Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences
Department of American Culture and Literature

FACT, FICTION, FACT-IN-FICTION: GORE VIDAL'S HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTIONS IN THE *NARRATIVES OF EMPIRE*

Saniye Çancı Çalışaneller

Ph. D. Dissertation

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KABUL VE ONAY

Saniye Çancı Çalışaneller tarafından hazırlanan "Olgu, Kurgu, Kurguda Olgu: Gore Vidal'in *Gayri Resmi Amerikan Tarihi* Serisindeki Tarihyazımcı Üstkurmaca Romanlar" başlıklı bu çalışma, 31 Ocak 2013 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından DoktoraTezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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Yukarıdaki imzaların adı geçen öğretim üyelerine ait olduğunu onaylarım.

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To my beloved Tarkan…

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ÖZET

ÇANCI ÇALIŞANELLER, Saniye. Olgu, Kurgu, Kurguda Olgu: Gore Vidal'in *Gayri Resmi Amerikan Tarihi* Serisindeki Tarihyazımcı Üstkurmaca Romanlar, Doktora Tezi, Ankara, 2013.

Tarihyazımının algılanış biçimi tarihsel roman ve tarihyazımcı üstkurmaca türlerinin oluşumunu da etkilemiştir. Tarih alanını kendilerine konu edinen bu iki tür benzer görünmekle birlikte birbirinden kesin çizgilerle ayrılır. Tarihsel roman geçmişi anlatırken gerçeklik duygusu yaratmaya çalışır. Oysa tarihyazımcı üstkurmaca tarih olarak temsil edilen geçmiş gerçekliğin nasıl kurgulandığını sorgular. Tarihsel roman ve tarihyazımcı üstkurmacayı ayırt etmek, ilgili eserlerin vurguladığı temel amacı kavramak açısından önemlidir. Çağdaş Amerikan yazarı Gore Vidal'in *Gayri Resmi Amerikan Tarihi s*erisi böyle bir tartışmanın merkezinde yer alır. Yedi romandan oluşan bu seride, Vidal resmi Amerikan tarihini yeniden yazar ve 1770'lerden 2000 yılına uzanan zaman diliminde Amerikan tarihinde yer alan bazı önemli olay ve kişileri ele alarak kurmaca bir tarihsel anlatı oluşturur. Tarihyazımı ve edebiyatın bir arada kullanıldığı bu romanların sorunsallaştırdığı konu ise geçmişin tarih olarak temsilidir. Dolayısıyla bu romanlar tarihi bir üst anlatı olarak sorgular. Akademik çevrelerin göz ardı ettiği Vidal'in *Gayri Resmi Amerikan Tarihi* serisi, sınırlı sayıdaki eleştirmen tarafından tarihsel roman olarak sınıflandırılmaktadır. Ancak, *Gayri Resmi Amerikan Tarihi* serisi, *Lincoln* romanı dışında, tarihsel romanın özelliklerinden farklı özellikler taşımaktadır. Bu romanlarda Vidal, Amerikan tarihini, edebiyat, tarih ve kuramın iç içe geçtiği tarihyazımcı üstkurmaca çerçevesinde sorunsallaştırır ve bir üst anlatı olarak sorgular. Bu tezin amacı, *Gayri Resmi Amerikan Tarihi* serisindeki romanların tarihyazımcı üstkurmaca olarak değerlendirilebileceğini savunmaktır. Bu sav doğrultusunda, tarihsel romanların ve tarihyazımcı üstkurmacının özellikleriyle birlikte bu türlerin oluşumunu etkileyen tarihyazımı anlayışları incelenecektir.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Gore Vidal, *Gayri Resmi Amerikan Tarihi* Serisi, Tarihyazımcı Üstkurmaca, Tarihsel Roman.

ABSTRACT

ÇANCI ÇALIŞANELLER, Saniye. Fact, Fiction, Fact-in-Fiction: Gore Vidal's Historiographic Metafictions in the *Narratives of Empire*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Ankara, 2013.

The conceptualization of history has influenced historical novels and historiographic metafiction, which focus on history as their subject matters. Although these two literary forms seem similar, they are radically different from each other in ideology and style. The historical novel aims to create a sense of past reality through historical faithfulness. However, historiographic metafiction questions how history as past reality is constructed. Historiographic metafiction calls attention to the fact that history, like fiction, is subjected not only to the conventions of narrative and language, but also to ideological motivations. This dissertation analyzes Gore Vidal's novels *Burr*, *1876*, *Empire*, and *Hollywood* in the *Narratives of Empire* series within the framework of historiographic metafiction. The *Narratives of Empire* consists of seven novels, *Burr*, *Lincoln*, *1876*, *Empire*, *Hollywood*, *Washington, D.C.*, and *The Golden Age*. Vidal rewrites American history in the *Narratives* by focusing on particular periods and important historical figures in American history from the 1770s to the end of twentieth century. Although these novels, left almost untouched by the academic world, are classified as historical novels by few critics who studied Vidal's texts, they fall into the category of historiographic metafiction, with the exception of *Lincoln*, because the representation of the past as the official history is questioned in these works. The novels in the *Narratives* explicitly problematize the writing of history, and question American history as a grand narrative in line with the premises of historiographic metafiction where literature, history, and theory are combined to ruminate on the writing of history. In this context, Vidal's novels are evaluated as historiographic metafictions to emphasize their critical approach towards history writing. The characteristics of the historical novel and historiographic metafiction are examined, and the changes in the conceptualization of history are traced since those paradigm shifts have influenced the formations of the aforementioned literary forms.

Key Words

Gore Vidal, *Narratives of Empire*, Historiographic Metafiction, the Historical Novel.

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INTRODUCTION

Gore Vidal, who was born in 1925 in West Point, New York, and died in 2012 in Los Angeles, was a versatile writer whose work ranges from novels to short stories, to plays and screenplays, and to essays and reviews. Although extraordinarily productive,[1] Vidal, mostly credited for his essays rather than his fiction, has not received much attention from academia.[2] As critic Harold Bloom notes in his article "The Central Man: On Gore Vidal's *Lincoln*," Vidal's "narrative achievement is vastly underestimated by American academic criticism" (228). Likewise, scholar Jay Parini in his essay entitled "Gore Vidal: The Writer and His Critics" claims that "Vidal has in fact been written about a good deal. The problem is with the quality, not the quantity, of this attention. Much of the writing about him takes the form of light magazine profiles and ephemeral reviews, since Vidal has been a celebrity from the beginning" (1). Vidal's exclusion from the academic world has been a subject of curiosity, and Jay Parini tries to figure out the reasons for such an absence. According to Parini, one "straightforward reason" is ironically Vidal's "unusual productivity" (3) which does not allow critics to easily categorize Vidal's work. As Jay Parini notes, Vidal is not a "predictable" man of letters since his work deals with different subject matters. For instance, his novels and plays

> focus on subjects ranging from world War II (*Williwaw*) to the ancient world (*Julian*, *Romulus*, *Creation*), to the postwar gay scene in America (*The City and the Pillar*), to the politics of Central America (*Dark Green, Bright Red*), to apocalyptic religion (*Messiah*, *Kalki*), to the sexual revolution (*Myra Breckindridge*, *Myron*), to the great march of American history (*Burr*, *1876*, *Lincoln*, *Empire*, *Hollywood*, and *Washington, D.C.*). His Swiftian satire, *Duluth*, has the whole of American pop culture in its deadly aim. (3-4)

Yet, according to Parini, the reason is not only Vidal's variety of writing: "Some of the prejudice against Vidal has to do with the author's characteristic approach to literary representation, which in some respects might be considered anti-*post*modern if not anti-modern." (4, original emphasis). Parini here points to the idea that Vidal's writing style, which he calls Vidal's "mandarine" style, does not give much space to the reader to imagine. Furthermore, he remarks on the "tone" of Vidal's prose or Vidal's "attitude toward his subject matter" as another issue which is "troubling to many critics" (5).

According to Parini, Vidal "writes, always, as an insider himself, and he communicates this feeling. This aspect of his mandarinism is present in most of the fiction and all the essays. The tone *is* the essays; it gives them their wonderfully acerbic edge and their vitality" (5, original emphasis). In Parini's opinion, Vidal

> holds the reader at some distance. Especially in the essays, he is like a rather formal host but definitely *not* a relative. We learn from him, we admire his turns of phrase, the illuminations that occur and occur. But we are not going to come away from a Vidal essay feeling cozy and wanting to call him on the phone. (6, original emphasis)

Not only the academic world but also the press does not pay enough attention to Vidal's writings. Vidal started his writing career in 1946 with the publication of *Williwaw*, which was categorized as a praised war novel. Yet the publication of *The City and The Pillar* in 1948 changed the tide. This second novel, which "traces coming out process of a young man as ordinary and American as apple pie" (Summers 57), created a major scandal, and the press contributed to the unfavorable atmosphere. Today, the novel is considered to be "an important and exemplary contribution to the emerging popular literature of homosexuality" (Summers 57). Vidal narrated how he was treated by the press after the publication of the novel as follows:

> I remember I read it [*The City and The Pillar*] through once before it was sent to the printer, and I thought that if I ever read again I'd never publish it . . . so I sent back a hardly-corrected proof. The reviews, what few there were, began and I discovered what happens in America if you tamper with the fragile—people avert their eyes, and go on talking. Half my former admirers did not review it at all. *The New York Times* refused to advertise it—and when the publishers took the matter directly to Mr. Sulzberger, he decided to uphold his censor. Of the reviews received, a few were thoughtful and lengthy, most quite bad. Two words popped up to haunt that book, and all my writing ever since: "clinical" and "sterile." "Clinical" is used whenever one writes of relationships which are not familiar—I dare say that if the story had dealt with a boy and a girl instead of two boys the book would have been characterized as "lyrical." "Sterile" is an even deadlier curse upon the house, and comes from a dark syllogism in the American *zeitgeist*: the homosexual act does not produce children and therefore is sterile . . . . (Stanton and Vidal 90-91)

Vidal was as much a dissenting voice in his political stance as in his sexual acts and discourses. He criticized American politics in a bitter way, and for this reason, he received unfavorable coverage. In a 1988 interview by Jon Wiener, Vidal explained that he was criticized by *Time* magazine because of his opinions about American politics: "*Time* magazine did a raging attack on me—saying that one of the things that made me such an evil figure was that I used that phrase, 'the American Empire'" ("The Scholar Squirrels and the National Security Scare: An Interview with Gora Vidal" 101). Likewise, in a 1974 interview by Gerald Clarke, Vidal talked about the reasons for his exclusion from the academia and the press in a nutshell as follows:

> Writers are the only people who are reviewed by people of their kind. And their own kind can often be reasonably generous—*if* you stay in your category. I don't. I do many different things rather better than most people do one thing. And envy is the central fact of American life. Then, of course, I am the enemy to so many. I have attacked both Nixon and the Kennedys—as well as the American Empire. I've also made the case that American literature has been second-rate from the beginning. This caused distress in book-chat land. They *knew* I was wrong, but since they don't read foreign or old books, they were forced to write things like "Vidal thinks Victor Hugo is better than Faulkner." Well, Hugo *is* better than Faulkner, but to the residents of book-chat land Hugo is just a man with a funny name who wrote *Les Misérables*, a movie on the late show. Finally, I am proud to say that I am most disliked because for twenty-six years I have been in open rebellion against the heterosexual dictatorship in the United States. Fortunately, I have lived long enough to see the dictatorship start to collapse. I now hope to live long to see a sexual democracy in America. I deserve at least a statue in Dupont Circle—along with Dr. Kingsey." ("The Art of Fiction L: Gore Vidal" 43-44, original emphasis)

Due to his critical perspective, Vidal has been considered to be cynical. Yet he claimed that he was realistic, and explained his realism in a unique manner:

> I'm realistic. Come to me and show me a small cancer and I'll tell you you've got a small cancer that should be cut out. That's realism but in America it's called cynicism. You're supposed to say, ah, you've got a little beauty blemish here and I have some marvelous Max Factor that will hide it. That's the American way of handling things. Anyway, I'm a diagnostician, not a cosmetician. (Stanton and Vidal 39)

According to Dennis Altman, the fact that Vidal lived abroad so many years (Vidal lived in Italy from 1963 to 2003) gave him "a particular perspective to comment on American developments, a perspective sometimes more respected abroad" (16). By drawing attention to Vidal's popularity abroad,[3] Altman claims that "Perhaps non-Americans see as realism what Americans tend to denounce as a cynical anti-Americanism" (16). Yet, despite his controversial stance and discourses, Vidal gained certain popularity and respect in American universities after the 1990s as indicated in the list of the dissertations and theses in the endnotes.

This study concentrates on Vidal's series of novels known as *The American Chronicle* or *Narratives of Empire*, which are chronologically published as follows: *Washington, D.C.* (1967), *Burr* (1973), *1876* (1976), *Lincoln* (1984), *Empire* (1987), *Hollywood* (1990) and *The Golden Age* (2000).[*] Each of these novels focuses on a specific period or important historical figures in American history. These works, which are the re-written versions of official American history, question the construction of the past as history as well as the significant historical figures as legends. Vidal imagines an alternative account for the official American history by questioning historical knowledge. He is very much aware of the constructed nature of history and is skeptical of official versions of history. His opinions about history are as follows: "In effect, the press invents us all. And the later biographer or historian can only select, from the mass of crude fictions and part-truths, those 'facts' that his contemporaries are willing to agree upon" ("The Agreed-Upon Facts" 139). According to Vidal, it is a "delusion" to believe that "there is a final Truth" ("The Agreed-Upon Facts" 141), and history is not fixed, or in other words, the interpretations of the past change from time to time. He claims, "All we have is a mass of more or less agreed-upon facts . . . and each generation tends to rearrange those facts according to what the times require" ("The Agreed-Upon Facts" 142). Vidal is particularly "skeptical of official versions" of history because, as he remarks in an interview by Charles McGrath entitled "Truer Than History" published in *The New York Times Book Review*, "The official narrator always has one story to tell and, often, a story to suppress" (15). In the same interview, Vidal

[*] According to the chronological order in which the events take place in the *Narratives of Empire*, the novels should be cited as follows: *Burr*, *Lincoln*, *1876*, *Empire*, *Hollywood*, *Washington, D.C.*, and *The Golden Age*.

claims, “To look for what is not told is the adventure” (15). Vidal’s perspective of history is dominant in his *Narratives of Empire* where he looks for untold stories.

Although Vidal’s novels in the *Narratives of Empire* series are labeled as historical novels by critics, with the exception of *Lincoln*, these texts can be evaluated as historiographic metafictions because they problematize the writing of history and question American history as a grand narrative along with the idea of the republic, democracy, and legendary historical figures in American life. Considering the definition of the historical novel, labeling Vidal’s *Narratives of Empire* as historical novels may mean to ignore Vidal’s critical, political, and satirical perspective towards American history. Unlike historical novels, which are generally considered to be escapist and nostalgic recounts, Vidal’s chronicle is disturbing and critical narratives, which underline the constructed nature of history. Examining these novels under the genre of historiographic metafiction is more suitable since the novels question the earlier historical accounts. In this respect, this dissertation also concentrates on the junctions and the differences between the historical novel and historiographic metafiction in relation to the changing perspectives of history writing.

As the argument above implies, this study requires a historical survey about the comprehension of history because the changes in the conceptualization of history influence the approaches to literary works such as the historical novel and historiographic metafiction, which focus on history as their subject matters. Thus, Chapter 1 is principally a survey, but, like any other survey, it is not exhaustive or comprehensive. It covers the understandings of history as rhetoric, science, discourse, and a literary artifact from Ancient times to the postmodern period. Chapter 1 also provides a theoretical background in which certain concepts in relation to history and literature are explored in order to explain the relationship between history and literature. Some of the key concepts discussed in this chapter are knowledge, the poststructuralist understanding of language, discourse, text, textuality, and context. The first part of this chapter is allotted to these concepts because the understanding of knowledge and language, which changes throughout the ages, gives shape to the perception of history and literature. The second part of Chapter 1 focuses on the distinctive features of the

historical novel and historiographic metafiction. Despite the differences between the historical novel and historiographic metafiction, the boundaries between them are sometimes blurred. Thus, this study also surveys the developments of the historical novel and historiographic metafiction in order to differentiate one from the other and to strengthen the main argument of the dissertation. In line with the understanding of history, this section also exhibits how the perception of history influences the practice of the literary works which treat history as their subject matters.

Chapter 2 analyzes Gore Vidal's novels within the framework of historiographic metafiction and applies the framework to the novels. Four of Vidal's novels, *Burr*, *1876*, *Empire*, and *Hollywood* are evaluated in this dissertation, and, in order to follow the logical line of the historical events, the novels are examined in the chronological order of the events that take place in the *Narratives of Empire*. The determining factor in the preference of the first two novels arises from their forms. *Burr* is a mixture of a memoir and a diary, a traditional form of the autobiography genre, and *1876* is a fictional journal. Although autobiography, biography, and journal entries are highly subjective, as will be argued further, they have been credited genres in historiography. By deliberately using these forms in his novels, Vidal emphasizes the subjective and constructed nature of history. The other two novels, *Empire* and *Hollywood*, are analyzed later because they chronologically follow the previous novels and problematize history writing by primarily questioning different media channels, such as newspapers and movies, as agents that interfere in and manipulate history.

Of the novels, *Lincoln* will not be analyzed for two reasons: Firstly, granted that it is a historical novel as suggested by the critics, the analysis of this novel will not contribute to the argument of this dissertation. Second, this novel is the most loosely connected one to the series because throughout the 657 pages of the novel, the Schuyler family, which provides the basic connection among the seven novels in the series, only appears at the very last pages of *Lincoln*. Thus, the Schuyler family's appearance at the end of the novel seems to be for the sake of integrating *Lincoln* into the *Narratives*. Actually, skipping *Lincoln* will provide a more comprehensible connection between *Burr* and *1876*, for, at the end of *Burr*, Charles Schuyler is abroad to fulfill his diplomatic duties

(the year is 1840), and at the very beginning of *1876*, he has just returned to America after thirty five years (the year is 1875).

The novels *Washington, D.C.* and *The Golden Age* revolve around the same themes with the novels analyzed in the dissertation. In order to avoid repetition, these novels are not examined in detail; however, they will be briefly referred to in the Conclusion. Vidal rewrote the historical period recounted in *Washington, D.C.* in *The Golden Age*. *Washington, D.C.* deals with the era between 1937 and the mid-1950s and *The Golden Age* narrates the events between 1939 and 2000. In *The Golden Age,* Vidal is concerned with expanding the time period into 2000. Technically, this act of re-writing indicates the constructed nature of history. That is, it is perfectly possible to textualize the same period in different ways. Hence, commenting on these two novels together draws attention to the act of re-writing in relation to the discussions in the dissertation. Besides, it provides a meaningful closure to the textual analysis on the ground that *The Golden Age* is the novel that concludes the series.

Chapter 3 concludes this study. It briefly summarizes the arguments made throughout the previous chapters. It also provides a final thought about the relationship between history and literature. Additionally, Chapter 3 presents a brief evaluation of *Washington, D.C.* and *The Golden Age* by intending to note some thoughts for further research. Lastly, it supplies a concluding remark on Gore Vidal's *Narratives of Empire* within the framework of historiographic metafiction, underlining the necessity of this analysis in the assessment of Vidal's works.

As there is relatively little critical material concerning Vidal and his works, left almost untouched by academe, it is hoped that this dissertation will contribute to the criticism of Vidal's works. Since this study examines Vidal's novels in the *Narratives of Empire* as historiographic metafictions rather than historical novels, hopefully further researches concerning Vidal's *Narratives of Empire* will benefit from this dissertation. The accumulation of the critical materials about the historical novel and historiographic metafiction along with the materials discussing the changes in history writing will also be helpful in related studies.

CHAPTER 1

1.1. PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS HISTORIOGRAPHY

This section examines particularly the approaches to historiography so as to give a historical perspective about the conceptualization of history. It will also present an insight to comprehend the mutual relationship between history and literature: all the approaches to history influence literary historical writing; in return, the conceptualization of language and knowledge has a great effect over both history writing and literary historical writing.

1.1.1. History as Rhetoric

In *Poetics*, Aristotle (384-322 BC) talks about the function of the historian and the poet. According to him, the historian "tells of what has happened" (43) while the poet tells of "things that might happen," and Aristotle claims that "For this reason poetry is something more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history; for while poetry is concerned with universal truths, history treats of particular facts" (43-44). The nuance between the telling of what has happened and the telling of what might happen is related to the tasks of the historian and the poet. As Simon Malpas suggests, the historian's mission is to "chart particular 'facts' and events without drawing more general conclusions about their meanings and connections" by becoming a "mere chronicler who records what has happened without passing judgement" (81). The poet, on the other hand, "deals with the possibilities of what might happen and is concerned with 'universal truths' of human nature" (Malpas 81). For Aristotle, poetic truth ornamented with rhetoric, in other words fiction which has the possibility of turning into a universal truth, is superior to historical truth, because historiography, lacking the rhetorical implications of poetry or of literature, is merely able to present individual truths.

Although Aristotle separated history from literature, Roman political leader and orator Cicero (106-43 BC), who described history as a "demanding *opus oratorium*" (Bermann

16), recognized the rhetorical suggestions in the historical writing. Similarly, Roman rhetorician Quintilian (ca 35-ca 100) considered history as a form of epic. According to Quintilian, as Lionel Gossman notes, “Of all prose forms, it [history] is the closest to poetry—a kind of prose poem” in the sense that the historian’s “object is not to demonstrate or argue or persuade, but to narrate and to memorialize” by employing “unfamiliar expressions and bold figures that would be out of place and ineffective in forensic rhetoric” (227). Yet the idea that history, too, can talk about what is universal was fully accepted after St. Augustine (354-430), who “in his *De civitate Dei* first positioned the particulars of history within a Christian providential scheme. Once rhetoric was accepted as an art affecting all writing and history could claim as much as poetry to be a locus of universal truth, the stage was set for the active assimilation—its critics inevitably would say confusion—of history and poetry” (Bermann 16). With this perspective, history and literature gained equal status as rhetorical devices.

History as rhetoric was granted throughout the Renaissance as well. As Lionel Gossman states, “Renaissance reflection on historiography conformed, as one would expect, to the precepts of the ancients. History writing was viewed as an art of presentation and argument rather than a scientific inquiry, and its problems belonged therefore to rhetoric rather than to epistemology” (228). Likewise, throughout the Enlightenment except for its final phase, history “was always distinguishable from ‘mere’ scholarship and antiquarianism, and the ground of the distinction was in large measure that the historian was a writer, whereas the scholar and the antiquarian were not” (Gossman 228). Hence, historiography was considered as a branch of rhetoric and its fictive elements were embraced. “Although eighteenth-century critics distinguished rigidly (and not always with adequate philosophical justification) between ‘fact’ and ‘fancy,’ they did not on the whole view historiography as a representation of the facts unalloyed by elements of fancy” (White, “The Fictions of Factual Representation” 24). In this period, critics believed that it was natural to use fictive techniques in historiography in order to represent real events. From this perspective, literature and history merged and there was a mutual relationship between the two genres. While historians used fictive and rhetorical elements in historical accounts, novelists, such as Daniel Defoe and Henry Fielding, imitated historical writing in their novels. Even in the early years of the

nineteenth century, this ambivalent relationship continued. In 1814, Sir Walter Scott published *Waverley*, which has been considered as the first modern historical novel. In his novels, history was "based on detailed description, local color, and exciting plot" (Nünning 549), and this style was imitated by historians. In this period, both historians and novelists made use of Scott's novels as models for their own writings by "combining novelistic and historical techniques" (Nünning 549). This period coincided with the aftermath of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars where the Romantic historiography fostered the nationalist aspirations. As Gossman notes, the major aim of the historian was to "inspire the entire nation" by formulating "their own political opinions" (167) without separating literary and scholarly aspects of historiography.

Likewise, Michael Bentley maintains in *Modern Historiography: An Introduction* that "Romantic historiography took its focus and its audience in resistance to the cold and clinical perspectives associated with rationalism" (25-26), which will be discussed in relation to the conceptualization of history as science. Romantic historians, such as Thomas Babington Macaulay and Thomas Carlyle, "chose to make history learn from literature and to function in the same way" (Bentley 26). For the romantics, "The vehicle of romantic history was narrative; but it asked for imagination beyond the putting events in chronological order along the lines that the eighteenth century had so frequently thought adequate" (Bentley 28). Hence, romantic historians made use of narrative and poetic truth to provide more vivid and credible historical accounts.

1.1.2. History as Science

A rigid separation started to occur between history and literature in the final phase of the Enlightenment, approximately between 1770 and 1830, particularly in the nineteenth century. In order to understand the nature of this conflict and the postmodernist perspective of history, which is the base of the argument in this study, it is relevant to survey the perception of knowledge throughout the ages because it directly influences the understanding of both history writing and literary productions. As historian Callum G. Brown suggests in *Postmodernism for Historians*, it is possible to divide world history into three major periods according to the perception of knowledge:

The pre-modern world before c. 1600, the Enlightenment—which can be separated into different periods as the early Enlightenment from c. 1650 to 1770 and the later Enlightenment from c. 1770 to c. 1830—and modernity from about 1800 to about 1960 (12-13). Postmodern ideas from the 1960s onward drastically change the perceptions of both language and knowledge. All periods interpret knowledge differently and approach historiography accordingly. The pre-modern world accepted knowledge as something "divine, God-given," privileged to "God and to monarchs" as a result of "feudal and Christian hierarchies" (Brown 12-13). Thus, it is fair to say that how knowledge is gathered was not the issue in this period. However, the Enlightenment promoted a "God-free science based on observation, experimentation and inductive reasoning" (Brown 14) and fostered the idea that science and learning should be "devoted to the discovery of reality" (Brown 15) through reason and rationality. Throughout the Enlightenment, reason was applied to science, philosophy, political science, and history, and how knowledge is acquired became an important issue.

Rationality, which is at the core of the Enlightenment, becomes the main reason behind conceptualizing history and literature as separate fields of study. By definition, rationality, as Brown notes, means "discovering reality (or the truth)—then applying reason to derive conclusions and further new thoughts from that knowledge" (13). In *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* as historian Alun Munslow states, rationality is based on empiricism, which is "knowledge acquisition through the use of the senses as we observe and experience life, or through statements or arguments demonstrated to be true" (80). Empiricism takes for granted "the corollary of the objective observation of the reality to be discovered 'out there'" (Munslow, *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* 81). It also fosters the idea of positivism, which "assumes a uniformity in scientific method," and "allows for the analytical study of human behaviour—a science of society—by observers who stand outside that which is being observed" (Munslow, *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* 187). As Munslow clearly states, positivism promotes the belief in "the facticity of the past: historical **evidence** can be discovered, evaluated and objectively constituted as **facts**. Beyond the simple level of events . . . positivism spurs some historians to seek out the infrastructural laws that guide, constrain and/or determine human society and its

progress" (*The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* 187, original emphasis). According to Enlightenment rationality, history was crucial because it offered "the empirical evidence from the past for the origins of things under investigation" and was capable of illustrating both "the centrality of the notion of progress—of the upward movement of mankind from primitive states to civilized states, and the belief that the present state was the best that there had ever been" (Brown 14-15). Thus, in a sense, history turned out to be "the record of progress and human perfectibility" (Munslow, *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* 85). Munslow states that empiricism supposes

> what we as historians can know about the past is what it tells us through the available **evidence**. This means we must observe the evidence of our senses without passion or self-interest, without imposition or question-begging. The past is, therefore, a "given" and historians discover its meaning through the priority of sense over intellect, content before form. (*The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* 81, original emphasis)

Hence, the Enlightenment, which cultivated "**positivism**, experimentation in science, and the close observation of natural phenomena with reason and rationality promoting the knowing subject" (Munslow, *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* 84, original emphasis), shaped history as a scientific discipline distinct from literature.

Accordingly, in this period, historians tended to separate fact from fiction by identifying fact with truth and fiction with the opposite of truth. One of the leading figures in providing a scientific perspective to historiography was the Prussian historian Leopold von Ranke, who, as Hayden White states, was "enchanted with the pictures" in Sir Water Scott's novels of romance dealing with "the Age of Chivalry" (*Metahistory* 163). Scott's novels urged Ranke to know more about the Middle Ages and he examined the sources related to that area. However, Ranke realized that "Scott's pictures were largely products of fancy" and "the actual life of the Middle Ages was more fascinating than any novelistic account of it could be" (White, *Metahistory* 163). What Ranke says in the Preface of *History of England, Principally in the Seventeenth Century* proves his indulgence in facts. Ranke defines a proper historical narrative as that "which shall comprehend all epochs, be true to facts and, while resting on thorough research, yet to

be attractive to the reader" (v). Ranke puts emphasis on facts and research to write realistic historiography. As Hayden White notes,

> Ranke had discovered that truth was stranger than fiction and infinitely more satisfying to him. He resolved, therefore, to limit himself in the future to the representation of only those facts that were attested by documentary evidence, to suppress the "Romantic" impulses in his own sentimental nature, and to write history in such a way as to relate only what had actually happened in the past. This repudiation of Romanticism was the basis of Ranke's brand of realistic historiography, a brand which, since Meinecke's popularization of the term, has come to be called "historism" and which still serves as the model of what an appropriately realistic and professionally responsible historiography ought to aspire to. (*Metahistory* 163-64)

As Hayden White claims, Ranke "rejected anything that prevented the historian from seeing the historical field in its immediacy, its particularity, and its vividness" and Ranke's understanding of realistic historical method was different from the understanding of realism in Romantic, Positivist and Idealistic philosophy of his own time" (*Metahistory* 164). Hayden White calls Ranke's concept of realism "doctrinal realism" because it "takes realism to be a point of view which is derived from no specific preconceptions about the nature of the world and its processes, but which presumes that reality can be known 'realistically' by a conscious and consistent repudiation of the forms in which *modern* art, science, and philosophy appear" (*Metahistory* 164, original emphasis). Ranke's historical realism allowed historiography to gain a scientific perspective and caused a rift between history and literature.

In line with these changes in the nineteenth century, history claimed the fact, the truth, the actual, or the empirical reality, while literature represented "'the possible' or only 'imaginable'" (White, "The Fictions of Factual Representation" 25). In this sense, while history emerged as an academic discipline to discover the truth (or reality), literature, as opposed to what Aristotle said, was considered "as a hindrance to the understanding of reality rather than as a way of apprehending it" (White, "The Fictions of Factual Representation" 25). Historians of this period tried to eliminate each and every implication of fiction "to eschew the techniques of the poet and orator" (White, "The Fictions of Factual Representation" 25). For historians, what historiography asserts as true statements about the past "can be checked against documentary evidence, whereas

novels can claim to neither verifiability nor truth" (Nünning 548). Historians insisted that if the historian escapes "ideology" and becomes "true to facts" (White, "The Fictions of Factual Representation" 27), historiography can be objective in recording the past.

Modernity, approximately from 1800 to 1960, is based on the seventeenth and the eighteenth-century Enlightenment rationality, and its dominant ideology is that "solutions are always available to the rational, technologically educated, and realist human mind" (Munslow, *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* 163). The distinctive principle of modernism is that "there is always a way to find out the truth" (Munslow, *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* 164). According to the modernist empiricist historical method, this truth comes from the archival raw data and its meaning is "offered as interpretation in the form of a story related explicitly, impersonally, transparently, and without resort to any of the devices used by writers of literary narratives, viz., imagery or figurative language" (Munslow, *Deconstructing History* 10). This understanding ignores the style or accepts it as "a minor problem of presentation" (Munslow, *Deconstructing History* 10). According to modernist or "proper history," reality or the content of the past "determines the form of history in the shape of the historical **narrative**" (Munslow, *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* 1, original emphasis). In other words, the content is superior to the form, which is the very idea of the Enlightenment historiography. Scottish philosopher and historian Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), as Munslow notes, wrote an entry in the Second Edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in 1780 and, in this entry, he emphasized the role of the historian in organizing his knowledge "conceptually before (re-)presenting it as history" (*The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* 2). The process of conceptually organizing the past is called "the past-as-history" by Munslow (*The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* 2), and the term the past-as-history underlines the distinction between the past and history. This distinction points to the paradox of the modernist history: "the existence of the objective yet engaged historian" (*The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* 2). Namely, history is under the control of the historian because of the need of conceptualization. Modernism, inspired by the Enlightenment where the eighteenth-century bourgeois liberal humanism "places the

rational, purposive and undivided thinking self at the center of all things" and where the "I" is assumed to be "'reality' or 'the evidence'" (Munslow, *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* 2), engages in this contradiction as well. Modernist thinking believes that "the centered knowing subject, as the originator of and authority for knowledge, can still be capable of separating him ('I') or itself (evidence) from the process of knowledge creation" (Munslow, *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* 2-3). Thus, this approach grants the idea that an empiricist and honest historian is able to give the objective and true account of the past. As Munslow emphasizes, "Ontologically modernist history holds that we can know, through the universal-centered knowing subject, the reality of the past-as-history. This translates in turn into the epistemology of empiricism, positivism and inference. This is the modernist history's epistemological turn" (*The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* 4).

Munslow lists the four principles of modernist or "proper" historical writing as follows:

> First, that there is a past reality that is intrinsically knowable by the knowing subject through the discovery of its structural principal; second, historical truth is found in the referential correspondence of the historians' facts to that structural reality, as derived through the conceptual procedure of inference; third, language is up to the job of written representation, and fourth, from these prior beliefs one absolutely basic law of human behaviour becomes evident: by knowing things about the real past we can reasonably conclude, as liberal humanists, that individuals act rationally and possess purposive agent intentionality. (*The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* 4)

To put it simply, it is possible to categorize these principles as a knowable past reality, the historian's role to figure out this reality, the role of the language to reflect the reality, and rational and purposive human being. The realist tradition in historiography, which actually separates history from literature, influences the fictional writing as well: Naturally enough, a realist novel intends to dwell on the reality of life, has almost always a god-like narrator, corresponding to the historian, to recount all of the events (or reality of the novelistic world), takes for granted that language is able to reflect reality, and gives the idea that all the actions of the characters have a reasonable cause or purpose. This tendency in literature allows literature to be considered as a serious genre. Yet the access to past reality, the nature of reality, the role of language and the

position of the historian are questioned in the postmodern period when critics start to consider history as discourse.

1.1.3. History as Discourse

After the 1960s, critics begin to question the distinction, inherited from the nineteenth century, between history and fiction. Poststructuralism, which leads to the postmodern understanding of history, influences the perspectives towards historiography and the relationship between history and literature. The relationship that has been continuously questioned for almost two thousand years in one way or another acquires a radical outlook: history's claim to truth as well as access to the objective knowledge of the past is questioned. The philosophers of history, such as Hayden White, Frank Ankersmit, Dominick LaCapra, and Louis Montrose, suggest that history, like fiction, is constructed through language, and it is a result of a writing activity. In other words, they emphasize the textuality of history. Identifying history as a linguistic product is often referred to as "the linguistic turn" in the field of history which is obviously affected by the poststructuralist understanding of language. Before dealing with the perception of knowledge in the postmodern period, the poststructuralist perception of language should be examined since the linguistic conceptions in the latter half of the twentieth century contribute to the understanding of the text.

As Raman Selden and Peter Widdowson states, "[a]t some point in the late 1960s, structuralism gave birth to 'poststructuralism'" (125), which is why it is pertinent to examine the structuralist conception of language developed by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure before poststructuralism. Within the framework of structuralism, language is evaluated as a signification system where words are accepted as signs "which are made up of two parts (like two sides of a sheet of paper): a mark, either written or spoken, called a 'signifier', and a concept (what is 'thought' when the mark is made), called a 'signified'" (Selden and Widdowson 104). This system excludes the referent, which is the thing in the world. In his seminal work *Course in General Linguistic*, published posthumously in 1915, Saussure claims that "*the sign is arbitrary*" (Saussure

67, original emphasis) since there is no necessary connection between the words and their referents (Rice and Waugh 6). For Saussure, sign is not referential, but differential:

> [*i*]*n the language itself, there are only differences*. Even more important than that is the fact that, although in general a difference presupposes positive terms between which the difference holds, in a language there are only differences, *and no positive terms*. Whether we take the signification or the signal, the language includes neither ideas nor sounds existing prior to the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonetic differences arising out of that system. (118, original emphasis)

This system is based on binary oppositions where the meaning of a sign depends on its difference from other signs. A sign gains its meaning only when it is compared to other signs.

Although Jacques Derrida, the leading figure of poststructuralism, is of the same opinion with Saussure about the differential relations between signs, he disowns Saussure's view about the binary oppositions in the system of language. In *Of Grammatology*, Jacques Derrida first questions phonocentrism and logocentrism in Western philosophy. Phonocentrism gives credit to the presence of the speaker to fix the meaning, and speech is privileged over writing because, in writing, there is no entity to speak or fix the meaning. Derrida relates phonocentrism to logocentrism, which is "the belief that the first and the last things are the Logos, the Word, the Divine Mind, the infinite understanding of God, an infinitely creative subjectivity, and closer to our times, the self-presence of full self-consciousness" (Spivak Ixviii). He deconstructs the binary opposition between speech and writing and maintains that there is no difference between speech and writing, for speech is "structured as writing" and "there is 'writing in speech'" or "What is written is read as speech or the surrogate of speech" (Spivak Ixx).

In Derrida's opinion, logocentrism, "the ascendancy of the voice" (Munslow, *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* 74) as in the case of phonocentrism, refers to a center, authority or determination:

> The notion of the sign . . . remains within the heritage of that logocentrism which is also phonocentrism: absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and the ideality of meaning. . . . We already have a foreboding that phonocentrism merges with the historical determination of the meaning of being in general as *presence*, with all the sub-determinations which depend on this general form and which organize within it their system and their historical sequence (presence of the thing to the sight as *eidos*, presence as substance/essence/existence [*ousia*], temporal presence as point [*stigmè*] of the now or of the moment [*nun*], the self-presence of the cogito, consciousness, subjectivity, the co-presence of the other and of the self, intersubjectivity as the intentional phenomenon of the ego, and so forth). Logocentrism would thus support the determination of the being of the entity as presence. (*Of Grammatology* 11-12, original emphasis)

Thus, in this system, which desires hierarchized positions, meaning is understood as fixed or unchanging, and language is accepted as a neutral tool to reflect the outside world. However, Derrida asserts that meaning in a text is not absolute. First, he does not believe in the binary oppositions in the system of signs, hypothesized by Saussure, by demonstrating that the so-called binary oppositions exist within each other: as in the case of the reality/fiction opposition, the privileged party of the opposition, reality, gains meaning because of the secondary party, fiction, that the privileged one has in itself. If one side of the opposition is absent, the other will not gain any meaning. This approach called deconstruction undermines the traditional understanding of language, or logocentrism in Western philosophy.

Second, Derrida does not believe in fixing the meaning in a text because he "would not privilege a signifier into transcendence" (Spivak Ixx). As Derrida states, "[t]he notion of the sign always implies within itself the distinction between signifier and signified, even if, as Saussure argues, they are distinguished simply as the two faces of one and the same leaf" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 11). For Derrida, logocentrism is deceptive:

> the concept of writing—no longer indicating a particular, derivative, auxiliary form of language in general . . . no longer designating the exterior surface, the insubstantial double of a major signifier, *the signifier of the signifier*—is beginning to go beyond the extension of language. In all senses of the word, writing thus *comprehends* language. . . . [O]ne can already suspect that an origin whose structure can be expressed as "signifier of the signifier" conceals and erases itself in its own production. There the

> signified always already functions as a signifier. (*Of Grammatology* 6-7, original emphasis)

According to Derrida, language is not a transparent medium to reflect the outside world but the interplay of signifiers: there is no "transcendental signified" or "referent" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 158) to refer to a fixed, unchanging, ultimate meaning, and reality. In his article entitled "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," as Derrida claims, "[t]he absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the interplay of signification *ad infinitum*" (151, original emphasis), thus, meaning is not certain and a text can have more than one meaning. Hence, there is no closure in a text in terms of meaning. Playing with the French word *différence* meaning both "difference" and "deferment," Derrida, writing the word as *différance*, claims, "differance defers-differs [diffère]" (*Of Grammatology* 66). This word game signifies the idea that meaning is both differential due to the differential relations between signs and is also temporal because it is always deferred.[4] In this sense, "signs are in incessant play over their meaning tantalising and confusing" (Brown 95). Furthermore, Derrida states, "*there is nothing outside of the text*" (*Of Grammatology* 158, original emphasis) by suggesting the idea that meaning and reality are produced through the intertextual relations because a text, composed of signifiers of signifiers, excluding the real or referent, does not reflect reality.[5] Rather, the text refers to other texts.

In order to clarify Derrida's claim, the concepts of text and textuality should also be addressed. *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines text as "the wording or words of something written or printed" (846). Yet, in poststructuralist and postmodern perspectives, the concept of text is not simple, but a complicated phenomenon. According to the poststructuralist critic Roland Barthes, "the text is a tissue, a woven fabric" because it consists of "weave of signifiers" which "answers not to an interpretation . . . but to an explosion, a dissemination" ("From Work to Text" 159). That is, the text continues to be produced even after it has been written, for it works within language. Every reading will give different meanings to the text ("From Work to Text" 161). Like Derrida, Barthes, using the metaphor of "network" for the text, draws attention to the intertextuality among texts and claims that "any text is an intertext; other texts are present in it, at varying levels, in more or less recognizable forms: the

texts of the previous and surrounding culture" ("Theory of the Text" 39). Similar to Derrida and Barthes, in *Desire in Language*, Julia Kristeva considers the text as "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" (36). All of these thinkers point to a lack of reference to reality in a text and underline the intertextual relations among texts. As for the connotation of textuality, considering the features of the text, textuality, as Brown claims, is "the quality of the *non-real*. That is, it is composed of many signs, each of which is not a signified, and a signified that is not the object (the referent) but only a concept of it. A text excludes the 'real thing'" (94, original emphasis). The textuality of history, or the idea that history is constructed through language, challenges the orthodoxy of modernist history which assumes that it is possible to know and reflect past reality through historical narratives, which are in turn also accepted as texts.

After the 1960s, the perception of language influences the understanding of knowledge as well. Thus, the relationship between language and knowledge requires a close examination. Poststructuralism provides "the conception of language-in-use," which could be defined as "discourse" (Selden and Widdowson 127). That is, according to structuralists, "'subjects' are produced by linguistic structures which are 'always already' in place. A subject's utterances belong to the realm of *parole*, which is governed by *langue*, the true objects of structuralist analysis" (Selden and Widdowson 127, original emphasis). By this approach, structuralism "excludes all subjective processes by which individuals interact with others and with society" (Selden and Widdowson 127). However, poststructuralism assumes language as "an impersonal system . . . always articulated with other systems and especially with subjective processes" (Selden and Widdowson 127). This concept of language is called discourse.

One of the leading figures that assert the important place of discourse in poststructuralism is Michel Foucault, who relates discourse to power and knowledge. Foucault's claims about discourse in relation to power influence both the perception of knowledge and the representation of historical knowledge. In "The Order of Discourse," Foucault states that "discourse is power which is to be seized" (53) because discourse,

for Foucault, is a regulating principal or a medium to decide what are the criteria of "truth," who should speak as authority and where this kind of authoritative speech should be given (Selden and Widdowson 129). In other words, discourse is "the exercise of power" (Foucault, "The Order of Discourse" 54). Foucault's understanding of power is not the power of institutions or of leaders in the traditional sense. Rather, it "reaches into the every grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives" (Foucault, "Prison Talk" 39). In Foucault's opinion, power is in discourse, but it is difficult to identify this kind of power.

Foucault explains the relationship between power and knowledge in connection with discourse by elaborating the idea of a "will to know." Foucault relates the "will to know" to the "will to truth" by claiming that at the turn of the sixteenth century, a will to know, "anticipating its actual contents, sketched out schemas of possible, observable, measurable, classifiable objects"; it "imposed on the knowing subject, and in some sense prior to all experience, a certain position, a certain gaze and a certain function (to see rather than to read, to verify rather than to make commentaries on)," and it was "prescribed (but in a more general manner than by any specific instrument) by the technical level where knowledges had to be invested in order to be verifiable and useful" ("The Order of Discourse" 55). This establishes the idea of the "will to truth," which

> rests on an institutional support: it is both reinforced and renewed by whole strata of practices, such as pedagogy, of course; and the systems of books, publishing, libraries; learned societies in the past and laboratories now. But it is also renewed, no doubt more profoundly, by the way in which knowledge is put to work, valorized, distributed, and in a sense attributed, in a society. (Foucault, "The Order of Discourse" 55)

According to Foucault, this institutional support and distribution of knowledge puts pressure and "something like a power of constraint" over other discourses ("The Order of Discourse" 55) ranging from those which are said in daily life and disappear after they have been uttered to those which "give rise to a certain number of new speech-acts which take them up, transform them or speak of them" ("The Order of Discourse" 57)

over and over again. These latter discourses, such as religious, literary, and, to a certain extent, scientific texts, become permanent in cultural systems.

The relationship between power and knowledge operates within discursive formations, which could be defined as conceptual frameworks constructed by unwritten rules. In Foucault's words,

> [w]henever one can describe, between a number of statements, such as a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statements, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say, for the sake of convenience, that we are dealing with a *discursive formation*—thus avoiding words that are already overladen with conditions and consequences, and in any case inadequate to the task of designating such a dispersion, such as, "science," "ideology," "theory," or "domain of objectivity." The conditions to which the elements of this division (objects, mode of statement, concepts, thematic choices) are subjected we shall call the *rules of formation*. (*The Archeology of Knowledge* 41-42, original emphasis)

Discursive formations allow only some modes of thoughts in accordance with the power/knowledge relation in a given society. According to this perspective, it is possible that one might "speak the truth in the space of a wild exteriority, but one is 'in the true' only by obeying the rules of a discursive 'policing' which one has to reactivate in each of one's discourses" (Foucault, "The Order of Discourse" 61). In order to explain this claim, Foucault gives the example of Mendel who spoke the truth in the nineteenth century but was denied by his time. The reason for this is that Mendel was not

> "within the true" of the biological discourse of his time: it was not according to such rules that biological objects and concepts were formed. It needed a complete change of scale, the deployment of a whole new range of objects in biology for Mendel to enter into the true and for his propositions to appear (in a large measure) correct. ("The Order of Discourse" 61)

In this sense, it is fair to claim that the truth subjected to the discursive formations, or simply "ideology," is relative and, further, it might be fixed erroneously as Marxist

critic Louis Althusser maintains in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (294-304).

Foucault asserts that every discursive statement is discontinuous, and he associates the idea of discontinuity with history: “discontinuity is one of those great accidents that create cracks not only in the geology of history, but also in the simple fact of the statement” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 31). In this context, he examines the changing understandings in certain disciplines such as history, and claims that the traditional history of ideas has been changing because “attention has been turned . . . away from vast unities like ‘periods’ or ‘centuries’ to the phenomena of rupture, of discontinuity”(*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 4). He surveys the tasks of the traditional history and historian to explain how the idea of discontinuity and rupture appears in the conception of history. In the past, the traditional task of the historian is to work on documents, to decide whether they are sincere or not, to interpret them and their expressive values. According to Foucault, this approach

> pointed to one and the same end: the reconstitution, on the basis of what the documents say, and sometimes merely hint at, of the past from which they emanate and which has now disappeared far behind them; the document was always treated as the language of a voice since reduced to silence, its fragile, but possibly decipherable trace. (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 7)

Foucault asserts that, today, documents are evaluated from a different perspective. No longer does history attempt to interpret the document, “to decide whether it is telling the truth,” or to evaluate “its expressive value” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 7). Instead, it assumes the role “to work on it from within and to develop it: history now organises the document, divides it up, distributes it, orders it, arranges it in levels, establishes series, distinguishes between what is relevant and what is not, discovers elements, defines unities, describes relations” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 7). In this sense, Foucault emphasizes the change in the status of the document:

> The document, then, is no longer for history an inert material through which it tries to reconstitute what men have done or said, the events of which only the trace remains; history is now trying to define within the documentary material itself unities, totalities, series, relations. . . . history is the work

> expended on material documentation (books, texts, accounts, registers, acts, buildings, institutions, laws, techniques, objects, customs, etc.) that exists, in every time and place, in every society, either in a spontaneous or in a consciously organised form. The document is not the fortunate tool of a history that is primarily and fundamentally *memory*; history is one way in which a society recognises and develops a mass of documentation with which it is inextricably linked.
> To be brief, then, let us say that history, in its traditional form, undertook to "memorise" the *monuments* of the past, transform them into *documents*, and lend speech to those traces which, in themselves, are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say; in our time, history is that which transforms *documents* into *monuments*. In that area where, in the past, history deciphered the traces left by men, it now deploys a mass of elements that have to be grouped, made relevant, placed in relation to one another to form totalities. (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 7-8, original emphasis)

According to Foucault, it is this new approach to the document that provides the proliferation of discontinuities in the history of ideas. The traditional history "was concerned to define relations (of simple causality, of circular determination, of antagonism, of expression) between facts and dated events" by trying to define "the position of each element in relation to the other elements in the series" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 8). However, history is now trying to constitute series: "to define the elements proper to each series, to fix boundaries, to reveal its own specific type of relations, to formulate its laws, and, beyond this, to describe the relationships between different series, thus constituting series of series, or 'tables'" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 8). This kind of approach leads to "the individualization of different series, which are juxtaposed to one another, follow one another, overlap and intersect, without one being able to reduce them to a linear schema" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 9). This understanding contradicts a linear and continuous history:

> in place of the continuous chronology of reason, which was invariably traced back to some inaccessible origin, there have appeared scales that are sometimes very brief, distinct from one another, irreducible to a single law, scales that bear a type of history peculiar to each one, and which cannot be reduced to the general model of a consciousness, progress, and remembers. (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 9)

Finally, this understanding, which questions the notion of a total history, gives way to a general history. Foucault maintains that a total history attempts to explain all

phenomena within the framework of “the same central core”: a total history “seeks to reconstitute the overall form of a civilization, the principle material or spiritual—of a society, the significance common to all the phenomena of a period, the law that accounts for their cohesion—what is called metaphorically the ‘face’ of a period” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 10). In contrast to a total history, a general history “would deploy the space of a dispersion”: it seeks to

> determine what form of relation may be legitimately described between these different series; what vertical system they are capable of forming; what interlay of correlation and dominance exists between them; what may be the effect of shifts, different temporalities, and various rehandlings; in what distinct totalities certain elements may figure simultaneously; in short, not only what series, but also what “series of series”—or, in other words, what “tables” it is possible to draw up. (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* 11)

According to Foucault, the notion of discontinuity becomes very important in today’s historical thought because it is “the positive element that determines [history’s] object and validates its analysis” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 10).

All these discussions on discourse lead to the idea that it is not possible to reach the absolute truth of past reality. Additionally, since the speaking subject, the historian in this case, cannot escape the discursive formations, in other words ideology, history narrated by him/her will not possibly be objective. Rather, history as discourse can only be the instrument of the ones who have the power. While the poststructuralist understanding of language displays the impossibility of reflecting the truth about past reality, Foucault’s perception of discourse signifies the lack of both an objective historical narrative and an objective historian to narrate it. Thus, the poststructuralist perspective of language and discourse undermines the three principles of modernist history: a knowable past reality, the historian’s role to discover it, and the role of language to reflect past reality. Ironically, the fourth principle of modernist history, which is the individual acting “rationally” and having “purposive agent intentionality,” is granted by the discussion on discursive formations or ideology because the individual, the historian in this case, almost always, even if unconsciously, has intentions governed by the power/knowledge structures.

