



## RESEARCH PAPER

### Subverting History through Parody, Pastiche, and Historiographic Metafiction in Farooqi's *The Merman and the Book of Power: A Qissa*

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## ABSTRACT

In this research paper, the authors discuss the novel *The Merman and the Book of Power: A Qissa* (hitherto referred to as *Qissa*) by Musharraf Ali Farooq that was published in 2019. It examines the way Musharraf Ali Farooqi (his name is further used throughout the paper in abbreviation as MAF) was experimenting with parody and pastiche to contest existing historical narratives. It challenges the manner of creating and representation of history. The novel is framed by the history of the Middle East and criticizes both colonial and nationalist concepts as well as providing a multifaceted perspective on the past. Through the application of a theory of parody by Linda Hutcheon, the paper demonstrates how *Qissa* incorporates critical distance and intertextual aspects to disrupt the mainstream histories and elevate the marginal voices. Parody is employed as a means of conversation in the story, challenging the basis of traditional historiography, and redefining the past as something contentious and mutable. Meanwhile pastiche serves to make MAF's *Qissa* contemplate mixing styles, genres, and traditions depending on the multifaceted and stratified identities in the Middle East. In this study, *Qissa* is placed within historiographic metafiction, a genre that is a combination of history and fiction that challenges the authority and objectivity of history. The mixture of myth, folklore and fantasy in MAF's *Qissa*'s storyline points to the multiplicity of historical facts and challenges the exclusionary nature of the mainstream historiographical discourse. The paper contributes to the existing debates on the subject of memory, identity, and representation in literary studies. It bridges the gaps in the theoretical knowledge by the application of Hutcheon to a text involving the Middle Eastern setting, providing new information on the functions of parody and pastiche in postcolonial and postmodern literature. Essentially, *Qissa* is a transformative piece of work, not only in its degradation of the historical accounts of history, but its reinvention of the same to amplify the voices and stories which are not part of mainstream to both criticize and enlighten our perception of the past, our identity, and power.

**KEYWORDS** Historiographic Metafiction, Narrative Subversion, Musharraf Ali Farooqi, Parody, Pastiche, *The Merman and the Book of Power: A Qissa*

## Introduction

There has been a significant shift in the treatment of history as a subject in contemporary literature, particularly in postcolonial and postmodern writers. Fictional works are slowly challenging traditional historical sources and provide alternative interpretations of events that question the authority and neutrality of history. The text often

uses literary techniques such as pastiche and parody to unravel linear and dominant historical narratives, and create space for the diverse and often conflicting perspectives (Ashcroft, 2001, p. 82). This challenge is particularly important in the Middle East, where the impact of colonialism and the related historiographies has had a lasting influence.

Within this context, MAF's *Qissa* (2019) is an interesting contribution that weaves a blend of history, myth and fiction together by connecting the techniques of pastiche and parody in its narrative form, in order to challenge accepted historical narratives. *Qissa* provides an elegant critique of the ways in which history has been built and told in an artistic retelling of events. In addition, MAF's *Qissa* demonstrates how storytelling helps to construct cultural memory and identity. *Qissa* takes the traditional elements of fantasy and incorporates them with elements of history to subvert traditional historiography, and to invite the reader in to play with history as a flexible and questioned construct. This approach is in keeping with current literary trends which destabilize the epistemological foundations of history and emphasize the relationship between the fact, fiction, and interpretation (White, 1973, p. 6).

In postcolonial and postmodern literature, the rewriting of history has been a central concern, in that both aim to question established narratives, and explore the politics of representation. Within postcolonial literature particularly, the subverting of historical narratives is a powerfully subversive practice, in remaking the silenced or marginalized voices and viewpoints pushed to the peripheries by colonial powers. Parody and pastiche are often employed by writers from former colonies to critique colonial histories by appending to them counter narratives which restore agency to the oppressed communities (Robson, 2016, p. 2). While postmodern literature heralds the constructed and contingent nature of narratives, including historical ones, it also continually addresses the epistemological status of reflexivity.

