Chapter III

Reconstructing the Past

Reconstruction is an inevitable process in the narration of history as the historians generally historicize past events. However, in the context of the new developments in historiography, every mode of historical inquiry needs to be reviewed and updated. So, the reconstructive strategy of historians is a necessary positive step in this direction. The validity of a reconstructed event is often challenged but there is an artistic involvement in every reconstructive process. In this regard, the historian’s function is no different from that of the artist. The ways in which a writer reconstructs and represents the events of history are interesting to both writers and historians. The reconstructed events often subvert the known facts of empirical history. Reconstruction is a means to subvert the past structured on hierarchical patterns of power. It is an art and a medium for a writer.

Writers and historians often reconstruct the past/history in manifold ways and manifest the same in their works of art. White’s conception of history as narrative brings in the elements of subjectivity and politics in the representation of history. Since both historical and fictional narratives are considered literary artifacts, reconstruction of past/history is a literary enterprise used for artistic and political purposes. Reconstruction of past/history leads to multiple interpretations of a historical event. It helps to
approach a past event from multiple perspectives. This narrative technique makes historical and fictional text open-ended with multi-layered semantic/political structures. Reconstruction of past/history is a narrative strategy used to examine the possibility of a totality of vision or a completeness of understanding in a text or a discursive practice. It is therefore, part of metanarrative.

Reconstructing the past/history as developed by the postmodern historians and writers creates a problematic that blurs the generic distinctions between narratives and transforms the cultural identity represented into a political construct. Even though their writings are conditioned by the postmodern characteristics of decentred subjectivity, fragmentation and multiple identities, they negotiate their political identity through their writings on the present. Postmodern historians/writers attempt to depict the present as shaped by the past, rather than portraying the past events as objective phenomena. They confront the problems of representation and reality in their attempt to (re)construct their identities through narratives.

Postmodern historians/artists find solutions to the problem of concretizing what is factual in the reconstructing process. At times, reconstructing past/history is a means by which the devoiced/the voiceless can articulate their resentment and dissent. It also helps to analyze the voids and silences in the narrative structures of a text. Reconstruction of past/history challenges the mainstream/empirical history and the dominant power structures represented in it. Generally, it is the dominant group which governs the society
that gets represented in the mainstream historical narratives. The marginalized/subordinate groups have developed their perspective on historical events to subvert the hegemony of the dominant group and its oppressive measures. The different forms of genealogy offer alternative and counter-hegemonic historical narratives. Poststructuralist concerns in the epistemological structures of genealogical history have considerably reduced the gap between the mainstream and the marginalized/devoiced societies.

The past in itself has no significance or meaning unless it is connected to the present. Writing the past has become problematic in the present. There are many ways in which the concepts of history/past have been theorized and problematized in poststructuralist and postmodernist discourses. These discourses, both historical and fictional, often treat history in a complex way. Since historical and fictional narratives are linguistic constructs, they get entwined in the text blending fact and fiction in the structure of the narrative. Both postmodern historians/writers represent the past/history figuratively, transforming the past event through the alchemy of narration. The imagination of the historian/writer alters the reality of the past through the transforming power of language and the politics of narration.

G. R. Elton, in *The Practice of History*, highlights the roles of imaginative reconstruction and interpretation in the narration of history:

> The discovery of truth requires not only... acquaintance with the available evidence and scholarly assessment of it – but also imaginative reconstruction and interpretation. Evidence
is the surviving deposit of an historical event; in order to
rediscover the event, the historian must read not only with the
analytical eye of the investigator but also with the
comprehensive eye of the story-teller. (2002: 76-77)

He means that the historian must have twin sense to reconstruct history:
the analytical sense of an inquisitive investigator and the comprehensive
sense of a narrator of stories. History is a form of re-discovery involving
interpretation and imaginative reconstruction of the past.

Contemporary means of reconstructing the past have made use of
the fundamental perceptions of the real and the virtual in narratives. The
virtual simulations are a means of realizing facts. Poststructuralists point
out that virtual simulations are realities of their own positions rather than
any empirical reality. Researches have been conducted under empirical
sciences to realize the authenticity of historical narratives. But the
textualized nature of the past realities makes them depend on the textuality
of history in the postmodern perspective. Naturally, historians abandon the
traditional means of accessing reality in an objective and totalizing manner.
Their searches become relative and fragmentary in nature. Alex Callinicos, in
*Theories and Narratives: Reflections on the Philosophy of History*, remarks:

> Historians seek to reconstruct the past by studying its traces.
> These traces largely … consist in documents, …. The historian’s
> practice thus takes the form, in Edward Thompson’s felicitous
formulation, of ‘the close interrogation of texts and contexts.’ (1995: 65)

He asserts that narrating history is not a simple and easy practice. It involves the method of interdisciplinary analysis: the evaluation of texts in their politically appropriate contexts.

There are ways for the reconstruction of past/history rendered throughout the narrative. Reconstruction is an ongoing activity performed by historians on contested past events. Opinions differ on the strategy of construction/reconstruction of history/past. The theorization of history often leads to differences in the perspective of events. It also shows the means by which historians reconstruct the textualized past.

Imitation is the oldest means and practice of reconstruction that has been used since Aristotle. Plato’s concepts on the world of ideas or the world of forms or objects reflect on the manner of representation. Several techniques have been developed over the years for the re/construction of historical narratives. The art of re/construction has been perfected in the postmodern age. Besides the techniques/devices, there are intertextual and intratextual affinities between various genres/disciplines that help reconstruction: for instance, literature and history, auto/biography and history, archaeology and history, memory and history, novel and history, epic and history, or travelogue and history. These genres/disciplines develop narratives with identical structures/forms. The cultural identities of different communities are often redefined within the narrative structures of story and history. The notion of
cultural memory has a close connection with a nation’s version of its past and its version of cultural identity. But, Pierre Nora, in “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire,” finds memory and history as binary opposites:

Memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition. Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. (Burns, 2006: 285 - 86)

While history keeps up reconstruction which is problematic and incomplete, memory is in evolution, conditioned by dialectics, unconscious of deformations and subject to appropriation and periodic revision.

The role of memory marks a renewed desire to secure a sense of the self in postmodern discourses. Cultural memory refers to the construction of a shared past by various cultural groups, their institutions and practices to create a symbolic form and order to their culture. Although the metaphorical use of the word ‘memory’ is a shared one, there also exists the processes of individual memory. The re/construction of a shared past resembles the processes of individual memory. Narrative often depends on the memory of the narrative. This is especially important in the case of retrospective narration and memory.
plays. Sometimes, the narration progresses through the unconscious of the narrator. Like memory, feigned memory or betrayal of memory also plays significant role in narrative. The recovery of memory through re-construction of past/history/myth is a narrative technique. In fact, memory is essential to understand the past and the present. Postmodernism offers a perspective/frame for the reconstruction of the past.

Many of the writings in the West on collective memory are centred on either the historical events of the Holocaust or the trauma of the two World Wars. In this regard, James E. Young explains in “The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History:”

Depending on where these memorials are constructed and by whom, these sites remember the past according to a variety of national myths, ideals, and political needs. Some recall war dead, others resistance, and still others mass murder. All reflect both the past experiences and current lives of their communities, as well as the State’s memory of itself. At a more specific level, these memorials also reflect the temper of the memory-artists’ time, their place in aesthetic discourse, their media and materials. (Erll, 2008: 357)

The concerns of a community/nation determine the nature of remembering the past. An artist's negotiation with memory provides him with a medium, materials and a discursive practice.
Alon Confino, in “Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method,” explains how a shared cultural memory can be represented in various media. He observes:

Used with various degrees of sophistication, the notion of memory, more practiced than theorized, has been used to denote very different things, which nonetheless share a topical common denominator: the ways in which people construct a sense of the past. It has been used to explore, first, the memory of people who actually experienced a given event, such as the memory of Holocaust survivors. In addition, it has come to denote the representation of the past and the making of it into a shared cultural knowledge by successive generations in “vehicles of memory” such as books, films, museums, commemorations, and others. (Burns, 2006: 263)

He means that a collective memory is not only a representation of the past but also a cultural knowledge shared by generations of the community.

