

**ELEMENTS OF HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION IN
CONTEMPORARY PAKISTANI HISTORICAL FICTION: A CRITICAL
STUDY OF THE SELECTED WORKS OF TARIQ ALI**

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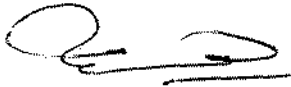
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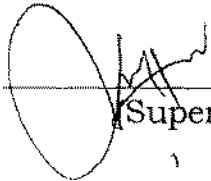
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Abstract

This thesis examines as to what extent Tariq Ali's novels employ the characteristics of historiographic metafiction as proposed by Linda Hutcheon and how far the formal and thematic features of historiographic metafiction are congruent with the ideological implications of representation of history with special reference to Tariq Ali's *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* and *The Book of Saladin*. Analysis of the selected novels is grounded in Linda Hutcheon's discussion on historiographic metafiction which she defines as a postmodern narrative genre that is self-conscious but at the same time lays claims over historical representation. The characteristics of this genre that she traces are decentred narrative, self-reflexivity and intertextuality. These features, at thematic level, function to problematize the objectivity of narration, challenge the historical truth, emphasize the critical return to the past, politicize the historical representation and highlight the problem of historiography. This study also renders the ideological implications of these formal and thematic features of historiographic metafiction installed in Ali's novels. The analysis showed a great tendency in *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* and *The Book of Saladin* to be called historiographic metafiction as they deconstruct the narrative authority and objectivity of historical account by including multiple perspectives; they critically revisit the past to problematize the historical representation by installing intertextuality; and they problematize historiography through their self-reflexive bent. Both novels also trace the ideological and political element in writing and rewriting of history.

Dedicated to

Ammi, Abbu

Introduction

This thesis investigates how far Tariq Ali's novels employ the characteristics of historiographic metafiction as proposed by Linda Hutcheon and how these formal and thematic features of historiographic metafiction serve in ideological implications of representation of history with special reference to Tariq Ali's *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* and *The Book of Saladin*. Linda Hutcheon's concept of historiographic metafiction has been used to analyze the selected novels. At the formal level, the metafictional features of decentred narrative, intertextuality and self reflexivity will be traced to see how they problematize the idea of objective narration, historical truth, representation of the past, politics of representation, and the nature of historiography thematically. Moreover, the study aims to discuss the role of ideology in historical representations by discussing implied ideological objectives in Ali's selected works. The novels will be evaluated as historiographic metafictions at both formal and thematic level to see what ideological and political implications they have.

Postmodern age is the age of revival of historical fiction. In one of his writings for *The Telegraph*, David Mitchell mentions a reason of the popularity of historical fiction saying: "while the needs of the human heart and body stay much the same... [reading about] people whom we might have been, had we been born then – under different regimes and rules– is fascinating for its own sake."¹ Popularity of this genre shows that past allures the writers and the readers of historical fiction alike. A.S Byatt gives another explanation of the recent rebirth of historical fiction. She thinks that in contemporary age, "we have... been forbidden to think about

¹ David Mitchell, "David Mitchell on Historical Fiction," *The Telegraph*.

history," that has instigated the novelists of historical fiction, who are trying to "find historical paradigms for contemporary situations."² In this thesis, I plan to trace the elements of historiographic metafiction in Ali's *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* and *The Book of Saladin* to find what historical paradigms Ali is exploring in cotemporary global situation.

Concepts of history as well as historical fiction had been changing with the passage of time. With compartmentalization of knowledge in nineteenth and twentieth centuries, literature and history were separated into different disciplines. This compartmentalization is challenged in the postmodern age by merging of various genres, and the representative genre of this age, according to Hutcheon, is historiographic metafiction.

Historiographic metafiction is a term coined by Linda Hutcheon, a Canadian academic and literary theorist, in her acclaimed work *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. (1988). The study of Postmodernism, according to Hutcheon, is directed at history, literature, or theory and is narrative in all three. The postmodern genre that explains postmodernism the best and incorporates all three is historiographic metafiction. According to Hutcheon, works of historiographic metafiction are "those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages."³

Historiographic metafiction is contradictory in the sense that it keeps itself at a distance from "formal auto representation and its historical context", but in doing so it "problematizes the very possibility of historical knowledge."⁴ So if on one hand, it is different from the radical modern form of metafiction in its idea of the subject; on the other hand, it is distinct from nineteenth

² A.S Byatt. *On Histories and Stories: Selected Essays*. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2001) 11.

³ Linda Hutcheon. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. (New York: Routledge, 1988) 5.

⁴ *Poetics* 106.

century historical fiction for challenging the very idea of historical and objective representation of that subject.

History and fiction have always been flexible genres and their overlapping and “mutual influences”⁵ would not be surprising. Postmodernism transgresses previously accepted limits, merging different boundaries, the most radical of which are those of history and fiction. Hutcheon, like Hayden White, discards the separation between history and literature by tracing the similarities between historical and fictional writings. “Both historians and novelists constitute their subjects as possible objects of narrative representation...[a]nd they do so by the very structures and language they use to present those subjects.”⁶ According to Hutcheon, postmodernism first installs and then traverses the frames that distinguish history and fiction. This interaction of the historiographic and metafictional questions the claims of both over authentic as well as imitative representations.⁷

Hutcheon confronts the criticism on postmodernism as ahistorical for its stance that history does not exist except as text.⁸ This, according to Hutcheon, is not the declaration of non-existence of history rather impossibility of an uninterrupted and unmediated access to the real past. All our efforts to represent past merely textualize it. The sources of these texts are other texts that existed before that. Hence, every text is in dialogue with already produced texts. Historiographic metafiction highlights this intertextual nature of history. It also problematizes the claims of scientific history to objective truth and realistic and objective representation of the

⁵ Hutcheon *Poetics* 106.

⁶ *Poetics* 111

⁷ *Poetics* 109-110.

⁸ *Poetics* 16.

past. “[H]istorical knowledge can never be impersonal and objective, for we cannot ‘ever rid ourselves entirely of the views of our own time and personality’.”⁹ Moreover, postmodern historical fiction questions the ideas of objective history, teleology, facts and absolute reality. Historiographic metafiction challenges objectivity of historical truth by highlighting the problematic nature of truth itself. It is also self reflexive as it lays emphasis on the process of writing (history and fiction) rather than what that writing is about. Historiographic metafiction reflects the postmodern slogan of returning to the past. This return to the past often parodic and is a distinguishing feature between postmodernism and modernism, but this return is also criticized by some critics like Fredrick Jameson who term it as pastiche. Hutcheon calls this return not an imitative but an ironic and critical return. She calls it parody and thinks it to be an important element of historiographic metafiction. This form of fiction also foregrounds the problematic relationship of text as form and text as ideology. It rejects the modern and romantic notion of art for art’s sake, but also contests the view of art as trivial for being imaginative and thus separated from its social and historical realities. Postmodern novel, like historiographic metafiction, self consciously acknowledges its “ideological positioning in the world.”¹⁰ So, these characteristics of historiographic metafiction also reflect the postmodern philosophy about literary and historical writing in which ideological and aesthetic is no more separable.¹¹ Postmodernism has moved from Marxist notion of ideology as false consciousness to a different notion of ideology as a general process of production of meaning.¹² It sees and interprets what we say in relation to the power relations that exist around us. Historiographic metafiction

⁹ qtd. in Ann Curthoys and John Docker. *Is History Fiction?* (Sydney: UNSW, 2006) 72.

¹⁰ Hutcheon *Poetics* 179.

¹¹ Hutcheon *Poetics* 178.

¹² Raymond Williams. *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 1977) 67.

problematizes this relationship of the formal concept of the text and political concept of ideology. I will study this relationship of formal with the ideological in Ali's novels. I will explore the elements of historiographic metafiction, at formal and thematic level, to see how Ali exploits these features to achieve certain ideological objectives regarding the re-representation of Islam and Muslims.

Ali is a British Pakistani author, journalist and filmmaker famous for his prolific writings in fiction and prose. Ali's *Islam Quintet* is like an "antidote" in this time where the western world is going hysterical about Islam, and anti-Muslim sentiments are increasing with each passing day.¹³ A simple response to an offensive statement against the Arabs that shaped itself in form of a novel, *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* (1993), became a set of five novels after Edward Said read the first one and said: "Don't stop now. Tell the whole bloody story."¹⁴ The other four novels of the Quintet are *The Book of Saladin* (1999), *The Stone Woman* (2001) *A Sultan in Palermo* (2005), and *Night of The Golden Butterfly* (2010). In his first novel, Ali tells the story of the aftermath of the fall of Granada after the Moors are driven out of Spain. It is a family tragedy and the story of people who tried to survive under the dominance of intolerant Christendom. *The Book of Saladin* (1999) is the fictional memoir of Saladin, written by a Jewish scribe, Ibn Yakub and set in 12th Century Cairo, Damascus and Jerusalem. The scribe talks to Sultan's wives and retainers to portray a complete picture of him in his memoirs. There are other interconnected stories that give readers an insight into the life of the Muslim legend and liberator of Jerusalem in 12th century.

¹³ Talat Ahmad. Interview: Tariq Ali. *Socialist Review*.

¹⁴ Muniza Naqvi. "Interview: Tariq Ali on Writing Novels". *3QuarksDaily*.

Though Ali's novels portray the clash of Muslim and Christian world in the past, the debates they initiate are quite recent. Pakistani Fiction in English has generally a historical overtone, which is why the trauma of partition(s), nostalgia for the past and critical commentary on social and political history of Pakistan are some of the recurrent themes in it. Despite this characteristic display of historicity in Pakistani fiction in English, historical fiction in English is not an established genre in Pakistan in comparison to its counterpart in Urdu language, which has towering figures like Abdul Haleem Sharar, Sadiq Sardhunwi, Naseem Hijazi, Qurat ul Ain Haider and Abdullah Hussain in it. Ali's selection for this research is because of his commitment with the genre of historical fiction and also his obsession with the Muslim history in form of Islam Quintet which earned him a unique place in contemporary Pakistani Fiction in English. His extensive work gives a broader perspective about the rise and fall of Islamic Civilization in different ages and in different parts of the world which makes its scope even wider. Representation of Islam and diversity in Islamic civilization as depicted in Ali's Islam Quintet challenges the myth of Islam as a monolithic religion incompatible with the west and Europe.¹⁵

Statement of the Problem

Historiographic metafiction is a postmodern historical novel that maintains its difference from traditional historical and realist fiction on one hand, and from postmodern genres of cyberpunk and science fiction on the other. It combines the elements of historical and metafictional and yet maintains its identity as a representative form of postmodern age. This study will investigate as to what extent Ali's novels employ the characteristics of historiographic metafiction as proposed by Hutcheon and how far the formal and thematic features of historiographic metafiction are

¹⁵ Talat Ahmad. Interview: Tariq Ali. *Socialist Review*.

congruent with the ideological implications of representation of history with special reference to Ali's *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* and *The Book of Saladin*.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study will be:

1. To what extent Ali's *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* and *The Book of Saladin* exhibit the features of historiographic metafiction?
2. How has the author achieved his ideological objectives by employing the techniques of historiographic metafiction at formal and thematic level?

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To draw attention to the formal and thematic aspects of Ali's novels as a postmodern genre of historiographic metafiction.
2. To analyze Ali's historical fiction for its ideological implications in the current global scenario.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it will serve to represent Pakistani fiction in current discussion of historical novel under the influence of postmodernism as well as the projection of Islam and Muslims in it. It will analyze Ali's depiction of history and historiography with special emphasis on the representation of Islamic history and civilization in it. Moreover, analyses of Ali's works will append the discussions on misrepresentation in and rewriting of historical narrative. The

research is also pertinent as the debates on the clash of Islamic and the western world are still relevant and continue to shape today's world. The current image of Islam as depicted by the media outlets in the west is of a religion that promotes "fundamentalism", "extremism" and "radicalism." The labels have been reinforced more forcefully after 9/11 to justify the wars against Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁶ Ali's works are of great political and historical value in this age of competing discourses. This study is of great significance to see how Ali responds to the prevailing stereotypes in the western and Islamic world in his novels.

Methodology

This research will be a qualitative and critical study in which a parallel close textual analysis of the two texts will be carried out in order to analyze the strategies of historiographic metafiction used in them. Hutcheon's concept of historiographic metafiction will serve as the framework of research in which the metafictional elements of decentred and problematic narrative, intertextuality and self reflexivity will be located and analyzed to evaluate the selected novels as historiographic metafiction at the formal level. Further the analysis will reveal as to how these features are exploited in Ali's historical novels to highlight certain themes like problem of objectivity in historical narrative, multiplicity of historical truth, revisiting the past, politics of representation and problematic nature of historiography. The study of these formal and thematic features will help trace the ideological implications embedded in them. The analysis will be carried out by critically analyzing the techniques of narration, themes, characters, dialogues and the form of the novels. Ali's *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* and *The Book of Saladin* will be the primary sources for the study. *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988) and *The Politics of*

¹⁶ Mirza MEŠIĆ . "The Perception of Islam and Muslims in the Media and the Responsibility of European Muslims Towards the Media." *Culturelink*.

Postmodernism (1989) by Hutcheon along with the books of criticism, journal articles, interviews, reviews and commentaries on postmodernism and historical fiction will be the secondary sources.

Chapterization

This thesis will comprise of five chapters.

Introduction: This chapter will introduce the topic as well as its significance.

Chapter One: This chapter will be an overview of the researches produced on or related to Pakistani Fiction as well as postmodern historical fiction.

Chapter Two: It will contain a critical discussion of both novels emphasizing the formal aspects of narration and point of view as are projected in the two novels. The themes of objectivity in historical narrative and nature of historical truth will also be discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Three: This chapter will be a continuation of the critical discussion simultaneously discussing the formal features of intertextuality and self reflexivity with thematic issues like revisiting the past, revising the representation and the problem of historiography in *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* and *The Book of Saladin*. The discussion will foreground the ideological implications embedded in the themes.

Conclusion: In the last chapter, I will conclude the discussion presenting the findings of the study and recommendations for further researches in the area.

Chapter One

Literature Review

Publication of *Waverley* in 1814 established historical fiction as a new literary genre.

Walter Scott inspired nineteenth century readers to take interest in history and the past. The historical novel remained neglected as a literary genre after Scott until its revival in the beginning of twentieth century. After that, historical novel began to be divorced from mainstream novel and was taken as a form which in some ways was in dialogue with history rather than with aesthetic strategies of fiction. Leopold Von Ranke, a strong believer of historical facts and sources, rejected Scott's historical fiction for its overtly imaginative and romantic outlook. Ranke is considered to be the most influential figure in establishing professional history as a separate discipline because he considered history a completely different medium from literature. He believed that the historians should treat the particulars as an essential part of their writing even if such details, unlike literature, may appear unappealing to the reader. With the advent of postmodernism, towards the end of twentieth century, separation of history and literature was questioned again.

Hayden White, the most radical and influential postmodern critic and historian, brought about a sense of crisis in historical approaches. He took a reverse position from Ranke and traced similarities, instead of differences, between history and fiction writing. He challenged the traditional claims of historians of representing truth and objective reality and defined a historical work as "a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes in the interest of *explaining what they were by*

representing them [writer's italics].¹⁷ He used a formalist method to discuss historiography proving that rhetoric and metaphor are integral part of history writing, and that history is a narrative discourse grounded within four fundamental literary tropes: Metaphor, Metonymy, Synecdoche and Irony. According to White, in historical writing selected events are arranged into a story that he calls emplotment. The four modes of emplotment used by the historians are Romance, Tragedy, Comedy, and Satire. This is where he develops the link between history and literature. White emphasizes the literary aspect of historical writing saying that even if historians do not regard their works as translations of fact into fiction, still this effect of their works cannot be denied. Postmodern historical novels are, therefore, different from Scott's because "there has been a shift in conceptualization of 'History' itself, and the purposes and virtues of such a style of writing."¹⁸ This approach towards history and historiography resulted in merging the boundaries between history and fiction.

Traditionally, separation between art and historiography has been quite old. The distinction Aristotle made namely that history talks about the past and art about possibilities and probabilities is no longer acceptable as some history writers have also used techniques of fictional representation to create imaginative version of their "historical, real worlds."¹⁹ For Postmodernists, history is like an act of creation, a personal construct and a manifestation of the historian's perspective as a narrator. The disparity between history and fiction is also criticized by Hutcheon in her book *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988). She

¹⁷ Hayden White. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1973) 2.

¹⁸ Jerome de Groot. *The Historical Novel* (London: Routledge, 2010) 119.

¹⁹ Hutcheon *Poetics* 106.

believes that postmodernism transgresses the previously accepted limits of different forms of art and different genres which has been manifested in the contemporary debate about boundaries and margins. Merging of fiction and non-fiction, however, has been the most radical genre-crossing.”²⁰ In postmodern writings both history and fiction are discourses with constructed meaning and there is no possibility of any “single, essentialized, transcendent concept” of authentic history.²¹ She discusses parallels between history and literature by saying that both employ verisimilitude rather than representing any objective truth; both history and literature are linguistic constructs, simplified in their narrative forms, and thus not at all transparent; and they both integrate the texts of the past in their own textuality.²² On account of these similarities history not only overlaps fiction but also becomes less trustworthy.

Hutcheon challenges the absolute quality of the history/fiction join implied through realist narrative. Postmodern fiction, according to Hutcheon, questions the orthodoxy and unchallenged ideology of that “assumption of seamlessness” without disconnecting itself from history or the world. It expects the reader to question the processes by which we “represent ourselves” and make sense of our experiences and construct order out of them in our cultures.²³ Hutcheon realizes the fact that representations cannot be avoided but they should not be fixed rather they should be transcultural and transhistorical. She traces a power structure in representations through which certain kind of historical knowledge is privileged and “our access through narrative to the world of experience — past or present — is always mediated by the

²⁰ Hutcheon *Poetics* 10.

²¹ *Poetics* 89.

²² *Poetics* 105.

²³ Hutcheon. *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1989) 54.

powers and limits of our representations of it. This is as true of historiographical narrative as it is of fictional.”²⁴ Making history a point of comparison between modernism and postmodernism she asserts that postmodern return to the past is a response to modern art and theory which is chiefly ahistorical because of its overt use of hermetic formalism and aestheticism.