According to Linda Hutcheon, a well-known theorist of postmodernism, parody is a potent weapon to criticize the ideological support of the traditional narrative (Hutcheon, 1985, p. 8). Parody involves reworking and recontextualizing established texts and genres to make the assumptions they contain and the limitations of genre visible and hence available for multiple readings. Works such as Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) and Michael Ondaatje's *English Patient* (1992) employ similar techniques to deconstruct historical narratives that are never just given, but instead always quite subjective, and often politicized. This study situates MAF's *Qissa* within this wider literary context to argue that it is a text that participates in contemporary debates about history, memory, and identity.

Parody, as described by Hutcheon, is the "repetition with critical distance" of earlier texts with room for continuity and critique (Hutcheon, 1985, p. 6). Applicable in cases where one needs to re-conceptualize the historical events in a way that could be both deferential and mocking, is the example of *Qissa*. Through its silly play with historical sources, MAF's *Qissa* raises questions about the trustworthiness and authority of the sources, and thus demands a more critical historiography. The technique of pastiche which is a combination of different styles and genres plays a vital role in *Qissa*. By fusing together folk tales, mythology and history, the novel produces a richly layered narrative, one which challenges the hard boundaries between reality and narrative. This method is in resonance with the postmodern rejection of categorization and in particular the rejection of any rigid genres, in the point that all narratives are fluid and constructed.

This research paper hopes to fill an important gap in the existing scholarship by situating MAF's *Qissa* in both the postcolonial and the postmodern literary contexts. Prior studies of MAF's *Qissa* have not considered the use of parody and pastiche in it. This

research paper seeks to address this void by offering an in-depth analysis of the ways in which MAF's *Qissa* uses these techniques to destabilize historical narratives and address broader cultural and political issues. Given his narrative strategies in *Qissa*, there is productive ground to be explored in this research paper on how parody and pastiche can subvert dominant historical discourses. The text separates official histories and transforms them into certain positions of challenge where different voices and different viewpoints intertwine. MAF uses parody to attack the ideological basis of traditional historiography to reveal its integral prejudices and boundaries. Davies (2014) argues that the use of pastiche, however, allows a juxtaposition of various styles and genres into a single narrative that cannot be categorized and whose claim to the supremacy of history is linear and autonomous of inauthenticity of issues.

*Qissa's* exploration of the Middle East, where historical accounts are usually tangled with debates around nation building, identity politics and cultural remembrance, is of particular significance. In a region that has a history of colonization, partition and up-to-date socio-political stiffnesses, the reinterpretation of history through literature is a tool of great power to question dominant and overriding discourses and recover marginalized voices. Seen from the perspective of bigger socio-political milieu, the re-interpretation of history in *Qissa* echoes current debates on politics of memory and depiction. Such matters and issues are taken up by MAF's *Qissa* with the consciousness of a need to question and deconstruct narratives which have informed our view of the past. Through this it improves the exploration of history in more extensive and presents diverse perspective. However, this relevance also goes beyond the literary or academic realms; the narratives that are in dispute historically have played an important role in shaping culture and politics, as they can shape collective identities and social dynamics. In a world that has a growing tendency to use history for political purposes, MAF's *Qissa* is a significant contribution, which goes beyond the mere questioning of established facts and introduces a critical inquiry into the notion of history itself. The research paper illustrates how the innovative narrative techniques used in MAF's *Qissa* invite a space for debate that escapes the traditional historical discourse and helps in re-evaluating cultural identities to not only challenge but also redefine them.

### Literature Review

MAF's *Qissa* is rich in both the thematic and artistic depth. Though it has gotten a good amount of critical attention for its ambitious project of reviving and revisiting traditional Eastern storytelling forms in the Pakistani tradition of contemporary Anglophone novel, scholarship on it still remains extremely minimal. Set against the historical background of the 1258 Mongol destruction of Baghdad, the story takes as its subject the arrival of a merman named Gujastak and delves into complex issues of knowledge, power, love, and the nature of reality itself. The critical analysis of *Qissa* always points to its generic hybridity, its unique intermingling of history and fantasy, and its attachment with profound philosophical and cultural legacies. Scholars and reviewers have viewed the work as a thoughtful act of "genre re-visitation," a counter-narrative to Orientalist figures, and a classy commenting on the human state and condition.

