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Diane's search for solitude, healing, and peace in nature is a pattern that is followed by the narrator and her grandmother which binds them to each other. William considers that her mother and the earth are one as they both have merged together. She thinks that as long as she has access to the wilderness of the land, she will be able to access her mother.

Williams emphasizes the close connection she sees between her life, the life of her family, and the landscape as she states that her family's "attachment to the land was our attachment to each other" (15). As her father John Tempest stated

"The land, the water, the air, all have minds of their own. I understand it because I work with the elements every day. Our livelihood depends on the lake. If it rains, we quit. If it is a hundred degrees outside, our men suffer. And when the ground freezes, we can't lay pipe. If we don't make adjustments with the environment, our company goes broke" (139).

Williams appreciates the natural world and its impact on human beings at the same time she portrays the violence committed against nature and humans. Williams states that the few men who attempted to dyke the lake in the refuge are not different from those who carry out nuclear tests where human communities live and work. Both are indifferent to human life and nature. She remains the history of North America's massive destruction of the land, water, soil, and wildlife by denoting "when the Atomic Energy Commission described the country north of the Nevada Test Site as virtually uninhabited desert terrain, my family and the birds at Great Salt Lake were some of the virtual uninhabitants" (287).

Williams describes the indifferent attitude of humans has changed the life of the birds in the sanctuaries as water levels rose in the Great Salt Lake during the early 1980s has threatened the nesting grounds of dozens of bird species. As a result, many shorebirds were destroyed and birds were displaced, and entire areas were damaged resulting in "loss of habitat and declining rate of bird production" (113).

Williams believes that human beings must not consider themselves as a superior form of life. She states that human is just another species on earth, and they cannot be separated from the natural world.

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Historiographic Metafiction as a Nuanced Methodology: A Study on *Francis Itty Cora*

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Caught in the liminality of history and reality, it is high time to theorize literary historiography. This article attempts to theorize the writing of history in contemporary Indian Literature by analyzing T. D. Ramakrishnan's experimental novel, *Francis Itty Cora* by using metafiction, *Francis Itty Cora* focuses on certain missing elements in Indian history thereby relating it to world history.

Francis Itty Cora is called historiographic metafiction because of its conscious self-reflexivity and concern with history. It is an implicit amalgamation of fact and myth. Historiographic metafiction is "novels that are intensely self-reflective but that also both re-introduce historical context into metafiction and problematize the entire question of historical knowledge" (Hutcheon 285-286). Historiographic metafiction bridges the fissure between historical and fictional works by recombining the two genres. *Francis Itty Cora* employs "a questioning stance through [its] common use of conventions of narrative, of the inscribing of subjectivity, of their identity as textuality, and even of their implication in ideology" (Hutcheon 286).

Historiographic metafiction is one kind of postmodern novel which rejects projecting present beliefs and standards onto the past and asserts the specificity and particularity of the individual past event. It also suggests a distinction between events and facts that is one shared by many historians. Since the documents become signs of events, which the historian transmutes into facts, as in historiographic metafiction, the lesson here is that the past once existed, but that our historical knowledge of it is semiotically transmitted. Finally, 'Historiographic metafiction often points to the fact by using the paratextual conventions of historiography to both inscribe and undermine the authority and objectivity of historical sources and explanations'. (Hutcheon, 122-123)

Linda Hutcheon states that "historiographic metafiction attempts to demarginalize the literary through confrontation with the historical, and it does so both thematically and formally" (289). Beyond reconnecting history and fiction, *Francis Itty Cora* attempts "to re-write or to re-present the past in fiction and in history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological" (Hutcheon 209). To accomplish this re-presentation of the past, *Francis Itty Cora*, "plays upon the truth and lies of the historical record. Certain known historical details are deliberately falsified in order to foreground the possible mnemonic failures of recorded history and the constant potential for both deliberate and inadvertent error" (Hutcheon 294).

Through its play upon "known truth" like historiographic metafiction, *Francis Itty Cora* questions the absolute "knowability" of the past, specifying the ideological implications of historical representations. In its process of redefining reality, history and truth *Francis Itty Cora* opens a sort of time tunnel which rediscovers the histories of suppressed people such as women, prostitutes, cannibals, satan worshippers etc. Like a New-historicist, T. D. Ramakrishnan views history not simply in terms of great men and women but in terms of

conflicting visions and attitudes, a world peopled by those who are outside the realm of so called normalcy, beings in the state of abjection. Rejecting a single grand interpretation of bygone events, the novelist pays attention to subversive, anarchic and counter moments and movements in the pages of history. History is available only in the form of texts and this textuality of history is evident in *Francis Itty Cora*.

This article further reveals the power of fiction in reinventing history and the power of history in representing itself as a discursive act. A new historicist reading prevents us from recognizing the literary text as merely one voice in a multi-leveled, multi-faceted nexus of discourses and practices. Its interdisciplinary orientation embraces textual and symbolic representations that include literary and non literary documents as well as paintings, films, photographs, monuments, rituals, everyday myths, customs, and symbolic activities. The peculiarity of *Francis Itty Cora* is that it is an amalgam of all the aforementioned categories including blogs and emails. Diaries and autobiographies, records of dreams, chronicles of festivals and local fairs, protocols of witches burned at the stake and of exorcisms, primers on sexuality, descriptions of clothing and cosmetics, eyewitness accounts and illustrations of disease, insanity, birth and death, black mass, ritualistic abuse and so on, taken from the 'slime of history' may be obscure but they are incorporated in the novel *Francis Itty Cora*.