The notion of reconstructing the past involves, as already stated, a retrospection of the past events. Retrospection literally means the action of looking back on past events, experiences and thoughts. Birgit Neumann, in “The Literary Representation of Memory,” stresses the element of retrospection in reconstructing the past:

Characteristically, fictions of memory are presented by a reminiscing narrator or figure who looks back on his or her past,
trying to impose meaning on the surfacing memories from a present point of view. Thus, the typical pattern for the literary representation of memories is retrospection or analepsis. (Erll, 2008: 335)

As in a stream of consciousness novel, the narrator as a historian, can reminisce the events in a story. A totalizing experience of the narrator enables him/her to highlight the present, giving meaning to memories. The most interesting thing in such retrospection is the construction of the fictionalized mode of memorization.

Our notions of history have changed over time. The postmodernist perspective of history has radically changed the traditional concepts of History and history. Michel Foucault, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, brings forward the distinction between the new and the old notions of history. Whereas the new perspective of history brings in subjectivity and discontinuity, the traditional perspective of history moves around continuous, objective and monolithic structures. Foucault explains:

> In short, the history of thought, of knowledge, of philosophy, of literature seems to be seeking, and discovering, more and more discontinuities, whereas history itself appears to be abandoning the irruption of events in favour of stable structures. (2002: 6)

Foucault thinks that history is concerned with patterns of sameness and differences or points of inflection and change. Foucault has laid out the idea of
a spatialized history in his prominent works. He pays attention to the thinking of the history of discourses and power in their spatial relations. He argues that the entire history remains to be written of spaces and his particular method emphasizes the connection between space and power.

An analysis of the social structures and their functions has led Foucault to reflect on the nature of knowledge and its social control. Such formation/generation of knowledge has its power structures constructed in the society itself. History is a site of such power regulations which a society governs through its knowledge formation. Foucault, in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, establishes the relations within power, knowledge and history:

Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish ‘true’ and ‘false’ statements; the means by which each is sanctioned; and the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (1980: 131)

In order to determine the nature of truth, each society has its specific rules and regulations. The procedures involved in such process are partly governed by those who are in control of power. There is a tacit and naturalized agreement within societies to yield to the power structures of a society. Both history and its representation, especially its truth claims, are governed by the powerful in
Anna Green and Kathleen Troup, in *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth-century History and Theory*, also express arguments similar to Foucault’s notion of power:

> History writing can be a form of power: we use our knowledge to control and domesticate the past, although it is only one past. Since all history must be present-centred, we create the way in which people think about the present through our creative fictions (for they can be no other) concerning the past. (1999: 302)

Constructing the past can be appropriated to control people’s view on the historical past. Writing history involves elements of fiction which sway the way people think of the past.

As Foucault argues, there is a distinction between the history proper and the history of thought. Foucault argues that history proper seems to be seeking deep, hidden, stable structures, while the history of thought seems to be discovering ever more discontinuities and ruptures. In practice, this apparent contrast is a false one. Both kinds of historical practices pose the same problems, and they have only provoked opposite effects at the surface level. This has prompted Foucault to redefine the entirety of the historical practice. For him, history is a way in which a society recognizes and develops a mass of documents with which it is inextricably linked. This new view of history, in which documents become artifacts or monuments, means that history aspires to be a kind of archaeology.
It is necessary to question and analyze the received ideas about the various kinds of series that constitute history. It is not prudent to take for granted certain kinds of progressive series primarily based on the assumption of a continuous chronology of reason which has an inaccessible origin. Selection and ordering of the series is the duty of the historian. Fitting events into the series need be questioned and examined by historians. The notion of discontinuity assumes a major and pervasive role in historical practice. Discontinuity precedes the works of the historian, as he or she tries to select between discontinuous levels of analysis and types of periodization, to address the documentary materials. Paradoxically, this discontinuity also results from their description, because they show historical limits and moments of breakdown. The discontinuity in the textual practice of historical narrative is self-reflexive.

In the postmodern perspective, there is no possibility of a total history, a history that depends on a single frame for all types of history. The totalizing history is replaced by general history in which no continuities are presumed in the open field of documentary evidence. The discontinuous elements demand more of heterogeneous forms of relation. Historians naturally confront with a host of new methodological problems on the re/construction of history: its delimiting bodies of documents, choices and levels of analysis. The impossibility of a totalizing history leads to incoherent, disruptive and heterogeneous narratives. This emphasizes the significance of metahistory.
Foucault has introduced a radical discontinuity in history and its human subject. Foucault considers Marxian analysis of the human subject as merely relational. While Nietzsche replaced the original rational foundations with a moral genealogy, Freud showed that human beings are not transparent to themselves. All these developments have challenged the traditional notions of history and attempted to give a non-linear narrative form to history. Foucault argues that historians do not simply study history as a kind of memory, but alter the accumulation and relation among the documents that constitute history. Besides, the mass of historical documents provides the conditions of the historians’ enterprise. The historians do not think in a vacuum, but they enunciate in part to what has been enunciated before. Historical narrative and historical practice are conditioned by the previously written texts of history and the practices followed by the historians of preceding generations.

In the philosophy of history there is a new emphasis on moments of transition, not from one stage of a progression of events to a logical next stage, but from one kind of philosophy to a kind that is deeply discontinuous with it. This is a history of breaks, of eruptions, of radical shifts in the limits of possible thought; in short, this is a history of discontinuities.

The traditional empiricist view of history and the postmodern notion of history have divergent views on the re/construction of events. The traditional practices point towards a monolithic attempt to bring forward every historical event in a linear structure. This monolithic structure is broken by the postmodern view to give voice to the voids and silences in history. Foucault, in
The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences, establishes how long the discipline of history have been in existence and the different functions it undertook to perform in the society. He explains:

It is true that History existed long before the constitution of the human sciences; from the beginnings of the Ancient Greek civilization, it has performed a certain number of major functions in Western culture: memory, myth, transmission of the Word and of Example, vehicle of tradition, critical awareness of the present, decipherment of humanity’s destiny, anticipation of the future, or promise of a return. What characterized this History—or at least what may be used to define it in its general features, as opposed to our own—was that by ordering the time of human beings upon the world’s development …or inversely by extending the principle and movement of a human destiny to even the smallest particles of nature…it was conceived of as a vast historical stream, uniform in each of its points, drawing with it in one and the same current, in one and the same fall or ascension, or cycle, all men, and with them things and animals, every living or inert being, even the most unmoved aspects of the earth. And it was this unity that was shattered at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in the great upheaval that occurred in the Western episteme: it was discovered that there existed a historicity proper to nature… Moreover, it became possible to show that activities
as peculiarly human as labour or language contained within themselves a historicity that could not be placed within the great narrative common to things and to men. (1970: 367)

As time passed, traditional historians find their linear practice of historicization inadequate. History requires a narrative which consists of ruptures, fragments, and voids. As Jean-François Lyotard declares, the Postmodernists emphasize an incredulity towards grandnarratives. Historians point out that the differences between the traditional History and the postmodern histories have been formulated with the needs of the present times. The histories have a non-linear structure, and they aim at to fill up the voids and gaps in the linear history. Filling up the voids, the silences, or the absences in the historical narrative is a way of re/constructing history. This is a historical practice followed by marginalized communities. They find it a means to re/construct their identity and voice their ideology.

Narrative history explores novelistic devices to create life-like characters and to bring distant places and past events into one’s mind. It can also inspire emotions in its readers or listeners. This narrative moves with the teleological affair of recording the great deeds of the past in order to build a collective memory which would later serve as a guide for the future. The teleology of narrative history makes it a grand narrative.