Postmodernism, unlike modernism, has chosen to face straight on the “nightmare of history.”²⁵ Hutcheon considers it a misunderstanding that postmodernism denies historical knowledge. She clarifies that postmodern writings of fiction and history remind us of their discursive nature. The real meaning does not lie in the “events” but how those past events become “facts” in the present through a “system of signification.” Postmodernism advocates a look into these systems that make meaning one of the human constructs.²⁶

Michael Confino has given the term “faction history” to the concept of history new historicists have posited recently. This history is a mixture of fact and fiction but Confino thinks that this concept, like the concept of the end of history, is not new rather it is “as old as history itself.”²⁷ He also gives three characteristics of this faction history which are that it is pastiche, it has theatrical undertones and it is unhampered by ‘reality’. Confino has also criticized Linda Orr for her idea of the end of history. Orr believes that history has always been a part of literature existing as a subgenre of literature for mixing fact and fiction until the situation changed in 19th century under the influence of rationalism, science and enlightenment.²⁸ History, according to

²⁴ Hutcheon *Politics* 54.

²⁵ Hutcheon *Poetics* 88.

²⁶ Hutcheon *Poetics* 89.

²⁷ Michael. Confino. “Some Random Thoughts on History’s Recent Past.” Indiana UP, *History & Memory*, 12.2 (2000) 38.

²⁸ Confino 40.

her, has failed to set itself free from literature which marks the end of history. Confino takes this view in line with anti-historical trend and remarks that many historians and philosophers had been declaring the end of history for centuries yet history is not dead yet.

The French Philosopher, Jacques Derrida, also challenges the idea of the end of history proposed by Fukuyama. Fukuyama declared the end of history as the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.²⁹ Derrida finds this idea of the end of history contradictory. According to Derrida, Fukuyama should have better defined the end of history as the end of Marxism, or the end of history as the western myth, revealed to be partial and subjective. What actually ended was the western familiar concept of history, which was an ideological conflict between competing systems of liberal democracy versus fascism and communism³⁰ and this concept of history ended with communism's collapse. The discourse of endism is one of the distinctive qualities of postmodern culture. Postmodernism and endist thinking go hand in hand freeing us from the traditional authority, encouraging us to abandon all universal values and standards and accepting relativity. Postmodern history destabilizes the unilateral accounts and calls for deconstruction, textuality and the process of decentring which results in the possibility of parallel histories. Michael Foucault also challenged the concept of a linear, continuous, living history by laying the foundation of his analysis of history on the categories of difference and discontinuity. This was provocative for historicists who believed that it was like murdering the history but Foucault rejected this criticism while maintaining at the same time that in reality that ideological

²⁹ Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* (Summer 1989)

³⁰ Stuart Sim, *Derrida and the End of History (Postmodern Encounters)* (Totem Books, 1995) 10.

use of history is bemoaned by which one tries to restore to man an unreachable past.³¹ Hutcheon also defends postmodern concept of history by saying that it does not relegate history by rejecting its existence except as text. She asserts:

History is not made absolute; it is, however, being rethought- as a human construct. And in arguing that *history* does not exist except as text, it does not stupidly and 'gleefully' deny that the *past* existed, but only that its accessibility to us now is entirely conditioned by textuality. We cannot know the past except through its texts: its documents, its evidence, even its eye witness accounts are *texts*.³²

Postmodern novels explore this fact as well as its consequences. They deconstruct the concept of universal history as a grand narrative.

A postmodern genre that blurs fiction and reality is metafiction. Metafiction is a fictional writing that problematizes the relationship between fiction and reality by "self consciously and systematically" drawing attention to its status of being a fictional work.³³ Hutcheon added a self conscious dimension of history into the definition of metafiction and called it historiographic metafiction. Historiographic metafiction has brought the questions of plot and problems of referentiality back into the discussion. These things were missing in radical experimental metafictional writings where the aim of the writer was to "explode" the conventions of realism. On one hand, historiographic metafiction is bestselling and is enjoyed by the readers in the

³¹ Linda Hutcheon. "Subject in/of/to History and His Story" Rev. of *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* by Teresa de Lauretis and *The Subject of Semiotics* by Kaja Silverman. *Diacritics*, 16.1 (1986) 79. *JSTOR*.

³² Hutcheon *Poetics* 16.

³³ Patricia Waugh. *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1984) 576.

manner of 19th century realistic fiction because it is equipped with an interesting plot and believable characters but on the other hand, it is a matter of serious interest for academic purposes.³⁴ Hutcheon also differentiates historiographic metafiction from nineteenth century historical fiction by comparing it with George Lucáks' model of nineteenth century historical fiction. The first difference is that nineteenth century historical fiction is the representation of microcosm that is generalized whereas historiographic metafiction accepts difference in form of plurality and multiplicity. Historiographic metafiction is different from nineteenth century historical fiction because the protagonist in a historical novel should be "a type", but the protagonists in a historiographic metafiction are ex-centrics, marginalized, peripheral figures of fictional history, in short, anything but the types. In nineteenth century historical fiction the use of details is unimportant but they are significant in historiographic metafiction since it plays upon the truth and the lies of historical record. The historical data is incorporated and assimilated in the nineteenth century historical novel to imply authenticity whereas it is not assimilated, though is incorporated in a historiographic metafiction. Similarly, the real historical figures are deployed in nineteenth century historical novel just to authenticate the fictional world but they serve no such purpose in historiographic metafiction, where this ontological join between fiction and reality is problematized by such questions as "how can we know the past"?³⁵

The postmodernist historical novel does not draw its inter-text from history and literature exclusively but from variety of texts from the past which makes it inter-textual and parodic. It attempts to insert history into fiction to subvert historical facts and rewrite them from a perspective different from the accepted interpretation and opens up the history to the present. It

³⁴Bran Nicol. *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction* (New York: CUP, 2009) 99.

³⁵ Hutcheon *Poetics* 114.

decenters the authentic narrative to bring forth the alternative interpretations and multiple truths about history showing the postmodernist belief in multiple truths. Major characteristics of historiographic metafiction, thus, in the light of Hutcheon's discussion, are the parodic intertextuality, self reflexivity, and multiple points of view. These elements make historiographic metafiction to blur subjectivity and to open up history to the present. History is not presented as conclusive rather is presented as a concept and gets its real political value.

Postmodernist fiction equates historiographic metafiction for Hutcheon and the terms are interchangeable for her. Brian McHale criticizes the exclusions and inclusions in Hutcheon's criteria she has set for historiographic metafiction. Hutcheon insists on the exclusion of the writing from postmodernist fiction which is metafictional without also being historiographic.³⁶ But according to McHale, she is also aware that such varieties of metafiction have equal claim on being considered postmodernist. Hutcheon later had to accept a stance from the feminist discourse according to which personal is the political. McHale suggests that on the same ground then the fictional writings that challenge personal histories, in the way political history is challenged in historiographic metafiction, also deserve to be included in the postmodernist category.³⁷ He also points out some startling inclusions of some texts in Hutcheon's examples of historiographic metafiction which are not historical but science fiction or metascience fiction, contradicting her own criterion of historiographic metafiction. Brian McHale criticizes Hutcheon for the marginal position she has given to science fiction in *Poetics*, whereas it is at the center of Jameson's construction of Postmodernism. The most vital significance Jameson attaches to the

³⁶ Brian McHale, "Postmodernism, or the Anxiety of Master Narratives". *JSTOR*. (22.1) 21.

³⁷ McHale 21.

newest wave of science fiction is cyberpunk. Jameson believes that the historical novel suited the modernist historical view but it is not relevant now. He suggests:

Something like science fiction can occasionally be looked at as a way of breaking through to history in a new way; achieving a distinctive, historical consciousness by way of the future rather than the past; and becoming conscious of our present as the past of some unexpected future, rather than as the future of a heroic national past.³⁸

Jameson looks at history in terms of the future rather than the past. He attaches the same importance to science fiction that Hutcheon has given to historiographic metafiction.

When it comes to the relation between postmodernism and history, Hutcheon's views oppose Jameson's. For Jameson, the postmodern narrative is ahistorical. Jameson thinks that postmodernity has made people forget to think historically. Modernism was defined by alienation but postmodernist person is not only free from alienation but every other feeling as well. For Jameson, postmodernism is the effect of late capitalism. Late capitalism has created a "perpetual present" where time is dominated by the rhythms of free floating media. Consequently our apprehension of past and future is weakened. We are unable to place ourselves in a historical context. History has become merely a matter of styles that can be pastiched in the latest retro clothes, theme pubs or in nostalgia films.³⁹ He argues that postmodern fiction merely reproduces the past as nostalgia that links it with consumerist popular culture and mass media. Hutcheon disagrees with this critique and disproves the charges on postmodernism being ahistorical, nostalgic and naïve. She answers Jameson's criticism on postmodernism being

³⁸ Fredric Jameson and Anders Stephanson. "Regarding Postmodernism: A Conversation with Fredric Jameson." Kellner 60.

³⁹ Jameson, *Postmodernism, or Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. (London: Verso, 1991) 19-20.

nostalgic and insists it is not nostalgia that is marked with the wish to go back in the past rather it is irony that urges the reader to rethink about the past. "This is not a nostalgic return; it is a critical revisiting, an ironic dialogue with the past of both art and society."⁴⁰ Postmodern art, according to Hutcheon, contests the possibility of our ability to know the real past recognizing the fact that the reality (social, historical, existential) of the past is only a discursive reality when used as the referent of art, and it can be considered genuine only when it acknowledges its own discursive and dependent identity.⁴¹ Postmodern novel ironically places the aspects of the past within present context to make reader think about the past conditions but also seeing how things are either different or similar presently. So past is employed critically in postmodern novel.

Umberto Eco's views are also in line with Hutcheon. Eco believes that every age precedes its own postmodernism which emerges when whatever is modern in an era cannot move forward "without lapsing into silence." This stage comes when the writers, in order to create new, have to destroy the past. The only solution left for those who follow these modernists is to reengage with the past once again. This is where postmodernism comes into play because this reengagement is made possible by the use of irony. This irony is employed as a strategy to make the negotiation possible without ending up in the "inevitable silence."⁴² Hutcheon further discards Jameson's criticism of postmodern narrative as pastiche. She calls it parody which according to her is the perfect postmodern form. This ironic parody critiques the rationalist view

⁴⁰ Hutcheon *Poetics* 4.

⁴¹ Hutcheon *Poetics* 24.

⁴² Bran Nicol, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction* (New York: CUP, 2009) 15.

of history by paradoxically installing as well as challenging the concepts it intends to parody,⁴³ making the work both historical and political.⁴⁴

Dino Felluga explains this contrast between Hutcheon and Jameson's views and explains that Jameson characterizes postmodern parody as blank without any political bite but for Hutcheon, the use of parodic self reflexivity in postmodern literature is important as it is ironic and gives a political value and historical awareness to the parodic work.⁴⁵ John N. Duvall negotiates these apparently polarized views of Hutcheon and Jameson and finds both useful. This negotiation is possible, since according to Duvall, Jameson and Hutcheon mean different things by postmodernism as they're talking about different cultural phenomena which focuses on consumer when discussed by Jameson while Hutcheon's originates with the artist as producer.⁴⁶

Chen Xin presents a parallel concept of history with Hutcheon. He explores the appeal of postmodernism in the historical circle and argues that postmodernism does not expect history to claim truth. He calls such history experimental history.⁴⁷ He first compares the views of different western as well as Chinese theorists about postmodernism and its effects on historiography. Later, he discusses the concept of experimental history along with the ideas of postmodern theorists like Foucault, White, and Ankersmit. The writer differentiates the three phases of history namely pre-modern, modern and post modern on the bases of the notions of time, truth

⁴³ Hutcheon *Poetics* 11.

⁴⁴ *Poetics* 11.

⁴⁵ Dino Felluga, "Modules on Jameson: On Pastiche." *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory*.

⁴⁶ John N. Duvall, "Troping History: Modernist Residue in Jameson's Pastiche and Hutcheon's Parody." *Sunypress*.

⁴⁷ Chen Xin, "Experimental History: the appeal of postmodernism in historiography." *Journal of Beijing Normal University*, (Vol. 5, 2004) 200.

and use in historiography during these three phases. According to him, postmodern approach towards history opposes static and never changing notion of time as well as the possibility of existence of truth outside time. Postmodernist epistemological structure keeps time at its center and is without a center. The resulting history is then experimental history. The authenticity of such text lies on the reader's reaction to the text. The truth is determined by historicity itself. So, one interpretation may be true at one point in time and untrue at another. Experimental historiography tolerates the existence of modern historiography and does not reject the heritage of enlightenment rather accepts it as one of the possible modes in the variety of choices readers may have. Hutcheon has presented a similar idea of history and history writing while discussing historiographic metafiction. She asserts the plurality of historical truth which is also manifested in historiographic metafiction. Historiographic metafiction both establishes as well as crosses the frames of history and narrative writing, and in doing so it highlights the rejection of the concepts of "authentic representation" and "inauthentic copy alike". It serves a two-fold purpose i.e challenging "artistic originality" as well as "transparency of historical representation."⁴⁸ The difference between Chen Xin and Hutcheon's ideas is that where Xin's experimental history accepts modern history as one of the options depending upon the reception of it, Hutcheon rejects modernist idea of history.

In every age history writing and historical novel writing has influenced each other and postmodern age is no exception. Postmodern skepticism about historiography is also visible in postmodern historical novels. Historiographic metafiction rejects the notion of authentic representation of the past and a transparent access to historical truth; it employs past in fiction to suggest that re-writing and re-presenting the past in fiction and in history is to avoid any closure

⁴⁸ Hutcheon *Poetics* 110.

and to open it up to multiple possibilities.⁴⁹ This is done through the subversion of narrative techniques in historiographic metafiction. So, the anonymity of the narrator of realistic fiction is replaced by over assertive and problematizing subjectivity by using an openly controlling narrator, and secondly by the use of multiple perspectives. But in neither of the two modes the narrator asserts any certainty or confidence to know the past.⁵⁰ The past is employed into the text of the present by the use of parody. Although the use of parody in historiographic metafiction questions the accessibility of the real empirical past, yet it does not deny the existence of a real past. The notion behind this postmodern parody is that readers in the present can only know the past from its textual remnants and can never hope to access any sort of real and unmediated past. Belief in truth and in the search for truth is not denied in postmodern historiography, however, it emphasizes that the “temptation to declare that historian can objectively establish the truth about the past is to be resisted”.⁵¹ So, a postmodern text does not refer to the actual historical events but other texts making the writing intertextual and subverting the humanist understanding of originality. The intertexts incorporated in historiographic metafiction are drawn not only from literature and history but a wide variety of texts including comic books, fairy tales, almanacs and newspapers.⁵² Intertextuality in historiographic metafiction undermines the notion of closed, singular meaning and acknowledges the presence of multiple perspectives. This form of fiction tries to fill the gap left by historians.

⁴⁹ Poetics 110.

⁵⁰ Poetics 117.

⁵¹ Ann Curthoys and John Docker. *Is History Fiction?* (Sydney: UNSW, 2006) 12.

⁵² Hutcheon *Poetics* 133.

Plurality of perspectives in postmodern art is present because of the development of identity politics during 1960's. Hutcheon links the characteristic of postmodern ex-centric identity assertion to the rise of various counter cultural movements namely black and feminist forms of art and literature. The movements like feminism reshaped the ideas about history and historiography making the female writers realize that women along with other minority groups need a narrative history"⁵³ which, according to Heilmann and Llewellyn, is the main reason why the genre of historical fiction has recently been dominated by the women writers. Women authors are not claiming to create any new genre rather they are combining the metafictional and metahistorical to question the absence of women as authors, readers and subjects in the recorded history.⁵⁴ Historiographic metafiction brings these silenced voices to the centre and reveals the power politics in historical writings.

Feministic and historiographic metafictional aspects are simultaneously discussed in "Historiographic Metafiction in *In the Time of the Butterflies*" by Isabel Zakrzewski Brown. Brown analyzes Julia Alvarez's novel for how it combines both feministic as well as postmodern conceptualizations. Brown finds feministic as well as postmodern resonance in the novel in the way the protagonists Mirabal sisters challenge the patriarchal social constructs of Dominican society. Brown locates the characteristics of historiographic metafiction in the novel i.e. self reflexion, intertextuality and configuration of the private spaces embodied by the four sisters. Thus by joining feministic undertones in the real historic events of Latin American Dominican

⁵³ Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn, (Eds.) *Metafiction and Metahistory in Contemporary Women's Writing*.(New York: Palgrave Macmillan; 2007) 5.

⁵⁴ Heilmann and Llewellyn 3.

society and Trujillo era (1930-61) at thematic level and imposition of the literary techniques of postmodern fiction justify the title historiographic metafiction for *In the Time of the Butterflies*.

Rewriting of history in postmodern historical novels also highlights the neglect in conventional historiography about minority history. Donald C. Goellnicht in his article discusses the concept of Tate about African literary criticism and applies it on minority histories. Claudia Tate terms African criticism as “staunchly mimetic and humanistic.”⁵⁵ Goellnicht proposes that the types of writings that rewrite history in order to put the record straight are generally mimetic and humanistic. They use realistic mode and believe in the ability of language to represent the past. They also serve a didactic purpose for the neglected group. Goellnicht, in this article, analyzes Kogawa’s novel *Obasan* in which she has given account of the Japanese Canadians in the Second World War with the perspective of a Japanese Canadian woman. Goellnicht regards it a historiographic metafiction in which an alternative and marginalized view of history is presented and official history is revealed as a lie. Being aware that history is not fixed and language is in a flux, Kogawa in this self reflexive fiction transcends the mimetic approach and also fulfills the responsibility of historiographic metafiction being didactic, not in the traditional sense of teaching a product but in teaching an epistemological process.

