Fragmented Identity and the Crisis of Truth: Metafictional Resistance in Salman Rushdie's *Quichotte* during the Post-Truth Era

الهوية المتشظية وأزمة الحقيقة: المقاومة الميتاسردية في رواية *Quichotte* لسلمان رشدي في عصر ما بعد الحقيقة

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Abstract

In *Quichotte* (2019), Salman Rushdie retells Don Quixote in the disjointed cultural and epistemic reality of the post-truth world, where reality and individual identity are subverted by the understanding that there are a variety of realities. *Quichotte* has been discussed in its metafictional form, post-truth critique and identity politics in the literature, although mostly singly. This fragmented treatment has left a gap in the knowledge of the interrelationship of such factors on one platform. The present paper seals this gap with the analysis of how the self-reflexive story of the novel embodies the disrupted identity as well as confronts the crisis of truth in the age of media saturation. The study strategy employed in this study is a qualitative close-reading approach, where the main scenes of the text are selected and analyzed within the framework of a tripartite theory of metafiction, as practised by Waugh; parody as a critical practice, as suggested by Hutcheon; and hyperreality, as proposed by Baudrillard. The findings indicate that not only does the metafictional pattern adopted by Rushdie mirror the post-truth disorientation, but it also represents an artistic reaction whereby the reconstruction of identity is achievable through the narrative consciousness. It has provided a coherent analytical framework to connect the two terms, identity and truth, that extends the sphere of literary and cultural analysis of fiction and its post-truth permutation. The study recommends enhancing the understanding of truth recognition and identity construction in contemporary literature.

Keywords: Salman Rushdie, *Quichotte*, metafiction, fragmented identity, post-truth era literary resistance.

الملخص

في رواية كويشوت   (2019)لسلمان رشدي، يُعاد كتابة *دون كيشوت* ضمن المشهد الثقافي والمعرفي المتشظي لعالم ما بعد الحقيقة، حيث تقوِّض تعددية الحقائق مفهوم الواقع والهوية الفردية. وقد تناولت الأدبيات السابقة حول *كويشوت* بنيتها الميتاسردية، ونقدها لعصر ما بعد الحقيقة، وسياسات الهوية، لكن في معظم الأحيان بصورة منفصلة. هذا التناول المجزأ خلق فجوة في فهم كيفية ترابط هذه العوامل ضمن منصة تحليلية واحدة. تأتي هذه الدراسة لسد هذه الفجوة من خلال مراجعة لكيفية تجسيد السرد الذاتي التأملي للرواية لهوية متشظية، وفي الوقت نفسه مواجهته لأزمة الحقيقة في عصر مشبع بالإعلام. وتعتمد الاستراتيجية البحثية في هذه الدراسة على منهج نوعي قائم على القراءة الدقيقة، حيث يتم اختيار المشاهد الرئيسية في النص وتحليلها ضمن إطار ثلاثي: الميتاسرد كما صاغته *وج* (Waugh)، والمحاكاة الساخرة كأداة نقدية كما اقترحتها *هتشيون* (Hutcheon)، وفكرة فرط الواقعية (hyperreality) كما طرحها بودريار   (Baudrillard).وتُظهر النتائج أن النمط الميتاسردي الذي اعتمده رشدي لا يعكس فقط اضطراب ما بعد الحقيقة، بل يمثل أيضًا ردًا فنيًا يُمكّن من إعادة بناء الهوية عبر الوعي السردي. لقد وفّرت الدراسة إطارًا تحليليًا متماسكًا يربط بين مفهومي الهوية والحقيقة، موسعًا بذلك مجال التحليل الأدبي والثقافي للأدب وتحوّلاته في عصر ما بعد الحقيقة. وتوصي الدراسة بتعزيز الفهم المتعلق بكيفية إدراك الحقيقة وبناء الهوية في الأدب المعاصر.

الكلمات المفتاحية :سلمان رشدي، *Quichotte*، الميتاسرد، الهوية المتشظية، مقاومة أدبية في عصر ما بعد الحقيقة.

1. Introduction

Salman Rushdie's *Quichotte* (2019) represents a remarkable reinvention of Miguel de Cervantes' Don Quixote, adapted to the multicultural, political, and media landscape of the twenty-first century (2024; Negi, 2024). Being one of the most controversial and glamorized representatives of postmodern and postcolonial literature, Rushdie has exploited such narrative devices as experimentation, intertextuality, and satire amid his forty-year career in an attempt to disrupt the nation-based narratives of history by questioning the colonial history and destabilizing the idea of identity (Hoydis, 2021; Atiwi & Khafaji, 2020).

Blurring the line between fostering reality and imagination, his works (including Midnight Children (1981), White Tiger (2008), and The Golden House (2017)) have constantly challenged the concept of reality and fiction, and now Rushdie is considered to be among the most acute figures in terms of the level on which the questions of cultural memory and politics circle narratives. Rushdie develops this work in *Quichotte* for the contemporary world of the so-called post-truth, establishing a metafictional setting where the main hero (Ismail Smile, alias *Quichotte*) takes a surrealistic drive across America in search of the love object, who has invented another son, Sancho. This absurd yet touching character of the journey serves as a means to discuss the existence of fragmented identity in the media world, which presents contradictory media realities, and how narrative form can challenge established ideological patterns (Majumder & Khuraijam, 2020; Bezrukov & Bohovyk, 2022; Farhan, 2024).

