

A CONCOCTED HISTORY IN R. F. KUANG'S *BABEL*

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the evolution and theoretical underpinnings of historiography, focusing on the approaches of constructionism and deconstructionism. It argues that humanity's innate desire to document and preserve the past has led to sophisticated methods of historical inquiry, moving from an initial perception of history as empirical to a critical understanding of its subjective and constructed nature. The study analyses R.F. Kuang's novel, *Babel or The Necessity of Violence: An Arcane History of the Oxford Translator's Revolution*, as a case study in alternate history. The paper explores how *Babel* exemplifies Hayden White's concept of the "linguistic turn" by demonstrating history as a literary narrative to highlight the role of language, rhetoric, and colonisation in shaping historical events and power dynamics. Through the novel's quasi-fictional setting and its narrative of Britain's colonial expansion fuelled by "silver workings," the paper will analyse how biases, cultural products, and the construction of historical accounts influence collective consciousness and societal development.

KEYWORDS: Historiography; Historical narrative; Constructionism; Deconstructionism; Alternate history

INTRODUCTION

From time immemorial, the desire to preserve the past and document the present has been innate to the collective human consciousness. Early humans deduced that conserving cultural products helps in societal development, and hence have left behind monumental historical records. Archaeological studies assist mankind in understanding the past with the help of resources like cave inscriptions, manuscripts and artefacts. The evolution of language and an organised writing system further paved the way for a more reliable record of events, and these written records painted a detailed representation of the past.

Written records attempt to portray historical events and their underlying political conditions with a fair degree of coherence. Historians thus play a dual role of chronicling the present events for future reference while interpreting the past to construct history. The process of construction of history thus relies heavily on available written materials. Till nineteenth century, history was

considered to be based on empirical evidence, which offered an authentic representation of the past owing to the objectivity of the texts. Since then, it has become evident that the historians' project of providing an objective account of the past appears to be a vain attempt, as every account invariably consists of an unconscious intervention of the author.

Canonical historical texts that claim to provide a factual account of events, on scrutiny, reveal that biases and preferences of the historians have seemingly infiltrated the texts. The narrative framework of several historical texts started to be diligently examined by scholars in the early twentieth century, which has fuelled further interest in history as an academic discipline. Many intellectual schools like New Empiricism and *Annales* sought to analyse the narrative structure of the historical texts, leading to the development of historiography. Historiography thus concerns itself with how history is written.

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Historiography is thus committed to understanding and dissecting the cultural and political events with respect to their historical source. It studies the credibility of the source material in terms of authorship and the legitimacy of the text. By delving into the metanarratives, as well as the moral and ethical norms of the source and the collective consciousness of a particular society, it studies the ways in which history is written to examine how mankind has perfected the process of documentation. Herodotus is acknowledged to be the first scholar who systematically collected materials and tested their reliability, though he frequently drew upon myths and oral traditions in his *Histories*. Expressing scepticism about the Greek style of doing history that focused on the lives of great men, Cato the Elder preferred a more annalistic approach which included local Italian traditions and a wider social focus. Later advocating for a new kind of history (*l'histoire philosophique*), Voltaire focused on customs, arts, and societal progress, emphasising critical inquiry and primary sources. In line with this, Edward Gibbon demonstrated extensive source criticism. His work is noted for its meticulous use of primary sources and adoption of a sceptical, ironic tone, especially on the role of Christianity in the Empire's fall. All these historians questioned the nature and the narrative structure of the written materials.

The development in theoretical and practical aspects of the discipline in the past centuries elevated scholarly studies on the way history is written. Recent trends in historiography, it is evident, have become more inclusive of interdisciplinary fields such as Genealogy, Philosophy, History of Science, Economics and Rhetoric. Many intellectual fashions and movements have provided new perspectives to the discipline. Though various approaches and methodologies have been in vogue, this research paper attempts to focus on two major approaches of historiography: Constructionism and Deconstructionism. While Constructionism maintains that historical understanding is shaped by interpretive frameworks and the researcher's active role, it still adheres to the possibility of constructing coherent narratives based on rigorous methodological engagement with primary

sources (Pagliarini 2017). Conversely, Deconstructionism posits that historical texts, like all other texts, are inherently unstable and subject to infinite reinterpretations, thereby questioning the very notion of a singular, authoritative historical truth (Oppermann 1999).