Traditional notions of historical accuracy demand scientific or objective representation of objects or events. Even though such narratives claim to be truthful, historians’ rhetoric and artistic language give an added value to such
histories. Such narratives are abundant in stylistic or argumentative devices, including the idiosyncrasies of the writer of history. The use of metaphorical style in writing the history of a nation may lead to many ideological speculations and orientations. But the readers of traditional history often keep up a tacit consensus on the truthfulness of such narratives. The figurative language of the narrative history is an inevitable part of any history. Some poetic renderings may intrude into any form of narrative, be it ordinary speech or scientific prose or elevated form of writing. It is true that nobody can narrate the past events with meticulous details of everything without any selection. The selection of details, the sequencing and order of events, and the prominence of events depend on the historian’s sensibility and subjectivity. Historians’ endeavour is to express their unique experiences with past events to their readers. In this process they often rely on the elements of familiar narrative strategies to make a comprehensive presentation of events. The overriding sense and the status of literary and rhetorical conventions lead both the writers and the readers of history to recognize the limits of devices employed.

There are close parallels between history and epic; they share several common elements. Traditionally, an epic narrates the part and parcel of a nation’s myths, transmitted either orally or through written parchments. Epics undertake the task of recording the conventions and life styles of nations, very often in poetic forms. An analysis of the epics of different nations proves that they have tried to record the history of their own nations. These narratives
involve realistic descriptions as well as emotional enchantment. Peter Munz, in his essay “The Historical Narrative,” claims “that one’s past defines one’s identity” (Bentley, 1997: 851). So, tracing the past is essential to establish one’s identity in the present. The understanding of the present culture depends on how representations of the past are received and understood by readers. The understanding of the past becomes the first step to understand the present. Poststructuralist thinkers are concerned more with the present than with what happened in the past. But the past has a significant influence in the comprehension of the present. The past is re/constructed in relation to the present. Norman J. Wilson, in History in Crisis?: Recent Directions in Historiography, explains three ways for representing the past:

The presentist and historicist extremes are part of three fundamental ways of approaching the past: (1) the past was like the present, and human nature has not changed; (2) the past was radically different from the present, so historians need to study it on its own terms; and (3) the past does not change but our understanding of it changes, so in effect the present determines the past. (1999: 25)

The third approach is essentially the postmodernist approach. The past must be re/constructed in the context of the present.

The details of historical events and their prominence are selected by the historians. This selection depends on the imagination and ideology of the historian. So a historical narrative is likely to be ambivalent. In this respect,
Certeau, remarks in *The Writing of History*; “history is always ambivalent: the locus that it carves for the past is equally a fashion of *making a place for the future*” (1988: 85). [Emphasis there] History not only defines one’s identity in the present but also locates one’s position in the future. Certeau actually highlights the impossibility of direct access to a historical “real” that is unmediated by discourse. Comparing two languages, French and English, he points out that the word for the past events and their retelling is the same. When the past events are retold, they conform to constitute history. This constitution of history refers to its own textuality. It also questions the fundamental differences between the retelling a novelistic story and re/constructing a past event. In this regard, two points worth a critical analysis: the textuality of history/past, and historicity of the past event.

Neither the historian nor the novelist can verify the empirical reality of a past event represented in the narrative. The past is constructed through narrative. Reality is an element of narrative produced by the representation of the past event. In this context, Linda Hutcheon states in *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*: “How can a historian (or a novelist) check any historical account against past empirical reality in order to test its validity? Facts are not given but are constructed by the kinds of questions we ask of events” (1988: 123). History is not past, but a constructed narrative of the past; reality is only one of the elements in the narrated text. Reality is a point that need be discussed in connection with representation. Postmodernists
view reality as a relative concept. The re/construction of the past depends on
the structure and form of the narrative and point of view of the narrator.

But, Terry Eagleton, in *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist
Literary Theory*, emphasizes the fact that literary representations are their own
reality, rather than a means of representing reality:

History, then, operates upon the text by an ideological
determination which within the text itself privileges ideology as a
dominant structure determining its own imaginary or ‘pseudo’
history. This ‘pseudo’ or ‘textual’ real is not related to the
historical real as an imaginary ‘transposition’ of it. Rather than
‘imaginatively transposing’ the real, the literary work is the
production of certain produced representations of the real into an
imaginary object. If it distantiates history, it is not because it
transmutes it to fantasy, shifting from one ontological gear to another,
but because the significations it works into fiction are already
representations of reality rather than reality itself. (1976: 74-75)

Eagleton asserts that the function of history within a text is ideologically
determined. Ideology imaginatively transposes the historical real. But a
literary work constructs an imaginary object from already represented forms of
reality. So fiction is a creative transposition of the representations of reality
already constructed by the writer or other writers.

Historians, while depicting facts in history, can only explicate the
meaning of the objective facts through their textualized traces. These traces
cannot, in many cases, show their actual entities in existence. So, the textualized traces remain as they are in these texts, giving the actual entities a separate existence. Moreover, these textualized traces remain independent of and different from the writings of many other historians. In this context, Hutcheon comments: “Past events existed empirically, but in epistemological terms, we can only know them today through texts. Past events are given meaning not existence, by their representation in history” (1989: 82). Historicizing an event makes it meaningful and transforms it as part of history. In postmodernist view, a narrated text is a cultural construct that represents the cultural identity of the narrator.

A narrative, in its movement from beginning to end, engages itself with space and time. Narrative space enacts its role in relation to time. One of the most influential discussions on the nature of time, both in contemporary philosophy and in literary theory, is that of the French thinker, Paul Ricoeur. He argues that time and narrative are on intimate terms precisely because narrative is the human relation to time. Ricoeur’s perspective on time and narrative is a hermeneutic one: it is based on understanding the imperatives involved in the interpretation of the phenomena.

David Wood, in *The Deconstruction of Time*, specifies the temporal structures a language can have in its demonstration of events. He explains:

What is critical is that the *order* of actions can be quite different from the *order* of *events*. A narrative may begin with the death of the hero and set itself the (retrospective) task of tracing how that
happened. … The usual way of describing the order of events is to talk of their "real" chronological order. It is assumed that however subtle the internal temporality of a text, it nonetheless projects (and rests on) a "real time" beyond itself. A flashback requires a "real past" to flash back to. (2001: 356)

Wood points to the fact that time in real life is different from time in textual practice. The external temporality of the world and the internal temporality of the text are interrelated through narrative.

In *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur presents his three-level model of narrative: the *pre-figuring*, the *con-figuring* and the *re-figuring*. The pre-figuring, or cognitive level implies a sheer observation of human action, acting itself. For him, con-figuring is the proper field of narrative emplotment and coherence. There are separate events, persons, motivations, and temporalities brought together in the process of con-figuring. This is the actual level of narratives, accounting for the past. He explains the process of con-figuring in unambiguous terms:

. . . configurating operation that has led us to prefer the term emplotment to that of plot and ordering to that of system. In fact all the concepts relative to this level designate operations. The dynamism lies in the fact that a plot already exercises, within its own textual field, an integrating and, in this sense, a mediating function, which allows it to bring about, beyond this field, a mediation of a larger amplitude between the preunderstanding
and, if I may dare to put it this way, the postunderstanding of the
order of action and its temporal features. (1983: 64)

It is the plot’s mediating function which helps to integrate and configure the
objects in a story. But the process of re-figuring posits human beings as
receivers and consumers of narratives, causing the stories to influence the
receivers, and making people to change their scripts, plans, and intentions.

In Ricoeur’s vision the three levels of narrative are matched by three
phases of epistemological analyses. In *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Ricoeur
has adopted the expression “the historical or historiographical operation” to
define the field of epistemological analyses of the documentary phase, the
explicative/comprehensive phase and the representative phase. For him, these
three phases lead to the development of history as reconstruction of the past:

I shall call the “documentary phase” the one that runs from the
declarations of eyewitnesses to the constituting of archives,
which takes as its epistemological program the establishing of
documentary proof... I shall call the explanation / understanding
[explicative/comprehensive] phase the one that has to do with the
multiple uses of the connective “because” responding to the
question “why?”: Why did things happen like that and not
otherwise? The double term “explanation/understanding” is
indicative of my refusing the opposition between explanation and
understanding that all too often has prevented grasping the
treatment of the historical “because” in its full amplitude and
complexity…I shall call the “representative phase” the putting into literary or written form of discourse offered to the readers of history. (2004: 136)

While the documentary phase provides documentary proof, the explicative phase seeks the reasons and consequences of its argument. But the representative phase encounters the questions of the indeterminacy and undecidability of memory and representation. It offers the readers the verbal equivalent of discursive history. In this practice of the active recalling of the past, history is elevated to the level of a reconstruction.