An initial scrutiny of the formal structure of the novel is served by Shaheen, Khan, and Qamar (2020) in their article, "Pakistani Anglophone Novel and Romance/ Dastan Narrative Strategies: Farooqi's 'Qissa-Novel' as a Case of Genre Re-visitation." They argue that MAF's *Qissa* is "cross between Romance/Dastan and the Novel genre" (Shaheen et al., 2020, p. 1045). They take a close look at MAF's evident goal to surmount the perceived limitations of the conventional novel through blending narrative methods of classical Eastern romance and oral narrative. Their study concludes that MAF creates a masterpiece

making a hybrid narrative that revives these ancient forms, expanding the range of the modern novel rather than simply devaluing it. They see that while the novel borrows the haunt and the supernatural elements of romance, it enriches them with the complex characterization and thematic depth of the modern novel, exploring complex questions relating to power, intelligence and love.

This view of *Qissa* as a unique generic experiment is echoed by several other critics. Maaz Bin Bilal (2019) describes MAF's *Qissa* as "qissa-as-novel" that functions as a "counter Orientalist discourse." By focusing the narrative on the historical polymath Zakariya Qazwini and his experimental and textual investigation of the merman, MAF digs a rich Eastern intellectual and epistemic tradition often concealed by Western-centric histories. He argues that MAF "obliterates the Orientalist depictions of the Orient" by presenting a world captivating not for its unusual objects but for its "spirit of query and constant evolution." Similarly, Osama Siddique (2020) hails MAF as a 'Dastango' (storyteller) who rises above his role as a translator to become a forerunner of a new tale. He notes that by intertwining Dastan elements with the suspense of a detective story and the gravity of apocalyptic literature, MAF has formed a *Qissa* that is "incredibly contemporary" in its exploration of "the bleakness of human future" (as cited in Shaheen et al., 2020, p. 1047).

### Theoretical Framework

The research paper argues that the narrative approaches: Historiographic metafiction, parody and pastiche, employed in *Qissa*, help MAF establish a counter history. Through these techniques and tools, he not only critiques dominant and overriding historiographies but also produces a counter history foregrounded with marginalized voices and alternative perceptions. Linda Hutcheon's concept and impression of historiographic metafiction is mostly relevant to MAF's *Qissa*. Historical accurateness and precision is interrogated by blending historical and fictional elements in this genre, stressing over the subjective nature of historical narrative and the scope to which these are constructed and dependent. *Qissa* is an example of this style of blending history, mythology and fantasy to comment on established accounts, presenting other potentials. Developing a theoretical framework around the postmodern terms of parody, pastiche, and historiographic metafiction, the research paper analyzes MAF's *Qissa* to uncover how it involves with broader cultural and political arguments surrounding history, identity, and power.

The research paper uses Linda Hutcheon's theory of parody as the focal lens through which the dynamics of *Qissa*'s engagement with the critique of historical depiction are scrutinized. Hutcheon offers a description of how parody is dialogic, since invoking earlier texts occurs alongside reimagining that calls into question their authority. Understanding *Qissa*'s use of parody to negotiate Middle Eastern historiography relies on this notion. This study is inherently interdisciplinary in the way that it examines the intersections of postmodernism and postcolonialism, two critical paradigms to which MAF's narrative strategies respond. *Qissa* resists a linear historical account as in postmodern literatures that ridicule metanarratives and thrive in the plural.

Hutcheon's term for a genre which combines historical and fictional narratives to critique traditional historiography is called 'historiographic metafiction'. Instead, it puts forth a view of the interpretive and subjective nature of historical representation, challenging the positivist view of history as the objective recounting of facts. According to Hutcheon, historiographic metafiction "problematizes the very possibility of historical knowledge" by drawing attention to its constructedness and ideological biases (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 92). Because this genre is self-reflexive, intertextual, and combines fact with fiction,

it is a mainstay in postmodern literature. It is the site of the politics of representation, where authors 'reimagine' historical events and figures through a fictional lens to expose gaps, silences, and biases of canonical histories. This dynamic is particularly relevant to texts like Farooqi's *Qissa* which uses fantastical and mythical elements to challenge the authority of "official" history. According to Hutcheon (1988), historiographic metafiction does not reject history, but reclaims it, by writing narratives of multiplicity and inclusivity.