There are three thematic pillars on which this study is based, which include fragmented identity, crisis of truth, and metafiction as cultural resistance. These ideas are closely related to the post-truth era, which characterizes a sociopolitical situation where objective reality is replaced more and more by emotional appeal, personal opinion, and fake stories (McIntyre, 2018; Farkas and Schou, 2020). The self-destruction of ontological instability, media saturation, and the determination of alternative truths are factors of fragmentation of identity that have been generated in the present research (DeRiso, 2023; Hoydis, 2021). The doubling motif is created throughout the course of Quichotte in the connection which is established between the author and the character. Simultaneously with Sancho being depicted as a physically and emotionally advanced character, the Brothers and *Quichotte* are the symbols of the author's thought.

The crisis of truth, in turn, is reflected in the media ecology of the novel through the existence of incompatible accounts and the blurring of boundaries between facts, echoing McIntyre's (2018) reasoning concerning a post-truth society that destroys, rather than builds upon, epistemic common ground. Finally, one can also experience metafiction as a form of cultural resistance, as the novel self-reflexively comments on itself as a narrative through its commentary. This element aligns with Hutcheon's (2023) perspective on parody as an ideological weapon and Waugh's (2002) position that metafiction challenges the authority of narratives.

Despite several recent analyses of *Quichotte* in the context of post-truth discourse, media criticism, and intertextual parody, few critics have been able to consider these issues in relation to one another as part of an integrated metafictional framework. (Çelikel, 2024; Negi, 2024). As an example, studies such as Majumder and Khuraijam (2020) examine how the novel addresses the issue of post-truth politics, but do not fully discuss how its layered narrative structure functions as a mode of resistance. Similarly, Bezrukov and Bohovyk (2022) discuss the text's hyperreal spaces and intertextual play but overlook the ethical implications of its metafictional design. Therefore, the gap in the research is clear: even though the metafiction used by *Quichotte* has been identified as one of the stylistic elements, it was not explicitly analysed as both a deliberate and politically intense strategy in dealing with the two crises of identity and reality. To fill this gap, the novel must be placed in the framework of both postmodern theory of narrative and contemporary theory of the media so that the novel could be perceived in a rather nuanced manner, yet also to be able to unite the literary analytical reading and cultural criticism (Maddalena & Gili, 2020; Cosentino, 2020).

Truth, identity, and narrative ethics are valuable contributions to contemporary discussions. Hoydis (2021) and Luburic-Cvijanovic (2024) propose that this viewpoint expands the engagement with Rushdie's work through a literary-critical lens. They argue that this viewpoint makes it possible to better engage with Rushdie's work. Regarding cultural and media studies, it demonstrates the role of fiction as a counter-discourse to disinformation that provides readers with other conceptual frames to make sense of selfhood within a disjointed epistemic space (Farkas and Schou, 2023; DeRiso, 2023; Farhan, 2025). The *Quichotte*, as a literary/cultural text analysis, indicates that the instrument of metafiction can be effectively used in the struggle against marketization and loss of long-term identity.

The study has two aims: (1) to describe the metafictional resistant strategies Quichotte undertakes to navigate the truth crisis (McIntyre, 2018; Bowell, 2018), (2) to comprehend how the strategies of metafictional dissidence that *Quichotte* adopts create, redefine, and conceptualize identity in the disputed epistemic space of the post-truth world (DeRiso, 2023). The study's central research question is: How does the metafictional structure in Quichotte articulate a fragmented identity and contest the crisis of truth in the post-truth era?

A methodological framework focused on qualitative close reading, analyzing a specific selection of passages that exemplify metafictional framing, identity fragmentation, and media critique, was adopted in this study (Atiwi & Khafaji, 2020). They will be discussed in relation to the features of texts (i.e., their narrative self-reflexivity, intertextual allusion, and structural layering) as well as the general context of the post-truth media discourse. The combination of literary theory, media theory, and post-truth research results in a comprehensive analysis that is both intellectually stimulating and precise in terms of the circumstances surrounding the reading. The notion of the parody as a critical exercise, which was presented by Hutcheon (2023), demonstrates how irony and intertextuality can be used to weaken the ideology. Similarly, Waugh's (2002) theorization of metafiction posits that it is a mode that highlights its fictional nature as a tactic to challenge the power of narratives. Moreover, McHale's (2003) is based on the concept of ontological instability as a postmodern fiction trait. Lastly, there is another concept by Essien (2024): hyperreality, which also deserves to be mentioned in this discussion. The analysis shows how the stratification of realities in Quichotte causes the truth claims to be unstable and depicts a cultural environment where the representation can have supplanted reality (Bezrukov and Bohovyk, 2022; Majumder and Khuraijam, 2020). The paper claims that the contrast of the two perspectives shows that *Quichotte* is not merely a mirror image of the epistemic and ontological unsteadiness of the era in which it was created, but also a force with which it confronted it.

Overall, this paper will place *Quichotte* in the context of post-truth in a literary analysis of text and will suggest that metafictional strategies in *Quichotte* are not just stylistic devices but also cultural resistance strategies used by Rushdie. It is thanks to the correlation between fragmented identity and the crisis of truth in the self-reflexive narrative structure that the novel will be able to show how literature can attack, reveal, and destabilize the realities of the post-truth era (Negi, 2024; Celikel, 2024).In this way, *Quichotte* honors the possibilities of metafiction as a tool of cultural critique, which can challenge the currently dominant discourses, reform the details of truth, and offer an alternative pattern of creating identity in the increasingly mediated reality of our century.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is not merely a formal technique in modern literary studies, but also the structural materials that enable the researcher to tie details of the text to larger philosophical, cultural, and political issues. As Eagleton (2022) asserts, theory provides the conceptual tools necessary for moving from the micro-level of textual analysis to the macro-level of sociohistorical critique. It is especially applicable in the context of twenty-first-century fiction, where narratives tend to respond to the processes affecting the entire globe, including such notions as the "post-truth" condition, the fragmentation of identity, and the politicization of storytelling (Negi, 2024; Çelikel, 2024).