The research paper examines the different approaches of historiography and emphasises the alternate position of history as an end product of Science Fiction. It tries to unearth Hayden White's 'linguistic turn' in R.F. Kuang's *Babel or the Necessity of Violence: An Arcane History of the Oxford Translators' Revolution*. The novel can be considered as an alternate historical narrative that retells the cause, effect and significance of the First Opium War. By tweaking a crucial moment of the event, Kuang substantiates his argument on the capricious nature of history. The novel deals with the process of colonisation and how language and rhetoric assist in the formation of an Empire. It correlates to the premise that history is a 'literary narrative'. "They dug through languages as they dug through mines, searching for valuable veins of common heritage and distorted meanings" (Kuang 167).

Set in a quasi-fictional setting of the Oxford Institute, the action in the novel takes place in Babel, the Oxford Royal Institute of Translation. The Babel consists of students and faculty who are excellent polyglots and are proficient in more than five languages each. The novel is an alternative historical fiction, where the events in history are slightly twisted to provide a speculative perspective of historical events. In the novel, Britain still figures as the world's leader in the Industrial Revolution and a major colonial power. However, Britain's economic and political power comes directly from the silver workings of the Babel.

Robin Swift, the protagonist in the novel, is a Cantonese boy who is raised by an Englishman after his entire family perishes. Robin Swift's real name is never disclosed, and the readers know him only by his anglicised name. As Robin prepares to become a translator, he will be able to deal with the most valuable resource in Great Britain: silver, which has magical properties when the right words are employed. Robin is devoted to Oxford because he feels privileged to have

received such a priceless education. However, he and his comrades Ramy, Victorire and Griffin decide to revolt when they realise that their expertise was being exploited for Oxford's own benefit and that their people were being oppressed.

The wealth and power of Britain is fuelled by the silver bars that are produced from Babel. The novel introduces the fictional technology of silver work, where the silver bars emanate magic and enhance technological developments. On one side of the silver bar, a word from a particular language is inscribed, and on the other side, a translated version of that word is seen. For instance, the French word *fermer* literally translates to 'close' or 'to lock'. Originally based on the Latin word *firmare*, the word means to 'make hard' or 'to strengthen'. Thus the silver bar containing this match-pair would produce an unbreakable lock.

The key characters in the novel, Robin Swift, Ramy Mizra, Letitia Price and Victorie Desgraves are all students of Babel. Each student comes from a different region and cultural background, and has a patron in Babel who supports his education. Robin is adopted by his patron, Professor Richard Lowell from Canton, while Ramy is from Calcutta, Victorie from Haiti and Letty from England, all adopted by their respective patrons. In due course of time, Robin comes in contact with his half-brother Griffin Lowell, who is a member of the Hermes Society, a clandestine underground network that attempts to annihilate Babel. The cohort's interaction with the Hermes Society provides an alternative perspective about Babel and projects the ulterior motive of the institute.

The cohorts come to know about the Empire's colonial legacy and the role of their institute in promoting it. Griffin and his friend Anthony Ribben recount the ways in which the silver acquired from the colonies enabled the economic growth of England at the expense of draining the colonies. "If this organisational competence strikes one as surprising, remember that both Babel and the British government made a great mistake in assuming all antislavery movements of the century were spontaneous riots carried out by uneducated, discontent lowlives" (Kuang 544). It also comes to light that scholars from the colonies were being compelled to migrate to England owing

to their intellectual acumen, resulting in both economic and intellectual drain of the colonies. Finally, the cohorts associate themselves with the Hermes Society and attack the institute by emblazoning themselves along with the silver bars.

Months before the attack, Robin, along with his friends and Professor Lowell, set out on a diplomatic mission, undertaking a naval voyage to Canton. They were sent to serve as interpreters during the struggle that was getting intensified between the British Empire and the Qing Dynasty, the latter being unwilling to permit opium or free trade into China. It is here that the novel interlaces with real historical events. The cohorts reach Canton at the outbreak of the opium wars. Historically, the opium wars were fought from 1839 to 1842, between England and China. The opium wars were one of the most horrifying events in the annals of colonial history. Britain was in search of resources, and China had abundant natural assets. After visiting Lin Zexu, the official dispatched to halt the opium traffic. Robin becomes sceptical of the British project after seeing an opium den first-hand. He is struck by the disdain the British have for the Chinese. The Babel affiliates depart for England after Lin sets fire to the cache of seized opium. Lovell chastises Robin on board for his alleged involvement with the Qing. But Robin won't let up and ends Lovell's life by blowing a hole in his chest with a silver bar.