Ricoeur presents here an expanded form of historiographical epistemology. He rejects firmly the view of history as representing the past just as it happened. For him, history is rather a narrative or a textual icon that selectively represents the past and puts conflicting witness testimonies into dialogue. According to him, neither historians nor political bodies can determine what must stand for the past. With the passing of witnesses and the destruction of artifacts, archives, museums or cities, the past may seem to be abolished in a society. Ricoeur thinks that whatever changes may take place to the constitution of a historical past, no one can make it appear that the past had not been. Ricoeur argues that the past exists just as unperceived objects exist in space. Similarly, no one can be forced to forget, or not to forget the past. Forgetting is not always a negative act in Ricoeur’s eyes: one has a right to forget in acts of forgiveness and reconciliation. In short, the agents of memory, history and forgetting are not simply those who participated in events, but all
those who selectively represent them in the search for a better understanding of themselves and others.

The affinity of postmodern literary theories to science, especially to Einstein’s theory of relativity, has prompted the critics to think of the self of the artist in reaffirmed imaginative space-time dimensions. These combined entities are never separate as in earlier versions of science, where time was understood as fixed and immobile, traversed by the movement of history. But, today they are inextricably interwoven together. Space is not an absolute entity, but is relatively defined with time. In postmodern discussions, space and time constitute each other to conform to the concept of space-time. It is necessary to grasp human activity as distributed in space-time since human interaction is situated in particular spaces at particular period of time that have a variety of social meanings.

The Marxist critic, Jameson argues that knowledge of history is a requirement for any discussion of culture and politics. He has retained the idea of history as a grand narrative in the Marxist perspective. For him, the Marxist point of view of grandnarrative remains politically charged; it provides a critical account of the present. In *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, he elaborates that historical events,

... can recover their urgency for us only if they are retold within the unity of a single great collective story ... Marxism, the collective struggle to wrest a realm of Freedom from a realm of
Necessity; only if they are grasped as vital episodes in a single vast unfinished plot. (1981: 19-20)

As Marxism imaginatively reconstructs human freedom, Jameson argues that a proper knowledge of history and culture can be acquired through the grandnarrative which Marxists view as a collective story.

In Marxist perspective writing or any artistic composition is a production similar to industrial production. Writing or art is a production of ideology. Marxists think that literature is an ideological superstructure. In this respect, Jameson tries to interpret the twin processes of reading and writing of literary texts. For him, reading constitutes a consumption of literary texts whereas writing is a process of production. In a purely consumerist trend, Jameson tries to view both reading and writing in capitalistic terms. Writing, which is part of cultural production, manifests itself in the re/construction of the present culture in intelligible forms for consumption. The process of literary writing points towards the relation between narrative and history in the postmodern period which he phrases as the “era of late capitalism.” In this way, history comes to play a central role in Jameson's interpretation of both production and consumption of literary texts.

Jameson’s work, *The Political Unconscious*, emerges as the manifesto of the new activity concerning literary narrative. It takes as its object not the literary text, but the interpretative framework within which literary/cultural texts are constructed. He emphasizes history as the ultimate frame of literary and cultural analysis. For him, an artist/writer is an individual creative subject
who recasts his artistic choices in terms of historical practices and norms. All literary/artistic works are conditioned by historical practices. As narrators, the historian and the writer, re/construct the past in their narratives.

Jameson argues that the transition from modernism to postmodernism can be identified as a shift from the concerns of spatiality and temporality to a dimension in which categories of space and time co-exist as a single entity. He states that human beings exist in a decentred postmodern hyper space where the subject feels adrift. The postmodern space has no effective bearing where the image of the self floats in a global world of flow and monstrous multinational information systems. In the postmodern space of chaos and disorder the natural links are disrupted; the sequencing and ordering of the events and the structure of the narrative are determined by “hyperlinks.”

Jameson’s postmodern view of retrieving historical reality is quite different from the traditional attempt to reconstitute the past through a form of historicism. Earlier attempts to reconstruct the past reality tried to re-present an object/event as a thing-in-itself without any form of interpretation or understanding. The literary realism of the nineteenth century was in tune with this form of historicism. But an analysis of the texts of the post/modern period provides Jameson many alternatives which foreground the problems of interpretation and representation of the past. Jameson elaborates this in *The Political Unconscious*:

Today this properly antiquarian relationship to the cultural past has a dialectical counterpart which is ultimately no more
satisfactory; I mean the tendency of much contemporary theory to rewrite selected texts from the past in terms of its own aesthetic and, in particular, in terms of a modernist (or more properly postmodernist) conception of language. (1981: 17)

In the postmodern period, the rewriting of select texts from the past involves an aesthetic of its own conditioned by the changes in the conception of language in the contemporary age.

Jameson’s radical thoughts emerge from his selective blending of poststructuralism with postmodernism. In *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, Robert J.C. Young observes that Jameson’s assimilation of poststructuralism is identified with postmodernism. He elaborates Jameson’s argument that postmodernism is the culture in dominance of late capitalism, rather than the style of a movement. He enumerates the five constitutive features of this culture in dominance:

. . . a new depthlessness, where the depth models of intrinsic meaning, essence/appearance etc., are replaced by a conception of practices, discourses, textual play, surfaces and intertextuality; a return of history not as the ‘real’ but as representation, as pastiche, thus foregrounding consideration of the historicity of history; a new form of private temporality whose ‘schizophrenic’ structure Jameson links to textuality, *écriture*, or schizophrenic writing; the ‘hysterical sublime’ – a formula which he invents in order to describe the way in which, in Lyotard’s terms,
postmodernism involves the unrepresentable (with the enormous forces, or power, of the Kantian sublime now no longer nature but the forces of global capitalism); and a new form of ‘postmodern hyperspace’ which has managed to transcend the capacities of the individual body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings, ‘and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world.’ (2004: 148 – 49)

These constitutive features, which form the culture in dominance of late capitalism, are the results of the conflicts observed in the earlier stages of the formation of a society. First, the contemporary age is characterized by a new depthlessness, which makes a textual play of objects, very often resulting in intertextual relations or discourses. Second, the concept of the “return of history” has its manifestation in representation and pastiche, rather than in the traditional “real” which is objective. Third, schizophrenic writing is the characteristic of the private obsessions of a writer manifested through textuality. Fourth, the hysterical sublime, with the forces of the global capitalism, refers to the unrepresentable in the postmodern period. Finally, the new form of postmodern hyperspace enables an individual body to transcend itself in order to comprehend its position in a mappable external world.

These are the means and features by which the postmodern society is constituted of, and as identified by Jameson. Each of these constitutive features has much to do with the real and its manifestation in the contemporary society. They are also the ways in which new cultural texts are constituted and
cultural identity is constructed. The postmodern subject finds a way out of its own labyrinth when its status becomes decentred to locate its own immediate surroundings. This self-referentiality, though not practically possible, is a feature of postmodernism. Foucault identifies it as “self-reflexivity” of the postmodern age. Young recognizes the Utopian futures involved in Jameson’s argument. He explains: “all forms of radical politics need the future, just as all conservative politics require the past” (2004: 151). Here the past is a necessity for the establishment of a conservative politics. But the future, as required by the forms of radical politics, involves the threat of impossibility. Still, Jameson postulates the Utopian future for the argument of the totalization in support of Marxism, which provides him an adequate account of the essential history of the cultural past. He thinks that the re/construction of the past has a bearing on the formation of future societies on the basis of radical cultural politics.