Postmodern theory and art, and recent critical readings of both history and fiction focus on what the two modes of writing share than on how they differ. Unlike historical novels, *Francis Itty Cora* does not present the generalized and concentrated microcosm. The accuracy or even truth of detail is irrelevant in order to achieve historical faithfulness in historical novel. It usually assimilates the data to lend a feeling of verifiability. Contrary to this, historiographic metafiction plays upon the truth and lies of the historical record. Though it uses historical data, it rarely assimilates such data. Historical personages have secondary roles in historical novels as if to hide the joins between fiction and history in a formal and ontological sleight of hand. Historiographic metafiction suggests the continuing relevance of an opposition between fiction and fact. *Francis Itty Cora* succeeds in projecting this kind of opposition between facts and fiction. Historiographic metafiction both inscribes and blurs the line between fiction and history. History and fiction are not the same even though they share social, cultural, ideological contexts, as well as formal techniques. Hayden White sees historiography as emplotment. Both include selection, organization, diegesis, anecdote, temporal pacing, and emplotment but they are not the same discourse.

Classified under popular cult fiction, *Francis Itty Cora* is a best selling mystery novel in Malayalam by T. D. Ramakrishnan published in the year 2009. It interweaves mathematics and literature and equalizes murder, geometry, secret likings, sexuality, knowledge, history etc. The novelist twists history and re-interprets it in order to justify that there exists mystery groups and other counter movements in the world. Laws of Probability and Randomness can be seen. Even though no strict chronological order is maintained, still Francis Itty Cora creates an order which gives power to the modern novel. He creates Francis Itty Cora as the real propounder of the Kerala School of Mathematics and the one who spread the same in Europe as also a staunch opponent of the Catholic Church.

Under the New-historicist paradigm, literary studies deal with representations which have a social as well as a textual dimension: How are power, poverty, crime, the penal system, and war represented and discursively constituted at a certain place, at a certain time? How are sexuality, gender, identity, leisure and work, sickness, epidemics, and death depicted? How does the intertwining between mass culture and politics affect the political process? New Historicism emphasizes the contingent and conditional, the non systematic,

contradictory, and even coincidental. It abhors large scale, totalizing claims and instead pursues local knowledge. *Francis Itty Cora* prefers anecdotes and montages over linear narratives, not one history, but histories. And hence a new historicist rendering of the text reveals the underlying historical background of the novel.

Francis Itty Cora is fine example of textualisation of history in an extremely imaginative way without losing the punch of real history. According to Hayden White, all historical facts come to us only in the form of language and narrative. Various historical facts which are hidden from the dominant historical discourse are woven into a narrative in a fantastic manner in *Francis Itty Cora*. Like a historian, T. D. Ramakrishnan links historical facts and provides a narrative where we can see the cause-effect sequence. He has arranged the events, facts and myths in a certain hierarchy so that the reader is forced to pay more attention to some and less attention to others. In contrast to the Biblical Ten Commandments, the gospel of Cora gives ample sexual freedom. The Tupac Amaru (shining serpent), the witchcraft Katreena performs with a jaw bone and the ceremony with the skull filled with goat's blood, after years is likely to be believed as practiced reality. But the legitimacy and authenticity of the new pattern is contested as the novel unfolds various power relations which are at work in the society and which are responsible for female subordination. The history propagated through the novel is not just the background and hence it is worth a serious study. For instance, the historical evidence proves that Hypatia was killed by fanatics for her philosophy, but *Francis Itty Cora* explains her killing as the reward of her adultery with prince Orestes.

Both fiction and historiography derive their force more from verisimilitude than from any objective truth. They are both identified as linguistic constructs, highly conventionalized in their narrative forms, and not at all transparent either in terms of language or structure. They appear to be equally intertextual, deploying the texts of the past within their own complex textuality. Typical of historiography, *Francis Itty Cora* does not rely on objective truth and use complex narrative structures. It is highly intertextual and makes use of various texts of the past to capture the complexity of history. History is not a burial ground as we find it at the end of Camus' play *Caligula*, but it is rather our imaginative-creative play ground for the understanding of the life-world as it is manifested in the setting of the novel.

While studying the captured history of Kerala or of the world, we should take into account the nature of identity and subjectivity. We do not find a subject confident of his/her ability to know the past with any certainty. For example in *Francis Itty Cora* nothing survives the instability caused by the rethinking of the past in non-developmental, non-continuous terms. Postmodernism both installs and then subverts traditional concepts of subjectivity.

