susan Sontag in the mid-sixties, Ihab Hassan (1969), David Antin (1971), William Spanos (1972) and continued with the criticism of Jean Francois Lyotard, and many others has analyzed the culture. Ironically, the common denominator among these detractors is their failure to agree on a sound, coherent definition of the term "postmodernism." This controversy over a definition of the term has to do with the multiple proliferations of the social, economic, artistic, and cultural trends in the contemporary world. It is difficult to define postmodernism because, as Linda Hutcheon points out, it is a twentieth-century phenomenon that is no longer relevant. It now has its canonical works, anthologies, primers, readers, dictionaries and histories are fully institutionalized.

Keywords: Postmodernism, Modernism, Culture, Minor, Literature, History, Identity, Institutionalized

1. INTRODUCTION

Postmodernism : an Introduction

Postmodernism has many aspects and definitions of this trend constructed by many critics and researchers that sometimes contradict each other. Therefore, examining some major postmodern traits and strategies that can be used to Rushdie's more recent works is an element of the study's methodology. I wonder if Rushdie is now a postcolonial or a postmodernist author because of my primary interest in postmodernism and how it connects with the current global social, economic, and political circumstances. A paradoxical phenomenon, postmodernism utilises and abuses, installs and then subverts the very idea it opposes, and here, like the postmodern phenomenon described by Hutcheon, I see Rushdie's works full of contradictions which is confirmed by John Clement Ball's statement that Rushdie's penchant for diversity and contradiction over a summing up, unifying truth. Despite the criticism's lack of intellectual coherence, postmodern literature captures a wide range of contemporary phenomena. One of its important topics is history. The "historiographic metafiction," those widely read conflicting works, would serve as an example of postmodernism in fiction, according to Linda Hutcheon. According to M. D. Fletcher, Rushdie's literature is primarily postmodern prose of a hilarious and biting sort. Specifically, Rushdie is postmodern in the sense that "his philosophical and artistic development is essentially modernist, if Rushdie can be considered postmodern at all, then there are certain articulations and emphases in which he plainly exceeds that basic structure, according to Aijaz Ahmed.

Fusion of Postmodernism and History

According to Linda Hutcheon, postmodernism "uses and exploits, installs and then subverts the very principles it attacks." According to Hutcheon, works that are historiographic metafiction—which are fundamentally contradictory, stubbornly historical, and inescapably political—best capture postmodern writing because they are both self-reflexive and purposefully tamper with history. In light of this analysis, *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* have been taken into account. A history that "deliberately makes evident, inside the very structure of its narrative forms, its own repressive techniques" is what Dipesh Chakrabarty called for in his description of histories, and Rushdie's portrayals of history seem to come close to this. Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), in particular, has been draped for many purposes. The novel is celebrated for its high and gallant style, especially the use of varied postmodern techniques. However, its treatment of subjects like Indian history, politics and the plurality of religions is what classifies it a model postmodern narrative. Rushdie's writing not only highlights the deception in narrative but also the fact that each narrative has its own goal. His writing stands out among others like *The Tin Drum* by Gunter Grass, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The General in His Labyrinth* by Garcia Marquez, *Ragtime* by E. L. Doctorow, and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by John Fowles.

The common between Rushdie and famous postmodern writers is the use of nonlinear narrative, irony, pastiche, and the list can go on but most importantly what attracts the attention is how Rushdie shares with those famous writers what Hutcheon calls, "the postmodern ironic rethinking of history". Rushdie may have used history in his postcolonial writings as a "nostalgic return" that reveals his emotions and his perspective as an expatriate author. However, the shift that happened to him after the third millennium locates his approach to history as that of postmodern historiography. Metafiction.