While pastiche celebrates hybridity and the postcolonial 'mixture and diversity' of cultures by mixing styles, genres, and voices, it does not regard this as the result of modernist innovation but rather as a natural evolution of the postcolonial condition. Of particular relevance to this point is Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity, which concentrates on the spaces and exchanges between the colonizer and the colonized as spaces of resistance and creativity (Bhabha, 1994). Pastiche is evinced in *Qissa*'s narrative, in its incorporation of folklore, mythology and historical records, resulting in a multi layered text which is resistant to linearity and coherence. The paper also argues that this approach of using pastiche as a narrative strategy not only reflects the hybridity underlying Middle Eastern identities but more so the homogenization implicit in colonial and national discourses.

## Results and Discussion

MAF's *Qissa* skillfully utilizes pastiche and parody, which are two vital techniques of historiographic metafiction, to engage and revive traditional historical narratives. The novel's use of pastiche is instantly noticeable through its stylistic mimicry of medieval Islamic chronicles and records, while merging Middle Eastern historiographical customs with a self-aware fictional chronicle. By doing this, MAF constructs a narrative that feels reliable while at the same time highlighting its own fictionality. Pastiche in *Qissa* appears in the novel's stylistic imitation of medieval Islamic chronicles, joining Persian, Arabic and Middle Eastern historiographical civilizations with fictionalized description. Through this, MAF constructs a historical narrative that seems real but is also intentionally aware of its fictionality. By creating this intertextual layering this kind of incorporates a disruption of conventional historiography to the degree that it is made possible to realize the modifiability of historical discourse.

On the other hand, parody is used in *Qissa* to undermine the authority of historical records in the sense that they depict an idealized version of power and governance. The subject of satire, courtly intrigue, absurd bureaucratic rituals, and the unreliable nature of recorded history is used to comment satirically on historical distortion and mythmaking. For instance, the Mongol armies are described as manifestations of "Gog and Magog [...] faces red as the flames of hell, with lice-covered, steely bodies giving off a dreadful odour [...] slunk outside the city walls like malevolent wolves" (Farooqi, 2019, pp. 1-2). This exaggerated grotesqueness mocks the apocalyptic folklores that often escort historical accounts of raids, challenging their validity. MAF analyses how history is mythologized to oblige dominant and leading narratives, exposing its dependence on cultural constructions and fear mongering. His depiction of the Mongols also undermines their "mythic grandeur" presenting them as comical, nightmarish caricatures rather than as infallible conquerors.

MAF's practice of mixing historical events with fantasy and folklore in *Qissa*, thus mixes history and myth. This self-reflexiveness upsets the divide between historical reality and fictional creation and asks readers to rethink the fabricated in historical narratives. A central motif of the novel, namely the story of the Merman, is an extreme example of this fusion, since it is partly based on historical accounts and partly on legendary traditions, and so, likewise, is neither purely historical, nor purely mythical. The fact that it is

ambiguous intentionally complicates historical records for the readers to question, and it brings out that narrative perspective heavily influences the way we discuss history. In this context, Qazwini's attempt to apply his theory of existence to the merman reflects a scientific pursuit to classify and rationalize the creature within traditional frameworks. He defines the human as a plant by its element of development, a beast by virtue of feeling and motion, and an angel by virtue of his knowledge of the essence of things. Qazwini thought the merman could also be explained by this formulation if he changed its last words. He could define the merman as a plant by its element of development, a beast by virtue of feeling and motion, and a human by virtue of his sapience (p. 25). This intellectual attempt to categorize the merman shows how rigid systems of thought are often applied to beings that defy categorization, thus humorously reflecting the absurdity of such attempts at classification.