The historicity of an event is manifest in the textuality of the narrative. So a text historicizes an event with the help of the material medium language. Jameson, in Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, examines the functions of intertextuality in the context of “remaking” of an object/event:

The word remake is, however, anachronistic to the degree to which our awareness of the pre-existence of other versions (previous films of the novel as well as the novel itself) is now a constitutive and essential part of the film's structure: we are now, in other words, in "intertextuality" as a deliberate, built-in feature
of the aesthetic effect and as the operator of a new connotation of "pastness" and pseudohistorical depth, in which the history of aesthetic styles displaces “real” history. (1991: 20)

Real history was the impossible project of historians in the modern period. But the postmodern period is characterized by the multiplicity of aesthetic styles employed to historicize the past in various works of different genres. Consequently, the traditional enterprise of reconstructing the past gets new dimensions in the postmodern age. Pseudo-histories have been developed with new aesthetic practices and epistemological structures to give form to the needs of the contemporary society. In this manner fiction is represented as historical facts and historicized through textual practice. Walter Hanke, for instance, forged documents to retell the history of Czech literature from tenth to thirteenth century; he falsely constructed a history for political motives.

Historical as well as fictional narratives are imaginative reconstruction of events. Terry Eagleton, in “Jameson and Form,” highlights Jameson’s imaginative reinvention of ideas. In fact, historians also imaginatively reinvent events to suit to the sensibility of the readers. This is also a process of re/construction, which is an ever-revolving one. Eagleton remarks:

It would be hard to imagine Jameson writing an extended piece of straight political or economic analysis. What fascinates him, as a kind of phenomenologist of the mind, is the business of imaginatively reinventing ideas, as his prose lingers over their flavour and texture. Ideas in his writing come saturated in
Eagleton means that Jameson’s political writing is saturated with poetic sensibility. Whatever be the means of imaginative reconstruction of the past, the historian in the postmodern period is shocked by the revelation that he too is no more than a poet or a novelist. It is true that artistic embellishments have corrupted the actual representation of events in history. Jameson’s practice of reinventing ideas is related to the postmodern epistemology. Previously, knowledge was considered objective, rational and logical. But, postmodern epistemology perceives knowledge as subjective and even intuitive; it can be metaphysical or even transcendental. So the truth experienced by the writer cannot be tested by the parameters of logic. Similarly, the truth claims of the historian rest beyond logic.

Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, in their *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory*, argue that the narrated pasts always lead to controversy. Despite the debate on the contested pasts, they try to pose questions on what the past can do to the present. They explain: “Our understanding of the past has strategic, political and ethical consequences. Contests over the meaning of the past are also contests over the meaning of the present and over ways of taking the past forward” (2003: 1). They state that, in this struggle for the accuracy of the past, there are various institutions, governments, cultures and individuals engaged in the repeated transformations of the past.
Rewriting history and reconstructing history are two separate processes with varying purposive actions. A rewriting of a specific history updates the available information on a specific event and attempts to bridge the gap between its fictive and factual accounts. Rewriting prompts a writer to appropriate the recent developments in a system of thought; the degree of its accuracy depends on the value of data either appropriated or misappropriated. Rewriting gives a sense of re-vision or reconsideration of a text or group of texts. But reconstructing history has a deliberate aim of appropriating history for political ends. It can actively reconstitute the foundations of its own constructions and persuade the readers to accept meanings which depend on the requirements of the subjective intentions of the author. In this context, Julie Sanders, in *Adaptation and Appropriation*, observes: “The discipline of history, …is in truth a history of textualities, of stories told by particular tellers according to particular ideologies and contexts. In this sense, history proves a ripe source and intertext for fiction, for histoire, to appropriate” (2006: 146). Ideological appropriation of history constructs an intertext of history and fiction and makes its textuality elastic and even elusive.

Literary adaptations often reflect many intertextual references and allusions to various art forms prevalent in a society. Intertextual explorations manifest themselves in many ways such as adaptation, appropriation, mimicry, parody, and so on. These art forms help themselves in bringing forward new modes of expressions in manifold ways. These reconstructed art forms find their application on narrative techniques. In this respect, Sanders extends her
glossary: “Variation, version, interpretation, imitation, proximation, supplement, increment, improvisation, prequel, sequel, continuation, addition, paratext, hypertext, palimpsest, graft, rewriting, reworking, refashioning, re-\textit{vision}, re-\textit{evaluation}” (2006: 3). These are the techniques by which historical texts/events can be reconstructed. T.S. Eliot’s \textit{The Wasteland} is an instance wherein intertextual potentials have been utilized effectively to reconstruct history. But the constructed text has several implications in the working of contemporary society: from industrial advancement to the deterioration and detestation of human values. The status of an appropriated text has its reproductive dimension in history/literature: creating new texts for a meaningful and coherent practice in contemporary society.

Every new text is a cultural construct produced from the practice of reconstructing the past events. Such a practice often leads to specific ideological, thematic and cultural orientations and to the directions of a writer’s artistic preoccupations. A re-reading or a re-interpretation of a canonical text often relocates itself in a cultural context. In this regard, Sanders comments on the inescapable position of an artist: “In appropriations the intertextual relationship may be less explicit, more embedded, but what is often inescapable is the fact that a political or ethical commitment shapes a writer’s, director’s, or performer’s decision to re-\textit{interpret} a source text” (2006: 2). In this process, intertextuality becomes an inherent feature of any art form like literature. This also points toward the ever-evolving production of meaning any text generates to its readers/audience.
Though many historians support objectivity in the practice of history, Keith Jenkins objects to it. In support of the postmodern characteristic of decentred subjectivity, he regards a narrated text of history as a paradigm of the historian’s subjectivity and imagination. He remarks in *The Postmodern History Reader:*

... the attempt to pass off the study of history in the form of the ostensibly disinterested scholarship of academics studying the past objectively and “for its own sake” as “proper” history, is now unsustainable. (1997: 6)

Jenkins contends that proper history is not academically sustainable. Writing history, for Jenkins, is merely a subjective enterprise, exclusively based on literary construction without objective grounding. In this context, selecting the story of an event has little to do with the events of the past. He argues that the objective historians base themselves on a foundationless axis. Jenkins takes advantage of the positioning of a subjective historian to enable the play of multiple standpoints. This leads to the multiples reconstructions of the same event in innumerable contexts suitable to various authors or historians. A postmodern historian, who takes benefit of the multiple identities/perspectives in a society, is in a better position to adopt various interpretations of the same event to suit his/her purposes. The postmodernist project is to reconstruct and reinterpret a historical event from multiple perspectives and to present all the view points before the sensibility of the readers.
Jenkins, in *Re-thinking History*, argues that history must abandon the search for objective truth about the past and come to terms with its own processes of textual construction. Jenkins maintains that the past does not present itself ready packaged in narratives that historians need only transmit it. Rather, historians should approach the past with the cultural milieu of the present. A historian’s function is inevitably circumscribed by the linguistic features of the narrative. As in a network of intertextual relations, his present preoccupations form a linguistic maze from which a historian cannot escape. In this way, histories become the statements of the historian’s present rather than studies of the past. Jenkins also points out how the historian’s readings of the past serve the “epistemological, methodological and ideological factors...” (1997: 22) of the present. Consequently, Jenkins holds that histories are best described not as “empathetic” descriptions of the past, but as readings of the past that serve particular present-day ideological and material interests. Postmodern subject positionings enable the historians to interpret and appropriate historical events in accordance with their political and artistic requirements and orientations.

Jenkins’s view of history/past makes him review the concept of historiography. He thinks that it is historiography that makes the past significant as an object of study. Jenkins observes in *On "What is History?": From Carr and Elton to Rorty and White*: Historiography is “the imposition of meaningful form onto a meaningless past” (1995: 137). It is an attempt to find meaning of the past through a matrix of associations in the structure and
semiotics of a narrative. Jenkins, in *Refiguring History: New Thoughts on an Old Discipline*, argues that the past and questions about the nature of history must be reviewed in the context of postmodern perspective on history. As he claims, there are many radical, innovative and imaginative steps in the process and practice of history as exemplified by Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Judith Butler, Alain Badiou, Elizabeth Ermarth et al.