Since Rushdie's philosophical examination of history is apparent in his works, and since Rushdie's works tackled in this study revolve around a postmodern analysis of history as a reconstruction of the reality of the past which refers to the concerns of the present-day society that come to see dovetails with western hegemony, we find it important, to begin with, to briefly summarise postmodernism's approach to history. In general, history is a conversation about the past. It is an effort to delve into the past in order to comprehend our conflicted relationship with the present and to offer the future a purpose and a forecast. The postmodern approach of history is ambivalent. The works of some critics, such as Alexandre Kojève's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, and Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History* and *The Last Man*, assert that postmodernism directly contributes to history's end. *The end of history* expression is not taken literally by those philosophers but as Fukuyama puts it, "liberal democracy may constitute the 'end point of mankind's ideological evolution' and the 'final form of human government,' and as such constituted the 'end of history'". In other words, the western system's liberal democracy is the last political system that mankind has developed, and it is seen as a success, especially if a globally homogeneous system is established.

Many scholars and critics have proved that Rushdie's novels can be historical novels because this would offer a political and economic liberalism to every nation on earth and the rights of individuals and minorities would be protected. Furthermore, Fukuyama XV asserts that this western liberal democratic system "dictates a worldwide evolution in the direction of capitalism," which supports more secure and advantageous avenues for the individual. On the other hand, this understanding of history is not applicable to non-Western countries because there is doubt over the development of a liberal political system, freedom of speech, and peace in the third world. On the other hand, Fredric Jameson argues that post modernity is characterized by a crisis in historicity;

This frustrating condition "determines a succession of spasmodic and intermittent, but frantic, attempts at recovery" because the postmodern age has forgotten how to understand historically. Jameson is concerned about the end of history because he does not view the coexistence of liberal democracy and capitalism as an accident. Since no one can ever arrive at an exact truth about history, he therefore invites historians and writers to create counter histories and alternative histories. According to a different reading of history in postmodernism advocated by critics like Linda Hutcheons and Fredric Jameson, history does not depend on truth because there is no such thing as absolute truth in postmodernism; rather, history is created, reconstructed, and presented to the reader as a text. As a result, some postmodern critics develop skepticism and adopt a relativistic perspective on history. Therefore, depending on the individual's experience and conception of the universe, postmodernism analyses truth and reality of any historical incident in a variety of ways. It is a matter of how we see, not what we see. The reader is urged by postmodernism to acknowledge that everything is a result of particular historical conditions and is shaped by the way the writer and reader interact with and understand history. The writer is therefore providing his own historically constructed explanation when interpreting the past.

Jameson asserts that there is a discrepancy between what actually transpired in the past and how it is actually depicted in historical writings within this framework of postmodern historicity. He states that "the past as 'referent' finds itself gradually bracketed, and then effaced altogether, leaving us with nothing but texts". The result is that, according to Jameson, "History is not in any sense itself a text or master text or master narrative, but that it is inaccessible to us except in textual or narrative form, or in other words, that we can approach it only through some prior textualization or narrative (re)construction" ("Marxism and Historicism") What concerns Jameson is that the historical text reconstructs history based on the writer's interpretation, which tells what the reader wants to hear about the past while it avoids the actuality of a past event. In addition, this approach of history, from Jameson's point of view, creates a false connection between the past and the present since this reading of history avoids the actual facts happened in the past.

Because of this erroneous link between the past and the present, postmodernism is connected to the cultural logic of late capitalism. In other words, the historical images that have been recreated are only relevant to the demands and issues of today's society, which is ruled and moulded by capitalism. Therefore, based on what has been discussed above, noted that Rushdie's interpretation of history, depicted in his recent novels, establishes a link between the past and present that is indicative of postmodernism and, thus, the cultural logic of late capitalism. Recent books by Rushdie approach history by concentrating on reconstructing both past and present history from the author's point of view, a strategy that, in my opinion, is consistent with the promotion of western hegemony. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, for instance, gives an alternative history of rock music that is defined by an Indian musician named Ormus Cama and his adored American Indian singer Vina Aspara and is only seized by America when it seems that rock music might be a source of hegemony. Rushdie's depiction and assessment of this alternative history seem to show the author's perception of modern history, which portrays America as being hegemonic, foregrounding America as hegemonic force. Thus it is clear that Rushdie's twenty-first century fiction employs many prominent features described by postmodern critics. Yet, before analyzing Rushdie's recent novels from a postmodern perspective, it is worth reevaluating Rushdie's status as a postcolonial writer. Such a reevaluation will show that Rushdie's position as a postcolonial writer has changed since he began to reside in New York in 1999. Rushdie has consistently been categorised by critics as a postcolonial writer whose main theme in his writings from the 1980s and 1990s was the centre vs margin polarity inherent in postcolonial discourses. He is not only a writer who writes in English, he is also a critic and a "god father" to some young Indo-Anglian writers, dubbed as "Rushdie's Children" who apply postcolonial discourse in their writings.

