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Fragmented Histories and Epistemic Plurality: Postmodern Narrative Strategy in *Riot*

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Abstract

This paper aims at examining *Riot* by Shashi Tharoor through the intersecting frameworks of historiographic metafiction and postmodern epistemology, foregrounding how the novel destabilizes the authority of historical truth. Constructed as an assemblage of letters, diary entries, official memoranda, interviews, and journalistic reports, the narrative reconstructs communal unrest in North India while simultaneously interrogating the possibility of objective historiography. Rather than presenting a coherent and authoritative account of events, the novel disperses narrative authority across competing discursive voices, thereby exposing the instability of truth-claims embedded within archival production. Drawing upon Linda Hutcheon's theorization of historiographic metafiction, Lyotard's critique of metanarratives, and Foucauldian insights into discourse and power, this study argues that fragmentation in *Riot* functions as a deliberate epistemological intervention. The archive emerges as a contested site where memory, ideology, and institutional authority intersect, revealing the constructed nature of communal histories and nationalist myth-making. By resisting teleological closure and rejecting homogenizing narratives of religious identity, Tharoor sustains epistemic plurality as a democratic narrative ethic. Ultimately, *Riot* redefines fiction as a critical arena in which history is shown to be discursively mediated, perspectival, and perpetually open to reinterpretation within postcolonial India.

Keywords:

Epistemic Plurality; Historiographic Metafiction; Archive and Discourse; Postmodern Epistemology; Narrative Decentering; Nationalist Metanarratives