The concept of historiographic metafiction was developed into metahistorical romance by a critic Amy J. Elias. She not only updated the concept of Hutcheon by applying it on the works published after 1990’s but also differentiated between postmodern and postcolonial historical perspectives. The postmodern historical texts are kept at the deconstructive spectrum whereas postcolonial texts are towards the reconstructed extreme. She further complicates Hutcheon’s

⁵⁵ Donald C. Goellnicht, “Minority History as Metafiction: Joy Kogawa’s *Obasan*”, 8.2 (1989). 287. *JSTOR*.

model by multiplying the categories of historiographic metafiction or metahistorical romance which was monolithic for Hutcheon. Brian McHale finds Elias's concept of history more ambiguous as it may mean written history and the historical events both.⁵⁶ He traces another blind spot in Elias's theory where she excludes supermarket romances from metahistorical romances on the ground that they are not worthy of it but he spots the difficulty in this exclusion which is "demonstrated by the way popular romance keeps seeping back into Elias's discussions of metahistorical romance, despite all her best efforts to exclude it."⁵⁷

The similarity about the rewriting of history creates an interchange between postmodern and post colonial trajectories. Postmodernism questions the reliability of the writing of the past on account that reality is always strategic. Postcolonial emphasis on the rewriting of the history is to question western imperial dominant version of history and to give a counter version with the perspective of the colonized. Thus, postmodern and postcolonial writers tend to reject the "conventional models of history (which are the creation of those who are in power) with the purpose to produce a new historiography attentive to cultural difference."⁵⁸ Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin also differentiate the two when they write:

While postmodernism has increasingly fetishised "difference and "the Other", those othered by a history of European representation can only retrieve and reconstitute a post-colonised self. While the disappearance of grand narratives and the crisis of representation characterize the Euro-

⁵⁶ Brian McHale, "Postmodernism, or the Anxiety of Master Narratives". *JSTOR*. (22.1) 157.

⁵⁷ McHale 160.

⁵⁸ Alice Mandricardo, "The End of History in English Historiographic Metafiction." Diss. Universita Ca'Foscari Venezia, 2009/10. 93.

American postmodernist mood, such expressions of breakdown and crisis instead signal promise and decolonization potential within postcolonial discourse.⁵⁹

Another research where the postmodern and postcolonial views about history intersect is the article by Joanne Tompkins. The writer unfolds the discrepancies and gaps in the Australian and New Zealand histories written by the whites where aboriginals and Maori histories are nowhere to be seen. Tompkins analyzes the novels *Dr. Wooreddy's Prescripton for Enduring the Ending of the World* and *The Matriarch* for their indigenous languages and use of oral myths in them, and traces their similarities with postmodern literature in that both "postmodern literature and indigenous postcolonial literatures disrupt the dominant culture to expose its inadequacies and invalid assumptions"⁶⁰

Most of the work on historiographic metafiction has been done by Hutcheon herself.

Apart from two books on the topic namely *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988) and its sequel *The Politics of Postmodernism* (1989), she wrote a number of articles discussing this concept. In her article "Historiographic Metafiction: Parody and Intertextuality of History", she discussed American novels, plays, art, film and music for showing the characteristic features of historiographic metafiction. She traces the reason for American literature's obsession with the past in the need to find an American voice within a culturally dominant Eurocentric tradition.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Mandricardo, 92.

⁶⁰ Joanne Tompkins, "It all depends on what story you hear: Historiographic Metafiction and Colin Johnson's *Dr. Wooreddy's Prescripton for Enduring the Ending of the World* and Witi Ihimaera's *The Matriarch*." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, 36.4 (1992) 497.

⁶¹ Hutcheon, "Historiographic Metafiction: Parody and the Intertextuality of History." *Intertextuality and Contemporary American Fiction*. Ed. O'Donnell, P., and Robert Con Davis. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). 3-32.

Ali's work is of a similar nature that emphasizes the rewriting of the past to revise the Muslim history dominated by the European historians. But it differs from American writers of historical fiction in that it even questions history from within i.e written by the Muslim historians.

Barbara Z. Thaden, in an article, weighs Chales Johnson's *Middle Passage* as a historiographic metafiction in the way it revises the narrative histories of American slavery. Johnson in this novel not only questions the point of view projected in those histories but also questions their relevance in today's world. Thaden finds Johnson's perspective distinctive in that unlike other postmodern texts it does not propose that stripping off of the illusion of an autonomous self necessarily leaves us disillusioned, despaired and alienated. Being a historiographic metafiction, it mixes up plot structures of different genres. With the use of parody and irony, Johnson questions the narrated past and also makes it speak to the present. Ali's historical works also incorporate the perspectives from the marginalized positions but unlike Johnson, Ali revises the history of Islam in Europe as it is conceived by the western as well as a Muslim reader and makes them relevant in the present world of global politics.

Another writer challenging the concept of official national histories is Monica Hanna. She studies different literary works from the genres of fiction, poetry, criticism and hybrid genres and examines them on their ability to produce alternative or resistance histories that are in contest with the national and official histories. The writers she includes in her analyses are Toni Morrison, Gloria Anzaldúa, Eavan Boland, Antonio Tabucchi, Junot Díaz, Sandra Cisneros, Ana Castillo, and Vincenzo Consolo. Hanna places diverse texts in conversation with each other to investigate the reasons for their confluence of style despite different national referents. She explores how by the use of the alternative generic elements like magical realism, science fiction, telenovelas , and comics etc. traditional literary realism is rejected. She discusses various

authors for their questioning of the way official national narratives try to bring homogeneity and continuity and focuses on resistance histories that instead explore moments of rupture, difference, and equivocal meanings within historical moments upon which constructions of national history are based.⁶² This is achieved by using non-standard national language and by focusing on the elements of artifice in both types of narrations, the official as well as the alternative. Hanna in this dissertation locates the areas where the literary writers of different national contexts have found gaps in official histories and tried to fill them. For example, the absence of the women, minorities, racial others, foreigners, and marginalized groups in the official national histories is criticized by the literary writers. So, the writers discussed by Hanna, like Ali, are not rejecting but revising and expanding their national histories. Ali also finds the histories of Spanish Reconquista and Crusades taught to the western reader as biased and partial and his novels attempt to give an alternate perspective to those histories i.e the perspective of Muslims.

A different perspective on history also comes up in Moraru's analysis of *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* and *Cloud Atlas* where he traces the features of historiographic metafiction in them but also links them with utopia/dystopia genre. According to him both the novelists borrow the techniques from utopia/dystopia fiction to show the ways in which history originates, ends, and is reborn. He uses the term histopia for them. He analyzes the two novels as histopias differentiating them from historiographic metafiction. In historiographic metafictions, according to Moraru, history is subsidiary whereas in the histopia novels, analyzed in this article,

⁶²Monica Hanna, "Resistance Histories: Contemporary Literary Reconstructions of national histories" Diss. City University of New York, 2009. *ProQuest*.

it is fiction that is marginalized. Fiction through its techniques serves to talk about History, the way it is produced or is constructed by men.⁶³

Many writers like Salman Rushdie, Jeanette Winterson, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Angela Carter have been discussed greatly for using the elements and techniques of historiographic metafiction in their works but not much has been written in this regard about Pakistani historical fiction. Ahmad Gamal has discussed the two novels of Ali namely *Shadows of Pomegranate Tree* and *A Book of Saladin* in an article. He has traced the metafictional strategies used by Ali in the two novels and has declared the novels as “postcolonial metafiction.” Gamal discusses Ali as a postcolonial writer who is representative of the New Leftist migrant rewriting the history of western modernity by proposing an alternative version of modernity. Gamal analyzes the novels with respect to three metafictional strategies which are “Rewriting the document”, “Rewriting the Other”, and “Rewriting the colonial language”. The main focus in the discussion is to show how Ali’s works have undermined the colonial, authoritarian and empirical history and how the texts are a postcolonial version of Third World history rewritten with the perspective of the marginalized and the colonized.⁶⁴ The current study focuses more on the postmodern, rather than the postcolonial paradigm to analyze Ali’s works though some of the issues overlap. This study incorporates Gamal’s points about othered and marginalized groups but it does not place Ali’s novels in any one position to view the history from, rather discusses a nomadic perspective about revisiting and revising the Muslim and western histories without reversing their positions, which is the main concern of historiographic

⁶³ Moraru “Histopias” *Academia*.

⁶⁴ Ahmed Gamal, “ Rewriting Strategies in Tariq Ali’s Postcolonial Metafiction.” *Postcolonial Text*, 6.4 (2011). *Postcolonial.org*.

metafiction. Historiographic metafiction is distinctive in its position about binaries and centers from the modernist view. Since postmodernism does not install the same dual of centre-margin, so reversal of the binaries is not in question. Historiographic metafiction, thus is about positionality rather than occupying the center. So, Hutcheon's framework is pertinent to this study where Ali's objective is not to reverse the position of the center in favour of the marginal, rather to critically view their positions from multiple perspectives.

Islam Quintet by Ali has also been discussed in another article titled "The Secular Side of Islam: A Case Study of Tariq Ali's Islam Quintet", collectively written by Sajid Ali, Nafees Pervez and Waseem Hassan Malik. First three novels of the Quintet i.e *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree*, *The Book of Saladin* and *A Sultan in Palermo* are discussed for their representation of the medieval Islamic civilization as tolerant, secular and intellectual, unlike its depiction by the western writers. The article discusses the novels as rewriting of the past but the emphasis is on picking up examples, mainly of characters, that represent Islamic Civilization as secular, liberal, tolerant, intellectual and unorthodox. The discussion is made in the light of the views of Edward Said, Tariq Ali and A.R Kidwai about mis-representation of Muslims in the western and American writings and media. Their analysis focuses Islam Quintet only for its representation of the Muslim characters to revise the concept of Muslims in today's world propagated by western and American media. This study, however, is broader in its discussion of Ali's novels, in their formal techniques, themes and ideologies propagated in them.

Though Pakistani Fiction in English has recently been seeking a lot of attention and recognition at the international literary arena, serious academic research on Pakistani authors and works is scarce. Ali is an established Pakistani writer who has been writing historical fiction for more than a decade now. Ali's historical novels survey the encounter between the Christian west

and the world of Islam in different periods of history. *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* is an account of Spain and the fall of Muslim Granada to Christendom. However, it is not simply an account of how Islam was driven out by Christianity after coexisting with it and other religions like Judaism for centuries. It explores the circumstances in which “co-existence is no longer possible, not even in this little pocket of the world where the old days still linger on.”⁶⁵ *The Book of Saladin* is the second one in this Islamic Quintet. The book unfolds the life of Salah al Din in its multiple aspects incorporating perspectives of different characters. Both novels have been read and reviewed worldwide. In one of the reviews of *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* the writer discusses the novel as an important record of renaissance al-Andalus which has not been written much about. Also, she takes it as an informative read for the western reader who is aware of Reconquista and al-Pujarra but not the forced conversions and book burning.⁶⁶ She also highlights some of the historical disparities in Ali’s work, both of structural and historical nature. Aurore Wellhoff, while reviewing *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* discusses how the novel foregrounds the events in 15th Century Spain as a loss to both Europe and the Muslim world. However, she thinks it to be a partial view that the Castilian rulers in Spain were intolerant while the Muslims were more inclined towards negotiation. She refers to the Muslim rule in Spain as a strict and suppressive of religious freedom for Christians and Jews. She also finds the novel to be challenging Muslim stereotypes as well as exaggeratedly progressive for its time.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Review. The idle woman.

⁶⁶ Review. The idle woman

⁶⁷ Aurore Wellhoff. *Review of Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree. World Religion Watch.*

The present thesis will analyze two novels from Ali's Islam Quintet namely *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* (1992) and *The Book of Saladin* (1998) as postmodernist historical novels in line with the form historical fiction has taken after the introduction of the idea of historiographic metafiction. It will also discuss the novels for their ideological and political value implied through their formal and thematic features.

Chapter Two

Narrative Authority and The Ex-Centeric: A Study of Narrative in

Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree and The Book of Saladin

According to Umberto Eco, past can be narrated in three ways: romance, swashbuckling tale and historical novel⁶⁸. Hutcheon proposes historiographic metafiction to be another way of narrating history. Some of the characteristic features of a historiographic metafiction are multiple points of view, problematic narrative (which is either highly subjective or completely decentered), self reflexivity and parodic intertextuality. In this chapter Ali's novels *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* (1991) and *The Book of Saladin* (1998) will be discussed for their formal features of narrative style and point of view and how they function to highlight the themes of historical objectivity and multiplicity of historical truth.

Historiographic metafiction highlights the limitations of historiography by problematizing the features of historical fiction employed in it. The genre of historical fiction in the guise of realism or authentic and true depiction needs to be overhauled even though novel and realism have been inseparable from each other. The realist novel propagates a specific ideology, making it to appear natural and universal through its linear plot, feigned objectivity and third person omniscient narration. Historiographic metafiction does not “choose realism

⁶⁸ Umberto Eco, *Postscript to the Name of the Rose*. 1983,1984. 74-75.

unthinkingly, but almost as an act of shocking rebellion against current orthodoxies.”⁶⁹

Historiographic metafiction problematizes the features of realism to reveal inherent (un)certainly, incompleteness, multiplicity and contradiction.

Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree is the story of the fall of the Muslim civilization in Europe in 15th and 16th century. As regards narrative style, conventional impersonal omniscient narration has primarily been used in the novel. The purpose of using this conventional Victorian style of narration is that it gives an access to characters' minds and thoughts which is not possible in case of narration from within by a character. Apart from the psychological insights and the observation of characters' gestures, appearances, detailed descriptions of food and clothes, the omniscient narrator does not take part in the course of narrative. Moreover, communication, conversation and dialogues of various characters form the narrative of the novel. The omniscient narrator is in complete charge of narration in prologue and epilogue, but occasionally interrupts the main text as well with its long explanations and commentaries. Epilogue opens with a scene in the court of Ximenes de Cisneros, the Archbishop, a week after one hundred and ninety five libraries were burnt in the city. It was 1st December 1499 and we see the event of the bon-fire in Ximenes' flashbacks. The novel starts in the year 1500 and then the omniscient narrator again appears in the epilogue twenty years after the tragedy of Banu-Hudayl telling us about the successful progression of the same commander Captain Cortes who had attacked Banu-Hudayl.

The narrator oversees all the situations and hears all the narratives. Impartial omniscient narration is significant because without it the narrative would have failed to portray the mental

⁶⁹ A.S Byatt, *On Histories and Stories: Selected Essays*. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2001) 39.

agony, fears and uncertainties entrapping characters' minds. Symbolically, this inward peep into characters' thoughts serves as a tool to highlight the internal weaknesses and flaws of the Muslim civilization in Granada. After the origin of Al-Hudayl family and how they founded the village of al-Hudayl centuries ago is told through omniscient narrator, other characters give their perspectives in narration and thus different points of view mingle in the narration.

The famous person of al-Hudayl family was Ibn Farid. Though he was a known warrior among Muslims and Christians alike, but his successors were only partially aware of Ibn Farid's personal life and the tragedy that befell the family after his death. It was Wajid-al-Zindiq (Ibn Zaydun) who narrated the story of Zuhayr's great grandfather, Ibn Farid, and the circumstances of the tragic death of his third wife lady Asma to him. Al-Zindiq represents a historian acquainting the ignorant i.e Zuhayr of his past. Zuhayr knew Ibn Farid only through "fairy stories"⁷⁰ narrated to him since his childhood. Though al-Zindiq takes Zuhayr a century back in the time but he does not intend to establish any authority and clearly lacks reliability as he himself admits that "Amira probably knew much more than he had ever been told, but whether either of them knew everything was open to question" (*Shadows* 88). Moreover, he is taking Zuhayr into the secret history of his family but also keeps him from completely believing in his version by accepting his limitations: "remember one thing, al-Fahl. What I am about to recount may not be the whole truth. I have no way of knowing" (*Shadows* 88). This uncertainty is not only about the past of the family of al-Hudayl but about al-Zindiq's lineage as well. He does not know whose son he is? Neither is there a way to determine that now. Al-Zindiq not only embodies the need to reveal the ignorance about the past that is always presented to us as

⁷⁰ Ali, Tariq, *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2006) 35. Subsequent references of the text will appear in parenthesis.

familiar and known, but also makes the reader recognize the impossibility of complete and certain narration.

A postmodern work does not claim of “self-sufficiency”, “autonomy” and “transcendence”⁷¹ rather it highlights its own lack of all these claims that may add unity in it. Uncertainties and incompleteness in al-Zindiq’s narration affect his credibility. Al-Zindiq’s version of family history is not only apprehensive but also incomplete. Al-Zindiq tells Zuhayr about his family history except the role he (al-Zindiq) played in that. He does not tell Zuhayr about his relationship with Zahra. This insufficiency in al-Zindiq’s narration is made up by Umar’s account of the past but certainty is lacking in Umar’s narration too. First, he is not sure of his knowledge and answers Hind’s question about Zahra’s madness by saying, “I do not know, child. We were all told that she had lost her mind in Qurtuba” (*Shadows* 50) but then decides reluctantly to relate whatever he knows.

Umar bin Abdallah also has his limitations because he is ignorant about Zahra’s life she had spent in maristan (asylum). The part he knows and narrates is Zahra’s expulsion from her father’s house, but it is also wrapped in vagueness because of his ignorance about many things. He lacks the memory to recall all the details and was not even sure as to when exactly Zahra’s tragedy began. Umar’s continuous confession about his ignorance about many things highlights the gaps in historiography and the challenges to fill those gaps. There are always loose ends that a narrator can’t tie up and leaves the story without any closure like Umar.

Narration shifts to Zahra after Umar because Umar only knew about the incidents that had happened in al-Hudayl. Zahra herself narrates her life in maristan to her nephew’s family but

⁷¹ Hutcheon *Poetics* 60.

skips her relationships with the Christians in her narration. This was later revealed by al-Zindiq when he tells Zuhayr his reason for not pursuing Zahra as: “[A]fter three months in Qurtuba she was seen climbing atop every Christian nobleman who smiled at her. This went on for many years. Too many years” (*Shadows* 86). This revelation by al-Zindiq is later confirmed by Zahra herself in her talk with Amira (Ama), whereas other family members like Umar are still ignorant or deliberately playing ignorant. *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree*, like a historiographic metafiction, brings the inadequacies of narration and narrators in traditional historiography. Inclusion of multiple voices highlights how the third person objective narrator is insufficient but it also makes the inadequacies of multiple narrators obvious. The resultant effect of this multiplicity in points of view is the gap and incompleteness created in narrative that does not become coherent and complete even if these accounts are joined.

