

Writing Cross-Cultural Identities in Postmodern Asia

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Over the last decades, postmodernity's influence has exerted a perceptibly indelible mark on the way emerging identities, of late, are framed and understood. Fredric Jameson's (1991), Jean Francois Lyotard's (1979) and Jean Baudrillard's (1998) established dominance in contemporary literary criticism is a testimony of the readiness of postmodernist critique. Yet, its usefulness as a literary tool for Asian novels is both liberating and limited for various reasons. In particular, literature documenting Singapore's capitalist cultural rise is but an example of postmodernity's reach on the upper echelons of Asia. Using the postmodern lens to conceive of the tiny South East Asian nation's rapid development of international trade, culture and tourism also assists in decentring cohesive and nation-bound identities of the city island's *nouveau riche* and old rich. Additionally, it provides a useful conceptual tool to interrogate Singapore's main ethnic identity—the Chinese, in distinctions between mainland and overseas Chinese. However, reading Asia *sans* an emphasis on its rich heritage of past history and traditional culture is restrictive. Thus, Singapore's jet-setting rich shape their own definitions of identity whilst embodying identity crises that are troped in the desirability for the postmodern condition. This paper seeks to interrogate the implications of emergent cross-cultural multinational networks of Asian millionaires in Kevin Kwan's debut novel *Crazy Rich Asians* (2013). Using Fredric Jameson's postmodern theory as a departure point, it will examine the novel's representation of social identities via themes of money, appearance, and loanwords that narrate a postmodern Asia.