The historical event is recounted by Kuang in the novel *Babel*, where the British are shown to be after silver ore, as it has magical properties. The cohort's arrival at Canton just before the opium wars alters the historical event altogether. Their mission is muddled by the Professor's heated argument with Robin and his subsequent death at the hands of his own ward. The destruction of Babel and the death of Professor Lowell render the historical sequence incomplete. R.F. Kuang adeptly alters one event and leaves the readers questioning the consequences of this change. The questions of "what-ifs" and "why-nots" have made historians interrogate the very nature of history and the relevance of historiography.

THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST APPROACH

Historiographers of the twentieth century attempted to approach history with the assistance

of scientific and technological evidence. It gave birth to a new approach called Reconstructionism or Practical Realism, advocated by G.R. Elton, Gordon S. Wood and Lawrence Stone. The reconstructionists constructed historical depositions based on physical evidence like manuscripts and monuments. This school of thought developed along with a rapid expansion of scientific conservatism and maintained the foundational belief in empiricism.

Behan McCullagh, a mainstream reconstructionist philosopher of history, is of the view that history is 'just over there' (2000) and the factuality of the past can be unveiled by paying attention to the accuracy of the historical documents. Alan Munslow, in his 2006 work *Deconstructing History*, opposes McCullagh's stance by explaining that, "Reconstructionists ... believe that they really can explain the past with a substantial claim to accuracy and truthfulness" (37). This purely empiricist approach, however, focuses only on the political history and disregards the socio-cultural and economic factors that determine the history of a time period.

McCullagh's reconstructionist stance was challenged by realist historians like Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob in their work *Telling the Truth about History*. In an attempt to locate the relationship between postmodernism and history, they concluded that historical documents are the narrative interpretation of the author: "... there are the records of the past, and there is the interpretation of those records. The gap between them is the source of concern. At best, the past only dimly corresponds to what the historians say about it ..." (2009 248). These gaps in the narratives and the insufficiencies of the reconstructionist approach led to the emergence of the Constructionist School of Historiography.

The Constructionist enterprise also relies on the empirical tendencies of the reconstructionist, but it strives to remain scrupulous between the relationship of the event and the explanation. Munslow provides profound insight into the Constructionist theory:

The constructionist process assumes ... that explanatory frameworks as suggested by the evidence must be stated in propositional terms that are then open to

verification through the further study of the evidence ... (Munslow 54).

The constructionists thus advocate for a broader study of social history that makes history a complex working model, incorporating interdisciplinary insights to study the past.

The constructionist campaign of interdisciplinary models for studying history burgeoned in the twentieth century with the rise of a new discipline called 'economic history'. This discipline studied the past with respect to trade, market trends and the quality of life of a people from a particular time period. In "The Emergence of British Economic History" (2004), Phillip Schofield details the assimilation of economics and history. History, until then, examined the consequences of incidents and failed to decipher the causation behind them: "If history as a discipline could not, of itself, generate all such questions, other disciplines could" (69). The London School of Economics (LSE) later accelerated the symbiotic study of economics and history.

The political economy, the collection and interpretation of economic facts illustrate the distribution of wealth across different epochs. Studying historiography through the lens of economics provides a broader scope of understanding the intricate nature of history. R.F. Kuang's *Babel* urges readers to focus on the silver trade that took place between Britain and China during the nineteenth century. The novel emphasises the consequences of political stability and its impact on the way in which history is written.

Set in the nineteenth century, when Great Britain was basking in its imperial glory, the novel provides an alternate narrative where the industrial revolution of England is spurred by the silver bars that were designed by the translators of Oxford. The novel attributes England's monstrous growth during the Industrial Revolution to the oppressive trade policies that the empire exerted on its colonies:

London sits at the centre of a vast empire that won't stop growing. The single most important enabler of this growth is Babel. Babel collects foreign languages and foreign talents the same way it hoards silver and uses them to produce

translation magic that benefits England and England only (Kuang 99).

The exploitation of colonies for economic gain and the strategic manipulation of trade routes underscore how England's dominance was ensured through the Industrial Revolution.

The novel masterfully explores the ways in which Britain's foreign policy affected both its own people and its colonies. It delves into the social, political and economic implications of England's imperialistic pursuits, shedding light on the complex dynamics that underpinned the empire's accelerated advancement:

The silver industrial revolution is one of the greatest drivers of inequality, pollution, and unemployment in this country. The fate of a poor family in Canton is, in fact, intricately tied to the fate of an out-of-work weaver from Yorkshire. Neither benefits from the expansion of the empire (404).

