

## BIO FICTION – A NEW EMERGING GENRE

CYNTHIA GEORGE

Assistant Professor, Department of Languages-French, CTTE College for Women, Sembium, Tamil Nadu, India

### ABSTRACT

#### What is Bio Fiction?

Steam lined answers from all corners “A fiction based on Biology rather Sciences” come yelling into my years, I on the contrary consider the words of Robert Parrish, a contemporary writer who goes to say that Bio Fiction is a new genre of fiction. Whether it is truly a new genre and will become a mainstream as biography, mystery or suspense needs to be hoped upon.

Biographies have been with us since time began. Presumably, oral storytellers sitting around ancient campfires no doubt recounted the lives and times of notable figures. Greeks, Romans and other societies all told stories of their gods and their heroes.

The Bible, of course, is replete with stories from the lives of men and women God chose to lead and shape His kingdom on earth. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, Moses and Aaron, Elijah and Elisha, David, Solomon and more. Both the Old Testament and New insightfully recap significant points – some high and some low – in the lives of men and women contributing to what we now call “The Scriptures.”

Early 20th-century movie-making based on a true story or as told to the author is more viewable with faster-paced formats than strict narration.

**KEYWORDS:** Fiction, Biographical Fiction

### INTRODUCTION

#### Bio Fiction is Simply Telling True Stories in Dialog-Rich Formats

Bio Fiction or Biographical fiction has its roots in late 19th century and early 20th century novels which were based loosely on the lives of famous individuals without direct reference to them, such as George Meredith's *Diana of the Crossways* (1885) and Somerset Maugham's *The Moon and Sixpence* (1919). During the early part of the 20th century this became a distinct genre, with novels that were explicitly about individuals' lives

I would like to present 2 contemporary Indian authors who by the recital of their own lives and the lives of their community have brought about turbulence in the minds of readers both within India and abroad especially France. I also go forward to present one French writer Kate Marsh who brings to light the India lost by France as a narrative fiction.

#### Viramma by Jociane Racine and Jean Luc Racine

Josiane Racine, a Tamil-born ethnomusicologist educated in France is also an author of *Viramma: Life of a Dalit* - the autobiography of an illiterate woman. *Viramma* was originally published in French in the prestigious series known as *Terre Humaine* (Human Earth). The first Indian book which created a great impact in France and was subsequently translated into English and Italian.

**Viramma**, an untouchable woman by birth, and listed as one of the authors, narrated the story of her life over a period of ten years to Josiane Racine and her husband Jean-Luc Racine, a French academic who first came to India and was so smitten that he returned to teach at the French College in Pondicherry. Viramma tells her fascinating life story with the unsentimentality, humor and dramatic sense of a born storyteller: her carefree childhood; her marriage before puberty; giving birth to twelve children ‘very gently, like stroking a rose’; adult life as an agricultural worker ‘condemned to bake in the sun’; tales of gods and malign forces, like Irsi Katteri ‘the foetus-eater’, who cast their shadow over her daily life. Told over ten years to Josiane and Jean-Luc Racine, this is an intensely personal and moving self-portrait, informed by a sense of profound social change in contemporary India. To emancipationists Viramma is a Dalit, one of the oppressed; to Gandhians she is a Harijan, a daughter of God; in her village she is still treated as an Untouchable, a Pariah. In this remarkable book she reveals the world of an extraordinary woman living at the very margins of Indian society

### **Autobiographical Fiction**

The World Wide Web defines this as a form of novel using auto fiction techniques, or the merging of autobiographical and fictive elements. The literary technique is distinguished from an autobiography or memoir by the stipulation of being fiction.

**Bama Faustina Soosairaj** the most celebrated contemporary Dalit woman writer. She has been in the forefront of caste literature activism and has given Dalit aesthetics tremendous visibility on the literary campus of India. Her works have been translated into English, German, French, Telugu, and Malayalam.

Her famous works include

Karukku (1992),

Sangati (1994)

Vanmam (2002)

Kusumbukaran (1996)

Oru Tattvum Erumaiyum (2003).