Recently debated issues in the field of postmodern historiography are questions of credibility, certainty, authenticity and truth which are also dealt with in *The Book of Saladin*. Stable point of view that was present in the realistic mode of writing is subverted in this novel. There are two possible narrative modes to replace the anonymous third person omniscient narrator in historiographic metafiction: The first form is the use of “overt, deliberately manipulative narrators”, and the other is multiple voices instead of a single perspective.⁷² But in neither do we see the subject confident about his or her ability to know the past with any certainty. Ali uses both modes in his novels, more prominently in *The Book of Saladin*. He uses an authorial narrator as well as plural voices in the narration. So, the narrative structure of *The Book of Saladin* is in line with postmodern historical fiction. The central narrator, the scribe, possesses the authority of narration, apparently with an objective point of view, but coupled with

⁷² Hutcheon *Poetics* 160

intrusive narration to add subjectivity and to make narration more dubious. The narrator, who is anonymous in the first couple of pages, is introduced to us as Isaac Ibn Yakub, after he is appointed a scribe of Saladin by the Sultan Saladin himself on recommendation of Ibn Maymun. Ibn Yakub assumes multiple roles i.e of a writer, narrator, a character and a scribe/historian at the same time thus merging the boundaries between historiography and novel writing. In historiographic metafiction “the producer’s position is one of both novel writer and narrative historian”⁷³ Isaac Ibn Yakub also performs these two roles simultaneously and can be called a “surrogate author”⁷⁴. He is the novel writer who tells his own story, his relation with his wife Rachel, his appointment as a scribe to Saladin, the betrayal of his friends (like Ibn Maymun) and his wife, his love for his daughter Maryam and finally the loss of his family. His story runs parallel to Sultan’s life which the historian is appointed to record. Ibn Yakub shifts as well as blends his two positions. He also possesses the roles of a character in the story he is writing as well as the role of the narrator of Sultan’s history. His character thus is essential in the discussion of his role of a historian.

Historiographic metafiction challenges the “traditional transparency of the first person pronoun as a reflection of subjectivity and of the third person pronoun as the guarantee of objectivity.”⁷⁵ Hence, the narrator and the scribe Ibn Yakub, narrates the story in first person but his point of view is objective. The first thing to create objectivity in narration is the fact that Ibn Yakub is a Jew. The fact that a Jew historian has been made to write Saladin’s memoir clearly

⁷³ Hutcheon *Poetics* 148.

⁷⁴ Mark Currie defines a surrogate author as the one who “dramatizes the process of fictional production.”

Postmodern Narrative Theory. (London: Palgrave macmillan, 2011) 60.

⁷⁵ *Poetics* 177

shows that Ali wanted to imply objectivity and neutrality in the narration about Saladin's character. It also makes the historical account about Saladin more credible. Apart from Ibn Yakub, Sultan Saladin himself is the narrator of his life history. If a neutral narrator adds objectivity in the narration, then Saladin himself also adds authenticity since these are his memories experienced by him.⁷⁶ His narration is also first person point of view but the point of view is not always certain. So, while dictating the scribe about his father he says: "Unur... trusted my father. On his deathbed, or so we are told, he advised the sultan Abak to retain my father's services" (*Saladin* 69). The information Sultan Saladin has of his past and the family might have been told to him by his elders. There is no way for him to know about how much of it is true since there are always chances of manipulation or personal biases. Like al-Zindiq, Umar and Zuhayr, he only knows what he has been told and he narrates the same information to the scribe. This personal example of uncertainty about a character's past can be extended to the knowledge of history in general. It can be known through discursive history but whether that information is definite or certain is questionable.

The main narrator of the novel i.e Ibn Yakub, never claims to know everything nor does he interrogate about the things he is not told. This is true, especially of the wars, fights and political decisions of Saladin. He is kept ignorant sometimes by his biggest source of information about Sultan i.e Shadhi. He seems quite content even when he sees that Shadhi "did not enlighten" him (*Saladin* 147). Although we know that the Sultan and his attendant do this to protect the historian from their enemies by not telling him everything they are planning, this ignorance on part of the historian is an indication that historians are not all knowledgeable since history is not all

⁷⁶ Ali, Tariq, *The Book of Saladin* (Islamabad: Alhamra Publishing, 1999) 194. Subsequent references of the text will appear in parenthesis.

knowable. For Foucault, the new historian does not seek to pursue mere plurality of viewpoints but the true explanation of the past which he gets by recognizing the “dispersals of the past.” This recognition of the past as plural, multiple and non-unified makes the realization possible that the present and even the historian is not unified within himself. “He can neither master knowledge of the past, nor write from complete self-knowledge.”⁷⁷ There are blind spots and blank spaces which historians sometimes fill with their own imagination but Ibn Yakub resists this temptation of which traditional historians are accused by postmodern critics of history. Ibn Yakub serves as an instrument to reveal incompleteness faced by every historian in the process of history writing.

Ibn Yakub is the personal scribe of Saladin appointed by the Sultan himself and he is the only scribe Sultan trusts with very personal information. But this also brings in the question of authenticity since we do not find any reference of Sultan asking the scribe to read what he has written after the Sultan relates it. Secondly, there is no second account by any other scribe to compare his writing with. Despite the fact that he is the only scribe, we have been provided with multiple reasons to believe in the honesty and truthfulness of the scribe. For example, the narrator lets the character of Saladin speak for himself. He interrupts narration only at some occasions where for example, he has to describe the expressions of Saladin.

Postmodern novels highlight the flaw of realistic novel for implying unity by establishing a coherent and stable structure. This unity is also implied by importing an objective third person narrator who is the sole controller of narration. Postmodern novels disrupt this unity by disrupting the authority of the narrator and implying multiplicity instead. Multiple narrators in the novel reflect postmodern attribute of plurality through multiple perspectives but also

⁷⁷ Ann Curthoys and John Docker 183.

highlight the limitations of the main narrator. Postmodernism also influenced another method of destabilising the authoritative narrator – to focus on historians’ lack of knowledge and the difficulty in knowing much at all about the thoughts and passions of the people of the past. These historians were more interested in foregrounding what they did not know, and their own processes of trying to decipher and decide what might have happened. “Such an approach reintroduces the historian as a first-person narrator in his or her own text, established as a detective figure attempting to work out from the (incomplete and sometimes contradictory) evidence what may have happened in the past.”⁷⁸ In *The Book of Saladin*, Ibn Yakub is playing a similar role of such a historian. He is not the only narrator, instead at many occasions he is merely a listener or a spectator. The limitations of a single controlling narrator, as highlighted in the novel, are: lack of knowledge and problems to access the information, limitations of memory and the problem of partiality.

The first constraint of a single narrator is the limitation of knowledge. One narrator cannot know everything and cannot possibly have access to all the information. Therefore, multiple narrators have been employed in the novel to expand the information. Apart from the first narrator, some other characters who contribute in narration are Saladin, Shadhi, Kadi al Fadil, Halima, Jamila and Amjad the eunuch.

Paul Veyne argues that we can know the events, even those personally closest to us, through memory. Events cannot be reproduced even if memory is at work; “memory can create only text.”⁷⁹ So, another limitation of a single narrator, importantly a scribe/historian is his memory. Ibn Yakub himself confesses about his weak memory about the details in contrast to a

⁷⁸ Ann Curthoys and John Docker 204.

⁷⁹ Paul Veyne, *Comment on écrit l’histoire*. (Paris: Seuil, 1971) 309.

very gifted scholar of Saladin's court i.e Imad al-Din. The issue of memory is quite significant in historiography. The main historian in the novel i.e Ibn Yakub, though is a gifted scholar, but is not confident about having as good a memory as Imad al-Din whose method to retrieve information about any past event was "first to recall details such as the tree under whose shade the listeners were resting when the story was told, or the boat trip they were taking, the sea shore and the time of day: then everything would become clear" (*Saladin* 173). Using this method when Ibn Yakub tried to write down this conversation with Imad, he became so much "fascinated by Imad al-Din's way of talking and his soft, enticing voice" that he would forget all else (*Saladin* 173). This contrast between the two scholars is reflexive of the contrast between nineteenth century historical novel and postmodern historical novel. Firstly, the postmodern historians, like Ibn Yakub would not use the peculiar and minute details just to authenticate their account. Whereas the conventional nineteenth century historians who are represented through Imad paid a great deal of attention to such details to historicize their account and to claim authenticity and originality. Also, Imad detaches himself from what he is recording, unlike Ibn Yakub who cannot separate himself from his feelings and personal opinions. His character is again representative of the problems of biases and subjectivity in historiography. The suspicion in the mind of readers of inclusion of the scribe's personal feelings into his historical writing creates distrust for the historian. Similarly, in *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree*, Umar bin Abdallah is also forgetful of most of the details and particulars of the story of his aunt Zahra. By installing this feature of nineteenth century historiography, Ali is actually subverting it. He seems to side with the postmodern view that even memory cannot be trusted when it comes to retrieving the past for writing or narrating it. The actual details, events, characters, situation in the empirical past cannot be retrieved from memory exactly as they had occurred. There is only a

partial and limited access possible to that past. So, Imad would only remember or claim to remember the details he had received from someone else but how far could the memory of that previous source be relied on. Moreover, the very concept of original is also problematic. Every source is traced back to another source and the chain of sources, even if traced to the firsthand account, cannot claim the access to the truth. This makes even Shadhi's most trustworthy account of Saladin's past doubtful. Secondly, Imad's exquisite memory and embellished style of writing are also a contradiction when the authenticity and originality are to be discussed. He is gifted with an extraordinary memory to be able to remember and retrieve the facts but he believes in beautifying the facts in his language which foregrounds the claim of historians of scientific representation of the historical facts in contradiction with the use of aesthetic features in their linguistic representation of those facts. Therefore, rhetoric and metaphor are essential to historiography, and history itself is a narrative discourse, like fiction, in which the reality is always mediated by the language.⁸⁰

Third limitation of Ibn Yakub's narration is his partiality associated with first person narration. His role(s) of a narrator/writer of the history of Saladin give an ambivalent inkling to the reader about his narration. For example, despite the first person narration, we do not sense any subjectivity on part of the scribe. One reason could be that this quality of objectivity or impartiality has been installed in the novel to criticize the subjectivity of traditional style of recorded history under the guise of objectivity. On the other hand, it could also be an effort to make Ibn Yakub a model historian to counter the objection of partiality by the postmodern

⁸⁰ Hayden White. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973) 7.

critics. In that sense Isaac Ibn Yakub is an ideally created postmodern historian who has the direct access to the past and who records it faithfully as well. It can be a deliberate effort on part of the writer to imply transparency in narration in order to emphasize the rewritten facts which had been ignored in western and Muslim historical writings alike. However, even he is affected by momentary feelings of pity, anger and jealousy which he checks instantly but that may or may not have affected his judgment. So, whether it is an impartial and objective writing is still a pertinent question since neither Sultan nor we get to read his manuscript.

Installation of multiple voices in *The Book of Saladin* is to compensate for the confines of

a single narrator. Saladin is made to narrate his life himself to make up for Ibn Yakub's limitations but only to highlight his own. Firstly, Sultan cannot remember everything from his childhood himself. Secondly, there must be occasions where he would choose to hide certain information or prefer not to tell it to the scribe. Thirdly, Sultan himself cannot be a judge of his character in every role. These problems are solved by employing multiple narrators in the novel and by decentering the role of the scribe in narration.

To solve these issues in Saladin's narration, Shadhi's character fulfills the responsibility of an informed narrator. He has seen Sultan grow from a child to a ruler, trained him to use a sword and also knows Sultan's character like no one else can. Shadhi's significance to Sultan's history is mentioned by Shadhi himself when he tells the scribe that "[H]e will never tell you. The memory of great men is always faulty. They forget their past so easily, but fortunately for you, my good scribe, Shadhi is still alive" (*Saladin* 72). Shadhi states events from Saladin's childhood and adventures in his youth to the scribe, shares the incident where he was rebuked by his father and narrates the incidents to the scribe that cause pain for the Sultan to remember. So, Shadhi plays a very important role in the narration and without his support Saladin's history

would not have been complete. Ibn Yakub valued his company for “he was an invaluable source for the secret history of Salah al-Din and the House of Ayyub” (*Saladin* 236). Information received from Shadhi is reliable for the scribe because of Shadhi’s character. He is not intimidated by Saladin or anyone’s authority, he is not afraid of saying what he truly feels and he is a confidante to Saladin as well. Jamila’s opinion of Shadhi, after his death, also marks him as a credible and reliable narrator when she says “[One] of the more reassuring things about him was his ability to distance himself from events and individuals and look at both with an indifferent rationality” (*Saladin* 256). He lets scribe in Saladin’s past and gives him the glimpse of his character yet he leaves some things on Sultan himself to relate to the scribe (for example the story behind Sultan’s bad eye which was never narrated). Despite the curiosity and persistence of the scribe he remains tight lipped. His being a rich reservoir of information about Sulatn, his faithfulness and love for Sultan, his straight forward character and his close relation with Saladin not only establish his credibility in the narration but also give a different perspective to it. It keeps narration from being centered or controlled by either Ibn Yakub or Saladin.

A similar role to Shadhi is played by an old maid servant, Ama, in al-Hudayl family in *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* but unlike Shadhi, she never gets a chance to relate the story of the masters herself. Instead, another male character (al-Zindiq) relates the story combining Ama’s version into it (whatever it was, since the reader never gets to know what exactly did Ama tell al-Zindiq). In contrast, Shadhi’s role in illustrating Saladin’s personal and political sides is very convincing but he might not have the same authority to talk about Saladin’s private life or his life in the harem. The authority of the main narrator Ibn Yakub as well as Shadhi is decentered again and the reins of narration go in the hands of Saladin’s concubines: Sultana Jamila and Sultana Halima. Narration of these female characters not only helps Ibn Yakub give a

whole picture of Sultan Saladin (as a warrior, as a sultan and as a husband) but also adds a female's perspective into narration.

Another important characteristic of the narrative in Ali's novels is a collective sense of escape from the past that makes narrative stutter. For instance, in *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* it is not Zuhayr's parents who tell him the family history initially rather al-Zindiq. It is as if they have a historic amnesia. This amnesia manifests itself in the form of an escape or a self imposed silence. "His [Miguel's] face, which had become so accustomed to concealing all emotions, suddenly filled with anguish...They saw Zubayda approaching, and what Miguel might or might not have told her remained buried in his heart"(*Shadows* 101).

This silence observed in the family is significant. Symbolically it reflects the preferences of historiographers, in this case the elders of the family who are responsible to transmit the family history to the present generation. In their process of pick and choose; only the bright, the good and the favourable parts (like the stories of Ibn Farid's valour) are narrated and transmitted. The rest is silenced. The tragedy of Asma and Miguel was silenced in al-Hudayl family, never to be mentioned again. A similar incident in the family happened in Ishbiliya where Ibn Hanif was supposedly his grandfather's son instead of his father's, but there it was tried to be forgotten and concealed (*Shadows* 139). So, even where such shameful acts were a part of the common knowledge of the older generation within the family, they were concealed from the next generation and forgotten as if they had never happened. But they keep coming back in their memories or in form of recurrence. "I tried to kill our past, to exorcise memory once and for all, but they are stubborn creatures, they refuse to die" (*Shadows* 69). Umar's futile inclination to get rid of the past in order to accept the present is not successful, rather they turn into "[t]he savage torments of memory" and he can't help but mourn for the days gone by (*Shadows* 82). Zahra too,

finds her escape from her painful past and returns to al-Hudayl thinking “[t]he past is forgotten and I do not wish it to return” (*Shadows* 49) but ironically this re-visit to Hudayl takes her to revisit her past only to emerge with a different perspective about it. The other members of Hudayl family ignored, silenced and removed from the memory what did not fit the family honour, and found an escape to forget the bitter past.

These silences and selective truths make knowledge of complete and true history impossible. Commenting on the historical truth, Foucault believes that truth should always be taken in relation to power and historical search for truth should also be studied critically. Every society has a mechanism to shape certain discourses as true. Every society, according to Foucault, has a demand for truth which is produced and transmitted under the control of the dominant and the powerful group. This group determines and differentiates truth from falsehood.⁸¹ Wajid al-Zindiq revealed the untold to Zuhayr breaching the promise he had made to Umar that his “...lips were to remain sealed on all affairs concerning his [Umar’s] family” (*Shadows* 42). Youth, like Zuhayr and Hind were not told this by their father, neither by their mother, and al-Zindiq declares they will never tell this to their children (*Shadows* 34). Though the hidden truth of Umar’s family had been spoken but it still couldn’t be made public. It would still remain within the family as Zuhayr promised to maintain “silence” (*Shadows* 42).

Narrators in historiographic metafiction are “either disconcertingly multiple and hard to locate...or resolutely provisional and limited.”⁸² The resultant shifting perspectives contest the totalizing and homogenizing systems. This provisionality and heterogeneity not only disrupts formal and thematic coherence, but also highlights the assumed homogeneity in historical

⁸¹ Ann Curthoys and John Docker. *Is History Fiction?* 185.

⁸² Hutcheon *Poetics* 11.

narrative by including the marginal and the ex-centric. Narrative shifts and multiple narrators serve a crucial part in *Shadows of The Pomegranate* as well where the installation of multiple narrators is significant to join the broken threads. No single narrator can tell the story of al-Hudayl family in its entirety which is only comprehensive when all the accounts are joined, though it still will not be complete. Similarly history cannot be considered reliable when it just concerns itself with the dominant view only. Another problem arises when historians make the historical characters limited to one side of their personalities which is deconstructed in *The Book of Saladin*. Multiplicity in narration not only deconstructs the conventions of traditional authoritarian and limited historical narratives, but reconstructs it at different levels. For example, it gives an insight into different aspects of Saladin's character in his personal, political, military and religious capacity. Plurality of voices thus gives a wholesome picture of Saladin. The problems of bias and concealment, though unintentional, have also been taken care of by installing more than one narrator.

Employing multiple narrators not only gives plurality of perspectives by incorporating the mute voices but ironically, it is crucial to historiography in revealing its inherent contradictions, biases, and fictitious truths. Multiple narrations challenge the authority of a controlled narrator but also reveal their inherent problems of uncertainty and contradiction. In *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* Zindiq's narration about Zuhayr's family history is uncertain as well as contradictory. For instance, his facts contradict about Zahra's age but Zuhayr does not notice them. Zindiq also happens to be self contradictory when he objects that Zuhayr is not critical enough to question him but he narrates the family history to him on the condition that he won't be interrupted (*Shadows* 36). Also, he doesn't wait for Zuhayr to ask any question rather "before he could ask a question, the old man had moved on" (*Shadows* 40). Al-Zindiq's

narration draws attention to the credibility of a historiographer whose role is always questionable. He appears objective and truthful only because of the silence on part of his listener Zuhayr. Postmodern historiography demands a reader who is not only critical but also conscious of the process through which historians establish their credibility to force their falseness mixed with the facts down the reader's throat.