In relation to history and discourse, Roland Barthes' article entitled "Historical Discourse," published in 1967, complements Foucault's discussion on discourse. Barthes, who is often associated with Structuralism, asserts similar thoughts to Foucault's ideas, which are often associated with Poststructuralism. Barthes attacks the idea of an objective history by likening it to a schizophrenic situation. He argues that, in order to create the effect of objectivity, the historian first erases his/her imprints in the discourse by "systematically omitting any direct allusion to the originator of the text" ("Historical Discourse" 148). In Barthes' opinion, this is deceptive: "At the level of discourse, objectivity, or the absence of any clues to the narrator, turns out to be a particular form of fiction, the result of what might be called the referential illusion, where the historian tries to give the impression that the referent is speaking for itself" ("Historical Discourse" 149). That is to say, it is as if the history wrote itself. Later on, the historian goes to recount "what happened, not what didn't happen, or what might or might not have happened" (Barthes, "Historical Discourse" 151). According to Barthes, this can be compared to a "psychotic patient who is unable to give the negative transposition of a sentence" ("Historical Discourse" 151). For Barthes, objective discourse, in positivist history, is very much like schizophrenic discourse, not only because there is a historical narrative having claim to truth by rejecting or erasing the originator to take responsibility for it, but also because "there is a radical censorship of the utterance, in which negativity cannot be expressed (though it can be felt)" ("Historical Discourse" 151). Barthes claims that the so-called objective historical narrative operates through two terms: a referent, which is what happened in the past, and the signifier, which hides the signified, the meaning given by the historian to the narrative. The historian's account is covered up with the referent. To quote Barthes, "in 'objective' history, the 'reality' is always an unformulated meaning sheltering behind the apparent omnipotence of the referent" ("Historical Discourse" 154). According to Barthes, similar to Foucault, historical discourse is "a product of ideology, or rather of imagination" because this process almost always requires the historian to fill out the meaning of history ("Historical Discourse" 153). Not only does the historian collect mere facts but also he "connects" and "organizes" them "in such a way as to replace the vacuousness of the pure catalogue with positive meaning" (Barthes, "Historical Discourse" 153). Barthes argues that, by relating the signifiers, the historian creates

meanings out of meaningless series of facts. Hence, historical discourse is not capable of relating an objective past reality.

Jean-François Lyotard also examines the perception and the status of knowledge in relation to power in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, published in 1979. Yet, different from Foucault who argues for the dispersion of power, Lyotard talks about power in a more traditional way. He emphasizes the relationship between wealth, efficiency, and truth in particularly computerized societies. According to Lyotard, an equation between wealth, efficiency, and truth is already established in the eighteenth century where "whoever is wealthiest has the best chance of being right" (45). With the first industrial revolution at the end of the eighteenth century, knowledge is legitimized through the help of technology which gives the data of the most efficient input and output ratio. Lyotard claims that technical devices are less deceptive and less limited in discrimination than sense organs are, and that these devices

> follow a principle, and it is the principle of optimal performance: maximizing output (the information or modifications obtained) and minimizing input (the energy expended in the process). Technology is therefore a game pertaining not to the true, the just, or the beautiful, etc., but to efficiency: a technical "move" is "good" when it does better and/or expends less energy than another. (44)

As Lyotard notes, the way to gain the best results of the input/output equation is to invest technical devices, and the ones who have money to do this will have the best outcomes. Moreover, knowledge turns out to be a commodity and "loses its 'use-value'" (16). In other words, power structures, such as governments and/or companies, leave the "idealist and humanist narratives of legitimation in order to justify the new goal: in the discourse of today's financial backers of research, the only credible goal is power. Scientists, technicians, and instruments are purchased not to find truth, but to augment power" (Lyotard 46). The reason for this competition is that since performativity—the best input/output ratio—"increases the ability to produce proof, it also increases the ability to be right" (Lyotard 46). Thus, knowledge and truth are determined according to the ideology of the wealthiest and the most powerful structure, and there is no room to question them. According to Lyotard, this process is in conflict

with the idea of science and research: legitimation of knowledge by performativity creates a kind of "terror" (46) because it prevents the production of further ideas on which science is established.

Further, "since 'reality' is what provides the evidence used as proof in scientific argumentation" (Lyotard 47), the ones who provide the proof will master reality: "By reinforcing technology, one 'reinforces' reality, and one's chances of being just and right increase accordingly. Reciprocally, technology is reinforced all the more effectively if one has access to scientific knowledge and decision-making authority" (Lyotard 47). According to Lyotard, this explains the eventual relationship between legitimation and power. As Lyotard notes, "Power is not only good performativity, but also effective verification and good verdicts. It legitimates science and the law on the basis of their efficiency, and legitimates this efficiency on the basis of science and law" (47). Lyotard argues that this is how legitimation by performativity brings control over and totalization in knowledge in the computerized societies. In this sense, it is fair to claim that reality is created according to the will of the ones who have the power proportional to their wealth and technology.

For Lyotard, who defines the postmodern culture as "incredulity towards metanarratives" (xxiv) while describing modernity as the age of metanarrative[6] legitimation, the major problem is the legitimation of scientific knowledge in the postmodern world. Since metanarratives of the past such as History, with a capital H, have lost their credibility to legitimate knowledge in the postmodern age, and since legitimation by performativity produces terror, Lyotard suggests a legitimation by paralogy by basing his argument on Ludwig Wittgenstein's approach to language as a "set of games each possessing its own rules for constituting truth" (Munslow, *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* 151). Paralogy is a kind of "conversational move" through which the speakers "will generate ideas" (Lyotard 65). It means "dissension" (Lyotard 61) because it lets every speaker reveal his/her own ideas. Yet Lyotard notes that multiple ideas, or plurality of knowledge, do not mean confusion because paralogy is not a methodology without rules. The mechanism of paralogy will help to "avoid confusion" by requiring an agreement of present speakers (65). In

Lyotard's opinion, "any consensus" on the rules of these conversational moves "*must* be local" agreed on by the present speakers (66, original emphasis). Thus, knowledge can be legitimized by the local rules established by the present speakers of the conversation without having recourse to either metanarratives or performativity. Legitimation by paralogy is against universal and totalizing knowledge and narratives, and presents a pluralistic understanding of knowledge. According to Lyotard, the conversation, or

> discussion would never risk fixating in a position of minimax equilibrium because it had exhausted its stakes. For the stakes would be knowledge (or information, if you will), and the reserve of knowledge—language's reserve of possible utterances—is inexhaustible. This sketches the outline of a politics that would respect both the desire for justice and the desire for the unknown. (67)

In accordance with Lyotard's approach to knowledge in the postmodern age, History, once accepted as a metanarrative, gives way to the *petit récit* as in the case of dissension in paralogy. The *petit récit* is associated with the plurality of history as opposed to History assumed as totalizing knowledge or an all-encompassing grand story throughout the Enlightenment and modernity. The nature of reality in the postmodern age is under discussion, and modernist or proper history, which assumes that there is a knowable past reality accessible via a neutral historian, loses its credibility. In the postmodern age, the major questions that the historian is interested in are "Whose reality is it?" and "Is it possible to tell an objective narrative of the past?" Moreover, within the framework of the changes in the understanding of both language and knowledge, the metamorphosis of history from rhetoric to science and to discourse gradually closes the gap between history and literature: historical narratives can be considered as literary artifacts because they are products of language. In the following sub-section, the affiliation between historical narratives and literary texts will be explored via Hayden White's tropological theory.

1.1.4. History as Literary Artifact

Hayden White is the leading figure of the linguistic turn in historiography where the form of language the historian uses has a "determining effect on the meaning," which

the historian "'impose[s]' on the past-as-history" (Munslow, *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* 152). In *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect*, White argues that "every history is first and foremost a verbal artifact, a product of a special kind of language use" and, in this case, historical discourse "must be analyzed as a structure of language" (4). White points to the difference between historical and literary discourses by saying, "Literary discourse may differ from historical discourse by virtue of its primary referents, conceived as imaginary rather than real events" (*Figural Realism* 6). Yet he insists that "the two kinds of discourse are more similar than different since both operate language in such a way that any clear distinction between their discursive form and their interpretative content remains impossible" (*Figural Realism* 6). In order to depict the link between history and literature, in *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, White points to the narrative characteristic of history by internalizing Benedetto Croce's dictum: "Where there is no narrative, there is no history" (qtd. in White, *The Content of the Form* 28).[7] He defines three kinds of historical representations as the annals, the chronicle, and the history proper, and claims that the first two fails to "attain to full narrativity of the events which they treat" (*The Content of the Form* 4) because the annals include only a list of events in chronological order, lacking the narrative component. In other words, the annals "represent historical reality as if real events did not display the form of a story" (White, *The Content of the Form* 5). Likewise, the chronicle lacks narrativity; it

> aspires to narrativity, but tragically fails to achieve it. More specifically, the chronicle usually is marked by a failure to achieve narrative closure. It does not much conclude as simply terminate. It starts out to tell a story but breaks off *in medias res*, in the chronicler's own present; it leaves things unresolved, or rather, it leaves them unresolved in a storylike way. (*The Content of the Form* 5)

In other words, the chronicler represents historical reality "as if real events appeared to human consciousness in the form of unfinished stories" (White, *The Content of the Form* 5).

White, defining the narrative as the process of meaning production, claims that the narrative "serves to transform into a story a list of historical events that would otherwise

be only a chronicle. In order to effect this transformation, the events, the agents, and agencies represented in the chronicle must be encoded as story elements; that is, they must be characterized as the kinds of events, agents, and agencies" (*The Content of the Form* 43). According to White, in this way, the historical discourse diverts the reader's attention to the plot structures of the story types existing in that culture. White asserts that "When the reader recognizes the story being told in a historical narrative as a specific kind of story—for example, as an epic, romance, tragedy, comedy, or farce—he can be said to have comprehended the meaning produced by the discourse" (*The Content of the Form* 43). In White's opinion, this comprehension is "nothing other than the recognition of the form of the narrative" (*The Content of the Form* 43). White accepts this meaning production to be a kind of performance because any set of real events can be encoded or emplotted in multiple manners and several genres. He argues that "Since no given set or sequence of real events is intrinsically tragic, comic, farcical, and so on, but can be constructed as such only by the imposition of the structure of a given story type on the events, it is the choice of the story type and its imposition upon the events that endow them with meaning" (*The Content of the Form* 44). Here, different from the traditional historian who privileges the content of the historical narrative, White emphasizes the importance of the form resulted from the "*topoi* of literary plots" (White, *The Content of the Form* 44), by relating the historical discourse to literary one. He elaborates his claim as follows:

> In its origin, historical discourse differentiates itself from literary discourse by virtue of its subject matter ("real" rather than "imaginary" events) rather than its form. But form here is ambiguous, for it refers not only to the manifest appearances of historical discourses (their appearance as stories) but also to the systems of meaning production (the modes of emplotment) that historiography shared with literature and myth. (*The Content of the Form* 44)

Thus, White treats both the historical discourse and literary discourse in the same way. He analyzes the deep structures of the historical narratives in order to explicate the determining effect of language on the meaning. In other words, he emphasizes the form of the historical narrative as a determining effect through tropological theory. In his *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, first published in 1973, White defines the levels of conceptualization in the historical work as

chronicle, story, mode of emplotment, mode of argument, and mode of ideological implication. According to White, chronicles and stories stand for "processes of selection and arrangements of data from the *unprocessed historical record* in the interest of rendering that record more comprehensible to an *audience* of a particular kind" (*Metahistory* 5, original emphasis). First, historical events are organized into a chronicle according to chronological order and then the chronicle is structured as a story that has a beginning, middle, and end. The difference between the chronicle and historical stories is that historical stories contain the "sequences of events that lead from inaugurations to (provisional) terminations of social and cultural processes in a way that *chronicles* are not required to do": chronicles have "no *inaugurations*; they simply 'begin' when the chronicler starts recording events" (White, *Metahistory* 6, original emphasis). Additionally, chronicles have "no culminations or resolutions; they can go on indefinitely," while stories have "a discernible form (even when that form is an image of a state of chaos) which marks off the events that might appear in a comprehensive chronicle of the years covered in their unfoldings" (White, *Metahistory* 6).

At this point, White draws attention to the similarity between history and fiction, which is invention. Although it is assumed that the fiction writer invents his/her stories and the historian finds or uncovers his/hers in the past events, the nature of the historian's task, too, requires invention. That is, the same real event can be used as a different kind of element of many different historical stories, depending on the assigned role. As White states, "The death of the king may be a beginning, an ending, or simply a transitional event in three different stories. In the chronicle, this event is simply 'there' as an element of a series; it does not 'function' as a story element" (White, *Metahistory* 7). It is the historian who arranges the events in the chronicle "into a hierarchy of significance by assigning events different functions as story elements in such a way as to disclose the formal coherence of a whole set of events considered as a comprehensible process with a discernible beginning, middle, and end" (White, *Metahistory* 7).

In the processes of selection and arrangement, the historian has to consider the kinds of questions such as what happened, when, why, and how. As White claims, these questions "determine the narrative tactics the historian must use in the construction of

his story" (*Metahistory* 7). Answers given to these questions make the events a "*followable* story" (White, *Metahistory* 7, original emphasis). In addition to these questions, according to White, there are other sets of questions such as what does it all add up to? and what is the point of it all? These questions are related to the "structure of the *entire set of events* considered as a *completed* story and call for a synoptic judgment of the relationship between a given story and other stories that might be 'found,' 'identified,' or 'uncovered' in the chronicle" (*Metahistory* 7, original emphasis). In order to provide a meaning, the historian answers these questions by applying three types of explanations: Emplotment, argument, and ideological implication. White provides a chart so as to explain his argument.

Mode of Emplotment	Mode of Argument	Mode of Ideological Implication
Romantic	Formist	Anarchist
Tragic	Mechanistic	Radical
Comic	Organicist	Conservative
Satirical	Contextualist	Liberal

(White, *Metahistory* 29)

According to White, in order to narrate a historical event, the historian chooses a mode of emplotment within the first table, and combines it with a mode of argument and a mode of ideological implication. Naturally, the same narrative written through the different strategies is loaded with diverse meanings. To get a general idea as to what these modes are, it is useful to view them roughly. Emplotment is "the way by which a sequence of events fashioned into a story" (White, *Metahistory* 7), and there are four modes of emplotment, which are romance, tragedy, comedy, and satire. Romance stands for a "drama of the triumph of good over evil, of virtue over vice, of light over darkness, and of ultimate transcendence of man over the world in which he was imprisoned by the Fall" (White, *Metahistory* 9). A romance contains the triumph of the hero over evil. In contrast to romance, satire is a "drama dominated by the apprehension that man is ultimately a captive of the world rather than its master," and human beings are "always inadequate to the task of overcoming definitively the dark force of death, which is man's unremitting enemy" (White, *Metahistory* 9). In White's opinion, comedy and

tragedy are much more moderate compared to romance and satire. That is, both suggest "the possibility of at least partial liberation from the condition of the Fall" (White, *Metahistory* 9), but comedy and tragedy imply different approaches towards this partial liberation. Comedy provides hope that is "held out for the temporary triumph of man over his world by the prospect of occasional *reconciliations* of the forces at play in the social and natural worlds," and these reconciliations are "symbolized in the festive occasions which the Comic writer traditionally uses to terminate his dramatic accounts of change and transformation" (White, *Metahistory* 9, original emphasis). In comedy, the partial liberation of the man causes celebration. In tragedy, there is no celebration or festive occasion, but "the fall of the protagonist and the shaking of the world he inhabits which occur at the end of the Tragic play are not regarded as totally threatening to those who survive the agonic test" (White, *Metahistory* 9). In comedy, the world is pictured as "being purer, saner, and healthier as a result of the conflict among seemingly inalterably opposed elements in the world" (White, *Metahistory* 9), but, in the long run, these elements are able to gain harmony with one another. The reconciliations at the end of a tragedy are "much more somber; they are more in the nature of resignations of men to the conditions under which they must labor in the world" and, more importantly, these conditions are presented as "inalterable and eternal, and the implication is that man cannot change them but must work within them" (White, *Metahistory* 9). Thus, the protagonist learns to work within the limitations in the world. White, who examines the deep structures of the important historical narratives of the nineteenth century, claims that Jules Michelet wrote all of his histories in the romantic mode, Leopold von Ranke used the comic mode, Alexis de Tocqueville made use of the tragic mode, and Jacob Burckhardt employed satire.

While the mode of emplotment is interested in "what happened," the mode of argument is concerned with explaining "'the point of it all'" and "'what it all adds up to' in the end" (White, *Metahistory* 11). The mode of argument gives clues about the historian's attitude as to what history should be. According to White, there are four types of arguments to give answers to the questions above. The formist argument focuses on the "identification of the unique characteristics of objects inhabiting the historical field," and "the depiction of the variety, color, and vividness of the historical field is taken as

the central aim of the historian's work" (White, *Metahistory* 14). A formist argument is considered as incomplete unless it defines the class, generic, specific attributes of a given set of objects extracted from the historical field and labels "attesting to its particularity attached to it" (White, *Metahistory* 14). It is of utmost importance to identify, classify, and categorize the objects of the historical field. Yet, as White notes, "although a Formist explanatory strategy tends to be wide in scope—ample in the kinds of particulars it identifies as occupying the historical field—its generalizations about the processes discerned in the field will be inclined to lack conceptual 'precision'" (*Metahistory* 15). The formist argument can be found in the works of Johann Gottfried Herder, Thomas Carlyle, Jules Michelet, and of some Romantic historians such as Barthold Niebuhr, Theodor Mommsen, and George M. Trevelyan.

The organicist argument emphasizes the importance of the whole in the historical field over the individual entities. The organicist historian desires to see "individual entities as components of processes which aggregate into wholes that are greater than, or qualitatively different from, the sum of their parts" (White, *Metahistory* 15), and, thus, the organicist historian is much more interested in "characterizing the integrative process than in depicting its individual elements" (White, *Metahistory* 16). The organicist historian tends to concentrate on the "'principles' or 'ideas' that inform the individual processes discerned in the field and all the processes taken as a whole. These principles and ideas are seen as imagining or prefiguring the end toward which the process as a whole tends" (White, *Metahistory* 16). Compared to the formist argument, which is evaluated as "'dispersive' in the analytical operations it carried out on the data" (White, *Metahistory* 14), the organicist argument is "more 'integrative' and hence more reductive in their operations" (White, *Metahistory* 15). The organicist argument can be found in the works of Leopold von Ranke, of the nationalistic historians such as Heinrich von Sybel, Theodor Mommsen, Henrich von Treitschke, William Stubbs, and Frederic William Maitland, and of idealists in general and dialectical thinkers such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.

While the formalist argument is interested in classifying, labeling, and categorizing the individual elements in the historical field and the organicist argument concerns itself

with visualizing the whole by assuming the individual elements as components of the whole, the mechanistic argument pays attention to the "causal laws that determine the outcomes of processes discovered in the historical field" (White, *Metahistory* 17). The mechanistic historian assumes the "'acts' of the 'agents' inhabiting the historical field as manifestation of extrahistorical 'agencies' that have their origins in the 'scene' within which the 'action' depicted in the narrative unfolds" (White, *Metahistory* 17). The aim of the mechanistic argument is to discover the laws that rule the human activities and thus history. Compared to the formist argument, both the organicist and the mechanistic arguments are considered as "'reductive' of the variety and color of the individual entities in the historical field" (White, *Metahistory* 17). The mechanistic argument can be seen in the works of Henri Thomas Buckle, Hippolyte Taine, Karl Marx, and Alexis de Tocqueville.

The contextualist argument tries to figure out the "'functional' conception of the meaning or significance of events discerned in the historical field" (White, *Metahistory* 17). The aim is to discover the "thread" between the events within "'the context' of their occurrence" or, in other words, "Why they occurred as they did is to be explained by the relation of the specific relationships they bore to other events occurring in their circumambient historical space" (White, *Metahistory* 18). The contextualist historian chooses an event and tries to figure out the

> "threads" that link the event to be explained to different areas of the context. The threads are identified and traced outward, into circumambient natural and social space within which the event occurred, and both backward, in order to determine its "impact" and "influence" on subsequent events. This tracing operation ends at the point at which the "threads" either disappear into the "context" of some other "event" or "converge" to cause the occurrence of some new "event." (White, *Metahistory* 18)

Thus, the contextualist argument aims to reach the origins of the event and to explain those events through their relations to other events. The contextualist argument is a mixture of "the dispersive impulses behind Formism on the one hand and the integrative impulses behind Organicism on the other" (White, *Metahistory* 19). The contextualist argument can be found in the works of any historian, but White underlines particularly the name of Burckhardt within the framework of *Metahistory*. Of all these arguments,

academic historians give credit to the formist and contextualist models as the "main candidates for orthodoxy," while organicist and mechanistic tendencies are regarded as "unfortunate lapses from the proper forms that explanations in history may take" (White, *Metahistory* 19-20).

Other than the modes of emplotment and argument, White underlines the mode of ideological implication. White defines four types of ideological implications (anarchist, conservative, radical, and liberal), by basing his argument on the analysis of Karl Mannheim in *Ideology and Utopia*. According to White, the ideological dimensions of a historical account "reflect the ethical element in the historian's assumption of a particular position on the question of the nature of historical knowledge and the implications that can be drawn from the study of past events for the understanding of present ones" (*Metahistory* 22). In other words, ideology is an obvious factor in determining the historian's stand on life and his/her ideas on how present events are shaped by the past. Additionally, as White notes, ideology also means "a set of prescriptions for taking a position in the present world of social praxis and acting upon it" (*Metahistory* 22). Thus, ideology reflects the way people take position or act in the present: they intend "either to change the world or to maintain it in its current state" (White, *Metahistory* 22). According to White, these prescriptions are "attended by arguments that claim the authority of 'science' or 'realism'" (*Metahistory* 22).

White explains the mode of ideological implication referring to particularly two reference points: the approaches to social change and time orientation. Conservatives believe in the gradual change in society occurring slowly as the natural rhythm. They assume historical evolution as a "progressive elaboration of the institutional structure that *currently* prevails, which structure they regard as a 'utopia'—that is, the best form of society that men can 'realistically' hope for, or legitimately aspire to, for the time being" (White, *Metahistory* 25, original emphasis). According to liberals, social change occurs through "adjustments, or 'fine tunings,' of a mechanism" (White, *Metahistory* 24). Consequently, they believe in the "'social' rhythm of the parliamentary debate, or that of the educational process and electoral contests between parties committed to the observance of established laws of governance" (White, *Metahistory* 24). Unlike

conservatives, liberals assume a future where this utopia will be realized. Different from conservatives and liberals, both radicals and anarchists assume "cataclysmic transformations," but radicals are "more aware of the power needed to effect such transformations, more sensitive to the inertial pull of inherited institutions, and therefore more concerned with the provision of the means of *effecting* such changes than are the latter" (White, *Metahistory* 24-25, original emphasis). For radicals, utopia is "imminent," and is realized by the "provision of revolutionary means" in the present (White, *Metahistory* 25). On the other hand, anarchists believe that if the "legitimacy of the current social establishment," which is seen by them as a corrupt system, is destroyed "either by an act of will or by an act of consciousness," utopia can be achieved at any time (White, *Metahistory* 25).

Not only does the historian organize the historical events according to the modes of emplotments, arguments, and ideological implications, but also s/he uses a poetic language in narrating these events. According to White, the historian uses four types of tropes: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony. As White claims, tropes are "useful for understanding the operations by which the contents of experience which resist description in unambiguous prose representations can be prefiguratively grasped and prepared for conscious apprehension" (*Metahistory* 34). It is because tropes help to characterize objects "in different kinds of indirect, or figurative, discourse" (*Metahistory* 34). Metaphor stands for transfer, and is based on similarities and differences between phenomena through analogy or simile, as in the case of "my love, a rose." As White states, metaphor is representational, and can be used in formism. In metonymy, the name of a part of a thing substitutes the whole as in the word "sail" used for "ship," and metonymy is "reductive in a Mechanistic manner" (White, *Metahistory* 36). Through synecdoche, "which is regarded by some theorists as a form of Metonymy, a phenomenon can be characterized by using the part to symbolize some quality presumed to inhere in the totality, as in the expression 'He is all heart'" (White, *Metahistory* 34). Thus, synecdoche is integrative like organicism. As White points to, through irony, "entities can be characterized by way of negating on the figurative level what is positively affirmed on the literal level," and there are "the figures of the manifestly absurd expression (catachresis), such as 'blind mouths,' and of explicit

paradox (oxymoron), such as 'cold passion'" (*Metahistory* 34). In this sense, irony is negational. As White notes, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony are "kinds of Metaphor, but they differ from one another in the kinds of *reductions* and *integrations* they effect on the literal level of their meanings and by the kinds of illuminations they aim at on the figural level" (*Metahistory* 34, original emphasis). White finds metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche as naïve when compared to irony in that irony is dialectical because an ironic statement aims to "affirm tacitly the negative of what is on the literal level affirmed positively, or the reverse" (*Metahistory* 37). White clarifies his point as follows:

> It [ironic statement] presupposes that the reader or auditor already knows, or is capable of recognizing, the absurdity of the characterization of the thing designated in the Metaphor, Metonymy, or Synecdoche used to give form to it. Thus, the expression "He is all heart" becomes Ironic when uttered in a particular tone of voice or in a context in which the person designated manifestly does *not* possess the qualities attributed to him by the use of this Synecdoche. (*Metahistory* 37, original emphasis)

White's argument on historical narratives is closely linked to creative writing. White underlines the idea that the historian uses his/her imagination in selection and arrangements of the events while turning the historical events in chronicles into meaningful stories that have a beginning, a middle, and an end. He clarifies the eventual subjectivity of the historian through his discussions on the modes of emplotment, argument, and ideological implication the historian uses while writing his/her story. He also underlines the poetic characteristic of the historians' language in historical narratives. Thus, White identifies historical narratives with literary artifacts by pointing to their affiliations with literary works.

This approach, which is called linguistic turn in history, has attracted some negative criticism. For instance, in "History and Postmodernism," Lawrence Stone states that "My only objection is when they declare not that truth is unknowable, but that there is no reality out there which is anything but a subjective creation of the historian; in other words that it is language that creates meaning which in turn creates our image of the real" (259). According to Stone, this approach "destroys the difference between fact and fiction, and makes entirely nugatory the dirty and tedious archival work of the historian

to dig ‘facts’ out of texts. It is only at this extreme point that historians have any need to express anxiety” (259). In a similar vein, in “Telling It as You Like It: Postmodernist History and the Flight from Fact,” Gertrude Himmelfarb argues against the idea that the historical narrative is a text as follows:

> What the traditional historian sees as an event that actually occurred in the past, the postmodernist sees as a “text” that exist only in the present—a text to be parsed, glossed, construed, interpreted by the historian, much as a poem or novel is by the critic. And, like any literary text, the historical text is indeterminate and contradictory, paradoxical and ironic, so that it can be “textualized,” “contextualized,” “recontextualized,” and “intertexualized” at will—the text being little more than a pretext for the creative historian. (162)

Himmelfarb suggests that postmodernist philosophers of history refuse any realist notion of facts, by seeing “history (the past as well as the writing about the past) as inevitably ‘fictive’” (164). According to Himmelfarb, this assumption leads the historian to being imaginative and inventive instead of being accurate and factual. She believes that once the premises of traditional historiography are discredited, “the historian finds himself with a *tabula rasa* on which he may inscribe whatever interpretation he likes” (168, original emphasis). Similarly, Perez Zagorin, argues in “Historiography and Postmodernism: Reconsiderations” that a work of literature and a historical work are different by pointing to the imaginative events and facts in these works: “unlike the work of literature, the historical work does not contain an invented or imaginary world. It presents itself as consisting, to a great degree, of facts and true or probable statements about the past” (308).

White actually is quite aware of the oppositions against the linguistic turn in general and tropological theory in particular. In order to clarify his stance, he deals with the arguments referring to linguistic relativism. He differentiates between the suggestions of linguistic relativism and the implications of tropological theory. According to White, tropological theory is mistakenly equated with linguistic relativism, which suggests that “the historian is the prisoner of the linguistic mode,” and “he can see only what his language permits him to conceptualize” (*Figural Realism* 14). As a result of this assumption, tropological theory appears both to “set limits on what can be learned in the

process of investigating the evidence" (*Figural Realism* 14) and to undermine the role of the historian. In a similar fashion, this misconception of tropological theory is connected with the finished work of the historian. That is, when it is claimed that historical discourse is constructed through tropological elements, it seems to deprive "historical discourse of its claims to truthfulness and relegates it to the fanciful domain of fiction," by making "of historiography little more than a rhetorical exercise" (*Figural Realism* 14). However, White asserts that tropological theory does not imply linguistic relativism because it is a "theory of discourse, not of mind or consciousness" (*Figural Realism* 17). White states that figuration in discourse is inevitable, but tropology just "seeks to provide the knowledge necessary for a free choice among different strategies of figuration" without implying linguistic relativism (*Figural Realism* 17). Also, he claims that tropological theory does not suggest that "perception is determined by language and that the truthfulness of a discourse is relative to the language in which it is written. As a theory of discourse, tropology has much to say about representation but nothing to say about perception" (*Figural Realism* 17). Here, White underlines the problem of representation of past reality as a focal point of tropological theory.

White notes that tropological theory does not refuse the "existence of extradiscursive entities" or the historian's "capacity to refer to and represent them in speech" (*Figural Realism* 17). In the first place, he explicates how tropological theory is conceived by the opponents of the theory. He maintains that the tropological theory of language appears to erase the distinction between figurative and literal speech, and turns the literal speech into a "special case" of the figurative speech. The theory "views literal language as a set of figurative usages that happen to have been regularized and established as literal speech by convention alone" (*Figural Realism* 14). This leads to the understanding that

> [w]hat is literal in one moment of a language community's development can therefore become figurative at another moment and vice versa, so that the meaning of a given discourse can change with any change in the rules of determining what counts as literal speech and what counts only as metaphor. This seems to vest the authority to determine the meanings of discourses not in the intentions of their authors or in what the texts written by them manifestly say but in readers or reading communities, who are permitted to make of them whatever they wish or whatever the current conventions

> governing the distinction between literal and figurative speech permit. (*Figural Realism* 14-15)

In this case, it seems that there is no fact to rationalize any interpretation of reality because any given literal statement can be counted as metaphorical one or every metaphorical statement as literal one. This reasoning gives the idea that the tropological theory of language and discourse undermines factuality and thus historians' claims "regarding the factual truthfulness not only of their statements about particular events but of their discourse as a whole" (White, *Figural Realism* 15). Ultimately, tropological theory becomes a threat to the claim of history, which is "to deal in facts and therewith its status as an empirical discipline" (White, *Figural Realism* 15). However, White claims that tropological theory does not reject the existence of reality: tropological theory does not suggest that "everything is language, speech, discourse, or text, only that linguistic referentiality and representation are much more complicated matters than older, literalist notions of language and discourse made out" (*Figural Realism* 17). The objects of the historian are found in the real world; namely, the reality of the referents is not denied. As White notes, tropological theory underlines the "metalinguistic over the referential function of discourse because it is concerned more with codes than with whatever contingent messages can be transmitted by specific uses of them" (*Figural Realism* 17). In this case, White claims that tropological theory is not anti-realist, and he concludes by explaining the function of tropological theory: "Insofar as codes are themselves message-contents in their own right, tropology expands the notion of message itself and alerts us to the performance, as well as the communicative, aspect of discourse" (*Figural Realism* 17). It is important to note that he parts company from poststructuralist relativism of language.

White also draws attention to the difference between facts and events in order to explain that tropological theory does not "collapse the difference between fact and fiction" (*Figural Realism* 18). He claims that there is no "such thing as raw facts, but only events under description" (*Figural Realism* 18). That is, events are transformed into facts through descriptive protocols: "Figurative descriptions of real events are not less factual than literalist descriptions; they are factual—or, as I would put it, factological—only in a different way" (White, *Figural Realism* 18). The aim of

tropological theory alerts the critic not to confuse events, which happen, with facts, which are constructed by linguistic description. Hence, tropological theory does not undermine the line between fact and fiction, but it questions and points to the difference between events and facts. Tropological theory draws attention to the process in which an event is turned into a fact by the historian who uses his/her imagination and language to create a meaningful fact out of the event.

In addition to the form of the historical narrative, White also states that the context of the historical narrative is closely related to the imagination of the historian. In "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," published in 1974, White questions the way traditional historians represent the past in the present, by noting that traditional historians are "interested in assessing the success of their discipline in mapping the past and determining the relationship of that past to the present" (42). The contexts of the historical narratives are "as much invented as found" ("The Historical Text as Literary Artifact" 42) and they are "the products of the fictive capability of the historians who have studied those contexts" ("The Historical Text as Literary Artifact" 43), because historical narratives "cannot . . . be subjected to either experimental or observational controls" ("The Historical Text as Literary Artifact" 42). In other words, the historical milieus of the historical narratives, the contexts of the texts, are not concrete and accessible: the historian is not able to go back to the past and revise the past events. Instead, the historian has to have recourse to other historical documents to give a meaning to the context s/he studies. According to White, "historical documents are not less opaque than the texts studied by the literary critic" ("The Historical Text as Literary Artifact" 43) and, furthermore, the clarity of the world in historical documents is blurred when historical narratives increase in number:

> Each new historical work only adds to the number of possible texts that have to be interpreted if a full and accurate picture of a given historical milieu is to be faithfully drawn. The relationship between the past to be analyzed and historical works produced by analysis of the documents is paradoxical; the more we know about the past, the more difficult it is to generalize about it. (White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact" 43)

Pointing to the multiple textualization of the context, White emphasizes the complexity of drawing a fixed meaning from the historical documents.

Philosopher Frank R. Ankersmit agrees with White in terms of the discussions on the determining effect of the form of the historical text, and delves further into the interaction between the past and present in the process of history writing in order to emphasize the problematic characteristic of the historical representation. By comparing the modernist historian to the postmodernist one in his "Historiography and Postmodernism," Ankersmit claims that the modernist historian

> follows a line of reasoning from his sources and evidence to an historical reality hidden behind the sources. On the other hand, in the postmodernist view, evidence does not point towards the *past* but to other *interpretations* of the past. . . . Evidence does not send us back to the past, but gives rise to the question what an historian here and now can or cannot do with it. ("Historiography and Postmodernism" 287, original emphasis)

Evidence about past events from the documents written earlier acquires the present state of mind of the historian to be re-interpreted. Thus, evidence gains meaning "only through the confrontation with the mentality of the later period in which the historian lives and writes. The mentality of a period is revealed only in the difference between it and that of a later period" ("Historiography and Postmodernism" 287). This postmodernist perspective depicts the departure point of postmodernism from the positivist or historist historiography. In "The Origins of Postmodernist Historiography," Ankersmit explains the positivist perspective as follows: "it is the rule that the historian must place the object of his investigation in its *historical context* if he wishes to understand it" (102, original emphasis). However, as Ankersmit notes, the focus of the postmodernist view is not on the past, but "on the incongruity between present and past, between language we presently use for speaking about the past and the past itself" ("Historiography and Postmodernism" 295). Thus, the historical context is also problematized in postmodernist history. The interpretation of the context of the historical text may gain another meaning according to the historical period, which is a new context, where the previous context is re-interpreted because the perspective of the

contemporary historian is most probably different from that of the historian who has written the historical context in his/her own past milieu.

Like Ankersmit, Dominick LaCapra draws attention to the interaction between the past and the present in writing history in relation to the context. According to LaCapra, historians are "involved in the effort to understand both what something meant in its own time and what it may mean for us today" (*Rethinking Intellectual History* 18). Thus, the dialogue with the past "becomes internal to the historian" (*Rethinking Intellectual History* 18). More importantly, LaCapra emphasizes the textual characteristic of the context:

> all contexts are encountered through the "medium" of specific texts or practices, and they must be reconstituted on the basis of textual evidence. For the past arrives in the form of texts and textualized remainders—memories, reports, published writings, archives, monuments, and so forth. (*History and Criticism* 128)

Hence, LaCapra underlines the idea that the context is a "text of sorts" (*Rethinking Intellectual History* 95), and there is a complex relation between the text and the context. That is, the context or the real world is "itself 'textualized' in a variety of ways" (*Rethinking Intellectual History* 26). The notion of textuality

> serves to render less dogmatic the concept of reality by pointing to the fact that one is "always already" implicated in problems of language use as one attempts to gain critical perspective on these problems, and it raises the question of both the possibilities and the limits of meaning. (*Rethinking Intellectual History* 26-27)

Interestingly, LaCapra states that like the text that has intertextual relations with other texts, the context

> raises a problem analogous to that of "intertextuality." For the problem in understanding context—and a fortiori the relation of context to text—is a matter of inquiry into the interacting relationships among a set of more or less pertinent contexts. Only this comparative process itself creates a "context" for a judgment that attempts to specify the relative importance of any given context. (*Rethinking Intellectual History* 96)

Here, as in the case of the textual characteristic of the historical narrative, the contextualization of the past events is also problematized. It is important to note that LaCapra opposes both the purely documentary representation of the past and the "'presentist' quest for liberation from the 'burden' of history through unrestrained fictionalizing" (*Rethinking Intellectual History* 65). He accepts that the contextualization of the past events requires interpretation, but this does not lead to mere subjectivity: "A significant text involves, among other things, creative art, and its interpretation is, among other things, a performing act. But art is never entirely free, and the art of the historian is limited in specific ways. He must attend to the facts, especially when they test and contest his own convictions and desires" (LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History* 65).

In a similar fashion with LaCapra, in *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse*, Robert Berkhofer, Jr. asks a very important question in relation to this interaction between the past and present:

> Since context refers to both the context within constructed histories as they represent the past as history and the context of historians within their own time as they write these histories, should not historians in their works and teachers in their classrooms construct their textualizations so as to show their audience how these dual contexts constrain, maybe determine, or at least co-create each other through and in what is textualized? (244)

In this sense, the historian creates another context while narrating the past as history. Berkhofer points to the fact that the context is "author constructed in terms of both method and discourse," and "such textual decisions ought to be made manifest by how the various constitutions of con(textualization) relate to one another in a text" (244). In Berkhofer's view, since historical textualization both "'draws from and creates'" the context, both the way the context is constructed as history and the way "the context of the historian's own time of writing is inscribed in the discursive practice(s) of the text" are equally important (244). Berkhofer clarifies this relation between the past and present as follows: "Just as past histories serve as contextual sources for today's histories, present histories serve as intertextual sources as well as contextual dialogue for each other" (244).

As White claims in an interview in *Encounters: Philosophy of History after Postmodernism* by Ewa Domańska, all these discussions on the textuality of history draw attention to the fact that history's claim to truth or reality is problematic because "the events of history . . . are not replicable" and inspection is, thus, out of the question (16). The events of history are narrated only through the language of the historian, and the historian needs to consult other historical narratives to narrate the subject, but none of these narratives is able to mirror past reality totally because of the problematic nature of language. The discussions pointing to the linguistic turn in history intersect with another field of study, known as New Historicism, in the field of literary criticism in the 1980s. Like the linguistic turn which pushes history to the border of literature, New Historicism searches for a "new and non-truth-oriented form of historicist study of texts" (Selden and Widdowson 161). Thus, the following sub-section will concentrate on the premises of New Historicism.

1.1.5. New Historicism

Coined by American critic Stephen Greenblatt, New Historicism is assumed as a "practice rather than a doctrine" (Greenblatt, "Towards a Poetics of Culture" 1) and New Historicists refuse "empty formalism by pulling considerations to the center stage of literary analysis" (Veeser xi). New Historicists in America are influenced by Michael Foucault and Louis Althusser, who believe that "human 'experience' is shaped by social institutions and specifically by ideological discourses" (Selden and Widdowson 163). In *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, Greenblatt asserts that if literature is separated from social and cultural codes, "we drastically diminish our grasp of art's concrete functions in relation to individuals and to institutions, both of which shrink into an obligatory 'historical background' that adds little to our understanding" (4). Thus, New Historicists, who argue for a discontinuous history in line with Foucault, seek connections between literary texts and culture of a given period. In other words, "literary and non-literary 'texts' circulate inseparably" (Veeser xi). In this view, each material, from official documents to private papers, "becomes aesthetic property" (Greenblatt, "Towards a Poetics of Culture" 11).

New Historicists do not want to polarize the linguistic and the social because, according to them, there is a mutual relationship between them. As American critic Louis A. Montrose claims, “On the one hand, the social is understood to be discursively constructed; and on the other, language-use is understood to be always and necessarily dialogical, to be socially determined and constrained” (15). Montrose does not give any priority to either the linguistic or the social. Instead, he suggests a “reciprocal concern with the historicity of texts and the textuality of history” (20) by emphasizing the complex relationship between the text and the context. He explains his point as follows:

> By *the historicity of texts*, I mean to suggest the cultural specificity, the social embedment, of all modes of writing—not only the texts that critics study but also the texts in which we study them. By *the textuality of history*, I mean to suggest, firstly, that we can have no access to a full and authentic past, a lived material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question—traces whose survival we cannot assume to be merely contingent but must rather presume to be at least partially consequent upon complex and subtle social processes of preservation and effacement; and secondly, that those textual traces are themselves subject to subsequent textual mediations when they are construed as the “documents” upon which historians ground their own texts, called “histories.” (20, original emphasis)

Montrose stresses the idea that the linguistic and the social, or the verbal and the world, or the text and the context, cannot be isolated from one another. He gives credit to both the “indeterminacy of the signifying process and the historical specificity of discursive practices—acts of speaking, writing, and interpreting” (23). In this sense, any analysis or understanding of history is not free of “historically, socially, an institutionally shaped vantage points” of the historian and the critic who are also “historical subjects” (Montrose 23). Thus, it is not possible to gain “final, absolute sense authentic, correct, and complete” meanings about the real past (Montrose 23). This understanding also requires to “historicize the present as well as the past, and to historicize the dialectic between them—those reciprocal historical pressures by which the past has shaped the present and the present reshapes the past” (Montrose 24). Thus, New Historicism draws attention to both the influence of the past over the present in shaping the present and, in return, the formative influence of the present discourses over the conceptualization of the past.

New Historicists underline the subjectivity of all discourses. According to them, “no discourse, imaginative or archival, gives access to unchanging truths nor expresses inalterable human nature” (Veeser xi) because they, including the subjects narrating the events, are all subject to linguistic, social, political, and cultural phenomena that change in time. New Historicists examine a given discourse in line with the cultural codes of the period in which the discourse is created. Furthermore, they pay attention to the re-contextualization of that discourse in another period. They evaluate historical narratives with their textual characteristics and examine literary texts within their historical milieu. In short, they do not believe in a totalizing history and they try to establish “new ways of studying history and a new way of how history and culture define each other” (Veeser xiii).

The major issue concerning these discussions is the problem of the representation of past reality. Until the postmodern period, the main aim of the historians was related to representing reality truthfully since the belief in reflecting the reality out there was not tainted. Whether it be rhetoric or science, historian and critics assumed that history is able to reflect the past. Indeed, all the efforts to create a narrative style as either rhetoric or scientific epitomize the belief in history’s claim to truth. In the postmodern period, however, the belief in reflecting reality through language, whether it be literary or scientific, is under discussion due to the conceptualization of both knowledge and language. The postmodernist historiography prefers to question the way history is written in order to prove the idea that history’s claim to truth is debatable due to the nature of language.

In relation to these discussions, there appears to be a correlation between the approaches to history and the evolution of the literary historical writing. Approaches to history as rhetoric coincide with the rise of the historical novel in which a serious conflict between history and literature does not exist. When history is accepted as a scientific field of study, the historical novel is considered to be on the opposite end of history writing in terms of its claim to truth despite the writer’s close scrutiny of the past events and documents, similar to the methods of a historian. The postmodern period witnesses the rise of historiographic metafiction, which questions and problematizes history writing as

it is in the case of the philosophers of history such as Hayden White and Frank Ankersmit. Hence, once again, boundaries between history and literature are blurred. In the following sub-section, the changing attitudes towards the historical novel in relation to the understanding of history will be traced to ground the differences between the historical novel and historiographic metafiction in detail.

1.2. HISTORY AND FICTION

1.2.1. Historical Novel

The perception of history eventually gives shape to the writing of historical fiction. In this section, the evolution and the premises of historical fiction will be surveyed to differentiate the historical novel from historiographic metafiction. Although historical fiction is a worldwide phenomenon, its evolution will be examined within the framework of English fiction in this dissertation. Scottish writer Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) is commonly accepted to be the father of the modern historical novel, and his work *Waverley* (1814) is regarded as the ancestor of the historical novel. Hence, Scott will be taken as the reference point in exploring the transformation of historical fiction. Since the characteristics of and the approaches towards the historical novel change in decades between the 1820s and 1870s, these decades will be closely scrutinized.

One of the most prominent literary figures studying Scott and the development of the historical novel is Hungarian philosopher and literary critic Georg Lukács. His comprehensive study, *The Historical Novel*, was first published in Russian in 1937 and later in English in 1962. According to Lukács, the historical novel is "the direct continuation of the great realistic novel of the eighteenth century" (31). Hence, it is pertinent to outline the general characteristics of the eighteenth-century realist novel to see its effects over the historical novel. As Ian Watt states in "From The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding," it is commonly accepted that the novel as a literary genre begins with Daniel Defoe (1660-1731), Samuel Richardson (1689-1761), and Henry Fielding (1707-1754) in Britain in the eighteenth century. Richardson and Fielding considered themselves to be the founders of the genre by

"involving a break with the old-fashioned romances" (363). Neither Richardson nor Fielding provides the precepts about the realist novel, because the characteristics of the novel as a genre are yet to be developed until the end of the eighteenth century. However, their attitudes towards this new writing style establish the foundation of the realist novels which differ from classical and renaissance epics, romances, comedies, and tragedies through the use of plot, characterization, and time.

The primary premise of the eighteenth-century realist novel was to give "a full and authentic report of human experience" (Watt 378) and, thus, the novelists needed to be loyal to human experience. To fulfill this aim, as Ian Watt notes, different from the plots of classical and renaissance epics based on past history and fable, Defoe and Richardson "did not take their plots from mythology, history, legend, or previous literature" (366). Their non-traditional plots were either totally invented or partly based on contemporary events and the characters were "particular people in particular circumstances" (Watt 367), unlike the previous tradition of romance where the characters were mostly stereotypical. In order to complement their individuality, Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding granted the characters with common names of the period which was also different from the earlier representations of the characters with historical names or type names. Moreover, the individual character was endowed with a self-awareness of his past and his present. As Watt claims, "the individual was in touch with his own continuing identity through memory and actions" (371). This created a much more coherent and believable character. Another novelty in the writing of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding was their use of a "causal connection" (Watt 372), which contributed both to development of the character and to the credibility of the plot. The novel departed from the earlier literary tradition of "using timeless stories to mirror the changing moral verities . . . by its use of past experience as the cause of present action" (Watt 372). The novel, then, intended to give up disguises and coincidences to be true to reality.

These early realist writers situated their characters in well-described and detailed places. Environment was well presented and the topographic details were not skipped in the novel. This gave a sense of actuality to the events in the novel. As Watt argues, in tragedy, comedy, and romance, place used to be "general and vague" (374). In the

novel, the individualization of the character was complemented through an effect of an actual environment. Along with a realistic representation of the place, the use of a new time dimension became a significant characteristic of the novel. The novelist aspired to describe the concerns of the everyday life and the individual life within a historical process, which was a desire resulting from the "rise of a more objective study of history" (Watt 373) peculiar to the developments in the eighteenth century. Events in the novel were located "in an unprecedentedly detailed time-scheme" as in the case Richardson (Watt 373). Likewise, Fielding tried to reflect a much more objective sense of time by using chronologically consistent events (Watt 374). When the issue in the novel was how to narrate the truth, the use of language became important. As Watt argues, "The previous stylistic tradition of fiction was not primarily concerned with the correspondence of words to things, but rather with the extrinsic beauties which could be bestowed upon description and action by the use of rhetoric" (375-76). In the novel, however, a much more referential language was used to report the truth. Hence, to be true to real human experience, the novel presented a "full and authentic" human experience, complemented with "the particulars of the times and places" of the action and the character, reported by a much more referential language (Watt 378). Hence, the principles of the realist novel were based on verisimilitude. To return to discussions on the historical novel, it could be said that the premises of the realist novel were internalized by the historical novel only after the 1830s, which will be evaluated in the following pages after examining the contributions of Scott to the genre.

In his *The English Historical Novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf*, Avrom Fleishman notes how the rise of the historical novel coincides with the aftermath of the French Revolution, which was "the age of nationalism, industrialization, and revolution" where people became conscious of their "historical continuity and identity" and where "widening commerce, population shifts, and factory organization created a new pattern of day-today life and consequent nostalgia for the old" (17). Increasing interest in the past gave way to historical fiction through which people satisfied their desires to know about the past. It ought to be noted that, until the late 1840s historical studies were not included in the curricula of the universities, and for the reading public the only source of the past was the historical fictions of the time. Yet it should also be remembered that as

James C. Simmons suggests in *The Novelist as Historian: Essays on the Victorian Historical Novel* that "Many of the historical romances of the early Victorian period in fact offered a real escape from the didactic fiction" (8) by avoiding "Utilitarian and Evangelical insistence upon practical values" (9) of the later Victorian period. In this sense, this attitude would be regarded as escapist by the more earnest Victorian reader.

Although Scott used the elements of romance in his fiction and although he believed that the reader "could gain limited knowledge from the depiction of Scottish manners and character and the portrayal of important personages" (Simmons 8), his special place in the development of the historical novel is based on his efforts to formalize the principles of the genre. Scott published *Waverley* without his name as the author because he was experimenting with a new form, which may not have appealed to the public taste. In the postscript of *Waverley* in a later addition, he explained why he withheld his name from the novel, by stating that this new form "might very probably fail, and therefore there was no occasion to take on [himself] the personal risk of discomfiture" (526). Scott was right about his anxiety to a certain extent because the genre was scorned by those who viewed history as a separate field from literature. Yet he was mistaken about the future of these novels. Although the genre has had its ups and downs throughout the time, the historical fiction has proved its allure. The present day examples certainly testify to the fact that such novels still hold their appeal.

It is difficult to generalize the historical novel, because, as Fleishman notes, perhaps with tongue in cheek, "Everyone knows what a historical novel is; perhaps that is why few have volunteered to define it in print" (3). However, this does not mean that there are no criteria to determine the general characteristics of the genre. Commonly accepted features of the historical novel come out of Scott's novels studied by critics. As Lukács observes, Scott uses details as "only a means of achieving historical faithfulness" and to make "concretely clear the historical necessity of a concrete situation" (59). In this sense, "it matters little whether individual details, individual facts are historically correct or not" (Lukács 59). Scott aims to depict men rather than manners in order to avoid mere mannerism and "the Gothic romances' absorption with the external trappings of past ages" (Fleishman 24). However, as Simmons observes, in such novels

as *Ivanhoe*, *The Talisman*, and *The Monastery*, "there is strong emphasis on a careful depiction of the external aspects of the age-scenery, costumes, and architecture—while character and plot are slighted" (13). Through these details, Scott tried to be faithful to the past age he wrote about. He was true to the manners and costumes of the age he deals with, but, as Simmons notes, it is not possible to say the same thing for the historical elements in his romances: in his novel *Kenilworth*, "the action of the novel occurs in 1575, yet the historical elements are notoriously inaccurate. . . . Scott's fidelity in *Kenilworth*, as elsewhere, was to the manners of the day, not the history" (14). Yet this does not mean that Scott neglected to do research. In *The Historical Novel from Scott to Sabatini: Changing Attitudes toward a Literary Genre, 1814-1920*, as Harold Orel states, Scott "had performed the necessary research to authenticate his sense of what was possible in a particular year, but . . . he freely rearranged the information he had so carefully acquired . . . . He did so because some 'facts' were intractable, and did not yield easily to fictional treatment" (8). The idea behind this attitude is Scott's belief that manners, costumes, and pageantry might be true, but complete accuracy cannot be achieved. Scott is satisfied with being true to details to create a sense of past reality, but his assumptions will undergo several changes in the decades to come.

Scott uses a certain formula for the characters in his romances in order to evoke the historical atmosphere. According to Lukács, Scott provides the historical faithfulness "in the human-moral conception of his characters" which is why Scott's characters are "never eccentric figures, who fall psychologically outside the atmosphere of the age" (60). Scott chooses his characters from the lower class, and couples them "with the colloquial liveliness of much of the dialogue," which creates "much of the dramatic vigor of his narratives" (Simmons 10). As Orel suggests, Scott chooses his heroes from the lower class because, generally, average people do not hide their passionate feelings (7). Thus, they emphasize strong passions, such as love, hate, and fear that would remain similar at every age. Thus, Scott's protagonists, as Lukács notes, are generally "average human beings" used to "generalize and concentrate in an historical deed" (39). In relation to characterization, another trait of Scott's narratives is the use of the historical characters. In Scott's novels, as Simmons observes, "the romance (fictive) characters and plot [are] in the foreground and the historical personages and events

behind, only occasionally coming into prominence" (11). The historical personages do not really function in Scott's romance; they are just the names to reconstruct the past age. As Lukács remarks, for Scott, "the great historical personality is the representative of an important and significant movement" (38) to create a sense of past reality. Thus, while the fictional characters and events are foregrounded, the historical figures and events are removed from the center of attention in Scott's novels.