### **Karukku**

In 1992 when a Dalit woman left the convent and wrote her autobiography, the Tamil publishing industry found her language unacceptable. So Bama Faustina published her milestone work *Karukku* privately in 1992—a passionate and important mix of history, sociology, and the strength to remember. *Karukku* broke barriers of tradition in more ways than one. The first autobiography by a Dalit woman writer and a classic of subaltern writing, it is a bold and poignant tale of life outside mainstream Indian thought and function. Revolving around the main theme of caste oppression within the Catholic Church, it portrays the tension between the self and the community, and presents Bama's life as a process of self-reflection and recovery from social and institutional betrayal. Bama was not allowed into her village for 7 months for her publishing of *Karukku* but later as the villagers realized that it was voicing their life they let her both into the land and their hearts. Later in 2000 Bama was the winner of the Crossword Book Award for this autobiography.

**Sangati** is actually an account of incidents that happen in the life of Dalits. Bama as the narrator at times becomes a critic, voicing out her views. Bama accounts struggles, frustrations and survival of Dalit women. The novel covers the stages of author's life starting from young girl to womanhood

### **Narrative Fiction**

Fiction is organized around issues - such as events, time, focalization, characterization, narration, the text and its reading - rather than individual theorists or approaches.

### **'India in the French Imagination: Peripheral Voices, 1754-1815'**

This book examines metropolitan French-language representations of India from the period between the recall of Dupleix to France, which effectively curtailed French expansionist policies in India, to the Second Treaty of Paris, which confirmed the territorial settlement of 1763 and France's subordinate position to Britain. Marsh explores what a European power, territorially peripheral in India, thought of both India and the administrative rule there of its rival, Britain. For the French, the image of India had a polyvalent nature, functioning both as a trope of exoticism and as a site that was inescapably imbued with expansionist failure and the concomitant success of la perfide Albion. Employing a comparative approach, and questioning the colonizer-versus-colonized binary which persists within colonial discourse analysis, Marsh posits a triangular discursive relationship between Britain, France and India. Challenging the grand narrative of the British imperial conquest of India, she explores the consequences for French culture of competing colonialisms on the Indian subcontinent.

### **Narrative Fiction**

The strongest thread of argumentation throughout this volume is the connection the author makes between political and historical events and the production of cultural material forms. Marsh moves brilliantly between the historical experiences of the French in India (and in the case of a visit by the South Indian leader, and enemy of the British, Tipu Sultan, and two of his advisers to Versailles in 1788, Indians in France) and French literary representations of India as an imagined space. Throughout each chapter, Marsh looks at both fiction and "fact," tracing the tropes and linguistic constructions that blur the line between the two modes of representation, as fiction, represented here by novels and plays, borrows from fact: travelogues, memoirs, and journalistic writings. Marsh shows how the philosophes became increasingly interested in India and were insistent on identifying and utilizing "authentic" texts to inform their writings. Of course, the "authenticity" of the texts should always be questioned, as Marsh maintains that many of the supposedly authentic Hindu or Brahmanic texts that Voltaire relied on in the writing of his 1756 work, *Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations*, were either written by Jesuit missionaries as tools to convert Hindus or were written in the service of one of the many trading companies. Marsh argues that it is not only the "Indien" that was defined by these narratives, but also the French self in opposition to other Europeans who were also present in India, particularly the British, but the Spanish and Portuguese as well.

### **The Burning Need**

What our country needs now is not only these sparks like Jociane Racine and Bama Faustina that light the society but those saner flames like Viramma that come forward to bring to light the multiple oppressions that violates the economic, political, social and cultural rights of women. Literature is a weapon through which one could achieve this emancipation and assimilation of knowledge.

I commend the work of Karl Marsh who illuminates the European continent about the unconquered India. To me she is a Vasco da Gama in literature to the many French citizens who have a craving to know about this land of tigers.

But whoever be the author or whatever be the writing whether a biography or a fiction if it is a deceit literature it is to be considered as disgusting.

I conclude with Arudhati Roy quotes “I do believe that in India we practice a form of apartheid that goes unnoticed by the rest of the world. And it is as important for Dalits to tell their stories as it has been for colonized peoples to write their own histories. When Dalit literature has blossomed and is in full stride, then contemporary (upper caste?) Indian literature's amazing ability to ignore the true brutality and ugliness of the society in which we live, will be seen for what it is: bad literature. It will become irrelevant “.