CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION:

IS HISTORY LITERATURE, OR VICE VERSA?

What has originally inspired an interdisciplinary research as the present one, is a central issue in history itself, namely, the question of mimesis or the problem of representation. Mimesis has become an issue in history today, because there is hardly any finality to the discussion such as, what is history? What is the nature of imitation? How can the object of mimesis, namely, human action be defined and represented? etc. It is interesting to note that the question of mimesis in history is often discussed in contradistinction to a similar issue of representation in the discipline of literature. Such interrelatedness of history and literature seems to demand one to dwell considerably on the ways in which history is different from or similar to literature. Whatever may be the answers, the critics pretend to have reached with regard to such an inquiry, the traditional conception of ‘objectivity’ in historical narrative, or the traditional conception of ‘imagination’ as the soul of literature, still seems to continue haunting such discussions, while the so-called answers constantly appear annulling, any finality to the conclusions themselves.
It is, therefore, assumed in the present investigation that, this complex situation, which is common to both history and literature, can be attempted a convergence in the question, Can literature be used as a source in history? Exploring an answer to the question has required the researcher to take for analysis a literary work which predominantly uses history as its subject matter, so that he could examine the ways and the extent to which an imaginative work appropriates history. Consequently, a work befitting an inquiry concerning the aforesaid question could be identified in the Portuguese epic – Luís Vaz de Camões’s Os Lusiadas (1572). The work appears to be particularly relevant to the present study, since at the core of the subject matter of this sixteenth century epic is the history of Vasco da Gama’s maiden voyage to India in 1497/98. The work is examined in subsequent chapters from angles as diverse as, the Formation, Self-consciousness, Centrality of historical narration, Conception of history and Structure of epic. However, before such an exercise is carried out on the source, the question of mimesis / representation in history discussed in the present times remains to be explored at some length.

A. Nature of History Today

It is widely known to historians today that the understanding of ‘the nature of history’ (pace Arthur Marwick) has undergone revolutionary changes in the modern (as some call it postmodern) times. The central issue in doing history today can be seen, in a sense, as centered on the question of
association/dissociation of history with/from imagination/literature. Indeed, this question of history/literature dichotomy is expressed by historians and historiographers in diverse forms.

Arthur Marwick, for example, considers it the direct objective of history "to challenge and deflate myths, while at the same time, perhaps, explaining their origins and significance" (The Nature, 14). While 'myth' has a wide range of meanings, Marwick seems to consider myth, only as stories imagined as something really happened in order to defend the self-interested cause of one's nation, religion, etc. The difficulty in achieving Marwick's professed objective lies not necessarily between the scientific and interpretative aspects of history (for Marwick does concede the necessity of interpretation in history), but in his avowed refusal to accept anywhere a space for imaginative reconstruction in the interpretation of sources. Such a stance of Marwick is rather unconvincing in many places of his book as he works hard to solve the dichotomy he created in his arguments. To cite an example, Marwick says that the existence of history is justified "in the rough and ready sense of the attempt by human beings to give a continuing, present existence to what no longer actually exists, the past" (The Nature, 3).

Today, it is less difficult for us than for Marwick, to accept the fact that to give an account of that which "no longer actually exists" in a "continuing" fashion, one has no other recourse than imagination. There may be historians even today who like Marwick go on claiming that they have "special skills of
analyzing and interpreting sources” (*The Nature*, 3) to check the intrusion of imagination, but it would do them well to perceive the impossibility of keeping imagination in abeyance permanently from history; a different conclusion is hard to arrive at if one reads between the lines of Marwick’s own significant statement:

Historians impose order, possibly pattern, define relationships and interactions; they decide what to put in and what to leave out; even if aiming at no more than coherent narrative, they are still contributing form or shape to that narrative. (*The Nature*, 8)

In fact history (writing of what actually happened [?!]) and story (event imagined to resemble history [?!]) etymologically remain inseparably associated. To quote Peter Widdowson’s words.

It is worth noting that the words ‘history’ and ‘story’ in English both derive from Greek *historia*: ‘learning by inquiry’ – from *histor*: ‘a person who knows or sees’ – so that, in its origin, ‘story’ implies a form of knowledge, a way of knowing. Our words come down to us by way of the earlier English usage in which both ‘story’ and ‘history’ can be ‘an account of either imaginary events supposed to be true’ (Williams 1976:119). But where the modern French word *historie* retains both the senses ‘story’ and ‘history’, from the fifteenth century onwards the English word bifurcates, with ‘history’ coming to mean ‘an
account of past real events', while 'story' includes 'less formal accounts of past events and accounts of imagined events' (ibid).

(133)

Among the interesting things in this passage, the most important observation would be that 'past' is no more considered the monopoly of the objective of history alone. As the author of *History: A Very Short Introduction* (2000) shows, "It is important to remember that in each age, there have been other ways in which people have approached the past: in paintings, in music, through objects, in poetry and literature" (31, emphasis added). This fact notwithstanding, many historians (like Marwick) have continued to be extraordinarily wary of imagination / literature. They all continue to cherish, in different forms, the spirit of William of Malmesbury (1095-1143) who, as John H. Arnold reports, rigorously examined sources and documents to bring out a number of works of history and avowed to be "critical and suspicious – the two modern 'virtues' of historians. 'That I may not seem to balk the expectation of my readers by vain imaginations' William writes, 'leaving all doubtful matter I shall proceed to the relation of substantial truths' " (24). Leopold van Ranke, the father of modern historiography showed them all, the model, appealing to the evidence and demanding that the historians "should produce 'scientific and 'objective' history if they returned diligently to the documentary archives. His philosophy of history is encapsulated in a much-quoted phrase: 'only to say, how it really was' " (ibid., 34-35).
However, as the new millennium dawned, the position of historian is found to be less sure than William of Malmesbury or Ranke. John H. Arnold remarks that the historian today appears rather con-fused also with the role of an imaginative writer or rather “the imaginative re-creator of past events” (ibid, 112). However, even Arnold himself, when he considers three alternative reasons for doing history, seems to fail to convince one as to how the role of a historian should be different from that of a literary writer. For, according to him, the three reasons for writing history today are enjoyment or pleasure, opportunity to study human nature and “to think differently about oneself,” i.e. to realize one’s own creativity (ibid. 119-120).

Imagination appears difficult to be isolated from doing history and the borderline separating history from literature is rather invisible. This is because, as Erich Kahler says in The Meaning of History (1964), history is “the indissoluble interaction between actuality and conceptuality” (181) and history is no science as literature is not since the real question in pure science is ‘why’ whereas the fundamental question historians (as well as the imaginative writers) ask is “how it happened” (197). In the words of G.R. Elton, “all evaluation, all historical evidence must start from one basic question: how and with what end in mind did this come into existence?” (92, emphasis added). Kahler and Elton thus point towards the need for selection and interpretation in history. Such an activity involves the active participation and imagination without which it would be indeed difficult, in the words of Elton, to discover the “far more things in historical evidence than
are embodied in current interpretations of history. The search for these things is the challenge that we hope will fire the imagination of those about to embark on the study of history” (129, emphasis added).

Meaning in history as well as in literature, especially in postmodern times, emphasizes (to quote Kahler again) the “freedom of choice, indeed human responsibility” (204) for “thinking implies the faculty of choosing” (207). It is perhaps the fear of the lack of such a responsibility in the present times that makes Marwick place history diametrically opposed to myth which for him is no less than some bias, self-interest and hidden politics that border on an absence of truth: therefore, according to him “Accurate, professional history is a necessity if tensions and suspicions are ever to be removed” (20).