Historiographic metafiction, by problematizing the authority of controlled narrator, challenges the authority of historian in historical narrative as well as the conclusive and absolute idea of history it tries to establish. It challenges the concept of center as eternal and universal.⁸³ It deals with the concept of center as fiction and recommends multiple narratives to be inclusive of the multiple perspectives that are neglected otherwise in historical discourses. For example, multiple narratives include the voice of the female narrators who had always been silent in historiography. According to Beard, the main reason of exclusion of women from histories is "partly a result of the confusion in historical writing between 'man' meaning humanity, both male and female, and 'man' meaning specifically male."⁸⁴ Male voice has been considered a universal as well as an absolute voice in traditional historiography, taking the female perspective for granted. The writers of historical novel are also guilty of ignoring the female representation. The male bias can be understood by reading Lukacs' praise of Walter Scott for adding "a new masculinity"⁸⁵ in the genre of novel by writing historical novels. Ali challenges this notion in his novels highlighting the problems arising as a result of this generalized perspective. Male recorders and transmitters of history cannot claim to represent all genders and their perspectives.

⁸³ Hutcheon *Poetics* 58.

⁸⁴ Ann Curthoys and John Docker 159.

⁸⁵ Ann Curthoys and John Docker 37.

But unfortunately, female narrators, no matter how crucial and significant their experience might be, have always been silent in historiography. In *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree*, even when al-Zindiq accepts the role and contribution of Amira in straightening out the facts of Asma's story but still Amira was never given a chance to either confirm or refute that. Similarly, there is a clear difference between how Umar narrates the arrival of Asma in the house of Ibn Farid and how Zahra describes it. Umar presents it to be hatred but Zahra recalls it as a feeling of "astonishment" over Asma's youth, innocence and beauty (*Shadows* 141). Likewise, al-Zndiq's narration had an element of self pity. Though there was a friction of regret for not going after Zahra, the excuse he made was Zahra's strange revenge from her father by sleeping with Christian friars; it did not convey Zahra's sentiments. Male eye cannot see through or express a woman's experiences. For example, in *A Book of Saladin*, Halima herself narrates her story before Sultan after Kadi's report. Kadi's narration lacks the sentiments of sympathy for her for being in the house with a man she never loved; it rather presents Halima as an unfaithful wife. Kadi was only able to state the facts that he had collected from his investigation; feelings and emotions were completely ignored during the collection of facts. There was subjectivity and authenticity in Halima's narration who gave a complete different perspective of the incident of adultery from Kadi's. This shows that men and male centred narration are inept to comprehend the exclusive female experience. Jamila also articulates this fact when she tells the scribe: "You and your beloved Sultan live in a male world. You simply cannot understand our world" (*Saladin* 218). The female characters in *The Book of Saladin* have also been given a voice. The accounts of Jamila and Halima have been narrated in their own voices by themselves. The writer/scribe is not 'representing' them or narrating their accounts on their behalf. So, re-visiting the past, with different and multiple perspectives, makes history all inclusive. On the contrary, this inclusion

also highlights the absence of these accounts in recorded histories. So, the reader of *The Book of Saladin* cannot possibly know whether Halima, Jamila, Amjad and Shadhi's accounts have been incorporated in Ibn Yakub's recordings, though he has been made aware of their absence in the history books.

Role of women in history making and historiography is twofold as Tariq Ali depicted it in *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* and *The Book of Saladin*. The first role is active presence in the history while the second is sharing the process of articulation of history. While in the former women are dominant, in the second role they have nominal presence. Whole history of al-Hudayl family revolves around two women and their respective tragedies. One is Asma and her incestuous relation with her son that cost her life whereas the other incident is Zahra's expulsion from her house because of her rebellion against her father followed by her skeptic and cynic ideas. The men and their role in the past and in the making of family history are not emphasized. Ali has shown how women affect history and play essential role in it but when it comes to women narrators and their role in the transmission of their historical knowledge, there is silence. Ama is the most apt example of this voiceless history. She acquaints Yazid with Miguel's past before he converted into Christianity and about Ubaydallah's corruption. Yazid is under a strong impression that Ama "knows a great deal" (*Shadows* 13). She is the one who has also brought up Umar bin Abdallah and knows family history so well even for Zahra to think of her as "the only person who could tell everything" (*Shadows* 60). Al-Zindiq also believes "Amira probably knew much more than he had ever been told" (*Shadows* 88) but she is not the one voicing the silent and hushed up stories to the members of al-Hudayl family, nor is she inquired by any of them (Umar, Zubayda, Zuhayr, Hind etc.). Only Zahra makes an inquiry, but only to satisfy her curiosity about Ibn Zaydun. So, Ama remains either silent, is ignored (especially by Zubayda and

Hind) or is indulged in self talking about the hideous past and bleak future of al-Hudayl family and dies silently with all the secrets still buried in her heart.

Zahra does not materialize the idea of making her life history public by writing it, though she partially communicates her past to the inquisitive youth of al-Hudayl family. Ali emphasizes the importance of the personal chronicles written by women and their disregard by the male historiographers in incorporating them into mainstream history. But on the other hand, it also highlights the paradox in Zahra's words about insignificance attached to the thoughts and words of women. Zahra herself eliminates the possibility of writing down her life history:

In the eerie calm of maristan in Ghamata she had concentrated on three or four good years in her life- these she would relive and even put down on paper. But three days before her return to the village of Banu Hudayl, she had destroyed everything on a tiny replica of the bonfire lit by Ximenes in the market. She had done so in the belief that her life was not of any great interest to anyone except herself and she was about to die (*Shadows* 140).

This is not the case though in *The Book of Saladin* where Jamila appoints Zainab, a very talented and learned girl, as her scribe. So, where Ali has shown a male scribe writing and recording the history of the Sultan, a female is simultaneously recording the reflections and history of his wife in the harem to be represented and transmitted with a pure female experience. Ali, in his historiographic metafiction, suggests the need of history of women being written by women themselves to bring them from the position of the 'other' to the center. Women characters are also brought into the center in *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree*. It is, however, important to note that questioning the historical narrative has been emphasized to create a counter narrative. Hind's character in the novel is one such example. She is a non-conformist woman in al-Hudayl family who, unlike her brother Zuhayr, asks questions and also interrupts

the narrator (her father Umar) by questioning the decisions made in the past. Therefore, her reception of history is not passive rather critical. She has a rebellious nature and is always up to reject tradition and authority like her aunt Zahra and her mother Zubayda. Moreover, Zuhayr sends Dwarf to Hind with his letter and AL-Zindiq's books with the instructions to keep them safe and take Daud's opinion on them. So, the responsibility of transmission of untold history is given to her to be communicated.

Ali dismantles the idea of an objective, certain and totalising history by showing uncertain and uninformed male narrators (Saladin, Ibn Yakub, Umar and al-Zindiq) and also by depicting women as silent or silenced carriers of history. It serves a dual purpose: it shows the discourse of history as deficient and incomplete, and also highlights the absence of female narratives by making their presence felt.

History has not only failed in incorporating female narratives but has also excluded marginalized, less privileged and iconoclasts from the mainstream discourse. Such history cannot claim to be universal or representative of all. Historiographic metafiction asserts the inclusion of views and perspectives of the under or un-represented groups in history to make history more inclusive, complete and integrated. According to the feminist standpoint theorists "knowledge from subordinated social locations is more complete than knowledge from dominant social locations."⁸⁶ The notion to form this opinion is that the subordinated group is more likely to understand the perspective of the dominant group along with its own but not vice versa. The dominant group is less likely to have a motive to understand the perspective of the subordinated group. The same notion can be applied to the historical knowledge, which is mostly exclusive

⁸⁶ "Feminist Standpoint Theory". Sage reference. *Encyclopaedia of Communication Theory*.

merely incorporating the views of the dominant groups. Ali has thus incorporated rather preferred history from the subordinated locations. The characters, classes and communities that otherwise get no representation in mainstream historiography have been given their own voice. Ali himself urges his readers to look for characters in his novels that are “always people who are slightly on the edges of the novel but become very important.”⁸⁷ He is critical of recorded history for being selective and partial as it only records the so called dominant view and marginalizes the other segments in history. *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* and *The Book of Saladin* incorporate different versions of historical truth by various communities, classes and marginalized group of people. In *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* Beatrice daughter of Dortha was not even consulted about her marriage with Ibn Farid. She, like her mother, was the commodity of her master Don Alvaro who decided about her marriage after a nominal approval from her mother. Then she was made to convert to Islam and even her Muslim name Asma was chosen by her husband. Ali highlights how women were marginalized in both Christian and Muslim world and especially the female slaves faced double oppression. The fate of Beatrice didn't change much after becoming Asma and she died a painful death after allegedly committing the sin of incest. But her story was not as popular as were Ibn Farid's stories of valour, courage and honour. She was the one who ruined that honour, got her punishment and was removed from the past never to be mentioned till Wajid al-Zindiq brings her name up in the history of al-Hudayl family. But there were some insignificant people who were not mentioned even by al-Zindiq. While narrating Asma's story al-Zindiq mentions Dortha and Dwarf's father saying, “...the Dwarf's father learnt a great deal from her...and there were stories that- but let me not digress” (*Shadows* 167). The main story and thus the story that deserves to be history is

⁸⁷ Tariq Ali, “Tariq Ali's Interview on The Islam Quintet” by Kashif Ahmed. October 2011.

the story of Ibn Farid's family. The stories of the servants and other poor villagers prove to be digressions which are ordinary and never make it to the mainstream history. Though Dorothea's decision of coming and staying at Hudayl's would have changed things but she is cut loose from the story. Even Zindiq does not trouble himself to know about her more and is satisfied with his own assumptions. The stories of the servants from generations like Shadhi, Dwarf's father, Dwarf, Amira and then Umayma are mere digressions as compared to the masters' that are the main plot in the fiction of history.

Histories are always written to save the records of people like Ibn Farid and Saladin but the loyal servants like the Dwarf and Shadhi can nowhere be traced. The stories of the people like Shadhi never make it to the history books. Scribe is also listening to his story but not including it in his history book. Shadhi resonates Zahra when he says, "I will tell you my story, even though it is of interest to only me and affects nothing" (*Saladin* 167). Here Ali on one hand, is acquainting the reader with the story of the unrepresented person, but also highlights the absence of this class from popular histories. Similarly, the tales of minorities are also excluded from histories, since the history is always dominated by the group which is in majority and power. Therefore, Ibn Yakub prefers to write Sultan Saladin's history over his project of compiling the history of his own people. During one of his journeys that he takes with the Sultan he says: "I... had thought of writing a detailed account of the desert for my own book, but once again Salah al-Din had interrupted my labours" (*Saladin*, 193).

Politics of exclusion is also exposed by Ali by inclusion of the intellectual outcasts or heretics as well as the segments of society whose stories always remain untold. For example, Ali's characters repeatedly refer to the philosophy of Ibn Rushd and Ibn Khaldun, most of the characters are familiar with the names of Ibn-Sina, al-Idrisi and bear enough knowledge of

theology and hadith to debate on the issues of sensitive nature, al-Zindiq (in *Shadows*), his followers as well as Jamila (in *Saladin*) quote Al-Ma'ari's poetry, and Saladin's library contains the book of heretics like Abul Hasan al-Bakri who were considered blasphemers. Wajid-al-Zindiq's character in *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* combines both outcasts and people with untold histories. He is living as a hermit for his heretic ideas, his past is completely unknown to people and his writings remain with him in his cave but Zuhayr sends them to Hind for being published later, thus the novel shows the concern of historiographic metafiction with representing the outcasts and telling the untold histories.

Another example of projecting the unrepresented is the people with different sexual orientation and gender, like homosexuals and eunuchs. Ali not only makes existence of eunuchs and gays noticed but shows homosexuality, exaggeratedly though, a common practice. Saladin's brother's erotic love with a boy who was a flute player, Halima's extra-marital relation, Halima and Jamila's erotic relation in harem, Syed Bukhari's relation with his pupil, Saladin's adulterous relation, Imad al Din's love for a boy and Daud and Mansoor's relation in *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* are a few examples. The eunuchs are given a lot of space in Ali's novels that acknowledges their role in history as spies, intriguing servants, killers and knowers of all the secrets of harem and courts (*Amjad and Almas*).

Through historiographic metafiction, the "modernist concept of single and alienated otherness" is challenged as it exposes the hierarchies concealed in the binaries.⁸⁸ Seeing history from subordinated positions not only gives us insight into the lives of marginalized people but also gives counterfactual narratives by exposing dominant groups and their practices "especially

⁸⁸ Hutcheon *Poetics* 61.

those that create and reproduce inequality.”⁸⁹ So, Ali’s history of Islam in both novels is narrated through the perspectives of women, Jews, heretics, eunuchs, homosexuals, outcasts and less privileged groups and classes of that time not only decentering the dominant view of history but also exposing underlying power relations among different groups.

Postmodern works challenge the narrative singularity and unity in favour of multiplicity and disparity to “contest art’s right to claim to inscribe timeless universal values.”⁹⁰ So, decentred narrative serves to question the unity and stability of historical truth as a monolith and homogeneous account of the past. Historiographic metafiction aims at questioning the nature of truth itself rather than evaluation of the stories as fact or fiction. It manipulates the overlapping of two genres of history and fiction. It shows that historiography is as structured, coherent and teleological as any narrative fiction whereas, fiction also incorporates social and political history. Ali’s novels ironically represent this problematic nature of truth. Plurality of opinions, multiplicity of truth, ambiguities, mysteries and inability of characters to have a transparent and uninterrupted access to the past makes the possibility of knowing the truth an illusion. This complicated nature of truth has been discussed by Ali in *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree*. There are some mysteries in history (and thus in the transmission of history), which cannot be solved and which always keep history open to interpretations and debates. For example, there was no way to know whether Zindiq was Ibn Farid’s son or the gardener’s, whether Shadhi was the son of Saladin’s grandfather or not? What was the reality of Miguel and Asma’s tabooed relationship?

⁸⁹ “Feminist Standpoint Theory”. Sage Reference.

⁹⁰ Hutcheon *Poetics* 90.

He had wanted so much to tell her all that had happened to him after that fateful day of shame; to describe the explosion of passions which had propelled him into an unknown space to defy the time-honoured taboo, and the horrendous aftermath; to discuss for the first time the death of Asma, a death which had deprived him of someone to blame for his own torment and unhappiness; the layers of guilt which still lay congealed somewhere in his mind...Miguel now realized that he himself would die without one last conversation with the only member of the family And the descent of al-Hudayl family itself who had belonged to the same vanished world. (*Shadows* 146)

There was no way to confirm whether al-Hudayl was descendant from a Prophet's companion or not and "regardless of whether this was true or pure invention, even the most irreligious members of the clan had insisted on the tradition of a simple mound of mud over their graves. Nothing more" (*Shadows* 145). Everyone still believed in what they had been told. It is quite ironic that the graves were not marked and following Prophet's tradition itself obscured their descent from the Prophet's companion. Uncertainty in the accounts that were second hand made the idea of truth skeptic. Umar himself heard the story of Zahra which was narrated to his own children years later. Al-Zindiq's knowledge was also unreliable as he got it from his mother who "insisted on speaking in riddles. She would not name the person, but from a combination of what she said to me [al-Zindiq] that night and what Amira had observed with her own eyes, what had happened became clear to us-or so we imagined" (*Shadows* 92). Most of the recounts were heard of, speculated or half told truths. Moreover these episodes in the family history were not recorded but orally communicated from mouth to mouth.

Postmodern approach to history does not deny the importance of search for historical truth but it warns against the impossibility of an objective and transparent access to that truth.

The inability of having an access to the real past is shown in the novel *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* by unavoidable circumstances in the family of Banu-Hudayl. After the death of Lady Asma and her trusted serving woman, the actual truth dies. What remains are the narratives (texts) of that truth in form of Ama, Zindiq and Miguel. These were the only available sources of at least a partial access to the truth. But this access was denied either by forced or a self imposed silence.

Ama, a very trusted, old and respectable servant in the family, appears to know about all the secrets of the family but keeps silent or is engaged in self talking. Ama's refusal to talk about the tragic past embodies the silence imposed on the transmitters of truth. Ama knows all the reality but does not tell because she is never given a chance to communicate the past herself. She always stays around the family members but still no one questions her about the reality of Asma's death rather Zuhayr questions al-Zindiq, who has a second hand account of the story. It is symbolically important that the source of truth (Ama) and reality was nearby but was never consulted or recognized, rather Zubayda and Hind never believed her accounts that she narrated to Yazid. Similarly, in history, truth is difficult to recognize and tell apart from lies, speculations and stories surrounding it. So Ama stays silent and finally, dies with her truth un-communicated.

Similarly, al-Zindiq knows facts partially, but he is not permitted to tell them. He is not even allowed to reveal his identity and likes to be called Wajid al-Zindiq instead of his real name that was Muhammad Ibn Zaydun. "I have long forgotten the name my mother gave me. Perhaps your Ama or the Dwarf will remember" (*Shadows* 41). He is not sure enough to relate the dormant history of the family to Zuhayr despite having it discussed with the old family servant Amira. "There was still no way of knowing whether their version was accurate or not, and it was for that reason that al-Zindiq was reluctant to talk" (*Shadows* 88). Moreover, only accuracy of

the account was not the only limitation but its wholeness was also a question and Zindiq accepts that the narrated account “may not be the whole truth. I have no way of knowing” (*Shadows* 88).

Miguel’s self imposed silence creates all the mystery and confusion in the search of truth. There are many things buried in the past never turning into history. Motives to hide them might be different, including the pain they inflict upon those who experience them as well as for those who inherit them in form of a bitter past, and they are then made to wonder like Zindiq: “The infernal power of yesterday’s ghosts still fuelling our passions?” (*Shadows* 101). Miguel could not even share his secret with Zahra and feared it would remain untold. He would die keeping that secret buried in his heart. Zahra was Miguel’s only link to that past which he could resolve, clarify and get retold or rewritten but when he was “ready to talk”, she had “died” (*Shadows* 146). There are many such personal and political secrets which never make it to the mainstream and known history. Or even if they do, they are not free form mysteries, questions and assumptions etc.