Midnight's Children: Analysis of Postmodernism

Rushdie's tone and stance in his essay "Outside the Whale" were criticized by Anuradha Dingwaney Needham in her article "The Politics of Post-Colonial Identity in Salman Rushdie" as being "untypical," different from Rushdie's fiction, and "authoritative," even though "he [Rushdie] tends towards less authoritative and belligerent discourse" in his novels. Needham argues that the reason behind Rushdie's pungent criticism is that these Raj TV series and their writers like Kaye and Scott, have misrepresented and distorted the image of South Asia and, as Rushdie proclaims, "end up being ultra- parochially British" in order to please the western viewers by "refurbish the 'Empire's tarnished image'". Rushdie seems to be arguing that the powerful control, dominate, and portray history. In addition, there are some observations tackled by critics that might weaken the postcolonial discourse of Rushdie's works. For example, in *Midnight's Children*, overtly, the story of India is a story of a hostile resistance of the grip of the British colonization. Timothy Brennan, however, says that there is "a conspicuous paucity of treatment of the anticolonial struggle" in Rushdie's book. The novel narrates "the 1919 Amritsar Massacre in an appropriately horrifying mode but then skips directly to 1942, and then rushes on to independence". In the book, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India, rushes to declare the country's independence before implementing all necessary political and economic measures and before all British officials have left. As a result, the story describes India's post-independence circumstances and how chaotic the governmental system was. Why has Rushdie not depicted India and its politicians more favourably if he is writing the history of India from an anti-colonial standpoint? Or, instead, why hasn't he better attempted to represent the efforts of reformation in his country after the independence? Even while this book appears to be anti-colonial on the surface, it falls short on a deeper level because the narration fails to adequately convey the colonizer's political struggle. On a deeper level, Rushdie resents the political resignation of both India and its political leaders. It is thought that Rushdie's hatred stems from the fact that he himself strives to transform the manufactured image of the Orient in his fiction but is unsuccessful in doing so.