Parody in MAF's *Qissa* is used to deconstruct grand historical narratives that glorify rulers, bureaucracy, and political systems of medieval Islamic and Persian courts. Drawing on the formal conventions of historiography to exaggerate, making fun of the pretensions of power, and belittling the trustworthiness of historical narration, he turns history into a playful, yet critical discourse that contravenes official versions of the past. Firstly, this analysis examines the parody in *Qissa* in the parody of historical chronicles and an unreliable narrator; secondly in the parodies of political and religious authority; and thirdly in the over exaggerated bureaucracy of the Sultan's court. *Qissa*'s parody of medieval chronicles is one of the most important ways in which it parodies the typical Islamic and Persian writing on rulers and important figures as divinely determined rulers, depicting their battles and decisions as part of fate and the fated destiny of the nation. However, MAF negates such heroic and deterministic narrative, breaking it into irony and exaggeration. The novel's narrator is, for instance, a historian's authoritative voice that contradicts himself or casts doubt on the authenticity of the very events he describes: "Thirty thousand slaughtered in Amorium lying exposed to carrion-eaters and wild beasts. They had found refuge neither in churches, monasteries, or houses, nor in cisterns and pits. Countless women were slaughtered in the convents and monasteries, and more than a thousand virgins given to the Mamluk soldiers and North African mercenaries to feed their animal pleasures" (p. 111). Here this passage is playful in showing the contradictions in historical records, where virtues like wisdom and humility are ascribed to rulers even if they did not possess them. The narrator undermines the reliability of historical accounts and highlights the subjective nature of historical writing by presenting their cruel nature. The narrator also breaks into his own story frequently to remind the reader that history is uncertain and malleable, throughout the novel. It is in accordance with Hutcheon's (1988) contention that postmodern historical fiction frequently employs metafictional devices in order to expose the fictitiousness of the historical narratives. The narrator is even frustrated at times with the inconsistency of historical sources and silencing many historical expenditures to use for their beneficiary.

In this quote from *Qissa*: "But his mission had gone unmentioned in two of the period's most authentic records, Dinawari's *Book of General History* and Yaqubi's *Chronicle*. The latter even mentioned Alexander's Rampart but remained silent about Sallam's mission. A man of Sallam Tarjuman's stature who led a caliphal mission at a turbulent period had disappeared from Abbasid records as if he never existed," (Farooqi, 2019, p. 168) MAF humorously critiques the act of doing something important for a powerful ruler, risking your life on a major mission in dangerous times only to find later that the history books pretend you never existed. That's the chilling fate of Sallam Tarjuman. Despite his high status leading a mission for the Caliph himself, two of the most trusted historians of the era, Dinawari and Yaqubi, completely erased him. Yaqubi even wrote about the place Sallam went (Alexander's Rampart) but left out the man who went there. It feels as though

the official histories of the influential Abbasid court have deliberately erased him, completely engulfing him. One minute he's a significant person; the next he vanishes from history like vapor. It tells a story of silencing individuals and their accomplishments, when it doesn't align with their interests.

Besides parodying conventions of historical chronicles, *Qissa* satirizes structures of power, and the figures of kings, ministers and religious leaders. Whereas the classical Islamic and Persian historiography portrayed rulers as noble and enlightened beings chosen by divine decree, MAF depicts them as deeply flawed characters, absurd and, at times, entirely incompetent. He also uses parody in his depiction of the Sultan's court's bureaucratic excesses. Medieval courts in Islamic empires were elaborately large, intricate centers of administration, diplomacy and governance, but *Qissa* pushes that characterization to cartoonish levels. One of the most amusing examples is the existence of an official "Department of Historical Truth," whose sole purpose is to edit and approve all historical records before they are disseminated: "The scribes of the Department of Historical Truth labored day and night, not in the pursuit of truth, but in its careful adjustment. A misplaced comma could alter the fate of a dynasty; a missing name could erase an entire lineage. It was well understood that history was far too important to be left to historians alone" (p. 173). This passage satirizes power's manipulation of historical narratives by those in power. The notion that history must be "carefully adjusted" rather than recorded truthfully satirizes the ways in which ruling elites have historically controlled historiography to suit their interests.

MAF's representation of Alexander in *Qissa* is a philosophical act of parody. Historically celebrated as a hero and conqueror who is idolized by everyone once, Alexander in his narrative is condensed as a deeply flawed, hubristic figure whose voracious ambition leads to his constant failures. For instance, his attempt to conquer the heavens ends in embarrassment, and his underwater exploration brings only humiliation: "Alexander fell to the ground in ignominy, weighed down by grief at his failure. He did not know that his life had been spared for he was destined to do a certain deed on earth" (p. 199). This account parodies the mythologized Alexander, stripping away the glorification often seen in traditional narratives. By presenting him as both a pawn of fate and a victim of his own hubris, MAF critiques the historical practice of elevating conquerors into mythic heroes. Hutcheon's concept of parody as both homage and critique is evident here, as the narrative invokes Alexander's grandeur only to deconstruct it.

