



Call for Papers

3-Day National Seminar

on

**Historiographic Metafiction:
Problematizing History and Redefining Fiction**

From 20-22 April 2017

Organised by

**Department of English
University of Kashmir**

The debate whether history and literature are distinct is a perennial one and the topic of the seminar, "Historiographic Metafiction: Problematizing History and Redefining Fiction" helps understand the underlying assumptions of literature and history and the relationship between the two. It also allows scholars to revisit the new currents of philosophical enquiry regarding the value of literature that suggest a new theoretical framework for thinking about the relationship between history and literature besides inviting discussion on the recent developments in the field of history experienced after the postmodern/poststructuralist impact. Very much in tune with the present demand in the contemporary/global educational scenario for an interdisciplinary bases/framework in different subjects/disciplines, the topic invites participation from scholars in the fields of Literature Studies, History, Sociology and Religion Studies.

Historiographic Metafiction, to use Linda Hutcheon's term, has been widely adopted by scholars and theorists. It calls for a re-visioning and re-examining of totalizing narratives. A postmodern genre, it transforms as Liedeke Plate would argue, "not only our understanding of the past but also our understanding of how we come to such an understanding." It perceives existing narratives as constructed and influenced by many cultural and ideological factors. It, therefore, undermines the totalizing nature of existing discourses.

Problematizing historical narratives, this genre questions the traditional approaches to historiography and declares the possibility of multiple histories. In order to falsify the objectivity of conventional history writing, it bases its argument on the poststructuralist theories which claim that language creates and shapes reality. These theories impact fiction as well. This has resulted in the transgression of the rules of both genres—history and fiction. The former is open to multiple revisits from the perspective of the present and the latter foregrounds its ideological underpinnings. As Greenblatt and Gallagher have pointed out, history has become more literary and literature more historicized.

It is true that Historiographic Metafiction allows for different voices and alternative, plural histories by subverting the historical documents and events that they refer to but then "truth" turns protean and subjective. That is if history is what legitimizes the struggle for nationhood then the very idea of the 'nation' becomes subject to the scrutiny of a dubious interplay of varied perspectives. But having said that Historiographic Metafiction is seen as a liberating genre for feminist and postcolonial writers both of whom have enabled other histories to be verbalized by opening the dominant discourse of history to multivocality.

There has been an increasing interest of contemporary fictionists in history. There have been attempts of literary theoreticians to promote novels which make use of historical material and merge fact and fiction within their self-reflexive narrative. Novels are now read as subversive texts that problematize the boundary between history and fiction, denying history its claim to a truthful and objective representation of historical events. But then the act of doing so is more of an ideological act dictated by language systems, conventions and institutionalized power structures. However, following their distrust of metanarratives, postmodern authors attempt to unveil the totalizing features inherent in narrative representation by creating self-reflexive narratives which make obvious their position as fiction.

Allied Aspects of the Topic in which Papers from Contributors will be Invited.

Broadly speaking, the proposed seminar is an attempt to promote a meaningful discussion on the significance and ethics of Historiographic Metafiction and also help understand the assumptions and presuppositions underlying the relationship between history and fiction. Besides, the proposed seminar hopes to address other issues as well including the following:

- Whether the postmodernist impulse inherent in the re-visionary narratives creates an awareness of metanarratives as fluid structures of meaning.
- Whether the new currents of philosophical speculation regarding the ethical value of literature suggest a new theoretical framework for thinking about the relationship between history and literature.
- Whether Historiographic Metafiction complicates the notion of “truth” and the process of uncovering it.
- The implications of Historiographic Metafiction in re-writing of religious histories and giving voice to other marginalized discourses.
- The impact of re-visionary narratives on positivistic historiography.
- Whether the aesthetic matrices of a work of art should be governed by philosophical and ideological analogues.

- Whether by means of their overt metafictionality, postmodern texts challenge the capacity of history to represent reality outside the text.
- The impact of postmodern philosophy of history in shaping the historical novels written after the 80's.
- An exploration of the metafictional elements of texts like self-reflexivity, non-linear narrative, and parody to underscore the refraction and the co-existence of plural voices.

Presentations: Research papers are invited from scholars. An abstract of not more than 200 words should be sent to the seminar director, Professor Lily Want, by post or by email at lilywant@yahoo.co.in by 1 April 2017. Full papers should be emailed by 10 April 2017. No submissions will be accepted after this date. All submissions should be original having a certificate attached that the paper has not been presented in any seminar before and /or published in any journal within and outside India. All papers will be published, after evaluation, in the departmental refereed journal, *English Studies in India*.

Each participant will be given 20 minutes for presentation which will be followed by discussion for about 10 minutes. Registration Fee of Rs 1000/ by way of a DD drawn in favour of the Head, Department of English must be send by post along with the full paper by 10 April 2017.

Venue: The seminar will be held at the University of Kashmir which is 10 Kms from the main city, Srinagar. Kashmir is linked through road from Jammu and up to Jammu by train, road and air. It has several low-priced flights operating from Jammu and Delhi. Participants are required to book their tickets well in advance so that they reach Srinagar on 19 April and leave by 23 April. Participants coming from outside Delhi/Jammu will be paid train/bus fare from their home towns to Delhi/Jammu on the production of tickets.

Accommodation: As far as possible, participants will be accommodated in the University Guest House on shared basis. TA/DA to University/College teachers will be paid as per the University rules. There is no room for spouses to be accommodated. *Research Scholars* desirous of participating will have to fend for themselves.

Climate: Kashmir can be warm in April but, nonetheless outstation participants must carry some warm clothing with them.

Foreign Delegates: Participant outside India are welcome. However, because of the paucity of funds, it will not be possible for the department to provide any financial support. The department will be glad to help them find accommodation etc if a request is made well in advance.

Food: Participants will have breakfast and dinner at the Guest House itself. However, lunch will be served at the Seminar venue which will contain both vegetarian and non-vegetarian items.

For queries write/contact:

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