The historical agency is a debatable issue to determine what historical truth is and who decides what will constitute as true? It is always the powerful whose truth is recorded in the history. The real truth, if inconvenient for the dominant agency, is either murdered or is silenced. Historiographic metafiction, according to Hutcheon, highlights the repressive nature of power by installing it.⁹¹ The family of al-Hudayl replicates as to how the powerful in the history take hold of truth and only let go of the part that is convenient to be revealed and the rest is buried through forced silences. Such truth, even if is pieced together always carries suspicions because the received versions (like Zindiq’s and Amira’s) have no possible source of confirming their

⁹¹ Hutcheon *Poetics* 180.

accuracy. So, all the reader or receiver of the stated and reported history gets is a mashed up record of apparently coherent and objective but inherently contradictory and biased details.

Historiographic metafiction acknowledges that history is not a transparent record of any sure truth,⁹² rather past is always so distant and inaccessible that all human efforts to reach to it are only successful to the point that it only makes sense by the use of human imaginations, interpretations and speculations. But whether the resulting fragment is truth always remains a question. Even al-Zindiq, when asked “[a]re you sure?” cannot help saying “How can I be?” (*Shadows* 93) proving that any certainty about the past is not achievable. Access to complete truth is not possible as the truth about the tragedy of the family of Ibn Farid was not to be accessed. The family members who knew about it were not certain of how much they knew and how true it was. Truth and reality are the combination of smaller truths which can even be self contradictory. Wajid al-Zindiq is Ali’s mouthpiece and wants Zuhayr to think over the possibility of truth in received versions of history that do not always make sense and call for human reason. Access to historical truth also becomes obscure because history is not only twisted but is created and concocted as well with the help of the most ‘objective’ and scientific tools like science. For example, Don Inigo Lopez de Mendoza’s family was one of the most distinguished in the country and tried to prove it the most noble as well since “the Mendozas had employed genealogists who traced their descent back to the Visigothic Kings” (*Shadows* 63), though Ximenes doubted its credibility. Similarly, Zindiq was skeptical about the reality of Abu Daud’s being the descendant of Ibn Khaldun because in the histories written on Ibn Khaldun his whole family was perished in a shipwreck. But Daud was a proof of the unwritten facts not to be found

⁹² Hutcheon *Poetics* 129.

in any history book. He tells al-Zindiq about Ibn Khaldun's another marriage which is not reported in the books.

Postmodernism calls for a critical return to the past to expose the irony that how past is created and textualized in the process of search for truth. This leaves some gaps and disparities in the recorded history. Revealing the untold and exposing the contradictions in the told history is crucial and important to answer the questions posed by the present. Ali's novel *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* also highlights the disparities between the told lies and the concealed histories. Everyone in the family was told by the elders that Great Aunt Zahra was mad so she was sent to maristan. It is only when they meet her themselves that they observe her to be completely sane and realize that "[n]one of the stories tallied with the reality they had experienced today as the real Zahra had sought refuge from the turmoil of Gharnata in her ancestral home" (*Shadows* 56). Told stories and histories can be concocted tales to suit the ones who write/tell them (for example, Ibn Farid in this case who feared Zahra's rebellion against him and also religious authority that was enough to ruin his reputation, family honour and authority). Zahra's return to Banu-Hudayl in a way serves as a return to the past and a chance to correct the wrong notions embedded in the history and memory of the family. A number of textual disparities can easily go unnoticed by the reader but it is significant how text problematizes the process of transmission of history by bringing out these contradictions in it. Also, the problems found in omniscient narrator's narration further highlight how objectivity and neutrality of the historian is always hidden in the guise of objectivity and omniscience. There are some textual contradictions for example, according to the third person omniscient narrator "Zuhayr's uncle, Ibn Hisham lived in a handsome town house...Ibn Hisham and Umar were cousins. Ibn Hisham's father, Hisham al-Zaid, was the son of Ibn Farid's sister" (*Shadows* 75), whereas

according to the family tree added in the beginning of the novel, he was Abdallah's cousin, and therefore Zuhayr's great uncle. The narrator contradicts the author here. In another instance, Umar's youngest son Yazid gets his birthday present made by "Juan...in time for his tenth birthday last month, in the year 935 A.H" (*Shadows* 6) but the same omniscient narrator contradicts himself as: "These surroundings, this courtyard and a cheeky nine-year-old looking at him with a hint of insolence" (*Shadows* 99). There is a clear contradiction in the text about Yazid's age once again challenging the credibility of omniscient narrator. Al-Zindiq tells Zuhayr that his great aunt Zahra was two years younger than her brother Abdallah (*Shadows* 35) only to contradict himself a little later by saying " Abdallah was then eighteen years old... Your great aunt, Zahra, was four years younger" (*Shadows* 39). Zuhayr's inability to detect this obvious contradiction proves him to be a listener who easily believes everything; it also makes the reader suspicious of al-Zindiq's narration overall. Postmodern history demands more consciousness and questioning on part of the reader to detect these contradictions in apparently truthful and coherent versions. These flaws in historiography become visible by multiple but uncertain, subjective and limited narrative accounts that do not hide these limitations rather highlight them to problematize the illusion of truthful and objective accounts of history.

The narrative styles of *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* and *The Book of Saladin* fulfill the criteria to be called historiographic metafiction. *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* that installs omniscient third person narration exposes the faulty and deceptive claims of realistic representation through its mistakes and contradictions. *The Book of Saladin* follows the historiographic metafictional stance of making the narration more subjective to highlight the problematic objectivity of traditional historiography. Both novels install multiple perspectives that make the novels historiographic metafiction for its propagation of the neglected and

subordinated versions of history and absoluteness of truth. Since postmodern age is the age of plurality, difference and multiplicity, it demands the same qualities to be there in historical recordings and writings. Multiple narrators in both novels weaken the authority of objective, omniscient, centered and controlled narration. As a result they decentre the dominant and mainstream views prevalent in history and re-write or re-tell history from others' perspective. The role of the reader or the listener of these versions or pieces of history is crucial. The historian's role is only to communicate all perspectives, half truths, discarded views, silenced facts for the reader to state, "Please! Let me be the judge" (*Shadows* 88).

Chapter Three

Revisiting the Past: Problems of Textuality, Representation and Reference in *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* and *The Book of Saladin*

Some general questions we ask as readers about Ali's novels are why did he think of rewriting the history of Muslim civilization when there has so much been written already? What is different in his writing and what intrigued him to take it up as a project to probe into different periods of Islamic civilization in his famous Islam Quintet? Ali has frequently been asked these questions to which he replies: "It was some idiot on BBC TV saying during the Gulf War something like 'The Arabs are a people without a political culture...' This enraged me and that's why I started thinking of the tormented history of Islam in Europe"⁹³ So, it was an intentional attempt to achieve certain objectives which according to Hayden White, are implied in every account of the past.⁹⁴ Historiographic metafiction is the eminent choice for such novels where the intention of the writer is to revise the known public notions, in this case among the western and Muslim readers, by revising the famed history. In this chapter, I will discuss both novels of Ali for the features of intertextuality and self reflexivity at the formal level. The thematic concern here would be to see the ideas of revisiting the past, revising the historical representations and questioning the nature of historiography. Further I will take history in two perspectives: the first

⁹³ Ali Tariq, Interview by Muniza Naqvi. *3 Quarks Daily*

⁹⁴ quoted in Hutcheon *Politics* 120

perspective of history would be history as the past. The second perspective would be history as discourse. What ideological implications Ali has made by employing these elements of postmodern historical fiction in his works will be significant and essential to this discussion in this chapter.

Historiographic metafiction reveals the postmodern realization that we cannot know the past but only as text. According to Eco, repetition of “already said” and “already been written” is one of the main threats faced by the writers in historically oriented texts. Realizing that the past is unavoidable, the postmodern writer tries to represent and employ the past in an ironic and parodic fashion to make it new.⁹⁵ This inevitable bond between the texts already written and the newly written text is called intertextuality. Postmodern literature on one hand deploys the historical forms registering its dependence on them (doxa), but at the same time, through juxtaposition of apparently incompatible forms, it questions their dominance (paradoxa).⁹⁶ Ali also deploys and problematizes the historical forms (in this case historical fiction and memoir/biography) in his novels. These historical texts themselves depend on paratexts creating an intertextual complex cross referencing. Ali makes unmediated access to the historical evidence possible but paradoxically, it highlights the impossibility of the direct access to the past. So, the scribe in *The Book of Saladin* collects his data from multiple narrators like Saladin, Shadhi, Halima, Jamila, Imad al-Din and Amjad. He also incorporates memories, epistolary correspondence as well as second-hand accounts to fill the gaps in Saladin’s memoir, created because of his absence. Similarly, In *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree*, uncertain narrations and distorted and fragmented accounts of the past highlight the problematic nature of

⁹⁵ Grahem Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000) 195.

⁹⁶ Allen 190.

historical truth, as all these 'texts' further textualize the past instead of representing it, because eye witnesses, personal narrations and letters are all texts and documents that try to reconstruct the past for the reader but take him farther away from it. Human memory also becomes an intertext to know the past and is subject to criticism. Thus history (past) does not exist, except in form of texts. Historian then decides which text to choose and include and which event or the narrative of event to exclude. This is a striking resemblance between historiography and fiction that both "constitute their objects of attention...[to] decide which events will become facts."⁹⁷ Similarly, in the historical novel "history can be present only as a 'double absence' as a production of a production of the real"⁹⁸ because the sources or the para-texts it consults and incorporates are produced after consulting other sources. Thus, as readers the only way to establish the validity of a fact is to check it in archives which further depend on other documents for their points of reference. Ultimately, this access to the real past becomes a myth and the only thing available is the interpretation of the past in different documents and texts. Intertextuality, on one hand, reveals the nature of history as narrativization of the past and on the other hand, it exposes the existence of archive as textual remains of that past.

According to Hutcheon, historiographic metafiction "open[s] itself up to history" by situating itself "within historical discourse" while maintaining its "autonomy as fiction."⁹⁹ The textual past is incorporated in the present text through parody. Hutcheon does not take parody as demeaning or destructive to the past, rather she believes, "to parody is both to enshrine the past

⁹⁷ Hutcheon *Poetics* 122.

⁹⁸ Ann Curthoys and John Docker 14.

⁹⁹ Hutcheon *Poetics* 124.

and to question it.”¹⁰⁰ This resultant intertextuality fulfills the desire of rewriting the past in the present context.¹⁰¹ Ali has returned to the Muslim past in order to rewrite it. This return is an ironic and critical return where he parodies already written versions of that past. The past Ali is ironically parodying however, is not the real past but a “pseudo-real,” a textual past in form of the histories produced by the western and the Muslim scholarship. Ali parodies the past for the western audience when he revises their notions about the Christian civilization in Europe. For example, he questions the “understanding of the Reconquista...formed from a Western, Christian perspective which has dominated the history” taught to the western reader. Ferdinand and Isabella are towering figures in that tradition. Ali tells them the other side of the story “in which the advance of Christianity was more like a ruthless gradual extinction of the civilization that had been preserved in Al-Andalus since the fall of the Roman Empire.”¹⁰² *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree*, therefore, presents a counterfactual history of the western civilization to the western reader. It is not only the re-representation of the Christian world that makes the novels intertextual but also a representation of the Muslim civilization as is depicted in *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* and *The Book of Saladin*. Both civilizations are parodied in their given versions as their respective characteristics have been reversed. These novels are hence parodies of historical “meta-narratives” which Ali rejects in his revision of the past.

Who writes these texts and records the events are the points of concern discussed in postmodernist novels like historiographic metafiction. Carl Becker, an American historian, rejects the nineteenth century illusion of a scientific historian that is propagated through the

¹⁰⁰ *Poetics* 126.

¹⁰¹ *Poetics* 118.

¹⁰² Review of *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree*, *The Idle Woman*.

belief that it is not the historian who speaks, history speaks through the historian. This idea, according to Becker, is absurd because historian has a “purpose” in mind which is crucial in deriving meaning out of historical events. So, historical meaning will change with the change in purpose, desires, aspirations, needs and fears etc. it explains then as to how every generation constructs the same history in a new way.¹⁰³ Nietzsche appears in agreement with this idea when he insists that the historian should mind the interests and desires of the present while interpreting the past.¹⁰⁴ Ali makes the history of Islamic civilization relevant in contemporary age by addressing the criticism made on Islam even today. Said, in his book *Covering Islam* (1981), exposed how Islam had been portrayed by the west in media. Said argues that if knowledge is power then the media is even a greater power in the way it controls knowledge and forms people’s opinions. He claims that “the western media has determined very selectively what Westerners should and should not know about Islam and the Muslim world. Islam is portrayed as oppressive, outmoded, anti-intellectualist, extremist, backward, the cause of worldwide conflict and danger.”¹⁰⁵ Using Said’s notion, Sajjad Ali et al analyze the depiction of Arabs (and Muslims) in American and western media and find that they are presented as “unreasonable, if not stupid, primitive, sex crazed, aggressive and violent. The women are seen as uneducated, oppressed and docile.”¹⁰⁶ Ali is critical of the western biases and the existing stereotypes propagated in the west about Islam and the Muslims to maintain western hegemony. He makes

¹⁰³ Ann Curthoys and John Docker 97.

¹⁰⁴ Ann Curthoys and John Docker 83.

¹⁰⁵ Sajjad Ali, Pervez Nafees and Nafees Hassan Malik, “The Secular Side of Islam: A Case Study of Tariq Ali’s Islam Quintet” *Journal of Culture, Society and Development*.

¹⁰⁶ quoted in Sajjad Ali et al. “The Secular Side of Islam: A Case Study of Tariq Ali’s Islam Quintet”.

an attempt, through his novels, to challenge and break the binaries, propagated through the orientalist discourses and western media, to establish the superiority of the western civilization that is based on the tenets of liberty, equality, secularism, tolerance and intellectual progress. Islamic civilization, on the other hand, is stereotyped as primitive, intolerant, violent and hostile towards reason and intellect. Ali criticizes these binaries as well as the people in the west who according to him, have no historical memory.

One reason for this short memory span is that television over the last fifteen years has seen a big decline in the coverage of the rest of the world. History, when they do it, is ancient history, and they sensationalize even that. Contemporary history is virtually ignored on television... This ignorance is very useful... because you can whip up a rapid rage in ill-informed populations and go to war against almost any country.¹⁰⁷

Ali accuses the west of ignoring history as a discipline because this short memory and ignorance about history serves the purpose of imperial powers. Therefore, his historical writing is also a reminder for the western readers of the bleak past of their civilization. Ali shows the mirror to the liberal western audience that “[t]he new mono-cultural identity in Europe was built on the ashes of Islamic civilization, literally. Books were burnt, people were burnt by the Catholic Inquisition. The Jews were expelled from Spain and Portugal and sought and were given refuge in Muslim lands in the Maghreb and the Ottoman Empire.”¹⁰⁸ This is the historical narrative that has always been sugar coated for the western reader by their historians. Ali rewrites it for them to establish this historical fact that the modern western liberal ideals have been borrowed from Islamic Civilization, after the two civilizations came into contact. Ali rewrites the history of Islam challenging the western notions of Islam and Muslims created by western media

¹⁰⁷ Tariq Ali's interview, *The Progressive*. Jan 31, 2002.

¹⁰⁸ Ali Tariq, Interview by Muniza Naqvi. *3 Quarks Daily*.

and history. His choice of historiographic metafiction as a genre is significant for its inherent quality of confronting the dominant history. In *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* Ali has shown the perspective of Islam in Europe that was tolerant to other religions and cultures and had the ability to merge them in it. But the downward movement started when homogeneity was imposed in European civilization through oppressive forces of Christianity. It destroyed the diversity and peace of European peninsula by turning syncretism into an intolerant rule of Christianity forcing Muslims either to covert, migrate or die. Don Inigo Lopez de Mendoza, Count of Tendilla, embarrassingly confesses this fact to the intolerant Ximene de Cisneros in *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* when he says: "They have ruled over a very large portion of our peninsula. They did so without burning too many bibles or tearing down all our churches or setting synagogues alight in order to build their mesquites. They are not a rootless phenomenon" (*Shadows* 63). This discussion in this global scenario is important since according to Said: "it's more accurate to say that the period that we are living in is not the clash of civilizations but the clash of definitions."¹⁰⁹ But important thing here is who is given the power to define?¹¹⁰ Ali revises the definitions established by the western historians in *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* and *The Book of Saladin* but unlike the Islamic scholarship, that is either apologetic about Islam being violent or completely denies it, Ali shows Saladin as the commander of the Muslims equally supported by his Jew and Christian subjects in his Jihad for the reconquest of Jerusalem. The concept of Jihad, always subject to criticism, has been discussed with reference to the tolerant and peaceful character of Saladin who does not wage any war driven by religious

¹⁰⁹ Edward Said. "The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations"(Transcript). *Media Education Foundation: Challenging Media*. P 7.

¹¹⁰ Refer to the comments at P. 58 of the presenter of BBC who defined the Arabs in his remarks during the Gulf war.

fanaticism. Imad al- Din speaks for Saladin's politically, and not religiously driven, objectives behind a military confrontation with the Franj in these words: "There were some hot-headed fools for whom the Jihad meant a state of permanent war with the Franj, but Salah al-Din was never sympathetic to such a view" (*Saladin* 231). *The Book of Saladin* presents an insightful comparison with *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* because Islamic Jihad, as is presented in *The Book of Saladin*, targeted only the armed soldiers in the battlefield, without killing innocent people whereas the Christian rulers, like Xemenes de Cisneros in *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree*, killed innocent people. Moreover, neither Saladin nor any of his commanders or soldiers ever destroyed the centers of learning,¹¹¹ or burnt the libraries, but Christian friars like Xemenes de Cisneros destroyed the whole culture and civilization of Muslims because they believed that "the heathen could only be eliminated as a force if their culture was completely erased" (*Shadows* 4). So, Ali's novel is a response to the western criticism endorsing his view that Islamic Civilization is not devoid of culture and knowledge rather culture and knowledge of Muslims was burnt in front of their eyes by the Christians or was transported to the west. In *The Book of Saladin*, not only scholars like Imad al-Din and Ibn Yakub show their concern with the books but Sultan Saladin also possesses rare books in his library. His wife Jamila was also well versed in hadith and philosophy of Ibn Rushd. Similarly, in *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* the tragedy of Bab al Ramla remains alive in the hearts of Muslims, who are more grieved over burning of their public libraries and all their treasure of knowledge, than the threat to their faith.