In this study, a three-composite model of three scholars (Linda Hutcheon, whose theory of parody is considered a part of critical practice; Patricia Waugh, who presents the idea of metafictional self-reflexivity; Brian McHale, who writes about ontological instability) is identified and applied. A combination of these frameworks can open the door to the sophisticated study of Salman Rushdie's (2019) Quichotte as a piece of metafictional opposition to the epistemic and ontological crisis of the post-truth era.

1.1.1 Hutcheon's Parody as Critical Practice

Hutcheon (2023) redefines parody as a double-coded approach to its texts rather than merely adopting the positions of imitation and ridicule. In the opinion expressed here, parody becomes a politically infused tool that challenges any dominant tale or cultural notions. *Quichotte* by Rushdie operates differently within this binary context because it relies upon Miguel de Cervantes' The Don Quixote and transfers its theme of a quest to the media-hyped, politically torn environment of the United States (Majumder & Khuraijam, 2020). Rushdie can explain how constructed realities affect not only a sense of self in a person but also a sense of group in the way he can change the knight-errant of Cervantes into the television-driven infatuation of *Quichotte.* Some of this parodic modification is also consonant with postcolonial trends in the rereadings and rewritings of transnational and European-centric literary canons of texts, placing a burden on the voices of the suppressed. This critique of European- and neocolonial-centric misinformation and commodification emerges from Cervantes, a satirist of European-centric misinformation and the cultural spectacle (Negi, 2024).

1.1.2 Waugh's Metafiction and Narrative Self-Reflexivity

Waugh (2002) defines metafiction as fiction that deliberately foregrounds its own constructedness, drawing attention to the processes of narrative production. In modern-day debate, critics have emphasized the ability of metafiction to act as a means of resistance to authoritarian or misleading claims of truth (Hoydis, 2021). In *Quichotte*, metafiction is not an embellishing feature but one of the basic organizational principles: the novel within a novel eliminates the distinctions between the author and the character, and fiction and reality. The author's character in the text also depicts the adventures of *Quichotte*, which are recursive and repeated. This is the resonance of the recursive nature of contemporary media, where stories are being re-framed, re-mixed, and re-contextualized. Secondly, the fact that Sancho is aware that he is a fictional character is also an example of the destabilization of metafiction that encourages a reader to question the validity of each of the stories. This is an additional important skill in an epistemic crisis (Negi, 2024).

1.1.3 McHale's Ontological Instability

According to McHale (2003), ontological instability is a key feature of postmodern fiction whereby several realities are competing and, in some cases, overlapping. This indecision, therefore, compels the reader to switch between shifting frames of reference, thereby questioning the reader's assumptions about what is real in the story. In that regard, this style has been linked by contemporary critics with the epistemological crisis of the post-truth world, a situation where different versions of the events exist and do not contradict each other (DeRiso, 2023; Bezrukov and Bohovyk, 2022).In *Quichotte*, ontological instability is apparent in scenes where the boundaries between the worlds of Brother and *Quichotte* are blurred, as well as in surreal narrative interventions, such as spontaneous transformations and improbable coincidences, all of which disrupt otherwise realistic backdrops. Such instances are made theatrical when reality is being eroded, which is an echo of the disorienting impact of disinformation and the fragmentation of media in the lives of modern people (Farkas & Schou, 2020).

1.1.4 Integration and Application to *Quichotte*

Combining the Hutcheon parody, the Waugh metafiction, and McHale's instability of ontology generates a composite analytical tool that will be very effective in analysing Quichotte. Parody explains the textual transformation of Don Quixote into a satire on post-truth America; metafiction explains its self-reflexive exposure of the instability of narrative authority, and ontological instability describes how the novel formally enacts the deconstruction of truth and identity. Practically, this quixotic adventure of the protagonist is a parodied allegory about the need to move in a land where the air is overcome with misinformation (Majumder & Khuraijam, 2020). The metafictional framework forces one to doubt monolithic, authoritative accounts, and the realities of the novel are fluctuating according to the discursive environment of the twenty-first century, which is full of epistemological fragmentation (Çelikel, 2024; Negi, 2024). This is composed of an interwoven reading which introduces *Quichotte* as something more than a homage to Cervantes and also a desperate cultural act. In this way, the literary form is used to resist efforts to make disinformation the new reality and, at the same time, to undermine the sense of a coherent self in the post-truth world.

2. Literature Review

This part is devoted to the literary apoeseisis of Salman Rushdie's novel *Quichotte*, which is closely related to the textual analysis, which deals with the way the novel dramatizes the significant issues of fragmented identity, crisis of truth, and metafictional resistance. Although the introduction and theoretical framework have already presented the general cultural and philosophical backgrounds, it is also pivotal to predetermine the literary aspect of the novel itself. The close reading exemplified here reveals how Rushdie not only reflects the situations in the post-truth period but also criticizes and disrupts them. The analysis takes the form of four sub-sections, i.e., fragmented identity, crisis of truth, resistance, and the research gap in the current scholarship.

2.1 Fragmented Identity

Fragmented identity is one of the most pronounced literary elements of *Quichotte*, and it is enacted via the doubling theme of *Quichotte*, Sancho, and the Brother figure. Rushdie actively constructs the ambivalent voices of the narrative and characters to show how unstable the self can become in the world of media saturation. This fragmentation is the same one that Hoydis (2021) and Farhan (2023) refer to as the unsettling of cultural memory; that is, several identities exist simultaneously without a definitive answer to it, and DeRiso (2023) asserts that the epistemic crisis of modern culture contributes to this instability.