Scott chooses *'Tis Sixty Years Since* to be the subtitle of his novel *Waverley* so as to emphasize that his approach to history is different from "that of the Gothic novelist, the German romances, and what was to be called the 'silver-fork school' of contemporary manners" (Fleishman 24). Scott's choice of dealing with the past sixty years before his own present time, which is a "period neither too far nor too near the present," shows that this characteristic "would arouse neither Gothic awe of the remotely exotic, nor the sophisticated contempt bred by familiarity" (Fleishman 24). Fleishman finds this approach to be the reason for Scott's success:

> Scott conceived of history from the outset as a past that allowed itself to be made present without losing its unique character, and this sense of the historical novelist's double perspective helps account for his work's imaginative complexity and great success. It is both an entry into the past—often achieving an interior sense of past life—and a coherent interpretation of that past from a particular standpoint in the present. (24)

Scott's approach helps him to draw a more faithful picture of the past. He is able to create a realistic setting and credible characters because it allows him "the fullest potential for the utilization of his own experiences and observations" (Simmons 10). According to Simmons, Scott's most successful novels are accepted as those in which he emphasized realism over romance, and when Scott "shifted setting from Scotland to England or a foreign country and moved back in time, the personal element disappeared from his fictions and the romance eclipsed the realism" (10). The fact that the setting and events are constructed sixty years earlier than the time in which Scott wrote his novel provides Scott with a vantage point to create more realistic romances since he could associate his own experiences to the period he wrote. Thus, instead of his imagination, his observations are at work in creating a much more credible narrative

than the gothic romances. However, the principle concerning the time span of the historical novel is debatable. For instance, in *The American Historical Novel*, Ernest E. Leisy states that recounting the history of a previous generation might be enough for the novel to be considered a historical novel, because changes, for example in America, are rapid (5). The answer to the question of how much earlier the writer should go back in history to create a historical novel is arbitrary.

Throughout the 1820s, romancers followed Scott's style in their novels. Yet many of them such as William Harrison Ainsworth, G. P. R. James, Emma Robinson, and Horace Smith "produced a flood of historical romances that lacked the strengths of Scott's best work but contained most, if not all, the faults" (Simmons 10). These romancers generally abused Scott's principles. In the first place, they generally "eschewed the realism and followed the romance" (Simmons 10). They preferred to deal with "intrigue, rapidly developing and swiftly moving tales, depending upon the utilization of lost heirs, disguises, incredible escapes, mistaken identities, fantastic coincidences, and missing letters" (Simmons 19). Although similar devices were used by Scott himself, his followers used them excessively and depended totally on these devices to attract the reader. Additionally, Scott used only one plot line and sidelined the action, his imitators fed their tales on different, hectic, and action-based plots. They exploited Scott's attitude towards the historical characters and events by parading many well-known historical figures and events of the age narrated. According to Simmons, these historical characters and events were so exaggerated that they just "serve[d] to break the unity of the narrative and insult[ed] the reader's intelligence" (12). In a similar fashion, the details about costumes, manners, architecture, and weapons were also abused by Scott's imitators. Although in his novels of English and French history Scott used the notes affixed to the novel for the antiquarian information, his imitators used these details within the narrative by "padding their fictions with excessive descriptions of the superficial aspects of earlier ages" (Simmons 14). Thus, in the 1820s, historical romances, written for mere entertainment with escapist intentions, might be true to the costumes, manners and pageantry of the age narrated, but they lacked historical accuracy.

Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, previous historical romancers including Scott were seriously criticized by earnest Victorian reviewers—reflecting the Victorian utilitarian demands for an instructive literature—for their lack of intellectual substance and their freedom to bend historical facts in their novels. At the same time, this period was marked by the approaches and practices of the romantic historians in England such as Thomas Babington Macaulay, Thomas Carlyle, and James Anthony Froude whose works were followed by the reading public. These historians did not want to present "the analytical, abstract, and stylistically 'dead' histories" (Simmons 39). Instead, they emphasized "an idea of history as a fully developed narrative drama" (Simmons 39). Labeled as literary historiographers, they underlined the importance of imagination of the historian in "reconstructing the past in the most graphic, dramatic, and detailed manner possible" in order to allow "the reader to experience history, to be made contemporary with the facts, acquiring them with the ingenuous spirit of a contemporary" (Simmons 39). These historians tried to make history attractive by using their artistic imagination and a dramatic style. These vivid, dramatic and imaginative manners in Macaulay's, Carlyle's and Froude's historical narratives helped them to sell their books, and their narratives turned out to be a rival to the historical romances. It ought to be noted that, as Simmons suggests, at this period in England the concept of scientific historiography theorized by Ranke, and other thinkers in Europe were "still relatively unknown" (38).

The increasing criticism against historical romances and increasing interest in history written by formal historians forced novelists to pay more attention to historical facts in their novels. These decades were the times in which the historical romance transformed into "light history" written by writers identifying themselves not as romancers but as historian-novelists. Some of the pioneering figures of this movement are Edward Bulwer-Lytton (Bulwer-Lytton's novel *Rienzi, The Last of the Tribunes* (1835) initiated the trend, and *Harold, The Last of the Saxon Kings* (1848) marked its close although some writers continued to stick to the trend for a while after 1848), Edward George Howard, Charles Macfarlane, Frederick Chamier, and Sir Francis Palgrave.

Feeling that they had responsibilities for being true to historical facts, these new generation writers gave their novels a new shape. While they did research carefully to provide the reader with factual fidelity, they eliminated legends and fantasy which Scott and his early followers excessively used. In his novels, Bulwer-Lytton presented the new principles of the movement by breaking with Scott's principles. Believing that, as Orel suggests, "history brought a reader closer to the truth than Scott's historical novels ever could, or did" (17), Bulwer-Lytton tried to be true to historical facts. Unlike Scott, Bulwer-Lytton did not focus on mannerism, costumes, and pageantry. Rather, his major aim was to concentrate on developing the important historical characters as the main characters in his novels. As Simmons notes, contrary to Scott, Bulwer-Lytton "set famous historical figures at the nucleus of his works and attempted to show how the dynamic, powerful, and continually vital makers of history went about their work" (Simmons 41). Although Bulwer-Lytton, like literary historiographers, believed in the power of imagination, "the fictional element [was] rigidly restricted to the depiction of the 'inward life' of his historical personages, specifically in regard to determining their motives" (Simmons 45). For him, imagination should be used "in the service of truth" and this is more valuable than "the antiquarian brand of history" (Orel 18). Unlike Scott, Bulwer-Lytton made use of fictional characters in a very limited number, and they were "so ordered as not to interfere with the actual historical events and motivations" (Simmons 46). Thus, Bulwer-Lytton carried Scott's treatment of characters to an entirely different level.

Moreover, Bulwer-Lytton deliberately chose the periods of momentous change to narrate his story. This preference seems to be similar to that of Scott, but it differs in purpose. Scott chose periods of transition because such a choice marked "the increased possibility of picturesque development available to the novelist working in these periods" (Simons 41-42). Bulwer-Lytton did not care about the picturesque contrast. He preferred these epochs since the "portrayal of these times presented the greatest challenge to his power as a novelist and historian" (Simmons 42). Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, historian-novelists focused extensively on historical facts by conducting intensive research on the period they dealt with because their primary aim was scholarly accuracy; they examined the historical personages and events from a historian's

perspective rather than that of a romancer by moving away from legends and fantasy; they put intensive control over fictional elements by keeping them at a very limited amount; they preferred history over story; and they aimed to instruct rather than to entertain. As Andrew Sanders states in his "'Sixty Years Since': Victorian Historical Novel from Dickens to Eliot," the historical novel started to educate and persuade "without resorting to sensation and to the machinery of the improbable" (22). Of course, all these changes in the historical novel are the outcomes of the desire for an objective historiography resulting from the premises of the Enlightenment. Also, it ought to be noted that the propositions of the realist novel are also at work in this period. Moving away from the tradition of romance, the desire to be true to reality, and developing characters in depth are the legacy of the realist novel.

The most successful examples of the historical novel appeared in the 1850s and 1860s, the decade which ironically coincided with the decline of interest in the historical novel. Before dealing with the reasons for the decline in interest, some examples for the successful historical novels ought to be mentioned. George Eliot, for instance, published *Romola* in 1863, which is accepted as one of the serious and scholarly Victorian historical novels. Eliot believed in the value of both faithful imagination and research to write a refined historical novel. Eliot, as an admirer of Scott, tried to create a novel different from those written by both Scott and Bulwer-Lytton. Firstly, unlike Scott's distinguished historical romances, which are placed in England approximately fifty or sixty years before the writer's time, Eliot's novel is set in Renaissance Florence in the fifteenth century during the reassertion of Florentine Republicanism. The reason for her particular choice is that "the novel dealt with something rich and strange and with a subject which required scrupulous research to support the 'veracious imagination'" (Sanders, "'Sixty Years Since': Victorian Historical Novel from Dickens to Eliot" 25). Secondly, unlike Bulwer-Lytton but like Scott, her fictional characters are at the center of the novel, and she "exposes them to moral rather than political choices" (Sanders, Introduction 15). In the Introduction of *Romola* published in 1984, as Sanders claims, "Moral choice is viewed as a perennial problem, not one tied to specific conditions," and, thus "character is conditioned by its historical, social, and geographical environment" (15). This is why her character and environment are "interconnected and

rearticulated" (Sanders, "'Sixty Years Since': Victorian Historical Novel from Dickens to Eliot" 26). In *Romola,* Eliot preferred to deal with the moral development of her characters rather than "the analysis of an historical crisis" in line with the demands of Victorian Evangelicalism (Sanders, Introduction 14). In this sense, it can be said that Eliot paid attention to social issues in her novel.

Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) is another example for a serious historical novel published in this period. Like Eliot, Dickens both used his artistic imagination and conducted research for his novel. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens focused on the effects of the French Revolution within society. He preferred imaginary characters by "deliberately receding accounts of 'historical' personalities and events" (Sanders, "'Sixty Years Since': Victorian Historical Novel from Dickens to Eliot" 28). Yet Dickens carefully studied Carlyle's *The French Revolution* (1836), re-interpreted Carlyle's "distaste for the Revolutionary process, and moreover, he has responded to Carlyle's inventive use of overlapping narratives" ("'Sixty Years Since': Victorian Historical Novel from Dickens to Eliot" 28). Thus, Sanders conceives *A Tale of Two Cities* to be a "'metatext' which interlinks history and story, action and fiction, it is also an experimental narrative which plays with a variety of ways of seeing, telling and interpreting" ("'Sixty Years Since': Victorian Historical Novel from Dickens to Eliot" 28). Like Eliot, Dickens was also concerned with social issues and dilemmas. As Richard Maxwell in the Introduction of *A Tale of Two Cities* published in 2000 notes, *A Tale of Two Cities* points to the "ruthlessness of the Terror" by focusing on "exclusively on the epoch" (xiv). Dickens interpreted the Revolution as a "*creative* negation," which served human progress instead of "delaying" it (Maxwell xvi, original emphasis). For this purpose, Dickens juxtaposed opposite characters: some cruel characters stand for the old dying past, while the protagonist Darnay, as a "progressive aristocrat," who cuts his ties off with the old aristocratic society and people, "is a figure of the future" (Maxwell xix). Although Dickens' approach, as Maxwell notes, somewhat abuses the facts, the depiction of the events and the era gives a sense of "historical truth rather than literally replicates it" (xix). Other than Eliot and Dickens, some other writers contributed to the historical novels in the 1850s and 1860s. William Makepeace Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* (1852), John Henry Newman's *Callista* (1856), and Charles

Kingsley's *Hypatia* (1852-1853) are a few of them. However, during this period interest in the historical novel was already declining.

Before focusing on the reasons for the decline of this movement, it is pertinent to mention the idea that literary historians and historian-novelists of this period practiced almost the same thing. The difference between the literary historian's formal history and the historian-novelist's historical novel is "one of degree rather than kind" (Simmons 39). Ironically, the line between history and literature breaks down as a result of this movement. While historical novels written by historian-novelists were considered not as fiction but history, historical narratives produced by literary historiographers were sometimes considered as not history but fiction and became the target of the critics. Simmons argues that these historian-novelists had the same strengths and weaknesses of romantic historiography and biography in that they wrote from a nationalistic perspective, they were partial, they worshiped heroes and they lacked a critical perspective. Simmons comments on their drawbacks as follows:

> Like Macaulay, Carlyle, and Froude, these historian-novelists were all amateurs and man of letters, who looked upon history as an adjunct to *belles lettres*, rather than a science did Neibuhr, Ranke, and their followers in England. These men were primarily interested in the depiction of individuals and events and avoided the discussion of the mere abstract questions of economic, political, social, religious issues. By slighting opportunities for reflection, generalization, and the discussion of more abstract matters, these historians reduced history to a well-told tale. Behind the approach of Macaulay, Carlyle, and Froude was a firm conviction that a factual story may be, and should be, told as agreeably as a fictitious one, that the incidents of real life, both domestic and political, may be so arranged without subsequent corruption of accuracy to command all the interest hitherto allotted to a fictional story. (53-54)

These shortcomings of both literary historiographers and historian-novelists essentially pointed to one of the reasons for the decline of interest in the historical novel. All these deficiencies also became much more evident in the late 1850s and 1860s, because scientific historiographic methods started to appear. It should be remembered that history as a discipline entered universities in 1848 in England, and historical studies gained momentum almost at the same period. Under the influence of scientific methods, professional historians attacked amateur historians. Both literary historians and

historian-novelists were targeted by professional historians. According to the new scientific approach, historical truth was at stake due to the works of these amateurs since the reader did not understand when the author provided facts and when s/he provided fiction. In relation to this, as Simmons claims, “No longer were people accepting the original premise that readers could learn history through the historical romance, no matter how carefully researched the work may be. The genre, in a word, ceased to be a rival to history, both in theory and in practice” (57-58). All in all, compared to the historical romancers of the 1820s, the historical novelists or historian-novelists of the 1830s and 1840s were more harshly criticized by the professional historians because of the belief in scientific methods.

Yet this was not the end of the historical novel, but just a part of the cycle that carried the genre to its former status. In the 1850s and 1860s, historical fiction became “light literature,” ceasing to be an addition to history. The historical novelist started to pay attention to “poetry of history rather than its chronology: his business is not to be the slave of dates; he ought to be faithful to the character of the epoch” (Simmons 61). In the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s, the novelist completely gave up history, and focused on “the free exercise of his artistic imagination, unfettered by any demands for factual accuracy” (Simmons 62). Writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson and Arthur Canon Doyle freed their works from facts and research. Thus, their romance did not include footnotes, scholarly prefaces or appendices. In this period, historical romances were written for mere entertainment, and the historical romancer became “the teller of tales” (Simmons 63) as s/he was in Scott’s period.

In spite of Scott’s shortcomings, as Andrew Sanders claims, the historical novel in the hands of Scott and his British followers “gave prose narrative a new aesthetic respectability,” and it opened up “a narrative potential which went far beyond the escapist imitations of earlier ‘Gothic’ fiction” (“‘Sixty Years Since’: Victorian Historical Novel from Dickens to Eliot” 22). Despite the changes in the genre, the attitudes that underestimated its serious characteristics and the decrease in interest, the historical novel continued to flourish in the nineteenth century. In addition to his influence upon British writers, as Lukács notes, Scott influenced many great writers

throughout the world, and his works and principles were studied and developed by writers such as Fennimore Cooper in America; Aleksandr Sergeyevich Pushkin, Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol, and Leo Tolstoy in Russia; Alessandro Manzoni in Italy; Honoré de Balzac in France, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in Germany (19-88).

Although the historical novel is a worldwide phenomenon, the cultural background of this thesis demands a survey of its development within the framework of American literature. In *The American Historical Novel*, a detailed study on the American historical novel published in 1950, Ernest E. Leisy surveys the development of the historical novel in the United States. According to Leisy, the historical novel in America can be divided into three categories although these distinctions are arbitrary because "in actual practice some of the characteristics of one type may be mingled with those of the others" (18). The first category is marked with the romance of adventure; the second one is the period novel, "a work more concerned with detailed background than in presenting the whole life" (Leisy 18); and the third is the historical novel proper, "which admirably integrates character and setting" (Leisy 18).

According to Leisy, Scott's tradition was imitated in America as exemplified by the works of James Fenimore Cooper during the early nineteenth century. Cooper's novel *The Spy* published in 1821 "successfully demonstrated that Scott's methods could be applied to American materials" (Kelly 176). Cooper's *The Pilot* (1823) and *The Leatherstocking Tales* including *The Pioneers* (1823), *The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative of 1757* (1826), *The Prairie: A Tale* (1827), *The Pathfinder, or The Inland Sea* (1840), and *The Deerslayer, or The First Warpath* (1841) are the well-known examples of historical fiction of the period. Like Scott who was followed and imitated in the world, Cooper turned out to be a novelist who was imitated by his fellow American writers, who revolved their novels around the similar themes.

After 1830, American writers of historical romance focused on "the cultivation of local history" since "The larger national themes had been exploited" (Leisy 11). According to Leisy, in the South, "where social conditions still retained many of the conventions of English life, it was easier than in the more changeable North to contemplate the past in

terms of Scott" (11). Hence, Scott's pattern in his historical fictions was extensively used by American writers: "The Scottish laird and the English baron were readily replaced by the aristocratic planter, the vassal and the serf by the indentured servant and the Negro, while the Indian and the mountaineer took the role of the Highland outlaw" (Leisy 11). As Leisy notes, although "In reality the planter was no baron, but a tobacco farmer, his estate no principality, and his rambling wooden house hardly a mansion" (11), William A. Caruthers in *The Cavaliers of Virginia* (1834) and John P. Kennedy in *Swallow Barn* (1832) used these patterns. Of the historical fiction writers of the period in the South, William Gilmore Simms occupied a major place. His novel *The Yamassee* (1835) where he described early colonial South Caroline in relation to the Yemassee Indians is another example of the novels in America following the Scott tradition. In Leisy's opinion, "In practice Simms followed Scott's and Cooper's patterns, but in adapting their technique to the Carolina background he evinced a more realistic portraiture of the Indians and of guerrilla warfare in dismal swamp and luxuriant forest" (12).

As Leisy observes, New England in the eighteen thirties was not as interested in historical fiction as the South was. Instead, New Englanders preferred

> the unvarnished tales which its distinguished historians—Bancroft, Prescott, Parkman, and Motley—were giving it. . . . Romantic history like D. P. Thompson's *The Green Mountain Boys*, with its dashing exploits of Ethan Allen and his democratic followers, appealed to others, while many enjoyed Sylvester Judd's *Margaret* for its rich storehouse of backwoods manners in early Massachusetts. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Minister's Wooing* and *Oldtown Folks* were accepted as faithful transcripts of the cheerful and dynamic aspects of later Puritan life. (13)[8]

Yet, in the 1850s, the early period of American historical fiction where "the cavaliers of the Old South, the somber Puritans, the droll Dutch, the savage Indians, and the noble frontiersmen" were romantically depicted had a closure (Leisy 14).

American historical fiction writing, which was "quiescent" during the Civil War, gave way to realism and local color in the 1870s and 1880s due to the advance of science (Leisy 15). However, parallel to the revival of historical fiction in England, during the

1890s American historical fiction became popular again. As Leisy notes, "writers became interested in depicting costumes and manners in addition to relating an exciting story of love and adventure" (15). Some of the exemplary historical fictions of the period can be cited as follows: Mary Johnston's *To Have and To Hold* (1900), Weir Mitchell's *Hugh Wynne* (1897), Paul Leicester Ford's *Janice Meredith* (1899), Maurice Thompson's *Alice of Old Vincennes* (1900), Ellen Glasgow's *Battle-Ground* (1902), Winston Churchill's *Richard Carvel* (1899), *The Crisis* (1901), and *The Crossing* (1904). However, by 1905 people lost interest in historical romances while writers turned to realism, and between 1910 and 1915 historical fictions "appeared only sporadically" because "Americans were too engrossed in the grim realities of a world war to concern themselves with a romantic treatment of the past" (Leisy 17).

After 1925, historical fictions reappeared. James Boyd's *Drums*, Harvey Allen's *Anthony Adverse* (1933) and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* (1936) are the important examples of the novels produced in these decades. According to Leisy, in these novels

> history and background are more accurately presented and much better blended with fiction than formerly. The novels are definitely more psychological and sociological than they were, and have less the character of period fiction. They exhibit more frankness and less fustian, the characterization is much better, the action moves faster, and the stories are more alive. (17-18)

For Leisy, Willa Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop* published in 1927 is one of the best examples for the historical novel proper in America (18). The period novels like Walter Edmund's *Drums Along the Mohawk* (1936) were also in vogue in these decades. In America, as scholar R. Gordon Kelly notes in his article "Historical Fiction," the historical novel continued to be popular during the 1940s. Some of the popular historical fictions of the period can be cited as follows: Kathleen Winsor's *Forever Amber* (1944) and Frank GarvinYerby's *The Foxes of Harrow* (1946) (Kelly 180). However, the popularity of the genre diminished during the 1950s, as scholar Sarah L. Johnson observes in her detailed book *Historical Fiction II: A Guide to the Genre* published in 2009:

> The extreme popularity of historical fiction, in its many guises, contributed to its overall perception as a lowbrow form of literature. All genre fiction has suffered critical disdain to some degree and continues to do so. This should surprise no one. As usually happens when the market is flooded with novels in a certain genre, as was the case with historical fiction in the mid-twentieth century, the overall quality declines. In a 1950 article in Masses and Mainstream ("Reply to Critics"), author Howard Fast, a historical novelist himself, wrote, "This is an era of many historical novels, few of them good, and very few indeed which have more than a nodding acquaintance with fact." (2)

As in the case of the development of the historical novel in England, American historical novel had its ups and downs in the course of time according to the demand of the market and according to the emerging literary movements such as Realism. In the 1960s and 1970s, although the historical novel in the traditional sense continued to be produced, other genres, which focus on history as their subject matters, appeared, and they will be dealt with in the following pages.[9]

To sum up the changes in the historical novel, during the 1820s in England, the genre includes some characteristics of romance although Scott and his followers try to escape from the romance tradition. In this sense, without giving much importance to the accuracy of the historical events as in the case of Scott, but with the effort to be true to the pageantry of the age, historical fiction inevitably contains escapist and entertaining features, along with the characteristics of the realist tradition. During and after the 1830s and 1840s, the realist tradition becomes more dominant in the genre, and the historical novel gains a more serious characteristic. Pursuing the realistic tradition, it turns out to be a didactic fiction including exaggerated footnotes and historical events. In this period, the historical novel is considered to be light history. The most serious examples of the genre appear in the 1850s and 1860s, and the historical novel ceases to be light history. Instead, it turns out to be light literature, breaking with its earlier connection to historiography. Inevitably, the change in the genre is due to the varying perspectives towards the historical novel's claim to truth.

In a similar vein, beginning with Fenimore Cooper, in America historical fiction becomes popular during the 1820s and 1830s; however, it loses its popularity in the 1850s. It gains momentum during the 1890s after a recession in the 1860s, 1870s, and

1880s. Similar ups and downs in the popularity of the genre can be observed in the following decades as well. The realist tradition in America before and after World War I also influences the American historical novel production. As Leisy observes in 1950, "Realism is still a matter of degree" (18) for the American historical novel as well. Considering all the discussions above, it could be said that the major issue concerning the historical novel is related to whether or not, or how the historical novel can be true to historical events. More or less, the evolution of the historical novel is based on this question, and this approach is pivotal within the framework of this dissertation in order to differentiate between the historical novel and historiographic metafiction. Thus, the following sub-section will be allocated to examine the characteristics of historiographic metafiction.

1.2.2. Historiographic Metafiction

The poststructuralist conception of language and text voiced by Derrida and Barthes along with the changing perspectives about knowledge, reality, and truth examined by Foucault and Lyotard are among the major reasons for the rift between the traditional realist novel and the postmodern novel. According to the realist tradition, one of the fundamental assumptions "which readers often make is that a good book tells the truth about human life—that novels and plays try to 'tell things as they really are'" (Selden and Widdowson 103). The reason for this belief is that language refers to the world outside the text. However, as American writer and critic Raymond Federman states in his article "Surfiction—Four Propositions in Form of an Introduction," as opposed to the realist novel, the postmodern novel does not "pretend any longer to pass for reality [and] for truth," because language, as a system of sign, does not refer to the external reality and does not "*reproduce* a pre-existing meaning" (8, original emphasis). In *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, as Patricia Waugh notes, postmodern texts "draw attention to the process of the construction of the *fictive* 'world' through *writing*" (102, original emphasis). According to Federman, the postmodern novel accepts its own fictionality instead of claiming to replace reality, but, at the same time, it constructs "A REALITY" on its own (Federman, "Surfiction" 8, original emphasis).

Although paradoxical, the postmodern novel questions its own nature as a linguistic construct. The novels that seem to incorporate questions about their own fictionality are called metafictional novels. Waugh defines metafiction as "a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (2). In her article "Modes and Forms of Narrative Narcissism: Introduction of a Typology," Linda Hutcheon maintains that metafictional novels are "linguistically self-reflexive, demonstrating their awareness of both the limits and the powers of their own language" (23). Referring to its writing process, metafictional novels also question the nature of reality and truth as human constructs which are produced through language. Thus, metafictional novels generally focus on the issues of narrative, writing, language, and thus, the writing process.

Despite the fact that poststructuralist ideas helped the development of metafictional novels, the limitations of the earlier narrative structures also contributed to the rise of new forms of expression. In 1967, American novelist and critic John Barth published his article entitled "The Literature of Exhaustion" in which he talks about "the used-upness of certain forms or the felt exhaustion of certain possibilities" ("Exhaustion" 64), and proposes to "write a novel about it" ("Exhaustion" 72) to overcome the feeling. Barth views metafictional novel as a refreshing form for literature. However, his article has been criticized for implying the idea that literature is exhausted. In order to correct the misunderstanding, thirteen years later he clarifies his claim in another article entitled "The Replenishment of Literature: Postmodernist Fiction," published in 1980. Barth notes:

> The simple burden of my essay was that the forms and modes of art live in human history and are therefore subject to used-upness, at least in the minds of significant numbers of artists in particular times and places: in other words, that artistic conventions are liable to be retired, subverted, transcended, transformed, or even deployed against themselves to generate new and lively work. (205)

Barth calls for experimenting with different forms such as self-conscious and self-reflexive metafictional novels instead of using traditional forms. Such an endeavor

would energize literature, and help to evaluate the changes in literature, as well. Barth is aware that all narrative forms have been used and abused extensively. He stresses the fact that an avant garde expression can be possible through postmodernist fiction, which is, he called, "the *best next* thing" following the exhaustion of the aesthetic of high modernism (206, original emphasis).

Federman maintains that self-consciousness and self-reflexiveness "are not new in the novel. They are not inventions of the 1960s or 1970s. All works of fiction are ultimately about themselves, about their process of coming into being and maintaining existence" (*Critifiction: Postmodern Essays* 18). He differentiates between self-consciousness and self-reflexiveness: the former "establishes a conniving relation between author and reader, and is played above the text. As such it deals with the reading process. One could say that it is a public act that draws the reader into the privacy of the text, and therefore functions as a window that opens from outside into the text" (*Critifiction* 20). On the other hand, the latter "establishes a play between author and text, and therefore relates to the writing process. It is a private act, but one that makes itself public since it allows the reader to witness the interplay between author and creation. As such, it functions like a mirror inside the text" (Federman, *Critifiction* 20-21). However, as Federman notes, self-consciousness and self-reflexiveness "often intersect within the same novel and are not always distinguishable" because they make use of the same devices such as "parody, irony, digression, playfulness—to demystify the illusory aspects of the story" (*Critifiction* 21).

Federman tries to map the critical difference between the explicit self-reflexiveness in the eighteenth-century novel including the historical novel and the self-reflexive mode in the novel of the 1960s and 1970s. According to Federman, the eighteenth-century self-reflexive novel "reflected upon itself, unveiled its secrets, questioned its possibilities in order to establish itself as a genre, as a respected literary genre, at a time when the novel was considered frivolous and even immoral" (*Critifiction* 21). On the other hand, the twentieth-century self-reflexive novel has a dramatically different purpose. As Federman maintains, it

> used similar techniques to extricate itself from the postures and impostures of realism and naturalism. In the first case it was a question of establishing a continuity for the novel, in the other it was a matter of creating a rupture in order to revive an "exhausted" genre—a genre that could no longer accommodate and express the extravagant notions of time and space of modern reality. (*Critifiction* 21)

The twentieth-century self-reflexive novel aims to display the difficulties and even the impossibility of reflecting the external reality and does not try to become a substitute of the world outside as the poststructuralist conception of language also dictates.

In her seminal book entitled *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History*, *Theory*, *Fiction*, published in 1988, Linda Hutcheon theorizes historiographic metafiction. By historiographic metafiction, Hutcheon means those "which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages" (*Poetics* 5). In this sense, historiographic metafiction challenges both "any naive realist concept of representation" and "any equally naive textualist or formalist assertions of the total separation of art from the world" (*Poetics* 125). While questioning the problematic nature of representation, historiographic metafiction does not disavow external reality, and refers to past events and historical figures. Hutcheon differentiates between postmodern works in general and historiographic metafiction by claiming that

> [i]n most of the critical work on postmodernism, it is narrative—be it in literature, history, or theory—that has usually been the major focus of attention. Historiographic metafiction incorporates all three of these domains: that is, its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (historio*graphic meta*fiction) is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past. (*Poetics* 5, original emphasis)

Historiographic metafiction aims to question the constructed nature of the past as history by using literature, history, and theory. Thus, historiographic metafiction explores the relationship between historiography and fiction.

Historiographic metafiction coincides with the discussions within the framework of the linguistic turn in historiography. It "puts into question, at the same time as it exploits, the grounding of historical knowledge in the past real" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 92), and

concentrates on the complex relation of historiography "to narrativization, thus, fictionalization" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 93). In this context, historiographic metafiction asks the same questions the philosophers of history have already asked: "What is the ontological nature of historical documents? Are they the stand-in for the past? What is meant—in ideological terms—by our 'natural' understanding of historical explanation?" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 93). As Hutcheon claims, historiographic metafiction puts forward the similar "skepticism or suspicion about the writing of history" that Hayden White and other philosophers of history deal with in their works (*Poetics* 106).

The major aims of historiographic metafiction are to problematize historiography and to question history as, to use Lyotard's terminology, a metanarrative, by refuting "the view that only history has a truth claim" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 93). Historiographic metafiction "selfconsciously reminds us that, while events did occur in the real empirical past, we name and constitute those events as historical facts by selection and narrative positioning. And, even more basically, we only know of those past events through their discursive inscription, through their traces in the present" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 97). Thus, history and literature, or historical and literary, merge once again through postmodern theory because, as Hutcheon suggests, both history and literature

> derive their force more from verisimilitude than from any objective truth; they are both identified as linguistic constructs, highly conventionalized in their narrative forms, and not at all transparent either in terms of language or structure; and they appear to be equally intertextual, deploying the texts of the past within their complex textuality. (*Poetics* 104)

Historiographic metafiction underlines the issues of subjectivity, intertextuality, reference, and ideology in accordance with the complex relationship between history and fiction. In order to foreground these matters, it uses certain devices. As Hutcheon notes, historiographic metafictions generally employ either multiple points of view or an overtly controlling narrator in order to problematize the issue of subjectivity. Neither of the modes provides "a subject confident of his/her ability to know the past with any certainty" (*Poetics* 117) because the former includes "a pluralizing multivalency of points of view" while the latter contains "over-assertive and problematizing subjectivity" (*Poetics* 161). For instance, Don DeLillo's historiographic metafiction

Libra, published in 1988, tries to unearth the secret history of the JFK assassination from twenty-nine different points of view. Both minor and major characters ruminate on the JFK assassination, but no one is able to provide the true history of the incident. Likewise, as Hutcheon suggests, British writer Graham Swift's historiographic metafiction *Waterland* (1982) provides an overtly controlling narrator, Tom Crick, who is a history teacher trying to give meaning to his present situation by questioning his past and by trying to narrate the history of the Fenland. However, Crick is so unsure about the past events that he is incapable of narrating them. In Hutcheon's opinion, postmodernism "establishes, differentiates, and then disperses stable narrative voices (and bodies) that use memory to try to make sense of the past. It both installs and then subverts traditional concepts of subjectivity" (*Poetics* 118). Thus, paradoxically, historiographic metafiction both uses and abuses traditional narrative voices so as to problematize and to question the notion of subjectivity.

Historiographic metafiction also makes use of intertextual references in order to underline the textuality of history. As Hutcheon states, postmodern intertextuality is "a formal manifestation of both a desire to close the gap between past and present of the reader and a desire to rewrite the past in a new context" (*Poetics* 118). However, this does not mean that historiographic metafiction intends to "void or avoid" history: "Instead it directly confronts the past of literature—and of historiography, for it too derives from other texts (documents). It uses and abuses those intertextual echoes, inscribing their powerful allusions and then subverting that power through irony" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 118). At this point, as Hutcheon suggests, literary theories and historiographic approach merge once again. In "Theory of the Text," Barthes claims, "any text is an intertext; other texts are present in it, at varying levels, in more or less recognizable forms: the texts of the previous and surrounding culture" (39). Likewise, LaCapra states, "the past arrives in the form of texts and textualized remainders—memories, reports, published writings, archives, monuments, and so forth" (*History and Criticism* 128). Thus, like a literary text which refers to other texts rather than the external world, a historical document only interacts with other historical documents.

By making use of intertextual references and challenging the "conventional forms of fiction and history writing," historiographic metafiction tries to show that "history is not the transparent record of any sure 'truth' and that it is inevitably textual" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 129). In this sense, historiographic metafiction uses and abuses anything and everything such as newspaper clips, almanacs, comic books, and so on as an intertext. For instance, as Hutcheon points to, Robert Coover's historiographic metafiction *The Public Burning*, published in 1977, narrates the history of Rosenbergs' execution, and "is mediated by many different textualized forms. One major form is that of the various media, through which the concept of the disparity between 'news' and 'reality' or 'truth' is foregrounded" (*Poetics* 133). Thus, historiographic metafiction questions how the idea of truth is constructed and manipulated through the printed media, which is a device to record history.

Historiographic metafiction also uses parody to integrate "the textualized past into the text of the present" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 118). Hutcheon defines parody as "an imitation with critical ironic distance" ("Defining Parody" 37). According to her, parody in metafiction is a way of "an exploration of difference and similarity," and "invites a more literary reading, a recognition of literary codes" ("Modes and Forms" 25). Hutcheon considers parody in metafiction to be a serious and valid approach in creating a new form as a synthesis. In historiographic metafiction, parody may be both literary and historical (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 118). In order to clarify her point, Hutcheon gives the example of E. L. Doctorow's *Welcome to Hard Times* published in 1960. According to Hutcheon, *Welcome to Hard Times*, which narrates the history of a western town in the nineteenth century, depicts the ironic intertextual use of the Western. She maintains:

> In parodically inverting the conventions of the Western, Doctorow here presents a nature that is not a redemptive wilderness and pioneers who are less hardworking survivors than petty entrepreneurs. He forces us to rethink and perhaps reinterpret history, and he does so mainly through his narrator, Blue, who is caught in the dilemma of whether we make history or history makes us. (*Poetics* 134)

Parody in *Welcome to Hard Times* is both literal and historical because it requires a sense of understanding to come "to terms with existing traditions of earlier historical

and literary articulations of American-ness" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 133). Thus, historiographic metafiction parodies both the literary form and the historical perception of national identity.

Another issue that historiographic metafiction problematizes is reference. As Hutcheon suggests, historiographic metafiction "both underlines its existence as discourse and yet still posits a relation of reference (however problematic) to the historical world, both through its assertion of the social and institutional nature of all enunciative positions and through its grounding in the representational" (*Poetics* 141). As Hutcheon maintains, historiographic metafiction does not deny the existence of the past real as in the "radical constructivism (according to which reality is only a construct); it just questions how we know that and how it is (or was)" (*Poetics* 146). Also, slightly different from metafictional self-reflexivity, which questions "the very existence as well as the nature of extratextual reference," historiographic metafiction furthers, deepens, and "complicates" this question: "History offers facts—interpreted, signifying, discursive, textualized—made from brute events. Is the referent of historiography, then, the fact or the event, the textualized trace or the experience itself?" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 15). Here, historiographic metafiction draws attention to the difference between facts and events: events are those "which have no meaning in themselves," and facts are those "which are given meaning" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 122). Then, facts are subjected to the historian's perspective that is structured under the influence of the dominant discourses of the period.

At this point, as Hutcheon suggests, historiographic approach and literary theories coincide. That is, White suggests that "As a symbolic structure, the historical narrative does not reproduce the events it describes; it tells us in what direction to think about the events and charges our thought about the events" ("Historical Text as Literary Artifact" 52). Likewise, as Hutcheon claims, historiographic metafiction "does not pretend to reproduce events, but to direct us, instead, to facts, or to new directions in which to think about events" (*Poetics* 154). Thus, historiographic metafiction points to the fact that events are experienced in the past and that the past is real, but the past is discursively constructed in the present. Moreover, historiographic metafiction

underlines the idea that, just like facts, historical figures both in historiography and literature are discursive because they are subjected to the interpretation of the historian and the writer. Like the events of the past, historical personages are known "only from their textualized traces in history" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 153). Finally, it should be stated that neither written historical accounts nor first-hand-eyewitness accounts are free of the interpretation of the historian and the writer. This approach alludes to Foucault's argument of discursive structures in relation to the power/knowledge relation.

Historiographic metafiction also problematizes ideology. Historiographic metafiction grants what White claims: "'every representation of the past has specifiable ideological implications'" (qtd. in Hutcheon, *Poetics* 120). Also, it underlines the idea that discourse, as in Foucault's argument, is subjected to "certain social, historical, and institutional (and thus political and economic) frameworks" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 184). According to historiographic metafiction, discourse is "both an instrument and an effect of power" and which is why historiographic metafiction is "always careful to 'situate' itself in its discursive context and then uses that situating to problematize the very notion of knowledge—historical, social, ideological" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 185). In this sense, it uses history to question any "authority as the basis of knowledge—power" in literature (*Poetics* 185). Thus, as Hutcheon suggests, in historiographic metafiction, the ideological and the aesthetic "have turned out to be inseparable" (*Poetics* 178).

Postmodernism asserts that any mode of representation is ideological and, as Hutcheon suggests, it asks questions about "the ideological power behind basic aesthetic issues" (*Poetics* 182). However, postmodernism paradoxically demonstrates an ideological approach, which is, as Hutcheon calls, "anti-totalizing" (*Poetics* 231). It is an "anti-totalizing ideology" because postmodern fiction "tries to problematize and, thereby, to make us question. But it does not offer answers" (*Poetics* 231). The fact that historiographic metafiction focuses on the issues such as subjectivity, intertextuality, and reference is based on its "anti-totalizing ideology" that makes the reader question the totalizing discourses.

However, Marxist critic Fredric Jameson criticizes postmodernism and its modes, and calls postmodernism the cultural logic of late capitalism in his article "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" published in 1984. Jameson evaluates postmodernism in terms of architecture, cinema, and fiction. He focuses his argument on parody, which he thinks turns out to be a mere pastiche in postmodernism. According to Jameson,

> [p]astiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists. Pastiche is thus blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs. (17)

For Jameson, in the postmodern period after "the collapse of the high-modernist ideology of style" (17), architects, cinema producers, and writers turn to the past to imitate "the dead styles" (18). Jameson interprets this act as "the random cannibalization of all the styles of the past, the play of random stylistic allusion," which is called "'historicism'" by the architecture historians (18). Jameson reads this kind of use of the past and the old styles as a postmodernist nostalgia for which nostalgia films are very good examples: "the nostalgia film was never a matter of some old-fashioned 'representation' of historical content, but instead approached the 'past' through stylistic connotation, conveying 'pastness' by the glossy qualities of the image, and '1930s-ness' or '1950s-ness' by the attributes of fashion" (19). Thus, from Jameson's perspective, the nostalgia film, which uses only certain images, objects, and styles of the past, merely displays, for instance, "some eternal thirties" by "emerg[ing] as an elaborated symptom of the waning of our historicity, of our lived possibility of experiencing history in some active way" (21). Hence, such films do not go beyond being artistic artifacts or images, which are produced through pastiche.

In a similar manner, Jameson furthers his argument by dealing with the historical novel, which he believes is an old form imitated by the contemporary writers. Jameson focuses particularly on E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime*, published in 1975, which narrates the stories of three families (an Anglo-American, a European immigrant, and a black one) in America in the 1900s, by criticizing American democratic ideals and by mixing and

interacting historical figures with fictional ones (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 89). According to Jameson, in the novel "the objects of representation, ostensibly narrative characters, are incommensurable and, as it were, of incomparable substances, like oil and water—Houdini being a *historical* figure, Tateh a *fictional* one, and Coalhouse an *intertextual* one—something very difficult for an interpretive comparison" (22-23, original emphasis). In Jameson's opinion, they resist interpretation because of their pastiche-like nature. Jameson considers *Ragtime* to be "a seemingly realistic novel" but "in reality a nonrepresentational work that combines fantasy signifiers from a variety of ideologemes in a kind of hologram" (23). Further, according to Jameson, *Ragtime* cannot represent the historical past because of the lack of the historical referent:

> *Ragtime* remains the most peculiar and stunning monument to the aesthetic situation engendered by the disappearance of the historical referent. This historical novel can no longer set out to represent the historical past; it can only "represent" our ideas and stereotypes about that past (which thereby at once becomes "pop history"). . . . it can no longer gaze directly on some putative real world, at some reconstruction of a past history which was once itself a present; rather, as in Plato's cave, it must trace our mental images of that past upon its confining walls. If there is any realism left here, it is a "realism" that is meant to derive from the shock of grasping that confinement and of slowly becoming aware of a new and original historical situation in which we are condemned to seek History by way of our own pop images and simulacra of that history, which itself remains forever out of reach. (25)

For Jameson, E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* and his other novels written in a similar style as well as other novels alike underline the "pastness" of the era narrated in the novel, and just provide the images and stereotypes of that era in the mind of the writer. Thus, these novels give a sense of nostalgia for the past by moving away from being political and critical.

On the other hand, Hutcheon reads *Ragtime* in a very different manner. Hutcheon answers Jameson's critique of the postmodern novel in general and of *Ragtime* in particular. She does not accept that *Ragtime* lacks the historical referent, and maintains:

> it is just as easy to argue that, in that very novel, the historical referent is very present—and in spades. Not only is there an accurate evocation of a

> particular period of early twentieth-century-American capitalism, with due representation from all classes involved, but historical personages also appear within the fiction. Of course, it is this mixing of the historical and the fictive and this tampering with the "facts" of received history that Jameson objects to. Yet that is the major means to making the reader aware of the particular nature of the historical referent. (*Poetics* 89)

Moreover, Hutcheon believes that mixing the historical figures and the fictional ones "may have a function in the problematizing of the nature of the subject in the sense that it foregrounds the inescapable contextualizing of the self in both history and society" (*Poetics* 84).

Hutcheon deals with the issue of nostalgia and claims, "If Doctorow does use nostalgia, it is always ironically turned against itself—and to us" (*Poetics* 89). Hutcheon provides the beginning of the novel to be the pattern of the irony used throughout the novel. At the very first page of the novel, the narrator describes the year 1902 with "a potential nostalgia, but surely it is one already tinted with irony" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 89). The related part of the novel is as follows: "Everyone wore white in summer. Tennis racquets were hefty and the racquet faces elliptical. There was a lot of sexual fainting. There were no Negroes. There were no immigrants" (Doctorow 4). However, just one page later, Emma Goldman, the historical figure fictionalized in the novel, talks about almost an opposite situation: "Apparently there *were* Negroes. There *were* immigrants" (Doctorow 5, original emphasis). Hutcheon claims,

> much of the novel is about precisely those ex-centric parts of society, traditionally excluded from fiction and history. Jameson is right, I think, to see this novel as inscribing a crisis in historicity, but it is his negative judgment that is surprising. The irony that allows critical distancing is what here refuses nostalgia: *Ragtime*'s volunteer firemen are anything but sentimental figures, and many American social "ideals"—such as justice—are called into question by their inapplicability to (black) Americans like Coalhouse Walker. There is no generalizing and sentimentalizing away of racism, ethno-centric bias, or class hatred in this novel. (*Poetics* 89-90)

According to Hutcheon, the fact that metafiction is aware of its semiotic nature "prevents both nostalgia and antiquarianism" (*Poetics* 90). In relation to this, Hutcheon notes that although much art "uses irony and parody to inscribe and yet critique the

discourses of its past, of the 'already-said,' postmodernism is almost always double-voiced in its attempts to historicize and contextualize the enunciative situation of its art" (*Poetics* 44). Thus, historiographic metafiction is self-consciously both historicist and (con)textualist. Hutcheon also opposes Jameson's idea that historiographic metafiction is apolitical by stating that novels like *Ragtime* "do not trivialize the historical and the factual . . . but rather politicize them through their metafictional rethinking of the epistemological and ontological relations between history and fiction" (*Poetics* 121).

Historiographic metafiction continuously calls attention to the fact that history, like fiction, is subjected not only to the conventions of narrative and language, but also to ideological motivations. As Hutcheon suggests, "Both history and fiction are cultural sign systems, ideological constructions whose ideology includes their appearance of being autonomous and self-contained" (*Poetics* 112). Hence, the most important question of historiographic metafiction is whose history exists in accordance with, to use Foucault's terminology, the power/knowledge relation. Historiographic metafiction asks questions about the "issues surrounding the nature of identity and subjectivity; the question of reference and representation; the intertextual nature of the past; and the ideological implications of writing about history" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 117).

Finally, with its anti-totalizing ideology, historiographic metafiction aims to "re-write or re-present the past in fiction and in history" in order to "open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 110), because postmodern fiction does not believe just in one Truth, rather it underlines the possibility of the existence of the truths in plural. As Hutcheon claims, "Historiographic metafiction suggests that truth and falsity may indeed not be the right terms in which to discuss fiction" because "there are only *truths* in the plural, and never one Truth; and there is rarely falseness *per se*, just others' truths" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 109, original emphasis).

In the light of these arguments, as Hutcheon claims, historiographic metafiction is "not just metafictional; nor is it just another version of the historical novel or the non-fictional novel" (*Poetics* 5).[10] Hence, it is relevant to examine the differences between

the historical novel and historiographic metafiction and, later, those between the non-fictional novel and historiographic metafiction. As stated earlier, although the characteristics of the historical novel continuously change between the 1820s and the 1890s, the major aim of the historical novel is to achieve historical faithfulness. Dramatically different from the historical novel, historiographic metafiction questions the nature of history and problematizes the writing of history by underlining the issues of subjectivity, intertextuality, reference, and ideology, even when all of these do not appear in the novel at the same time. The literary and ideological aspects of historiographic metafiction are drastically different from those of the historical novel. Although Scott's formula of historical fiction has been used, abused, and changed by his followers from time to time, the basic principles of the historical novel remain the same, which is why Scott's formula will be taken again as a reference point to make a comparison between the two genres.

In order to provide historical faithfulness, the historical novel "usually incorporates and assimilates" the details or historical data as in the case of Scott (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 114). However, as Hutcheon suggests, historiographic metafiction "plays upon the truth and lies of the historical record. . . . certain known details are deliberately falsified in order to foreground the possible mnemonic failures of recorded history and the constant potential for both deliberate and inadvertent error" (*Poetics* 114). Thus, while the historical novel searches for the ways to provide historical faithfulness and concerns itself with how to be true to past reality or truth, historiographic metafiction focuses on the possibility of the manipulation and misrepresentation of past reality in accordance with dominant discourses of the given period as well as on the multiplicity of truth. Thus, "The eighteenth-century concern for lies and falsity becomes a postmodern concern for the multiplicity and dispersion of truth(s), truth(s) relative to the specificity of place and culture" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 108).

Besides, historiographic metafiction uses the historical data in a different manner from the historical novel. Historiographic metafiction "incorporates, but rarely assimilates such data. More often, the process of *attempting* to assimilate is what is foregrounded" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 114, original emphasis). Hence, historiographic metafiction

critically displays the process of making history while dealing with the historical details and their collection. As Hutcheon asserts, “As readers, we see both the collecting and the attempts to make narrative order. Historiographic metafiction acknowledges the paradox of the *reality* of the past but its *textualized accessibility* to us today” (*Poetics* 114, original emphasis). In other words, the aim is not to create a sense of past reality, but to question the way past reality is created.

The use of the characters in historiographic metafiction is also different from the historical novel. As argued previously, the protagonist in the historical novel is a kind of type. However, as Hutcheon claims, the protagonists in historiographic metafiction “are anything but proper types: they are the ex-centrics, the marginalized, the peripheral figures of fictional history. . . . Even the historical personages take on different, particularized, and untimely ex-centric status” (*Poetics* 114). The aim of this kind of characterization is to underline “a postmodern ideology of plurality and recognition of difference; ‘type’ has little function here, except as something to be ironically undercut” (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 114).

Likewise, historical figures in historiographic metafiction have a specific purpose. As mentioned earlier, historical figures in the historical novel are used just to show the historical context of the novel and they generally have minor roles (Lukács 38-39). On the other hand, in historiographic metafiction, historical figures are used to make the reader “see all referents as fictive, as imagined” because these historical personalities are only known through “their textualized traces in history” (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 153). Hence, in historiographic metafiction some well-known figures of history may occupy an important role to create a space for questioning their representations in history as grand narratives. For instance, Napoleon Bonaparte is represented as a “street boy” who is “short, pale, moody” (12), instead of a heroic general, in British writer Jeanette Winterson’s novel *The Passion*. The novel that narrates the love story between Henri, Napoleon’s chef, and Villanelle, the web-footed daughter of a Venetian boatman, thus questions the grand narrative revolving around Napoleon as a hero by providing an alternative portrait of the general. In this way, *The Passion* stresses the imaginary and fictive nature of all representations.

The differences between the historical novel and historiographic metafiction also call for the differentiation between the non-fictional novel and historiographic metafiction because of their seemingly similar but radically different natures. Along with the discussions on the used-upness of certain forms of fictional writing in the 1960s, which has been previously discussed in connection with John Barth, the social reality in the 1960s is the major driving force for the writers to experiment with new forms. In the 1960s, America experienced shocking events such as the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Malcolm X, the Vietnam War turning into a dramatic failure and igniting protests, the Civil Rights movement causing violence scenes, and the rise of a drug-abusing counter culture. What America witnessed was incomprehensible for many. Larry L. King observes this enormous change in reality as follows:

> The America of 1968, with its assassinations, torched ghettos, campus wars, crime waves, alienations, deposed kings and crazed pretenders, almost seems too much for a single book. Offered as a novel, it might be rejected even by the lowliest of publishing house readers. "This story smacks too much of fantasy," such a low-echelon reader might report to his superiors. "There is too much random violence, nameless complications, and wild improbabilities. . . . This manuscript should be rejected." (qtd. in Zavarzadeh 22-23).

As King suggests, all these are too much even for a fictional work. In *The Mythopoeic Reality: The Postwar American Nonfiction*, as Mas'ud Zavarzadeh suggests, what America experienced as the actual reality did not coincide even with what realistic fiction represented. As Zavarzadeh notes,

> [a]t this cultural juncture, the old fictions seem suddenly to have become new realities, and the old verities to look like new fictions. The totalizing novel, which aims at interpreting the human situation with mimetic conventions and linear causal logic rooted in the separation of fiction and fact, reduces the charged quality of experience and consequently presents to the reader an imaginary (almost escapist) world, thin and anemic in comparison with the empirical world. . . . An air of irrelevance and immateriality has surrounded the contemporary interpretative novel because of its loss of orienting power and its inability to fulfill its traditional function, namely the exploration of the actual through the fictional and the illumination of man's experience in its public contexts through authentic aesthetic patterning. (26)

Since the traditional realist novel was not enough to represent this new social reality, writers searched for a new form, and the New Journalism, which is used interchangeably with nonfiction writing, came into the scene. In *Fact and Fiction: The New Journalism and the Nonfiction Novel*, as John Hollowell states, this form is characterized with the combination of fictional techniques and the detailed observation of journalism (10). By spelling the different names of the form such as "higher journalism," "new journalism," or "the literature of facts," Hollowell summarizes the general characteristics of the nonfiction narratives as follows: "They reflect an increasing tendency toward documentary forms, toward personal confession, toward the exploration of public issues" (10). The New Journalism starts to be fully practiced and theorized by journalist Thomas Wolfe, whose article "The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby," which was published in *Esquire* in 1963, is accepted to be the first materialized form of the New Journalism. In *The New Journalism with an Anthology*, Wolfe states that he realized that it is possible to "write accurate non-fiction with techniques usually associated with novels and short stories" and "to use any literary device, from the traditional dialogism of the essay to stream of consciousness, and to use many different kinds of simultaneously, or within a relatively short space . . . to excite the reader both intellectually and emotionally" (15).