¹¹¹ Muslims have been shown more tolerant towards a mutual co-existence, though there is a side reference to an intolerant Moorish city of Fez where the Jew philosopher and physician Rabbi Musa ibn Maymun had to live, along with his family, disguised as a Muslim because of the threat to non-Muslims, who were given the choices of either to convert, emigrate or die. But it was not under Saladin's reign. (p.21)

liberal in 12th and 15th centuries as depicted in *The Book of Saladin* and *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* respectively. Muslims were tolerant towards homosexuals, there were male brothels, hamams and taverns and there was respect for individual liberty. This exaggerated portrayal of specific groups and their role in the societies is ironically highlighting their exclusion and otherness in recorded Muslim histories which have always been tales of the heroes and legendary characters. Ali also makes his histories relevant in today's world by raising the voice for women, heretics, minorities, eunuchs and people of different sexual orientation, since this debate is a part of contemporary western liberal narrative. But it seems ironic that Ali is rewriting the Muslim past using the western criteria of judgment in order to correct the representation of this past by the western historians. It appears to get approval of Muslim past from the western readers as it reflects their own principles and tenants of their civilization at present.

The return to the past serves another purpose which is preventing history from being "conclusive and teleological."¹¹⁷ Thematically, these points of view help to question the past by discussing different causes of the downfall of Islam in Spain. It opens up history to multiple perspectives and thus, subverting the monolithic and essentialist notions about Islam. Peter Burke, in his essay "History of Events and the Revival of Narrative" favours multiple points of view, as it would "allow an interpretation of conflict in terms of a conflict of interpretations".¹¹⁸ The discussion is more complex in Ali's *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* as it is not only about the conflict between Islam and Christianity but also exhibits internal conflict of variety of causes that resulted in the downfall of Islamic civilization. The downfall of Islam has been

¹¹⁷ Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. (New York: Routledge, 1988) 110.

¹¹⁸ qtd. in Ann Curthoys and John Docker. *Is History Fiction?* (Sydney: UNSW, 2006) 202.

discussed with multiple reasons given by different characters. The novel therefore, can be interpreted as an allegory in which the personal and private intersect the public and political history. Banu-Hudayl family can be taken as a microcosmic representation of the European Islam in the late 15th and early 16th Century; the causes of downfall of al-Hudayl family symbolically correspond to the causes of downfall of Muslims in Spain.

Ama (Amira) represents the tradition and orthodoxy in the novel. She propagates and believes in an outdated belief system that no one is interested in anymore in Hudayl family and which is already at the verge of extinction. So, she is found complaining in the beginning “Who listens to an old woman these days, Ibn Umar? I might as well be dead” (*Shadows* 8). She does not approve of the new order and considers it damaging for the family. Ama was extremely critical of Yazid’s mother and the way she brought up her children...She regarded the lady of the manor as over-indulgent to her daughters, over-generous to the peasants who worked on the estate, over-lenient to the servants and their vices and indifferent to the practices of their faith (*Shadows* 16). Ama deems the individuals responsible for the collective deterioration of Islam. Traditional Islam is the acceptable order for her and according to her, “...it was precisely weaknesses of this order which had brought Islam to the sorry pass in which it now found itself in al-Andalus” (*Shadows* 17). Ali’s representation of the character of Ama is ambivalent. Her representation is sympathetic as well as satirical. She is clearly the one who is more aware of the past of the family; she is probably the only one offering prayers and following other religious practices, and sees things in terms of good or evil. She is also very close to Yazid and has a strong influence on the boy’s mind but she represents a weak system that is losing grip on the state of affairs. She used to carry Umar in her arms and put him to bed but her inability to carry Yazid now symbolically shows the weakness of tradition and orthodoxy in the house. Yazid,

though emotionally attached with Ama, does not have any interest in her preaching and “[a]ll the preachers reminded him of Ama, except that he could stop Ama with a question and divert her from all this lofty talk. That was impossible in the mosque” (*Shadows* 105). She clearly has nostalgia for the past, which remained an ideal time for her, despite some painful memories. Religion, symbolized through Ama, was revered and respected but had no authority and control over the lives of the residents of the house.

Yazid’s character can be a metaphoric representation of the new turn Islamic civilization had taken or was taking in Spain. He was the youngest, and thus the weakest, member of the family whose future would be directly influenced by whatever decision the family of Hudayl makes about their lives in al-Hudayl. His parents feel pressured and are more sceptic about his future which symbolically represents their skepticism about the future of Islam in al-Andalus. He is clearly the “universal favourite” (*Shadows* 7) but the time in which he lives is not suitable for his secure and safe future and this atmosphere of uncertainty about the future looms throughout the novel. His awe for chess and feelings of being “frightened and fascinated” by the “black queen,” (*Shadows* 8) symbolizing Isabella, represent the dominance of the western Christian power over last Muslim regime. Yazid symbolizes Islamic rule in Garnada with Hind, Zubayda and Zahra putting sense and reason in him whereas Ama, Zuhayr and other characters putting in religious sentiments. When Hind leaves Yazid, Zuhayr cannot protect him either. His brutal death in the end is representative of the death of Muslim rule in Spain which was poorly guarded by the loyalists like the Dwarf and which could not be rescued by the blind and sentimental followers either.

Zuhayr, labeled as a “rash fool” (*Shadows* 46) by his mother Zubayda, is symbolic of orthodox and traditional Muslims because of his “headstrong character and impetuosity”

(*Shadows* 25). He is naïve and is warned by al-Zindiq against this weakness of being “too easily convinced”, being lead by his “friends” (*Shadows* 71) and for not being critical. He analyzes the situation to call for a military resistance as the only dignified choice because he rules out conversion to Christianity or leaving their ancestral home as the survival choices. Leading the youth to fight changes him to wear a mask of firmness and conviction (*Shadows* 238), but he is unable to understand that the gallant and courage of his great grand-father and a blind faith was no more relevant. The realization comes too late and he loses his belief in these things. His impulsive decision of fighting the Christian enemies and his false and empty ideas of bravery made him regret in the end. Ali makes Zuhayr a microcosmic depiction of the stagnant Muslim tradition that lead Muslims to weakness and then extinction.

Hind is one of the most important characters that symbolizes much admired yet condemned and feared rationalists and intellectuals of the Muslim civilization. Though Yazid is loved by everyone, he had a special bond with Hind which he could not have with his elder brother Zuhayr, who represented emotional or the impulsive side of the last Muslim empire. Yazid’s tilt towards Hind in the end foreshadows his disapproval of Zuhayr’s decision. These three sides of the Muslim empire have also been represented in the old generation, though with the different sense of domination. Ibn Farid represents the military side and his bravery and stories of his gallantry always fascinate Zuhayr; Zahra and al-Zindiq represent the intellectuals who suffer because of the tradition and orthodoxy represented by Ama and Ibn Farid. Tradition dominated in the past and the rationalists were outcasts and cornered by the conformists; but when it lasted for too long Muslim power went into decline and even the intellectuals and rationalists could not save it. The novel thus can be discussed in form of allegory where the

civilization (Yazid) dies in the end making Zuhayr (Tradition) regret and wish to get along with Hind (rationale/intellect).

Umar's family, being the decision maker for Banu-Hudayl were not unaware of the troubling times they were living in and the question they were faced with was "[i]n times such as these, what is the most important consideration? To survive here as best as we can, or to rethink the last five hundred years of our existence and plan our future accordingly?" (*Shadows* 18) Yet their response differed, showing how different fractions shared and responded to this loss. For example, Zubayda took the defeat of Muslims as a cycle of history. The fatalistic notion of Zubayda about the fall of Islam in Al-Andalus made her feel less responsible, restless and guilty unlike Umar who thought it the blindness of their minds "poisoned by alcohol" (*Shadows* 19) that they believed in the Castilian rulers and trusted their promise of giving Muslims their right to practice their religion and culture, which proved to be a trick to avoid civil war. Zubayda, though not a religious person, opposed forced conversions knowing at the same time that it was the only choice available to ensure the lives of her children and family. Her opposition to forced conversion was not based on the love of her faith but the repulsion of the Christendom. Zahra had her own analysis of the decline of the Muslims in al-Andalus, which was self-critical, not fatalistic. According to her, Muslims had been nurturing a "fool's sense of honour" because they considered "forgiveness as wrong" (*Shadows* 51). This was true for her personal tragedy as well. Had Ibn- Farid forgiven al-Zindiq, Zahra would not have had to waste her whole life in maristan, away from her relations. Symbolically, Zahra represents a deceased civilization in which both, cleric and heretics, had inhabited but had never come closer. Also, Zahra's departure from Zaydun's love in the end symbolizes the breach of Muslim civilization from what it considered heretic and sceptic. "For al-Zindiq, sad, embittered al-Zindiq, it was but another example of the

deep-rooted divisions in al-Andalus, which had torn the children of the Prophet asunder” (*Shadows* 147). Zahra could either be in love with al-Zindiq or be at home with her traditional family, and in the end she chose the family. Metaphorically, this return is the return of the civilization to the orthodoxy, tradition and conventional Islam which disappoints a sceptic like Zaydun. But this return is fatal for the Muslim civilization represented through Zahra’s quiet death. Miguel thinks it to be an inherent weakness of Muslims to meet failure since they had been stagnant and inactive for centuries. Zindiq also analyzes the extinction of Muslim civilization and deems the lack of reason responsible for Muslims’ rash and irrational decisions. Conversion, for him, was a rational decision for Muslims to survive in al-Andalus. A number of other minor characters like Musa, Daud, and qadi etc. give their own analyses of the situation pointing at different deficits.

While defending postmodern return to the past Hutcheon says that this return is not nostalgic but ironic. The characters in *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* are always reminiscing about the past but we see that instead of being nostalgic they are critically revisiting it. This critical revisit to the past makes them question how things in the past could have been different. Different characters have different views about that past they all shared which highlights the plurality in which it can be taken. Ali exposes those cultural, religious, political, intellectual and individual weaknesses through different characters, and raises the questions to be answered: is the hamartia of Banu-Hudayl and Muslims of al-Andalus their commitment with their religion? Is it their moral corruption and their disregard of the Islamic teachings that caused their failure? Is it the separation of rational and religious thought which destroyed them from within? Is it the political and intellectual stagnation that made them vulnerable? Is it their inability to adapt to the changed political circumstances and act accordingly? The answers to all these questions appear

to be in affirmative. Moreover, Ali opens up history to different possibilities. For example, had Muslims been more flexible and shown political wisdom, it would have been a different end for them. Had they called for reason instead of emotions, Islamic civilization would not have extinct. So, it was not an end fate had chosen for them, but what they could have easily avoided with their reason, wisdom and intellect. History of Granada was repeating itself but in reverse. The generation of Don Inego and Umar bin Abdullah became friends from enemies but the new generation of Friars was replacing this friendship with enmity again. The folklore of the battle was turning their friendship into folklore (*Shadows* 66). Ali is representing history of Granada not as Muslim or Christian history but a shared history that, if turned a different way, could have benefitted both Muslims and Christians alike. But burning the libraries was a loss of not only Muslim culture and civilization in Spain but the loss of the European Peninsula (*Shadows* 67/68). Hence, this return to history is to open it to multiple possibilities which characterizes *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* a historiographic metafiction.

Intertextuality in a postmodern historical fiction also brings the notions of fact and evidence into question as they are installed in historiography and historical novels. It questions their neutrality and tests the possibility of interpretation as it enters narrativization inevitably. Thus, transparency of historical truth is not possible as the historians who write historical narratives for us do it after a process of selection and rejection of the data collected from archival research since they do not have a direct access to historical events and personages (the actual history) but through other texts. The sources of information for the narrator are personal accounts of different characters. But neutrality and objectivity is questionable there as well. For once, in postmodern views narration of personal accounts and eye witnesses are also a form of "text" which cannot escape intervention and subjectivity on part of the reporter. Therefore, Shadhi's

narrative accounts of Saladin, Jamila and Haleema's descriptions, and other narrators' reports in the novel are all open to suspicion of their validity and truthfulness. Though writer has employed firsthand accounts and the character of narrator refrains from giving his opinion or judgments about different versions of different characters but the reader is never exposed to what narrator has written nor does Sultan ever ask him to read his inscriptions before him. That itself problematizes the role of the historian in the process of history writing. Since the reader's reception of history is always interrupted by the role of the historian whose access to history itself is marred by other texts, so the question of validity and fidelity is always relevant in the postmodern discourse of history.

The second way in which history has been dealt with is history as a discourse. In this point the formal element of self reflexivity highlights the relation between historiography and novel writing. History is the shared experience of the past that cannot be communicated with certainty and in its wholeness. People have an ambivalent relation with history which is the attempt to find an escape from it as well as nostalgia to return to it. The concept of postmodern historiography can be understood by interpreting the metaphor of harissa in *The Shadows of Pomegranate Tree*. Harrissa, according to Dwarf, has almost 60 ways to cook it and he prefers the way taught by the great teacher al-Baghdadi. Similarly, there are many methods of recording or 'cooking' history by theorists and philosophers of history but the real art is the personal creativity of the historian himself. A great historian will not rely completely on the methods recommended by others. Similarly, Dwarf uses the ingredients and herbs of his personal choice because he thinks personal creativity to be the real talent of a cook. Moreover, a cook alters his dish according to availability or unavailability of the required ingredients using his instinct but if asked to repeat, he might not be able to recall it as it is. "A truly good dish, like a great poem,

can never be repeated exactly" (*Shadows* 95). The historians, using their instincts, pick, choose and prefer certain facts over the others and thus changing the original if there is any. But important thing is the effect of the cooked dish or history over those who taste it. Even if the creator forgets to separate false and created from the original, the receiver always remembers the dish and its effects on him. These are some parallels between the recipe of harissa and the method of history writing. Ali makes his readers conscious of this process hence making his novels self reflexive. For example, Ibn Yakub, in *The Book of Saladin*, is representative of a historian used as an instrument to comment on the process of historiography. He performs a dual task of highlighting the limitations of modern historiography by installing and subverting the techniques of historiography at the same time.

The novel, *The Book of Saladin*, itself is commenting on the process of history writing as well as novel writing. The novel begins with the narrator's recollection of the memories from his past. He sounds like a narrator of his personal tale and not a historian when he self reflexively writes "...as I begin to write this story, the image of that doomed room where everything once began is strong in me again." (*Saladin* 21) The narrator does not try to naturalise his narration and makes the process of writing a story obvious. Ibn Yakub, the authorial narrator, intrudes the narration challenging the concept of authentic representation. Explanatory note in the beginning makes metafictional nature of the novel clearer where the author admits that "The narrator and Shadhi are my creations" (*Saladin* 16). The use of imagination, according to Collingwood, is a part of constructive history.¹¹⁹ The historians fill the gaps in the continuity of history with the use of their own imagination because the sources cannot fill them. The use of imagination by the

¹¹⁹ Ann Curthoys and John Docker 105.

historian makes him resemble a novelist.¹²⁰ *The Book of Saladin*, thus, is the story of a historian written by himself. But it is also the history of Sultan Saladin written by a storyteller. The history and story overlap in such a way that it is hard to tell them apart. Ibn Yakub keeps the reader conscious of his assigned role of a historian by repeatedly referring to it. He even reminds the Sultan at times of his role refusing to directly comment on something, expressing his opinion or giving his judgment by saying “I am only the storyteller, O great Sultan” (*Saladin* 255). He continues to play his role of a storyteller even after his role as a scribe is suspended because of the death of his wife and daughter in an attack by the Faranj. “As I write these lines I have no recollection of what I did everyday” (*Saladin* 369). But the two roles are so overlapped that they are difficult to separate. The book is self reflexive on two levels: One is at the level of its being a novel, the other is its being a history. Similarly, Ibn Yakub plays both roles that of a novelist and a story teller simultaneously that results in merging the boundaries of novel and history writing, challenging the very nature of discursive history. In his role of a novelist, Ibn Yakub makes the reader conscious of his story writing by addressing him. *The Book of Saladin* carries several examples of such addresses. “There was a Franj knight, by the name of Reynald of Châtillon , and the time has come to write of this abomination, for we are now not so far from the last battles of the Sultan against the Faranj, and we will soon meet this wretch in person” (*Saladin* 229). Here “we” suggests the inclusion of the reader as it is the time for the writer to “write” it for the reader and share the information with him. There are several occasions where Ibn Yakub addresses the reader directly e.g. “Reader, I succumbed” (*Saladin* 260) and at another point he says” “Reader, I did not take any notes of that crucial meeting which decided the fate of Jerusalem” (*Saladin* 340). Reader is involved not as a distanced contemplator but as a testimony

¹²⁰ Ann Curthoys and John Docker. 105.

or a witness. Postmodern texts like historiographic metafiction draw the attention of the reader towards the text as a construction rather than referring to an objective reality.