Literarily speaking, the doubling of *Quichotte* and Sancho is not merely a parody of the original figures of Cervantes but a textual performance of identity disintegration as a result of conflicting realities. This influences readers to explore the boundary between fiction and reality, as Sancho's awareness of his fictitious nature makes

the concept of a stable identity seem questionable. In this way, *Quichotte* can expect identity to be controversial and transient instead of unstable and intense.

2.2 Crisis of Truth

It is closely associated with fragmented identity and the permanent involvement of the novel with the crisis of truth. The metafictional form of metafiction, a novel within a novel, is an intentional disappearance of the distinction between fiction and fact. The recursive structure in which the author writes *Quichotte*, who, in his turn, is the creator of Sancho, is representative of the post-truth relationship where several accounts, which are mutually incompatible, coexist at the same time. The concept of post-truth, as described by McIntyre (2018) as a space where truth is groundless, bears a striking resemblance to the Rushdie case. However, Farkas and Schou (2020) employ the term "cultural destabilization of the epistemic common ground." This is achieved through literature by the narrative overlay and surrealist interferences, i.e., improbable coincidences, spontaneous alterations, and recursive narration, which disrupt the authority of any particular narrative. The difference between representation and reality is dissolved in postmodern texts that occupy hyperreal spaces, as Bezrukov and Bohovyk (2022) claim. Rushdie transfers it to the literary domain, turning his novel into a textual experiment of the instability of the truth itself.

2.3 Resistance

Quichotte is also an act of resistance despite its representation of instability. The literary techniques of parody, metafiction, ontological instability, etc., used by Rushdie are employed as instruments that reduce the effects of the hegemonic discourse of disinformation and homogenized culture. The redefinition of parody as a politically charged one, which imitates and criticizes the predominant narratives, provided by Hutcheon (2023), can be applied directly to this case: Rushdie parodies Don Quixote of Cervantes into post-truth America of the twentieth century, revealing the insanity of modern reality-making.

In the same way, Waugh (2002) emphasizes the aspect of metafiction as a type of narrative self-reflexivity, altering the dominance of the hegemonic discourses. Rushdie employs such metafictional devices as characters cognized of being fictional and parodic stories as ways to encourage his readers to challenge truth-claims by authority. The concept of ontological instability, as defined by McHale (2003), also contributes to the notion that Quichotte is a text that cannot be closed and continuously switches realities, undermining epistemological certainty. These strategies allow the novel to be not only indicative of post-truth culture, as Majumder and Khuraijam (2020) and Negi (2024) believe, but also resistant to it.

2.4 The Research Gap

Many academics have explored *Quichotte* through the lenses of post-truth discourse, intertextual parody, and media critique, but few have merged these into a single literary entity. As an example, Majumder and Khuraijam (2020) are keen on post-truth politics, but not the narrative of alternative layers of resistance, and Bezrukov and Bohovyk (2022) consider hyperreal spaces and ignore the ethical aspects of metafiction. Celikel (2024) and Negi (2024) have stressed the intertextuality of the novel without linking it to identity fragmentation and resistance as an interconnected process. The insignificance of this crevasse allows the thorough analysis of literature, which would gather the problems of identity, truth and resistance by the textual devices of metafiction. The focus on these dimensions helps the study to fill the gap and show that *Quichotte* can be discussed as not only a postmodern narrative experiment but a literary intervention that is politically essential in the cultural discourses of the post-truth generation.

3. Methodology

The current paper employs a qualitative and interpretive research design based on the literary analysis, and this design is exceptionally efficient in the investigation of multifaceted intersections of thematic interests, including fragmented identity, crisis of truth, and metafictional resistance, in modern fiction. A finer and contextualized interpretation of a literary text can be formed by employing qualitative methods, which are concerned with depth and not breadth and can adapt the integration of theory into the text one studies (Negi, 2024; Hoydis, 2021). Such a design is especially relevant for *Quichotte*, where meaning is generated through narrative experimentation, intertextual layering, and metafictional self-awareness elements that resist quantification but demand interpretive scrutiny.

3.1 Justification of the Chosen Approach

The qualitative interpretative approach was chosen since the research concerns presented in this study are subjective and multi-layered. The concepts of fractured identity, the crisis of truth, and metafictional resistance

are strongly antagonized against considering them easily through the assistance of empirical techniques; on the contrary, they necessitate a method that is more receptive to perceiving depth and textual subtlety (Negi, 2024; Hoydis, 2021). Spivey (2023) argues that strategies that help recognize the multifacetedness of meaning-making in fiction are useful to contemporary literary criticism, especially when texts undermine the ontological issues and disrupt epistemic authority. An approach of quantitative or strictly historical kind would have been unable to translate the added metafiction self-consciousness, intertextual reverberation, and cultural criticism of Quichotte (Hutcheon, 2023; Waugh, 2002).

Furthermore, the interpretive model may be used by the researcher to provide the transition between the micro-level analysis of texts and the macro-level social critique, which fits in the postmodern and postcolonial discourses in comprehending the politics of representation (DiRiso, 2023).

