Call for Papers:
Re-Thinking, Re-Reading, and Re-Seeing Ethnic Historical Fiction (Special Issue of *MELUS*)

Guest Editors:
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Deadline for Submission of Initial Proposal Abstracts: October 1, 2018
Deadline for Completed Essays: March 1, 2019
Anticipated Publication: 2020

We are in a golden age of historical fiction, with acclaimed literary novelists and graphic novelists exploring major events in the past from new perspectives. Ethnic American (and North American) writers have been particularly influential in this genre, in the process bringing new insights to major historical events from the past, including the Boxer Rebellion, the American Civil War, the Holocaust, the Vietnam War (US War in Vietnam), the Cultural Revolution, and more. Historical fiction always has the capacity to bring the past vividly to life and to reappraise specific events in light of new evidence. But our recent moment is distinguished by novelists uniting historical fiction with that of speculative fiction, imagining alternative histories or “counter-factual history.” These forays into the “dustbin of history” shine focused light on our present, bringing our current preoccupations – such as the insidiousness of white supremacy, the unresolved trauma of war, the demonization of refugees and immigrants – to light through their detailed re-creation and re-imagination of historical events.

Such creative forays and relevant foci figure keenly in the recent publication of works such as Michael Chabon’s *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*, Philip Roth’s *The Plot Against America*, Lin Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton*, Viet Thanh Nguyen’s *The Sympathizer*, Madeleine Thien’s *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*, Colson Whitehead’s *Underground Railroad*, Karen Tei Yamashita’s *I Hotel*, Gene Luen Yang’s *Boxers and Saints*, among many more. These works not only have garnered accolades from prize committees and annual “best of” lists but also have gained large audiences. In sum, ethnic historical fiction has emerged as a vibrant site to contemplate the past/present dimensions of US racial struggle, formation, and empire. Accordingly, this special issue will feature essays exploring specific authors and their revisionist accounts of historical events and what they reveal about the retrospective and prospective views of history.

What follows are some guiding questions for submissions:

- How do recent ethnic American authors reappraise and rewrite historical events with the benefit of hindsight? What are the definitional distinctions between historical fiction, speculative fiction, or counter-factual history?
- How do writers lay bare the racial legacies embedded in genre conventions? How do these authors revise and/or subvert these modes? How are ethnic American writers pushing form into new areas?
• Is there anything distinctive about minority writers’ approaches to historical fiction? Does a comparative approach reveal patterns previously hidden?

• Considering the contemporary moment, how have movements such as #blacklivesmatter, #sayhername, and #metoo challenged ethnic writers to grapple with the past and present in new ways? How have recent controversies involving previously beloved ethnic authors (such as Junot Díaz and Sherman Alexie) provoked new or renewed debates about how/whether readers and critics can (or should) separate the author from the work?

• Do certain genres carry heavier ethical expectations or have the capacity for greater philosophical provocation?

Please submit 250-500 word abstracts to the co-editors (cathy.schlund-vials@uconn.edu and jsheffe@bgsu.edu) by October 1, 2018. After reviewing all of these proposals, the co-editors will invite up to 45 people to submit completed essays by March 1, 2018. These essays will then be peer reviewed as part of MELUS’s normal refereeing process. Ultimately, 8-10 will be selected for the special issue.

Completed essay submissions should be between 7,000 and 10,000 words (inclusive of notes and works cited). Shorter think pieces are also encouraged. Citations should follow the format of the MLA Style Manual 8th edition. Please do not include the author’s name anywhere in the manuscript. Essays under review at other journals or previously published in any form will not be considered for publication in MELUS. Please include an updated 250-word abstract with your final submission.

If invited to submit a full essay, you will be instructed to do so through the MELUS online manuscript system by March 1, 2019. The system can be accessed using the following URL: https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/melus. In the “custom questions” section of the online submission form, please note that you are submitting to the CFP for the special issue on ETHNIC HISTORICAL FICTION. For questions about the issue, please contact Cathy Schlund-Vials (cathy.schlund-vials@uconn.edu) or Jolie A. Sheffer at jsheffe@bgsu.edu.