Two principles of postmodernism, according to Callum Brown, are that reality is “unrepresentable” and secondly no “authoritative” account can exist of anything. Postmodern historians like the traditional historians accept the existence of reality but unlike them, they deny the possibility of showing reality, except only versions of it. Three reasons for this limitation, as they give, are the hugeness of reality, the matter of personal choice and subjectivity as a hindrance to a neutral and objective past and thirdly reality being present and accessed only as texts, not in its own form.¹²¹ Ideas of authenticity and truth are important in historiography as well. Postmodernists like Hutcheon believe that there is no transparency and authenticity possible in historiography. Saladin is also aware of the manipulation and distortion done to the historical record. That is why he looks for a “trustworthy scribe” (*Saladin* 24) to dictate his memoirs to. Saladin does not trust his own secretary with his memoir as he “was quite capable of distorting the meaning of words to suit his own future needs” (*Saladin* 24). Saladin tries to authenticate his memoir and tries to make it transparent and reliable by employing Ibn Yakub whose thoughts about traditional historiography reflect the reservations of the critics of historiography. He says, “I have read many books about the kings of old. The ruler is usually portrayed as god or devil, depending on whether the account is written by a courtier or an enemy. Books of this sort have no value. When truth and untruth lie embracing each other in the same bed it is difficult to tell them apart (*Saladin* 26). This is a clear critique of the historical narratives and historiography, which are in fact fictitious accounts merged with some facts. Ibn Yakub’s request from Saladin to ask questions while he writes Sultan’s dictations is what is

¹²¹ Callum G. Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians*. (New York: Routledge, 2004) 7.

expected of postmodern historiographer as well as reader. The scribe actually wants readers to question the received versions of historical accounts. Without being bothered about the answers, asking questions is the main purpose of postmodern historiography which is reflected in Sultan's reply to Ibn Yakub: "I grant you that privilege. But I may not always reply. That is my privilege" (*Saladin* 26). It suggests that history is not always simple and comprehensive to offer answers though it may open ways to the answers. But the question arises that how is Ibn Yakub different from traditional historians and scribes and why is he preferred over Sultan's personal secretary? The answer lies in Isaac Ibn Yakub's comments where he states his method of working inspired from the great Tabri, that is also approved by postmodern critics of history. So, the scribe answers Sultan's question about his method of working by saying that he writes in a chronological manner, ensures the real and authentic details and communicate all the versions if exposed to more than one account of a thing. (*Saladin* 31). Sultan objects the scribe's method saying that "[y]ou contradict yourself. How can there be more than one account of a single fact? Surely there can be only one fact. One correct account and several false versions" (*Saladin* 31). This is the traditional view about historiography. The scribe is the mouthpiece of a postmodern historiographer when he states: "[y]our majesty is talking about facts. I am talking about history" (*Saladin* 31). Tariq Ali makes Ibn Yakub his agent and it appears he is telling his own method of compiling history in his novels. This direct commentary on the process of writing history validates the novel to be self reflexive and as a result historiographic metafiction. This dialogue between Sultan and the scribe also reflects opposite views about history and historiography. One is the nineteenth century view in which history is an antonym to fiction and is factual, conclusive and authentic. The traditional historians of the nineteenth century wrote history with this idea about history. So, they took history as something accessible. They chose one version to be

factual and claimed their writing to be transparent and authentic. The other view, reflected in the scribe's words, is the postmodern view about history and historiography. According to this view, history is not one factual and true account but multiple truths depending on whose perspective it is written with. It is also mediated and carries personal biases and exaggerations. Historiography thus is not different from fiction writing and the questions of transparency and authenticity are irrelevant then. It is not simple to determine Ibn Yakub's views about historiography as they imply his integrated approach towards historiography. On one hand, he thinks history not as factual data but as multiple stories that should all be communicated to the reader but on the other hand, he prefers the techniques of traditional historiographers by writing chronologically. Like the traditional historians, he favors the segregation of truth and falsity (which shows his views about existence of an objective truth) but also wants permission to ask questions that demonstrates his reluctance in uncritical reception of facts or information. This is the problematic nature of history and historiography that has been highlighted through the self reflexivity of the novel. The novel is also self conscious as Tariq Ali has imported a literary academic, Ibn Yakub to comment on the process of history writing. Carrie terms such novels as "theoretical fiction" for incorporating the theoretical and critical debates and this makes Tariq Ali a "writer-critic" in his words.¹²² The conversation between the scribe and Saladin can be interpreted as a dialogue of Ali with history itself that awaits a faithful scribe to record it.

The novel is self reflexive for incorporates the debates about historiography in it. One of these debates is about the style of the historiographers. Historiographers do not differ much from novel writers in that both "derive their force more from verisimilitude than from any objective

¹²² Mark Carrie 60.

truth.”¹²³ The use of figurative language in narration of history as well as fiction makes these disciplines similar. Imad al-Din, one of the secretaries and mushrifs of Saladin, ironically criticizes the historiographers when he reminds Ibn Yakub to put extra effort while writing down Saladin’s words. He says: “I hope you improve our ruler’s words even as you take them down, Ibn Yakub. Saladin... does not pay much attention to style. That is your job, my friend” (*Saladin* 172). Imad al-Din’s expectations are not something unusual because this is what historians and scribes have been doing since ages. The historians, like the novelists or poets, beautify the style and diction. Though they claim their writings to be factual but their language is such that it is indistinguishable from any aesthetic piece of writing. So, Imad al-Din is put to criticize traditional historians in contrast to Ibn Yakub who prefers “simplicity of the scriptures” (*Saladin* 171).

Transparency in the discursive history is another problematic issue that is embedded in the novel. History is always written by those who are in power. Historiographers thus, have to face a direct or indirect pressure especially if they are officially appointed scribes. Sultan’s nephew Taki al-Din, though humorously, is the mouthpiece of the rulers who get their memoirs and histories written under their supervision. Historians, in these cases feel a pressure to fulfill the rulers’ expectations who continuously remind them that “[o]ur future depends on you. If you write badly of us we will be forgotten, but if you write truthfully the memory of what our clan has achieved will remain...” (*Saladin* 194). This is important because for those, who are the center of the history writing, “truthfully” representing them is analogous to show them as achievers and worth remembering. But we continuously see a pressure on Ibn Yakub of being truthful. One such reminder for him is from the great scholar Ibrahim ibn Suleiman in Damascus

¹²³ Hutcheon *Poetics* 105.

who reminded Ibn Yakub before his death that “[t]he service of great kings may carry its own rewards, but the service of truth goes unrewarded and is, for that very reason, worth far more” (*Saladin* 220). One of the reasons for the failure of historians to communicate factual history is catering to the “public expectations of absolute truth.” This temptation of fulfilling these expectations is to be resisted, because that leads to obscure the difference between interpretation, error and fabrication.¹²⁴ Though there is no direct coercion by Sultan or any of his family members to force the scribe on writing anything yet Taki al-Din’s words, quoted above, imply the general notion about the process of history writing written by the court scribes. The accounts produced by the court scribes are always looked at skeptically and are questioned for their reliability and honesty. In *The Book of Saladin*, although the narrator is the personal scribe of the Sultan but this brings in more authenticity in narration because it is based on the first hand information. However, the question still remains at the centre as to what constitutes as truth or credible? Farrukh Shah, another nephew of the Sultan Saladin asks Ibn Yakub “is there any such thing as absolute truth? Do you report different versions of the same event? Do you consult more than one source? After all, much of what you are writing comes to you from the lips of our esteemed uncle. Naturally he will not talk of those events in which he disappointed himself” (*Saladin* 194). These are some pertinent questions asked in the postmodern criticism on historiography. The problem of objectivity and fixity is at the center of this discourse. This issue is also discussed in the novel. In traditional historiography an omniscient narrator who is in control of the narration represented the idea of factual and truthful history reported by an all knower narrator. In *The Book of Saladin*, however, Ali is critical of the conventional practices of historiography. He promotes the postmodern idea of history where there is no concept of one

¹²⁴ qtd. in Ann Curthoys and John Docker 11.

truthful, factual, objective and absolute version rather it is believed that there are “only *truths* in the plural...and there is rarely falseness *per se*, just others’ truths.”¹²⁵ This multiplicity of historical accounts is represented through multiple narrators in the novel. So, this critical debate on historiography that is the part of the novel is what we call self reflexivity. The reader is not only engaged in the process of reading but this reading is a conscious reading where the reader simultaneously is engaged in the critical debate about the process of history and novel writing.

Where the author makes the reader conscious of his reading of the text, he also makes him aware of its being written. By doing that he also endorses the writer’s attempt to make his narration authentic by tracing it directly to its source. For example, Sultan Saladin dictates the scribe about his citadel by directly instructing him: “Write this down, scribe” (*Saladin* 136). The scribe is writing down the information while it is happening or as it is being said. The reader is continuously made aware of this memoir being written by such references. Moreover, it also serves as a proof of the transparency of the account since it has directly been heard from the speaker. But it is so paradoxical that these attempts on part of the writer to employ authenticity highlight it more and problematize it further. For example, the narrator/historian never reads his writing before Sultan. Also, there is no other scribe employed to compare Ibn Yakub’s writing with, and this is a clear limitation when it comes to interrogate the credibility of Ibn Yakub. All we, as readers, get predominantly is how Ibn Yakub compiled Saladin’s history, rather than Saladin’s story. Self reflexivity in historiographic metafiction refuses the innocence of mimesis of social realism. “The metafictional element of these novels is meant not to dissociate fiction from the real world but to raise questions about how the truth-claims of both historical and novelistic

¹²⁵ Hutcheon *Poetics* 109.

texts are organized and legitimized."¹²⁶ Postmodern novelists transgress the known history and create a parallel or alternative fiction of history and thus make the credibility of the known historical record problematic.

To conclude, Ali's novels exhibit all the qualities of a historiographic metafiction. They situate themselves with respect to other texts and bear intertextual tendencies. They reveal the politics of representation in historical narratives and revisit the past critically. They self-reflexively comment on the process of writing and also critically comment on the problematic nature of history and historiography. So, they qualify to be called historiographic metafiction.

¹²⁶ Madhu Dubey, "Contemporary African American Fiction and the Politics of Postmodernism." *DUP. JSTOR*.

Novel: A Forum on Fiction, 35.2/3 (2002) 163.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate as to what extent Tariq Ali's novels employ the characteristics of historiographic metafiction as proposed by Linda Hutcheon and how far the formal and thematic features of historiographic metafiction are congruent with the ideological implications of representation of history with special reference to Tariq Ali's *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* and *The Book of Saladin*. The research questions that the study tried to answer were: To what extent Tariq Ali's *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* and *The Book of Saladin* exhibit the features of historiographic metafiction as proposed by Hutcheon? And what ideological objectives have been achieved by installing the techniques of historiographic metafiction at formal and thematic level? The objectives of this study were to draw attention to the formal and thematic aspects of Ali's novels as a postmodern genre of historiographic metafiction and to analyze Ali's historical fiction for its ideological implications in the current global scenario. The analysis of the selected text was mainly grounded in the concept of historiographic metafiction discussed by Hutcheon in her book *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* 1988.

The first objective of this study was to draw attention to the formal and thematic aspects of historiographic metafiction as used in Ali's novels. The elements of postmodern historical fiction were traced in *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* and *The Book of Saladin*. The study showed that both novels exhibited some important elements of historiographic metafiction at formal level. The metafictional elements of multiple points of view, self reflexivity and intertextuality are used in both novels. The installation of these formal features makes the concepts of objective history, absolute truth, the idea of the past and the process of

historiography problematic in the novels. These elements highlight the limitations of traditional historiography and expose the claims of truth, objectivity and factual history as farce. Both novels give multiplicity and plurality to the narration, challenging an all authoritative, all knowing and omniscient narrator of conventional historical novels. *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* and *The Book of Saladin* are also intertextual for their abundant reference to historical events. Different historical events and characters have been installed in the novels, but only to make the readers realize the impossibility of having an access to the actual history. Despite the firsthand accounts, multiple versions, eye witnesses, letters and other efforts to retrieve the past, it's only in form of a text that the past can be known as. So, the claims of historians of the factual nature of history as its distinctive quality appear more mythical. Another example of intertextuality is the allusive references to Ibn Rushd, Ibn Khaldun and Al- Ma'ari, that connect the past created in these novels with the one presented in the works and writings of these writers. This return to the past is ironic as it revises the established discourses about that past. Both novels also make a direct commentary on the ideas of history, historiography as well as the limitations and problems in discursive history. This makes the novels self-conscious and self reflexive. It makes the reader conscious of their being fictional works, thus merging the boundaries between history and fiction writing.

Ali has also installed the elements of conventional historical novels along with metafictional elements of postmodern historical fiction. For example, in *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* omniscient narration has been used for the most part of the novel. Though different characters take turns in narration to make the point of view pluralistic, third person omniscient narration makes the novel a traditional historical novel in its outlook. We also notice a mimetic and realistic depiction of the situations, events and characters, rather than the parodic

treatment given to historical record and characters in historiographic metafiction. Moreover, there are conventional elements like family tree, background information in form of prologue and conclusion in epilogue (in *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree*), which are associated with conventional historical novels rather than historiographic metafiction. *The Book of Saladin*, the second novel of the Quintet, installs more formal features of historiographic metafiction as compared to the first novel. For example, it is more self reflexive, it uses a problematic first person pronoun, it includes multiple narrators, and is intertextual. However, there are also traditional elements used in this novel such as, a map of “The New East in the Late Twelfth Century”, an explanatory note, and glossary etc.

The formal elements of historiographic metafiction, though used in both novels, are employed subtly. The first reason of this might be the desired effect. Tariq Ali did not intend to make his histories look completely farcical or fictional. He therefore, created a mimetic and realistic effect by installing the traditional features and maintaining the conventional form of nineteenth century historical fiction. So the merging of traditional and postmodern elements serves his dual purpose of portraying the previous histories as dubious as well as establishing his as the authentic one.¹²⁷ He could not have achieved this by sacrificing the form of the historical novel completely. Therefore, he has moulded it and replaced these elements wherever he deemed it necessary to fulfill his purpose.

Secondly, Ali has retained some features like omniscient narration, closure and maps etc. to show their limitations. He subverts these elements of historiography by installing them. The disparities in the narration and the family tree, the confession of the author in the explanatory

¹²⁷ This is the inherent paradox of these novels as well. It criticizes the previous histories as biased, faulty and problematic but how does it justify his histories to be true, authentic or factual?

note about the element of imagination in characterization and the closure in both the novels highlight the historiographic metafictional elements of problematic narration, uncertain, subjective and faulty history, as well as the fictional and ornamental nature of historiography, that is presented as stories to the readers, laying claims to objectivity, and factuality of discursive history. Ali exposes the process of artistic creation of a historical novel in an interview by Muniza Naqvi by saying: "I wanted to excavate the history of European Islam and went, naturally, to Spain. Here I saw the Great Mosque in Cordoba, went to Granada, wandered round Seville and imagined the ruins whispering to me...stories of their past and those who had built them. So I imbibed the atmosphere and wrote the first novel of the Quintet".¹²⁸ The chronology and closure to the novels can also be taken as a feature of historiographic metafiction since such writings are historical and metafictional but the story and proper plot are not compromised.

To achieve the second objective, Ali's historical fictions were discussed for their ideological implications in the current global scenario. Analysis revealed how by intertwining the themes of the novels with the formal techniques, some ideological objectives were achieved. Ali questioned the objectivity and credibility of the western historical discourse about Islam by problematizing the historical narrative and the nature of history. In his stories and counter-factual histories about the Islamic Civilization, Ali gives frequent references to acclaimed Muslim theologians, scholars, intellectuals, rationalists, heretics, philosophers, poets and critical thinkers who made that civilization rich, diverse and more inclusive than the western civilization of that time. He plays the same role as a writer that is played by al-Zindiq in *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree*. Wajid al-Zindiq familiarizes Zuhayr with the past never told to him, opens his mind to the intellectual writings of the great Muslim thinkers and urges him to be more

¹²⁸ Muniza Naqvi. "Interview: Tariq Ali on Writing Novels". *3QuarksDaily*. February 2010.

critical towards the received versions of the past. Similarly, Ali seems to urge the Muslims to look into the past, but not just the heroic and chivalric past like Zuhayr, rather a past that was distinctive and glorious because of the cultural diversity, intellectual liberty and syncreticism.

He also challenged the idea of an objective, universal and absolute historical truth by tracing the politics of power and representation in it. Through this he also criticized Muslim historians for the insufficiency of their histories because of the absence of marginalized groups from them. He highlighted these limitations in Muslim history by projecting multiplicity of historical truth that included the points of view of the marginalized groups like women, minorities, eunuchs and intellectual outcasts etc.

Ali's novels also exhibit the importance of a critical reengagement with the past by the Muslim as well the western readers by highlighting the process through which past is created, textualized, and misrepresented while enjoying the status of a realistic and scientific discipline. History writing has generally been motivated by the moral sense and patriotic fervor about the past but postmodernists "deny that history (i.e the past) *teaches* us morality, that the knowledge of the past provides an irrefutable base for morality in the present day... the postmodern condition has seen a lessening of the sense of morality being hitched to patriotism".¹²⁹ Thus Ali brings the shortcomings of Muslims as well that lead to their downfall and caused their civilization to stale and vanish. Instead of favoring any particular group, Ali's objective is to educate the ignorant Muslim, as well as western readers, and make them more aware of a shared

¹²⁹Callum Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians* (New York: Routledge, 2004) 10.

past. He discards the notion of suppressing the past to start everything anew because he thinks “[i]f you try to suppress it, it reemerges in horrific fashion.”¹³⁰

To conclude, Tariq Ali’s novels *Shadows of The Pomegranate Tree* and *The Book of Saladin* can evidently be labelled as historiographic metafiction for the formal and thematic configuration in both novels. Ali exploited the genre of historiographic metafiction at its formal and thematic level to achieve certain ideological objectives. The novels are an attempt to rewrite the history of Islamic Civilization, but at the same time rewriting the history of the western Civilization of the European peninsula. Ali is addressing both, the western as well as the Muslim audience, to re-read their histories, not as they have been taught to them or fed to them through media but critically. He also emphasizes syncreticism as it was a feature of a history shared by people of diverse cultures and different religions in Europe. His treatment of history is more wholesome as he makes women, eunuchs, minorities, ordinary people, under-privileged classes, people with different sexual orientation and radical intellectuals a part of a mis-represented history. Ali’s histories break the western stereotypes and binaries about the Islamic World as well their stereotypes about their civilization to be liberal and intellectual. Historiographic metafiction is used as a suitable tool for this purpose but ironically, Tariq Ali’s histories can also be questioned if scrutinized under the same rules since the past he revives in his novels is also a created and constructed past. Though he tries to revise history, but he cannot represent the past because “past and history float free of each other, they are ages and miles apart”.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Tariq Ali’s interview for *The Progressive*.

¹³¹ qtd. in Ann Curthoys and John Docker 13.

Recommendations

The current study is limited in that it only discusses two novels of the Islam Quintet. It can be extended to the other novels as well in future researches. The Quintet can also be studied to locate other postmodern features like chronology and irony in them which could not be incorporated for the limitations of this study. The concept of historiographic metafiction can also be applied on other Pakistani fiction writers whose works exhibit historical overtones. Future researchers can also take the comparison of male and female stances towards history and historiography as their point of concern. Tariq Ali can also be studied in comparison to western writers, Herald Lamb for instance, who wrote historical novels about the same historical personages though in a different way. Researches in future can also be conducted to trace postmodern elements of historical novel in Urdu writers of historical fiction to see the mutual similarities and differences between them and those who are writing in English.

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