So the question in history turns out to be how far history could be made less and less imaginative and more and more scientific. Hence historians such as Robert William Fogel came to insist on objectivity and impersonality (characteristics [mis] understood to be really possible at least in science) and the possibility of Cliometricians in history – “a narrow group of highly trained specialists” who do not generally address wider public, as orators, poets, politicians, clergymen etc. do (65). Others like, G.R. Elton, would dismiss Cliometricians as non-historians since they cannot “handle human thought” (81) for, according to Elton, a historian’s primary task is to understand “the past as event and experience” (78, emphasis added). The role of imagination is again asserted since “There is no historical evidence that
does not lack perfection” (85). Elton maintains that a fool-proof history is almost always the invention of regimes bent on defending the power of state (121). In other words, Marwick’s insistence on ‘accurate, professional history’ (20, already quoted) is more problematic than a history that exploits the faculty of imagination, ‘possibilities’ and openness of non-conclusiveness. Elton appreciates those historians who are rather “conscious of the unending variety of that past and the great variety of techniques which help that study and well aware that however far they advance they will never come to a final conclusion” (121, emphasis added).

Needless to say, it has been customary in the field of literature to view history as different from the former in that literature deals with the universal while history deals with the particular. Even such a distinction is problematic because in contra-distinction with science, history itself is viewed as supposedly dealing with the universal while science is said to be dealing with the particular. These distinctions, therefore, become problematic only because such binaries are treated in terms of superiority/inferiority levels. For instance, with the Neoplatonists “poetic imitation was regarded as the highest of all imitations because it offered access to the divine archetypes rather than merely copying existing materialities” (Widdowson, 30). But then it has been equally customary for historians to regard literature as inferior to the demands of history. To quote John H. Arnold,
Historians sometimes like to define their work against that of literature. An author of fiction can invent people, places, and happenings, whereas a historian is bound by what the evidence will support. This comparison might make history seem somewhat dry and unimaginative. However, as we have seen and will further explore, *history also involves imagination*, in dealing with that evidence, presenting it, and explaining it. For every historian, what is at stake is what actually happened and what it might mean [sic]. There is an excitement to these precarious attempts to grasp the ‘truth’, a truth that might at any point be revealed as illusory.(12-13, emphases added)

It was part of Rankean myth to consider historian as a “stern arbiter of objective truth”(ibid. 53), though one should always doubt if it was not his imaginative appeal that should have made his writings particularly interesting to the readers. An equally source-based historian was Jules Michelet (1798-1874) but as Arnold comments, “Michelet was not always tremendously accurate, but his flair and imagination provided an alternative inspirational model to later historians” (53, emphasis added). No wonder, history for early Greeks meant not forming a serious body of knowledge, like, even philosophy; and Herodotus was both the ‘Father of History’ and ‘Father of Lies’(ibid, 17-18).
The idea regarding the nature of history has thus undergone such radical changes with the result that history is today considered by many as yet another genre of story. History and story are both read initially as something that (really) happened (the credit for the existence of both goes to the Coleridgean ‘willing suspension of disbelief’); the successive readings of both – whether history or literature – render them equally indefinitely self-conscious and suspicious. “This means that”, in the words of Robert Eaglestone, “history is not recreation of the past ‘as it really was’, but the name we give to genre of stories we tell about the past.... Writing meaningfully about the past is, and can only be the ‘emplotment’ of events of the past into certain types of story” (36-37). Keith Jenkins who heavily draws on philosophy and literary theory to write his Re-thinking History (2003) justifies his act saying: “For if ‘doing history’ is about how you can read and make sense of the past and the present, then it seems important to me to use discourses that have ‘readings’ and the construction of meanings as major concerns” (4, emphasis added).

Thus, for Jenkins, history is, in fact, historiography for. “.... this way of seeing things makes the study of history (the past) necessarily a study of historiography (historians), historiography therefore being considered not as an extra to the study of history but as actually constructing it” (14) and “to repeat, when we study history we are not studying the past but what historians have constructed about the past” (56).
This, in other words, is to say that the status of history as a system designed to offer verifiable, objective truth has turned out to be questionable. Until the modernist times in history (roughly between 1910 and 1970), historians entertained the idea of history as capable of certainty of 'the truth'. As Michael Bentley in *Modern Historiography: An Introduction* (1999) remarks, their attitude meant "the undesirability of metaphysics and all forms of bluntedness, the necessity for rationalism of an Enlightenment kind" (138). They believed in a "realizable truth" as "a visitable place"; for them "From the two theories of relativity to the double helix of DNA, from the sociology of Talcott Parsons to the anthropology of Claude Levi-Strauss, the texts of modernism breathed the excitement of discovery" of realizable truth (138). As Paul L. Ward, the author of *Studying History: An Introduction to Methods and Structure* (1985) says, the focal agenda of history always remained to be "a form of knowledge" (3). The voices of those who insisted that "there is an unbridgeable gap between knowledge of causalities and humanistic understanding" (15) were rather discouraged in favour of the assumption that history presented objective knowledge. The voice majority wanted to listen to was the kind as reflected in the arguments of Friedrich Meinecke who in his later years was acknowledged dean of German historians. Meinecke insisted "firmly that the search for causalities and the comprehension of values were in fact inextricably intertwined for the historian" (15).

Interestingly, such shared sense of reality (between the writer and the reader) and representability characterise literature too. From biographical
approach to structuralism, critics maintain the traditional Platonic view that art is an imitation of life. Even when it is maintained that a text comes to the reader through various forms of mediations (from language to propaganda), as Peter Widdowson in *Literature* (1999) states “a reader coming to such a text for the first time will read it ‘for themselves’ as the primary act of comprehension” (128). However, with the dawn of postmodernism (from 1970s onwards, as many view it), a suspicion in the use of methods of natural science, rejection of self as a knowing subject, a disavowal of language as a perfect system, awareness of the inseparability of power and knowledge, a self-consciousness of the inseparability of narrative and knowledge and a disbelief in meta-narratives, etc. began to pervade the humanities.

As a result, literature began to appear less and less history and history more and more literature. It is a new phenomenon in history that, as Michael Bentley states, historical discourse came to take lessons from literary theory (145). In literature, content was given less importance than form/structure, and in history ‘facts’ came to be less significant than ‘method’ (Arnold, 23). Religious faith which was the inspiration behind the assumption of objective truth, suffered a jolt and “At stake was not only the truth about the past, but the truth of God” (ibid. 36). The general idea was that people have different ideas about truth and, therefore, what is the point in attempting the so-called *the* true story about a past that can never be recaptured as objective reality? Thus, even ‘method’ was not fool-proof, for rules do not solve puzzles left by the past and they “cannot produce a single, uncomplicated version of events”
(ibid, 116). The devices of realistic narration such as third person, omniscience of the author, linearity and conclusion of story are hardly attempted these days, seriously, in novel or in history. In the words of Robert Eaglestone, "Traditionally, history is written in the third person, in the style favoured by realist novelists, but once such devices are suspected, ‘‘Pure’, neutral’ or ‘objective’ history is impossible" (39), since "objectivity is a fondly cherished myth" (49). Even in his *The New Nature of History* (2001), Marwick continues to maintain the same attitude to myth in order to redeem history itself from turning into a myth, something against which he always presented the objectives of doing history. For, here too, he defines myth as "a version of the past which usually has some element of truth in it, but which distorts what actually happened in support of some vested interest" (*The New Nature*, 292). As the author of *Re-thinking History* asks, "is it possible to say what really happened in the past, to get to the truth, to reach objective understandings or, if not, is history incorrigibly interpretive?" (4, emphasis added). History is no more valid as a system to supply the truth. "for if it is hard to know about something that exists, to say something about an effectively absent subject like ‘the past in history’ is especially difficult" (ibid, 12). Reliability of methodology to arrive at truth (as Marwick and others showed) itself has become a myth today. As Keith Jenkins states:

Talk of method as the road to truth is misleading. There is a range of methods without any agreed criteria for choosing. Often people like Marwick argue that despite all the methodological
differences between, say, empiricists and structuralists, they do nevertheless agree on the fundamentals. But this again is not so. The fact that structuralists go to enormous lengths to explain very precisely that they are not empiricists; the fact that they invested their specific approaches precisely to differentiate themselves from everyone else seems to have been a point somewhat ignored by Marwick and others. (18-19)

Much of the terminology prevalent in history through modernism, such as time, evidence, cause, effect, continuity, change, similarity and difference, have been substituted in the postmodern times by structure, agency, overdetermination, conjuncture, uneven development, centre-periphery, dominant-marginal, base-superstructure, rupture, genealogy, mentalité, hegemony, elite, paradigm etc. But both sets of terminology have been failures epistemologically.

It is pertinent and urgent to make clear in this context that postmodernism/deconstruction does not negate the existence of truth or reality. What it makes one aware is the fact of mediation: that, truth or reality (that might exist) comes to us through various media and, therefore, we have versions of truth rather than truth itself. Therefore, to exclude one truth for privileging another or to disown any particular version of reality, are all postmodernism misconceived. It is for this reason that Holocaust denials are dismissed even in these postmodern times as untenable. Holocaust histories
at their worst may be 'fictions' (mediated representations) but not lies. The point is succinctly put by Shelley Walia: "This most certainly is significant development in the philosophy of history because it endeavours to privilege literary discourse by virtue of its self-reflexivity and perceives that the only discernible 'truth' is fiction" (17). Thus, more than the verifiability and authenticity of truth (questions no more relevant today), what is interesting now is to know how this fiction/knowledge is used in the society to wield power: "...knowledge engenders power which in turn cannot be exercised without knowledge" (Walia, 25). Holocaust denial pauses itself to be a privileged knowledge at the exclusion and expense of all other 'knowledges' and therefore, such denials are themselves considered hegemonic, playing power politics.

Having made the problematic nature of history today rather clear, it is worthwhile to comment at least briefly on the status of sources, ideology, language, grand narratives and 'endism' in history.

It was William Robertson in his History of America (1777) who used the word 'source' in the sense that if comprised "one of the elements out of which a historical text might flow just as a river originates in its source"(Bentley, 3-4). Fogel, Elton, Marwick and others divided sources into primary (first hand testimony or trace about historical events) and secondary sources (descriptions of the event derived from and based on primary sources). However, there are many relevant problems surrounding the study
of sources which do not seem to have been addressed by historians in the
postmodern era. Among these issues is the question of **purpose of a source**
on account of which it (especially the primary one) came into existence. This
implies that contextual translation of a source that is archived or excavated is
one of the first challenges of a historian. Even the distinction of sources into
**primary and secondary**, itself, is controversial. For it is possible for a so-
called secondary source to be used by another historian as a primary source –
depending upon the topic he is dealing with. Now Marwick’s positioning of
history against myth and imagination becomes problematic in his own terms;
for while he diagrammatically professes that historians use sources to
challenge myths to produce interpretations which together form the body of
knowledge known as history, he elsewhere states that the past “can only be
apprehended through memories, myths, and most important, through the relics
and ‘sources’, archaeological, written, printed, painted, etc., etc., - which it
leaves” (*The Nature*, 3, emphasis added). Marwick maintains that
“architecture, novels, poems, paintings, sculpture are distinctive products of
the society which is being studied, so that the historian who fails to pay
attention to them will fail to understand that society in its totality” (*The
Nature*, 214, emphases added). Again, he categorically states that “a novel or
poem or painting, if it is a source at all, is a **primary** source for the period
in which it was written or painted, not for the period about which it is written
or what it purports to represent” (*The Nature*, 228). From these arguments it
follows that if a historian could use imaginative literature as a primary source,
it is quite reasonable for yet another historian to use the same source as secondary—depending on the topic he is dealing with. No one today accepts the position of Elton who maintained that source would speak for itself. At the same time, E.H. Carr's position that source in its process of becoming an evidence does need historian's interpretation, immediately lands the historians/historiographers on the issue of historian's world-view and the question of ideology in writing history.

One of the first challenges in handling the source consists in “seeing things from the standpoint of the people about whom they read” (Ward, 17): but they, however, no more exist. An event which is past is characterized by simultaneity and is, therefore, beyond a comprehensive reach; however, history is linear and narrative, shaped into structure of a story (with a beginning, middle and end) for the sake of everybody's comprehension. Widdowson's words are noteworthy:

... history, it may be argued, presents itself as unequivocally concerned with 'the real world', with fact (sic), with giving a serious and 'truthful account of past real events'. So why am I pairing it with 'story'? ... first, that history can only offer an inadequate account of the simultaneity of 'solid Action', one which is, by definition, partial, but which purports to the whole truth; and second, that History-writing is indeed 'Narrative'. a story which makes knowledge possible by 'forging' 'patterns' or
a ‘sense of subject’ out of the ‘Chaos of Being’ which is totality
of the past and present experience (134, emphasis added).

It is ideology or the historian’s worldview that renders history a work
not superior to a story. Thus we have histories (versions) rather than ‘the’
history. Such “... accounts stem from wide differences in perspective and
approach; differences, in fact, in their [historians’] philosophy of history”
(Eaglestone, 33); in other words, “... history is always history for a
particular reason...”, or again, “History is always history from (sic) a certain
worldview” (ibid. 34). An objective history becomes a far cry also because
“each history is also constructed as a narrative for [sic] an audience” (38).
Marxists as a whole maintain that ideology always prevents people from
attaining a true knowledge of society, for an ideology always silences the
truth of a text (Eagleton 15, 33). Thus, in the words of Keith Jenkins,
“History is never for itself; it is always for someone” (21, emphasis added).
We have, thus, histories by women, blacks, regional groupings, various
minorities etc. This means that disinterestedness and impersonality are ideals
impossible to practise. Even the assumptions, such as, ‘general agreements’,
‘majority’ etc. are reached hypocritically, for there is no such thing as
universal acceptance or agreement unless it is to agree with the dominant
power. History is often described as the interaction between the past and the
present, but such an enticing ideal risks objectivity in history. As Jenkins
observes “... to all past events historians bring their own mind-set
programmed in the present” (48, emphasis added). As a result, empathy – yet
another long-cherished ideal in doing/writing history – came to be understood as a fiction, or an imaginative construct.