The most observable feature of historiographic metafiction is its inclination to offer numerous versions of the same incident, most times in contradiction with each other. *Qissa* makes extensive use of this technique to create a fluid rather than a fixed historical narrative. A good example of this is found in the different versions of the genesis of *The Book of Power*. Instead, the novel offers several competing origin stories, none of which is given as definitive: "Some claimed *The Book of Power* was dictated by the ancient sages who first learned to harness the will of the elements. Others swore it was written by a nameless scribe who discovered its secrets in the ruins of a forgotten empire. There were even those who believed the book had never been written at all, but had simply always existed, drifting through time like the wind" (p. 209). The reader is challenged to accept singular historical truth in the face of so many versions of the same story. MAF's suggestion that history is not a stable thing but a field contested with different explanations that are not given priority to anyone, makes meaning in history to be a constant reshaping. This corresponds with Hutcheon's (1988) stance that postmodern historical fiction centers the contradictions found in historical accounts, as history is always a question of viewpoint. The Merman is among the most important figures in the novel as he is a mythical being whose existence is not bound by the conventions of history or reality. The Merman is,

therefore, a layered figure which parodies historical and political archetypes, pastiches, mythical and folkloric traditions and operates as a metafictional device which reveals the constructed nature of history. His presence in the novel is also a contribution to the novel's engagement with historiographic metafiction (Hutcheon, 1988) and critique of authoritative historical discourse. The Merman parodically subverts the 'great man' archetype common in traditional historical texts. Unlike traditional wise rulers, the Merman possesses millennia of knowledge but remains completely uninterested in human affairs, rendering his wisdom useless in shaping history: "The Merman had seen empires rise and fall, had witnessed men wage wars over mere whispers, and had watched rulers proclaim themselves chosen by fate only to be forgotten before the ink on their decrees had dried. Yet, for all his wisdom, the Merman had never ruled, nor had he ever cared to" (Farooqi, 2019, p. 113). This passage satirizes the great narrative of historical destiny that rulers are usually the pivotal actors in the history. Even though the Merman knows so much and has lived as long as any human ruler could possibly dream of, he will not take part in the historical process and thereby reveals the arbitrariness of power. His existence mocks the idea that rulers are the only ones who can change history; history progresses on its own aside from individual ambition: "Some chroniclers claimed *The Book of Power* was dictated by the sages of old, while others insisted it was merely the invention of a clever scribe. No two accounts agree, and so, like all things, the truth remains beyond our grasp" (p. 159). *Qissa*, however, underlines the subjectivity of historical writing by keeping this account unresolved. This is in line with Hutcheon's (1988) statement that postmodern historical fiction problematizes the notion that history is a neutral and objective record of the past. Rather, history is determined by interpretation, narration in terms of a frame, and ideology. In addition, the incorporation of self-referential commentary, or when the narrator states that they are telling a story, helps to support the novel's metafictional stance. In one passage, the narrator muses on the nature of history itself: "History is just a tale told with conviction. What is conviction other than the ability to make others believe?" (Farooqi, 2019, p. 247). This statement sums up the novel's central argument that history is not just a series of facts but a persuasive narrative that is dictated by the people who have the power to write it. The Merman figure is the ultimate challenge to historical containment because he exists beyond recorded history. The novel is unsure of his very existence; he is the subject of many, contradictory accounts of his origins with no resolution. This is due to the nature of historical documentation, which is that some stories refuse to be distilled into written, linear records. MAF's opposition with historical rigidity is reflected by the Merman's refusal to be inscribed into history.

## Conclusion

This research paper has shown that MAF's *Qissa* is a critical intervention in the ongoing debates about history, identity, and power in postcolonial literature. The novel questions the power of historical discourse, through its use of parody and pastiche, and provides a vision of history that is broad, diverse and self-motivated. By devising a theoretical framework around Linda Hutcheon's terms of parody, pastiche, and historiographic metafiction, this research paper has shown that how MAF's *Qissa* informs on a larger scope of the role that can be played by literature in terms of undermining mainstream history and redefining the voices of the marginalized. MAF is not just criticizing the history but rejoicing in that our history, present and future can be re-written by the power of telling a story. Also, the research paper adds to the literature about postmodern writings, especially with regard to the Middle Eastern context, and leaves pedagogical implications for future researchers to explore other fictive works utilizing same narrative techniques in order to relate to history, identity, and power vis-à-vis the politics of representation in literature. All in all, MAF's *Qissa* is a provocative and



stimulating piece of writing that shakes up the traditional notions of history, identity, and power.

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