The novel provides a comprehensive approach to the multifaceted relationship between trade policies, colonial exploitation and England's industrial revolution.

Robin is staggered to witness Britain's excessive acquisition. He is thrilled to see the silver-powered steam engines, carriages, industries and factories all adorning the prized silver bars. However, Robin soon understands that the silver bars have become so sought after that they have become an unattainable luxury. The accessibility of the silver bars has been restricted only to the elites, and the rest of England scampers for basic amenities:

London had accumulated the lion's share of both the world's silver ore and the world's languages, and the result was a city that was bigger, heavier, faster, and brighter...the day would come when it either devoured itself from inside or cast outwards for new delicacies, labour, capital, and culture on which to feed (19-20).

The Hermes Society played an important role in the siege of the institute, but it was successful owing to the cooperation of the peasants of Oxford, who were left dissatisfied with the distribution of resources.

It alludes to what Robert C. Allen briefed on the growth of the imperial countries in his book, *The*

British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective, that they flourished at the expense of the colonies. He asserts, "In the eighteenth century, international trade gave the economy a second boost via successful mercantilism and colonialism. Many European countries chartered companies to trade with Asia" (111). The economic growth of the European countries in the eighteenth century was accelerated by the introduction of mercantile policies and the forging of colonial relations. Countries like Spain, Portugal, France and Britain competed for trade with Asia and Africa.

KUANG'S UNIQUE VANTAGE POINT

Kuang's comprehensive understanding of the nature of history gives her a unique vantage point to comment on the action and speculate on its historical causation instead of plainly laying out the linear facts. Conventional narration is often centred on the aspect of colonial expansion of the Empires, leaving out their source of power. The novel is explicitly framed in the age of imperialism and industrialisation. Kuang positions imperialism and the Industrial Revolution on the same scale as they mutually complement each other. Kuang dwells on how events in history are influenced by several factors such as economics, religion, culture and language.

By applying economic understanding to historical incidents, Kuang links the Industrial Revolution to the process of colonisation. Thomas G. Rawski, in his book, *Economics and the Historian*, opines that "The economic perspective often establishes unexpected connections and reveals new vantage points that enable historians to expand the range of their studies and enlarge the value of source materials" (13). It is evident that the Industrial Revolution was not a passive supplement to the empire but the sole means and motive behind it. Kuang also provides an alternative reality in which the Industrial Revolution is halted, resulting in the crumbling of the empire. The correlation of economics and history for the study proves that history is an interdisciplinary field, which substantiates the assertions of the constructivist historiographers.

While deconstructionist historiographers tend to question the structure and pattern of a historical narrative, Jacques Derrida in his work "Structure,

Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences” offers a deconstructive implication into historiography: “The centre is not the centre” (353). He rejects the claim that history is a single, linear narrative that has a fixed centre which depends on the rise and fall of civilisations. He asserts that this approach restrains the limits of history.

By adopting a deconstructionist approach, readers could delve into the complexities of texts and histories to uncover the underlying power dynamics and conflicting perspectives that shape the stories they inherit. It enables readers to critically reassess the perceptions of the past by revealing the multiplicity of meanings and inherent contradictions present within these narratives. Deconstructionists warn that historical texts should not be perused without critical inquiry. A historical record should be a point of discourse to initiate a dialogue rather than for defining or labelling historical events.

Keith Jenkins in *Re-Thinking History* surmises that, “...history’ is really ‘histories’ for at this point we ought to stop thinking of history as though it were a simple and rather obvious...” (1991, 4). Jenkins opines that it is essential to recognise that there could be multiple narratives whose only common feature is that their ostensible object of enquiry is ‘the past’ (4). Deconstructionist historiographers thus undermine the objectivity of a historical text by exploring history as a literary narrative with semantic and systemic gaps. They claim that even history is a literary text. No historical account can be considered as a final or absolute truth. After all, historians do not just record the past, but they reproduce it with language. Since language itself is unstable and capable of producing multiple meanings, a historical text that has been constructed with language cannot claim to be the final truth. Miguel Cipriani in “Can the Subaltern Laugh? A Study of Humour, Power, and Resistance” declares that,

... when considering through a thought experiment that the author effectively does manage to capture the original intention of the text, is this not only a mimicry of the original that will never truly be what it seeks to represent? (50).

The historical texts are shaped by linguistic patterns, metaphors and cultural references of the historian.