What Jacques Derrida said on the dominance of language that there is nothing outside the text, is also true of history. Marwick who declared that “History at its highest must be interpretation, not fact grabbing” (The Nature, 38) has noted the importance of language in history. He states:

Certain branches of historical investigation require the skills of paleography, diplomatics and philology. There may be problems of deciphering inscriptions, hieroglyphics and certain types of handwriting. There can be problems arising from archaic or obscure language. (The Nature, 224)

The difficulty of interpreting history consists in writing history by surmounting the issues of language. The language the historian uses is not the scientific language of natural and mathematical sciences but, as I.A. Richards stated, the emotive language of the social science – a language which can be subjected to infinite interpretations. As Dominick LaCapra has identified, “For the historian the very reconstruction of a ‘context’ or a ‘reality’ takes place on the basis of ‘textualized’ remainders of the past” (27). Paul L.Ward who distinguishes between internal evidence (monographic research) and external evidence (philosophic and moralistic interpretation of the event) warns: “Exercises like this are needed to give the students a sense of the value of strict attention to what the words of a document say. which
may or may not be exactly what is available outside evidence has led them to expect” (8). Even at the end of 17th century Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) who was a professor of rhetoric and philosopher of history and is a great inspiration for the present day historians, believed that knowledge was a matter of language. As Bentley presents Vico’s position, “So long, therefore, as we can reconstruct the vocabulary of past civilizations, we can re-enter their thought world and understand their history” (7). The question of empathies is beside the point, for to reconstruct the vocabulary of past civilization is near impossibility. As John H. Arnold observes,

When the historian comes to write his or her true story, how does he or she translate a past mentalité for a modern audience? Whose words do you use to explain the source (and therefore the past): those of the dead or those of the living? (102)

In other words, history, as Shelley Walia explains, is “bound by language” and “the signifying power of language disables any attempt to produce a scientific discourse” (17). This significant linguistic dimension of history transforms the traditional view as ‘doing history’ into ‘writing history’ and history itself into a literary artifact or text capable of never ending interpretations. As Dominick LaCapra states, “If intellectual history is anything, it is a history of the situated uses of language constitutive of significant texts” (18) and, as a result, according to him, the entire intellectual history should be re-viewed “as a history of texts” (35). Thus for one more
reason, history is no ‘science’ – other commonly known reasons being, according to Karl Popper (the author of *The Poverty of Historicism*, 1957), “the impossibility of experimentation and quantification, the features of novelty, complexity, unpredictability, unavoidable selectivity of presentation, insufficiency of causal explanation, and so forth” (Kahler, 189).

It is Karl Popper himself, perhaps, for the first time argued that history has been history of power politics as the discipline has been always after influential, selective people, eras and events and tended to ignore the uninfluential (ibid. 192). In other words, the inevitable selectivity of history reduced it into grand narratives. Thus, once again, the traditional claim of history to the final, unquestionable possession of truth turns untenable and unconvincing. For, grand narratives, one way or the other, were seen as having suppressed, for examples, non-Eurocentric histories, women’s histories, postcolonial histories, etc. When history is made to depend rigidly and exclusively on sources, historians can hardly ever ask why certain voices lack evidences or why their evidences are suppressed. If the historians persist in demanding sources/evidences, how would the history of the disappeared, the conquered and the vanquished (whose sources/evidences were also vanquished along with them) be written? Another problem with grand narratives is that they can unselfconsciously take many things for granted. As Arnold comments, many political historians (whose criterion of selection is ‘the influential’) become complacent thinking that “Narrative... makes ‘what happened’ sufficiently clear in itself” (80). It is in such self-
assured ‘conclusiveness’ of historical (and even literary) grand narrative (for it is in the very nature of the narrative to be conclusive, to tend to end) endism took its origin in history.

There are historiographers who identify a version of endism with Marxism itself. In the words of M. C. Lemon, “Somewhat akin to Fukuyama, Marx put forward the notion that human history is driven, progressively and imminently by human activity, towards a consummation which is such because it finally satisfies ‘human nature’” (426). A telling example of endism in the present times can be identified with the Holocaust deniers. Such counter-discourses, ritualistic declarations and other instances of hyper-relativism do not mean that it is the spirit of post modernism to deny the possibility of writing history at all. But it has definitely shaken the false assumptions, smugness and complacency of grand narratives for postmodernism asserts that there is not just one meaning and truth: it rather implies that the co-called “actuality is only a historical and cultural fabrication” (Walia, 60) and that “the practice of history-writing has to be integrated within poststructuralist theorizing about representation, subject, gender and interaction of discourse and power” (ibid, 61). Thus the present issue in historiography, as Dominick LaCapra reminds us, is whether the writing of history should be merely the traditional “documentary reconstruction” or a “dialogue with, the past” (LaCapra, 27). Grand narratives always, rather, uncompromisingly, attest the former.
It is, therefore, no wonder that as Plato banished poets from his ideal commonwealth, history today also came to experience similar banishments in the hands of thinkers like Jean Baudrillard, Jean Francois Lyotard, Paul Davies and Francis Fukuyama. Though history’s grand narratives could be said to have caused ‘endism’ in history, the endists themselves could no more be credited as apolitical and innocent. Endism itself was part of a ‘secret’ political agenda. In the words of Stuart Sim,

To abolish history is at the same time to abolish possibility of political change [history is possible to work only with the assumption of possibility of political change], and Baudrillard [like his kinds] is in this respect every bit as guilty as Fukuyama of possessing a disguised ideological agenda. (25)

The nature of history, as we reflect on in this postmodern era is not the same as that which characterized the discipline from the time of its first use till the 70s in the twentieth century. An understanding of this radical change that has come upon history has been attempted in the forgoing pages regarding such aspects of history as the epistemological strength of history as to the ability to represent objective truth of the past, exclusive dependency of sources, the questionable presence of ‘the present’ in history (in other words, ideology of the historian), inescapability of the fluid nature of language available to a historian, bad faith of the grand narratives and finally endism in history. By way of conclusion, one may say that what is so special to the
nature of history today is that, quite contrary to the traditional view of
exclusiveness in doing history, the borderline between history and
imaginative literature became so widened that at least one of the definitions of
history today must include - to speak metaphorically - all the constituents of
at least one of the definitions of literature too.

It, therefore, remains to see, though briefly, how historians /
historiographers as well as literary critics respond to these new developments
in the understanding of history.

B. History as Literature

In an attempt to explain away the issues that pest history today, many
historians hold the attitude of considering literature or literary imagination
too, one of the attributes of history. E.H. Carr himself recognizing the
limitations of history either in giving out lessons or in functioning after the
manner of science, says that the utility of history is confined to a dialogue
between the past and the present (68). In such a dialogue, a historian can very
well treat art as one of the documents, for as Marwick points out, certain
questions in history are to be faced in any form of interdisciplinary cultural
studies. Such a stance is not difficult for him, for he knows very well that
even Edward Gibbon who is popular for his Decline and Fall of the Roman
Empire (1776-88) maintained “that history was the most popular of all forms
of literature (that is, before the novel established its ascendancy)” (The
Nature, 37, emphasis added). Writing in 1983, Dominick LaCapra suggests
that the intellectual historians "can come to terms with problems in their field" only by inquiring into the "neighbouring fields" of "literary criticism and philosophy" (15). This, he thinks, is because "the dominance of a [traditional] documentary conception [of history] distorts our understanding of both historiography and the historical process" (61). Those who are obsessed with documents / sources / evidences would not dare to write anything on the conquered peoples whose evidences were also, as usual, destroyed by the conquerors. "In many such cases", as Peter Widdowson remarks,

the history of the vanquished has no, or very little, written documentation to sustain contemporary acts of restitution. Therefore, the only way in which a people's past can be retrieved and restored is by an imaginative reconstruction of the complex processes of survival and opposition which the dominant power would have written out of its own history of victory and control. (179, emphasis added)