Biography and autobiography are also narratives of personalized histories/memories. Like historical narratives, they also use metaphoric language. The American deconstructionist, Paul de Man, establishes that all knowledge, including self-knowledge, depends on figurative language or tropes. If this argument is tenable, autobiographies only produce fictions or figures in place of the self-knowledge they seek. Personalized histories encounter the threat of the fictionalized form of narrative. Personal memory is most clearly represented by the genres of autobiography and memoir. Traditionally it is assumed that autobiography is the objective representation of the self and presentation of past events. But Paul de Man suggests the relation between life and autobiography is similar to that between an act and its consequences. He explains in “Autobiography as De-Facement”:

> We assume that life *produces* the autobiography as an act produces its consequences, but can we not suggest, with equal justice, that the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life and that whatever the writer *does* is in
fact governed by the technical demands of self-portraiture and 
thus determined in all its aspects by the resources of his 
medium? (1979: 920)

Contrary to popular belief, he asserts that autobiography determines the life: 
this is necessitated by the demands of the medium “self-portrait.”

The questioning of the self and the artist in the postmodern perspective 
challenges the very foundations of the writing processes. Paul de Man clearly 
states the differences between a traditional autobiographer and the postmodern 
autobiographer. The determinants of writing autobiography in the postmodern 
period involve the resources and aspects of the medium. In this attempt, 
autobiography impersonates fictional elements. In the postmodern era, there 
are fictions on autobiography which are meta-autobiographical. Max Saunders, 
in “Biography and Autobiography,” explains the nature of meta-
autobiographical texts. He explains:

. . . just as fiction about biography has proliferated through the 
twentieth century, so have not only autobiographical novels, but 
also a variety of fictions about autobiography. These don’t just 
represent their author’s experience, but are meta-autobiographical: 
explicitly concerned with the autobiographic process, and the 
representation of auto/biography. (Marcus, 2004: 302)

Postmodern autobiographies interrogate the notion of representation. It is more 
conscious about the self-reflexivity of the practice of writing self-portrait.
Many practitioners of auto/biography think that the traditional mode of autobiography is inadequate for the postmodernist expression of the self. In this regard, Alison Light remarks in “Writing Lives”:

Much autobiography has been founded on the notion of confession, but in the late twentieth century such a concept proves inadequate when the writer is the witness to and victim of traumatic events, like World War II, the Holocaust or the nuclear bomb, which ‘overwhelm our ability to assimilate them and which exceed our capacity to understand’. Such traumatic histories cannot simply be incorporated into narratives since they may only be known by a gap or ‘collapse of understanding’ but it is these incoherences and suspensions which come to carry the most significance. (Marcus, 2004: 764)

Conventional autobiographies are confessional whereas contemporary autobiographies are expressions of the traumatic experiences of the individual and society. The postmodern autobiographies have many gaps and voids in their narratives. It is the incoherences and gaps which make such autobiographies significant. Paul de Man views autobiography as a textual production, not a kind of referentiality in a physical form. For him, it is necessarily a fictive exercise that is rhetorical but not historical in nature. He does not regard autobiography as a genre at all; he considers it a “figure of reading or of understanding that occurs . . . in all texts” (1979: 922). This typically poststructuralist reversal of the signifier and the signified points to the
creativity and performativity of the self in writing. Rather than representing an essential “self,” this view assumes that there is only the representation and that memory and the self are created out of linguistic performance.

Historical figures or events often transform themselves into myths. Baudrillard, in *Simulacra and Simulation*, asserts that the modern era has witnessed the transmutation of history into myth: “History is our lost referential, that is to say our myth” (1981: 43). Even though narrated histories remain as constructed myths, they have their relevance in the present: they shape our future life. According to Baudrillard, there are three levels of simulation. The first level is an obvious copy of reality. The second level is a copy which blurs the boundaries between reality and representation. The third level is one which produces a reality of its own without any base on the real world. Virtual reality, a world generated by computer languages, is an instance for the third level of simulation. They are abstract entities generated by mathematical models. Baudrillard’s term “hyperreal” refers to this third level of simulation. Arthur Marwick, in *The New Nature of History: Knowledge, Evidence, Language*, 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” (2001: 292). Such a definition balances the effects of verisimilitude. Myths are embedded with a power structure which is hierarchical. They have a closed narrative structure with a clear and well-defined message. As the society is patriarchal, myths are androcentric expressions of male hegemony.
Both myth and history keep up intertextual relations with each other. Roland Barthes, in *Mythologies*, explains the nature of myth in appropriate terms:

Myth is a system of communication, it is a message. This allows one to perceive that myth cannot possibly be an object, a concept, or an idea; it is a mode of signification, a form. Later, we shall have to assign to this form historical limits, conditions of use, reintroduce society into it: we must nevertheless first describe it as a form. (1972: 109)

The passage reflects that myth is a message. Rather than an object, myth is a discourse or a language. In order to study myth, it is important to know the historical and social dimensions of myth and individual’s ability to understand and interpret the past. On the other hand, myth is limited and influenced by history. Myth is a type of speech limited by historical boundaries. Barthes explains the manifold aspects of myth:

Ancient or not, mythology can only have an historical foundation, for myth is a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the ‘nature’ of things. Speech of this kind is a message. It is therefore by no means confined to oral speech. It can consist of modes of writing or of representations; not only written discourse, but also photography, cinema, reporting, sport,
shows, publicity, all these can serve as a support to mythical speech. (1972: 110)

Myth is a kind of speech selected by history. It is a discourse, not confined to oral or written form; it can assume numerous forms of representation such as film, photography or sport.

There is a considerable importance of myth in the study of history. Michel Foucault, in *Power-Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, explains the significance of myth:

Myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts; myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflexion … We reach here the very principle of myth: it transforms history into nature … what causes mythical speech to be uttered is perfectly explicit, but it is immediately frozen into something natural; it is not read as a motive, but as a reason. (1980: 129)

Myth is an inflectional speech spoken/written in a fixed language. It transforms history into nature which makes myth explicit.

Literary appropriations can incorporate material facts like historical events and personalities. Historiographic metafiction shows an interest in substituting the official version of history with fictional events. But historical facts are often appropriated with deliberate intentions. These fictive accounts try to locate themselves in the past which is familiar to many historians. Their authenticating strategy is to provide contextual details of the past. But their fictive nature is revealed only when the author consciously appropriates the
known facts of history. Readers get a grasp of the process of appropriation when they compare the text with similar narrated texts on the same historical event/personality. Writers often depict a historical event for its imaginative content; but the parallel between literary/historical narratives leads to the politicization of contemporary issues presented through appropriation.

Photograph, as an element symbolizing a past event, can be used in reconstructing the past. Barthes, in Camera Lucida, acknowledges that photography’s constructedness relies on pose and perspective. But he still believes in the magic of the photograph, in its status as an “emanation . . . of past reality” (1981: 88). Photographs are the manifestations of the actual in the physical world. But in the digitalized world of computers, the constructedness of photographs cannot be taken for the actuality of events. Photographs function as an index to the actuality of events. But their constructedness makes them unreliable.

Each society possesses a collective memory of its own to remember the past. Kevin Meethan, in “Remaking Time and Space: The Internet, Digital Archives and Genealogy,” observes:

Memory is both a collective phenomenon that binds people together through forms of a social imaginary, and the unique legacy of each individual’s unique biography… Memories are always situated in a social context, but this should not be seen as a simple or straightforward projection of a collective, shared memory. Rather the themes, metaphors and imagery are derived
from commonly held written and visual sources act as a repertoire of shared forms that people draw on, providing the reference points around which individual experiences of the self can be made intelligible to others who share a similar background. (Timothy, 2008: 104-105)

Social memory is the imaginative resources from which the individuals draw their narrative techniques in order to make the personal experiences intelligible to the community.

Poststructuralism exposes the illusion of realism and emphasizes the open-endedness and multiple interpretation of the text. Barthes, in *S/Z*, introduces the concept of a “writerly text,” a text not restrained by the illusion of realism; allows an interpretative pluralism of the text that elevates the reader to the rank of co-writer (1975: 4). Both the marked renunciation of the realist tradition and the refusal to provide narrative closure are postmodern strategies. As the presence of personal memories becomes past textual history, the line between these two hypothetically opposed terms dissolves. The collective memory and its traditions theoretically survive in the continuous present. The obsessive collection of survival testimonies and their commitment to textual representations indicate a communal anxiety about the possibility of maintaining such a collective identity.