The reason for the search of a new form in journalism is related to the codes of the journalistic writing. As Ronald Weber suggests in his article "Personal Journalism," within his book *The Literature of Fact*, the "detached, impersonal, seemingly objective point of view" in journalistic writings is the most important characteristic to produce a qualified and reliable piece of writing (23). However, according to Weber, the new trend in journalism considered the objective point of view to be dishonest to the reader: "to deny the shaping presence of the reporter because of theoretical demands of detachment and objectivity was to be fundamentally dishonest with the reader as well as oneself" (23) because it is not possible for journalists or other writers to produce an objective, detached, and impersonal piece of writing. Even a most objective work is written from a certain perspective of its originator. Thus, journalists started to avoid "pretence of objectivity of presentation" by using "techniques of fiction in an overt manner" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 115).

In *The New Journalism with an Anthology*, Wolfe explains this trend as follows: Journalists learn "the techniques of realism" by discovering "the devices that gave the realistic novel its unique power, variously known as its 'immediacy,' its 'concrete reality,' its 'emotional involvement,' its 'gripping' or 'absorbing' quality" (31). For this purpose, journalists use basically four techniques of fiction: The first one is "scene-by-scene construction, telling the story by moving from scene to scene and resorting as little as possible to sheer historical narrative" (Wolfe 31). This gives the sense that the journalist "could actually witness the scenes in other people's lives as they took place" (Wolfe 31). The second device is to "record the dialogue in full," which "establishes and defines character more quickly and effectively than any other single device" (Wolfe 31). The third technique is the third-person point of view: "the technique of presenting every scene to the reader through the eyes of a particular character, giving the reader the feeling of being inside the character's mind and expressing the emotional reality of the scene as he experiences it" (Wolfe 32). In relation to the third-person point of view, Wolfe suggests interviewing the character "about his thoughts and emotions, along with everything else" to "accurately penetrate the thoughts of another person" (32). Wolfe avoids using the first-person point of view, the "'I was there'" pattern (Wolfe 32), which journalists had generally used, since he finds it "very limiting for the journalist" (32) in that the journalist using the first-person point of view "can bring the reader inside the mind of only one character—himself—a point of view that often proves irrelevant to the story and irritating to the reader" (32). The fourth device is the recording of status details such as

> everyday gestures, habits, manners, customs, styles of furniture, clothing, decoration, styles of traveling, eating, keeping house, modes of behaving toward children, servants, superiors, inferiors, peers, plus the various looks, glances, poses, styles of walking and other symbolic details that might exist within a scene. (Wolfe 32)

Hollowell mentions two more devices in addition to those which are provided by Wolfe. Hence, the fifth tool is interior monologue, "or the presentation of what a character thinks and feels without the use of direct quotations" (26). The final device is composite characterization, "or the telescoping of character traits and anecdotes drawn from a number of sources into a single representative sketch" (Hollowell 26). Additionally,

other literary devices such as flashbacks, foreshadowing, and inverted chronology are also used. The aim of the journalist in using these details is to reflect the contemporary reality, which turned out to be almost unbelievable in the 1960s.

Of the literary works written in the form of nonfiction, Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, which is based on the massacre of the Clutter family that took place in Holcomb, Kansas, occupies an important place because, as Wolfe states, although Capote did not call it journalism by labeling his novel the non-fictional novel, "his success gave the New Journalism, as it would soon be called, an overwhelming momentum" (26). *In Cold Blood*, Capote, who creates his novel out of very short newspaper news, combines novelistic and journalistic techniques which are mentioned above. For this novel published in 1965, he spends five years in order to search the story by interviewing both the killers in prison and the people of Holcomb because, as Hollowell argues, the New Journalism "demands a more intense and personal kind of interviewing and research than does traditional reporting" (32). Although Capote did not witness the event, he engaged himself with the event through these interviews.

In other examples of the non-fictional novel, the idea of personal engagement is more explicit. For instance, Hunter S. Thompson lived with the motorcycle gang Hell's Angels for months in order to write their lives in his non-fictional novel *Hell's Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga* published in 1966. Similarly, in order to narrate the lives of the Merry Pranksters in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Taste* published in 1968, Wolfe was personally involved in the drug scene of California by traveling with Ken Kesey and Merry Pranksters in the States. In a similar vein, in *The Armies of the Night: History as a Novel, the Novel as History,* published in 1968, Norman Mailer narrates an anti-war demonstration he had participated in. As Wolfe claims, this narrative was "written soon enough after the event to have a journalistic impact" (27).

Although the non-fictional novel and historiographic metafiction seem to be similar in the use of fictional devices, they are radically different in terms of ideology and focus of attention. According to Hutcheon, the way the non-fictional novel writers use the techniques of fiction in an overt manner and the way they make "no pretence to

objectivity of presentation," in other words "metafictionality and provisionality," connect the nonfiction novel to historiographic metafiction (*Poetics* 115). By referring to Hollowell, Hutcheon states that in the non-fictional novels whose writers observed and were involved in the actual events which are mentioned above, "there was a very 'sixties' kind of direct confrontation with the social reality in the present" (*Poetics* 115). According to Hutcheon, this kind of "authorial structuring experience was often in the forefront as the new guarantee of 'truth,' as narrators individually attempted to perceive and impose pattern on what they saw about them" (*Poetics* 115). As Hutcheon argues, although both the non-fictional novel and historiographic metafiction emphasize the authorial power of the imagination of the writer "to create unities," historiographic metafiction "installs totalizing order, only to contest it, by its radical provisionality, intertextuality, and, often, fragmentation" (*Poetics* 116). Hence, the authorial voice in historiographic metafiction cannot be the guarantee of truth. Rather, it pushes the reader to question further the nature of truth.

In line with her argument, Hutcheon evaluates Mailer's *Armies of the Night* as a non-fictional novel which is closest to historiographic metafiction. The novel is composed of two parts, respectively entitled as *History as a Novel* and *The Novel as History* that narrate the same anti-war demonstration from different perspectives. Both parts ruminate about the relationship between literature and history. The first part is narrated from a third person narrator identified with Mailer who participated in the event. At the end of the first part, the narrator claims that this part where he narrates "his history of the Pentagon" "insisted on becoming a history of himself over four days, and therefore was history in the costume of a novel" (Mailer 215). After finishing his personal history, the narrator decides to write "a most concise Short History, a veritable précis of a collective novel, which . . . will seek as History, no, rather as some Novel of History, to elucidate the mysterious character of that quintessentially American event" (Mailer 216). The second part, which is supposed to clarify the demonstration, is a kind of journalistic account, which is based upon various media and is written after the event. At the beginning of the second part, the expectations of the narrator about historiography turn out to be wrong because "The mass media which surrounded the March on the Pentagon created a forest of inaccuracy which would blind the efforts of

an historian" (219). However, the novel, which is the first part of the book, "has provided us with the possibility, no, even the instrument to view our facts and conceivably study them in that field of light a labor of lens-grinding has produced" (219). As Hutcheon suggests, the final decision of the narrator "seems to be that historiography ultimately fails experience and the 'instincts of the novelist' have to take over" (*Poetics* 117). In Hutcheon's view, this provisionality and uncertainty "define the new postmodern seriousness that acknowledges the limits and powers of 'reporting' or writing of the past, recent or remote" (*Poetics* 117). What makes *The Armies of the Night* the closest non-fictional novel to historiographic metafiction is the rumination about the representation of a historical event by emphasizing the fictionality of historiography and the way it questions the writing process of history.

To sum up, differing both from the historical novel and the non-fictional novel, historiographic metafiction is "a novel about the attempt to write history that shows historiography to be a most problematic art" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 112). Historiographic metafiction primarily stresses the textuality of history by displaying the process of history writing. It emphasizes the historicity of the text by examining the contextualization of the past as history. Also, re-writing the historical events without claiming an ultimate truth functions to make "us aware of the need to question the received versions of history" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 115). In this sense, historiographic metafiction turns out to be a genre which is concerned with both history and history writing at the same time.

CHAPTER 2

2.1. *BURR*

Vidal published *Burr* in 1973 right after Americans witnessed the abuse of the presidential power in relation to both the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal in the presidential election of 1972. In his essay "The Second American Revolution," Vidal, who claims that "Congress and Court can be bypassed by an executive order," criticizes the abuse of the presidential power in America (263), and says "The Presidents have fought two major wars—in Korea and Vietnam—without any declaration of war on the part of Congress" ("The Second American Revolution" 262). He points to the idea that when abused, the executive power creates dictators out of presidents. Accordingly, this critical perspective is presented in the representations of the presidents in *Burr*. This subsection will first contextualize *Burr* in order to explore the historicity of the text. Then, the characterization in the novel will be examined to display the framework of historiographic metafiction. Finally, the textual analysis will include the discussions of the autobiography tradition in relation to history, the questioning of the representations of the founding fathers as grand narratives, and the problematization of history writing, all of which differentiate *Burr* from a historical novel.

Burr opens with "*A Special Despatch to the New York Evening Post*" (Vidal 1) where Charles Schermerhorn Schuyler tries to describe Aaron Burr's marriage to the wealthy ex-prostitute Eliza Jumel, on July 1, 1833. The novel consists of five chapters designed as 1833, 1834, 1835, 1836, and 1840, and has a two-layered narrative structure. The first layer consists of the fictional character Charles' diary, kept between the years 1833 and 1840. Charles is a law clerk in Burr's law office and an ardent writer with aspirations to become a journalist. While working at Burr's law office, Charles is hired by William Leggett, editor of the newspaper *Evening Post*, to write a pamphlet that will reveal that Martin Van Buren, vice-president at the time, is Burr's illegitimate child. With this pamphlet, Leggett aims to destroy Buren's status in politics. Meanwhile, Charles takes notes on Burr's conversations on other people, and Burr, who notices his actions, assumes that Charles is writing about his "adventurous life" (Vidal 5). In order to help Charles write his life story, Burr, who served as the vice-president of Thomas

Jefferson between the years 1801 and 1805, offers to give Charles his manuscripts about the years of the Revolution along with his memoirs. Charles' diary, which functions as the frame-story, includes the events that Charles observes and experiences while he is trying to write both the pamphlet and Burr's biography. Ruminating about creating a historical account, Charles works towards collecting all the data in Burr's manuscript and memoirs, and, at the same time, he writes about Burr's recounts from his recollections.

The second layer includes Burr's manuscript about the American Revolutionary War which was written between the years 1791 and 1797 when Burr was a member of the Senate. This section also contains Burr's memoirs in which Burr narrates his life between 1783 when he and his family came to New York and 1807 when he was charged "with treason for having wanted to break up the United States" (Vidal 1), and was eventually found "innocent of treason but guilty of the misdemeanour of proposing an invasion of Spanish territory in order to make himself emperor of Mexico" (Vidal 2). The manuscript and the memoirs embedded in Charles' diary provide Burr's first person narrative voice, thus displaying his perspective.

In the 1830s, Burr is an unpopular lawyer in New York City, not only because he killed Alexander Hamilton, one of the founding fathers, in a duel in 1804 when he was the vice-president in Thomas Jefferson's administration, but also because he conspired a secessionist plot within the Union in 1805, as the rumor indicates. He is so disliked that Charles is secretly hired to disclose the rumor that politician Van Buren, who Burr keenly supports in politics, is Burr's illegitimate son. This rumor will cause Van Buren to be erased from the political arena due to his familial connection with the infamous Burr. Charles views Burr as his mentor in politics and after reading Burr's manuscripts and memoirs, he has friendly feelings towards Burr despite his earlier skepticism. In spite of his guilty conscience, Charles continues to write both the pamphlet that can destroy Van Buren and Burr's biography because he is desperately in need of financial means to sustain himself and his lover, Helen Jewett, a prostitute Charles has lived together for a short period.

Charles tries to soothe his guilty conscience about the would-be pamphlet that destroys Van Buren by saying “Do I betray the Colonel? In a small way, yes. Do I hurt him? No. An anonymous pamphlet maintaining that he was the devil would not distress him at all. . . . Also, if he is consistent, he could hardly complain if the world were to know he is the father of Van Buren” (Vidal 21-22). Luckily, Charles sells the pamphlet for a good price to a publisher who plans to publish it under the name of Davy Crockett, a congressman whose autobiography has been published in the previous year. Charles is relieved as he says, “Best of all I have done no injury to Colonel Burr. Not only will he never associate me with Davy Crockett but if the Crockett style is what I think it is no one will take seriously a word that’s published in the name of that drunken fat-head” (Vidal 433). Additionally, Matt L. Davis, a newspaper editor and one of Burr’s followers, intends to write Burr’s biography to be published post-humously. Although Burr is informed of this incident, he particularly wants Charles to write his biography in corporation with him. Thus, two biographies of Burr are being written almost simultaneously.

After Burr dies in September, 1836, Charles does not write anything in his journal until December, 1840, and, at the time, he works as American consul in Amalfi, Sicily. Despite continuously and meticulously probing Burr’s life to find the filial connection between Burr and Buren and to write Burr’s biography, in the end Charles accidentally learns that Burr is his father and Van Buren is his half-brother. The novel concludes with Charles waiting for the publication of Burr’s biography by Matt Davis in order to publish his own account.

Burr, which breaks with the premises of the historical novel by problematizing the writing of history while underlining the textuality of history, demonstrates the discussions upon the historicity of the text in accordance with the New Historicist perspective. As examined in the previous section, LaCapra, Berkhofer, Greenblatt, and Montrose suggest that the conceptualization of the past cannot be viewed as separate from the present social, cultural, and political mentalities because the historian is also a historical subject in the social system s/he experiences. In order to understand why a historical period is contextualized the way it is, it is necessary to understand the

historical period in which the historian lives. This outlook clarifies the dialogue between the past and the present. In this context, the publication of *Burr* and the atmosphere of the time will be examined to display the effects of the social, political, and cultural atmosphere in the construction of the past in *Burr*.

Before his assassination, Kennedy and his administration supported South Vietnam by strengthening the US military presence in the region to prevent a communist invasion over South Vietnam. In 1964, the Lyndon Johnson administration wanted to expand the war to North Vietnam by denying negotiations with the rulers. Congress also passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, "which gave the president the authority to 'take any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression'" (Norton et al 842). The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution led Congress to surrender "its warmaking powers to the executive branch" (Norton et al 842). Thus, the president gained extensive power in governmental decisions.

Like Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon also used his extensive presidential power. For instance, Nixon promised to end the Vietnam War, but he also ordered US forces to invade and bomb Cambodia. Additionally, President Nixon was involved in the Watergate break-in in the election of 1972. According to Mary Beth Norton and et al., "The Watergate scandal shook the confidence of American citizens in their government. It also prompted Congress to reevaluate the balance of power between the executive and legislative branches. Beginning in 1973, Congress passed several major bills aimed at restricting presidential power" (*A People and a Nation: A History of the United States* 875-76). The 1970s was a period when American people and media became suspicious about the deeds of their presidents.

In this context, there is a meaningful relationship between what Vidal narrates throughout *Burr* and the social turbulence in the 1970s. In the novel, Burr severely criticizes the founding fathers as imperialist monarchs who abuse their presidential powers. As Donald E. Pease claims in his article entitled "America and the Vidal Chronicles," "Burr explains Washington's belief in a strong government as an effort to protect his vast landholdings in Mount Vernon, and Thomas Jefferson's espousal of

states rights simply as a political strategy to win votes" (269). It could be claimed that while Vidal was contextualizing historical figures such as Washington and Jefferson in *Burr*, Johnson and particularly Nixon and their scandalous political actions were in his mind. Vidal's article "Richard Nixon: Not *The Best Man*'s Best Man," published in *Esquire* in 1983, can justify this connection. In this article, Vidal remarks that his play entitled *An Evening with Richard Nixon* was produced on Broadway in 1972 and was severely criticized by a *New York Times* journalist because Vidal said "'mean and nasty things about [the] president'" (Vidal 58). Vidal explains why he interpreted Nixon the way he did by evaluating other American presidents as follows:

> To understand Nixon's career you would have to understand the United States in the twentieth century, and that is something that our educational, political, and media establishments are not about to help us do. After all: no myth, no nation. They have a vested interest in maintaining our ignorance, and that is why we are currently stuck with the peculiar notion that Nixon just happened to be the one bad apple in a splendid barrel. The fact that there has not been a good or serious president since Franklin Roosevelt is ignored, while the fact that Nixon was corrupt some of the time, and complex and devious all of the time, is constantly emphasized in order to make him appear uniquely sleazy—and the rest of us just grand. Yet Nixon is hardly atypical. Certainly his predecessor, Lyndon Johnson, far surpassed Nixon when it came to mendacity and corruption. But the national myth requires, periodically, a scapegoat; hence Nixon's turn in the barrel.
> Actually, corruption has been more the rule than the exception in our political life. ("Richard Nixon" 58-59)

In *Burr*, Vidal, who argues that Nixon is not the only corrupt president in American history, underlines the idea that corruption existed even in the establishment of the Republic. By presenting Washington and Jefferson's unknown or rather sidelined characteristics, Vidal demonstrates his personal opinion about the founding fathers' corruption in association with Nixon's corrupt political career. Vidal is not surprised by Nixon's corruption because, according to him, Nixon inherited his outlook from previous presidents. In *Burr*, Vidal's emphasis on the monarchist, imperialistic, and opportunistic intentions of the founding fathers can easily be associated with similar objectives of the presidents in the 1960s and 1970s. As Pease states, *Burr* "depended on debates over executive privilege, balance of powers, Nixon's Imperial Presidency, and the Watergate break-in for a contemporary consciousness responsive to the actions

recorded in" the novel (268). Thus, Vidal's current social, political, and cultural environment determines his understanding of past events and historical figures in *Burr*.

Additionally, Vidal's critical perspective towards American ideals such as democracy and republic can be scrutinized from the way he constructs *Burr*. As Pease states,

> Burr repeatedly violates the mythological event that guaranteed the doctrine of American Exceptionalim. That mythological event conflated the nation's founding with Columbus' discovery of the New World and required early Americans to misrecognize the historical agency of their own imperialist war—in Mexico, California, and the western territories—as a result of some "foreign" power. Unlike George Washington and the other founding fathers, who readily transcribed their own imperial ambitions onto this mythological coda, Aaron Burr freely expresses his wish to found an Empire in America and to expropriate Native Americans' land in the name of the American Empire. (269)

By juxtaposing Burr's desire to establish a Mexican Empire on American soil with the other founding fathers' unspoken political agendas to build an empire, Vidal hints that both Burr and the other founding fathers had similar goals. Yet only Burr is identified as the unwanted person. Pease interprets Burr's role in American history as follows:

> As a political figure who openly acknowledges his imperialist ambitions, Burr represents a national history hidden by political mythology. Without Burr to serve as ritual scapegoat for the contradictions between their putative motives and actual deeds, the founders would have been subjected to a more severe critical scrutiny rather than historical worship. (269)

Through his novel *Burr*, Vidal aims two things: as Pease claims, he "rehabilitated Burr's character during the intense scrutiny of the Nixon presidency" and "Burr's biography legitimized the political critique of Nixon's imperialism" (Pease 269-70). Hence, the associations between the events of the 1970s and those of the Revolutionary years depict the formative influence of the present mentality in constructing past events as history in the novel.

The mode of the characterization in *Burr* is also different from that of the historical novel. The protagonists in the historical novel are types that reflect the general human

characteristics of the time which the novel narrates for the sake of providing a sense of past reality. In Lukács' opinion, Sir Walter Scott's historical novels almost always include average human beings and they are "never eccentric figures, who fall psychologically outside the atmosphere of the age" (60). Unlike the historical novel, historiographic metafiction, as Hutcheon claims, presents "the ex-centrics, the marginalized, the peripheral figures of fictional history," and "[e]ven the historical personages take on different, particularized, and ultimately ex-centric status" (*Poetics* 114). The aim of this kind of characterization in historiographic metafiction is to underline "a postmodern ideology of plurality and recognition of difference" (*Poetics* 114).

In *Burr*, almost all of the characters, including the two prostitutes, Mrs. Townsend, the manager of the brothel house, and Helen Jewett, Charles' lover, are historical figures. There are two exceptions, though. One of which is Charles, as Gore Vidal notes in the afterward of the novel, "who is based roughly on the obscure novelist Charles Burdett" and a minor character William de la Touche Clancey, "who could, obviously, be based on no one at all" (502). Vidal either chooses ex-centric historical figures, or fictionalizes them as marginalized characters in his novel in order to underline the textuality of the historical figures. Likewise, he prefers to create fictional characters who precede the psychology of their historical atmosphere. The fictionalized historical personages Burr, Mrs. Townsend, Washington Irving, the semi-fictional Charles, and the fictional de la Touche exemplify the distinctive characterization of *Burr*.

As the protagonist of *Burr*, Burr is very aptly used in the novel: in the first place, Burr himself is a peripheral historical figure because he has been literally marginalized in the official story of American history as a traitor. By making use of an eccentric and marginalized historical personality as the main character, *Burr* presents the opinions of a character, who is cut off from historical narratives. *Burr* presents an alternative history constructed by Burr in order to draw attention to how history could be different if narrated by Burr. Burr's narrative does not have to be true because the purpose is not to provide a true account. It is because, as Hutcheon suggests, "The eighteenth-century concern for lies and falsity becomes a postmodern concern for the multiplicity and

dispersion of truth(s), truth(s) relative to the specificity of place and culture" (*Poetics* 108). In this sense, the aim of the novel is to question the idea of providing a true historical account through Burr's biased, deliberately subverted, and sensational statements by showing how Burr would construct his narrative if given the chance. *Burr*, like other historiographic metafictions, stresses the plurality of discourses in historical narratives.

Using Burr as the protagonist confers with Hutcheon's idea that, in historiographic metafiction, historical figures are used to make the reader "see all referents as fictive, as imagined" (*Poetics* 153). Although some historical novelists employ historical personalities as major figures in their novels, the general trend is to use them as minor characters for the convenience of the reader in spotting the historical period. However, according to the premises of historiographic metafiction, historical personalities are also referents in historical accounts because they are only known through "their textualized traces in history" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 153). In relation to this, throughout the novel, the reader witnesses both Charles' effort to textualize Burr in his diary and Burr's effort to textualize the founding fathers in his memoirs. Thus, the reader finds the chance to compare the representations of Burr and the founding fathers in historical accounts to the ones in *Burr*. The incongruity between their representations in historical accounts, accepted as grand narratives, and their fictional representations in *Burr* emphasizes that historical figures are fictionalized and textualized either in historical accounts or in fictional ones. In this sense, the use of historical personalities in historiographic metafiction is also functional in problematizing the representations of these figures as grand narratives.

Another historical and marginalized character in *Burr* is Rosanna Townsend, who is an ex-prostitute and the current manager of the brothel house. Mrs. Townsend, who occupies a secondary place in the novel, seems to be quite an ex-centric character because "she reads works of philosophy, collections of sermons" (Vidal 33). Contradictory enough to her occupation, she is almost the only character in the novel who thinks about religious issues, and whenever she appears, she is associated with religion and religious matters. When Charles visits the brothel house at the Five Points,

“where the five streets come together the world’s worst people can be found—drunks, whores, thieves, gamblers, murderers-for-hire (Vidal 32), he sees Mrs. Townsend reading John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, which is an allegory in which the main character is in search of religious truth. She refers to Milton while narrating her first impressions on New York by saying “‘when I was seventeen I came to the city, too, eager to take my place in Sodom and Gomorrah. Like Milton’s Satan, I would rather reign in Thomas Street than serve in Claverack” (Vidal 35). Mrs. Townsend searches for the meaning of the universe. According to her, “‘there must be some meaning to all this. Some great design’” (Vidal 33). She contemplates on how and why the current events unfold in a certain way.

In another scene, she appears reading Jonathan Edwards, and quotes some passages for Charles. While she reads Bunyan to find the meaning of life, she reads Edwards “‘*for the terror*!’” (Vidal 130, original emphasis). One of the quotations she chooses is as follows: “‘Let it be considered that if our lives be not a journey toward Heaven, they will be a journey to Hell’” (Vidal 130). Later on, she gets interested in the Buddha by “extending [her] religious range to the East” (Vidal 276). Although Mrs. Townsend is a prostitute, she acts in a way that is not expected from a prostitute. She uses metaphoric language to express her ideas, develops a critical perspective towards Edwards by emphasizing the terror in his Puritanical writings, and tries to understand Eastern philosophy and religion. The incongruity between her mentality and environment makes her a marginalized historical character. In contrast to Lukács’ definition of a type character, she seems to “fall psychologically outside the atmosphere” (60) of her own age because of her interests in philosophy, spirituality, religion, and untimely intellectual inquiries.

In his book *Gore Vidal*, although Robert F. Kiernan evaluates Mrs. Townsend as a figure who is “paralleling the history of American religious sentiment in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries” by moving from Bunyan to Edwards and later to Oriental religions, which is an “Emersonian interest” to “soothe[] her spirits” (81), it may also be claimed that, considering her occupation and the lack of the fast communication technology of the time, she anachronistically experiences Transcendental ideals.

Although American Romanticism appeared after the 1820s, the Transcendentalist movement was popularized by Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was influenced by Hinduism, Confucianism, and Islamic Sufism, and Henry David Thoreau after the 1830s. Emerson moved to Concord, where the Transcendentalist movement was initiated, in 1834; the Transcendentalist Club was organized in 1836; Emerson's first publication, *Nature*, appeared in 1836; and his poem "Brahma" was published in 1857. Likewise, Thoreau's *Walden, or, Life in the Woods* appeared in 1854. At this point, it should be noted that when Mrs. Townsend appears interested in the Oriental religions in the novel, the year is 1834. In the nineteenth century, it does not seem to be possible for Mrs. Townsend to have access to the publications that shape the movement as soon as they appear. Mrs. Townsend's intellectual activities seem to be a little ahead of her own historical period because she fosters the ideas that are not yet widely popularized in the society. Hence, she could be evaluated as another ex-centric historical figure in the novel.

Besides, Mrs. Townsend, who administers the brothel house, ironically becomes an important source of information for Charles since he gathers valuable information about Burr from Mrs. Townsend who knows Burr in person, or as she says, "'even—or especially—in the Biblical sense'" (Vidal 35). For instance, Charles asks her if Van Buren is Burr's illegitimate son, and she implies that she has heard it but prefers not to talk about it. Yet Mrs. Townsend gives Charles the information that Burr "'has at least one son born beneath the rose, as they say, a silversmith, who lives in the Bowery. Aaron Columbus Burr he is called. His mother was a French and he was conceived while the Colonel was in Paris'" (35-36). Additionally, Charles learns from her that Aaron Columbus Burr "took a trip up the Hudson River with Mr. Van Buren and the Colonel" (Vidal 277). Most importantly, although Charles spends his days with Burr and searches for information on the relationship between Burr and Van Buren, he learns from Mrs. Townsend that Burr was with Van Buren the day before and that "'Colonel Burr was a good friend to that young man'" (Vidal 276). Although a peripheral character, Mrs. Townsend is used as a source of information, which is also meaningful in the framework of historiographic metafiction in that this bizarre, ex-centric, and marginalized character is also able to produce a historical account as a micro narrative

as opposed to grand narratives of history. Mrs. Townsend is a character who would hardly appear in a traditional historical novel.

Washington Irving whom Charles admires is also a historical character worth mentioning. Although Vidal claims that Charles is based on the historical character Charles Burdett, there are significant similarities between Charles and Irving, as well. As George Sanderlin notes in *Washington Irving: As Others Saw Him*, Irving writes under the pseudonym Jonathan Oldstyle, Gent. for the *Morning Chronicle* (12). Likewise, Charles writes under the pseudonym Old Patroon for the *Evening Post*. Both suffer tragic losses: Irving's girlfriend dies from a cold (Sanderlin 24), and Charles' girl friend is murdered by a brothel house customer. As Sanderlin states, Irving served governmental posts such as secretary of the American legation in London in 1829 (37) and ambassador to Spain between 1842 and 1846 (41). Similarly, Charles represents his country abroad when he is sent to Amalfi, Sicily, as the American consul.

Another striking similarity between Irving and Charles is their relationships with the patriotic fathers, George Washington and Aaron Burr whose biographies are written by Irving and Charles respectively. For both Irving and Charles, these patriotic fathers turn out to be father figures. In the Introduction of *Washington Irving's* Sketch-Book, Blander Matthews narrates the fact that Irving was named after George Washington after the American forces had saved New York where the Irving family lived and that Irving was literally blessed by Washington. A few years later the city was saved when Washington came to New York "to be inaugurated as the first president of the United States, a Scotch maidservant of the Irvings took the child up to him in a shop one day, saying, 'Please, your honor, here's a bairn was named for you,' and the great man gave the boy his blessing" (iv). Thus, George Washington, who Irving was named after, also blessed him like a godfather. Likewise and further, Aaron Burr, who treats Charles as a son throughout the novel, is revealed to be Charles' biological father at the end of the novel.

Moreover, both Irving and Charles write the biographies of these patriotic fathers. The important point in this connection is that they approach their subjects in a very similar

manner. In 1856, American historian William H. Prescott evaluates Irving's biography of Washington, *Life of Washington*, as follows: "I have been gladdened by the sight of the second volume of your great work. . . . You have done with Washington just as I thought you would, and, instead, marble statue of a demigod, you have made him a being of flesh and blood, like ourselves—one with whom we can have sympathy" (qtd. in Sanderlin 97). This is exactly what Charles does in his biography of Burr. Burr, who is assumed as a dark spot in American history, turns out to be a sympathetic character due to Charles' contextualization of Burr.

Yet the most important connection between Irving and Charles is their interest in history. As Sanderlin claims, Irving, who is known as a fiction writer writing romances inspired by German folktales, also writes "popular biography and history" (34). Some of his important works concerning history are cited as follows: *Knickerbocker's History of New York* (1809), *The Life of Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (1828), *Biography and Poetical Remains of the Late Margaret Miller Davidson* (1841), and *Life of George Washington* (1855-1859). Irving as a historian was credited at the time, and, in 1829, "he had been elected a member of the Real Academia de La Historia (The Royal Academy of History), only the second American to be honored" (Sanderlin 35-36). In his article published in 1906, American critic Leon H. Vincent explains Irving's contribution to history writing as follows: "Irving rendered an immense service to the biographical study of history. Columbus, Mahomet, the princes and warriors of the Holy War, are made real to us. Nor is this all. His books help to counteract that tendency of the times to make history a recondite science" (qtd. in Sanderlin 108) because they are readable historical accounts.

In *Burr*, Irving, who was considered as a serious historian at his time, also thinks about writing history, and gives some advice to Charles about it: "Your investigation will lead you down all sorts of paths. You must be careful. There are pitfalls for the unwary" (Vidal 143). His suggestion is quite right, but his questions and attitude push Charles and the reader to question the writing of history. Charles thinks that since Burr is still alive, he is able to collect the correct data from Burr to learn "the way things really were" (Vidal 85). In a conversation, he reveals his thought to Washington Irving.

However, Irving's answer is surprising for Charles: "'Really were?' Perhaps. Yet isn't it better that we make our own *useful* version of our history and put away—in the attic, as it were—the sadder, less edifying details?" (Vidal 85, original emphasis). Irving's attitude is surprising because, considering his conceptualization as an important historian by authorities of the time, the reader and perhaps Charles may expect that Irving would give a lecture about writing objective historical accounts. However, Irving's rhetorical question points to one of the issues, which is the difficulty of the choice of the details as evidence, which postmodernist historiography is also deeply concerned. By fictionalizing Irving as a character who self-consciously ruminates about history writing rather than a character who only helps to spot the historical period in which the events in the novel take place, *Burr* presents Irving as an atypical historical character that may not be present in a historical novel.

In *Burr*, the use of the semi-fictional Charles as the other protagonist of the novel is also different from the use of the protagonist in the historical novel. That Charles is based upon a historical figure, Charles Burdett, and that this detail is revealed by Vidal at the end of the novel, push the reader to search for the intertextual relationship between the fictional Charles' narrative and that of Burdett. As Bernard F. Dick maintains in *The Apostate Angel: A Critical Study of Gore Vidal*, Charles is

> a shadowy kinsman of Charles Burdett, one of Burr's wards and perhaps his bastard son. Burdett, like the fictitious Schuyler, also worked in Burr's law office and was a writer of sorts, whose *Reminiscences of Aaron Burr, by One Who Knew and Loved Him* was touching account of the way Burr educated his protégés as if they were his natural children. (182-83)

Burdett also wrote a novel entitled *Margaret Moncrieffe* (or *The Beautiful Spy and Amours of Aaron Burr*), which is defined as a historical romance by Dick. This novel, based upon a real event, narrates the love affair between Burr and Margaret who is later discovered as a British spy by Burr himself. The novel that includes a chapter entitled "Love at First Sight" depicts Margaret from a third person narrative point of view through Burr's perspective as follows:

> She was tall—quite up to the standard fixed by that *arbiter elegantiorum*, Lord Chesterfield—with a form fully developed in all the glory of budding womanhood; large, lustrous eyes, a complexion so shaded between blonde and brunette, it was impossible to decide which predominated; hair black as the raven's wing, and presenting an *ensemble*, which a painter or sculptor would have been proud to embody as his ideal of perfection in womanhood and beauty. (31, original emphasis)

Burr is mesmerized by the girl who asks him how old she could be, and he answers as follows: "You are young enough to make me wish you were older, and old enough to make me wish that I was older" (32). However, as Dick suggests, this relationship that is represented by Burdett as love at first sight is displayed in a totally different way in *Burr*: "In the novel, Burr acknowledges the affair but corrects the impression that he and Margaret were legendary lovers" (183). In *Burr*, Burr reveals his opinion about Margaret as follows: "I have been accused of having seduced" Margaret (66), "I did not like the girl at all. Thought her precocious and sly" (67), and "I am told she gives to me the honour of having been the first to take her virginity. But I do not think that would have been possible" (68). At this point, it is possible to claim that the existence of Charles as a re-written form of Charles Burdett in *Burr* is a clue to see the incongruity between the texts that deal with a same historical fact. In this sense, Charles forces the reader to realize the intertextual relations between texts rather than functioning to represent the general characteristic of his time.

Likewise, Charles is not a character who can be evaluated as a type. What causes Charles to fall outside of his historical atmosphere is his approach to history writing, which has postmodern implications towards the writing of history. As discussed earlier, between the 1770s and 1830s, particularly in the nineteenth century, there is a major separation between historiography and literary writings, which marks the principles of modern historiography. In this period, historians claim that evidence is assessed and objectively constructed as history. Supporting this idea, the historical novel of the period focuses on the facts and novelists meticulously research to write their historical novels by reflecting the same opinion. It ought to be noted that in 1833 Charles tries to write his historical account of Burr's life by questioning this positivistic perspective, which alludes to the postmodernist incredulity towards metanarratives, to use Lyotard's terminology. As it will be discussed in detail later, Charles ruminates about the nature

of evidence to claim a fact, tries to sort out the confusing historical data, struggles with the gaps within historical accounts, and underlines the importance of form by endeavoring to have a proper style. Finally, he understands that it seems to be impossible to write a whole and truthful account of Burr's life. His skeptic approach to history writing overlaps with the skepticism of postmodernist historiography. In this context, Charles anachronistically fosters a postmodernist perspective towards history writing, which makes him another ex-centric figure in the novel.

The only purely fictional character in the novel is William de la Touche Clancey. Although Clancey appears in the novel just five times as a very minor character, it is worth mentioning him since he is a marginalized figure, represented as a "compulsive sodomite, forever preying on country boys new to the city" (Vidal 40) despite his rich wife and five children. Clancey is a character who acts out of the norms of the period and seems to fulfill his homosexual desires openly. When Charles first meets Clancey, who is also a writer for his own magazine *America*, Clancey is being beaten by a young actor at the Five Points because he has tried to get the actor to his bed. This fight takes place in the middle of the street, and Clancey is not disturbed at all. The second appearance of Clancey in the novel is at the Dining Room of the City Hotel when he comes and suddenly sits down next to Charles who is talking to Dr. Bogart, who is their common friend. Charles makes a quick farewell to Dr. Bogart because he feels "an insolent crash" in Clancey's eyes, which disturbs him (Vidal 76). Similarly, Clancey's other appearances in the novel are also related to his homosexual desires. Like Burr, Mrs. Townsend, and Charles, Clancey is a marginalized character. He is not an average character embodying the general human characteristic of his time. When compared to the historical novel in which fictional characters are employed to represent the average human being, Vidal's *Burr* diverts from the characteristics of the historical novel by employing the only fictional character as a peripheral figure.

The most distinctive characteristic of *Burr* as a historiographic metafiction rather than as a historical novel, whose primary aim is to give the sense of a past reality, is *Burr*'s intense, self-conscious, and self-reflexive concern with history writing. The purpose of *Burr* is to question history writing by intending to display the subjective and discursive

nature of history. Hence, *Burr* problematizes history writing. Accordingly, the structure of the novel is based on the forms highly subjective, such as Burr's memoirs where Burr tries to write another version of the history of the Revolution and Charles' diary where the reader witnesses Charles' effort to write both the pamphlet about the relationship between Burr and Van Buren and the biography of Aaron Burr. These forms are closely associated with historiography because memoirs, diaries (or simply autobiographies), and biographies are used as sources in writing history, and these genres overlap with many issues that the writing of history addresses. The use of the memoirs, a diary, and the discussions on the writing of history are the primary devices in *Burr* that problematize history writing.

Since the backbones of the novel are Burr's memoirs and Charles' diary, it is relevant to emphasize the connotations of autobiography in relation to history. Autobiography is simply defined as "the story of a man's life written by himself" (Painter 163) and, in "Modern American Autobiography: Texts and Transactions," as Albert E. Stone claims, autobiographies can be accepted to be "individual versions of history" (95). As Stone suggests,

> [a]t its inception, personal history represents a historically conditioned transaction between a surviving witness or participant and available records of the past. These embrace memoirs above all, but also correspondence, interviews, diaries, photographs, newspapers, and other library sources. What results is an account designedly individual and partial. (96)

Although autobiographies are highly subjective, as Albert E. Stone admits, they are "useful in throwing light on the time-bound perceptions of past events and the effects of, and responses of individuals to, the structural features (e.g. institution and social process) of given historical moments" (96-97). Hence, they are treated as historical documents to a certain extent.

While the autobiography is accepted as individual history, an autobiographer is associated with a historian. Susanna Egan examines American autobiography after the Civil War, and claims in her article "'Self'-Conscious History: American Autobiography after the Civil War" that autobiographers "assume the role of

historians," desire to be "useful," and thus aim "to record and thereby to create American history" (72). According to the autobiography tradition, an autobiographer is not merely recording his life story, but writing history. Within the framework of the autobiography tradition, an autobiographer is not a simple and ordinary personality. In her book *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation*, Leigh Gilmore notes the qualities of an autobiographer as follows:

> The writers whose texts have been used as the base of an argument for what autobiography is, form a set of "exemplary" literary, political, and military men; they have been seen (and this view persists) as singular figures capable of summing up an era in a name: Augustine, Rousseau, Franklin, Henry Adams. (11)

In most cases, an autobiography is a story of success. Claiming that autobiographies "have been assimilated to political agendas," Gilmore observes that "Myths of American self-sufficiency, for example, of crafty capitalist know-how" have been "deployed throughout the history of American autobiography" (10). In this context, the most well-known autobiography is Benjamin Franklin's, which is worth mentioning because, as Lawrence Buell notes in his article "Autobiography in the American Renaissance," "America's only canonical work of fully-developed autobiography before the late nineteenth century was Franklin's personalized version of the famous-figure memoir" (49). Franklin's life is an example for an "exemplary" life, and serves the myth of American self-sufficiency in that, as Russell B. Nye maintains in the Introduction to Franklin's *Autobiography*, "By reason of his industry, skill, and acumen [Benjamin Franklin] rose from penniless obscurity to fame and wealth" (x). Hence, an autobiography conventionally includes an exemplary personality who narrates his life story embroidered with his successes.

In *Burr*, Vidal plays with the conventions of the autobiography tradition in line with postmodernism. As Hutcheon claims, postmodernist art forms "use and abuse, install and then destabilize convention in parodic ways, self-consciously pointing both to their own inherent paradoxes and provisionality and, of course, to their critical or ironic re-reading of the art of the past" (*Poetics* 23). In contrast to the conventions, Burr, who wants his life story to be written, is not an "exemplary" person since he is remembered

as a traitor and a murderer in American history. As a historical fact, Burr was tried for being involved in a secessionist plot and having murdered Alexander Hamilton in a duel. Burr's life is not an exemplary life to be narrated. However, *Burr* incorporates Burr as the protagonist, and narrates the life story of an outcast in contrast to the traditional autobiography. In this sense, Vidal provides a postmodernist perspective to the tradition of autobiography: on the one hand, he uses the form of autobiography; on the other hand, he demonstrates that the conventions of the autobiography writing do not work in *Burr* because Burr's autobiography works against Burr by revealing his scandalous life. Hence, *Burr* challenges and repeats the conventions "with critical distance that allows ironic signaling of difference at the very heart of similarity," in accordance with Hutcheon's opinion (*Poetics* 26).

Burr is in line with historiographic metafiction that searches for the cracks of history that are rarely narrated or totally ignored. Historiographic metafiction does not accept that there is only one truth. In this context, autobiographical pieces as the shaping forms of *Burr* help to provide multiple points of view in first person narration. *Burr* presents two first-person narrative perspectives, Burr's and Charles'. In parallel with Hutcheon's discussions on historiographic metafiction, presenting multiple points of view "[problematizes] the entire notion of subjectivity" in history writing (*Poetics* 117). When Burr offers to give his memoirs to Charles, he actually voices this approach. Burr calls his memoirs "'[b]its and pieces'" that are the outcome of his "'lingering desire to tell the true story of the Revolution before it is too late'" (Vidal 5). He wants to write his version of history by explaining his reason as follows: "'the legend of those days seems to be cast in lead if the schoolbooks are any guide. It is quite uncanny how wrong they are about all of us'" (Vidal 5). Acting like a historian, Burr desires to create a contesting historical narrative as opposed to the official version of the history of the Revolution. Yet, as he states, he is well aware that his "'side of the story is not, necessarily, the accurate one'" (Vidal 24). Burr's aspiration to re-write the history of the Revolution and his acceptance of the fact that his version, too, cannot be the accurate one is very apt to the anti-totalizing ideology of historiographic metafiction, which aims to question history as a metanarrative.

Moreover, these first-person narrators in the novel are capable of knowing the events only from their perspectives proportional to the limits of memory and documents they have access to. When Burr hands in his memoirs to Charles, he leaves Charles a note in which he says, “Sometimes I have written only a paragraph, intending more. Other times, I reconstruct from memory. I doubt if I shall ever add to what I have done. Perhaps you can make something of these fragments” (Vidal 91). Similarly, Charles also feels the same frustration when he takes Burr’s documents: “I took the manuscript, delighted that the Colonel has chosen to confide in me, even though I find the Revolution as remote as the Trojan War, and a good deal more confusing since the surviving relics agree on nothing” (Vidal 24). Charles’ comments on the documents about the war also remind Hayden White’s claims about the difficulties in making generalizations concerning the past events: increasing documents and knowledge about the past make it difficult to provide a whole and general historical narrative that can be passed as the truth (White, “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact” 43). Although Burr aspires to write the true story of the Revolution, he is not confident because of his weakening memory. Likewise, Charles is hopeless because of the confusing documents that refer to the war. Thus, neither of the narrative voices is able to narrate the true and complete history, which is very appropriate to the premises of historiographic metafiction. According to Hutcheon, the use of this kind of narrative voice that does not present a subject “confident of his/her ability to know the past with any certainty” is “not a transcending of history, but a problematized inscribing of subjectivity into history” (*Poetics* 117-18).

As stated earlier, history as discourse is not free of ideology as Foucault and Lyotard assert in connection to the power/knowledge relation. Likewise, Hutcheon states, “Those in power control history. The marginal and ex-centric, however, can contest that power, even as they remain within its purvey” (*Poetics* 197). Postmodern novels question this totalizing approach, and “The question of *whose* history survives is one that obsesses postmodern novels” (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 120, original emphasis). Accordingly, *Burr* demonstrates this obsession through Burr’s narrative that tries to contest all other historical accounts. In the novel, Burr questions primarily the representations of the historical personalities in history such as George Washington,

Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton by intending to offer the true story of the Revolution. Burr's intention to give his memoirs to Charles in 1833 is also related to the power/knowledge relation. Simply, Burr, who was once an outcast and marginal figure, is now powerful enough to produce knowledge because, in 1833, he is the only living person among other patriotic figures. He is a powerful lawyer, married to a wealthy woman, and his illegitimate son, Van Buren, is progressing in politics. Burr knows that Matt Davis will write his biography when he dies, but he wants Charles to write his biography while he is alive because he wants to produce the discourse. It should also be remembered that Hamilton's biography, written by his son, has been recently published, and Burr wants his own biography to contest this account, as well. Although Burr asserts that he aims to write the true story of the Revolution, his ulterior motive is to correct his dark representation in history, as it will be examined in detail in the following pages. Thus, Burr's narrative displays Hayden White's assumption: "'every representation of the past has specifiable ideological implications'" (qtd. in Hutcheon, *Poetics* 120). The following arguments will focus on how Burr conceptualizes and re-writes past events in order to underline the subjectivity in history writing by focusing on Burr's memoirs. Later, Charles' diary will be explored in order to stress the novel's direct concern with history writing.

Burr claims that truths about George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and most importantly about himself are not written in history books. He states that Washington, Jefferson, and Hamilton are represented as legendary figures of the American Revolution and the Republic. In *Gore Vidal: A Critical Companion*, Susan Baker and Curtis S. Gibson suggest, "*Burr* works deliberately to demythologize and desentimentalize patriotic legends" (76). Particularly the memoirs of Burr in the novel function in this way because these legendary figures are narrated in the novel directly from Burr's perspective. This detail is significant in the novel on the grounds that Burr's preferences in narrating the events, his style, and his intention give some insights about how history is constructed, and create a platform in which history writing is problematized.

Burr's first target to demythologize is General George Washington. From Burr's perspective, General Washington, who is accepted in history books as one of the heroes of the Revolutionary War and the newly constructed Republic, has failed as a general during the war. Based on his experiences with Washington in politics and in the war, Burr claims in his manuscript about the Revolution that

> [a]lthough defective in grammar and spelling, owing to a poor education, the General was uncommonly shrewd in the way he flattered congressmen. But then he had not spent fifteen years as a burgess in the Virginia Assembly without learning something of politics. Ultimately, I think, he must be judged as an excellent politician who had no gift for warfare. (Vidal 64).

Although Burr seemingly gives credit to Washington as a politician, the reader senses his critical and sarcastic perspective through his style. Later on Burr clarifies his argument by claiming that Washington is ignorant in politics because he has never read the political theories of Hobbes, Montesquieu, or Plato. Burr underlines Washington's shrewdness in manipulating the congressmen as his only strength in politics. This ability is of course a questionable success.

Burr also gives some examples of Washington's failures during the war. For instance, when the British Army enters New York City, Washington confronts the enemy with all his forces at Brooklyn in Long Island and the battle turns out to be a "disaster" for the American army (Vidal 70). According to Burr, "This was to be Washington's first set battle; it was nearly the last. Even today's hagiographers admit his sole responsibility for the disaster" (Vidal 70). Here, the fact that Burr mentions hagiographers is meaningful because of the characteristics of a hagiography. According to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, hagiography means "biography of saints or venerated persons" or "idealizing or idolizing biography" (hagiography). According to Burr, Washington's failures are so obvious that even in a hagiography it is not possible to reflect Washington in an idealized manner. However, in historical narratives, which are assumed to be reliable sources of information, Washington is represented as a hero because, as Burr states, "History, as usual, has got it all backward" (Vidal 64). Thus, Burr, who ruminates about history writing, questions historical narratives about

Washington by comparing them to hagiographies, which are totally partial forms. Burr's ultimate purpose is to stress the subjective nature of historical accounts.

Burr also explores the power/knowledge relation in history writing while narrating how Washington is viewed by his subordinates. Burr narrates the execution of a soldier for treason. At the execution, Washington, who is viewed as puritanical by Burr, delivers a speech to the troops, and Burr, who reads Washington's statement after the incident, narrates it as follows:

> According to our commander, the English-born Hickey had gone over to the British not for money but because *he was a life-long prey to lewd women*! It was a sermon worthy of my grandfather. Incidentally, the private soldiers disliked Washington as much as he disdained them. On the other hand, the young officers (with at least one exception) adored their commander, and it is the young officer not the private soldier who eventually decides what history is. (Vidal 64, original emphasis)

Burr, as the exceptional young officer referred to, views Washington to be a dictator who does not like independent minds and notes that Washington turns out to be "the Demigod" (Vidal 103) by the young officers who have the power of speaking up. In this case, the controversial perspectives about Washington are not preferred to be narrated and sidelined, and only the selected portions of the past events are noted down as history. Washington's heroic representation in history is based on the narratives that are produced by powerful people who decide on a certain discourse. Thus, Washington's drawbacks are not represented in historical accounts. Here, Burr gives some clues about how and by whom historical accounts are created as grand narratives by pushing the reader to question the history making process.

In his memoirs, Burr also tries to demythologize Thomas Jefferson who is commonly accepted as a hero. In historical accounts, while Jefferson is mentioned as one of the founding fathers, Burr is generally mentioned as the traitor, and, as Burr suggests, Burr owes this reputation particularly to Jefferson. In 1791 Burr is chosen as the third United States senator from New York, and he evaluates his political status and stance as follows:

> The fact that I had not sought the office nor wanted the office gave me strength. Although I was anti-Federalist, I was on good terms with many federalist leaders and so could act with perfect freedom. I was not thirty-five years old, and from an important region. I accepted my destiny. I would become the president, an office for which I believed that I was by temperament and training uniquely qualified. Why else had fate set me so high on the ladder? All I need do was ascend. I had no fear of Hamilton. His limitations were already apparent to me. The man I should have feared I thought my friend. By allowing Jefferson to deceive me, I lost all. (Vidal 178)

As the vice-president of Jefferson between the years 1801 and 1805, Burr has two personal conflicts with Jefferson, which is why he reserves a long section for Jefferson in his memoirs. The first problem between them is based on the election of 1792. At the time, there is a difference in opinion between the Republican Party, which is pro-France, anti-British, and egalitarian, and is led by Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Burr, and the Federalist Party, which is on the opposite side, and is led by Alexander Hamilton and John Adams. Since the election of 1792 is predicted to be a tough one for the Republicans, Jefferson makes a plan to defeat the Federalists. Since Charles does not find much about the election of 1792 in Burr's memoirs, he asks Matt Davis about it. Matt Davis, who has witnessed the 1792 election year, narrates the political arena of the time and Jefferson's plan to Charles as follows:

> It was a tribute to Colonel Burr that after only one year in the Senate, he was regarded by many Republicans as a future president. It was Jefferson's plan to undermine Adams as vice-president. Washington would be reelected unanimously but Adams must be defeated, or at least diminished. To Jefferson's amazement, votes began to accumulate for Colonel Burr and votes for Jefferson did not materialize. Finally a meeting was held in which the Republican leadership, directed by Jefferson, persuaded Burr to give up his votes to Governor Clinton with the understanding that in 1796 Burr would be our vice-presidential candidate. (Vidal 203)

Contrary to Jefferson's expectations, the election of 1792 ends with the success of the Federalist Party. Burr encourages Jefferson, who seemingly intends to retire from politics, to become the presidential candidate of the Republicans for the next election in 1796 and asks Jefferson to support him as his vice-presidential candidate. Jefferson makes a promise to Burr by saying, "'Whatever I can do, Colonel Burr, I will do'" (Vidal 239). However, in the election of 1796, Jefferson does not keep his word, and

does not support Burr. Particularly Virginia, which, Burr assumes, is the land of his "good friends and allies" (Vidal 239) does not vote for Burr. Later, he learns that Jefferson did not support him on purpose. Madison explains to him what Jefferson has thought: "'Politically, he thinks you too independent. Personally, he fears a rival. . . . he fears of you'" (Vidal 239). Burr is offended, but he feels the need to continue his career in politics, and he explains his feelings as follows: "Yes. Whatever Jefferson could do for himself he did! . . . I never trusted Jefferson again. But since we needed one another, I pretended to forgive" (Vidal 239).