In the novel, *Babel*, Kuang rewrites Britain’s economic and imperial history through the lens of linguistic instability. The imperial legacy of Britain is glossed over using words like ‘progress’, ‘development’ and ‘civilisation’. The multiracial students of Babel are conditioned into believing that Britain gives them social and economic privilege: “...he was an Englishman and not...That the Chinese were stupid, backwards people and that he was also one of them....” (319). Britain’s records illustrate how the empire strives to civilise the barbarians. Nevertheless, the version of history from the perspective of the colonies differs from the one put forth by the Empire due to semantic deviations. The words “civilisation” for “erasure”; “progress” for “loot”, and “development” for “destruction” challenge the mainstream historical narrative and produce a history of resistance.

The implication of words and their inherent meaning seems to vary from one culture to another. Certain words carry specific weight for different people. For example, while the word ‘revolution’ rings of people’s movement in France, it evokes alarm in countries like North Korea. Historical texts, thus, contain semantic differences which provide scope for multiple histories rather than a single unified history. The constructionist approach, thus, calls for an interdisciplinary approach to history, whereas the deconstructionist approach calls for an in-depth analysis of the nature of historical texts.

DUAL NATURE OF HISTORY

From an enquiry into these approaches of historiography, it can be surmised that there are two perspectives on the nature of history: 1) History as branched and open-ended 2) History as a literary narrative. Hayden White, in *Metahistory*, claims that all historical texts have tropes, plots and narrative elements, which means history is imbricated with literature. “It is sometimes said that a historian aims to explain the past by “finding,” “identifying,” or “uncovering” the “stories” that lie buried in chronicles” (White 6). He locates three approaches in explaining the nature of historical texts: 1) Explaining by

emplotment 2) Explaining by argument 3) Explaining by ideological implication. Explaining by emplotment is the way in which a historical text is analysed based on how it is structured. White defines that a historical record attains its meaning through the way in which the historian has emplotted his/her narrative. "If, in the course of narrating his story, the historian provides it with the plot structure of a Tragedy, he has "explained" it in one way; if he has structured it as a Comedy, he has "explained" it in another way (7).

This research paper has attempted to underscore that all historical texts are literary narratives in the light that they are composed of language and the semantic gaps that go with language. Furthermore, White's concept of the 'Linguistic Turn' emphasises that all historical narratives have literary tropes and motifs, further elucidating the literariness of historical texts.

In the novel, there is a reference to the biblical story of the forbidden fruit, which sheds light on how language can alter history. Artwork and illustrations all around the world depict the forbidden fruit as an apple. However, Robin's mentor Mr Felton lectures that this visualisation is a result of a trivial linguistic difference. The Latin word *malum* translates to 'bad', whereas the word *mālum* with a macron mark denotes an apple: "It was a short leap from there to blaming the apple for the original sin" (25). A minor linguistic misinterpretation has caused artists, illustrators and painters all over the world to equate the forbidden fruit with an apple. Since artworks, codices and other forms of documentation too constitute a large part of historical narratives, White's concept of the 'Linguistic Turn' becomes significant in the depiction of the past.

The implied notion of the literariness of historical texts provides scope for an analysis of the literary genre called alternative historical fiction. Mainstream historical texts contain properties of literature, whereas fiction contains properties of historical texts. This alternate history consists of real events twisted slightly to produce extremely opposite cause-effect relationships. In her work, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, Linda Hutcheon refers to this genre as 'Historiographic metafiction':

This is why I have been calling this historiographic metafiction. It can often

enact the problematic nature of the relation of writing history to narrativization and, thus, to fictionalisation, thereby raising the same questions about the cognitive status of historical knowledge (Hutcheon 92-93)

Historiographic metafiction is highly self-reflexive; a good example of it is Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. Such novels challenge the claims of objectivity by mainstream historians and advocate for the plurality of historical texts. Derek J. Thiess, in his work, *Relativism, Alternate History, and the Forgetful Reader: Reading Science Fiction and Historiography* (2015), states that, "The alternate history asks questions about time, linearity, determinism, and the implicit link between past and present. It considers the individual's role in making history, and it foregrounds the constructedness and narrativity of history" (1-2). Alternate history is therefore the by-product of relativist historiography and historiographic metafiction.

BABEL AS ALTERNATE HISTORY

Kathleen Singles, in her work, *Alternate History: Playing with Contingency and Necessity* (2015), underscores that "Alternate histories assume and rely upon a prevalent record of historical fact, and their own version of history is based upon and is part of this record; it is not an independent construct itself" (44). Singles makes a significant differentiation between alternate history and revisionist history. Revisionist history is written to challenge the canonical mainstream historical texts, in contrast to the alternate history that is a literary reproduction of the event.