In addition to failing to alter the Orientalist perception of India, Rushdie abandons postcolonial resistance and covertly supports western colonialism by inventing narrators like Saleem Sinai, Jibreel Farishta, and Malek Solanka who embrace western thought as a refuge from the culture's narrow-mindedness. For instance, in *Midnight's Children*, Sinai narrates the illiterate Padma the historical account of India in place of Sinai's "digressions and time jumps," which Padma demanded Sinai use throughout the book. Rushdie appears to be telling his audience that only illiterates and common people appreciate history as a straightforward, linear narrative story; only intellectuals are able to grasp the complexity, the nonlinear interruption of history that ultimately has an impact on current political events. Therefore, Rushdie's use of nonlinear narrative technique in reconstructing history is targeted to one type of audience—a western intellectual one—who can follow his verbosity and who could examine new critical, political, and historical perspectives. Rushdie also saw India from the perspective of the middle-class Indian who received a good education and was influenced by western philosophy, but he purposefully kept the authoritarian political angle unexplored and unwritten—yet another blatantly un-postcolonial choice. I believe that Rushdie is relying on the 'Elite' middle class Indians, the "inheritors of the British mantle, the deracinated, speaking English, thinking English, dreaming English, Indians terrified, horrified, revolted by Indians and India, yet unable to escape the umbilical bond" to legitimize the western colonization of India. This is possibly best illustrated in Saleem Sinai, an illegitimate child of an Englishman by the name of William Methwold, who tells the tale of India before and after its freedom. Methwold's four houses in India were sold to four Indian families who agreed to purchase everything inside the house and the legal transfer of the property is equated with the national transfer of sovereign power. At the beginning, the Indian families were restless to live among Methwold's clothes and drinks but by the time the independence becomes close, they have learned to accept and imitate Methwold's way of living as well as keeping to the accent he speaks. Here, Rushdie shows how India's resistance to the coloniser only serves to allay the guilt stemming from an underlying sense of national acceptance of Great Britain's neo-imperialist dominion. This acceptance of the colonizer's way of life does not, in my opinion, fit into the postcolonial discourse that challenges the colonizer's authority. Instead, it is a strategy for accepting Western ideals that are materially superior to those of the conquered culture. In addition, Rushdie, in an interview about the film adaptation of *Midnight's Children*, states that there were visible impacts of the British colonialism of India at that time. He notes: To give the British their due, they built the railroads and roads, and left behind an extremely efficient civil service center, without which India couldn't function. They completely excluded religion from their constitution, which has shown to be incredibly beneficial. Despite the fact that the tragedies that occurred left the country in a mess, it was still in relatively good structural shape when they left. The founding leaders of the Indian Independence Movement were magnificent individuals who were ready to guide their nation into its first moments of freedom, just like in America. India was very blessed by those leaders—people of deep intelligence, deep philosophy, great sophistication and selflessness. Rushdie not only explicitly mentions some of the major privileges of western colonialism in several of his interviews, but one can also see signs of western privilege in his so-called postcolonial novels. In other words, understanding how Rushdie was influenced by western story and style is crucial to understanding why he gave up on the postcolonial movement.

His narrative techniques: unites with postmodernism

Rushdie is a middle-class Indian exile who is similar to the middle-class characters in his books. He uses western narrative approaches of style, such as exotic fantasy, magical realism, stream-of-consciousness, myth, and nonlinear narration, and his characters are fluid, hybrid, and pliable. As a result, he panders to the West. Some might say that many non-western writers adopt the western narrative techniques so why should Rushdie's case be different? Rushdie, in his memoir *Joseph Anton* states that in the West he felt bewildered about four roots: place, community, culture, and language and "of these four roots... he had lost three". Rushdie acknowledges that although the original root of language still exists, other roots have been lost. According to what he writes in his memoir, his status as a migrant confounds him: "In the age of migration, the world's millions of migratory selves faced gigantic issues, problems of homelessness, hunger, unemployment, disease, persecution, alienation, and dread." Rushdie was among the more fortunate people. He was concerned that his ties to India had deteriorated. Rushdie's realization that he is losing his Indian connections triggers him to write about the history of India which the author sees as "not cool. [India] was hot. It was hot and overcrowded and vulgar and loud and it needed a language to match that and he would try to find that language". Rushdie's language is noteworthy because it is "distinctive," according to numerous reviewers like Gregory J. Robinson, since "[it] is composed of a blend of "British" English, cinema slang, Indianized English, Caribbean English, youth slang, and many others." Rushdie uses the English language in his writing, yet the reader will occasionally come across terms in Urdu or Hindi. English-language postcolonial writers have their own reasons for employing the Empire's vocabulary to push back

against it. However, I come to see Rushdie's use of the language of the Empire because it represents power and this language, unlike Rushdie's mother tongue, can reach everywhere and can be hegemonic.

Moreover, from a look at Rushdie's interviews since he moved to America, one can notice how he uses the pronoun "We" when tackling a critical or political issue of America. In addition, in an interview about *The Enchantress of Florence*, Rushdie asserts that he is a cosmopolitan writer yet is mostly influenced by western literature: come from all over the place.

CONCLUSION

Rushdie's trends of postmodernism can be seen in most of his works. His major works have the tremendous echoes of this term which make him to stand in the group of postmodernism. The art of mingling of past with present create a new form for modernism.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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