The second conflict between Jefferson and Burr dates back to 1807 when Burr has been arrested "by order of President Jefferson and charged with treason for having wanted to break up the United States" (Vidal 1). Although Burr's genuine intention in the west and the south is still ambiguous today, as a historical event he is tried upon no firm evidence, and this event is known as the Burr Conspiracy in history. In the novel, Burr tries to prove that he is unjustly accused and tried. After a meeting with Jefferson at Washington, Burr simply explains the United States interest in the west and the south: "When I left Washington in the spring of 1805, everyone from Jefferson to the Creoles at New Orleans not only expected but wanted a war with Spain that would give the United States the Floridas, fix the western border of the United States, and open for me Texas and Mexico" (Vidal 355). Jefferson as president is also involved in the liberation of Mexico from Spain, but the way he and Burr take action is different. That is, Jefferson seems to be more precautious with having a war with Spain because he considers "his difficulties with Bonaparte, of his difficulties with England" (Vidal 345). However, Burr is bolder than Jefferson is. He says,

> [m]y plans at the west were bottomed on two suppositions. First, that there would be a war with Spain, making it possible for me to raise an army and descend upon Mexico. Second, that since Spain was now a dependency of France and France was at war with England, I would have English naval support. (Vidal 355)

In the novel, Burr often claims that he did not defend the separation of the union:

> Although I never had any plan to separate the western states from the rest of the union, I did ally myself with a number of political figures like the senators Brown and Adair and General Jamie Wilkinson—who had in earlier times been involved in the Spanish Conspiracy. But that was all past. In the summer of 1805 there was no movement for disunion anywhere in the United States, outside of New England. (Vidal 367)

Burr is encouraged by General Wilkinson, who is promoted by Hamilton who "wanted to have under him someone as eager as himself to conquer Mexico" (Vidal 328). Wilkinson convinces Burr that England would support them by providing an army for a would-be war between the United States and Spain on the condition that Burr would be the general in charge. Although he seems to be inclined to accept the proposal, Burr is cautious while talking to Wilkinson: "'You know my interest in the liberation of Mexico. Everyone's interest. I think I can even speak for the president when I say that he, too, would like Mexico liberated'" (Vidal 330). After a negotiation with the British minister, Burr gets the help that he needs for the marines in case of a war. In his memoirs, Burr once again stresses his purpose by saying that "I was careful to commit myself in no way to a breaking up of the union. My interests were first, Mexico; second, Texas; third, the Floridas. I never saw myself as King of Kentucky, yet at this very moment I was, according to Jefferson, plotting treason" (Vidal 335). Burr never accepts Jefferson's accusations and states:

> Among my numerous crimes the chief is supposed to be that I conspired to break up the union. Jefferson wanted the world to believe that when I went west I was bent on separating the new states of Kentucky, Tennessee and Ohio from their natural ruler Virginia. This was nonsense, and Jefferson knew it was nonsense. (Vidal 303)

In relation to the issue of the secession of the states from the union, Burr stresses that it was actually Jefferson who supported this idea by referring to his conversation with Jefferson about New England. The issue is based on Jefferson's belief in the inherent rights of any state to separate from the union. On this ground, Jefferson is ready to approve the demand of New England to secede. He explains his intention to Burr as follows: "'if Senator Pickering and the others can convince the people of their states to secede, then I will be the first to offer the hand of friendship to the new confederation'" (Vidal 346). Burr opposes this idea completely because as he explains to Jefferson, "'as

long as each state believes it has the right to secede, eventually one or more states will secede and there will be no United States'" (Vidal 345). When he wants to confirm Burr's story about Mexico, Charles meets Sam Swartwout, who has known Burr, Jefferson, and Hamilton: "'I asked what the Colonel's intentions were in Mexico but all that Swartwout would say was, 'They arrested me. Did you know that? I was dragged in chains for months. Massa Tom wanted to prove us all traitors. But if there was any traitor it was him not us'" (Vidal 318). Burr's version of history and Swartwout's statement display that historical narratives give only one perspective that is passed as truth. By narrating all these historical events in his memoirs, Burr tries to provide an alternative history in order to make the reader question any historical account.

In order to counter the legendary representations of Jefferson in history books, Burr presents a very cunning, sly, and despotic Jefferson in his account. Known as one of the founding fathers of democracy in America, Jefferson has a very different portrait in *Burr*. Burr accuses Jefferson of wanting to have an "imperial power assigned to the president" (Vidal 346) to manipulate the judiciary when it becomes contradictory to his purposes. For instance, when Samuel Chase, a justice of the Supreme Court, talks against the Republicans and Jefferson, he is "indicted (with Jefferson's connivance) by the House of Representatives" and he is "charged with partisanship, unfairness, bad manners" (Vidal 347). On the other hand, as Burr states in his memoirs, he "always preferred a judiciary independent of the other two branches of government" (Vidal 348). From Burr's perspective, in contrast with the usual representations of Jefferson in history, Jefferson is a monarchist. Burr notes,

> [t]o Jefferson the Constitution was simply a convenience when it allowed him to do what he wanted to do, and a monarchical document when it stayed his hand. He regarded domestic government as the business of the states and foreign affairs as the business of the Executive, and he was naïve enough in those days to think that the two businesses could be kept separate. Enlightenment came when, as president, he decided to fight pirates in the Mediterranean, to buy Louisiana, to steal the two Floridas and, if possible, to annex Cuba. By the time Jefferson's presidency ended, the Executive was more powerful than it had ever been under those two "monarchists," Washington and Adams. (Vidal 231)

In Burr's opinion, Jefferson, as president of the United States, abuses his power by using it to support his opinions. Jefferson's understanding of democracy serves only towards fulfilling his own purposes. Burr describes Jefferson as follows:

> Jefferson was a ruthless man who wanted to create a new kind of world, dominated by independent farmers each living on his own rich land, supported by slaves. It is amazing how beguilingly he could present this contradictory vision. But then in all his words if not deeds Jefferson was so beautifully human, so eminently vague, so entirely dishonest but not in any meretricious way. Rather it was a passionate form of self-delusion that rendered Jefferson as president and as man (not to mention as writer of tangled sentences and lunatic metaphors) confusing even to his admirers. Proclaiming the unalienable rights of man for everyman (excepting slaves, Indians, women and those entirely without property), Jefferson tried to seize the Floridas by force, dreamed of a conquest of Cuba, and after his illegal purchase of Louisiana sent a military governor to rule New Orleans against the will of its inhabitants. (Vidal 186-87)

Burr sarcastically defines Jefferson as "the most successful empire-builder of our century, succeeding where Bonaparte failed" (Vidal 187). In contrast with the representation of Jefferson in historical accounts as one of the founding fathers who established the American democracy, Burr provides a man with aspirations of monarchy.

Burr also severely criticizes Jefferson's attitude towards his slaves. He claims that Jefferson abuses his slaves by underlining the sexual affair between Jefferson and his female slaves. As Burr states, Jefferson has a concubine by whom he has at least five children, and at the time Burr narrates this story, Sally the concubine "is living with one of her sons in Maryland" and "[a]pparently the son is now considered white, obliging his mother to keep her identity a secret from their neighbours in Aberdeen" (Vidal 229). Burr narrates a conversation which can confirm such a claim. When Burr goes to see Jefferson in Virginia, Jefferson talks about the life in Virginia as follows: "'I inherited the bright slaves from my father-in-law John Wayles.' . . . 'It is no secret—there are no secrets in Virginia—that many of them are his children'" (Vidal 229). When Burr learns this, he describes Jefferson's position as follows: "Sally Hemings was a daughter of Wayles which made her the half-sister of Jefferson's late wife. . . . Amusing to contemplate that in bedding his fine-looking slave, Jefferson was also sleeping with his

sister-in-law! One would have enjoyed hearing him moralize on that subject" (Vidal 229). Burr furthers his claims by giving a sensational panorama of Monticello:

> It was a curious sensation to look about Monticello and see everywhere so many replicas of Jefferson and his father-in-law. It was as if we had all of us been transformed into dogs, and as a single male dog can recreate in his own image an entire canine community, so Jefferson and his family had grafted their powerful strain upon these slave Africans, and like a king dog (or the Sultan at the Grand Port) Jefferson would now look about him and see everywhere near-perfect consanguinity. (Vidal 235)

In order to shatter the image of a democratic Jefferson, Burr also states that Jefferson is a cruel master and does not want to free his slaves because the slaves are his essential capitals. Burr reveals his opinions about this issue as follows:

> I discovered that Jefferson never simply freed anyone. On occasion, however, he would allow those slaves who had found employment to *buy* their freedom usually with money advanced by a future employer. But then the hundred or so men, women and children Jefferson owned at Monticello were his capital. Without them, he would have been unable to till the soil or to manufacture nails and bricks, to build and rebuild houses, to write the Declaration of Independence. From all accounts, he was a kind master. Yet today I find it hard to reconcile the Jefferson whom the Abolitionist demagogues enjoy quoting with the slave owner I saw at home in Monticello. (Vidal 236, original emphasis)

The portrait that Burr provides for Jefferson as an incorrigible slave owner is not compatible with the picture of Jefferson as one of the providers of democracy in America. Through these claims, Burr aims to destroy the heroic image of Jefferson by referring to the unspoken chapters of history.

Likewise, Burr wishes to dethrone Hamilton's mythological representation in history by narrating how he (Burr) becomes the devil after the duel with Hamilton. Burr states that Hamilton "was no more monarchist than Jefferson" (Vidal 197), and through his political maneuvers he "was like rocket in the ascent" (Vidal 175). Besides, Hamilton acted like "a *de facto* prime minister" under the "magistrate" of Washington (Vidal 175). Moreover, according to Burr, Hamilton, who "dreamed of a Mexican empire for himself in alliance with England" (Vidal 305), is worse than Burr, who dreamed of a

Mexican empire in alliance with the United States. Hamilton is not accused of being a traitor and he survives Mexican project without damage to his reputation although he directed General Wilkinson to manipulate Burr's involvement in the liberation of Mexico. Yet, as Burr suggests, history notes "a tall, beautiful, noble Hamilton, all in wax, and a sly, mean Burr, dark as the son of morning" (Vidal 303) just because of Hamilton's death in the duel. Burr thinks that he "'made Hamilton a giant by killing him'" (Vidal 317). He claims, "'If he had lived, he would have continued his decline. He would have been quite forgotten by now. Like me'" (Vidal 317). While Hamilton's image grows positively, Burr's image diminishes in the public sentiment after the duel. He sarcastically talks about the transformations of their images:

> After Hamilton's death, I remained at Richmond Hill for ten days. I confessed that I was not prepared for the response to our interview. Apparently no one had ever fought a duel in the whole history of the United States until Aaron Burr invented this diabolic game in order to murder the greatest American that ever lived (after George Washington, of course). Over night the arrogant, mob-detesting Hamilton was metamorphosed into a Christ-like figure with me as the Judas—no, the Caiaphas who so villainously dispatched the godhead to its heavenly father (George Washington again) at Weehawk, our new Jerusalem's most unlikely Golgotha. (Vidal 322-23)

In order to express the dramatic rise of Hamilton's fame and the demise of his own reputation after the duel, Burr uses Biblical images. Hamilton is associated with Jesus, Burr is associated with Judas, who betrays Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, or Caiaphas, who is the High Priest in the Council claiming that Jesus should die "for the people, instead of having the whole nation destroyed" (John 11:50). Today's Weehawken in New Jersey, Weehawk, where the duel took place, is identified as Golgotha where Jesus was crucified. While the duel sanctifies Hamilton, it devastates Burr, who was once assumed to be a future-president of the United States. After Hamilton's death, a marble obelisk is dedicated to his memory, while Burr is remembered as the traitor and the devil. According to Burr, historical narratives have selected to tell the story of the duel in this manner.

Ironically, while trying to destroy the grand narratives about Washington, Jefferson, and Hamilton, Burr aspires to create a heroic image for himself in his biography that will be

written by Charles. Just like other historical narratives that create the elevated portraits of Washington, Jefferson, and Hamilton by selecting particular events and situations, Burr selects certain details, as he admits, to "'be added to [Charles'] *heroic* portrait of [Burr]'" (Vidal 313, original emphasis). Burr intends to interfere with the writing process of his biography and change the common knowledge that Hamilton and he have been in conflict at all times. To prove his point, he wants Charles to add information arguing that "'Somewhere in the text we must make the point that Hamilton and I continued friends for the next three years until I became vice-president. We even worked together to create the Manhattan Company'" to bring fresh water to the city (Vidal 248). When Charles hears this information, he is surprised because "This is not the usual version" in history books (Vidal 248). Burr reveals that "'at Hamilton's request, [he] made his brother-in-law a director. And so [they] brought fresh water to the city'" (Vidal 248). By interfering in Charles' narrative and by selecting the proper details, Burr provides a contesting narrative to counter historical accounts in which his reputation is tarnished.

Burr avoids revealing the reasons for the duel by saying, "I have no intention of repeating, ever, what it was that Hamilton said of me" (Vidal 314), and withholding such information makes him a questionable source in providing a true story or true history. What Burr does not narrate about the duel is as important as what he has narrated about it. Charles asks Swartwout what caused Burr to call Hamilton for a duel, and Swartwout reveals that "'he said that Aaron Burr was the lover of his own daughter, Theodosia'" (Vidal 318). This information reminds Charles of Burr's letters to Theodosia from England and France where Burr used to live. Charles accidentally finds the letters while he has been secretly trying to find the Burr-Van Buren connection in Burr's room. Although Burr has given Charles his manuscript and memoirs, he keeps some of his journals and letters to Theodosia as secret. In these letters, as Charles claims, "the Colonel describes each of his sexual encounters, using French words which I don't always understand as well as a private guage shared by him and his daughter" (Vidal 76). One of the most shocking details Burr tells about his sexual affair with a woman is thus: "We did first the *Camel*. Then an attempt at *la Tonnerre* which failed due to pique and false entry. Most pleasing, all in all" (Vidal 77). Burr purposely skips

the important parts of the story although he deals with the details to support his own view.

Although Burr does not reveal all aspects of the story, the fact that the novel, through Charles' narrative, presents Burr's disreputable characteristics demonstrates one of the premises of historiographic metafiction: As Hutcheon states, historiographic metafiction "installs the power, but then contests it" (*Poetics* 180). Throughout his narrative, despite the fact that Burr's voice appears as the authority in narrating the past events, his extreme subjectivity in discrediting the legend of the patriotic fathers and his preferences in rendering the events to build a heroic image for himself ironically make him an unreliable source of information. Burr contradicts himself when he claims, "'I seldom try to correct legend'" (Vidal 127). Actually, he desperately tries to correct the legends throughout the novel. Thus, the reader is forced to question Burr's narrative as a true historical account.

However, it is fair to claim that Burr's statements about Washington, Jefferson, Hamilton, and himself accentuate that history is a subjective discourse: it is the historian who decides which event is to be underlined or removed from the center of attention. Acting like a historian, Burr chooses these events and personalities to narrate, and his act gives the sense that there might be another side of the story that is not narrated in history books. *Burr* purposely provides sensational examples such as the bizarre portraits of Washington and particularly Jefferson. The novel stresses the fact that if an incident or a historical personality is to be narrated whether in a historical account or in fiction, the representation will eventually be subjective. Even if historians try to be ethical and represent the historical events as truly as possible, it seems impossible to be totally objective. Burr's narrative is extremely subjective and partial, because the novel wants to take a stand on the issue of subjectivity in historical accounts. The construction of the images of the patriotic fathers as grand narratives is presented as a microcosm of how history is constructed at a larger level. The novel forces the reader to question both Burr's (hi)story about the founding fathers and the representations of these patriotic legends in history books as metanarratives.

Charles' diary also works towards evaluating *Burr* as a historiographic metafiction. Trying to write both the pamphlet about the Burr-Van Buren relationship, and Burr's biography, Charles thinks about how history should be written, and reveals his concerns in his diary. Charles' diary functions as a sketch book of how history should be written rather than a traditional diary in which the writer primarily focuses on his personal experiences. *In Gore Vidal: A Critical Companion*, as Baker and Gibson suggest, "Certainly, Charles readily confides his self-doubts and anxieties within its pages. Most of these doubts are practical ones, turning on his overwhelming desire to support himself by writing" (79). Although Baker and Gibson's remarks on Charles' diary are credible, it is also appropriate to claim that Charles wants to reveal his doubts and anxieties about history writing.

William Leggett hires Charles to write a pamphlet for the *Evening Post* about Van Buren and Burr and tells him that he (Charles) will "change history" (Vidal 21). This pamphlet will reveal and prove the rumor that Buren is Burr's illegitimate child. Leggett believes that if this relationship is exposed, Van Buren will be destroyed and erased from the political scene. According to the agreement between Leggett and Charles, after publishing the pamphlet anonymously, Charles will write Burr's biography. Leggett advises Charles:

> You will be favourable to Burr, and so must fail because the American reader cannot bear a surprise. He knows that this is the greatest country on earth, Washington the greatest man that ever lived, Burr the wickedest, and evidence to the contrary is not admissible. That means no inconvenient facts, no new information. If you really want the reader's attention, you must flatter him. Make his prejudices your own. Tell him things he already knows. He will love your soundness. (Vidal 162)

Leggett, who knows how readers are manipulated, recommends that Charles should stick to the grand narratives if he wants the pamphlet to have credibility in the eyes of the public. He advocates that alternative narratives will not be appreciated. His statement ironically refers to the general preoccupation of *Burr*: Vidal does the opposite of what Leggett advises Charles and presents an alternative story. The novel tries to shake the foundation of the grand narratives in American history, and Vidal consciously employs Leggett to suggest the possibility that his novel will most probably be disliked

by people since it does not flatter the expectations of the reader. Leggett as Vidal's mouthpiece displays the novel's intense concern with history writing, and, in this way, the novel deviates from the classical historical novel.

Further, through Charles' diary, *Burr* provides discussions that question the principle of modernist history writing. The diary lays bare the writing process of history and, at this stage, the issues of literature, historiography, and theory merge with the outlook of historiographic metafiction. According to modernist historiography, an empirical study which is conducted by an objective but engaged historian will provide a successful rendering of the past reality. Charles' diary draws attention to the modernist historian's belief in evidence to provide a truthful past reality. As has been stated previously, modernist historiography is based on the Enlightenment rationality that evidence can be found and objectively composed as facts by the historian who can empirically study that evidence without prejudices. The nature of evidence is discussed in *Burr* through a conversation between Leggett and Charles. Charles informs Leggett that he has found a letter in which Burr states that he was near Kinderhook at the time Van Buren was conceived. The letter, in Charles' view, is cryptic because of Burr's following sentence: "'I disport myself as best I can in this wooded valley, and you know what I mean by that'" (Vidal 160). However, this is solid proof for Leggett that Van Buren is Burr's illegitimate child. Yet, Charles says, "'We lawyers have different standards from you journalists. This is no proof. It is merely circumstantial'" because Burr "'hardly ever mentions'" Van Buren in the letter (Vidal 224). This conversation, which dwells on the nature of evidence, problematizes the modernist historian's belief in the connection between evidence and truth, because evidence has a changing quality according to the party in question.

The discussion of evidence in the quotation above can also be associated with F. R. Ankersmit's argument about the nature of evidence. As has been stated before, Ankersmit maintains that evidence does not refer to the past; rather it leads to interpretations of the past since evidence is read from the perspective of the present and is contextualized through this perspective. Burr's letter mentioned in the above quotation, as a written document, is naturally an evidence for a past event: Burr was

near Kinderhook, but it does not prove that Burr caused Mrs. Buren's pregnancy. However, it ought to be noted that Leggett interprets the letter several years after the incident. Leggett's prejudices and his contemporary political and social position as well as his dislike for the vice-president Van Buren provoke him to interpret the letter as a proof for the filial relationship between Burr and Van Buren. It could be said that the letter, which does not directly mention the original incident, may be mistakenly or purposely associated with another event in proving it. Hence, the interpretation of the letter fails to provide a credible past reality.

Charles' situation also pushes the reader to ask questions about the modernist historian's assumption that the past reality is knowable. In the very beginning, Charles is quite optimistic that he will be able to understand and write what has happened in the past. As he claims, he diligently records what Burr says: "At Leggett's suggestion I have decided to keep a full record of the Colonel's conversation" (Vidal 4). Charles describes how Burr and he work together by underlining his belief in becoming successful in writing the whole story of Burr as follows:

> Our first attempts were simply fragments. The Colonel could not correct episodes. He tended to wander from the point. But now (the middle of May) we were working well and what began as a series of random anecdotes is becoming such a full narrative that as we sweep down the years I am at last able to detect, here and there, a glimpse of my quarry, and I am certain now that once I have thoroughly mapped the jungle it ought not to be too difficult to find whatever beast I want, no matter how hidden the lair! (Vidal 163)

According to Charles, it is possible to learn the secret and hidden sides of the past, and he is decisive to "know what [Burr] knows before the end" (Vidal 5). However, the more Charles collects data about the past, the more suspicious he gets about providing a whole story. For instance, although Charles "prefer[s] an orderly presentation" to write a coherent story (Vidal 74), Burr does not provide an orderly presentation. Charles asks something, but Burr talks about something else: "The Colonel puts his feet up on the grate; shuts his eyes as if he expects some inner curtain to rise upon past spectacles. 'You asked me about Hamilton.' I had asked him about Van Buren" (Vidal 163).

Charles is not able to interfere with the flow of the narrative, so he decides to organize the events later.

Yet the task of organization gets more complicated when Charles recognizes certain gaps in Burr's notes. For instance, in one part of his manuscript Burr mentions a conspiracy plotted by the politician James Wilkinson and a French officer Conway Cabal to replace General Washington with General Gates at Valley Forge during the Revolutionary War, but he does not mention any other detail in the rest of the manuscript. Charles becomes desperate, indicating "I have looked through the rest of Colonel Burr's notes but I find nothing more to do with Wilkinson and the Conway Cabal" (Vidal 102). Similarly, after talking to Matt Davis about how Jefferson's relationship with Burr was severed, Charles recognizes that "Colonel Burr's narrative—seemingly so ample—had discreetly omitted the events of 1792 when George Washington and John Adams were re-elected president and vice-president, and John Jay was defeated by George Clinton for governor of New York" (Vidal 202). To a certain extent, the reader senses a kind of complaint in Charles' tone when he is not able to obtain the whole information from Burr's notes and memoirs. He says, "Colonel Burr's narrative stops at this point. Then another fragment, on different paper, of recent date" (Vidal 115). In Burr's narrative, continuity is upset, and Charles has trouble in filling the gaps of the story.

Since there are gaps in Burr's narrative, Charles needs to consult other sources of information, but this process confuses him further. In his memoirs, Burr does not mention who fired first in the duel between Hamilton and himself. Charles asks Matt Davis, who was one of the eyewitnesses of the duel. Yet he is unable to get a straightforward answer:

> Mr. Davis shook his head. "No one knows. And I was there, watching through the bushes. I *think* Hamilton fired a second before the Colonel. I *know* that at the first report the Colonel swayed—my eyes were on him—and I was afraid that he'd been hit. But he told me later there was a stone under his boot, and he was off-balance…." (Vidal 353, original emphasis)

What Matt Davis states implies that, sometimes, even an eyewitness account is not able to provide the truth. Moreover, Charles realizes the inconsistency of the information in relation to Van Buren being Burr's illegitimate son. Washington Irving warns Charles: "'My dear boy, there are those who wish to destroy Mr. Van Buren with *any* weapon. For years the Vice-President's enemies have put it about that he is Colonel Burr's natural son, that he is Colonel Burr's *un*natural political creation. Both are lies'" (Vidal 142, original emphasis). Such a person as Washington Irving who Charles admires and imitates in style provides information which is just the opposite of what Charles intends to prove.

However, these are not the only problems Charles has to face while narrating Burr's story. Charles is also worried about Burr's memory. Although he claims that Burr's "memory of the past is as sharp as ever," he, at the same time, complains that Burr "has also become somewhat absent of mind" (Vidal 133). For instance, Burr forgets that he has recently put some money in a dictionary to use if necessary, or, similarly, he forgets that he has usurped his wife's, Madame Jumel's money by saying, "'I have never taken a penny that was hers. Quite the contrary'" (Vidal 221). Yet, as Charles observes, "He had obviously forgotten the carriage and horses, the money from the toll-bridge shares" taken from Madame Jumel (Vidal 221). These remarks on memory force the reader to be suspicious about Burr's narrative constructed from memory. Burr's concern with his own memory supports this suspicion: Burr wants Charles to record his recollections by saying, "'While they are still lodged in what is left of my mind'" (Vidal 133). Moreover, Burr reminds Charles that "'as people grow old there is a tendency for them to believe that what the past *ought* to have been it was'" (Vidal 23, original emphasis). Interestingly and ironically, Burr does not accept that he is old: "'But I'm not old, Charlie. . . . Not only do I know what my past ought to have been, I know what it *was*. . . . And I'm the only one who knows'" (Vidal 23, original emphasis). Burr needs to prove that he is not old and that he is sane enough to remember the past as it was in order to convince Charles, because, as discussed previously, he has a specific agenda to narrate the lives of the patriotic legends and his experiences. However, Burr is seventy-seven years old, and his memory is not as sharp, and his effort to prove the reverse is a futile maneuver.

Apart from the gaps in Burr's narrative, the confusion caused by the various sources of information, and Burr's memory problems, Charles is also worried about his conceptualization of the events. He has difficulties in interpreting the events and the situations that he confronts. For instance, when Burr denies that he is old, Charles tries to understand Burr's approach: "An involuntary what? Grimace? Look of pain? Or do I invent?" (Vidal 23). It is difficult for Charles to understand the subtexts of Burr's statements. The issue of interpretation is also underlined in another section of the novel. Burr shows Charles a miniature that depicts Burr as a thirty-year-old man. Charles tries to decipher the expression in the painting: "The Colonel was remarkably handsome if the miniature is accurate: full mouth, huge dreaming black eyes. Of what was he dreaming?" (Vidal 340). Charles asks Burr what he was dreaming: "He was taken aback. 'Dreaming? Am I? Was I?' He put on his glasses; studied the miniature closely. 'No. It is merely the artist's interpretation. Or yours'" (Vidal 341). This reference to the difficulty of interpreting visual materials can easily be associated with the difficulty of interpreting written materials. The miniature as a visual historical representation is open to the interpretation of the viewer along with that of its originator. Moreover, the interpretation of the viewer and that of the originator do not necessarily coincide with each other. Naturally, many different interpretations surface. Likewise, a written representation of any historical event or personality is subjected to the interpretation of its writer on one level, and on another level it is subdued by its reader. Thus, different and inconsistent interpretations are likely to appear. In this sense, Charles is further confused about how to interpret.

Charles depicts the desperate effort of the historian who wants to provide a whole and true historical account. In the beginning, Charles is confident about completing the whole story or Burr's true history, but in the end he is almost about to give up writing both the pamphlet and the biography. Some entries in the diary reveal his situation: "[Burr] is a labyrinth. Must not lose my way" (Vidal 6); "But what do I really know of Aaron Burr? Or of myself? I am only scribbling idly, trying to put myself in his skin as I sit now at my desk in Reade Street" (Vidal 139); and "It is July. How can I be ready in three months with so much unknown?" (Vidal 225).

While thinking about his biography in comparison to Matt Davis', Charles confesses that it is not possible to narrate the complete story:

> [Davis] cannot publish his own book for several years at least and perhaps he thinks my effort will whet the public's appetite for the entire story. My effort? What am I writing about? I now act even to myself as if I were writing the full story of the Colonel's life when, actually, I am only on the track of one small portion of it which Leggett assures me will change history. (Vidal 151)

Charles comes to the conclusion that he will not be able to have access to the true information about Burr and Van Buren or be able to write Burr's biography. All these discussions on history writing in the novel are compatible with the principles of historiographic metafiction that presents the nature of history writing in fiction.

What has happened to Charles' pamphlet and the biography of Burr at the end of the novel is also meaningful within the framework of historiographic metafiction. The reader can neither read the pamphlet nor see the finished version of the biography: the only narrative s/he has is the one where Charles narrates how he has written them. Charles sells the pamphlet in which he claims that Burr is Van Buren's natural father on no firm grounds to Davy Crockett to be published under the name of Crockett. Feeling guilty about what he has done to Burr and Van Buren, Charles is somewhat relieved because he thinks that nobody will care about what Crockett says about Burr or Van Buren, because Crockett, who previously published his "so-called story of his life" which is "funny, in the western style," is not a reliable writer (Vidal 432). Indeed, Crockett's publisher openly accepts it: "The Davy Crockett style is so much that of the tall story that we can say nearly anything we please" (Vidal 432). Although the pamphlet is supposed to be published in Crockett's book, the reader does not have the chance to read it throughout the novel. Similarly, Burr's biography is not finished at the end of the novel because, as Charles states, Charles is "waiting for Mr. Davis to publish his biography" (Vidal 498). Hence, *Burr* becomes a novel about how history is written rather than an account that provides Burr's true story. This result is appropriate for a historiographic metafiction that questions history writing and fosters the idea that it is not possible to give a whole and truthful account of past reality.

Another major issue of historiographic metafiction is, as Hutcheon suggests, the relationship between historiography and fiction. As has been discussed in the theoretical background, Hayden White explores this relationship and stresses that narrative is the common point of historiography and fiction. In White's view, what differentiates a historical account from annals and chronicles is narrative. Since annals and chronicles include just a list of events, they lack a full account (White, *The Content of the Form* 5). However, these unconnected events are turned into a narrative in a historical account by being associated to one another. As White argues, the events, which are actually "value-neutral," are

> made into story by the suppression or subordination of some of them and the highlighting of others, by characterization, motific repetition, variation of tone and point of view, alternative descriptive strategies, and the like—in short, all of the techniques that we would normally expect to find in the emplotment of a novel or a play. ("The Historical Text as Literary Artifact" 47)

White's argument above is related to the form of the historical narrative, which is "its fiction," that is its common point with literature ("The Historical Text as Literary Artifact" 47). His suggestion about the fictional characteristic of a historical account in relation to its form is discussed in *Burr* to a certain extent.

A little part of Matt Davis' biography of Burr is embedded in Charles' diary. Matt Davis gives Charles his biography of Burr to help Charles in writing Burr's life. Matt Davis' biography of Burr helps to juxtapose a chronicle with a historical account which has a story-like pattern. In this sense, it helps to understand the differences between a chronicle and a historical account. It is worth quoting from Matt Davis' biography of Burr:

> April 12, 1782, he [Burr] became a counselor-at-law.
> July 6, 1782, he married Theodosia Prevost at Paramus, New Jersey. He was twenty-six. She was thirty-six.
> June 21, 1783, their daughter Theodosia was born at Albany. In November Burr moved to New York City, arriving just as the British army departed.
> The Burrs lived first at the Verplanck house two doors from City Hall. Then they moved to the corner of Maiden Lane and Naussau Street (their backyard was famous for its grape-vines and arbours, their household for a

> drunken maid named Hannah). In 1791 they moved to 4 Broadway. As a summer house, the Colonel took a lease on the mansion at Richmond Hill. (Vidal 158-59)

Charles is not satisfied with Matt Davis' version because these are just events, in Charles' view "the facts," and "Mr. Davis simply puts them all down, pasting an occasional platitude over the Colonel's wax-like energy" (Vidal 160). This part of Matt Davis' biography is like a chronicle. It does not give any answers to the questions of how and why, for instance, Burr moved to New York, or if there was any relationship between his moving to New York with the British army that departed at the time. The biography is not interested in associating and combining events.

According to Hayden White, in order to construct a story, the historian has to answer certain questions: "'What happened next?' 'How did that happen?' 'Why did things happen this way rather than that?' 'How did it all come out in the end?'" (*Metahistory* 7). The answers to these questions are "determining" and used to construct a "*followable* story" (*Metahistory* 7, original emphasis). However, these are not enough to have a complete story. In order to construct a completed and meaningful story, the historian needs to answer other types of questions such as "'What does it all add up to?' 'What is the point of it all?'" (White, *Metahistory* 7). According to White, these questions call for "a synoptic judgment of the relationship between a given story and other stories that might be 'found,' identified,' or 'uncovered' in the chronicle" (*Metahistory* 7). As White argues, these questions can be answered in mainly three ways: explanation by emplotment, explanation by argument, and explanation by ideological implication, which has been previously discussed in detail. However, it is useful to repeat them roughly. Emplotment, which provides the meaning of the story by answering the question of "what happened," determines the mode of the narrative: romance, tragedy, comedy, and satire. Argument seeks the answer to "the point of it all" or "what it all adds up to" in the end through four types of argument: formist, organicist, mechanistic, and contextualist. Ideological implication points to the ethical element in the role of the historian in conceptualization of the past in relation to the present, and it is explained through four major ideological positions: anarchist, conservative, radical, and liberal.

In relation to White's discussion, Matt Davis' biography of Burr quoted above seems to be more like a chronicle rather than a meaningful historical account. Matt Davis does not emplot the events, and does not discuss them in relation to other events. Actually, Matt Davis, who calls Charles "My fellow historian" (Vidal 144), is aware of the weaknesses of his version and states that "'Charlie is onto something golden' . . . 'He will write the true story of Colonel Burr while I shall write the official memoirs. That means Charlie will beat me all hollow'" (Vidal 150). Matt Davis extracts only the well-known and general information about Burr, but Charles puts effort to understand the details and the association among the events by trying to fill in the gaps in order to make a meaningful story. In this sense, Charles' account seems to be closer to a much more complete historical account.

However, it should be stated that Matt Davis' biography of Burr is not just a list. There are some parts that narrate events in a way that is expected from a historical account pointed out by White. For instance, in some parts of his biography Matt Davis mentions the rivalry between Hamilton and Burr as follows:

> Burr's rivalry with Hamilton began in those days. It was inevitable. Both were heroes, both were ambitious, both were lawyers. Of the two Hamilton was considered to be the more profound philosophically as well as the more long-winded, with a tendency to undo his own brief by taking it past the point of successful advocacy.
> Burr was the more effective in a court-room because his mind was swifter than Hamilton's; also, of an entire generation of public men, Burr was free of cant: he never moralized unless to demonstrate a paradox. As a result the passionate believers thought him evil on the ground that the man who refuses to preach Goodness must be Bad. (Vidal 159)

Here, the important point is how Matt Davis narrates the events. The way he associates the events with each other by providing answers to the question of "What does it all add up to?" and "What is the point of it all?," and the like, creates a meaningful story. For instance, Matt Davis presents the reasons why Hamilton and Burr were in competition and why Burr was considered less favorable than Hamilton. In this part of the biography, Matt Davis simply tries to contextualize the historical events, which is different from a chronicle. Thus, these different approaches juxtaposed in Matt Davis' biography demonstrate the function of the narrative in a historical account. Yet Charles

is still not satisfied with Matt Davis' version because Matt Davis has not written anything that Charles does not know. In this sense, Matt Davis makes use of the grand narratives as Leggett preaches, hoping to receive credit from the reader. After reading Matt Davis' manuscript, Charles states, "Now I must begin the real work: finding out what is true, if possible," (Vidal 160), and, in a very unethical way, he adds: "'or if not true useful to my purpose" (Vidal 160). At this point, it is relevant to note that neither biography will be reliable because Matt Davis uses only the well-known information by not dwelling on the unexplained sections of history, and Charles intends to manipulate the historical knowledge in support of his pamphlet.

As Linda Hutcheon remarks by referring to Hayden White, since "Narrative is what translates knowing into telling," it "is precisely this translation that obsesses postmodern fiction" (*Poetics* 121). This is why historiographic metafiction like other postmodern novels is self-consciously interested in the writing process. Accordingly, Charles' diary includes many references and comments on how to write. In the very beginning of the novel, Charles tries to describe the wedding ceremony of Burr and Madame Jumel, and complains by saying "I don't seem able to catch the right tone" (Vidal 2). Charles obsessively thinks about how to write:

> Describe! as Leggett keeps telling me. Describe! Very well.
> Through open gates. Stone? Wood? Could not tell. Down a curving carriage way. Tall black trees. A view of the river in the distance. Light on water like tarnished silver (cannot do better—will try again later). Then the dark bulk of the mansion. Lights blazing at every window. A party? No. Burr would have wanted us to dress appropriately. But if not a party, why the lights? (Vidal 7)

Charles tries to describe the mansion where the wedding ceremony will take place, but he has trouble in finding the right words to depict what he observes. He is unable to identify the material of the gate, a very concrete object, from a distance. The quotation displays how difficult it is to put something into words. This quote also implies Charles' difficulties in trying to describe the past events he did not even witness.

At one point, Leggett instructs Charles on style. He gives Charles some libels to study in order to imitate. Charles reads them and expresses his reaction as follows: "I read

aloud one of the gaudier passages . . . I desist. ‘Is this the style I’m to imitate?’” (Vidal 280). Charles desperately searches for a style, and after a conversation with Washington Irving whom he admires, he even tries to parody Irving’s style. Irving tells Charles about Burr’s daughter Theodosia, and Charles expresses his feelings about Irving’s recollections as follows: “I have the impression that Irving exaggerates his passion for the long-dead beauty, expressing his adoration in complex complete sentences as a single tear rolls slowly down his cheek into the fortress of that tall starched stock there to splash in darkness from chin to chin like . . . I am beginning to parody his style” (Vidal 83). When compared to the paragraph where Charles is unable to describe even the material of the gate, this long and elegant sentence shows that Charles makes some progress in using language. Charles’ situation finally justifies Burr’s reason for having Charles write his biography. Burr claims, “‘Matt will no doubt do me fine. But I am still here I would not in the least object to your having a look at my papers. After all, you are incorrigibly literary’” (Vidal 25).

Throughout the novel, although Charles does not inform the reader whether he has found the right tone or the style. His intention to parody Irving’s style is meaningful, taking into account that Irving is one of the leading figures in American literature who introduced the romance tradition. If Charles imitates Irving’s style, then it could be claimed that he tries to contextualize Burr’s life into a romance. According to the definition given by Hayden White, romance means a “drama of the triumph of good over evil, of virtue over vice, of light over darkness, and of ultimate transcendence of man over the world in which he was imprisoned by the Fall” (*Metahistory* 9). Actually, the definition of romance and Burr’s aim to have a biography written by Charles overlap with each other. In Burr’s view, his biography written by “incorrigibly literary” Charles will depict a Burr who will excel in history where he has been doomed to fail in other narratives. Also, the style and the form that Charles might use will help to create a romance hero. The discussions on style in the novel can be associated with the close relation between historiography and literature as being verbal artifacts.

In the light of the discussions above, it can be concluded that *Burr* is a historiographic metafiction rather than a historical novel. Vidal’s contextualization of the past events in

relation to the mentality of the 1970s points to the historicity of the text. The use of characterization, the manipulation of the first person narration through Burr's manuscript and memoirs, and Charles' diary, Burr's efforts in demythologizing the representations of the patriotic figures in official history to provide an alternative historical account, his ironic desire to create a heroic portrait for himself, which paradoxically pushes the reader to question his own narrative, Charles' concerns about how to write a historical account, which problematize history writing, and the novel's preoccupation with historiography and fiction are all compatible with the premises of historiographic metafiction. All in all, *Burr* questions and problematizes history writing, and thus, becomes a novel about the process of writing the past.

2. 2. *1876*

The second sub-section of this chapter will focus on *1876*, which Vidal published in 1976. American people observed the communist paranoia triggered by the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, reaching its peak in the 1950s, and even maintaining its effects in the early 1970s. In his essay "The State of the Union Revisited (1980)," Vidal evaluates the anti-communist hysteria in America as a prop to make money by "keep[ing] the country on a permanent wartime footing" (229), and severely criticizes the administrations for keeping the Red Scare alive. He accuses post-Civil War governments banks, which have held the economic power in their hands starting from 1945, and names the presidents as banksmen. He says:

> Loyal Harry S Truman deliberately set out to frighten the American people. He told us that the Soviet Union was on the march while homegrown Reds were under every bed—all this at a time when the United States had atomic weapons and the Russians did not, when the Soviet Union was still in pieces from World War II and we were incredibly prosperous. ("The State of the Union Revisited (1980)" 229)

Vidal's critical perspective about the anti-communist hysteria in America can be deduced from the associations he used in *1876*.

Another dominant theme in *1876* is the corrupt relationship between democratic ideals and material gains. In an interview by Charles McGrath, published in *The New York Times Book Review*, Vidal expresses his ideas on political decadence and associates the corruption with personal material gains by stating, "we've always been reasonably corrupt. That is the price of democracy, and a small amount does no great harm. But when it is totally accepted that he who pays the most money to buy the most time is going to be the president, or at least the nominee, I think something is off the rails" (15). In this context, *1876*, which narrates the scandalous election of 1876 where the presidency was stolen by the Republicans through political tricks, echoes the corrupt political atmosphere of the 1970s where American people also witnessed one of the most scandalous and corrupt elections in American history, and watched a president, Richard Nixon, resign for the first time.

In this context, this sub-section contextualizes *1876* to explore the historicity of the text from the New Historicist perspective: the events in *1876* that anachronistically echo Vidal's contemporary period will be analyzed. The characterization in the novel will also be discussed to display how characterization is different from that of the historical novel. In the detailed textual analysis, *1876*'s self-conscious concern with history and history writing will be underlined through the discussions of the biography tradition, the representation of truth in newspapers, democracy as a grand narrative, and memory as a hindrance in the writing of history. All the discussions will help to display the reasons for evaluating *1876* as a historiographic metafiction rather than a historical novel.

1876 opens with Charles Schuyler's arrival to New York in December 1875 after thirty-eight years of his diplomatic position in Europe. Throughout these years, Charles had been to Italy and France, got married, and had a daughter named Emma, otherwise known as the Princess d'Agrigente. Both Charles, who is a widow now, and Emma are desperate for money because Charles lost his capital in the panic of 1873 and Emma's husband died in debt five years ago. Charles' arrival to the United States in the centennial year of the republic coincides with the presidential election in which Democratic Samuel J. Tilden and Republican Rutherford B. Hayes competed. In this election, the presidency was stolen by the Republicans in favor of Hayes although Tilden technically won the election. As in the case of *Burr*, *1876* is Charles' scratch journal in which he narrates his observations about this election and his duties in the election until May 16, 1877, the date of his death. Charles, who considers himself to be a historian, defines his journal as follows: "These pages are to be a quarry, no more. A collection of day-to-day impressions of my *new* old country" (Vidal 5, original emphasis). In order to earn money, Charles, who views the United States in general and New York in particular as "the Valhalla of journalism" (Vidal 8), wants to write for American newspapers. Even before being offered a post in a newspaper, he imagines possible titles for his prospective texts: "'The United States in the Year of the Centennial.' 'Traveler's Return.' 'Old New York: A Knickerbocker's Memories.' 'Recollections of the Age of Jackson and Van Buren'" (Vidal 5).

Throughout the novel, Charles is involved in writing both his journal, which is embedded in the novel, and numerous essays for several newspapers. His old friend William Cullen Bryant, editor of the *Evening Post*, offers him to write a piece on the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. Charles is also hired by James Gordon Bennett, Jr., publisher of the *New York Herald*, to write about the Grant administration, which is rumored to be involved in several scandals such as the Tweed Ring, a corrupt group that manipulated city government in New York through bribery, and the Whiskey Ring, a group of people including whiskey distillers and public officials who swindled the government on liqueur taxes. In this context, Charles is supposed to analyze "'Washington City in the Age of Corruption'" (Vidal 41). While thinking about writing for these newspapers, Charles allies with Governor Tilden, who will eventually be the presidential candidate of the Democratic Party in the following election, and hopes to receive a diplomatic position in France in return for his alliance. Charles explains his aim in his journal as follows: "If I do my part, provide information, work to explore the corruption of General Grant and whoever is chosen to succeed him as leader of the Republican party, then I will get my heart's desire . . . the legation at Paris" (Vidal 47). If Tilden wins the election, Charles will have a comfortable life in Paris, again. Other than his writing projects, Charles also wishes to sell his memoirs about the Empress of Eugénie to another New York newspaper, the *Ledger*.

While Charles probes into the corrupted politics, his daughter Emma starts to explore the high society of New York. As Baker and Gibson suggest, "Emma will make her way in the world of the rich while her father chronicles the most bizarre election in American history" (106). Although Emma is engaged to a well-to-do young lawyer named John Day Apgar, she does not view this relationship as promising. Meanwhile, she makes friends with Denise Sanford, wife to William Sanford, who pretends to be a self-made man, but draws his fortune from his rich wife. Emma encourages Denise to have a child although she knows that pregnancy might be dangerous since Denise has already gone through several abortions. After Denise dies in childbirth, Emma ends up marrying William Sanford. *1876* ends with a special dispatch to the *New York Evening Post* written by William Cullen Bryant, which announces that Charles Schuyler is dead.

1876 manifests the historicity of the text in line with the New Historicist perspective. According to the New Historicist understanding, the contextualization of the past is subjected to the present social, cultural, and political situations, since the historian, who is a historical subject, conceptualizes the past according to the current mentality of his/her own age. As Montrose explains, "the histories we construct are the textual constructs of critics who are, ourselves, historical subjects" (23). In this context, Montrose draws attention to the impossibility of grand narratives of the past as follows: "If scholarship actively constructs and delimits its object of study, and if the scholar is historically positioned vis-à-vis that object, it follows that the quest of an older historical criticism to recover meanings that are in any final or absolute sense authentic, correct, and complete is illusory" (23). To understand the historical situation in which the past is written will help to uncover how the past event is constructed textually. As in the case of *Burr*, Vidal exemplifies a dialogue between the past and the present in *1876* by contextualizing the past through his own present historical perspective. It is important to emphasize this detail because, as Hutcheon remarks, "Narrativized history, like fiction, reshapes any material (in this case, the past) in the light of present issues" (*Poetics* 137). *1876* is a fictional history of the election of 1876, which can be used to exemplify the relationship between the writer and his/her narrative that is shaped according to the present issues.

1876 intensely reminds the reader of the Red Scare of the twentieth century in a sarcastic and an anachronistic way. The Red Scare, which first appears during and just after World War I and reappears after World War II in the 1950s, penetrated all the layers of the country by artificially creating paranoia among people. As is claimed in *A People and a Nation: A History of the United States*,

> The Russian Revolution and the communist risings elsewhere in Europe alarmed many Americans, and the fears grew when in 1919 the Soviet Leadership announced the formation of the Communist International (or Comintern), whose purpose was to export revolution throughout the world. (Norton and et al. 641)

During this period, American government questioned and persecuted its own citizens who were mostly critical of the system and who were sympathetic to Russia and

communism. For instance, Russian born immigrant Emma Goldman was jailed and later deported to Russia in 1917 for her anarchist actions against the government (Norton and et al. 642). Likewise, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two immigrant workers, were convicted of murdering a guard and paymaster during a robbery and executed in 1927 "[t]hough evidence failed to prove their guilt" (Norton and et al. 668). As Norton and et al. claim, their main offense "seems to have been their political beliefs and Italian origins" (668).

The more dramatic paranoia of communism, known as McCarthyism, was witnessed in the 1940s and 1950s.

> In 1947, President Truman ordered investigations into the loyalty of more than 3 million employees of the U.S. government. As anticommunist hysteria grew, the government began discharging people deemed "security risks," among them alcoholics, homosexuals, and debtors thought susceptible to blackmail. In most cases there was no evidence of disloyalty. (Norton and et al. 806)

The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), created in 1938, was at work to investigate "'subversive and un-American propaganda,'" and people who did not cooperate with HUAC were sent to prison (Norton and et al. 806-807). Congressman Richard Nixon, who was a member of HUAC, "accused former State Department official Alger Hiss of espionage" in 1948, and Hiss was "convicted of lying about his contacts with Soviet agents" in 1950 (Norton and et al. 808). Likewise, Republican senator Joseph McCarthy accused the U.S. State Department of getting "'infested with Communists'" (Norton and et al. 807). Throughout this period, people were ready to point an accusing finger at each other.

In *1876*, there are several subtle references to the anti-communist hysteria in America in the twentieth century. In the first place, Vidal mocks at the paranoia of communism by displaying a journalist who considers being honest as being communist. As soon as Charles comes to New York City, American journalists arrive on board to interview him. Upon a question, Charles explains what he thinks about Democratic Governor Tilden by saying "'I do know that Mr. Tilden's breaking up of the Tweed ring so

pleased the honest people of the state that last year they made him governor. After all, he has stopped the rich stealing from the poor—'" (Vidal 12). One of the journalists likens this situation to communism by saying "'But that sounds communist, sir'" (Vidal 12). Charles, who finds the way "communism should so distress the overcoats" is "fascinating," opposes the journalist by claiming, "'I had no idea that honesty and communism were the same'" (Vidal 12). This journalist demonstrates how hysteric one can be when the conversation stirs towards communism in America, and this example hints at the paranoid reactions of the people and the governments of the 1920s and 1950s as well as Vidal's sarcasm about the issue.

Vidal associates certain historical events of different time periods to underline this paranoia. While in Paris, Charles has written a historical book entitled *Paris Under the Commune*, which is about his firsthand experiences with the Paris Commune of 1871. In the online *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, the Paris Commune of 1871 is defined as an "insurrectionary" government formed at the end of the Franco-Prussian War. At the end of the war, Napoleon III's empire fell, and Parisians, who broke up with the national government and the National Assembly at Versailles by refusing a "humiliating peace with Prussia," elected a municipal council, which is known as the Commune of 1871. The Versailles troops assaulted Paris to regain national control, and communards who consisted of urban workers, tradespeople, and radical bourgeois, were defeated in a few weeks after bloody clashes ("Commune of Paris"). The way Charles narrates the events in Paris in 1871 echoes what happened to the people who were suspected of being communists in America in the 1940s and 1950s. Charles recalls the situation in Paris as follows:

> Obviously the uprising in Paris frightened the New York burghers—certainly it frightened us Parisians when the communards seized the city as the Germans withdrew; even more frightening, however, was the revenge of the burghers, who butchered untold thousands for being Communards. I myself saw a child of five slaughtered in a street of Mont Rouge. (Vidal 12-13)

In his article "The Paris Commune of 1871," Norman Barth, editor of the online *Paris Kiosque*, gives the estimated casualties after the assault as follows: "Roughly 50,000

were arrested after the suppression of the Commune. Some of these escaped, many were imprisoned, the worst offenders—some 4,500—being sent to New Caledonia in the South Pacific" (paris.org). Likewise, in *A People and a Nation: A History of the United States*, the paranoia of communism in the United States and the arrests in the 1950s are narrated as follows:

> . . . the committee [HUAC] went on the attack. Members of a group of screenwriters and directors known as the "Hollywood Ten" were sent to prison for contempt of Congress when they refused to "name names" of suspected communists for HUAC. At least a dozen others committed suicide. Studios panicked and blacklisted hundreds of actors, screenwriters, directors, even makeup artists, who were suspected of communist affiliations. With no evidence of wrongdoings, these men and women had careers—and sometimes lives—ruined. (Norton and et al. 807)

In the 1930s, HUAC even charged the child star Shirley Temple, together with other film stars, for being "dupes of the Communist Party" (Norton and et al. 807). This is an event similar, not in activity but in mentality, to the incident of the five-year old child slaughtered in a street of Mont Rouge. Thus, Charles' narration about the people who were killed in 1871 for being communists becomes the blue print of the people who were deported, jailed, or executed in the United States as a result of the communist paranoia. This chronologically out of place and critical association between the past and present in *1876* does not fall within the historical novel that primarily aims to represent a past reality.

The historicity of the text, or "the social embedment" of the text (Montrose 20), is deduced from the intertextual references to both historical and literary narratives according to the New Historicist perspective that refutes the "unproblematized distinctions between 'literature' and 'history,' between 'text' and 'context'" (Montrose 18). Although intertextual relations between texts indicate the historicity of the text, intertextuality also underlines the assumption that a literary or historical text only refers to other texts instead of reality. As Hutcheon notes, "Historiographic metafiction . . . is overtly and resolutely historical—though, admittedly, in an ironic and problematic way that acknowledges that history is not the transparent record of any sure 'truth'" (*Poetics* 128-129). This paradoxical situation can be explained through the intertextual parody of

historiographic metafiction. According to Hutcheon, the intertextual parody "enacts, in a way, the views of certain contemporary historiographers: it offers a sense of the presence of the past, but a past that can be known only from its texts, its traces—be they literary or historical" (*Poetics* 125). Intertextual references in *1876* remind the reader that it is the mentality of the present time that contextualizes past events. These intertextual connections are functional to see Vidal's vantage point in constructing *1876*, and they demonstrate the dialogue between the past and the present.