Historical narratives with its restricting modes of selection, interpretation and narration find a parallel in the presentation of television documentary. Raymond Williams, in his *Television: Technology and Cultural
Form, discusses the impact of a new kind of drama-documentary released along with the existing dramatic forms, very often broadcast in televisions. Such kind of a drama-documentary has a crucial function to perform. He observes:

[It has a] capacity to enter a situation and show what is actually happening in it. Of course, in all such cases there is mediation: directors, cameramen and reporters select and present what is happening. There is thus an intrinsic overlap between what is classified as factual report and what is classified as dramatic presentation. (2003: 70)

The intervention of directors, cameramen and reporters make the event more confusing to the audience. Williams argues that the selection made by the people behind the scenes has negative impact. The reporters’ manipulation of events creates the impression of either promotion or blackening of individuals in a society. It is similar to a historian’s appropriation of historical events.

There are clear distinctions between history and historiography. In this context, Marwick argues, in The New Nature of History: Knowledge, Evidence, Language: “History is about finding things out, and solving problems, rather than spinning narratives or telling stories” (2001: 28). He admits that “history is a human activity” carried out by “fallible human beings.” But Marwick contends that historiography is used “to signify the writings of historians” (2001: 29). The knowledge derived from such historical writings is considered unreliable. He emphasizes in The Nature of History: “. . . the true concern of the historian
is history, not historiography” (1989: 215). Traditionally, historiography has been given much academic veneration as it depicts the practice of historians. Our notions of history are formed by experiences in the present and practices of historiography. In this respect, Patrik Lundell, explains in “The Medium is the Message: The Media History of the Press”:

Our contemporary experiences shape our views on history, and our pictures of the past have an impact on our judgments of the present. Our notions are historically formed. But they are also, and not least, determined by historiography. History does not come to us unmediated. We view the press in accordance with what historiography has taught us. If historiography is given a broader meaning than conventional press history, the all-overshadowing producer is the press itself. (2008: 7)

He stresses that our views, including the views on history, are historically formed. Theses views are scrutinized by historiography which finds that history cannot be constructed in unmediated form.

The question of subjectivity is well explained by Marwick with the rejection of the auteur theory of history. He deliberately assigns an objective position to history, besides its subjective nature. The concept of the historian as auteur is to regard the views expressed by an author “similar to the joys and benefits of reading novels” (Marwick, 2001: 38). He recognizes the genuine attempts of a few novelists to incorporate authentic historical facts into their novels. But history, in itself, has an objective status as the historians present
the knowledge about the past. Though limited in its scope, it is a construction of the past. But, for a novelist, history is raw material rather than a form of knowledge. The novelist reconstructs the history/past in his novels. In *The New Nature of History: Knowledge, Evidence, Language*, Marwick absolutely denies the role of historians in reconstructing or re-presenting the past. Rather, he asserts that historians are engaged in producing knowledge about the past. Marwick observes: “I stress knowledge first because historians do not, … ‘reconstruct’ or even ‘represent’ the past. What historians do is produce knowledge about the past” (2001: xiii). In this respect, history is the production of knowledge about the past, rather than any reconstruction. Novel, on the other hand, is a reconstruction of the past/history.

The New Historicist textual practice consists of a rewriting of history and rediscovery of the past. Mark Currie, in *Postmodern Narrative Theory*, highlights the New Historicist emphasis on the practice of the textuality of history. He observes: “…it is characteristic for a New Historicist reading to declare its subjectivity as a kind of rewriting of history, as an active reinvention of the past which wears its political allegiances on its sleeve” (1998: 88). For the practitioners of New Historicism, every rewriting reinvents the past with the subjective politics of the writers. New Historicist readings give the readers different phases of the same phenomenon on the basis of its selection and difference of texts in the specified area of interest. In a postmodern context, a re-discovery or a recounting of accurate historical events in time is an impossible task. In this respect, writing history has more to do with inventing
meaning than finding facts. So, any pursuit of the truth of historical occurrence becomes highly dubious. A unilateral vision of past events is no longer sufficient. From a postmodern perspective, multiple points of view enhance our understanding of the events.

Depending on the point of view, each historian stresses that there are several reasons for them to write or rewrite history. Through the process of historical writing, the reader achieves a complete understanding of the present and a thorough appreciation of the writing process. In this context, Roz Ivanič and Romy Clark argue in *The Politics of Writing*:

> A person’s life-history includes his/her opportunities and experiences, and the people s/he has encountered, which are shaped – enabled and constrained – by socio-economic factors and differences in status. These different experiences and encounters lead to differential access to discourse types. (1997: 140)

The voices recorded by historians provide a more comprehensive perception of the past. Collective memory also enables historians to reflect on the voices silenced in the past. The memory throws light on the characteristics of the societies. Moreover, there is always a historical meaning for such acknowledgement. While voices have a definite value in history, silence also has its meaning in the narrative. The meaning of the silence reflects on the understanding of the present.
Representations often become commemorations of historical events. Representations thus reflect identities in history. The term “parody” has much to do with the postmodern enterprise of representation. Linda Hutcheon, in *The Politics of Postmodernism*, illustrates the concept of parody:

... through a double process of installing and ironizing, parody signals how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference. [...] Parody also contests our humanist assumptions about artistic originality and uniqueness and our capitalist notions of ownership and property. (1988: 93)

Parody makes it possible for past representations to continue in the present. As a result, it can be implied that art is continuous, but its authenticity can be questioned. Thus, parody is a tool for understanding the past, a mirror to the society one belongs to. Hutcheon clarifies: “Parody can be used as a self-reflexive technique that points to art as art, but also to art as inescapably bound to its aesthetic and even social past” (1988: 101). The understanding of art is made possible through parody. Parody represents art’s relationship with society and its past. The self-reflexive function of parody can be utilized to understand history. Hutcheon and Mario J. Valdés in *Rethinking Literary History* state:

... literary history not only attempts to realize a reenactment of a past event, it also presents a contemporary reflection of the writing as an
aesthetic experience in the present. Literary history treats writing both as document and as experience. (2002: 81)

Literary history looks at writing as a physical document and as an artistic process. Consequently, reflection and representation become essential parts of the aesthetic of narrating history and literature.

The experience of narrating history is different from the aesthetic experience of writing. Ashis Nandy, in “History's Forgotten Doubles,” makes clear that the historical mode may be the dominant mode of constructing the past, but it is not the most popular mode of doing it. He claims that there is a non-modern world for the construction of historical consciousness. This consciousness has been a means to prioritize the past in cultures that have lived with open-ended concepts of the past and depended on myths, legends, and epics to define their cultural selves. Nandy cautions that this marginalized reconstruction of the past has also made the historical worldview complicit with many new forms of violence, exploitation, and Satanism. This reconstruction of the past is considered ahistorical by many mainstream historians. Nandy explains:

In recent decades, there has been much talk about history being primarily a hermeneutic exercise. It is now fairly commonplace to say that there can be no true or objective past; that there are
only competing constructions of the past, with various levels and kinds of empirical support. (1995: 49)

Writing history has become a process of interpretation with empirical support. This is essential to verify the validity of facts in its reconstruction. As an objective past is an impossible attempt by any historian, the trials for true history are subject to many variables. The textual practice in history is conditioned by modes of emplotment; it involves selection and interpretation of the historical events by the historians. White, in his “Interpretation in History,” elaborates on the inescapable role of interpretation in reconstructing the past:

Theorists of historiography generally agree that all historical narratives contain an irreducible and inexpungeable element of interpretation. The historian has to interpret his materials in order to construct the moving pattern of images in which the form of the historical process is to be mirrored. (1973: 281)

As White makes it clear, interpretation has become an inevitable feature of writing history. Historians interpret their materials so that the readers can have a comprehensive idea of the nature of events in question. So, there are many constructions of the same historical past which interpret the past at different levels with different sets of empirical data. All these constructions are in the quixotic race to the true absolute history.