3.2 Data Source

Quichotte (Rushdie, 2019) is chosen as the primary text because of its distinctiveness, which balances postmodern aesthetics, postcolonial commentary, and post-truth cultural commentary. Majumder and Khuraijam (2020) and Celikel (2024) have noted how the novel is repositioning the Don Quixote of Cervantes as a means of exploring the epistemic insecurity of an environment full of media. The workaround of the story of Quichotte and Sancho creates an ideal case of the functioning of metafiction as a source of disinformation resistance, identity fragmentation, and narrative unreliability by integrating the elements of the metafiction genre when the fictitious author, a character named Brother, narrates the story (Bezrukov and Bohovyk, 2022). The direct reference of the fake news, hyperreality, and cultural polarisation phenomenon in the novel also contributes to the fact that this novel should be discussed in the context of post-truth literary criticism (Farkas & Schou, 2020).

Quichotte is a novel written by Salman Rushdie and published in 2019 in the United States by Random House and in the United Kingdom by Jonathan Cape. Each of the textual citations and page numbers used in this paper was taken from the 2020 Vintage Paperback Edition. The reason why it has been chosen is that it is readily available, that it has the same number of pages as any other international market, and that it is used more frequently in later studies of the work in the academic community, which ensures the accuracy of the reference and the suitability for the modern critical discourse. Peer-reviewed scholarly articles, book chapters, and critical reviews on the topic that have been published in the past few years (2020-2025) and focus on Quichotte or cover its thematic and theoretical problems are considered secondary data that will be included in the research.

This meant that the sources were accessed using some of the most reputable scholarly databases, such as Google Scholar, Taylor & Francis Online, and JSTOR, thereby enhancing the credibility and academic soundness of the sources (Negi, 2024; Hoydis, 2021). The focus on modern literature serves as a reminder that the research seeks to put its findings into perspective in relation to current debates on post-truth culture, literary forms of resistance, and the fluid nature of identity in the digital era.

3.3 Data analysis

Close reading is the applied method of analysis because it enables the exploration of the most crucial passages in detail, finding there the metafictional framing, identity disintegration, and truth destabilization. This approach, which is widespread in the sphere of literary research and study, allows the researcher to create a bridge between the academic sources and larger cultural and theoretical frames of reference (Hutcheon, 2023; Waugh, 2002). Such attempts to determine them through theoretical exposition, observed in the analyses of such attempts, are seen in the parody-as-critique of Hutcheon, the ontological poetics of McHale, and the hyperreality of Baudrillard. In this way, it can be said that the textual analysis will be based not only on the materiality of the story but on critical theory as well.

3.4 Scope of the study

Finally, the research is deliberately narrowed in its focus to Quichotte as a case study of one text. Still, it makes some limited comparative references to other contemporary novels, including Dave Eggers' The Every and Jennifer Egan's The Candy House, both to state trends in post-truth fiction more clearly. This selective yet comparative type of analysis turns out to be accurate and relevant in its analysis (Bolbakov & Tsvetkov, 2020). The study's structural approach aligns with its research aims and theoretical basis, making the overall research consistent and well-grounded. This results in a logical analysis of how metafiction in Quichotte addresses the shattered sense of self and confronts the truth crisis within the post-truth state.

4. Analysis

Quichotte (2019) by Salman Rushdie is a novel that can be read on several layers, not just due to its playful reenactment of Don Quixote, but also due to its constant exploration of epistemic uncertainty and identity

disintegration, and its metafictional commentary on its own fictionality. Against this backdrop, the post-truth term can be discussed as a contradiction between the overload of information and the mediatised images of reality. In this regard, *Quichotte* places the characters in a situation where selfhood and truth are paired and redefined continuously. This discussion centres on three key thematic pillars: fragmented identity, a crisis of truth, and a metafictional resistance, with three textual moments selected for their importance. These moments, however, combined with the appropriate theory, as employed in the study featured in the given paper, allow not only to reveal how the novel itself assumes the form of cultural resistance but also to trace the mechanism of personal disintegration and collective disorientation. The readings are situated within the modern critical discourse, as recent scholarship has been incorporated (Negi, 2024; Farkas & Schou, 2023).

4.1 Fragmented Identity:

Quichotte's belief that he is meant to win the affection of a television star, despite their lack of prior interaction, highlights the fundamental disconnection at the core of his identity: *"He had convinced himself that his quest was righteous, and reality would have to catch up"* (Rushdie, 2020, p. 45). This example can be used to discuss the phenomenon of ontological instability, as proposed by McHale (2003), which points to the breakdown of the boundaries between the real and the imagined worlds. The notion of a liquid identity (DeRiso, 2023) in late modernity provides a clue to how the sense of self in Quichotte is shifting to those of the media-based fantasies, causing his loss of touch with a solid reality. Mishra (2024) notes that the digital age with expressive individualism improves the potential of self-reinvention, often at the expense of coherence.

Quichotte is not the only place affected by the internal dissonance that runs through the novel, because the inner fictional state of people living around him, especially Sancho, contributes to the investigation of fluid identity in the novel. The way Sancho slowly understands that he would not be around without Quixote believing in him, which comes out in the question: *"If he stopped thinking of me, would I fade like a dream?"* (Rushdie, 2020, p. 162), intensifies the theme of fragmentation. It fits the postmodern identity theory, which views selfhood as constructed through relational discourse, and not innate (Majumder & Khuraijam, 2020). Murugesam and Sankar (2020) confirm that the metafictional apparatus (self-consciousness of this character) arouses more conservative concepts of identity and pushes the reader to think more consciously about the constructiveness of narrative selves. The combination of these moments creates the way the relations of *Quichotte* and his mediated environment interplay, that lead to a disintegration of a stable sense of self, and the personal and systemic elements of identity disintegration blend. When Quichotte becomes overwhelmed by conflicting news stories, *"Every channel told a different truth, and all demanded allegiance"* (Rushdie, 2020, p. 203). Here, the reader is brought to the concept of hyperreality as presented by Baudrillard (2008) when the signs and media representations are replaced with reality. This scene shows that identity is fragmented not only in the personal crisis, but also in the problem of the system in the environment of media saturation. These mediated contradictions are related to the post-truth phenomenon as presented by Farkas and Schou (2023), but in *Quichotte*, such confusion is directly used to create the disjointed self-conception of the protagonist (Negi 2024).