In *1876*, Vidal particularly uses intertextuality to emphasize the intricate nature of history writing. One of the striking examples is Charles' book, *Paris Under the Commune*, which is one of the anachronistic intertextual references to the anti-communist hysteria in America in the twentieth century. Charles' book is constantly remembered under different titles by the characters in the novel such as *Paris Under the Communards* and *Paris Under the Communists*. This book is actually a reference to a comic book entitled *Is This Tomorrow: America Under Communism!*, which was published by the Catechetical Guild Educational Society in 1947 to warn Americans about the dangers of a Communist takeover. It is worth citing in full length the inside cover of the comic book to explain the purpose of the repetitions of the mistaken title of Charles' book in *1876*:

> IS THIS TOMORROW is published for one purpose—TO MAKE YOU THINK! To make you more alert to the menace of Communism.
> Today, there are approximately 85,000 official members of the Communist Party in the United States. There are hundreds of additional members whose names are carried on the Party roles because acting as disciplined fifth columnists of the Kremlin, they have wormed their way into key positions in government offices, trade unions, and other positions of public trust.
> Communists themselves claim that for every official Party member, there are ten others ready, willing, and able to do the Party's bidding.
> These people are working day and night—laying the groundwork to overthrow YOUR GOVERNMENT!
> The average American is prone to say, "It Can't Happen Here." Millions of people in other countries used to say the same thing.
> Today, they are dead—or living in Communist slavery. IT MUST NOT HAPPEN HERE! (original emphasis)

Although Charles has written a book about historical facts he has witnessed in 1871, the title of the book is borrowed from a comic book published in 1947. Vidal's perspective is exemplified through his association of a text of the twentieth century with the description of an event occurred in the nineteenth century. By using the mentalities of the 1940s and 1950s in the context of the 1870s, Vidal displays one of the major issues that historiographic metafiction points to: "the problematic nature of the past as an object of knowledge for us in the present" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 92). This ironic reference out of its place and time is purposely repeated in the novel to indicate *1876*'s interest in history and the problematic nature of the representation of the past as history. There is no nostalgia for the past as in the case of the traditional historical novel because references are politically engaged and thus provide a critique of the past events.

Another arresting intertextual reference in *1876* is a text entitled *The Crucible*, which is "a play 'leased and managed' (but actually written as well) by Oakey Hall, who is also, to the delight of New York, the leading actor" (Vidal 84). In reality, Hall's 1875 play referred to in *1876* is entitled as *Crucible or Feathering a Mayor's Nest*, and consists of a prologue and four acts. Act I and Act II show how A. Oakey 'All, a lawyer who wants to be an actor, turns out to be an actor. 'All's wish is granted by a spirit called Katie King, who wants $100 from him in return. The lawyer gets an invitation from the manager of the Park Theatre who sends him a crucible, a vessel used for melting substances, in which he is carried to the theatre. In Act III and Act IV 'All plays T. S. Arthur Higgins, a bank clerk, who is wrongly and purposely accused and jailed for stealing from the bank. In jail, the spirit Katie King visits Higgins, and promises to save him from jail in return for $10. The spirit keeps her promise by forcing the jury to declare that Higgins is not guilty.

The theme of the play that justice can be bought coincides with the corruption of government and decision making authorities in *1876*. More importantly, the playwright and the title of the play include certain implications of communism and anti-communist hysteria that saturated America especially in the first half of the twentieth century. As is stated in the website *The Bowery Boys: New York City History*, American politician, lawyer, and writer Abraham Oakey Hall (1826-1898), who wrote the play *Crucible or*

Feathering a Mayor's Nest in 1875, was Emma Goldman's advocate in 1893 in a court case. This subtle connection between Hall and Goldman inevitably reminds one of the first Red Scare during and after World War I where "249 radicals, including the anarchist Emma Goldman, were deported to Russia" (Norton and et al. 642). More explicit allusion is the title of the play that directly refers to Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, premiered and published in 1953, where Miller "found in the hysteria that overtook Salem a useful parallel to America's preoccupation with the activities and influence of the country's alleged Communists," as Midge Decter notes in "The Witches of Arthur Miller" (54). All these references to the anti-communist hysteria depict the formative influence of the present mentality in constructing past events as history in *1876*. The novel's intense interest in the dialogue between the past and the present mentality, which is demonstrated through the use of the anachronistic intertextual references in this case, differentiates *1876* from the historical novel.

1876 also pushes the reader to associate the election of 1876 with that of 1972, which is again functional to understand the formative effect of the present over the past narrated as history because the emphasis on the corrupt election system in *1876* echoes the corrupt political atmosphere of the 1970s. Before the election of 1972 five men from the Nixon campaign, who did not want to take any risk of losing the election, broke into the Democratic National Committee's offices at the Watergate apartment complex. These men "were associated with the Committee to Re-elect the President, known as CREEP. The break-in got little attention at the time, and Nixon was swept into office in November with 60 percent of the popular vote" (Norton and et al. 875). On Nixon's order, a secret group called the Plumbers was formed, and they "expanded their 'dirty tricks' operations during the 1972 presidential primaries and campaign, bugging phones, infiltrating campaign staffs, even writing and distributing anonymous letters falsely accusing Democratic candidates of sexual misconduct" (Norton and et al. 875). *1876* echoes the degeneration in the election of 1972 where Nixon was re-elected through the political tricks of the Republicans by narrating how Hayes was elected through the political maneuvers of the Republicans after Tilden had already been elected by the majority of the popular votes, which will be discussed in the following pages in detail.

Since the characterization in *1876* is also different from that of the historical novel, it is pertinent to explore the characterization in the novel. As Lukács notes, the protagonist in the historical novel is a type, which mirrors the atmosphere of the historical period that is narrated (60). However, as Hutcheon claims, the characters in historiographic metafiction are not types: in order to reflect "a postmodern ideology of plurality" and "the recognition of difference," postmodern protagonists take on "ex-centric" and "marginalized" roles that do not reflect universal human conditions (*Poetics* 114). In *1876*, all of the characters are historical except for Charles, Baron Jacobi, Charles' daughter Emma, Mr. and Mrs. Sanford, and William de La Touche Clancey. Different from *Burr*, in *1876*, there is no major historical figure as a protagonist, and the fictional characters are not developed in detail. However, in *1876*, there is enough information to differentiate the two fictional characters, Charles and Baron Jacobin, from the typical characters that are likely to appear in a historical novel.

Though underdeveloped as a character, Charles, the protagonist of *1876* as in the case of *Burr*, is an ex-centric character whose primary function is to push the reader to question history and history writing. If he was a type according to the premises of the historical novel, he would merely serve to reflect the general atmosphere of the period. However, Charles, who acts like a historian in the novel, makes remarks on the problematic nature of representation in writing. After Hayes is elected president, Charles wants to write a book about the election of 1876, which will narrate all incidents. In order to write this book, Charles plans to use his writings about the election published by the *Herald*. Charles also intends to consult two people for his book: Democratic diplomat John Bigelow, who "promises to tell [Charles] *all*" about the election (Vidal 354, original emphasis) and the defeated presidential candidate Tilden, who "himself promises to give the final manuscript a careful reading" (Vidal 355). The book that Charles plans to materialize seems to be a historical account of the election according to the method he will use: his own observations and records of the election, Bigelow's firsthand experience in the election, and Tilden's peer review to provide an accurate account of the election. However, Charles treats his prospective book as a fictional narrative. While writing the story of the election in his book, Charles wants to meet the new president, Hayes, and is finally able to see him. Charles' comments on Hayes refer to the fictional

nature of historical narratives: “Hayes is an impressive-looking, rather stout man with a naturally fierce expression. I stared at him with some fascination, for he is, after all, my creation, a major character in the book that I am writing. It is not often that writers are actually able to see their fictional creatures made flesh” (Vidal 361). Charles is aware that narrating a historical character will inevitably fictionalize that personality. His opinion about the fictionalization of a character can be explained through one of the premises of historiographic metafiction, which is the fictionality of the past real through the imagination of the historian. The fact that Hayes turns into a character in Charles’ work refers to the unavoidable fictive nature of history. Charles is not a typical character who is likely to appear in a historical novel because his interest in the problems of writing history presents his critical outlook, and his awareness of the problematic nature of representation echoes postmodern concerns.

Within the framework of characterization, Vidal also uses an intertextual reference, which turns a fictional character in *1876* into a postmodern personality that ruminates about history. In the Afterward at the end of *1876*, Vidal warns the reader about the origin of the character Baron Jacobi by saying “Readers of Henry Adams will duly note the resurrection of Baron Jacobi” (363). Hence, Baron Jacobi and Adams’ novel *Democracy: An American Novel* in which Baron Jacobi, the minister from Bulgaria, appears, deserve a closer attention. Henry Adams (1838-1918), who was a historian, novelist, and journalist, anonymously published his novel in 1880. Set in Washington in the 1870s, *Democracy* narrates the corruption of the capital city through the abuse of power by politicians. A thirty-year-old wealthy and prestigious widow from New York City, Madeleine Lee, and her sister move to Washington to observe the political machinations of the country. The narrator accounts Madeleine’s purpose as follows:

> What she wished to see, she thought, was the clash of interests, the interests of forty millions of people and a whole continent, centering at Washington; guided, restrained, controlled, or unrestrained and uncontrollable, by men of ordinary mould; the tremendous forces of government, and the machinery of society, at work. What she wanted, was POWER. (Adams 10, original emphasis)

While in the city, Madeleine is accompanied by Silas P. Ratcliff, a corrupt Republican presidential candidate who wants to marry her since she is potentially a presentable first lady in the House, and by John Carrington, an honest lawyer who is in love with Madeleine and who tries to protect her from Ratcliff. Madeleine witnesses decadent politicians in Washington and Ratcliff's corruption. From a letter by Carrington, Madeleine learns that Ratcliff has taken graft during the election campaign eight years ago, which causes her to reject Ratcliff's proposal. Disappointed by the corruption in politics, Madeleine wants to go to Egypt. The novel ends with a letter to Carrington from Madeleine's sister who encourages Carrington to reveal his feelings to Madeleine.

In the Introduction to *Democracy*, Noel Perrin evaluates the novel as social comedy that critiques American government (viii). As Perrin suggests, like Madeleine who tries to understand the nature of democracy, Adams "was studying the workings of democracy, he was looking for great men" in Washington (vi). However, Adams was disillusioned by the scandals of Grant's administration: he "was outraged at the corruption, disgusted with the folly, and contemptuous of the social climbing and power seeking he saw in Washington" (Perrin vi). *Democracy* is the materialized version of Adams' disillusionment with democracy in America. In *Democracy*, Baron Jacobi seems to be the spokesperson of Adams. Baron Jacobi's tirade about America is so dramatic that it is worth citing it in full length:

> "Ah!" exclaimed the baron, with his wickedest leer, "what for is my conclusion good? You Americans believe yourselves to be excepted from the operation of general laws. You care not for experience. I have lived seventy-five years, and all that time in the midst of corruption. I am corrupt myself, only I do have courage to proclaim it, and you others have it not. Rome, Paris, Vienna, Petersburg, London, all are corrupt; only Washington is pure! Well, I declare to you that in all my experience I have found no society which has had elements of corruption like the United States. The children in the street are corrupt, and know how to cheat me. The cities are all corrupt, and also the towns and the counties and the States' legislatures and the judges. Everywhere men betray trusts both public and private, steal money, run away with public funds. Only in the Senate men take no money. And you gentlemen in the Senate very well declare that your great United States, which is the head of the civilized world, can never learn anything from the example of corrupt Europe. You are right—quite right! The great United States needs not an example. I do much regret that I have not yet one hundred years to live. If I could then come back to this city, I should find

> myself very content—much more than now. I am always content where there is much corruption, and *ma parole d'honneur*!" broke out the old man with fire and gesture, "the United States will then be more corrupt than Rome under Caligula; more corrupt than the Church under Leo X.; more corrupt than France under the Regent! (Adams 50-51)

Baron Jacobi, who talks about the corruption in the United States in Adams' *Democracy* that echoes one of the main themes in *1876*, is also the character who probes the relationship between history and literature in *1876* by becoming Vidal's mouthpiece. Historiographic metafiction ruminates about history and history writing in order to question history as a grand narrative. Likewise, *1876* is interested in history and history writing, and, therefore, it calls attention to the discursive nature of history. In *1876*, Baron Jacobi fulfills this role as he talks about the connection between fiction and history with General James Garfield and Charles. They talk about what kind of writing should be evaluated and trusted as a historical account. According to Baron Jacobi, the classics, such as Julius Caesar's accounts of history, should be considered as literature instead of history because as Jacobi puts it, "'Who, after all, believes a word that Julius Caesar wrote? His little 'history' was simply a sort of leg up for his political career'" (Vidal 206). Baron Jacobi underlines the fictionality and subjectivity of the historical narratives in connection with the purposes of the writer. Moreover, he questions history as a grand narrative when he claims, "'We *cannot* know any history, truly. I suppose somewhere, in Heaven perhaps, there is a Platonic history of the world, a true record. But what we think to be history is nothing but fiction'" (Vidal 206, original emphasis). Charles agrees with the Baron by claiming that there is "'no *absolute* record,'" and exemplifies the issue by narrating his own experience: "'When I was trying to write about the Communards in Paris—and I was there at the time—I could seldom find out just who was killed by whom'" (Vidal 206, original emphasis). Even further, Baron Jacobi claims that historical narratives are less reliable than fictional narratives of history and that he prefers to learn past "'From Dante, Shakespeare, Scott—all fiction writers'" because he believes that Shakespeare's "characters are always *right*" (Vidal 207, original emphasis).

The Baron's discourse, which questions history, differentiates him from a type in a historical novel. A type character would suggest that history writing provides the truth.

Yet the Baron's attitude towards history echoes the postmodern concern of history as opposed to modernist historiography. In this sense, he is an ex-centric figure in the novel. Further, the very existence of Baron Jacobi in *1876* is chronologically out of place. The Baron, who was actually created in 1880 by Henry Adams, appears in the year of 1876 in Vidal's novel. Chronologically, the Baron is situated out of place in *1876* since he is not even created to deliver his showy speech on history. Within the framework of historiographic metafiction, this incident also points to both the historicity and the textuality of history. The way Vidal makes a character speak prematurely about his own contemporary issues clearly exemplifies how Vidal historicizes his novel according to his contemporary atmosphere. This relationship between the texts that Vidal uses to construct his narrative also demonstrates how one text refers to the other instead of reflecting outside reality. Hence, Baron Jacobi character functions to situate *1876* outside the genre of the historical novel.

1876 also makes use of autobiography and biography tradition as a tool to problematize history writing. As in the case of *Burr*, *1876* includes a journal in which the election of 1876 is narrated, and discussions on biography writing take place in the novel. Since autobiography in relation to history has already been discussed in *Burr*, this chapter will underline the biography tradition in connection with history. In his essay "On History," written in the 1830s, Thomas Carlyle interprets history as "the essence of innumerable Biographies" (blupete, par. 5). In a similar manner, in *Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism*, scholar F. V. N. Painter defines biography as the "department of history" that "gives the facts and events of an individual life. . . . While great men are in large measure the creatures of mighty movements, they at the same time give direction to historic development. There is truth in Carlyle's idea that universal history 'is at bottom the history of the great men who have worked there'" (161-62). Thus, biographies of the great men are treated as documents that picture the historical era as in the case of Carlyle's work on Oliver Cromwell, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, published in two volumes in 1845, which gives an insight into the civil war in England.

Similar to the discussions in writing history, the first crucial issue in writing biography is the assumption of truth, which can be subverted mistakenly or deliberately.

According to Painters, there are two sources of errors in writing biography: ignorance and prejudice for or against the person whose biography is being written. While ignorance "leads to the omission of important particulars or to a misinterpretation of those that are known," prejudice leads "on the one hand, to such a presentation of the biographical facts as to magnify the merits of the man; and on the other, it leads to such a suppression or distortion of the facts as to detract from his deserts" (162-63). For instance, as Ian Campbell from the University of Edinburgh argues in an online article on Carlyle, Carlyle's works on Cromwell include fake letters although it is "an extraordinary history, almost a dialogue with a dead hero" (par. 24). As Campbell notes:

> "It [*Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*] was provocative, original, fiercely contested at the time of its publication and more so when Carlyle was deceived by patent forgeries of Cromwellian letters—the celebrated "Squire Letters"—offered him after he had completed the basic writing of history. Carlyle accepted the letters uncritically and stubbornly clung to his belief in their authenticity after they had been revealed to the reasonable as forgeries. Just such a weakness makes it easy to criticize Carlyle's method and his conclusions: his method was intuitive, and his admiration for character (often on apparently inconsequential grounds) overrode many critical mechanisms which could have ensured greater objectivity. (par. 24)

Hence, all the discussions on writing history in terms of subjectivity, selection process, and ideology explored in the theoretical background overlap with writing biography.

Additionally, the blurring of boundaries between fact and fiction in writing history are also valid for the discussions on biography writing. In his article "Biography: Inventing the Truth," Richard Holmes claims that biography is an outcome of "Fiction married Fact" (15). As in the case of the historian who cannot escape imagination while constructing history, the biographer needs to use his/her inventive power. According to Holmes, "The fluid, imaginative powers of re-creation pull against the hard body of discoverable fact. The inventive, shaping instinct of the story-teller struggles with the ideal of a permanent, historical, and objective document" (20). Historiographic metafiction, which problematizes history writing, deliberately questions subjective documents such as biographies that contribute to the writing process of history.

In *1876*, there are three references to the genre of biography, which imply how biographies of "the great men" as historical documents are unreliable. As a historical fact, in 1868, American statesman John Bigelow edited Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* by using Franklin's original manuscript. Bigelow was also the editor of the 1875 version of the *Autobiography*, and this time he used both the original manuscript and Franklin's written correspondence and other writings as is stated on the citation page of the related book. Vidal manipulates this historical fact in *1876* to emphasize the unreliability of biographies in history writing. In the novel, the first reference is a comment on a biography of Benjamin Franklin written by Democratic diplomat John Bigelow. In his journal, Charles introduces Bigelow to the reader as follows: "If Bigelow is remembered, it will be for his resurrection of Benjamin Franklin. Until Bigelow, no one had ever thought to save that wicked old creature from the bowdlerizers. Bigelow's editing of the original texts of Franklin's works as well as the biography of Franklin he published last year have made him a fortune" (Vidal 44-45). The quotation suggests that Bigelow both changed Franklin's works and wrote a biography by eschewing the points that might hurt Franklin. According to Charles' claim, as historical documents, neither Franklin's works nor his biography is trustable. If history is the history of great men, as in the case of Franklin's biography, history should be questionable. Bigelow's account of Franklin's biography coincides with Painter's claims in relation to the sources of errors in writing biography. In this context, *1876* questions history by underlining subjectivity and arbitrariness in biographies, which are considered as historical documents that are consulted in history writing.

The second reference to biography in the novel appears when Charles reveals his desire to write a campaign biography. Charles wishes to "find a similar subject" with that of Bigelow (Vidal 45) to make a fortune, and plans to write Tilden's campaign biography. He says: "'Actually, I approached my publisher about doing a campaign biography. He is interested'" (Vidal 119). Tilden's biography will be written on the condition of his nomination, and Bigelow will "'provide [him] with the material'" (Vidal 119). Since Bigelow is Tilden's political ally, Tilden becomes an unreliable source of information for such a biography. Additionally, the reliability of a campaign biography as a historical account is also questionable since a campaign biography is written "for the

purpose of getting [the candidate] elected," as Jill Lepore states in her article "Bound For Glory: Writing Campaign Lives" published in *The New Yorker* (par. 3). As is indicated in Lepore's article, the first campaign biography was published in the election of 1824. John Eaton, a lawyer who had served under Andrew Jackson in the War of 1812, was hired by Andrew Jackson to finish his life story upon the deaths of the other two biographers. In 1817, the biography was published under the title of "The Life of Andrew Jackson," and, as Lepore notes, "In 1824, Eaton published a revised 'Life of Jackson,' founding a genre, the campaign biography" (par. 2), which "established the genre's conventions" (par. 5). Lepore deduces the conventions of the genre from Eaton's style:

> When Eaton revised it [the biography] in 1824, he turned what was a history, if a decidedly partial one, into a political propaganda; his changes are carefully noted by Frank Owsley, Jr., in a facsimile edition published by the University of Alabama Press. Eaton cut out or waved away everything compromising (the duels Jackson fought, a soldier he had executed), lingered longer over everything wondrous (battles, mainly), and converted into strengths what pundits had construed as weaknesses. Eaton's Jackson wasn't reckless; he was fearless. He had almost no political experience; he was, therefore, ideally suited to fight corruption. He lacked political pedigree; his father, a poor Scotch-Irish immigrant, died before he was born—but this only made Jackson more qualified for the White house, since he was, to use a phrase that was coined during his Presidency, a "self-made man." (par. 5)

The way Eaton treated Jackson's life story might be called trimming the story by censoring, exaggerating, and distorting the truths, which is a situation that echoes Painter's argument about the errors of biographies. Inaccurate though it was, the biography written by Eaten helped Jackson to be elected in 1828. As Lepore states, a biographer named James Parton, who did research in the eighteen-fifties for his book about Jackson, found "in the nation's libraries and bookstores, 'mountains of lies and trash' known as 'Campaign literature,' a peculiar product of the United States" (par. 8).

In her article, Lepore displays how campaign biographies turn an ordinary person into a great man. The pattern that Eaton used in Jackson's biography, which is the rise of a man from rags to riches to show the success of the candidate in life, was used in the

upcoming biographies. Lepore exemplifies her claim about the pattern of the campaign biographies as follows:

> Garfield was born in a log cabin; his biographers provided illustrations of the family home, complete with measurements. (Garfield's life was, literally, a Horatio Alger story, "From Canal Boy to President.") McKinley—"From Tent to White House"—lacked even logs. Coolidge was born behind clapboards, in a house attached to his father's general store, but his was nevertheless "another story of the Log Cabin to the White House." "The Story of Hoover," born on a farm in Iowa, orphaned at nine and a millionaire before he was forty, was "the Story of America." . . . Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whose speech nominating Smith for the Presidency was itself published as a campaign biography, left his own biographer in a quandary. His origins were hardly humble. This did not stop one biographer from answering yes to the question posed by his book's title, "Is Roosevelt an Andrew Jackson?" It wasn't actually a lie to say that he was born in "the old family house on the ancestral farm." (F. D. R. insisted it not be called an "estate".) And then there were the hardships of Groton: "The Boys slept in dormitories. The alcoves were small and bare. There was one tiny window. There was a bed, a chair, a bureau. That was all." (par. 16)

This pattern was so much exaggerated that one of the presidential candidates had to correct what was written about him: "Adlai Stevenson displayed remarkable candor when he admitted that, in 1952, 'I wasn't born in a log cabin. I didn't work my way through school nor did I rise from rags to riches, and there's no use trying to pretend I did'" (qtd. in Lepore par. 17). Campaign biographies were used as tools to create heroic personalities about the would-be presidents by appealing to the public through the use of specific, exaggerated images. It could be claimed that, considering the purposes of campaign biographies, the references to campaign biographies in *1876* function to draw attention to how grand narratives about historical figures are created. In this way, *1876* forces the reader to see the constructed nature of these biographies.

In connection with the discussions on campaign biographies above, in *1876* the reference to Lincoln's campaign biography written by William Dean Howells, which is the third reference to the biography tradition in the novel, is quite meaningful in reminding the reader of the novel's concern with history writing. Charles mentions Howell's biography of Lincoln in his journal as follows:

> The citadel of realism is the *Atlantic Monthly*, published at Boston by a middle-Westerner named Howells, an engaging if somewhat too literary man whom I met years ago in Venice, where he was the very young American consul—his reward for having written an exultant campaign biography of President Lincoln. (Vidal 79)

As a historical fact, in 1860 Lincoln's biography was written by Howells who claims, "'I wrote the life of Lincoln which elected him'" (qtd. in Lepore par. 13). Yet the important point is that, as Lepore notes, the work that Howell was proud of actually contains false information about Lincoln. After elected, Lincoln read and reread the biography,

> and in the margins he made corrections. In the White House, he reread it more than once. He checked it out of the Library of Congress twice. It was in his office when he was assassinated. Where Howells had written that Lincoln was, in the eighteen-thirties, "a staunch Adams man," Lincoln crossed out "Adams" and wrote "anti-Jackson." And when Howells told of how, as a young congressman, Lincoln had traveled miles and miles, by foot, to the Illinois legislature, Lincoln scribbled in the margin "No harm, if true; but, in fact, not true. L." (Lepore par. 20)

Interestingly, when Lincoln saw the mistakes, it was too late to correct them because the biography was already published, and history was already textually forged. At least, in that edition of the biography, history was mistakenly recorded. All these emphases on campaign biographies in *1876* prove the novel's interest in history and history writing, which again places *1876* in the genre of historiographic metafiction.

Historiographic metafiction is concerned how knowledge is gathered and how reality or truth is represented. As Hutcheon states,

> Postmodern discourses both install and then contest our traditional guarantees of knowledge, by revealing their gaps and circularities. They suggest no privileged access to reality. The real exists (and existed), but our understanding of it is only conditioned by discourses, by our different ways of talking about it. (*Poetics* 157)

Like any postmodern form that challenges institutions "from the media to the university, from museums to theater" (*Poetics*, Hutcheon 9), *1876* questions power and power-

related institutions such as newspapers and concepts such as democracy, which consist of the superstructure of society, and, thus, vulnerable to power games. *1876* points a suspicious finger to the newspapers as unreliable sources of information or historical records, which inevitably influence the way history is recorded. In *1876*, the newspapers are seen as pawns of political powers which manipulate the results of elections by deliberately providing misinformation. Thus, the discussions on newspapers and democracy are intertwined in *1876*. Different from the historical novel whose primary concern is to reflect a sense of past reality, *1876* deals with the issue of how past events are represented, or rather misrepresented through discussions on newspapers.

1876 first draws attention to the possibility that newspapers as sources of information, which could be consulted in the future for would-be historical records, may not be reliable. The unreliability may occur accidentally as in the case of the newspapers that misprint Emma's title. When Charles and Emma arrive at New York, a group of journalists meet them, and Charles gives them an interview. When Charles looks through the newspapers the following day, he sees that none of the newspapers printed Emma's title correctly. In his journal, Charles narrates this event as follows:

> The inner pages of each journal announce the arrival of Charles Schermerhorn Schuyler and his beautiful daughter, the Princess Dag Regent, Degregene, Dahgreejuhnt, widow of Napoleon's famed marshal, daughter-in-law of the Emperor Napoleon III, intimate of the Empress Eugénie . . . a jumble of information, mostly false. (Vidal 36)

In addition to the unintentional misinformation in the newspapers which are not able to give true information even about a very simple matter, *1876* also points to the arbitrary misinformation in the newspapers. Charles writes an article about Empress Eugénie for the *Ledger*. Yet he does not like the article when he reviews it before publication because the *Ledger* has changed it to a great extent. Charles narrates his discontent as follows:

> Incidentally, the *Ledger*'s version of my Empress Eugénie will be published Saturday. I read the slips with some dismay. They have hacked everything about, trying to "improve" my poor work by adding a number of detailed

> descriptions of the Empress's clothes in what they take to be my style. The result is horrendous, and deeply humiliating. (Vidal 88)

Charles' article has been changed to the extent that when Emma reads it, she exclaims, "'It's unrecognizable!'" (Vidal 96). According to Emma, who knows both the first version of Charles' work and the Empress in person, the newspaper editor has caused the text to become unrecognizable. Such a change has to do with the *Ledger*'s target readers, who are mostly women. The newspaper wants to appeal to them by underlining the feminine details about the Empress. In Emma's opinion, the article has turned out to be "'nothing but dress patterns, and how she [the Empress] does her hair,'" but "'they've got the dresses and the hair all wrong'" (Vidal 96). Disturbed by the people who just want to know about the dresses and the hair style of the Empress, Charles scolds an agent, who tries to hire Charles for some lecture circuit about the Empress and her court, by saying, "'You should really book not me, not a political writer, not a historian, but my daughter the Princess d'Agrigente'" (Vidal 141). The *Ledger*'s desire to be circulated in great numbers results in the false information.

However, Charles, who prides himself as a political writer and historian, is forced to consent to these changes in his article because he needs the money. Most importantly, Charles turns out to be a *Ledger*-esque journalist who works according to the standards of the *Ledger*. Charles offers the *Ledger* to write another article entitled *The Last Days of Napoleon III*, which is accepted by the newspaper. He narrates his thoughts about the possible article as follows: "The only problem is that I know nothing about the poor man's last days except that he had a most difficult time with his prostate and bladder. I suppose I can concoct something *Ledger*-esque. After all, I saw enough of the Emperor over the years to be able to describe, with a sob in my prose, his poignant coda" (Vidal 88). It is evident that this writing on Napoleon, like the one on the Empress, will not provide the reader with the truth. Both situations serve to emphasize the fact that newspapers as the source of information are not reliable and that although historical figures did live in the past, our knowledge on them is conditioned by their representations subjected merely to the conscience of the writer and the historian. Thus, *1876* questions the reliability of the representations of the historical personalities as historical accounts.

Parallel with the discussions above, *1876* underlines the idea that even the most prestigious newspapers may not provide the truth. For instance, when Charles talks about providing the truth(s) in the *Evening Post*, William Cullen Bryant, editor of the *Evening Post*, comments on the issue as follows: "'Half truths are the best we can manage, I fear'" (Vidal 33). Similarly, James Gordon Bennett, Jr., owner of the *Herald*, sarcastically declares that his own newspaper is not reliable, as well. When Charles questions Bennett about if President Grant will be a candidate for the next election, the following conversation takes place between them:

> "'Even I, in Paris, have read that he will not be a candidate again.'
> 'Even you, in Paris, *believe* the newspapers?'
> 'Only yours!'
> 'Well, don't!' Jamie laughed." (Vidal 39, original emphasis)

Another important newspaper, *Times*, is also mentioned as an unreliable source of information. Democratic diplomat Bigelow warns Charles not to rely on the *Times*. Charles narrates his observation by repeating Bigelow's words for the reader as follows: "Bigelow railed against the press in general and the *Times* in particular. 'But then the *Times* can never be objective'" (Vidal 44). All these discussions on the newspapers and their attitudes towards providing knowledge serve to question their place in the writing of history since all these newspapers will turn out to be historical records, which are archived for future references.

1876 also questions the printed media as a tool that is used by powers to manipulate both the people and the elections. Thus, the printed media is represented as something that interferes in the democratic processes. Throughout the novel, the emphasis is primarily on "'newspapers bought, *bought* by political bosses'" (Vidal 13, original emphasis). As Governor Samuel J. Tilden suggests, even the *Evening Post* "'took a retainer from Tweed'" (Vidal 13), and there is a rumor that a journalist named Nordhoff, who used to work in the *Evening Post* for Bryant, "was sacked because—everyone but Bryant says—of his attacks on the Tweed Ring" (Vidal 149). Moreover, the newspapers often turn out to be spokesmen of the political parties. As Tilden claims, the *Evening Post*, for instance, "'supported the entire Republican ticket because that scoundrel Henderson is thick as can be with Grant, and controls the paper'" (Vidal 44).

Likewise, the Democratic Party tries to control newspapers by "'using all sorts of writers and artists to prepare material for the newspaper press'" (Vidal 119). Hence, the newspapers become tools used by those in power, and circulate the deliberately chosen information.

The newspapers during the election process are powerful enough to change the course of elections by manipulating and confusing the people. *1876* emphasizes this power of the newspapers as intruders that violate the election process, which is supposed to be one of the backbones of democracy. For instance, as a historical fact, in the election of 1876, where Samuel J. Tilden was the Democratic candidate for the presidency and Rutherford B. Hayes was the Republican one, Tilden was elected president with the majority of the popular votes. Yet Hayes became the president by the help of the newspapers and the corrupted politicians. In *1876*, this situation calls for the concept of democracy to be questioned as a grand narrative. After the first counts of the votes in the election of 1876, as Charles notes in his journal, "Tilden is the president. The *Tribune* is certain that he has been elected while the *Evening Post* estimates that Tilden may have as many as 209 votes in the Electoral College as compared to 160 for Hayes" (Vidal 297). However, there is also confusing information in some newspapers. Charles reads the headlines: According to *The New York Times*, it is a "'A Doubtful Election.' The editor made much of the fact that Oregon had gone Democratic by only 500 votes; also, of the fact that the crucial states of Louisiana, Florida, and South Carolina were being claimed by Hayes's electors—as we had always anticipated" (Vidal 297). The *Herald* also casts doubt on the election: "'The Result—What Is It? Something that No Fellow Can Understand.' . . . 'Impossible to Name Our Next President. The Returns Too Meagre.' But then the writer declares that the key states of Louisiana, Florida, and Oregon had indeed gone Democratic, and so it did *look* as if Tilden was elected" (Vidal 297, original emphasis). Not understanding why the *Herald* and *The New York Times* use such headlines after Tilden has won the election according to the popular votes, Charles questions Bennett, the owner of the *Herald*. Bennett claims that he has got a clue from *The New York Times* for the headline of the *Herald* that casts doubt upon the election, and Charles summarizes what Bennett tells him as follows:

> Around four o'clock this morning, the aver-alert editors of the *Times* discovered that one of Tilden's aides had sent out a telegram to all state chairmen, asking each state what the electoral vote was going to be.
> The *Times* decided that this telegram displayed anxiety on the part of the Democrats; therefore, the election might still be in doubt. Although the editors knew that the popular vote at the South had gone for Tilden and the paper had already grudgingly conceded him New York State, they preferred to act as if the Democratic majorities in Louisiana, Florida, and South Carolina had already been reversed by the Republican Returning Boards. This explained the headline in the first morning edition of the *Times*.
> At 6:00 A.M., the second *Times* edition arbitrarily gave Hayes two of the "doubtful" Southern states and threw in Oregon for good measure while admitting that Florida was in doubt. Tentatively the *Times* gave Tilden 184 electoral votes and Hayes 181, making the point that if "doubtful" Florida should go Republican, Hayes would be elected by one vote in the Electoral College. (Vidal 298)

Here, the important point is that, as Charles claims, "'all of this is invention'" (Vidal 298). Bennett suggests that in order to reverse the result of the election, "'the *Times* and now Zach. [the Republican Party's chairman] and William Chandler [secretary of the Republican Party] are deliberately putting it in doubt. With the help of General Dan Sickles'" (Vidal 298).

Moreover, the Republican National Committee sends the *Herald* a telegram which reads "'Louisiana, Florida, South Carolina, Wisconsin, Oregon, Nevada, and California have given Republican majorities. There is no reason to doubt the correctness of those reports. And if confirmed the election of Hayes is assured by a majority of one in the Electoral College'" (Vidal 300). Yet before sending this message Zach. Chandler already knows that Louisiana and Florida have voted to the Democratic Party. As Bennett states, Zach. Chandler has been "'suppressing the bad news, waiting for them to get his message'" (Vidal 300). President Grant is also aware that Tilden has won. One of Bennett's editors says that "'We've also heard a report that the President personally believes that Louisiana has definitely voted for Tilden, and that Tilden has been elected'" (Vidal 301). Upon this, President Grant orders Federal troops to go to Louisiana to keep order in case of an emergency where the supporters of Tilden may rebel against the manipulation of the election. By using the newspapers, the Republican Party manipulates the flaw of knowledge, "'Falsify[s] the vote,'" and creates "a doubtful state" (Vidal 300). The aim of this manipulation is that although the Democrats

"actually won the most votes . . . the Republicans who control the election machinery are now going to reverse the vote" (Vidal 300). Through the newspapers, the outcome of the election changes.

Although the newspapers are aware of the truth, they are under the influence of the political power and they do not contradict the already determined verdict. Thus, through their discourse, democracy is manipulated and shaped by the imposed power games. This situation coincides with what Hutcheon suggests: "Discourse . . . is both an instrument and an effect of power" (*Poetics* 185). That is to say, the newspapers' way of handling the election, their discourse, causes the citizens to doubt which requires the re-counts of the votes. Yet the recounts will eventually be in favor of the powerful or the rich party because, as Tilden, Democratic candidate for presidency, notes, "'There will be bribes given, and taken,'" and the Democrats "'shall certainly lose [their] majority of ninety-two in Florida'" (Vidal 308). Most importantly, the discourse that these newspapers create will definitely influence the creation of another discourse, history. In this context, *1876* also questions the newspapers as "both an instrument and an effect of power" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 185).

Along with the critique of the newspapers, *1876* primarily demythologizes the concept of democracy. *1876* draws attention to the idea that, like other grand narratives, democracy is also a constructed discourse, manipulated, used, and abused by power. The novel questions democracy as an American ideal, and displays how it is manipulated by the political machinery. In this sense, *1876* implies the idea that, like history, democracy is subjected to power relations. This approach to democracy prevents nostalgia for the past, which distances *1876* from the historical novels. Although there are several definitions of democracy, this study will not examine the differences in meaning and interpretation of the definitions since the aim is not to examine democracy but to explore how the concept of democracy is abused. *Webster's Online Dictionary with Multilingual Thesaurus Translation* provides several definitions for democracy: "1. The political orientation of those who favor government by the people or by their elected representatives. 2. A political system in which the supreme power lies in a body of citizens who can elect people to represent them. 3. The doctrine

that the numerical majority of an organized group can make decisions binding on the whole group." The dictionary also gives the contemporary usage of the term as follows: democracy "refers to a government chosen by the people, whether it be direct or representative." According to these definitions, the core of democracy is the election of governments by people. As stated in "The Gettysburg Address" by Abraham Lincoln in 1863, the monumental maxim of American democracy is the idea of a government "of the people, by the people, for the people" (368). *1876* plays with the idea of democracy by narrating the election of 1876 in order to display how this maxim, or grand narrative, does not work.

In order to exemplify how democracy fails, in *1876*, Vidal constantly emphasizes the corruption in politics. Corruption operates on all levels of politics. For instance, while William Sanford's wife Denise is talking to Charles about American politics, she says, "'we buy the senators who buy the elections'" (Vidal 140). In the novel, Senator Roscoe Conkling is such a senator. Senator Conkling explains to Charles how he has acquired his seat at Senate as follows: "'Senate seats are also expensive. My admirers are said to have spent a quarter of a million dollars to get me this plain chair and table'" (Vidal 175). When Charles says that Conkling did not actually need the money to be elected, Conkling replies to him as follows: "'Senators are chosen by state legislatures and the legislators of New York are spoiled men—as well as spoilsmen'" (Vidal 175). In a sense, corruption is inescapable in Washington.

The election system is also corrupt. After casting doubt upon the election, the Republican politicians try to steal it. Bennett calls upon Charles in the midnight of the election day via a note in which he says, "'You must start writing again. The Republicans are sending their leaders—and their money—South. They're going to steal the election if they can. Popular vote: Tilden's beaten Hayes by more than 250,000 votes. This *used* to be enough to make anybody president'" (Vidal 304, original emphasis). According to Charles, "no matter what tricks are played, bribes given, troops mustered" (Vidal 304), stealing the election after the majority has already made its decision is an absurd idea. Charles narrates his certainty about Tilden's presidency as follows: "Admittedly, the Electoral College—that ridiculous invention of the

founders—can be manipulated to some degree but not sufficiently at this late hour to cheat the people of what they have so overwhelmingly voted for: the Tilden Administration" (Vidal 304). Yet the Democrats including Tilden himself are not sure of it, and in order to counter the Republicans' tricks, one of the Democrat politicians offers to bribe the electorate just like the Republicans are planning to do. Tilden refuses this offer by saying, "'I have been elected president by a clear majority of the people who are as revolted as I am by state of affairs in this country. Now, if I want the office to which I have been elected, I must outspend General Grant and his friends'" (Vidal 308). However, the Democrats, who know that "'If they pay the money that Tilden refuses to pay, they will have both states, regardless of the popular vote'" (Vidal 310-11), look for the ways to pay the high prices for the doubtful states. Charles, who ponders upon democracy and how democracy is being carried out, sarcastically claims, "Bigelow and Pelton [Tilden's brother-in-law] were right: with more money and more industry, the state would have been Democratic" (Vidal 292).

The electoral commission, which is the decision making authority in solving the problem of the 1876 election, is also corrupt. In their article entitled "The Last Stolen Election: The Story of Rutherfraud Hayes," Jerry Kopel and Dave Kopel analyze the election of 1876, and they describe the nature of the electoral commission as follows: "Politically, the commission had seven Republicans, seven Democrats and independent Supreme Court Justice David Davis of Illinois. But Davis suddenly resigned from the court to accept a U. S. Senate position from Illinois. His replacement was Republican Supreme Court Justice Bradley" (par 17). In *1876*, Vidal explores this detail in order to display the dimension of corruption in the election. In Charles' journal, the details about Bradley are noted as follows: After an interview with Bradley, Bradley seems to vote "with the Democrats to go behind the returns," (Vidal 337), which means the declaration of Tilden's victory. Yet, according to the information which is given to Charles by journalist Nordhoff, right after the interview, Bradley has been visited by a Republican Senator and Secretary of the Navy. During this visit, "The railroad interests were heard from, the flag was appealed to, and Mrs. Bradley is reported to have wept when she begged her husband to support Hayes," and Bradley "voted *against* going behind the returns" which means he "has sold out" (Vidal 338, original emphasis). All

these discussions on Bradley and the electoral commission display that corruption in the government is explicit, and that democratic ideals can be manipulated easily.

The discussions on the corruption within the framework of the 1876 election in the novel serve to question the concept of democracy as a grand narrative: corruption is disseminated in all levels of politics and this situation prevents democracy from genuinely prevailing. Moreover, corruption is viewed as a problem of not only the United States but also of other countries. Democracy in America is compared to the Napoleonic dictatorship in France when a Frenchman, who has come to America "to observe the ways of Democracy" (Vidal 314) along with a group of European audience whose mission is to follow the election, inquiries Charles as follows: "'Explain to me, sir, . . . in what way this election differs from that infamous election where Louis Napoleon destroyed the French republic, and made himself emperor'" (Vidal 314). In this context, *1876* exhibits how democracy turns out to be tyranny by focusing on the manipulation of the election. Thus, the novel tries to shake the belief in democracy as a grand narrative.

In line with the premises of historiographic metafiction, *1876* also represents itself as an unreliable source of information. For instance, writer and journalist Charles Nordhoff, who tells Charles that Bradley "'was paid two hundred thousand dollars to change his vote'" (Vidal 338), admits just after this sentence that this "'is unsubstantiated gossip'" (Vidal 338). Hence, Charles' narrative about Bradley and the electoral commission is not reliable. Plus, the dialogue between Nordhoff and Charles below questions the reliability of Charles' narrative. That is, the great amount of information in Charles' journal comes from Nordhoff, and Charles and the reader view the events from Nordhoff's perspective. More importantly, the source of Nordhoff's information is not known. This detail is stressed to create suspense about the historical knowledge provided in the novel. When Charles complains about James Garfield who proposes him to publish false information in favor of Blaine, Nordhoff claims that he has already provided the truth for Charles by saying, "'But now you know the truth. And the truth always comes out'" (Vidal 208). Charles' reply to Nordhoff is meaningful within the framework of historiographic metafiction, which constantly questions the historical

knowledge and the truth: "'Dear Nordhoff, in this case I know only what *you* tell me is the truth. And you could be mistaken. As for the truth always coming out, why, I think it never does. But even if it did, who would know?'" (Vidal 208, original emphasis). *1876* avoids certainty of the information it provides by repeatedly referring to the skeptical nature of knowledge, and thus questions its own reliability.

1876 also underlines the plurality of history. Basically, *1876* is Charles' journal particularly about the election of 1876, and it can be evaluated as Charles' personal history of the election. Charles explains what his journal means to him as follows: "Those notes are to be the quarry from which I hope to hack out a monument or two to decorate the republic's centennial, as well as to mark my own American year—a year that is beginning in a most helter-skelter breathless way" (Vidal 30-31). Charles will try to give meaning to the events of 1876 in this journal, and will create his own history of the election. The use of a journal in the novel to provide an alternative history of the election of 1876 is meaningful because historiographic metafiction highlights the plurality of truths and histories. Accordingly, a journal, as a personal history, serves postmodern fiction which, as Hutcheon notes, "substitutes for History the value of histories, revealing how it is we who give meaning to the past, how it is we who make histories into History" (*Poetics* 214).

1876 also focuses on the unreliability of history in relation to the fallibility of memory. As the basic information storage of humans, memory is not reliable. The reliability of histories is then questioned in relation to memory and its malfunctions. In his book *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers,* Daniel L. Schacter, who is a memory researcher for more than twenty years, clarifies how memory works:

> we do not record our experiences the way a camera records them. Our memories work differently. We extract key elements from our experiences and store them. We then recreate and reconstruct our experiences rather than retrieve copies of them. Sometimes, in the process of reconstructing we add on feelings, beliefs, or even knowledge we obtained after the experience. In other words, we bias our memories of the past by attributing to them emotions or knowledge we acquired after the event. (9)

Schacter also discusses the malfunctions of memory by dividing them into seven transgressions as transience, absent-mindedness, blocking, misattribution, suggestibility, bias, and persistence. According to Schacter, transience, absent-mindedness, and blocking are "sins of omissions: we fail to bring to mind a desired fact, event, or idea" (4). For instance, transience "refers to a weakening or loss of memory over time" (4). Schacter notes that absent-mindedness "involves a breakdown at the interface between attention and memory. Absent-minded memory errors—misplacing keys or eyeglasses, or forgetting a lunch appointment—typically occur because we are occupied with distrusting issues or concerns, and don't focus attention on what we need to remember" (4). In Schacter opinion, blocking

> entails a thwarted search for information that we may be desperately trying to retrieve. We've all failed to produce a name to accompany a familiar face. This frustrating experience happens even though we are attending carefully to the task at hand, and even though the desired name has not faded from our minds—as we become acutely aware when we unexpectedly retrieve the blocked name hours or days later. (5)

Schacter points out that, apart from the malfunctions of memory considering omission, misattribution, suggestibility, bias, and persistence are "all sins of commission: some form of memory is present, but it is either incorrect or unwanted" (5). Misattribution "involves assigning a memory to the wrong source: mistaking fantasy for reality, or incorrectly remembering that a friend told you a bit of trivia that you actually read about in a newspaper" (Schacter 5). Suggestibility "refers to memories that are implanted as a result of leading questions, comments, or suggestions when a person is trying to call up a past experience" (Schacter 5). According to Schacter, bias

> reflects the powerful influences of current knowledge and beliefs on how we remember our past. We often edit or entirely rewrite our previous experiences—unknowingly and unconsciously—in light of what we now know or believe. The result can be a skewed rendering of a specific incident, or even of an extended period in our lives, which says more about how we feel *now* than about what happened *then.* (5, original emphasis)

Schacter clarifies persistence as "entail[ing] repeated recall of disturbing information or events that we would prefer to banish from our minds altogether: remembering what we

cannot forget, even though we wish that we could" (5). Considering all these malfunctions of memory, general or personal history as the outcome of memory is eventually unreliable.

Historiographic metafiction considers memory in history writing as a hindrance to reality. As Hutcheon states, "even the event closest to us, personally can be known to us afterwards only by its remains: memory can create only texts. There is no such thing as the *reproduction* of events by memory" (*Poetics* 153-54, original emphasis). Even the individual who witnesses an event cannot guarantee to give the full account of the event without missing at least some of the details. In *1876*, Charles' difficulties in recording the events in his journal signal the limitations of history writing. One of the complexities in recording the events is his memory. Charles, who introduces himself to people as "'mostly an historian'" (Vidal 160), tries to narrate how and when Governor Tilden has been offered the governorship, but he has some difficulties in remembering the details. He writes about his situation as follows:

> Is it a trick of memory that at that moment the letters were brought to the table that assured Tilden of the democratic nomination for the governorship of New York? I daresay I have moved things about in my memory. In any case, it was on that holiday in Switzerland—Tilden's first trip to Europe—that he summons came. (Vidal 14)

Charles' concern with his memory is a self-reflexive warning for the reader about the reliability of the journal. In another section, Charles, who is supposed to record the trials of corrupted politicians after watching the trials, reminds the reader that he has to write what he has seen from memory: "I write this from memory, and must paraphrase" (Vidal 256). Thus, the reader should not expect to have the full and accurate account of the trials.

The malfunction of memory can also be an impediment to remember the events. For instance, when Charles is in the courtroom to record the trials, he has missed a remark that many listeners have not. Charles suspects whether he has listened to what has been said in the trials, which he plans to record. Aware of his mistake, he notes: "The phrase of Ingersoll that everyone quotes (save me: was I listening or just hearing?) is his

reference to Blaine as ‘the plumed Knight.’ I suppose my ear rejected this image because of its silliness” (Vidal 261). Here, Charles seems to talk about a memory problem that might recall Schacter’s argument about the malfunctions of memory in relation to omission. It could be claimed that any account of an event is subjected to the perception of the receiver, which might be called a natural selection process of memory. Different from the historical novel that is devoted to reflecting a truthful past reality, *1876* stresses the difficulties of the historian in writing history due to how the memory works.

Other than natural difficulties in recording the events precisely, external factors prevent Charles from writing the history of the election of 1876 accurately. Charles discloses his particular situation during the writing process. He confesses that once he has taken opiate before writing his journal: “I have just taken an opiate, a powerful laudanum mixed for me in Paris. So now, sleepily, I write rather as one dreams, not knowing what is real or not” (Vidal 18). In dreamlike atmosphere, he tries to remember and record the events of the day, which is a situation that asks one to question the reliability of Charles’ accounts. Indeed, in another night, Charles also confesses that he cannot remember the details of what has been said to him: “I fear that I have drunk too much champagne this evening, smoked too many fine cigars, and so gorged myself on fried oysters that I cannot recall many of the details Sanford so willingly supplied, but I do recall his offer to give me an introduction to Babcock—to Grant, for that matter” (Vidal 67). Although these self-reflexive references to Charles’ inability to narrate the events he has already witnessed seem to be exaggerated, they are functional to draw attention to the limitations of history writing.

Likewise, in *1876*, there are other references to history writing that directly force the reader to question *1876* as a reliable historical account. As has been discussed earlier, Baron Jacobi thinks that historical accounts are not trustable due to their fictive nature. Opposing Baron Jacobi’s idea on history, General Garfield believes that history can be true to reality because “‘we now have letters, diaries, newspaper cuttings’” (Vidal 206). However, Baron Jacobi reverses General Garfield’s statement with a rhetorical question: “‘As for letters, journals, who ever writes the truth about himself?’” (Vidal

206). The Baron's question points a suspicious finger to *1876* which actually consists of Charles' journal. Different from the historical novel that tries hard to represent past reality, *1876* tries to show that representing past reality is problematic and that it is delusion to believe in the possibility of an definitive record of history.

Indeed, the ending of *1876* also contributes to the idea that there is no supreme or complete history that can include everything since none of the narratives in *1876* is properly completed. Within *1876*, there are two narrative layers: One of them is Charles' journal, and the other one is a special dispatch in the *Evening Post* about Charles written by William Cullen Bryant after Charles dies. The reader also knows that Charles has been writing a book on the election of 1876, but the content of the book is never revealed. In the novel, Charles dies all of a sudden by leaving both his journal and the book about the election incomplete. Interestingly enough, the special dispatch is also unfinished. The last sentence of *1876* is from the special dispatch, and is as follows: "At the time of Mr. Schuyler's death, he was at work . . ." (Vidal 362). The sentence breaks up, and the novel abruptly ends. There are no proper conclusions for all the historical narratives in *1876* including the novel itself as the fictional history of the election of 1876. These unfinished accounts about the past hint at the idea that a conclusive history does not exist. Instead, there are micro and fragmentary narratives, which associate the novel with historiographic metafiction.

To conclude, all the discussions above justify that *1876* can be evaluated as a historiographic metafiction rather than a historical novel. Vidal's contextualization of the past within the framework of his present mentality draws attention to the historicity of the text. The ex-centric characters that ruminate about history, the novel's self-conscious interest in history writing underlined through the discussions on the biography tradition, the issue of the representation of truth highlighted through the newspapers that promote misinformation, the questioning of democracy as a grand narrative, and the discussions about the limits of writing and recording history such as memory are distinctive characteristics of *1876*. Hence, these characteristics are enough to label *1876* as a historiographic metafiction since it questions and problematizes history writing.