The flexible and ambiguous nature of history is amplified in Kuang's *Babel*: "He had never thought before about the lacuna of written history they existed in and the oppressive swath of denigrating narrative they fought against, and now that he did, it seemed insurmountable" (505). Robin sets out to chronicle the events that have transpired in Babel, but he soon grasps the dynamics of history and comes to a conclusion that this could not be the only perspective on what has happened.

Ostensibly, alternate historical fiction also aligns with the genre of science fiction. Brian Attebery and Veronica Hollinger, in their book, *Parabolas of*

Science Fiction, posit that “Science fictional parabolae take us from the known to the unknown. The known elements usually include a location, an initial situation, a set of character types, and a problem” (2013 vii). Alternate histories have a Point of Divergence (POD) in which the writer swivels the narrative from the actual history. In literature, they call this point of divergence the

‘Jonbar Hinge’. The Jonbar Hinge is found in three places in the novel, *Babel* – the usage of silver bars in the Industrial Revolution, the murder of Professor Lowell and the destruction of Babel.

The three PODs or multiple hinges are termed as ‘sequential hinges’. The sequential hinges in the novel can be graphically represented as below:

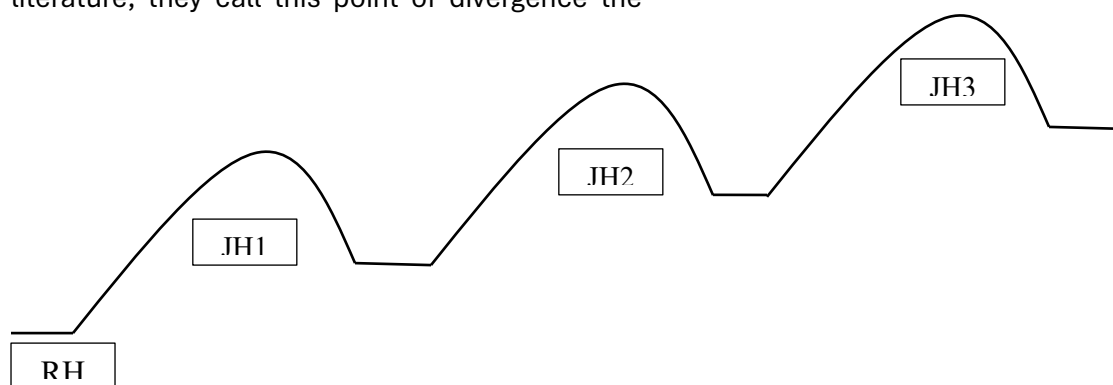


Figure 1. Graphical Representation of the Novel with Sequential Hinges

The graph represents the novel’s trajectory in relation to the Jonbar hinges. RH represents the Real History, where Kuang articulates the imperial history of Britain. JH1 represents the first deviation from history by the implementation of silver bars. JH2 refers to the second deviation, denoting the murder of Professor Lowell that has altered the course of the Opium Wars, and JH3 denotes the third deviation in which Robin destroys Babel. These points in an alternative historical novel align with the parabolae of Attebery and Hollinger.

The substantiation of the science fictional parabola is found in Kuang’s *Babel*, where one minimal change in the course of history alters the historical timeline and produces utterly unprecedented events. Robin pronounces the following words as he is about to annihilate Babel from within. “And what happens next is anyone’s guess. The future would be fluid. One individual choice, made at just the right time. This was how they defied momentum. This was how they altered the tracks of history” (527). Kuang affirms that it just takes one individual action to modify the course of history. Likewise, the perspective through which a particular event is approached

also plays a huge role in the narrative to present the validity of historical records.

The substantiation of Attebery’s parabolae of science fiction with an alternate fictional novel proves that alternative historical fiction aligns with the genre of science fiction. It contends that advanced techniques of historical investigation have evolved from an initial view of history as empirical to a critical knowledge of its subjective and manufactured form because of humanity’s fundamental need to record and preserve the past. The narratives that reach the readers and the narratives that the readers select for themselves make all the difference in the formation of a political and cultural discourse.

CONCLUSION

A critical attempt towards understanding the nature of history and historical texts has been made in this research article. Through an in-depth study of the various schools of historiography like constructivism and deconstructionism, it has argued that history is branched, open-ended, akin to a literary narrative. The paper has underscored that the polysemic nature of history has given birth to a literary genre called alternative fiction.

Besides, the research article has attempted to locate alternate historical fiction within the genre of science fiction,

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