4.2 Crisis of Truth

The *Quichotte* crisis of truth is a thematic issue and a narrative tool, portraying a world that is losing factual ground due to media misinformation, subjective beliefs, and manipulation of narratives, all of which increase the instability of reality. *Quichotte* is constantly interrupted in his everyday travelling by the overload of fake information: *"The news was a hall of mirrors, each reflection more distorted than the last"* (Rushdie, 2020, p. 119). This event is a vivid example of the post-truth model developed by McIntyre (2018), where facts are replaced by stories that focus on emotional appeal more than factual accuracy. Similarly, Farkas and Schou (2023) relate the fact of fake news to the loss of a common reality, and state that works like Quichotte represent how people cope with such manipulations. According to Petricone (2021), the emergence of media ecosystems that are primarily powered by algorithms reinforces personalized truths, which makes the disorientation that can be traced in the worldview of *Quichotte* even worse.

This systematic degree of distortion of reality is bound to go down into the interpersonal level, where the devaluation of the facts exchanged between you will result in confrontations on the question of who is right in their truth. In a high-charged encounter between *Quichotte* and a stranger, the latter asserts, *"Your truth is not my truth, and mine is the only one that counts"* (Rushdie, 2020, p. 214). This discussion is an illustration of the destruction of the shared values of knowledge, which fits well with the concept of Hutcheon (2023) of parody as a form of criticism. In this case, parody demonstrates subjective truth irrationality. Maddalena and Gili (2020; Lathrop, 2025) emphasise that the post-truth discourse thrives when the personal conviction in beliefs becomes

a priority over scientific facts, but Hoydis (2021) notes that the reasoning of the satirical dialogue is what forces a reader to confront the fact that consensus reality is fluid.

In fact, these anti-positions of individual and communal truth are also reflexively carried over in the formation of the story in the novel, when the author-narrator rewrites the story with consciousness, which in its turn makes the assertion of objective discourse even less persuasive. The metafictional narrator "Brother" admits to altering events for narrative effect: *"I could have told you what happened, but the lie makes for a better story"* (Rushdie, 2020, p. 277). This confession will correspond to the theory of metafiction and narrative reliability introduced by Waugh (2002), whose emphasis is on the artificiality of the truth claims in fiction. Celikel (2024) views such cases in *Quichotte* as intended attempts to take an in-depth analysis of stories, real or fictional. According to Negi (2024), this manipulation indicates the nature of post-truth media that conveys events in a way which fits into the existing narratives.

4.3 Metafictional Resistance

The metafiction of *Quichotte* would not only be a style but a style of cultural protest. With the help of self-reflexivity, activating of the reader, and intertextual parody, the authority of any one version of the truth would be undermined: *Once, the narrator, who is also called Brother, interrupts to comment on his narration: "The trouble with writing is that it makes you believe you are God, when all you are is a juggler of fictions"* (Rushdie, 2020, p. 88). This reflective instance portrays the theory of metafiction as presented by Waugh (2002), which perceives storytelling as an intentional gesture that reveals the artificiality of narrative authority. Hutcheon (2023) introduces these intrusions as a kind of parody, which is a critical depiction of the loss of confidence in authoritative narratives by the reader. Luburic-Cvijanovic (2020) hypothesises that metafiction in postcolonial contexts is a tool of undermining the dominant historical discourses through exposing their artificial nature.

This questioning of narrative authority does not just stop at the writer questioning himself, but also entails an intentional questioning of the audience, whereby they are drawn into the novel questioning of truth-making. In a playful aside, "Brother" addresses the reader directly: *"Perhaps you think this is all absurd, but then, so is the world you live in"* (Rushdie, 2020, p. 196). This deliberate shifting of the fictional border entails the Reader-Response Theory of metafiction, where the reader becomes one of the active agents in the construction of meaning. According to Atiwi and Khafaji (2020), such direct address makes readers admit that they interpret and legitimize narratives. As Thomas (2025) notes, in a post-truth culture, this information manipulation technique is indicative of the destabilisation of information sources, in which a critical self-awareness is promoted.

The difficulty posed in the interpretive task of the reader is brought to its peak with an intertextual collage, which is like a weaving together of various cultural writings, thus adding to the challenge of the novel of refusing the singleness of truth claims. The daydream that *Quichotte* experiences in the movie is a mixture of the scenes of Don Quixote and Bollywood movies, and the reality TV shows: *"He fought windmills, sang to a heroine in Hindi, and answered quiz show questions, all without leaving his chair"* (Rushdie, 2020, p. 241). This intertextual collage falls into correspondence with the theory of parody presented by Hutcheon (2023) as a very politicized cultural critique instrument. As Bezrukov and Bohovyk (2022) note, intertextuality in *Quichotte* contradicts the existing claims about the truth by presenting several conflicting frames of reference. Mishra (2024) assumes that such narrative hybridity confronts the centralised meaning-making power and offers chances to establish other truths.