Robert Eaglestone who does not approve of the Holocaust deniers and similar 'endisms' in history, nevertheless holds "that history... is not the past objectively reconstructed, but texts constituted by generic rules that claim to represent the past" (50, emphasis added). Eaglestone too regards history's chief kinship with imaginative literature: "History is not the recreation of the past as it actually was. It is the name for the stories we tell about the past. It
is a type of *genre* of story" (20, emphasis original). In order to write history of the vanquished, (whether it is in the case of gender, race, class, or region, etc.) the “Historians are apparently being urged”, in the words of Shelley Walia, “*to be more imaginative* and reflexive about their discipline and recognize their creative role in the construction of historical narratives” (60, emphasis added). It is equally significant to read that Walia does not approve of the “obsession with *textuality*’ in contemporary literary theory” to the point of completely negating any meaning / content (66). However, an amount of textuality is quite welcome in history. For, as Keith Jenkins remarks, “It is liberating for it throws out old certainties and those who have benefited from them are capable of being exposed” (30). According to him, relativism in theory need not lead one to despair for it is emancipating that any one can make alternative histories (31, 33). Meaning is each one’s choice or freedom and equally a responsibility; for the signified is liberated from sign at all levels (whether it is at source or in interpretation). Truth is, in other words, chiefly a *decision*, a responsible choice made with the knowledge that whatever comes through language cannot the indisputably true. Here history and literature come to share issues in common; this is most evidenced in Jenkins’ interpolated quotation from Terry Eagleton:

‘It is difficult to see criticism [history] as anything but n innocent discipline. Its origins seem spontaneous, its existence natural: there is literature [the past] and so – because we wish to understand and appreciate it – there is also criticism[history]....But...criticism
History and literature have long been engaged in the same project - representing (human) Nature. In this activity, these disciplines strike a difference with scientific projects. As E.H Carr had long back recognized, “The predicament of the historian is a reflection of the nature of man” (20) and that “The human being is on any view the most complex natural entity known to us and the study of his behaviour may well involve difficulties different in kind from those confronting the physical scientist” (69). The predicament of the historian consists in his having to make a choice and selection from the vastness of human nature and story. In the words of Marwick, “The past, what actually happened, even if we could apprehend it directly, is in any case incomprehensible in its vastness, comprising as it does all actions, all thoughts, all products of all human beings who have ever lived” (The Nature, 7). This predicament or rather limitation of historian in having to be unforgivingly but inevitably selective, forces him to forge his wiring into a recognizable form or a comprehensible shape, in other words.
a narrative which has a beginning, middle and end. This means that histories assume the nature of “fictions” and “narratives” (Jenkins, 71-72).

The more literary/imaginative writing of history assumes, the more involved the reading of that history makes. It is significant to note how John H. Arnold’s *History: A Very Short Introduction* itself is described on its outer blurb by Neal Ascherson: “his skill as a communicator makes his own subtle analysis of history’s history as gripping as a novel” (emphasis added). However, the particular trend, described today as postmodernist in that it rejects all versions except its own, or even that it rejects all versions including its own, itself has to be suspected as having some political/vested interests. It is even illogical and unfortunate that postmodernism which argues vigorously against the notion of the universal, attempts to make itself the universal. If postmodernism’s avowed virtue consists in its tolerance, a truly tolerant postmodernist should be tolerant towards even a history written with the traditional pre-postmodernist assumptions of the sanctity of sources, representability of language and faith in the efficacy of methodology. Traditional history is not the version, but it could be accepted, surely, as one of the stories.

That the history is ‘a story’ is something that is hardly doubted by anyone now. Its amorphous position was destined to be so from the very beginning, so to say. That Herodotus is both the ‘Father of History’ and Father of lies’ could only be a coincidence (Arnold, 17-18) but it is hardly
controversial today to say that historians attempt 'true stories' though the presumed emphasis used to fall on either of the terms, with every history writing (ibid, 44-45). The reason for history in becoming a 'true story', as has already been remarked, is the precarious position of history — "...at once the impossibility and the possibility of history: that history, which aims at the whole truth cannot ever reach it (can only ever be a true story)" (Arnold, 77, emphasis original). The three essential aspects of history which Arnold identifies can hardly be described as belonging exclusively to history and not to literature:

The first is simply 'enjoyment'. There is pleasure in studying the past, just as there is in studying music or art or films or botany or the stars.... Leading on from this is my second reason: using history as something with which to think.... Lastly, my third reason. This again is connected with the first two: to think differently about oneself, to gather something of how we 'come about' as individual human beings, is also to be made aware of the possibility of doing things differently. (120-21)

The position is clearly epitomized in the last words of his history, significantly quoted from an American novelist, Tim O'Brien: "'But this is true too: stories can save us'" (qtd. 121).

There are also other reasons for history for assuming the nature of fiction. The most important of them would be the necessary structuring
function of history. The past is too vast and the historian is compelled to be selective. A meaningful and comprehensive selection gives birth to structure. Bentley's words on Wilhelm von Humboldt's lecture are noteworthy:

Humboldt's lecture 'On the Tasks of the Historian' (1821) talks in a sophisticated way about history's function of finding form within chaos, of designing events as parts of organic wholes, of going deeper than the flow of occurrence in order to locate in some more fundamental sense the 'form of history per se' (36-37, emphasis added)

One who firmly established the structuring function of history is indeed, Giambattista Vico through his classic Scienza Nuovu (New Science) (1725). Structure in history is a notion acceptable to all and the fallacy of R.G Collingwood's 'idea of history' (also the title of his work, 1946) that "history is a kind of research or enquiry" or that "history is to be understood as the happening itself" (Kalher,16) is too self evident. What we transfer and convey is not the past itself or what actually happened but 'meaning'; and, as Kalher reminds us, "order is the first prerequisite of meaning"(193). Thus the historians construct or discourse into the past. Consequently, as Kaith Jenkins remarks, ...

...the world / past comes to us always already as stories and ... we cannot get out of these stories (narratives) to check if they
correspond to the real world/past, because these ‘always already’ narratives constitute ‘reality’. (11, emphasis added)

It is generally assumed that it is the nature of literary imagination to be universal and general, while history is thought to handle the particular. But the narrative or the structuring principle of history makes history, too, universal. Once facts are used for interpretation, generalization becomes natural. In E.H. Carr’s words “It is nonsense to say that generalization is foreign to history; history thrives on generalizations” (64). Subjectivity, interaction between past and present, the inductive method in history, use of language, etc. according to E.H Carr, transform history into “probabilities” or into “reasonable belief” (68) – characteristics fundamental to the universality of literary imagination as well.

It is interesting to see how history-writing is invested with a high amount of imagining. It is true that “Historians sometimes like to define their work against that of literature” (Arnold, 12) but from one fact to another there are many blanks and as they fill in these blanks, they have to resort to “the art of good guessing” (ibid., 12). In the process, “Synthesis always involves silencing something” (ibid, 88); nevertheless, in the end of the process, “It is also clearly a ‘story’ in that it has a beginning, middle and end” (ibid., 6). E.H. Carr who is well aware of such a process in the writing of history, thinks that for the profound interaction and dialogue between the past and the present to be possible, the historian should be adequately
"inspired" (37) and the historian should venture on an "imaginative understanding for the minds of the people with whom he is dealing" (24, emphasis added). Thus imagination and understanding/knowledge are inseparably linked. As Stuart Sim quotes Arthur Marwick from the latter's 1970 edition of The Nature of History, "... try to imagine what everyday life would be like in a society in which no one knew any history. Imagination boggles, because it is only through knowledge of its history that a society can have knowledge of itself" (qtd. 3, emphasis added). Shelley Walia suggests imagination itself as a corrective to the methodological/representational issues in history:

His [Edward Said] is the 'contrapuntal' approach inherent in the sensibilities of an exile or 'the new migrant' who always believes that the power of 'the playful imagination [is ] (sic)... to change forever our perception of how things are'. This may be called the 'intifida of the imagination – a holy war against the established order created by the powers that be' (8, emphasis added).