Metahistory is a self-reflexive narrative on the problematic of constructing history. It confronts the textual practices of narratives and the
writing practices of history: how the textuality of history can be constructed as different from the historicity of an event narrated in the text. White’s views on history and various manifestations of a historical text are elaborated in his work *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. He discusses a variety of aspects of a historical text:

I will consider the historical work as what it most manifestly is — that is to say, a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes in the interest of explaining what they were by representing them. (1973: 2)

Certainly, a historical work is considered a verbal construct that points to past events and to the processes of reconstructing such events. White continues to clarify that a historian and a writer are engaged in creating stories. This process always tends to the verification as well as the fictionalization of facts or objects. There is an inescapable subject position which leads the readers to assess and make open-ended hypotheses about the work of art and its factuality. White extends his argument by focusing on the historian’s act of writing:

Historical accounts purport to be verbal models, or icons, of specific segments of the historical process … therefore, the historian must first prefigure as a possible object of knowledge the whole set of events reported in the documents … It is also poetic in so far as it is constitutive of the structure that will
subsequently be imaged in the verbal model offered by the historian as a representation and explanation of “what really happened” in the past … In the poetic act which precedes the formal analysis of the field, the historian both creates his object of analysis and predetermines the modality of the conceptual strategies he will use to explain it. (1973: 30 - 31)

White emphasizes the poetic act which takes place when the historian explains his version of the events and selects the form of his narrative. In contrast, this act will lead the same strategies that a historian will use to develop his or her narrative. White, in “The Fictions of Factual Representation,” explicates on the poetic process involved in the process of writing history. Even though historians and novelists are engaged in the activities of representation, the final output of their writing is shaped and influenced by a poetic process:

Novelists might be dealing only with imaginary events whereas historians are dealing with real ones, but the process of fusing events, whether imaginary or real, into a comprehensible totality capable of serving as the object of a representation, is a poetic process. (Green, 1999: 218)

The process of the fusion of events often leads to the distortion of events. This questions the validity of objects represented and makes the process of history problematic.
Terry Eagleton also expresses a similar view. In “Literature and History,” he remarks: “Historical texts were themselves ineradicably rhetorical, and literature was an historical practice quite as material as the making of automobiles” (1985: 25). He virtually endorses White’s argument that writing history and writing novel are identical in the refiguration of the narrative language: both practices explore the use of the rhetoric as discourse. In “The Crisis of Contemporary Culture,” Eagleton contends that reconstructions appear as different incarnations:

If literature is important today, it is because it is held to incarnate, in peculiarly graphic and sensuous form, the fundamental, universal language of humanity, at a moment when the regimes under which we live have need of that notion but have themselves rendered it profoundly problematical. (1992: 32)

Every reconstructed text is an incarnation of the past event. In this sense the reconstructed texts are paradigms of prefiguration.

As Derrida thinks, history cannot be “outside the text.” Rather than merely presenting the world, history “re-presents” it, at times substituting or supplementing the discourse for the real. History, like fiction, is the representation of events in a narrative form; it uses narrative’s techniques to create an artificial text. As Hayden White points out, the presentation of history in a narrative form allows the interpretation of history as a story, a plot with inherent meaning, where the conglomeration of historical events does not
necessarily have meanings of its own. White explains in “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality”:

In this world, reality wears the mask of a meaning, the completeness and fullness of which we can only imagine, never experience. In so far as historical stories can be completed, can be given narrative closure, can be shown to have had a plot all along, they give to reality the odor of the ideal. This is why the plot of a historical narrative is always an embarrassment and has to be presented as "found" in the events rather than put there by narrative techniques. (1980: 24)

White takes the position that reality does exist, but the shaping and the presentation of that reality through narrative fictionalizes it, shapes it into a story that cannot have unmediated access to reality. White’s stance is often termed poststructuralist historiography. He elaborates the ways in which history and historical narration are appropriated and shaped by various modes of emplotment. The shaping of available historical events into various predetermined narrative forms governs the future interpretation of historical texts and the cognitive understanding of historical narrative.

Poststructuralists generally try to write the history of the present. White, in “The Burden of History,” explains that the role of the contemporary
historian is to find solutions to the problems of the society through the writing on the present. He observes:

In the world in which we daily live, anyone who studies the past “as an end in itself” must appear as either an antiquarian, fleeing from the problems of the present into a purely personal past, or a kind of cultural necrophile, that is, one who finds in the dead and dying a value he can never find in the living. The contemporary historian has to establish the value of the study of the past, not as “an end in itself,” but as a way of providing perspectives on the present that contribute to the solution of problems peculiar to our own time. (1966: 125)

White rejects the concept of the past as an end in itself. An antiquarian view of history cannot find any positive measures to solve the problems of the present society.

Some of the historians are skeptical of the possibility of absolutes in the narrativization of past events. Postmodernism rejects the role of absolutes in all discourses, including history. Jenkins emphasizes this point in *Re-thinking History*. But he explains the importance of inevitable choices to be made: “The only choice is between a history that is aware of what it is doing and a history that is not” (1997: 69). Historical narratives are neither absolute nor final. They are often relative accounts of the same events. Beverley Southgate, in *History: What & Why?: Ancient, Modern and Postmodern Perspectives*, makes this position clear: “. . . there can never be
one single privileged position from which the story of the past can finally be
told; it implies an inescapable and inevitable relativism in our positions in
relation to that past” (1996: 7). The single privileged position is an empiricist
stance which pursues an elusive objectivity in historical texts.

Historical texts approximate the quality of literary texts through the
refiguration of language. In this context, Tim Woods, in “History and
Literature,” explicates the ability of the fictional narrative in transforming and
reconfiguring the past:

For fictional narrative frequently has the ability to transform and
reconfigure the past, a process of reconfiguration which is not
simply a judicial sifting of the documentary record, but a change
of relation to the past. The new focus in literary studies upon
social memory and textual memory aims to free us from the hold
of linear time and the fixity of the past, both of which obstruct the
development of new routes into the future. Fictional narration is
not aimed at caging the beast of the past, but at transforming it.
(Lambert, 2004: 169 – 70)

The recent emphasis on textual and social memories frees the readers from the
traditional notions of temporal continuity and brings forth a transformation in
the relation to the past. This idea must be read in the context of the observation
of John Lewis Gaddis in *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map*
the Past. Gaddis emphasizes the liberating function each reconstruction of the past involves:

. . . when historians contest interpretations of the past among themselves, they’re liberating it in yet another sense: from the possibility that there can be only a single valid explanation of what happened… We’re showing that the meaning of history isn’t fixed when the making of history – and even the writing of history – is finished. That’s liberation as well. (2002: 141)

Reconstruction makes the narrative open-ended and leads to the multiplicity of meaning for the historical event in question. The reconstructed text is subject to endless interpretations: it continues to construct meanings.

Reconstruction is a means to subvert the hegemonic structures of the past and to review history in the context of the present. Writers and historians engage in re-constructing the past/history for varied purposes. They develop a narrative suitable for adaptation and appropriation. This helps them to challenge the monolithic notion of history and the uniformity of historical narratives and leads to multiple interpretations of the narrated past. Historians and authors take to reconstruction for various reasons. Every reconstruction is a linguistic construct with a political objective. A writer’s subjectivity is revealed to the readers/audience through his/her writings. A narrative is a manifestation of the self. Postmodern notion of the self celebrates fragmentation. Postmodern narratives can truly reflect the fragmented subjectivity of the writer.
The notion of history as narrative emphasizes the role of narratives in historicizing events of the past. The process of historicizing helps a writer to construct his/her cultural identity. It also provides a context to interpret past from multiple perspectives. The process of rewriting enables a writer to review the history in the context of the present. The reconstructive strategies in historicizing events justify different standpoints and create a totality of vision. Here, the narratives function as metanarratives/metacommentaries of earlier histories/historical practices. The reconstructive strategies continue to evolve and have their sway in the narration and (re)interpretation of histories.