4.4 Synthesis

Those three thematic strands of fragmented identity, the crisis of truth, and metafictional resistance in *Quichotte* are not independent topics by themselves but are rather dimensions that complement the cultural critique of the novel. The depiction of identity fragmentation arises from the same cognitive uncertainty that drives post-truth discourses; *Quichotte's* fluctuation between illusion and actuality reflects the confusion generated by the surge of conflicting assertions of truth. (DeRiso, 2023; Farkas & Schou, 2023). Comparably, the metafictional interventions of the narrator "Brother" function not only as stylistic elements but also as deliberate disruptions that reveal the constructed nature of all narratives, consequently questioning the authority of prevailing truth regimes (Waugh, 2002; Hutcheon, 2023). Through the integration of ontological instability, parody, and direct addressing to the reader, the novel by Rushdie performates a kind of literary resistance that is, in its nature, most appropriate to the post-truth age: that makes use of the self-reflexivity to not only demonstrate but also elicit reactions in response to the dissolution of fixed identity and literal truth (Negi, 2024).

4.5 Filling the Research Gap

Although the existing scholarship has focused on the theme of *Quichotte* interaction with the post-truth culture, media critique, and intertextuality, studies have been inclined to cover one of these thematic aspects in particular, either its political satire (Negi, 2024; Hoydis, 2021) or its metafictional experimentation (Bezrukov and Bohovyk, 2022), without necessarily considering them in relation to each other within one analytical framework. This present study fills that gap by demonstrating how fragmented identity, the crisis of truth, and metafictional resistance intersect as interdependent forces within the novel's structure. This helps in the study of literature since the idea of metafiction has been proposed to expand the literary criticism that is no longer simply a feature of the postmodern play, but an active version of the form of cultural intervention that can reverse the process of epistemic erosion (Hutcheon, 2023; Luburić-Cvijanović, 2020). The study complements the discourse on selfhood/truth interaction in the context of twenty-first-century fiction with current theoretical breakthroughs in the field of post-truth discourse (Farkas and Schou, 2023; McIntyre, 2018) and the theory of identity (Murugesan and Sankar, 2020; Mishra, 2024). And, lastly, such a synthesis not only performs a long-needed task of closing a gap in the study of *Quichotte* but also contributes to the current discourse on the importance of literature in mitigating the destabilizing influence of the digital age of information.

4.6 Discussion

This research paper suggests that *Quichotte* is an incredibly multifaceted novel that brings together the aspects of dissolved identity, crisis of truth, and metafictional resistance and produces a self-reflexive and politically aware story. The metafictional engagements of the narrator, the discontinuous identity of *Quichotte*, and the bewilderment that the character feels in a world of incompatibilities do not exist as independent entities but relate to one another in a particular manner. Their concerted effort at giving an epistemological attack on the post-truth world, coupled with the introduction of the literary theory of resistance, is not only pertinent to the contemporary cultural discussion but also has great importance in the field of postmodern narrative theory, which is still being developed. Besides, regarding fragmented identity, the findings can be generalized with the notion of liquid modernity, as suggested by Mishra (2024). It is an idea that identities nowadays are not fixed, have no definite signifiers and are constantly re-constructed according to the changing needs of the cultural and informational landscape.

In *Quichotte*, the vicissitudes that the main hero of the novel experiences as he navigates between his fantasies and the real world remind us of the findings described by Murugesan and Sankar (2020) concerning expressive individualism, motivated by the desire to focus on personal storytelling rather than communal identity construction. Similar patterns have been identified by Majumder and Khuraijam (2020), who note that Rushdie frequently populates the liminal space between fact and fiction with characters, and that this identity disintegration occurs naturally. Still, within the current study, they further expand their thought by using these case studies to illustrate that such identity fragmentation is, in fact, strategically exaggerated through the metafictional construction of the novel.

The truth crisis, as depicted in the novel, is a very accurate reflection of the circumstances described by McIntyre (2018) and Farkas and Schou (2023), where facts that can be verified are replaced by narratives that are most likely to reach the hearts of people. These scholars are opponents of this epistemic relativism, which is condensed in Quichotte by the words of the stranger: "Your truth is not my truth." Unlike the previous literature analysis, which seeks to study post-truth discourse as a phenomenon in itself (Negi, 2024; Celikel, 2024), this analysis shows that we cannot afford to overlook the destabilization of truth in Quichotte without also looking at how it seems to be presented (in terms of identity fragmentation), in addition to its metafictionalism. It is through these themes that the study fills the methodological gap identified in previous literature, in which these interconnections had not been studied extensively.

The fact that *Quichotte* employs metafiction reaffirms that Waugh (2002) is correct in stating that traditional authority is being destabilized because the artifice behind storytelling is being illuminated. The statement by the narrator, quoted at the beginning of the paper, regarding the lie being a better story, reflects Hutcheon's (2023) idea concerning parody as a critical practice, where narrative play is embraced as a means of disrupting dominant truth regimes. While Luburić-Cvijanović (2020) emphasizes the subversive potential of metafiction in postcolonial contexts, this study demonstrates that in *Quichotte*, metafiction not only destabilizes narrative reliability but also functions as an ethical intervention in the face of epistemic erosion.

The conclusions are also echoed in the recent cultural studies of digital-era disinformation. Petricone (2021) and Maddalena and Gili (2020) point out how algorithmic curation reinforces customized versions of truth, forming the type of hall-of-mirrors media landscape described in *Quichotte* in very graphic terms. It is in such a synthesis

of perspectives that the current research project can be seen as situating the narrative of Rushdie within the larger context of how the socio-technological infrastructures upon which post-truth culture is built can be criticized and exemplified through the medium of literature.