It may be true that "Historians sometimes like to define their work against that of literature" (Arnold, 12), but such a perspective is no more tenable now for along with E.H. Carr, we know that history is peopled with "characters" (75) and "dramatis persona" (70,76) – categories of literary imagination. If history is history of man – which is too vast and far bygone –
it is bound to be ‘partial’ and there will only be historical subjectivity and not historical objectivity. All historians need to be aware of the fact that their history is partial and subjective – for, history is about ‘subject’ not ‘object’; but they – known mostly by ‘empiricists’ - are wary of conceding it. Keith Jenkins comments:

As we have seen, the attempt to get into the otherness of the past is, for idealists, what is at the centre of historical study. But this requires some imagining. no matter how much one is enriched by understandings of the past, and it is this stress on imagination that has been attacked. This attack has come mainly from liberal and right-wing empiricists. (65, emphasis added)

Imagination in history is also the product of the interaction between the past and the present. The past is interpreted by the historian who is also an individual and a product of history and a society. According to E. H. Carr. “It is in this twofold light” - individuality and the historical environment- “that the student of history must learn to regard him” (44). In other words, E. H. Carr was suggesting that the “twofold light” or ideology is a powerful source of enhancement of the structuring or imagining involved in history-writing. In this “processing process” (16) the contribution of the historian is thus, “unconscious” as well as “conscious” (35).

The extent of the presence of imagination in history takes away the possibility of linear reading but demands a literary or multiple readings of a
historical text. The historian today is well aware of the changing connotation of terms like democracy, empire etc. and resultantly, "the use of language forbids him to be neutral" (Carr, 25). In such a perspective, the poetic or inspirational origin of literature becomes hard to be perceived as distinct from the source of the necessity to write history itself. As Marwick observes, "There does seem, in most people, to be an instinctive curiosity about the past, a sense of wonder, a poetic desire to be somehow in contact with that past" (16, emphasis added). As a consequence, the idea of history extends to the other extreme and in history, as C.N.L. Brooke notes, "we analyse the play of human personality and all the subtleties of the human mind, and so mingle with literary criticism (qtd. Marwick, 18; emphasis added).

A suggestion of the possibility for multiple or contrapuntal readings of history is made here, not because one wants to argue in favor of an obliteration of history as a unique discipline; instead "it is to argue that if we ask for one, sole monolithic Truth, we may silence other possible voices, different histories" (Arnold, 114). Only a contrapuntal reading/writing of history would enable us to heed to the histories of, for example, the interned in concentration camps, the black people, women, vanquished nations, postcolonial peoples etc. — "the voices of those originally 'hidden from history' " (ibid., 115). As Edward Said maintained, since one cannot "separate the personal from the political" (Walia, 6), "there can never be any disinterested inquiry or objective sets of assumptions" whether in literature or in history (ibid., 37). Therefore, in his postcolonial readings "Said
offers *alternative* epistemological systems to dislocate our endocentric perspective which is shaped by Western *literature* and *histories*” (19, emphasis added). A postmodernism – to sound a note of precaution, every now and then, would not be in any case redundant – that implies a complete disavowal of any semantic confirmation in history or in literature (or in social sciences, in general) would be the same as again suppressing ‘the voices of those originally hidden from history’. In this context, Said’s words of warning may be taken as representative:

Exercising considerable influence on the direction of literary studies in universities around the world, Said has helped to turn ‘reading against the grain’ into a critical methodology that, at one level, reconciles with postmodernist thinking, and at another, warns literary theoreticians to take a skeptical view of the lapses into extreme relativism [in history].(Walia, 22, emphasis added)

For ‘the spectre of history’ (pace Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*, 1994) will ever continue to haunt humanity. Historians have not yet conceded to the complete abolition of history as some disconcerted postmodernists dream of. If those who lapsed ‘into extreme relativism’ were some of the “literary theoreticians”, according to Said/ Walia, they are only some of the ‘literary intellectuals’ ” according to C.P. Snow/ E.H Carr (Carr, 85-86). Historians still want to strike a difference between history and literature, following, in a sense, the tradition of Leopold von Ranke who viewed the project of history
as clearly incomparable with that of even the historical novels (a literary genre assumed to be the closest to history) of Sir Walter Scott. To quote Ranke,

'I read these works with lively interest; but I also took objection to them... The comparison convinced me that the historical sources themselves were more beautiful and in any case more interesting than romantic fiction. I turned away completely from fiction and resolved to avoid any invention and imagination in my work and to keep strictly to the facts.' (qtd. Arnold, 34)

**History** thus came to be regarded by historians today as a *genre of writing*, if not of literature itself. It is on account of the generic principles of history, the historians try to defend its identity against a total negation of "the entire genre that they regarded as history" (Bentley, 88). As we have already noted, John H. Arnold awards history its generic nomenclature as 'true stories' with a freedom allowed to shift the emphasis of the terms according to the shifts in significance of literature and history in historian’s activity (Arnold, chapter 7). Edward Said has already exposed the problematic shifts of emphasis of "literature and history in his two books, *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*" (Walia, 20). To quote Said from his *Culture and Imperialism* (1993):

*Stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method...*
colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own *history* (qtd. Walia, 21, emphasis added).

Thus in the sense that “Writing meaningfully about the past is, and can only be, the ‘emplotment’ of events of the past into certain types of story” one can say that “… history is not recreation of the past ‘as it really was’ but the name we give to the *genre of stories*” (Eaglestone, 37,36 emphasis added). Postmodernism has shown us that historical objectivity is a myth; however, according to Robert Eaglestone, the ideas of historian as one who jointly works with the community of historians, historian’s ability to follow a recognized mode of argument, use of sources, consistency, techniques of realist mode of narration (in third person), etc., are some of the generic rules of history (43-49). Denials of history are extra-historical, as they do not come under the purview of history at all, because they refuse to mind the generic rules of history. Thus, as Eaglestone remarks, “Holocaust denial doesn’t obey the rules of genre. Therefore, *Holocaust denial isn’t part of the genre* of history, but another genre, the genre of the politics or of ‘hate speech’”(50). What remains to see are the interesting ways various literary critics regard history as a genre not only of writing but of literature itself.

C. Literature as History

Perhaps, the first significant attempt to read literature in order to construct history came from the Marxist literary critics. Marxist approach developed through Pierre Macherey, Louis Althusser and Terry Eagleton – to
name only a very few among an umpteen number of critics adhering to an almost equal number of versions - denounces Russian Formalism which regards even content in literature as the function of form, as well as 'vulgar Marxism' which says that content in literature is form-less. History, for these Marxists, is equivalent to dialectical materialism as envisioned by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. But to view 'the' history at present (namely, the economic forces behind any human activity, which tend to culminate in communism in the 'final analysis' of the dialectical progression of the matter), ideology (obviously except Marxist ideology!) plays a hindrance.