2. 3. *EMPIRE*

This sub-section will concentrate on *Empire*, which was published in 1987. The 1980s were marked by an economic turbulence that turned America "from the world's largest creditor nation to its largest debtor" (Norton et al. 895). In his essay "The Day the American Empire Ran out of Gas" published in 1986, Vidal remarks on the economic situation: "On September 16, 1985, when the Commerce Department announced that the United States had become a debtor nation, the American Empire died. The Empire was seventy-one years old and had been in ill health since 1968. Like most modern empires, ours rested not so much on military prowess as on economic primacy" (105). Along with the Cold War politics, Vidal bitterly criticizes the expansionist policies of America in connection with the Asiatic nations, and relates the economic problems to America's imperialistic desires: "In order to maintain a general prosperity (and enormous wealth for the few) they [politicians] decided that we would become the world's policeman, perennial shield against the Mongol hordes" (106). In this context, *Empire*, which focuses on the years between 1898 and 1907 when the United States was on the way to becoming an empire, is a critique of the imperialistic impulses of America. As Donald E. Pease claims in his article "America and the Vidal Chronicles," *Empire* also "addresse[s] the troubling questions raised by a president [Ronald Reagan] who simply could not discriminate between his real-life policies in Nicaragua, Libya, or Iran and the fantasy world of the movies" (268). The novel also deals with the corrupt power relationship between the government and the press. Accordingly, this sub-section will first contextualize *Empire* to unearth the historicity of the text from a New Historicist perspective. In other words, the influence of Vidal's vantage point of the 1980s upon the representation of the events and historical figures of 1890s and 1900s in *Empire* will be examined. Second, the characterization in the novel will be analyzed to emphasize the digression from the characteristics of the traditional historical novel. Lastly, the textual analysis will yield Vidal's interest in the representation of reality and the critique of Republican ideals by preparing the grounds for the discussion of history writing in the novel, which will eventually place *Empire* within the boundaries of historiographic metafiction.

Empire begins at Senator Don Cameron's summer house in Kent, England, in 1898 just after the Spanish-American War. Don Cameron and his wife Elizabeth organize a party, and invite John Hay, American ambassador to the Court of St. James's, England, Hay's wife Clara, their son Del, Henry James, and Henry Adams. Among the guests is twenty-year old Caroline Sanford, who is Burr's great-granddaughter and the grand-daughter of Charles Schuyler who died in 1877 at the end of *1876*. Caroline's parents, Emma and Colonel William Sanford, are already dead: Emma died after Caroline's birth in 1878, and Colonel Sanford died in 1897, falling from the horse on to the railway. Emma's older half-brother Blaise Delacroix Sanford—whose mother Denise Sanford died while giving birth to him as narrated in *1876*— lives in America at the moment. Currently living in the Sanford estate at Saint-Cloud in France, Caroline also plans to travel to the United States after visiting the Camerons. Caroline wants to solve the problem of Colonel Sanford's latest will in the United States, which has become a source of conflict between her and Blaise. Before his death, Colonel Sanford kept changing his will since he "had progressed from pronounced eccentricity to the edge of madness, ... In the warm weather, the Colonel preferred daughter to son; then, just as the leaves started to turn, he preferred son to daughter" (Vidal 7). The problem with the will is that Colonel Sanford wrote his will in "faulty French, and since the French number one looks just like an English seven, though unlike a French seven" (Vidal 62). This vagueness prevents twenty-year old Caroline from receiving her share of the inheritance until she turns twenty-seven. Meanwhile, Blaise is in charge of the inheritance, and "the lawyers in New York [are] still unraveling the various wills" (Vidal 7).

Caroline's temporary visit to America turns out to be permanent in Washington. She wishes to own a newspaper company after she witnesses the power of the media patrons in the public and political arena as in the case of William Randolph Hearst, the ambitious owner of the *New York Journal* famous for its Yellow Journalism.[11] Caroline's rivalry with her half-brother Blaise inspires her further since Blaise works for William Randolph Hearst. Eventually, Caroline buys the *Washington Tribune* to gain "power," and she feels that she "must be partisan in one way or another" because "A newspaper has no choice" (Vidal 156). Imitating Hearst in style, Caroline becomes a public figure in Washington, and she is invited to political occasions as well as the

events in the White House then occupied by President Theodore Roosevelt and his family. After her fiancée Del Hay dies, Caroline has a long lasting affair with Senator James Burden Day, otherwise known as Jim, who is married to Kitty. When Caroline gets pregnant as a result of this affair, she marries her cousin John Apgar Sanford, who is also her legal representative for the lawsuit of the Sanford will. This marriage is arranged with the understanding that Caroline will help John Apgar to pay back his debts in return for clearing her shame of pregnancy out of wedlock. Caroline divorces John Apgar when she turns twenty-seven.

Meanwhile, after the Spanish are ousted from the Philippines at the end of the Spanish-American War of 1898, America occupies the region. The insurrection against America in the Philippines causes President William McKinley to appoint the former private secretary of Lincoln, John Hay, to the position of the secretary of the state. After McKinley's assassination Vice-president Theodore Roosevelt takes the office in 1901, and keeps John Hay in his current position even after he is officially elected in 1904. Roosevelt accuses Hearst's newspaper of inciting McKinley's assassination and Hearst, who aspires to be a presidential candidate from the Democratic Party in the election of 1908, threatens Roosevelt to reveal the contents of the letters between Roosevelt and Archbold, the president of the Standard Oil Company. According to Hearst, Roosevelt has received bribes from Standard Oil to conduct his election campaign in 1904, and ignored the wrong doings of the company in return. The novel ends with the private Roosevelt-Hearst meeting of 1908 at the White House, which nobody is allowed to witness.

The historicity in *Empire* can be evaluated through the New Historicist perspective. In his article "New Historicism: A Comment," Hayden White interprets New Historicism as follows: New Historicism is a wish "to extend the principle of structuration to include non-literary texts, on the one hand, and the social institutions and practices that comprise historical contexts, on the other" (298). In relation to this idea, Montrose stresses the multiplicity of histories:

> writing and reading are always historically and socially determinate events, performed *in* the world and *upon* the world by gendered individual and

> collective human agents. We may simultaneously acknowledge the theoretical indeterminacy of the signifying process and the historical specificity of discursive practices—acts of speaking, writing, and interpreting. (23, original emphasis)

The context of the historical past narrated and that of the historian or the writer who narrates that past are in dialogue. The historical context in which the past is re-interpreted and re-contextualized is vital to deduce the sub-text and ideology behind this re-contextualization. As in the case of *Burr* and *1876*, Vidal presents a dialogue between the past and present in *Empire* by re-contextualizing the events of the 1890s and 1900s in light of his present experience.

Empire, which narrates the interest in expanding American influence in Asia especially in the Philippines after the Spanish-American War of 1898, echoes the United States interventions in the internal affairs of other nations during the 1980s. During his presidency, Ronald Reagan emphasized two principles: One was his ongoing fight with communism, and the second one was "an underlying optimism about the ability of American power and values to bring positive change in the world. Reagan liked to quote Tom Paine of the American Revolution: 'We have it in our power to begin the world over again'" (Norton et al. 900). The Reagan Doctrine endorses that "the United States would openly support anticommunist movements—'freedom fighters'—wherever they were battling the Soviets or Soviet-backed governments" (Norton et al. 900). These premises were put into practice in the Caribbean and Central America:

> in October 1983 the president sent U.S. troops into the tiny Caribbean island of Grenada to oust a pro-Marxist government that appeared to be forging ties with Moscow and Havana. In El Salvador, he provided military and economic assistance to a military-dominated government engaged in a struggle with left-wing revolutionaries. (Norton et al. 900, 902)

The Reagan administration was also involved in the Nicaraguan civil war which started in 1979 when leftist insurgents in Nicaragua toppled Anastazia Somoza, who was an ally of the United States. Leftists, calling themselves Sandinistas after César Augusto Sandino who had revolted against the United States occupation of Nicaragua in the 1930s and who was later assassinated by Somoza henchmen, rebelled against the United

States imperialism in Nicaragua (Norton et al). The Sandinistas helped rebels in El Salvador, purchased Soviet weapons, and acquired help from Cuba to develop the Nicaraguan army. Upon this, “Reagan officials charged that Nicaragua was becoming a Soviet client. In 1981 the CIA began to train, arm, and direct more than ten thousand counter revolutionaries, known as contras, to overthrow the Nicaraguan government” (Norton et al. 902). At the time, the United States intervention in El Salvador and Nicaragua caused serious discussions in Congress, and leaders in Congress thought that Nicaragua could turn out to be another Vietnam. In order to prevent this, Congress voted to stop the military aid to the contras. As historian Kenneth C. Davis notes,

> [t]he Democratic-controlled Congress had taken the upper hand in its power struggle with the White House over the Contra aid by passing an amendment that cut off all U.S. funds for the rebel army. But inside the White House, plans were hatched to make an end run around Congress by soliciting foreign money for the Contras, and that was done (523)

Davis claims that “Even though Reagan was advised that sending such funds might be considered an impeachable offense, the plan went ahead” (523-24). The Reagan administration secretly approached other countries such as Saudi Arabia, Panama, and South Korea to provide money and weapons for the contras, and placed an economic embargo against Nicaragua (Norton et al. 902). Further, the desire to intervene in the internal affairs of Nicaragua turned out to be a scandal. In 1986, it was revealed that Reagan’s national security advisor John M. Poindexter and marine lieutenant colonel Oliver North had secretly sold weapons to Iran to rescue the hostage American citizens from Islamic fundamentalist groups in the Middle East. Moreover, money coming from this deal had been illegally sent to the contras in Nicaragua (Norton et al. 902). As Davis notes, “the idea of using profits being made from the sales of arms to Iran to fund the Contras” gives the scandal the title “Iran-Contra” (524). Meanwhile, as this arms deal was covertly continuing, Washington was calling Iran a terrorist country and pressing allied nations not to trade with the Islamic state (Norton et al. 902). Reagan’s presidency was seriously damaged after all this became apparent although Oliver North confessed that he “illegally had destroyed government documents and lied to Congress to keep the operation clandestine” (Norton et al. 902). During the 1990s, the issue was being debated:

> In late 1992 outgoing president George Bush pardoned several former government officials who had been convicted of lying to Congress. Critics smelled a cover-up, for Bush himself, as vice president, had participated in high-level meetings on Iran-contra deals. As for North, his conviction was overturned on a technicality. In view of its deliberate thwarting of congressional authority, the Iran-contra secret network, the scholar William LeoGrande has argued, "posed a greater threat to democracy in the United States than Nicaragua ever did." (Norton et al. 902)

The United States intervenes with the internal affairs of Nicaragua, and is involved in illegal arms deals to justify its intrusion with imperialistic intensions. This incident depicts the extent of imperialistic desires of the United States as well as the decadence in American democratic ideals since the decisions of Congress have been bypassed.

Empire comments on the interventionist attitudes of the United States in the 1980s through the late nineteenth century United States administrations. Starting with the McKinley administration, America was involved in the political affairs of Central American nations, such as Venezuela and Cuba, and Asiatic nations, such as the Philippines. For instance, in 1895 just one year before McKinley's presidency, the Venezuelan boundary dispute with Great Britain was solved by the United States without consulting the Venezuelans, and "Thus the United States displayed a trait common to imperialists: disregard for the rights and sensibilities of small nations" (Norton et al. 606). Further, the McKinley administration financially supported Cuba in their independence war from Spain in 1898, which incited the Spanish-American War of 1898 after the American battleship *Maine* sank in Havana harbor.

Empire presents the United States intervention in the Philippines in a similar fashion to the interventions in the 1980s in terms of the expansionist mentality which assumes the guardianship of the other nations. During the Spanish-American War of 1898, the Filipinos under the leadership of Emilio Aguinaldo cooperated with the Americans for liberation from Spain, believing that "once the Spaniards were gone there would be an independent Philippine—or Vishayan—republic" (Vidal 105). On the other hand, President McKinley "convinced that it was the will of the American people, and probably God, too, that the United States annex the entire Philippine archipelago" after the Spaniards left the region (Vidal 104). In *Empire*, President McKinley's ideas to use

American power towards the good for others, is represented sarcastically, which evokes Reagan's position. While McKinley explains his celestial revelation to John Hay for the annexation of the Philippines, he assumes a fatherly role towards the Filipinos:

> "I was in the oval library. . . . I was alone. I told God that I had never wanted any of this war, and that certainly had never wanted those islands. But the war had come, and the Philippines are ours. What am I to do? Well, number one, I said to God, I could give the islands back to Spain. But that would be cruel to the natives, who hate Spain. Number two, I could let France and Germany take them over. But that would be a very bad business for us commercially . . .'
> "I'm sure God saw the wisdom of that." Hay could not resist the interjection. Fortunately, McKinley was too preoccupied with his divine audience to note Hay's impiety.
> ". . . and discreditable, too. Number three, we could simply go home and let them govern themselves, which they could never do, as everyone knows. But at least we'd be out of it. That's the easy way, of course. It was then that I felt—something." . . . "There was a presence in that room, and I found myself summing up in a way that I had not planned to. I had simply wanted to put the case to God and hope. But God answered me. I heard myself saying, aloud: Number four, in the light of numbers one through three, as I have just demonstrated, Your Honor—God, that is—we have no choice but to take all of the islands and govern the people to the best of our ability, to educate and civilize them and to Christianize them—and in my sudden certitude, I knew that God was speaking to me and through me, and that we would all of us do our best by them, or our fellow men for whom Christ also died." (Vidal 111-12, second and third ellipses are original)

Vidal's McKinley in *Empire* far exceeds Reagan's optimism and belief in American power and values. McKinley considers himself as a creator, and he esteems his own words as if they are unquestionable commands of the highest authority. The way McKinley decides the faith of the Philippines through his fantasies reminds one of Donald E. Pease's satirical comment on Reagan. As suggested earlier, in his article "America and the Vidal Chronicles," Pease describes Reagan as one who is not able to "discriminate between his real-life policies in Nicaragua, Libya, or Iran and the fantasy world of movies" (268). Although McKinley seemingly presents a considerate attitude towards the Filipinos, his ulterior motive is voiced by John Hay who calls McKinley's desire for the annexation of the Philippines "Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation" (113). Ironically, the phrase reminds one of the Emancipation Proclamation, which

abolished slavery in 1863. However, McKinley's Assimilation Proclamation aims to make the Filipinos dependent upon the United States.

Despite dissident voices—such as a Delaware senator's telegram to John Hay which states that "as the United States had fought Spain in order to free Spain's colonies from tyranny, the United States had no right to take Spain's place as tyrant, no matter how benign" (Vidal 104)—President McKinley insists on the annexation of the Philippines. While the discussions are going on, President McKinley receives a telegram revealing that "Aquinaldo's gun-men had opened fire on American troops" (Vidal 110). When John Hay asks whether they knew who fired the first shot, President McKinley does not give a clear answer. Instead, he claims that they have been planning to withdraw the troops from the Philippines, but this new situation has created a change in the plans. "'So they—Aguinaldo, that is—have really done us a great favor. We can't bring the troops home if there is an insurrection'" (Vidal 111). With a critical and sarcastic comment, the narrator interprets President McKinley's attitude as follows:

> After all, the word "insurrection" assumed that the United States government was the legitimate government of the Philippines; but they were not a legitimate government; they were, allegedly, liberators, and the so-called insurrection was actually a war for independence from foreign liberators turned conquerors, with Aguinaldo in the role of Washington and McKinley in that of George III. (Vidal 111)

Vidal bitterly criticizes the interventionist and imperialist politics of America through the analogy between Great Britain and America. America went to war with Great Britain in 1776 to get rid of British imperialism; however, as the narrator confirms, hundred years later, in 1898 America became a nation with similar imperialist aims in their dealings with the Philippines. The narrator's emphasis on the word "insurrection" in the above quote also presents Vidal's analogy between the present historical events and those in *Empire*. The Philippines in the 1890s and Nicaragua in the 1980s were against the American presence in their regions. In both cases, American military power claimed to be in the regions for the benefit of the people: to keep an eye on the country until a stable government was formed or to prevent communism from spreading and becoming a threat. Vidal, who criticizes the imperialist intervention of the United

States, associates the current economic problems with the political views originated in the 1890s. In his essay "The Day the American Empire Ran Out of Gas," Vidal sarcastically says that, in the fall of 1985, "the money power shifted from New York to Tokyo, and that was the end of our empire. Now, the long-feared Asiatic colossus takes its turn as world leader, and we—the white race—have become the yellow man's burden. Let us hope that he will treat us more kindly that we treated him" (107). Vidal's vantage point of the 1980s is determinate in constructing *Empire* as a bitter critique of American politics.

In terms of the characterization, *Empire* moves away from the traditional historical novel to a certain extent. As Lukács notes, Walter Scott used types to "preserve the historical faithfulness" through the psychology of his characters (60). Eccentric figures are not likely to appear in Scott's novels and all of the characters are supposed to reflect the atmosphere of the time. Different from the historical novel, historiographic metafiction is not interested in reflecting historical faithfulness through the use of stock characters. Rather, as Hutcheon points out, "ex-centric," "marginalized," and "peripheral" characters are likely to appear in a historiographic metafiction (*Poetics* 114). According to Hutcheon, types are not functional in historiographic metafiction, because they fall short of postmodern "plurality" and "recognition of difference" (*Poetics* 114). In *Empire*, almost all of the characters are historical personalities except for Caroline, Blaise, John Apgar Sanford, Senator James Burden Day, his wife Kitty, who has a very minor role, and Plon, Caroline's other half-brother who occupies an insignificant role. The historical personalities are not marginalized characters since they do not fall out of their historical atmosphere although they are given more depth than the characters in a typical historical novel. On the other hand, Caroline, the protagonist, and Blaise, who occupies a considerable role in the novel, could be examined as ex-centric characters.

Of all the fictional characters, Caroline is intensely played upon as an ex-centric figure, and she goes far beyond being a mere type in the novel. She does not conform to the characteristics of a female figure of the age. In a conversation between First Lady Mrs. McKinley and Caroline, the traditional roles of a woman in society in the 1900s are

presented. When Mrs. McKinley learns that Caroline does not know how to play cribbage, a card game, she recommends Caroline to learn it by saying, "'You ought to [learn it]. Euchre is a good card game, too. I always win, you know. It's important when you're a wife, to have something to do'" (281). According to Mrs. McKinley, playing card games is a necessary attribute for the role of a wife. In a similar vein, Caroline pretends to be a traditional woman when speaking to Mrs. Delacroix, Blaise's grandmother. For instance, when Caroline is in a rush to go to work, she tries to shorten her conversation with Mrs. Delacroix as follows: "Caroline said that she had—she almost said the unsayable word 'work' but quickly remembered the common phrase—'letters to write,' and clothes to be changed. Mrs. Delacroix let her go" (Vidal 249). Although women are supposed to deal with card games, letter exchanges, and clothes in the world in which Caroline has to live, her interests lie in the public sphere deemed for men.

Caroline does not conform to the traditional role in her private life either. Traditionally, a woman accepts a ring from her fiancée, but Caroline personally gives the engagement ring to her fiancée Del Hay. The narrator recounts the situation as follows: "Now a woman's ring was in place on a man's finger; and the scandal, if anyone were to know, would echo from flashy Lafayette Square to stolid Scott Circle. Apparently, no girl had ever given a man a ring before" (Vidal 217). She has unconventional tastes in her private life as well. She likes to challenge the traditional gender roles as her relationship with James Burden Day proves. "As it turned out, he—not she—said, 'I've never done this before'" (Vidal 350). Further, although Caroline likes Day, who regularly visits her on Sundays, she does not want him by her side at all times. Caroline's opinion about this relationship is as follows:

> Kitty [Day's wife] got to see this homely but also exciting spectacle every day while she could only attend the miracle play on Sundays; yet she did not envy Kitty. To have a man always with you, even one as well-proportioned and charming as Jim, was not a dream that she had ever wanted to come true. She had been a bachelor too long. (Vidal 352)

Caroline seems to enjoy unconventional and even eccentric behavior patterns. After a Sunday meeting, she offers Day a future dinner party for which he should also bring Kitty along with him. The conversation between them is as follows:

> Jim looked amazed. "*Both* of us?
> "Well, it is usual to invite married couples together, or so my Society Lady [a supplementary of Caroline's newspaper for women] instructs us."
> "You'd *like* Kitty here?"
> "Very much. We have," Caroline smiled, "so much in common." (Vidal 352, original emphasis)

Caroline teases the traditional roles and expectations which give depth to her personality. In this sense, she is not a stereotypical character.

Caroline's passion for owning a newspaper is also not compatible with the traditional roles expected from women at the time. Her wish is met with remarks of surprise. Mr. Trimble, editor of the *Tribune*, says to Caroline: "'But no woman . . . no lady has ever run a newspaper that I know of, and there aren't many men who have the knack either'" (Vidal 166). Mr. McLean from the newspaper *Enquirer* makes a similar comment: "'No lady that I know of has ever set out, so young, while single, to do anything like this'" (Vidal 186). Likewise, Mrs. Delacroix reveals her opinion to Caroline thus: "'It is curious indeed,' . . . 'to see a young lady reading press, and getting ink on her gloves in the process'" (245). Caroline's fiancée, Del, also has a similar attitude. The narrator presents Del's opinions about Caroline's desire to be a publisher from Caroline's perspective: "Del looked at Caroline, most curiously. She knew that he was mystified by her life as a publisher; scandalized, too, she feared. Ladies did not do such things. Ladies did not, in fact, do anything at all but keep house and wear the jewels that the gentlemen they were married to gave them" (Vidal 194). Escaping from the traditional roles imposed upon her by society, Caroline "felt like a man; like a *business* man" (152, original emphasis), and she was "now beyond mere womanhood, she was a publisher" (Vidal 310). All the comments made by the characters and the narrator function to emphasize Caroline's ex-centricity.

Caroline, who aspires to be like William Randolph Hearst, wants yellow journalism in her newspaper, and her desire for yellow journalism reinforces her ex-centric nature. Caroline explains what kind of news she wants in the *Tribune* to report by saying "'Surely, from time to time, a beautiful woman is pulled out of the muddy cold dark Potomac River. A beautiful woman perhaps divided into sections, and wearing a

negligée'" (Vidal 155). Witnessing the conversation between Caroline and her editor, Caroline's cousin John, embarrassed by the mention of a woman in a negligée, instinctively protests: "'Caroline,' murmured Cousin John, so shocked that he used, in public, her first name" (Vidal 155). Mr. Vardeman, ex-owner of the *Tribune*, who has just sold his newspaper to Caroline, is another person in the room to protest: "'The *Tribune* is a serious paper,' said Vardeman, thick lips suddenly compressed like punctured bicycle tires. 'Devoted to the republican Party, to the tariff . . .'" (Vidal 155). Caroline does not take his words into consideration, and she continuous to give directions to Mr. Trimble, editor of the *Tribune*: "'Well, Mr. Trimble, let us never forget our seriousness. But let us also remember that a beautiful young woman, murdered in a crime of passion, is also a serious figure if only to herself, while the crime—murder—is the most serious of all, in peacetime, that is'" (Vidal 155). Mr. Trimble is surprised that Caroline wants yellow journalism: "'You want . . . uh, *yellow* journalism, Miss Sanford?' Trimble was staring at her, a look of amusement in his pale blue eyes" (Vidal 155, original emphasis). Humorously and bitterly, Caroline puts an end to the conversation by saying, "'Yellow, ochre, café au lait,' tactlessly, she looked to yellow-brown Vardeman, 'I don't care what color. No, that's not true. I am partial to gold'" (Vidal 155). Since even an established journalist like Hearst has been seriously criticized for treating news in an unprofessional manner, the men in the room cannot believe that a woman desires yellow journalism. In short, Caroline is viewed as a peculiar individual in her personal and professional conduct.

Caroline's opinions on how to present the news echo the points about the role of the fictional elements in historical narratives elaborated by Hayden White in his discussions on the modes of emplotment, argument, and ideological implications in his *Metahistory*. White notes that the way the historian answers the questions of how and why in relation to an event shapes his "narrative tactics," which in turn determines "the construction of his story" (*Metahistory* 7). Hence, the way the historian interprets events by selecting what to narrate due to his ideological concerns is the fictional or the imagined aspect of history. Although Caroline's thoughts about creating news are not as refined, she underlines the role of imagination in constructing the stories in the *Tribune*. Mr. Vardeman warns Caroline to be serious in managing the newspaper by saying that "'the

Tribune is a *news*paper'" (Vidal 156, original emphasis). Caroline's counter argument is as follows:

> "No," said Caroline. "It is not a newspaper. Because there is no such thing as a newspaper. News is what we decide it is. . . ." . . . "Obviously earthquakes and election results and the scores of . . . *baseball* teams," . . . "are news, and must be duly noted. But the rest of what we print is literature, of a kind that is meant to entertain and divert and excite our readers so that they will buy the things our advertisers will want to sell them. So we must be—imaginative, Mr. Trimble." (156, original emphasis)

Caroline voices the arbitrariness of the selection of events to record, and demonstrates the influence of the ideology of the recorder in formulating the representation of the events. Thus, the truthfulness of newspapers as historical documents is questioned by Vidal.

Caroline demonstrates how an event is manipulated by the recorder, which also leads to the argument of the difference between events and facts. Hutcheon notes that events do not have any meaning in themselves, but they gain meaning according to the perspective or contextualization of the historian (*Poetics* 122). The end result of this process are facts, which "are given meaning" by the historian (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 122). While creating news about a theft in the city, Caroline uses her imagination, and prefers certain adjectives to make her story attractive for readers.

> Caroline had inserted the adjective "fabulous" before the word "diamonds," despite the objection of the elderly reporter, who had said, "They were just run-of-the-mill stuff, Miss Sanford. A pin. A ring. Earrings."
> "But aren't the Binghams rich?" Caroline toyed with the notion of a crime ring: "Connecticut Avenue's Reign of Terror" she saw a headline (as usual, with her, too long); "Where will the thieves strike next?"
> "The Binghams own the Silversmith Dairies. They advertise with us, or used to. Yes, ma'am, they're rich enough. But the jewels—"
> "Priceless heirlooms of one of Washington's oldest and most aristocratic families," added to the story. "If that does not delight the Binghams, nothing will," she said to Trimble, who was amused but dubious, as always, of her inspirations. (Vidal 159-60)

Caroline does not feel remorse over the changes in the story. However, although the theft seems to be a minor incident in nature, the impact of the theft will emanate fear in

the community with Caroline's manipulative reporting and headline. Hence, Caroline's interpretation makes the event a fact which exceeds the genuine status of the event.

Caroline desires to have power in the community through unusual means. Her cousin John considers Caroline's style to be corrupt, and criticizes her. Yet Caroline objects by saying, "'Corruption? Of what? The newspaper readers of Washington? Hardly. They know it all. Of the *Tribune*, a dull, dying paper? The word doesn't apply. I see no corruption in what I mean to do. Perhaps,' . . . 'we shall offer a true *reflection* of the world about us. But you cannot blame a mirror for what it shows'" (Vidal 156, original emphasis). When John claims that her mirror "willfully distorts" (Vidal 156), Caroline reveals her ulterior motive to manipulate news. According to Caroline, if she sells more, she will have influence in society. This is "a small price" for Caroline "to pay, . . . , for power" (Vidal 156). She says to John that this is the "only thing worth having in this democracy of yours'" (Vidal 156). In this conversation, Caroline seems to understand working of politics by pointing to the relationship between politics and the press as a power game. In this context, Caroline's unique character is revealed. The narrator refers to Mrs. Lightfoot Lee, the protagonist of Henry Adams' novel *Democracy* (1880), the summary of which has been provided in the previous sub-section. In *Democracy*, Mrs. Lightfoot Lee comes to Washington to observe the Washington society and power politics. Her desire is similar to that of Caroline because "What she wanted, was POWER" (Adams 10, original emphasis). The only way for Mrs. Lightfoot Lee to gain power is to get married to a powerful man, as the times in which she lives require her to do. At the end of the novel, her desire is not realized and she leaves the city offended by the political power games and their actors. Caroline, who has already read Adams' novel, is aware of the difference between her and Mrs. Lightfoot Lee: "More than a generation separated Caroline from Henry Adams's Mrs. Lightfoot Lee; now, Caroline decided, it was possible for a woman to achieve what she wanted on her own and not through marriage, or some similar surrogate. . . . She not only did not fear failure, she did not expect it" (Vidal 157). Eventually, Caroline realizes her desire through her newspaper although her environment is still not ready for such a change in gender roles. As the narrator recounts, "In a city where all power was based on notoriety, she was thought eccentric—a rich young woman perversely playing at being a newspaper

proprietor" (Vidal 182). Later in the novel, Caroline is depicted as a woman "taken seriously as a newspaper publisher, and general authority" in Washington. (Vidal 261), which makes her an ex-centric character.

Another marginalized fictional character in *Empire* is Blaise, Caroline's brother. Blaise's homosexual desire for James Burden Day is a recurrent motif throughout the novel. Blaise accidentally sees Day's naked body, and the narrator describes how Blaise feels as follows:

> Blaise, in a bathrobe, entered Jim's room, which adjoined his own. The bathroom door was open and his tennis partner stood, eyes shut, beneath the shower. . . . Blaise stared, thoughtfully, at his tennis partner; and wished that he himself were as tall and well-proportioned. Where his own legs were short and muscular, Jim's were long and slender, like the rest of him; he had a classical body in every sense, heroic even, suitable for showing off in a museum, once suitably large leaf had been found. (Vidal 362)

Blaise admires Day; however, the gaze carries more than an appreciation of a muscular figure. He desires to possess that body. The phrase "like the rest of him," which is put just next to the sentence "Jim's [legs] were long and slender," is suggestive in the sense that it alludes to Day's male organ. Additionally, the reference to a "large leaf" is also meaningful considering that a leaf is supposed to cover sexual organs. Hence, Blaise's thoughts about Day's body imply his sexual desires for Day. Blaise's desire for Day is underlined further in the novel. When Caroline suffers from a financial crisis, and reaches the point that she might lose the *Tribune*, she feels that she has to confront Blaise although the problem concerning Colonel Sanford's will is not resolved between them. When Day offers to help her, the conversation occurs between them:

> "Shall I work on Blaise? He seems to like me."
> "More than that is my impression."
> Jim's head suddenly filled with blood; the face became scarlet. The hydraulic system that produced a blush was, Caroline observed, with a wonder, the same as that which produced a man's sex. "I don't," he stammered, "know what you mean."
> "Which means you know exactly what I mean. He is like a school-girl around you." Caroline rose from her dressing table, armored for the day. "Seduce him." (Vidal 409)

Although Day first rejects the idea, he spends a night with Blaise aboard a river-boat. The details are not revealed in the text except that Blaise never forgets that night. Blaise's feelings about Day and Caroline are narrated later in the novel as follows:

> In the back of Blaise's mind, there had always been the thought—hope—that he and Jim might one day reenact what had happened aboard the river-boat. But, ever since, the embarrassed Jim had kept his distance; and once again, Caroline was triumphant. From *Tribune* to Jim, Caroline had got everything that *he* had wanted. (Vidal 471, original emphasis)

Like Caroline, Blaise is not a character likely to appear in a historical novel since he does not reflect the general atmosphere of the period which would mostly appreciate heterosexual relationships as mainstream and which would deny homosexual preferences. The way Caroline knows Blaise's marginal preferences and manipulates it in this way as well as their rivalry concerning Day also makes both characters doubly ex-centric. Hence, the characterization of both Caroline and Blaise are functional for presenting the difference of the characterization from that of the historical novel.

Historiographic metafiction is intensely concerned with how reality or truth is represented in a text. As Hutcheon suggests, the text "has direct links to the world of empirical reality, but it is not itself that empirical reality. It is a contemporary critical truism that realism is a set of conventions, that representation of the real is not the same as the real itself" (*Poetics* 125). Historiographic metafiction problematizes the representation of reality, and forces the reader to see not only "the textualized traces of the literary and historical past, but also the awareness of what has been done—through irony—to those traces" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 127). In this context, newspapers as the textualized traces of the past are questioned in *Empire* in relation to the representation of reality. *Empire* draws attention to the newspapers as unreliable traces or records of the past. For instance, the novel shows that newspapers may publish false stories for the sake of circulation. In this context, Blaise narrates how Hearst makes up stories in his newspaper *Journal* about the Brooklyn Bridge to promote the sales:

> The Chief [Hearst] decided that after all the fuss about the bridge—you know, the biggest and the best and so on—that the bridge was about to fall

> down. So we ran a series on how it's about to collapse. Lovely stuff. Except there was nothing wrong with the bridge. Then when people found out that the bridge was safe, everyone was so mad at the Chief that he goes and publishes a big front-page story, saying that Brooklyn Bridge is safe at last, thanks to the *Journal*. It was a wonderful series. (Vidal 91)

When Caroline asks whether or not this situation bothers Hearst, Blaise says, "'It's just for circulation. No one cares. There's always another story tomorrow'" (Vidal 91). As Blaise suggests, any medium that records past events is capable of creating false news depending upon its own agenda. Therefore, the fictional quality of newspaper stories or of any other document becomes part of the discussion in the book.

In *Empire*, the Spanish-American War of 1898 is re-contextualized to depict how newspapers become the power sources by recording the events to achieve a specific goal and thus form a certain kind of history. The Spanish-American War becomes an arena to scrutinize the relationship between the recorded events in the media and the created effect, not only in terms of the public sentiments but also as a means of controlling the administration. Vidal was aware of historical Hearst's influence in writing the story of the Spanish-American War. As is stated in *A People and a Nation*, just a week before the *Maine* sank, "William Randolph Hearst's inflammatory *New York Journal* had published a stolen private letter written by the Spanish minister in Washington, Enrique Dupuy de Lôme, who belittled McKinley as 'cheap politician' and suggested that Spain would fight on" (606). Although "[t]he naval board investigating the *Maine* disaster then reported that a mine had caused the explosion, . . . [v]engeful Americans blamed Spain" (Norton et al. 606). Moreover, "Later, official and unofficial studies attributed the sinking to an accidental internal explosion" (Norton et al. 606), but America nevertheless declared war. Starting with the administration of President McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt in Kettle Hill, Cuba, and Admiral George Dewey in the Philippines, America cleared the Spanish presence in the region.

In this context, *Empire* first indicates Hearst's newspaper as a tool of power which records history partially, and then challenges the newspapers as sources of information and records of the past. The power of the newspapers is underlined in a conversation between Caroline and Del. Caroline tries to explain her understanding of power by

using Julius Caesar's handbook she read in school as an example: "'You start at first light and then, by forced marches, you surprise the enemy and kill them. Then you write a book about what you've done'" (Vidal 12-13). She implies that history is written by people in power who narrate their victories. In a sense, this explains how grand narratives are created. Del associates these kinds of books with newspapers by saying, "the newspapers are now the book'" written by people in power (Vidal 13). Caroline, not understanding Del's point, asks: "'But isn't it better—if that's what you want—to win a war first?'" (Vidal 13). Del makes a connection between Hearst's publications about the Spanish-American War and winning a war by stating, "'that's exactly what Mr. Hearst has done, or thinks he's done. All those stories of his about how the Spanish blew up our battleship'" (Vidal 13). The conversation between Hearst and Roosevelt justifies Del's assumption about Hearst. Hearst explains his role in the war as follows: "When I made—invented, I should say—the war with Spain, all of it fiction to begin with, I saw to it that the war would be a real one at the end, and it was" (Vidal 483). Hearst believes that since he has constantly published news about the *Maine* and the conflict between Spain and America, he has single-handedly caused America to declare war against Spain.

Empire also questions the power of the press over governments. In a conversation between Caroline and Elihu Root, Roosevelt's secretary of the state after the John Hay's death, the influence of the newspapers on politics is discussed. Root believes that being a politician is "a craft, if not an art" like "newspaper publishing" (Vidal 468). However, Caroline opposes the idea, stating that journalists are the true artists since "'News is what [they] invent . . .'" (Vidal 468). Root replies to her by saying, "'But you must describe the principle actors . . .'" (Vidal 468). Caroline's answer is sharp: "'We do, but only as *we* see you . . .'" (Vidal 468, original emphasis). Here, Caroline implies the determining factor of the journalist in the perception of the politician and in manipulating the reactions to the events. *Empire* suggests that the government is aware of the unreliability of the news about the *Maine*, but the administration prefers to accept the story as true. Del explains the idea to Caroline as follows: "'Well, I agree newspapers are not always true, but if . . . foolish men think they are true—perhaps true—then it *does* matter to everyone because that is how governments are run, in

response to the news'"(Vidal 27, original emphasis). The dialogue between Caroline and Del points to the decisive power of newspapers over governments. The influence of Hearst's newspaper over the current administration is narrated from Blaise's perspective:

> Theodore Roosevelt may have won a small battle but everyone conceded that Hearst had himself started and won a small war. Without Hearst's relentlessly specious attacks on Spain, the American government would never have gone to war. Of course, the sinking of the *Maine* in Havana harbor had been decisive. The plot had been as crude as it was lurid: a ship of a friendly nation on a friendly visit to a restive Spanish colony sinks as the result of a mysterious explosion, with the loss of many American lives. Who—or what—was responsible? Hearst had convinced most Americans that the Spanish had deliberately done the deed. But those who knew something of the matter were reasonably certain that the Spanish had had nothing to do with the explosion. Why should they antagonize the United States? Either the ship exploded from a spontaneous combustion in the coal-bins, or a floating mine had accidentally hit a bulkhead, or—and this was currently whispered up and down Printing House Square—Hearst himself had caused the *Maine* to blown up so that he could increase the *Journal*'s circulation with his exciting, on-the-spot, coverage of the war. Although Blaise rather doubted that the Chief would go so far as to blow up an American warship, he did think him perfectly capable of creating the sort of emotional climate in which an accident could trigger a war. (Vidal 49)

The above passage that ruminates on the sinking of the *Maine* demonstrates that the press is capable of mapping a course for future events through manipulative stories. The way the press deals with an event creates the "emotional climate," to use Blaise's terminology, to divert from the other possible paths of history. Hence, Hearst's fiction spread through his newspaper becomes a reality for the nation.

Empire deals with the impact of the press over public opinion as well as over the government. In this context, *Empire* plays upon the intriguing relationship between Hearst and Roosevelt, who do not have any problems until President McKinley's assassination. After Vice-president Roosevelt replaces McKinley, he accuses Hearst of inciting McKinley's murder through the adverse news against the late president, which causes Hearst to bear a grudge against Roosevelt. Furthermore, Roosevelt and his political allies work against Hearst to erase him from the political arena in the elections for the mayor of New York: "Although Hearst had lost the election for mayor of New

York, in a three-way race, he had come within a handful of votes of winning it. Only a last-minute burning of ballots by Murphy of Tammany Hall had secured the election for McClellan" (Vidal 463). Upon this, Hearst withdraws from politics and searches for means to destroy Roosevelt.

Hearst has secretly bought the letters between Roosevelt and John D. Archbold, president of Standard Oil, from an office boy before the election of 1904, and intends to use the evidence in these letters to ruin Roosevelt's career. Hearst, assuming that Standard Oil gave money to Roosevelt to support him in the election of 1904, declares that he will publish these letters to prove his claim. After a while, Hearst is summoned to the White House by Roosevelt, and the conversation between Hearst and Roosevelt draws attention to how a newspaper manipulates the public opinion. Hearst boldly utters that his newspaper created Roosevelt as a hero during the Spanish-American War of 1898 although Roosevelt did not do anything significant at Kettle Hill, Cuba. Hearst claims that he commanded his journalist to foreground Roosevelt as a hero after playing an important role in the onset of the war. He addresses Roosevelt as follows:

> I was also stuck with the fact that once you start a war you have to have heroes. So you—of all people—came bustling along, and I told the editors, 'All right. Build him up.' So that's how a second-rate New York politician, wandering around Kettle Hill, blind as a bat and just about effective, got turned into a war hero. . . . Of all my inventions you certainly leapt off the page of the *Journal*, and into the White House. (Vidal 484)

According to Hearst, Roosevelt is the president just because the *Journal* has supported him. Hearst also asserts that people will remember Roosevelt after he leaves the office only if Hearst mentions him:

> "I go on and on, describing the world we live in, which then becomes what I say it is. Long after no one knows the difference between you and Chester A. Arthur, I'll still be here." . . . "But if they *do* remember who you are, it'll be because I've decided to remind them, by telling them, maybe, how I made you up in the first place, in Cuba." (Vidal 483, original emphasis)

Hearst accepts his role as the major actor in creating heroes or dethroning them by manipulating the public opinion in his newspaper.

In *Empire*, the power of newspapers is emphatically and constantly reminded to the reader. A conversation among Blaise and Lord Pauncefote, British Ambassador to the United States, demonstrates that newspapers are capable of creating empires alongside wars and heroes. In the first place, Blaise draws attention to the fact that newspapers choose news according to their purposes. He supports his argument by revealing that Hearst intentionally did not publish the original story in Cuba: "'The real story in Cuba—which the Chief will never print—is not how we bravely defeated the Spanish but how seven hundred brave Spaniards nearly beat six thousand incompetent yanks'" (Vidal 269). When Lord Pauncefote says that he has "'never read this in any newspaper'" (Vidal 269), Blaise insists that he "'never will, either'" (Vidal 269). While Blaise continues to boast that they "'create news'" (Vidal 269), Pauncefote asks: "'Empires, too?'" (Vidal 269). Blaise's answer is sharp: "'One follows on the other, if the timing's right'" (Vidal 269). All these examples confirm to the idea that the power of newspapers penetrates all the layers of society, and causes drastic changes in politics.

In this context, *Empire* echoes Foucault's ideas about discourse. After buying the *Tribune*, Caroline, who imitates Hearst in style in her newspaper and who now knows much about the power and the power relations in Washington, anachronistically reminds one of Foucault's discussion on the power/knowledge relation. Foucault describes discourse as "the exercise of power" ("The Order of Discourse" 54). According to him, it is difficult to spot discourse since it is dispersed in society. Although the diffusion of the discourse in everyday life makes it invisible, it is this quality of discourse that gives discourse the power to exercise: without being spotted, discourse easily pervades society. In *Empire*, just like Hearst, Caroline sees her newspaper as a kind of power exercised over the public:

> To determine what people read and thought about each day was not only action but power of a kind no ruler could, with such regularity, exercise. Caroline often thought of the public as a great mass of shapeless modelling clay which she, in Washington, at least, could mould with what she chose to put in the columns of the *Tribune*. (Vidal 429)

She is so convinced about the power of the press that she believes she "could use a newspaper to change the world" (Vidal 100). All the discussions about the newspapers

are related to both the construction and the representation of reality: In the short run, the content of the press which circulates in significant numbers will influence the perception of reality. In the long run, however, these textual traces will eventually influence the evaluation of the past by future historians since there is no chance for the future historians to go back to the past and check the truthfulness of the given events.

The last part of the conversation between Hearst and Roosevelt that appears at the very end of the novel also underlines the fictional quality of history within the framework of newspapers as the textual traces of history:

> "Who says this is not my country? I've forced *you*, of all people, to act against your own kind. Because of what I've revealed this year, you'll do something next year. But you don't ever really lead. You follow *my* lead, Roosevelt." . . . "It's my story, isn't it? This country. The author's always safe. It's his characters who better watch out. . . ." . . . "After all, I made you up, didn't I?"
> "Mr. Hearst," said the President, "history invented me, not you."
> "Well, if you really want to be highfalutin, then at this time and in this place, I am history—or at least the creator of the record."
> "True history comes long after us. That's when it will be decided whether or not we measured up, and our greatness—or its lack—will be defined."
> "True history," said Hearst, with a smile that was, for once, almost charming, "is the final fiction. I thought even you knew that." (Vidal 485, original emphasis)

Hearst stresses the constructed nature of history. Like any other text, a historical text is also subjected to the writer's ideology and agenda as in the case of Hearst. Since any event which is textualized is, more or less, fictionalized, the final truth is not accessible. Hence, *Empire* is critical about the representation of reality in relation to history.

Empire also questions the American republican values from within, and challenges them as grand narratives. The novel gives the sense that, like history, the American republican ideals such as "government of, by, and for people," are used and abused in the power relations. Throughout the novel, there are ample discussions on American politics in relation to the desire for an imperialistic power. In order to fulfill the longing for an empire, the novel suggests that American politicians manipulate the system, and undermine the republican ideals, but they pretend to perform their actions as if they are

in accord with those very ideals. *Empire* is a critique of the American Republic as it asserts that republican values have been abused by power and that the Republic has turned out to be an empire. In this sense, the novel echoes Hutcheon's claim that historiographic metafiction is "a questioning of any . . . authority as the basis of knowledge—power" (*Poetics* 185). For this reason, *Empire* does not aim to evoke nostalgia for the past.

Empire develops a critical perspective against a group of American public and political figures who support imperialism and who want America to reign like an empire. One of these figures is historian Brooks Adams, who searches for a presidential candidate for the upcoming election after the Spanish-American War. Adams describes his would-be president as follows: "'We shall need a different president, of course. McKinley has been superb. But now we need a military man, a dictator of sorts. I'm instructing the Democratic Party to support General Miles. He's a war hero, after all. He's commanded all our forces. He's deeply conservative'" (Vidal 45). It is ironic that Adams tries to find "a dictator of sorts," with the support of the Democratic Party, for the United States, which is founded upon the republican ideals. Since party, democracy, and republic are ideas incompatible with the idea of dictatorship, the ironic juxtaposition of these ideas in *Empire* demands a critical outlook from the reader.

In this context, characters' manner in bestowing titles by referring to McKinley and Roosevelt creates the same effect. After the Spanish-American War, Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge calls McKinley "Caesar" (Vidal 121), and John Hay praises McKinley by saying "'Hail McKinley'" and "'Pacific lord of the Pacific Ocean'" (Vidal 121). In a similar vein, after McKinley dies and Roosevelt replaces him, Brooks Adams celebrates Roosevelt's presidency by saying "'And for Theodore the Great, whose rein has, at last, begun'" and "'The King is dead' . . . 'Long live the King'" (Vidal 299). Although the events such as the Spanish-American War, McKinley's assassination, Roosevelt's taking the office, and the arguments for and against imperialism among public figures and politicians are all historical events, Vidal's attitude in re-contextualizing all these events through a critical and ironic perspective differentiates *Empire* from a historical novel.

Empire constantly calls attention to the idea that it is not democratic ideals but money that fosters politicians in the United States. Henry Adams is not happy with the involvement of money in politics, but he feels that it is inevitable:

> Would wealthy men one day buy the great offices of state as they had during Rome's decadence? Adams thought that the practice was already common. After all, state legislatures elected United States senators. Many legislators were for sale. Hadn't New York's sardonic Roscoe Conkling boasted that he had paid only two hundred thousand dollars for his seat? . . . Hanna [Republican politician known as campaign manager of McKinley] had financed McKinley on a scale unknown until now. What would prevent a Carnegie or a Jay Gould from selecting some nonentity and then, through adroit expenditure, securing for himself the presidency's power, all in the nonentity's name? (Vidal 116)

As Adams suggests, democracy does not work, and decadence becomes visible in politics as in the case of voting for the peace agreement in Congress after the Spanish-American War. The McKinley administration presents the peace treaty to Congress, which requires the annexation of the Philippines; McKinley's political allies like Mark Hanna bribe senators to vote for the treaty. The reader learns this from Republican politician Henry Cabot Lodge: "'I never thought I'd live to see the day when any man dare try to give, openly and in broad day light, a bribe to a United States senator so as to get him to change his vote'" (Vidal 120). *Empire* emphasizes that it is not democratic values but money that directs politics.

In order to criticize the abuse of these American ideals of republic and democracy, Vidal demonstrates a sarcastic attitude by alluding to Theodore Roosevelt's book *American Ideals* in *Empire*. Henry James tells Adams, Caroline, and Del that he recently reviewed Roosevelt's *American Ideals*, and does not like it at all:

> I have just—tell no one—reviewed his latest . . . latest . . . well, *book* for want of a description other than the grim literal paginated printed nullity, called *American Ideals*, in which he tells us over and over—and then over once again—how we must live, each of us, 'purely as an American,' as if that were something concrete. (Vidal 42, original emphasis)

As James suggests, Roosevelt discusses American ideals and characteristics in his book, published in 1897. *American Ideals* is a collection that contains sixteen essays and a speech Roosevelt delivered at the Naval War College. The essays were written between the years 1885 and 1897, and display Roosevelt's opinions about American social and political life. Roosevelt describes the spirit of Americanism as follows: "We Americans have many grave problems to solve, many threatening evils to fight, and many deeds to do, if, as we hope and believe, we have the wisdom, the strength, the courage, and the virtue to do them" (33). Roosevelt underlines honesty in public affairs as a must for success: "No amount of intelligence and no amount of energy will save a nation which is not honest, and no govemment [sic] can ever be a permanent success if administered in accordance with base ideals" (51-52). He claims that "Doubtless, if we can have clean honest politics, we shall be better off in material matters" (61). Roosevelt underlines the importance of being "unselfish" and "disinterested" in public affairs (58) and fervently advocates the above mentioned precepts in his book.

Vidal's sarcasm arises when the depiction of Roosevelt in *Empire* is juxtaposed against the ideals Roosevelt asserted in his book. Although *Empire* mentions Roosevelt's fight against corruption while working as the governor of New York, Roosevelt is mostly depicted as a corrupt politician who was involved in bribery in the novel. Roosevelt's corruption is underlined in the following incident where Roosevelt tells Blaise how he supported Admiral Dewey in the Spanish-American War: "'Well, I did get him the job in the pacific. Took a bit of doing. Had to get a *senator* to sponsor him first. Imagine! What a country! If we hadn't found us a senator to sponsor him, another officer would have got the job, and we'd not be in Manila. Good man, Dewey. Good officer" (Vidal 127, original emphasis). In another situation, Roosevelt is depicted as a decadent politician who is the victim of his passion for presidency. Different perspectives describe Roosevelt's situation as follows: Hearst claims that "'He sold himself to the devil in order to get elected, and . . . for once, he's kept his side of the bargain'" (Vidal 476). Likewise, Blaise knew that "Roosevelt, in his famous pre-election panic, had promised the rich everything. Then, as he would never again run for president, he double-crossed the lot, or as Frick dryly put it, 'We bought him but he isn't staying bought'" (Vidal 476). The inconsistency between Roosevelt's belief in honesty and

moral values asserted by himself in *American Ideals* and his image in *Empire* forces the reader to reconsider the real historical persona, Roosevelt, and his deeds.

In the novel, one of the most striking criticisms towards American ideals appears when John Hay reflects upon them. Hay demonstrates how American ideals are abused:

> Although Hay did not in the least disapprove of the coming American hegemony, as outlined by Brooks in his soon-to-be-published polemic The New Empire, he felt that the Administration ought never to associate itself with such un-American concepts as empire. Let the empire come in the name of—the pursuit of happiness, of liberty, of freedom. (Vidal 331)

These ideas directly refer to the American Dream, another grand narrative, and, according to Hay, they will now serve the politicians' imperialistic desires. This approach confirms the illusionary nature of the American Dream and its exploitation as an ideology to be embraced by the masses. Hay continues to ponder upon American ideals:

> government of, by, and for the People? Had ever a great man said anything so entirely unrealistic, not to mention, literally, demagogic? The people played no part at all in the government of the United States in Lincoln's time, and even less now in the days of Theodore Rex. Lincoln had tended to rule by degree, thanks to the all purpose "military necessity" which gave legitimacy to his most arbitrary acts. Roosevelt pursued his own interests in his own surprisingly secretive way; he was for empire at any cost. The people, of course, were always more or less *there*; they must be flattered from time to time; exhorted to do battle, or whatever the Augustus at Washington wanted them to do. (Vidal 395-96, original emphasis)

Hay directly questions the basis of American republic by emphasizing its metamorphosis into an empire due to imperialistic cravings. In a judgemental tone, Hay associates Roosevelt with Caesar Augustus, the first emperor of the Roman Empire. In the novel, historian Henry Adams, Brooks Adams' older brother, critically declares that "'The Republic is dead'" (Vidal 399) since America has imposed its hegemony upon the Asiatic nations. Hence, *Empire* challenges and questions the American ideals through a radically controversial discourse.