The parody of Hutcheon, the metafiction of Waugh, the ontological uncertainty of McHale, and the hyperreality of Baudrillard have been synthesized in theory in a sufficiently robust manner of interpretation. This engagement of these structures clarifies that, besides the interrogation of truth claims, it is through self-reflexivity that *Quichotte* dramatises the processes by which fragmented and constructed identities are created. By choosing a strategy that prioritizes the interdependency of the textual structure and the cultural operation, the theoretical combination has gone further to strengthen the discipline. This is because it leaves behind solo framework interpretations that tend to disconnect the textual structure from the cultural operation.

This study aims to answer the question: How does the metafictional structure in *Quichotte* articulate a fragmented identity and contest the crisis of truth in the post-truth era?. It has been shown that Rushdie does so by weaving together a set of narrative devices destabilizing ontological borders, parody intertextuality, and directly inviting the reader to a reflexive exploration of narrative credibility. Besides depicting the confusion of modern individuals who are exposed to a multiplicity of realities that are often mutually incompatible, these methods also provoke readers to become critical of any assertions of truth. The metafictional background can be considered as the self-reflection of the unreliability of the post-truth era and, simultaneously, a way of destabilizing its normalizing processes.

The consequences of such results on the culture are colossal. Describing the personality of a protagonist, whose life is also determined by disinformation, hyperreality, and the breakdown of narrative, *Quichotte* reflects the situation of people whose lives are becoming more and more controlled by the digital mediation of the world. Rushdie's metafictional strategies are not merely commentary on these conditions; they actively resist them, urging readers to recognize and confront the mechanisms that distort truth and identity.

On a literary level, the novel stretches the limits of even the postmodern story in its ability to unite formal experimentation with the force of such an attack on the postmodern narrative, observed next to desperate socio-political commentary. This is why the argument is being disputed, specifically the claim that postmodernism is technically an aesthetic movement that does not concern itself with ethics or politics (Hoydis, 2021). Alternatively, Quichotte suggests that the postmodern modalities of metafiction and intertextuality that have become popular today may be considered beneficial mechanisms that contribute to the fight against the instability of postmodernism.

Finally, incorporating fragmented identity, crisis of truth, and metafictional resistance elements into an analytic framework will not only help fill a significant gap in the study of *Quichotte* but also add a valuable dimension to the debate concerning the literature of the post-truth era. The provided findings confirm the possibility of fiction to become a cultural resistance, re-examining the identity of narrative experimentation as a way of interacting with reality and its possible reenactment.

5. Conclusion

This study interprets *Quichotte* by Salman Rushdie through the prism of the interdependent topic of fractured identity, the crisis of truth, and metafictional resistance. It incorporates the novel into the cultural and epistemological framework of the post-truth age. Analysis has shown that these three thematic strands do not exist in isolation as separate narrative elements, but as mutually dependent strategies. Crossing the border between ontology, introducing intertextual parody, the narrative sense of self, Rushdie constructs a metafictional pattern, which, on the one hand, gives the expression of the instability of the truth, and on the other, gives a reformulation of the confrontation with its deflation.

The exploration of fractured identity assisted in devising how the novelist's character, Quichotte, managed to move between dissimilar and at times conflicting realities that continuously altered his perception of himself. This kind of volatility implies socio-cultural universalities, and something which could be followed within the framework of the liquid modernity, and the concept of expressive individualism. This analytical treatise proves that the motivational force behind these shifts in identity cannot be narrowed down to the obligating power of character development per se, but is rooted in the self-reflexive paths the novel pursues to add to the enrichment of the reader with identity as a form of creation and an allegedly fluctuating notion.

The presented crisis of the truth, as disclosed in the story, is about the dissident breakdown of epistemology that names the epistemic fragmentation of contemporary discourse. In this respect, the example of *Quichotte*, with its intense dependence on subjective truth compared to objective facts, can be used as a bright example of

relativism and its normalization in the digital era. Meanwhile, this situation is not merely mirrored in the novel, but it is actively challenged through the implementation of various metafictional techniques as well.

In fact, metafictional resistance proves to be a red line that connects the identity turmoil with the disruption of truth. Using the theory of metafiction and the idea of parody as a critical practice, the analysis shows that the self-awareness of the narration by Rushdie serves as both a result of the instability of post-truth and as an ethical reaction to it. This discussion thus demonstrates the political and cultural importance of metafiction and goes beyond previous research that was interested in metafiction as a formal tool, and reveals that it is an important tool in counteracting the manipulation of epistemes.

By answering the guiding research question, How does the metafictional structure in *Quichotte* articulate fragmented identity and contest the crisis of truth in the post-truth era?. This study confirms that Rushdie's strategies operate on both narrative and cultural levels, achieving the dual aims of reflecting post-truth disorientation and encouraging critical engagement with truth claims. Both research objectives have been fulfilled: first, to determine the metafictional strategies that can be used to overcome the crisis of truth, and second, to learn how the metafictional strategies are involved in identity construction and reimagining. In general, this paper has been effective in bringing together three thematic issues, namely, identity, truth, and metafiction, into a theoretical and cohesive structure. By so doing, it will not only seal an academic gap in the scholarship on Quichotte but it will also illustrate the importance of experimental narratives in the first century as a mode of cultural criticism.

Moving forward, it is possible that future studies build upon this one and provide a comparative analysis of *Quichotte* and other literature that belongs to post-truth, including The Every by Dave Eggers and The Candy House by Jennifer Egan. This kind of comparison would give a more in-depth analysis of the functioning of metafictional resistance in various settings.

Furthermore, this question can be enriched with references to media studies and cognitive psychology, thus explaining how the readers are introduced to the notions of truth and identity in fiction and how they process them. Lastly, the understanding of novels such as Quichotte in the classroom can improve critical literacy and develop moral principles in the era of digital communication, particularly when it comes to the cultural and political authority of narration.

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