However, literature because of its generic attributes (refraction, distanciation, estrangement, etc - in a single word, 'literariness') mediates between ideology and history and contains a potentiality to expose the history to the reader. Thus, Marxists themselves do not regard literature as a substitute for pure history or content itself, which rather lies outside literature. On the other hand, the presence of history in literature is dialectically embedded in its form (Eagleton, 23). Though history is viewed as 'single', reading of literature, because of its literariness, could be done dialectically, contrapuntally. The purpose of literature is not to effect a single fiction - a single writing or a suspension of disbelief - but many fictions; it is in the very nature of literature to be inconclusive (Eagleton, 59). This tension between literariness and history in literature later came to symbolize the very unresolved tensional presence of formalism and materialism in Marxist approach. To view literature as a carrier of history caused Marxists
to become many versions and interpretations only to surmount still many more contradictions. For a worldview that regards matter as the ‘prime mover’ of everything, it did not seem becoming of them to grant autonomy to imagination. Such a tension — materialism vs. aesthetics — was present even with the initial rhetoric of Marx and Engels. In the words of Terry Eagleton, “...it is this distinction [distinction between the ‘conscious’ and the ‘unconscious’] which enables Marx and Engles to admire a consciously reactionary author like Balzac. Despite his Catholic and legitimist prejudices, Balzac has a deeply imaginative sense of the significant movements of his own history” (45, emphasis added). Thus, to reduce as far as possible, the degree of autonomy of literariness/textualism and to enhance in equal proportion the historicity of imagination in literature became the principal challenge the Marxist critics are busy encountering.

To many critics and imaginative writers who are not necessarily Marxist, literariness of literature itself serves a historical purpose. After all, as is already mentioned, literature has its etymological origin in historia and “Both ‘story’ and history’ then, are [regarded as] narratively organized ways of knowing about the past” (Widdowson.134). Further, if literature is exploring the ways of “how we might reconstruct our understanding of how we live” (ibid.,159), it can hardly ever strike a difference with history. The American novelist Tony Morrison is reported to have said: “... new information has got to get out, and there are several ways to do it. One is novel” (qtd. ibid. 198) But, as we have already seen, ‘facts’ do not inform
since they are fragmentary, simultaneous and bygone. Consequently, people cannot know things except through story or a simulacrum of reality (structured narratives with beginning, middle and end). Thus, the journalist protagonist in Graham Swift's novel _Out of This World_ (1988) says; “People want stories. They don’t want facts” (qtd. ibid., 162). To know the past is an epistemological necessity.

Even in the postmodern times, we have no escape from story, since self-consciousness in writing and reading transform the story into ‘stories’ and simulacra. As in history, literature too, has to necessarily compress flux/vastness and entirety into this-ness and clock-time against a structure-less psychological time. This economy which is the secret of art (as well as history) transforms the text susceptible to multiple readings or contrapuntal interpretations. Thus, literature, like history tends to transcend any attempt to get itself defined. Both are, therefore, considered the best means to define themselves reflexively, and they always get blurred, one almost always crossing the self-assumed boundaries of the other. Thus, for instance, Raymond Williams in his _The Long Revolution_ (1961) defined cultural history as “the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life... [in a] ‘pattern’” (qtd. ibid., 104). Peter Widdowson in his _Literature_ (1999) ‘defines’ literature saying “that all literary works are ‘creative’ in respect of their original ‘making’ in language, whilst also potentially holding for us, in this, what Thomas Hardy called ‘moments of vision’” (106). Peter Widdowson then asserts the epistemological importance of literature; while
doing so, he finds literature assuming the same function of history for his famous book chiefly examines the ways by which literature provides us with “historical understanding” (136).

As is already remarked, our historical curiosity is poetic and instinctive and, therefore, wherever imagination is involved, there is always a lapse back into memory to seek the self’s identity. As Terry Eagleton remarks “our liking for great art is a nostalgic lapse back into childhood” (11) for everything – including the powers and possibilities of consciousness – is tied on to concrete art (68). No literature (imaginatively produced and constructed) is devoid of history.

It is imagination that helps both the historian and the literary writer to select and economise the vastness of life into a readable whole. Thus just as the validity of history is its ‘factual’ justice (and not objective truth), the validity of literature is its fictive/poetic justice. In either case, to write story of facts – whether it be history or literature – is an epistemological inevitability: “not that it necessarily tells the truth; but that it at once counters the official ‘truths’ which envelop our lives, and shows us in its own self-conscious textual ‘making’, how those [hi]stories (sic) are fabricated too” (Widdowson, 193).

One advantage with literature is that it had long assumed the nature of history in that it is in the nature of literature to demand a contrapuntal complexity and multiplicity of reading. The very existence of umpteen
number of approaches to literature and a student’s freedom to apply any ideology to the interpretation of literature explain this fact. This means that literature is imaginative not in its making alone; it is equally ‘imaginative’ in reading. Imagination (choice in meanings/signs) is the faculty by which content is sought in literature as well as in history. As Raymond Williams in his fiction, People of the Black Mountains (1989-90) says, “... history which is both recorded and unrecorded can only find its way through to personal substance if it then becomes a novel, becomes a story” (qtd. in Widdowson, 181; emphasis Widdowson’s). According to Widdowson, it is the historian in Williams that turned him into an imaginative writer, which made possible “the imag[in]ing (sic) of the experiential history of the silenced Welsh people” (183).

This is how literature redeems history from those historians who make a fetish of evidences and grand narratives but negate history to the vanquished and the conquered merely because their evidences were obliterated by the conquerors along with the people whom they ravished. In Midnights Children (1981), Salman Rushdie says “that in a country where the truth is what it is instructed to be, reality quite literally ceases to exist, so that everything becomes possible except what we are told is the case...” (qtd. Widdowson, 192). Meaning in postmodern era has become a thing of choice. Hardly do we ever become conscious of the fact that nothing whatsoever takes place in a literary/historical book. The reading mind, instead, is the space where a person chooses various meanings including
some as literary and others as historical. It is reading/perception which is the real fictionalizing act. Thus, if history is a poetic necessity (as is already seen) literature “creates poietic realities” (sic., Widdowson, 104) and both assume universal appeal through their narrative and structuring compression.

In this sense, postmodernism does not announce the end of reading/or of history; instead, it declares that there are histories rather than ‘the’ history and meanings rather than ‘the’ meaning. It declares, in other words, that “history is nothing but historiography” (Walia, 15) and meaning in literature is a differance between metonymy and metaphor. It is significant that postmodernism brought fiction nearest to history by way of the genre, historiographic metafiction. It is equally significant and even ironical that only Jacques Derrida, the foremost among postmodern thinkers, (and not anyone of the so-called conservative or orthodox historians) could theoretically reclaim – through his Specters of Marx (1994) – ‘the historical’ in historical activities which seemed rather threatened by such a decisive work as Francis Fukuyama’s The End of History and the Last Man (1992). (A detailed account of how Derrida answers the false smugness of Fukuyama’s capitalist dreams is available in Stuart Sim’s Derrida and the End of History, 1999).

Only a ‘literary’ reading – whether of history or of literature – has potentialities (remember Malcolm Bradbury’s book Possibilities), to remain alive in reading because only the category of ‘‘the literary’ creates poietic
(sic) realities’” (Widdowson, 205) (Read ‘histories’ for ‘realities’). ‘The literary’ now has to be understood “in its historical, cultural and social locations and effects, rather than in terms of its aesthetic essence” (ibid.117) alone.

Widdowson, time and again, asserts that to read literature in favour of history, one should discard linear, monolithic approach and attempt a ‘postmodernism’ in reading which allows perspectives /contrapuntal complexity rather than a single perspective. For, single perspectives often cater to the interests of the author’s / reader’s politics. However, as is inclusive in stance, postmodernism should take into account even the author’s hidden agenda.