Francis Itty Cora reveals the intertextual nature of the past. Parody is one of the postmodern ways of literally incorporating the textualized past into the text of the present. *Francis Itty Cora* draws on various literary and non literary texts cutting across years and genres. Postmodern intertextuality has a desire to close the gap between past and present of the reader and a new desire to rewrite the past in a new context. Like a postmodern novel *Francis Itty Cora* teaches that both fiction and history actually refer the first level to other texts. We know the past only through its textualized remains. Postmodern art suggests that there is no presence, no external truth which verifies or unifies but there is only self-reference. Historiographic metafiction self-consciously suggests this, but then uses it to signal the discursive nature of all reference. The ideology of postmodernism while regarding history is that every representation of the past has specifiable ideological implications. The postmodern ideology is paradoxical for its claiming and denying its own truth, for

questioning the history it seeks to reconstruct, for critiquing the ideologies it is influenced by. It is part of the postmodern ideology not to ignore cultural bias and interpretative conventions and to question authority-even its own. This is exactly what T. D. Ramakrishnan does in *Francis Itty Cora*.

A new historicist sees literature as an institution which mediates in the power-relations between writer and reader. In this role as a site for representing power relations, especially in different contexts, literature can transform or replicate or contest the power relations existing in society. What makes the novelist foreground Black Mass by the Cora clan? What is the politics behind the depiction of women as powerful only by attributing sexual prowess? The novel not only reflects an age's themes and contexts, but also shapes those contexts by persuading people to accept particular beliefs and opinions. In contrast to the tithe commanded by God in Holy Bible, the eighteen families of Cora practices to give 1/10th of whatever they get to Cora. Like a New-historicist, T. D. Ramakrishnan views history not simply in terms of great men and women but in terms of conflicting visions and attitudes, a world peopled by those who are outside the realm of so called normalcy, beings in the state of abjection. Rejecting a single grand interpretation of bygone events, the novelist pays attention to subversive, anarchic and counter moments and movements in the pages of history. History is available only in the form of texts and this textuality of history is evident in the official and social power relations which determine the narrativisation of history. All socio-cultural and religious forms are interconnected not only in support to but also antagonistically to the beliefs of the dominant classes in the society. T. D. Ramakrishnan narrates the events with reference to year and place. Thus the plot located in Peru, Kunnamkulam and various others attain a dimension which borders on reality and forces the reader to accept a counter history consisting of cannibals, Satan worshippers etc. The representation of Tupac Amaru, Katreena's wizardry and other heinous ceremonies are done in such a way that these are indeed historical facts which are hidden from the dominant discourse. Production of this kind of new objectivisation of history in the novel can be explained by Ingardenian theory.

By looking at the novel with Ingardenian eyes, we will find that the dimension of time is expressed by author in the perspectives he offers to the reader. As a result the reader of *Francis Itty Cora* receives the author's specific order of a sequence of events which establishes continuity within the literary work by means of the order of presentation and the suggestion of models and parallels. Consequently, the reader has been involved through the authority of the author into a new perspective which combines the known with new aspects of perceiving and insight. The result is a new objectivisation which is taking shape in the perception process of the reader, who arrives at such an objectivisation by interpretatively sorting out the polyphony of the novel on the basis of the various perspectives which enables him to concretize the literary work of art on the grounds of its potential contents and the selections of these contents as they are subject to the reader's predilection. Thus the literary experience of the reader becomes a time related experience because of the sequence of events presented to him by the author within the text; it is also a time-related cognitive experience for the reader himself depending on his own wealth of knowledge and learning of geometry, Kerala School of Mathematics, Fermat's theory, Hypatian philosophy, etc.

Major assertions and characteristics of postmodern novels include the plural truths, the problems of the rewritings of history and the need and the danger to separate fiction and history as two different genres. *Francis Itty Cora* too make use of plurl truths and rereadings of history. *Francis Itty Cora* openly assert that there are only truths in the plural and never

one Truth and there is rarely falseness per se, just others truths. *Francis Itty Cora* suggests that to re-write and to present the past in fiction and in history is to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive. The rewriting history is also problematic. The characters in *Francis Itty Cora* alter the dates of verifiable historical events, making a projection of 'a chaos of unhistory'.

Miner opines that like all other kinds of history, then, literary history deals with a continuum that is known. It differs from some other kinds, however, in that although it is knowledge, it is knowledge about what is already knowledge, literature (553-68). The literary works are one of the media in which man expresses his historicity, and in which historicity forces itself upon him. T. D. Ramakrishnan uses myth to reveal how history is not a unified entity. He does not replace history with myth. On the contrary, he employs the mythical facts as a structuring frame. However, he alters the mythological essence by representing historical personages from Indian history and world history with human attributes, especially their weakness for sensual pleasures. For instance, the depiction of Raphael, Michelangelo, Hypatia, etc. Claudio Guillen states:

The historical imagination cannot be defined by the degree to which it is retrospective, past-oriented, memory bound. It issues just as genuinely from a human being's commitment to his own time, from his involvement in the life around him- the lives, the processes, and the durations that envelop his own. (175)

This is exactly what *Francis Itty Cora* creates. T. D. Ramakrishnan sees the power of fiction to contain an alternative version of history. His novel locates the transformative power of fiction in its capacity to provide alternative versions of the past and thereby question official histories.

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