Like Widdowson, Hayden White, too, asserts the literariness of history “so that it has no distinction from philosophy or literature, and is apparently an imaginative creation of the past that goes well beyond the constraints of documents and ‘facts’.” (Walia, 16). In fact, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida initiated such a discourse which “was then taken up by Hayden White who regarded all history as verbal fiction that is partly invented” (ibid., 13, emphasis added). “However”, Walia cautions, “to say postmodernist views of history are nihilistic is to miss the main argument: no one has ever denied that history can be written” (60). What they all want to seek are innovative ways of writing history. In the
words of Widdowson, to write/ read literature as a source of history is one such innovative way:

Perhaps the most innovative ‘use’ by which contemporary literature contributes to history, however, is by writing it as fiction... [Literature voices the] ‘silence’ which is the history of a people who have been vanquished and/or colonized by victors of one sort or another... In many such cases, the history of the vanquished has no, or very little, written documentation to sustain contemporary acts of restitution. Therefore, the only way in which a people’s past can be retrieved and restored is by an imaginative reconstruction...(179, emphasis added)

Marwick had already conceded that “the poor do not leave much in the way of primary sources” (The Nature, 44). Marxist critics already came forward declaring that literature is a source of history. Pierre Macherey reports that Lenin analysed ‘Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution’ (299) and to Macherey, Balzac as a writer is both a novelist and a historian (260-61). Fogal says that traditional historians rely principally on literary evidence (Fogel, 24). According to Arthur Marwick, anything could be invested with history and, therefore, is a source. Literature, according to Marwick could only be primary source (for the period in which it is written); he is at the same time aware that categorization of primary and secondary sources itself is unconvincing:
Certain materials do not fit neatly into the categorization as primary or secondary sources; some are primary sources from one point of view, secondary from another; as so often in all aspects of historical study, much depends upon the precise questions which are being asked. (200)

This is exactly what many post-structuralist approaches have done to literature. Literature, as is shown by Widdowson and many others like the postcolonial feminist and black writers, is also read as a secondary source. Marwick had already appealed to the skill of a literary critic: “Establishing meanings in art and literature requires the formal skills of art historian and literary scholar” (The Nature, 231). And in their skills, literature is written/read as ‘alternative liberating histories” (Widdowson, 135). The traditional ‘sources [of history] are not [themselves] transparent and innocent documents” (Arnold, 71). At the same time, in the contemporary times, what had been traditionally considered anti-historical are treated as powerfully contributing to historical knowledge. Myth, for example, was the antonym to history, according to Marwick, but today, “Memory, fantasy, narrative and myth continuously interact with history, culture and power, thereby bringing about experiences of continuity and difference” (Walia, 63). Such an historical interaction of literature with history is the main argument of Widdowson’s work: “The fact that fiction is a primary form in which this ‘real history’ gets recorded – in the potential absence of it from ‘official history’ – lies at the heart of my argument here” (180) And elsewhere he
declares: "But the nub of my argument is that [Raymond] Williams has to write a novel (sic) in order to retrieve the unwritten, unrecorded history of the Welsh people" (182).

As is already suggested, most of the imaginative writers assume that they are writing 'histories' and 'factual accounts'. Daniel Defoe and Henry Fielding, some the first novelists in the history of English fiction, are impressive examples. The historical in The Tempest is examined now in the postcolonial context. F.R Leavis has examined Adam Bede and has found that "As sociologist and social historian [Eliot] is scrupulously precise" (Widdowson, 141). Arthur Miller, in his commentary in Act One of The Crucible, a play on the Salem witch trials, says: "'No one can really know what their lives were like. They had no novelists....'" (qtd. ibid, 154).


Intertextuality, implies a re-reading of (historical) context in earlier novels. Examples for historical re-examination abound in literature/literary criticism.
itself. They are proofs enough to the effect that literature can very well be used not only as primary source but also as secondary source.

Today, Arthur Marwick’s words, “The historian who aspires to the imaginative insights and the narrative style of Honoré de Balzac or George Eliot had better give up writing history” (The Nature, 313) are hardly heeded to by historians or literary writers. Still worse seems to be his anti-intellectual stance visible in his refusal to enter a dialogue with theory itself, let alone postmodernism: in his words, “‘theory’ in the arts, in fact, is the same nonsense as is so-called ‘theory’ in history, the same neo-Marxist, postmodernist stuff that I have been challenging throughout this book” (The New Nature, 193). But his caution that, before a literary work is considered for use in history, the history of the literary source itself has to be studied—“how (sic) particular works of art came to be produced in the precise form in which they actually appeared” (The Nature, 304)—are to be reckoned with by literary critics in particular.

Os Lusíadas (1572), the Portuguese epic by Luis Vaz de Camões, tells the story of Vasco da Gama’s voyage of ‘discovery’ to India in the years 1497 to 1499. A curious mixture of history and literature, the work inspired numerous translations in languages including English, French, Italian, German and Spanish. It has also been a source of many an imaginative work in European literature. The general theme of the epic is the history of Portugal from its origin to the establishment of empire in Africa and Asia. To relate this story.
Camões chose the historic account of the voyage of Vasco da Gama and his fleet as the central plot of his epic. The work contributed tremendously to the consciousness of nationhood of Portugal and continues to exert an influence for the Portuguese beyond a measure. No doubt, Camões continues to be regarded the most celebrated of all Portuguese poets and his place is reckoned with equal to and perhaps excelling Homer, Virgil, Ovid, and Petrarch.

Vasco da Gama is made the principal narrator, following classical models, and imitating *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*, the progression of the heroes is made along a maritime route. In the manner of Renaissance classicism, the mariners meet mythological figures who include Venus as the protector of the Portuguese, Bacchus as their enemy, and Adamastor (Camões's invention) as the embodiment of Cape of Good Hope, then called Cape of Storms (Cabo das Tormentas), and finally the original creation of an Isle of Love (a Ilha dos Amores) as the climax of the poem.

The analysis of *Os Lusiadas* will be done from various angles such as its formation, self-consciousness of the author, centrality of historical narration, conception of history in the work, and finally structure of the epic. The basic assumption regarding history held on throughout this work is that the study of history is primarily, a study of the source itself. Ironically, one of the sources of inspiration for the methodology adopted in the present study is Arthur Marwick himself who saw the importance of source in doing history in this manner: "What historians believe in is the need to study and analyze the
sources (sic) as objectively as is humanly possible....The proper answer [to the question when does something becomes a fact of history] of a trained historian would be that this depends upon a critical analysis of the evidence (The New Nature, 154-155, emphasis added). Hence a concentration of the work in question became the prime focus of this exercise. Pretensions of scholarship by a display of traditional histories and chronicles are kept at abeyance also because Os Lusiadas has been compared already rather exhaustively with the historical ‘facts’ recorded in histories and chronicles. What appears to lack in Camonian scholarship is a historical approach suitable to be applied to an imaginative work. The studies hitherto existing on Camões’s epic hardly have attended to these twin dimensions of his epic satisfactorily. The following chapter plan adopted in this work is expected to fulfill this missing requirement.

Chapter II. Reading or Experience?: Formation of Os Lusiadas will examine the background and influences that have gone into the making of Camões’s epic. Chapter III. Historian or Poet?: Self-Consciousness in Os Lusiadas will attempt to analyze the self-consciousness as revealed in the epic regarding the identity the poet / historian assumes with regard to the work he has created. Chapter IV. The Victorious or the Vanquished?: Nationalities in Os Lusiadas will seek to probe the question of centrality of nationhood in the epic to observe which nation occupies the subject position in the epic, while chapter V. Faith or Mythology?: Conception of History in Os Lusiadas essays to observe the interplay of pagan mythology and
Christian faith in the epic in order to outline the conception of history Camões appears to hold in the poem. Chapter VI, Epic or History?: Structure of Os Lusiadas seeks to investigate how the nature/structure of Camões's work appears to shift constantly between those of epic and history, or, in other words, being a product of literary imagination and one of historical construct. Chapter VII, Conclusion will sum up the chief arguments, results and conclusions of the preceding chapters.