Empire also problematizes history writing, which is a quality that differentiates it from a historical novel. Vidal chooses historian Henry Adams to question history writing in *Empire*. Adams is described in the novel from Caroline's perspective as follows:

> as the chronicler, Adams was no Saint-Simon, there were no rogue bastards to occupy his pen, though such things did exist in American history, but hidden from view, like the old story that her own grandfather, Charles Schermerhorn Schuyler, was the bastard son of that dark son of the American republic Aaron Burr, who had, so tremendously, like Lucifer, fallen. (Vidal 14)

Here the subjective nature of history is underlined. The reference to the existence of dark events and personalities in history suggests that information is purposely sidelined by historians. In a similar fashion, the narrator emphasizes the constructed nature of texts while claiming that by staying close to the White House, "He [Adams] could write, think, and even make—through backstage maneuvering—history" (Vidal 19). In a similar vein to the press, the historian is able to change the direction of history by "influencing events through various chosen instruments" (Vidal 20).

Throughout the novel, Adams appears to meditate on history. He struggles "to find a scientific basis to history" (Vidal 392), and tries to act accordingly. For instance, he gives instructions to the assistant editor of the *North American Review* as follows: "when editing historians, strike out all superfluous words, particularly adjectives" (Vidal 106). However, Adams seems to be hopeless to achieve his aim: "I've done with our history. There's no pattern to it, that I can see, and that's all I ever cared about" (Vidal 143). The use of Adams as a character trying to understand the nature of history in the novel is meaningful, for the historical Adams develops some theories about history, which precede the post-modern understanding of history, as Howard Horwitz suggests in his article "The Education and the Salvation of History" (117). In 1904, Adams published his autobiography, *The Education of Henry Adams*, which includes a chapter entitled "The Dynamo and the Virgin (1900)." In this chapter, Adams, referring to himself as a third person character, interprets history and narrates his struggle with history writing as follows:

> Historians undertake to arrange sequences,—called stories, or histories—assuming in silence a relation of cause and effect. These assumptions, hidden in the depth of dusty libraries, have been astounding, but commonly unconscious and childlike; so much so, that if any captious critic were to drag them to light, historians would probably reply, with one voice, that they had never supposed themselves required to know what they were talking about. Adams, for one, had toiled in vain to find out what he meant. He had even published a dozen volumes of American history for no other purpose than to satisfy himself whether, by the severest process of stating, with the least possible comment, such facts as seemed sure, in such order as seemed rigorously consequent, he could fix for a familiar moment a necessary sequence of human movement. The result had satisfied him as little as at Harvard. Where he saw sequence, other men saw something quite different, and no one saw the same unit of measure. (382)

Adams problematizes modern history writing by questioning the understanding of a linear history based on the cause-and-effect relationship. In this context, his questioning of sequences of history reminds one of Foucault's claims about the discontinuity and ruptures in history. As has been discussed earlier, Foucault asserts that the contemporary understanding of history deals with "the space of a dispersion" instead of the "continuous chronology of reason" by rejecting the understanding of a "total history" that attempts to establish "the overall form of a civilisation" as "the 'face' of a period" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 5,6,7). Like Foucault underlining the plurality of history here, Adams points to the plurality of history when he recognizes the diversity in the interpretations of the same sequence of history, and challenges history as a grand narrative. In "The Education and the Salvation of History," Horwitz argues about Adams' above quote as follows:

> The quiet ambiguity of "arrange sequences" raises the question of whether sequences preexist historians or are invented by them. Adams's parenthetical elision of "stories, or histories" further implies that "history" may be simply one story among many, with no greater validity and authority than fiction or legend or myth. History's truth, rigor, and utility, then—and hence its legitimacy as a formal discipline—is suspect. (116)

As Horwitz claims, Adams' "thorough critique of the progressive, metaphysical assumptions of fin-de-siècle Euro-American culture has led some critics to embrace *The Education* as protomodern and finally proto-poststructuralist critique of the categories of history, knowledge, the subject, and ideology" (117). In this sense, *The Education*

turns out to be a work that "illustrates the postmodern problematization of judgment, identity, morality, and (in some instances) the very idea of America (Horwitz 117). In *Empire*, it is not Adams but ironically Caroline who claims that a scientific method might not be applicable to history: "Caroline, who knew little of history and nothing of science, was convinced that there were no laws applicable to the human race, a random affair that moved neither up nor down but, simply, on in fits and starts, for no reason" (Vidal 392). Caroline problematizes the understanding of a progressive, linear history based on a cause-and-effect relationship. In this context, her questioning also reminds one of Foucault's argument about discontinuities and ruptures in history. Hence, Adams' failure in finding a scientific method to apply to history writing as well as his failure in spotting a pattern in history and Caroline's disbelief in progress and reason call history writing into question.

In *Empire*, Adams talks about his brother Brooks' law of history instead of his own theories because, as he claims, although having "a number of cloudy theories," Adams "can't work them out properly" (Vidal 37). Brooks' law of history does not directly refer to history writing; it rather implies the actors who put themselves in charge of making history through their actions and discourse, based on the power they have. His theory serves those in power, and in this sense it might be related to the construction of grand narratives within the framework of the power/knowledge relation. In a conversation with Del, Henry James, and Caroline, Adams explains Brooks' hypothesis as follows:

> "All civilization is centralization. That is the first unarguable law. All centralization is economy. That is the second—resources must be adequate to sustain the civilization, and give it its energy. *Therefore* all civilization is the survival of the most economical system . . ."
> "What," asked Del, "does most economical mean?"
> "The cheapest," said Adams curtly. "Brooks thinks that there is now a race between America and Europe to control the vast coal mines of China, because whichever power has the most and the cheapest energy will dominate the world." (Vidal 37, original emphasis)

Brooks' law of history, which seems to have been established to justify the imperialistic purposes of America, recalls Lyotard's argument about metanarratives. The wealthiest

ones are able to impose the truth they deem as appropriate upon the world in accordance with the financial power and the efficiency they possess. In the novel, the novelist Henry James bitterly criticizes Brooks' approach by opposing Henry Adams: "You speak of law of history, and I am no lawyer. But I confess to misgivings. How can we, who cannot honestly govern ourselves, take up the task of governing others?" (Vidal 38). At this level, James' disbelief in and questioning of Brooks' law of history could be associated Lyotard's "incredulity towards metanarratives." Through the discussions on history, *Empire* raises questions about power, history, and history writing.

Empire moves beyond the characteristics of the historical novel since it concerns itself with the issue of representation. As Hutcheon asserts, "postmodern fiction manifests a certain inversion, a self-conscious turning toward the form of the act of writing itself" (Poetics 128) to mark its textual quality. In *Empire*, Henry Adams ponders on the writing activity. He "wonder[s] how someone who had never seen a battle could have written such a fine war novel as *The Red Badge of Courage*" (Vidal 41). Henry James "reminded him that 'the titanic Tolstoi' had, after all, not been alive during Napoleon's invasion of Russia, yet he could imagine that War as well as Peace" (Vidal 41). Caroline contributes to the conversation by saying, "'Although Mr. Crane has never been a girl of any kind, much less one of the streets, he did create for us Maggie'" (Vidal 41). All of the comments here indicate the role of the imagination in the writing process, and draw attention to the realistic effect of the historical novels, for all the novels mentioned above are classified as thus. However, the gist of this conversation in the novel, in other words, the juxtaposition of imagination and truthful representation in history writing, elicits another interpretation: Though not overtly, *Empire* calls attention to the idea that although these novels seem to be true to reality, they ironically gain this effect from imagination, which signifies the fictional quality of any text. In this sense, *Empire* is in line with Hutcheon's interpretation of historiographic metafiction since it challenges "any naive realist concept of representation" (*Poetics* 125).

Likewise, the way *Empire* intratexually refers to *Burr* and *1876* functions to draw attention to both the textual relations among texts and the re-contextualization of the past through these texts. Caroline inherits a bunch of papers in a box which were written

by Aaron Burr "with a commentary by his law-clerk Charles Schermerhorn Schuyler," Caroline's great-grandfather (Vidal 451). At the end of the pages, Caroline reads "what she already knew, of her grandfather's accidental discovery that he was one of Burr's numerous illegitimate children" (Vidal 451). Actually, Caroline reads Vidal's *Burr* where the details of the curious relationship between Burr and Charles are narrated. Similarly, Caroline finds another group of papers in another box "covering the year of 1876" (Vidal 451). This journal narrates that Charles "had returned to New York, for the first time since 1836, with his daughter Emma, the Princess d'Agrigente" (Vidal 451). It is evident that this journal is Vidal's *1876*. Even further, Caroline of *Empire* enlightens the reader about the death of Dennis, Blaise's mother, and her mother Emma's role in this death by solving the mystery established in *1876*. Caroline reads the journal:

> As Caroline read on, she began to see something alter in Emma's character—alter or be revealed to the reader, Caroline, but not to the narrator [Charles Schuyler], who seemed unable to understand the thrust of his own narrative. Sanford made his entrance, with his wife Denise, who could not give birth without danger. As Denise and Emma became closer and closer friends, Caroline found that her fingers were suddenly so cold that she could hardly, clumsily, turn the pages. Caroline knew the end before the end. Emma persuaded Denise to give birth to Blaise. In effect, Emma murdered Denise in order to marry Sanford." (Vidal 451)

The quotation above hints at the idea that the past is known through the textual traces of it, but these textual traces may gain new meanings in the present as in the case of Caroline. While writing his journal, Charles was not aware of Emma's ulterior motive to motivate Dennis to have a child. However, when the same narrative is read by Caroline with her own present experience and vantage point, Emma's motives become clear. This detail in the novel demonstrates Hutcheon's claims that historiographic metafictions "make us look to the past from the acknowledged distance of the present, a distance which inevitably conditions our ability to know the past" (*Poetics* 230). Hence, Caroline's interpretation of Charles' journal indicates the dynamic nature of historical narratives rather than a grand narrative with a fixed and ultimate meaning.

In accordance with the premises of historiographic metafiction, *Empire* questions every representation of reality in a critical way. Throughout the novel, although Hearst advertises himself as the creator of history, he ironically becomes a subject of someone else's representation. When Hearst is accused of inciting McKinley's murder in another newspaper, Hearst's friend Brisbane "sadly" declares that "'They will invent anything'" (Vidal 308). Blaise's opinion reveals the irony of the situation: "The two founding fathers [Hearst and Brisbane] of invented news were not pleased to find themselves being reinvented by others no less scrupulous. The irony was not lost on Blaise" (Vidal 308). Likewise, Vidal reinvents Hearst and other historical figures as well as events in *Empire*, but prefers to underline his limits as an author. When Roosevelt welcomes Hearst to his room at the White House, "he shut the door behind him. There would be no witnesses to what might follow" (Vidal 482). The information above that indicates the unknowability of the content of this meeting is also Vidal's own questioning of the contextualization of this meeting in *Empire*. In the article entitled "A Theatre of Politics: History's Actors in Gore Vidal's *Empire*," Heather Neilson interprets this scene as follows: "As the novel declares its own author's prerogative to re-invent the 'inventor', so it suggests the trope of history as *mise-en-abyme*, reconstruction within reconstruction. In emphasizing the mortality of the various 'historians' which it portrays, *Empire* signals its own finiteness as a representation of history" (87). Hence, *Empire* raises questions about its own status as a historical narrative.

In conclusion, all the discussions above help to call *Empire* historiographic metafiction. Vidal re-contextualizes the events that took place and historical characters who appeared during and after the Spanish-American War of 1898 in the light of his vantage point of the 1980s. In this context, his re-contextualization signifies the historicity of the text. The existence of the ex-centric characters who are not likely to appear in a historical novel is also functional to differentiate *Empire* from the historical novel. Additionally, the novel's interest in the representation of reality and truth, the discussions on newspaper stories as unreliable records of the past, and the critical perspective towards the abuse of the republican ideals are qualities that place the novel within the genre of historiographic metafiction. *Empire* is a text which directly

questions history writing, shows the limits of knowing reality, and challenges the understanding of history as a grand narrative through its approach towards history.

2. 4. *HOLLYWOOD*

This sub-section will analyze *Hollywood* which appeared in 1990 just three years after the publication of *Empire*. As in the case of *Empire*, *Hollywood* criticizes America's politics in the 1980s, and Vidal's focus is on the body politics and political actors between the years 1917 and 1923. Yet, different from *Empire,* which deals particularly with the foreign policy of the United States during the 1980s, *Hollywood* mostly hints at the domestic issues of the 1980s. Similar to the previously analyzed novels, *Hollywood* questions American ideals such as democracy and freedom of speech, and focuses on the corruption in Washington, D.C. and the power relations between the administrations and media. Unlike *1876* and *Empire,* in which the major medium to question history writing is newspapers, *Hollywood* specifically brings forward the influence of the movie industry in manipulating reality and public opinion in relation to history making. The novel also questions the reliability of the newspapers as the records of the past. This sub-section will first contextualize *Hollywood* to foreground the historicity of the text from a New Historicist perspective by seeking the traces of Vidal's interpretation of the 1980s in the representation of the years between 1917 and 1923 in *Hollywood*. Later on, the characterization in the novel will be discussed to underscore how the characterization in *Hollywood* functions beyond the traits of the historical novel. Likewise, the textual analysis will cover the novel's interest in the representation of reality and history by means of the Hollywood movie industry.

Hollywood concentrates on the six years between 1917 and 1923. The former date marks President Woodrow Wilson's decision to enter World War I and the latter indicates Vice President Calvin Coolidge's succession to the Presidency upon Warren Gamaliel Harding's sudden death. The novel is narrated from four different perspectives: Caroline, Blaise, James Burden Day, and Jess Smith, who is the only historical character. Although he was re-elected with the campaign slogan "He Kept Us Out of War" in 1916, Wilson, in fact, is in search of a propaganda tool in 1917 to justify possible United States involvement in war. In Wilson's opinion, the upcoming German power is a threat for America, and he wants the Congress to "declare the recent course of the Imperial German Government to be in fact nothing less than war against the

government and people of the United States" (Vidal 50). He establishes the Committee of Public Information under the journalist George Creel to disseminate the idea of entering the war and to demonize Germany. Creel plans to use Hollywood to promote for the war efforts, and asks Caroline Sanford, now a mature and successful woman who owns Washington *Tribune*, to travel as an emissary to Hollywood and encourage the production of pro-war movies.

Caroline accepts the offer and goes to Hollywood. She even stars in these pro-war movies such as *Huns from Hell*. In this silent movie, she plays an American mother who tries to find her lost son in the French battlefields and is raped by a German soldier. Caroline, under the stage name of Emma Traxler, becomes a famous actress while the movie demonizes Germans. Meanwhile, Caroline has an affair with Timothy X. Farrell, a director with whom she later co-establishes a production company. In the 1920s, Hollywood is a newly established industry, and the business needs to promote the dominant ideology and power structures to make money. As an experienced publisher, Caroline is aware of this fact and tries to persuade Farrell to stay away from delicate subjects such as labor unions, the subject matter of his previous unsucessful movie. According to Caroline, "Since Americans only worshipped the strong and the bullying, she had at least convinced him that it was bad for his career to become too identified with the hated poor" (Vidal 295).

Los Angeles is a hard place to survive because it is in "the midst of what the press called a crime wave" at the time (Vidal 381). Immigrants pour into the city; local criminals try to trade drugs, morphine, and mostly cocaine over their territories in the city. In all this chaos, "when it came to serious crime, the police stayed aloof; either paid off or frightened off" (Vidal 381). Although Hollywood actors and actresses seem to be glamorous on the silver screen, in reality, drug abuse and scandals cast a shadow on their lives and on the Hollywood movie industry. Female star Mabel Normand's career is about to end because of cocaine; actor Wallace Reid is "at the end of his career and probably life, thanks to morphine" (Vidal 450). Most intriguingly, director William Desmond Taylor is found dead in his home, and the murder remains unsolved. Despite

the wild nature of the city, Caroline decides to settle down in Los Angeles at the end of the novel.

Meanwhile, armistice is declared in 1918, but Wilson has a severe stroke in 1919 while the Treaty of Versailles is still under discussion in Congress. Despite his illness, Wilson remains as the president, but he cannot nominate in the election of 1920. Ohio's junior senator Warren G. Harding, publisher of the newspaper *Marion Star* in Marion, Ohio, is elected as the president with the help of Harry M. Daugherty. Harding appoints Daugherty as the Attorney General which confirms his position as the president's mentor. Harding and his wife Florence, otherwise known as the Duchess, also are close to Jesse or Jess Smith, whose ideas become influential throughout the novel. Jess, who had a dry-goods emporium in Ohio, is offered the post of commissioner of Indian Affairs by Harding. Since some senators oppose this appointment, Harding asks Jess to be treasurer of the United States, "a ceremonial job which involved little more than allowing his signature to be printed on every dollar bill. But as Jess had other plans for dollar bills, he had thanked the President warmly and said he preferred to be of use to the Administration in less formal ways" (Vidal 398). Although Jess does not have an official rank or title regarding the administration, Harding gives him an office on the sixth floor of the Justice Department. Jess

> was paid no salary but he could write letters on Justice Department stationary and, best of all, he had access to the files. . . . Finally, as right hand to the president's right hand (Daugherty had a private line to the President's office), every door opened for him as he went about his business, which was to keep the money rolling in. (Vidal 400)

In order to keep the money rolling in, Jess sells liquor from the government's bonded warehouses to bootleggers for so-called "medical purposes" by forging "the name of an imaginary Treasury official to the form" (Vidal 394). At the same time, he conducts poker games in the "little green house" on K street where Harding and his friends play poker and where Jess conducts "all sorts of business with desperate men who wanted immunity from prosecution or, simply, information from the files of the Justice Department" (Vidal 431). Jess is the contact person for Harding's and Daugherty's broker Samuel Ungerleider. He also organizes Harding's meetings with his mistress.

After a while, President Harding finds himself in trouble because the statesmen of his administration are involved in several scandals and are abusing their administrative positions. Charlie Forbes, director of the Veterans Bureau, transacts illegal dealings in selling contracts and acquiring products for new hospitals. The Senate orders an investigation of the Veterans Bureau, and Charlie Cramer, general counsel of the Veterans Bureau, is found dead just before he testifies, reportedly committing suicide. On the other hand, Albert Fall, Secretary of Interior, illegally leases the Naval Reserve Number One at Elk Hills, California, to Edward Dohan. Likewise, he leases the Naval Reserve Number Three at Teapot Dome, Wyoming, to Harry Sinclair. Both Dohan and Sinclair bribe Fall to keep the oil reserves. Senator La Foilette asks for a Senate investigation as to why the Navy lands have been leased to private investors. Meanwhile, Jess, who learns almost all the details of these business transactions, is found dead, allegedly another suicide. The novel ends without providing answers to these suspicious deaths.

In order to understand the dialogue between the past narrated in *Hollywood* and the time in which the novel was written, it is pertinent to read *Hollywood* from the New Historicist perspective. In *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, Stephen Greenblatt suggests the necessity of "investigating both the social presence to the world of the literary text and the social presence of the world in the literary text" (5) since the historical context in which the text is written is one of the aspects that determines why the past is narrated as it is. The historical context in which the writer constructs his/her text that narrates the past helps to infer the ideology and subtle meanings behind the narrative of the given past. Like *Burr*, *1876*, and *Empire*, *Hollywood* is a kind of text that exhibits a dialogue between the past narrated and the historical context in which Vidal composed his text.

Here, it is redundant to re-state America's foreign politics in relation to the Reagan administration not only because they have been discussed in the previous sub-section but also because *Hollywood* particularly reflects domestic issues of the 1980s through the events taking place in Washington, D.C. and Hollywood in the years between 1917 and 1923. The link between Hollywood and Washington in the novel is the key to

discuss the dialogue between these periods. In *Gore Vidal: Writer Against the Grain*, Jay Parini interprets how Vidal associates Hollywood with Washington, and it is worth quoting Parini at length:

> The connection between Hollywood and Washington have been of interest to Vidal from the beginning, but it wasn't until the 1980s that history served up on a platter the presidency of Ronald Reagan, thus bringing the two worlds into fantastic juncture. Responding the history's little gift, Vidal began—in essays as well as novels—to explore these connections, finding Woodrow Wilson there at the beginning, fully aware of the infinite propaganda potential represented by Hollywood. With his intimate knowledge of the history of the movies and the history of American politics, Vidal was perfectly situated to explore these links. Against the continuing sage of the Sanford family, the rise and fall of presidents from McKinley to Wilson and Harding is heard like the beating of waves on the shore throughout *Empire* and *Hollywood*; the parallels with the present become increasingly shocking and converge like infinite railroad tracks into the not-so-imaginary future, where Ronald Reagan stands with arms folded, his smile in place. He is, as Vidal memorably puts it, "our first Acting President." (26-27)

Reagan's background as a Hollywood actor is an intriguing fact that helps to associate the actions of Reagan the actor as a man of fantasy with the actions of Reagan the President as a man of statesman.

Vidal is not the only person who links Reagan's administrative actions with the fantasy world of Hollywood. In the article entitled "Will Reagan's Luck Outlast Reagan?" published as an opinion in *The New York Times* on January 1, 1989 just before Reagan left the office on January 20, 1989, the word choice of the writer of the opinion is striking. Reagan is described as someone who "sometimes dreamily disengaged from reality" (par. 5), who "mangled facts, and [whose] small talk was the stuff of vaudeville" (par. 7), whose economic policy is "the supply-side fantasy" (par. 10), and whose invasion of Grenada is "melodramatic" (par. 16). The words "dreamily," "vaudeville," "fantasy," and "melodramatic" directly refer to a fantasy world. The most noticeable comment of the writer is as follows: "Mr. Reagan asked the country to dream dreams, and it has" (par. 21). The sentence is an obvious allusion to Reagan's first inaugural address on January 20, 1981. Reagan repeatedly uses the word "dream" in addressing the nation: "we are too great a nation to limit ourselves to small dreams"

(par. 17), “we have every right to dream heroic dreams” (par. 18), “Your dreams, your hopes, your goals are going to be the dreams, the hopes, and the goals of this administration” (par. 19). Reagan’s emphasis on dreams, heroic dreams, and heroes create a legitimate ground to associate President Reagan to the Reagan of the fantasy world. Most importantly, the association might lead to the idea that the fantasy world of Hollywood via President Reagan’s actions influences the direction of American politics. This analogy might allude to Woodrow Wilson’s effort to influence Hollywood for the purpose of manipulating public opinion and giving a new course to American policy through the movie industry, which will be discussed in the following pages in detail.

While Hollywood analogy helps to associate the Wilson and Reagan administrations, political scandals in Reagan and Harding’s administrations provide a link to figure out why Vidal concentrates on the Harding administration to criticize American policy of the 1980s. For instance, like Albert Fall, Secretary of Interior under the Harding administration, James Watt, Secretary of Interior under the Reagan administration, was also involved in a scandal. Watt “allowed private corporations to acquire oil, mineral, and timber rights to federal lands for miniscule payment” (Norton et al. 893) just like Fall who had illegally leased the Navy lands to private investors. Apart from this, in his essay entitled “Ronnie and Nancy: A Life in Pictures” published in 1983, Vidal states that there are personal similarities between Harding and Reagan. In this essay, he probes into the Reagans’ lives and claims, “Of all our presidents, Reagan most resembles Warren Harding. He is handsome, amiable, ignorant; he has an ambitious wife (Mrs. Harding was known as the Duchess)” (91). All these associations between these periods indicate the influence of the 1980s on the representation of the years between 1917 and 1923 in *Hollywood*.

The construction of the characters in *Hollywood* is different from the traits of the characterization in the historical novel. According to Lukács, the Scott tradition does not allow the historical personalities to occupy a major role in the novel. When a social crisis arises “only then does the great historical hero enter upon the scene of the novel” (38) because “the great historical personality is the representative of an important and significant movement” (38). Hence, the historical figure is there to help the reader to

understand the historical context. However, the historical character may occupy the whole text in historiographic metafiction, and his/her representation may not connote a heroic personality. It is because the function of the historical character in historiographic metafiction is in accordance with the meta-fictional self-reflexivity to make the reader "aware of the need to question received versions of history" (Hutcheon 115). As in the case of *Burr*, *1876*, and *Empire*, almost all of the characters, except for Caroline, Blaise, Blaise's wife Frederika, Senator James Burden Day, and Emma (James Burden Day and Caroline's daughter) in *Hollywood* are historical figures. Moreover, both Wilson and Harding have major roles in the novel. In line with Hutcheon's claim above, the representations of Wilson and Harding enable the reader to see another version of history. In this sense, they function to depict the plurality of discourses in history. Furthermore, unlike a type character common to the historical novel, Vidal, as Baker and Gibson suggest, "also casts them, in their private moments, against type; in so doing he creates a pair of credible fictional characters to play out their historical destinies" (123). Since Caroline and Blaise, protagonists of the previous novels, have been discussed in the earlier sub-sections, this sub-section will focus particularly on the representations of Wilson and Harding. Jess' function in the narrative as another historical character will also be discussed.

Hollywood probes into Wilson's private life to play with the common perception of Wilson as "rigid, didactic, and authoritarian" because of his background as a professor of history, the president of Princeton University, and the governor of New Jersey (Baker and Gibson 123). Even though the novel draws a "scholarly" and "remote" picture of Wilson (Vidal 32), it also presents a romantic Wilson who likes "the company of women, particularly those who could recite poetry and talk, imaginatively, of him" (Vidal 300). In the novel, Wilson's affair with Mary Peck Hulbert before his second marriage with Edith Wilson is revealed. This affair is first mentioned to Caroline as a rumor. According to the rumor, the old mistress threatens to sell the President's letters addressed to her to the newspapers before the election of 1916. The letters are bought by Bernard Baruch, rich Wall Street speculator, while Edith Galt marries Wilson. This story is later retold to Caroline in Hollywood by Mary Peck Hulbert. Caroline realizes that Mary once thought Wilson would marry her and that she would even buy lace for

her wedding dress. According to Mary, she was supposed to substitute Wilson's sick first wife Ellen, who knew that Wilson needed company at the White House after her death. Mary explains the situation further: "She [Ellen] liked to have me at the White House to . . . distract him. I did, or tried to. When I wasn't there, he wrote me every Sunday for years and years" (Vidal 304). These are the letters which form the basis of the rumor, but Mary denies that she wanted to sell them. As she narrates,

> [t]here was some sort of White House plot. Everyone was worried that if the President married Mrs. Galt, he might lose the election. Ellen had been dead only a year. And then there was me. The fall and winter after Ellen died, he begged me to come to stay in the White House. But I couldn't. My son had lost a great deal of money, and I was trying to get work as an interior decorator in Boston, not the best of cities for that sort of thing. . . . (Vidal 304)

This side of the story, which remains sidelined, actually gives a new dimension to Wilson's personality. As opposed to an aloof and solemn Wilson, there appears a romantic and intimate Wilson in the novel, which goes against his common image.

Vidal also presents a comic Wilson by imagining him dancing and singing before Blaise. While Wilson and his crew are on the way back to the United States from the Peace Conference at Paris, Wilson tells Blaise that he could have "done well in vaudeville'" (Vidal 252), and starts acting:

> Suddenly, he let his face go loose and Blaise was reminded of the scene at the Capital before the declaration of war. Slowly, Wilson shook his head. The face, totally slack, was cretinous and comical. The body drooped, complementing the face. "I'm Dopey Dan," he sang, "and I'm married to Midnight Mary." With that, he did an expert scarecrow sort of dance across the desk, whistling all the while. When he finished, he bowed. (Vidal 252)

As Baker and Gibson suggest, "On that note, the president of the United States does a grotesque little dance and takes a bow. Vidal's Wilson is clearly not the icy pedant of popular imagination" (123). In his article entitled as "Vidal's Remaking of the American Myth," critic Christopher Lehmann-Haupt interprets this scene to be "a perception of where American leadership is headed" (par. 14). This scene, witnessed

only by a fictional character, sarcastically presents a diversion from the accepted solemn and authoritative Wilson portrayals.

Hollywood also concentrates on Wilson's political actions in order to question American ideals such as democracy and freedom of speech, which is different from the ways in which a historical character in a historical novel would be portrayed. Two years after Wilson was elected president, World War I broke out and Wilson remained neutral towards the war during his first term, to which he owed his re-election in 1916. Wilson's campaign slogan in the election of 1916, "He Kept Us Out of War" (Norton et al. 591), did not turn out to be the reality of Wilson's second term. *Hollywood* plays upon Wilson's struggles to find a way to persuade the nation to enter the war. Wilson gives speeches before the Senate and tries to justify his intentions. He proposes to "'fight thus for the ultimate peace of the world and the liberations of its peoples, the German people included; for the rights of nations great and small and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and of obedience'" because "[t]he world must be made safe for democracy'" (Vidal 51). The novel approaches Wilson's war slogans in a sarcastic manner. While Wilson's campaign slogan of the election of 1916, "He Kept Us Out of War," is rendered obselete, a new slogan "Peace without Victory," is introduced. The latter is mocked by Senator James Burden Day, leader of the Brynite wing of the Democratic Party "which hated war, England, the rich, and by and large, Woodrow Wilson, too" (Vidal 37). According to Day, peace without victory is "utopian; hence, impossible; hence, acceptable to all" (Vidal 174). *Hollywood* foregrounds the idea that while Wilson wants peace and democracy for the world, he ironically turns out to be a dictator at the home front because his political acts are reminiscient of the "Caesar's way" (Vidal 44).

In this context, the novel first questions Wilson's attitude towards conscription. Wilson wants to establish a division for the war, and wants the young men to be drafted. Yet he thinks that the words, conscription and draft, are problematic, so he advises his counselors to "Find a new word for draft" (Vidal 79). Wilson dislikes the words because

> [t]he word "conscription" was taboo, reminding everyone of the Civil War's bloody riots. But since Wilson could no more rely on volunteers than

> Lincoln, a new phrase was devised. A few years earlier when it looked as if the border troubles with Mexico might turn into a full-scale war, Wilson issued a ringing call for volunteers: and hardly anyone had rallied to the colors. This time he was taking no chances. Conscription was to be swift and absolute and under another name. On June 5, ten million men between twenty-one and thirty had been registered under the national Defense Act for "selective service" in the armed services, which sounded rather better than, say, cannon fodder in France. (Vidal 94-95)

Since Wilson does not believe in voluntary support for the war, he designs an obligatory decree to draft the young men. Selective Service Act sounds optional and voluntary, but in actuality it is obligatory "acquiring all males between the ages of twenty-one and thirty (later changed to eighteen and forty) to register" (Norton et al. 629). Hence, the discussions on the Selective Service Act in the novel establish Wilson's political stance as a despotic ruler.

While the euphemism for conscription is underlined to critique Wilson's attitude, the extraordinary power of the Executive Branch during war situation is also questioned. Caroline is confused about how the President is able to execute a deed that the Senate does not approve, and asks Burden: "'The President's busy arming those ships that you willful men in the Senate said he shouldn't.' Although the celebrated American Constitution was a perfect mystery to Caroline, this did seem wrong. 'How can he?'" (Vidal 32). According to Burden, "'he can, if he wants to. He can call it 'military necessity'" (Vidal 32). At this point, Vidal's critical perspective echoes in the words of a British citizen, Nigel Law, who tries to understand the function of the Executive Branch and who eventually learns that the President has extraordinary powers during war. Law's comment is critical: "'Then, if I were an ambitious president, I'd keep the country forever at war'" (Vidal 96). Through these comments, the novel questions both Wilson's decisions in particular and the extraordinary power of the presidents as a hindrance to a democratic constitution in general.

In connection with this, the novel also challenges the execution of democracy. While Wilson seeks the support of the Senate to join the League of Nations, a group of Senators calling themselves irreconcilables work against Wilson. The irreconcilables "plan to stump the country, particularly the West, propagandizing against the League"

(Vidal 278). When Wilson hears the plan, he says “So we must all, now, go to Caesar” (Vidal 278). Burden furthers this approach by saying “To our masters” (Vidal 278). Burden’s comment is an allusion to the anti-democratic actions of the founding fathers, which have been discussed in *Burr* in detail. From Burden’s perspective, democracy is

> the fiction that the American people in any way controlled their own fate. The Constitution had largely excluded them while custom had, paradoxically, by enlarging the franchise limited any meaningful participation in government by the governed. Naturally, the emotions of the people had to be taken into account, but those emotions could be easily manipulated by demagogues and press. (Vidal 278)

In Burden’s opinion, administrations could manipulate people according to their plans while pretending that the people have authority over the governing bodies. Hence, for Burden, democracy is nothing but an illusion. Burden’s approach to democracy raises questions about the execution of democracy in America.

Hollywood also criticizes Wilson’s interference in the freedom of speech. According to Blaise, Wilson intends “to establish control over every aspect of American life” (Vidal 99), and for this purpose his administration passes the Espionage Act in 1917. Blaise is particularly concerned with the Espionage Act because he is a publisher. His observation is as follows:

> In the first thrill of war and Hun-hatred, an Espionage Act had been passed, which made it possible to put in jail for twenty years, and to fine ten thousand dollars anyone who conveyed “false reports or false statements with intent to interfere with the operation or success of the military or naval forces of the United States or to promote the success of its enemies. . . . Or attempt to cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny or refusal of duty, in the military or naval forces of the United States, or . . . willfully obstructing recruiting or enlistment service.” (Vidal 100)

Yet since Blaise is one of the publishers intimate to Wilson, he publishes news supporting the government, and he even gets Mrs.Wilson’s gratitude for his services. Blaise is not affected by the Espionage Act because of his support to the government, which further shows the monitored nature of freedom of speech. The novel’s explicit criticism of the exercise of censorship comes from Caroline even though she stars in

and produces pro-war movies supporting the Wilson administration later in the novel. According to Caroline, “Either one could speak freely of political matters or not, if not, do not claim that there is freedom of speech when its exercise means ten years in prison. The ‘clear and present danger’ proposition was, to Caroline, itself a clear and present danger to freedom itself” (Vidal 190).

While *Hollywood* criticizes the extreme power of the president, it also questions the function of the office itself. After Wilson has a stroke, some statesmen of the Democratic Party feel that Mrs. Wilson has taken over the administration and that a regency has begun. However, Burden believes that “‘Nobody’” runs the government at the moment by pointing to an utter vacuum of power, and he claims, “‘That’s just the way it is, and I don’t think the Republicans will ever bring up the subject, because there’s a good chance that the folks may like the idea and decide to abolish the office and save us all a lot of money’” (Vidal 364). *Hollywood* implies that the office of presidency turns out to be an ineffectual and money consuming and that this situation will be kept hidden from the voters by both the Democrats and the Republicans for the sake of the preserving the system. In this sense, the novel depicts a critical approach towards the function of the office of presidency by using the Wilson character as a tool. In *Hollywood*, Wilson is not just used to indicate the historical period to help the reader to grasp the historical context; Vidal uses this character to underline the plurality of historical narratives and to criticize the abuse of the Executive power.

Similar to Wilson’s representation, Harding’s portrait in *Hollywood* is different from the characterization in a historical novel. While Vidal is dissecting Harding’s life, he exploits Jess’ point of view. Jess provides the details of Harding’s life which is integral to emphasize the plurality of historical accounts. As Hutcheon observes, storytellers as well as historians might “silence, exclude, and absent certain past events—and people—” (*Poetics* 107); however, historiographic metafiction deploys these kinds of events and people to question history writing and to re-write them so as to emphasize the plurality of historical accounts by presenting alternative narratives. In *Hollywood*, it is possible to refer to Jess as somebody whose voice is excluded: Jess has a dubious position in the administration because although he does not have any official

commission, he has an office in the Justice Department where he deals with covert underground operations involving himself, Daugherty, and Harding. Most importantly, even though Jess is close to Harding and Daugherty, he is also marginalized. That is, after the Senate orders an investigation of the Veterans Bureau and the Teapot Dome scandal becomes public, Harding tries to distance Jess from his administration: First, he asks Daugherty to take Jess' name off the list of a group of statesmen who are accompanying him to Alaska. Second, upon Harding's order, Daugherty tells Jess to stay away from Washington. Jess feels wounded, but he has to do what has been told. Moreover, at the time of the crisis in the administration, Jess, who has knowledge of all the details of the scandals, is found dead, and it is reported to have committed suicide. To question the received versions of history, Vidal plays with the idea of how history would be presented when narrated from Jess' perspective.

In this context, the novel opens with Jess' point of view that narrates Harding's private life. In *Hollywood*, Harding is first mentioned in relation to his extramarital relations. Together with Jess, the Duchess, Harding's wife, goes to see a sorceress, Madame Marcia, who "comfortably advertise[s] herself as 'A president-maker and a president-ruler'" (Vidal 8), to learn if Harding would be elected president. The sorceress is only given the date and hour of birth of the person and is expected to tell what she sees about the future of the person in question. In the case of Harding, Madame Marcia's first premonition is about Harding's relationships out of wedlock: "'I feel extra-marital entanglements may cause grief'" (Vidal 13). Madame Marcia's interpretation is justified by the narrator revealing that "The Duchess suffered because her husband was a ladies' man and there was nothing she could do but turn a blind eye, as she did to their neighbor Carrie Phillips, wife of James, who, like Jess, was a dealer in dry goods, as well as fancy and staple notions and infants' wear" (Vidal 14). Carrie, otherwise known as Nan, obsessively loved Harding even before Harding committed himself to politics: "She had never made any secret of the fact that she used to cut out pictures of W. G. from the newspapers for her scrap-book; and she would even moon about the Mount Vernon house, to W. G.'s embarrassment and the Duchess's rage" (Vidal 342). Although Carrie moves to New York City upon her father's death, Carrie and Harding continue to meet from time to time.

Daugherty knows about Carrie and Harding's relationship and accepts the situation by assuming that "there could be no real scandal in the sense that the lovers would ever want to be married or that there might be a child" (Vidal 124). Daugherty even helps Harding in hiding the relationship from the press through appointing Jess as a messenger between Carrie and Harding to arrange safe meetings. Yet Daugherty and Jess are both anxious of Carrie's sudden appearance at the most unexpected moments. Additionally, Harding and Carrie have been exchanging letters whose contents are unknown to Daugherty. When Jess learns about these letters and asks if they are similar to the ones President Wilson wrote to Mary Peck Hulbert, Daugherty explains what bothers him as follows: "'There are a bit homier, Jess.' Daugherty was sardonic. 'W. G. swears there's nothing compromising, but hell, any letter to a girl half your age, telling about hotel rooms and times and places, is going to look real bad'" (Vidal 343). The affair gets complicated as Daugherty reveals that Carrie has recently given birth to a baby from Harding, and Harding has been supporting her. Learning it, Jess feels as though Daugherty "just made a complicated joke that [he] was too dense to comprehend" (Vidal 343). Besides, at the Republican convention in Chicago, Harding goes to see Carrie at her apartment and their relationship continues even after Harding is elected president. The very private details of the meetings of Harding and Carrie at the White House are narrated from Jess' perspective as follows:

> she had made several visits to the White House, like this, in secret. One of the agents, Jim Sloan, was in constant touch with her, and whenever she wanted to see W. G. she would alert Sloan. The previous summer, W. G. had sent for Nan, or so she had told Jess. They had met in the office on a Sunday like today. But there was no place for them to make love. The guards that marched regularly past the windows of the oval office had an unobstructed view of what went on inside. Finally, W. G. had found a nearby closet and there the star-crossed—Duchess-crossed was more like it—lovers became as one amongst the frock coats and umbrellas, ... (Vidal 426-27)

Harding making love with his mistress in a closet is the Harding Jess presents to the reader. It is not possible to verify this scene to decide whether it is true or false since it is not possible to recreate the past and verify the actual events. In fact, as Hutcheon claims, "Historiographic metafiction suggests that truth and falsity may indeed not be the right terms in which to discuss fiction" because "there are only *truths* in the plural,

and never one Truth; and there is rarely falseness *per se*, just others' truths" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 109, original emphasis). Here the reader witnesses Jess' truth, and in this sense Harding's representation underscores the possibility of alternative narratives which contest the other received versions of history.

Different from the presentation of a historical personality in the historical novel, Harding is neither a hero solving a critical problem, nor a great personality whose life is worthy of narration. Rather, he is generally described as an inefficient politician. The novel presents Harding as Daugherty's "creation" rather than someone who realizes his own future (Vidal 68). *Hollywood* gives the sense that Harding consents to whatever Daugherty recommends him. As the narrator states, when Daugherty first met Harding, who was then state legislator and publisher of *Marion*, at Richwood's Globe Hotel, Daugherty "had decided there and then that this handsome young state legislator and newspaper publisher was going to go all the way to the stars, or so Daugherty now told the story" (Vidal 66). Harding has not had a safe and stable political career until Daugherty intervenes:

> After two terms in the state senate, W. G. had zigged into the lieutenant governorship of the state; served one term; went back to editing the profitable Marion *Star*, with considerable help from the Duchess, who was inexorable when it came to collecting monies due. Six years later, in 1910, W. G. zagged disastrously when he ran for governor and was defeated. But two years later Daugherty had reversed the Harding fortunes when he maneuvered the Republican magnates into letting Warren give the nomination speech for William Howard Taft at the Party's convention. In a matter of hours, the handsome, sonorous, gray-haired, black-browed young politician was a national figure; and two years later, in 1914, he was elected to the United States senate in the first election . . . . (Vidal 66)

While Daugherty makes plans to place Harding in the White House, Harding seems to be indifferent to his own future: "Daugherty talked strategy morning, noon, and night while W. G. just gazed off into the distance, smiling at whatever it was he saw there. He seldom committed himself to anything; seldom gave a political opinion" (Vidal 68). Harding is presented in a lethargic mood by "half-smil[ing] that smile of his and star[ing] off into space, eyes half-shut, head half-tilted" (Vidal 66) while Daugherty is shaping his career. In this context, unlike the features of a historical character peculiar

to the historical novel, Harding does not seem to be capable of solving a problem in a very critical moment of history. He is just used as a prop to question the very nature of presidency and the function of the office of presidency.

The way *Hollywood* represents Jess' death provides another alternative narrative. It ought to be noted that the novel employs Jess' point of view to narrate the earlier hours of his own death. After the scandals become public, "[i]t was agreed that Jess do away with all his records in case the various investigations were to spread beyond the Veterans Bureau and the naval oil reserves" (Vidal 485). Meanwhile, Jess goes to the White House to see Harding, and Harding says he has knowledge of the business transactions taking place in the K Street. After this meeting, Jess heads to the hotel suite he shares with Daugherty.

> As he unlocked the door to the living room of the suite, he was aware that something was not right. Then he saw Martin [Daugherty's special assistant from the Justice Department], in his shirt sleeves, seated at the desk, talking on the telephone…. "I won't know till he gets here." Then Martin must have heard the heavy sound of Jess's breathing. He said into the receiver, "I'll call you back." . . .
> "The General [Daugherty] was worried about you. So he asked me to sleep over, knowing how you don't like being alone at night." (Vidal 488)

Jess, who is disturbed by the unexpected presence of Martin, goes into his own bedroom and burns every document "that pertained to the President and Daugherty" (Vidal 488). Feeling creepy, Jess wants to spend the night somewhere else, makes an arrangement with a friend to stay in her place, but falls asleep. Jess "dreamed of monsters, closets, horrors that he could sense but could not see. He dreamed that he heard a key turning in a lock and a door being opened. Then came an explosive thunder-clap, lightning, darkness" (Vidal 489). This is the final scene in which Jess appears. The reader is later informed that Jess committed suicide when Martin, accompanied by Lieutenant Commander Joel T. Boone, tells the President what happened at that night:

> "Well, sir," Martin began, nervously pulling at the fingers of his right hand with his left, "at about six-thirty this morning, I heard what sounded like somebody had slammed a door, or maybe thunder because there was this bad storm most of last night. I tried to go back to sleep but I couldn't. Then I

> got up to see how Jess was. The door to his bedroom was open and I looked in and there he was, lying on the floor, his head in this wastebasket full of ashes, with this pistol in his hand. He had shot himself in the head, on the left side." (Vidal 489)

Harding just wants Boone to speak to the press by saying "You must speak to the press. Tell them . . . he shot himself because . . ." (Vidal 490). Boone helps Harding to find the explanation for Jess' suicide: "'Because, sir, he was in a diabetic depression, and had suffered from such depression ever since last year when his appendix was removed and the scar would not heal'" (Vidal 490). Boone also claims that there is no need for any further investigation of Jess' death, and notes: "As there was no reason for a post-mortem, I surrendered body to Mr. Burns of the F.B.I." (Vidal 490). The press is informed accordingly, and Jess' body is sent home.

Hollywood points to the incongruities in Jess' death to question the received versions of this story. While Harding reports the events to Daugherty, who is "unable to speak" (Vidal 490) upon the news, and tries to demonstrate how Jess shot himself, the data appears to be confusing:

> Harding placed his left hand against the left side of his head. "Here," he said.
> "But Jess was right-handed," said the Duchess. She stood in the doorway, wearing an elaborate silk dressing gown.
> "Perhaps I heard wrong," said the President. He shook his head. "First Cramer. Now Jess. There is a curse on us, I swear." (Vidal 490-91)

Actually, Harding is reporting what Martin has told him about the incident which is how Jess shot himself "in the head, on the left side" (Vidal 489), but nobody seems to be willing to pay attention to the details. Also, the reason why Jess has bought a gun upon his exclusion from the administration escalates the suspicion about his death. When the hardware store proprietor, who "'never knew [Jess] to touch one of these before'" (Vidal 484), asks why Jess wants to have a gun, Jess says: "'It's for the Attorney General [Daugherty]. Nowadays you got to protect yourself'" (Vidal 484). Likewise, even though he is a diabetic, he is not depicted as suicidal: when he hears Cramer's death, "Jess had not believed the suicide story. You only killed yourself if you were really sick with something, like diabetes before the days of insulin" (Vidal 485). All in

all, the novel presents a disbelief in the suicide story of Jess. Accordingly, *Hollywood* opens the past narratives about the death of Jess to discussion by making Blaise comment on the event as follows:

> [Blaise] wondered why Jess Smith had killed himself. The *Tribune* reporter had been most suspicious of the fact that no one had seen the body except a White House doctor and the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Also, it was remarkably convenient that Jess should kill himself in Daugherty's hotel suite with an agent from the Justice Department in the next room and Mr. Burns of the F.B.I. on the floor beneath. Then, instead of an examination by a police coroner as the law required, a White House naval physician had been called in. But why, asked Blaise, would Daugherty want his closest friend killed? Why, asked the reporter, were so many papers burned and then the one person who knew their contents killed? (Vidal 491-92)

The novel does not present answers to these questions. Rather, the reader is expected to discuss and think about these matters. In this context, Vidal's version of Jess' death challenges the earlier narratives about the issue in line with the premises of historiographic metafiction.

Historiographic metafiction particularly questions the representation of reality or truth. In this context, it aims to "problematize both the nature of the referent and its relation to the real" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 19). While dealing with the representation of reality or truth, such fictions "question *whose* notion of truth gains power and authority over others and then examine the process of how it does so?" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 18, original emphasis). In accordance with Hutcheon's statement, similar to *Burr*, *1876*, and *Empire*, *Hollywood* is also concerned with the representation of reality and the influence of power structures on the construction of reality or truth. In this context, Vidal re-contextualizes the relationship between Washington and Hollywood to depict the power relations in shaping the representation of reality. He particularly uses Hollywood movies as a medium to question how reality is constructed by certain power structures.

Hollywood first displays how American film industry is manipulated by the Wilson administration to promote the primary ideology of the administration.[12] As a historical fact, in 1916 when the Wilson administration remained neutral to World War I,

producer and director Thomas Harper Ince produced *Civilization* which was an anti-war movie. At the time, the movie was regarded as a masterpiece, for the pacifist theme was popular. According to the narrator, “Since Wilson was then running for president as the peace candidate, Ince added an epilogue to the film, showing Wilson himself thanking Ince for having made so powerful a contribution to peace and, as it turned out, his own re-election” (Vidal 158). However, in 1918, these kinds of movies were seen as “treasonable even blasphemous” (Vidal 158), and people making such movies before and after the execution of the Espionage Act were imprisoned within the framework of the Espionage Act. However, Ince was free of being charged of treason due to his movie just because he “had cleverly covered himself” (Vidal 158) by adding the epilogue to the movie in which Wilson thanks him.

In the aftermath of 1918, the Wilson administration wants to make sure that “nothing like *Civilization* was ever made again” (Vidal 158). In order to manipulate public opinion in favor of the Wilson administration’s decision on entering the war, journalist George Creel desires to control the motion-picture business. For this purpose, he asks Caroline “‘to go west. To Hollywood. To influence the motion-picture business’” (Vidal 102). According to Creel, “‘She will persuade—as [his] representative—Hollywood to make pro-American, pro-Allies photo-plays . . .’” (Vidal 102). Creel believes that if Caroline succeeds in imposing the administration’s ideology upon Hollywood, they will claim authority over public opinion as well as over the world’s opinion. Creel explains his reasoning as follows: “‘The audience for the movies is the largest there is for anything in the world. So if we can influence what Hollywood produces, we can control world opinion. Hollywood is the key to just about everything’” (Vidal 102). In this context, like “‘yellow journalism,’ which obliged reality to mirror not itself but Hearst’s version of it” (Vidal 109), which has been discussed in detail in the previous sub-sections, movies will be used to mirror Creel’s version of reality.

The reason for Creel for choosing movies to sell the war is the magical power of movies. Even Hearst, who is represented as a journalist influencing people and governments through his newspapers by publishing sensational and fictional news, accepts the dramatic power of movies. He claims, “‘I always thought it was going to be

the press. So simple to print. So simple to transmit with telegraph. But there's the language problem. . . . The beauty of movies is they don't talk. Just a few cards in different languages to tell you what the plot is, what they're saying'" (Vidal 112). The novel emphasizes the irresistible power of movies through the voices of Ambassador Spring Rice and Blaise as well. According to Rice, "'Apparently, [Wilson] is a barometer in human form. He registers precisely the popular mood. Then, when it is no longer—variable?—he acts in accordance with that mood'" (Vidal 143). Blaise makes his contribution by saying, "the photo-plays have created for him" the popular mood (Vidal 143). Wilson needs the popular mood where Germany would turn out to be the devil and the world would be victimized by the Germans. In this sense, the movie, *Huns from Hell*, in which Caroline is the leading star playing an American mother (nurse Madeleine) who searches for her lost son at the French front, occupies an important place to depict the mechanism of power and authority.

In *Huns from Hell*, at the symbolic level while Caroline sanctifies America's place in the war, Germans, otherwise called Huns, are demonized. According to the plot of the movie, the mother of the lost American boy enlisted in the French army goes to France to find her son: "her search through the battlefields for her lost son was like the stations of the cross, Tim [the director] maintained, or Dante's descent into hell. Caroline grew nobler and nobler as the death and destruction all about her grew worse and worse" (Vidal 158). Unable to find the son, the mother has to go to the German headquarters placed in a church where her son has been taken prisoner. She pleads with a German officer who is "pleased with the situation" and does not pay attention to her by keeping "reading and writing" (Vidal 161). When she asks for information about her son, the officer scolds her: "You Americans will never learn to fight. Never. Germany will triumph over your mongrel race" (Vidal 162). Moreover, the German officer tries to rape the mother. According to the director's instruction, the script is supposed to develop as follows:

> "Then you look up, Pierre [the actor playing the German officer]. You see she's beautiful. You stand up. You come round the table. To your right. You try to take her. She resists. You chase her to the altar. She seizes the crucifix—don't worry it's very light wood—and she clubs you with it. You

> fall backwards. We end with a close shot of it, of Nurse Madeleine holding the crucifix. Horrified . . .” (Vidal 161)

Eventually, the mother repels the enemy by slamming the crucifix down on the German officer’s head, and escapes to meet “the American Marines, who had, single-handedly, defeated the entire German army, or so the Creel-inspired title cards would instruct the audience” (Vidal 163). The movie is shown at movie theatres, and Caroline observes that “This was more potent than newspapers” (Vidal 165). The movie is also shown at the White House, and is taken with gratitude by the White House audience as well. “The guests in the East Room applauded the victories” while “the Hun was driven back toward his lair across the Rhine” (Vidal 187). The only problem with the movie which escapes from the attention of the audience is that there is no mention of the Allies “who had contributed so much” (Vidal 187). Yet the solution is simple: “‘We’ll have different cards in the different countries,’ Ince [the producer] had said. ‘That way everybody gets to win the war except the Huns’” (Vidal 187). Through the movie, the mood Wilson needs is created in the United States, and the Wilson administration enters the war. Further, with the help of different language cards of the movie, the rest of the world is planned to be persuaded that the Germans are doomed to lose the war.

Along with emphasizing the intricate relationship between the government and the movie business in terms of exercising power over public opinion, *Hollywood* presents how a movie is made. The production process of a movie shown in the novel contributes to *Hollywood*’s problematization of the representation of reality since a movie is a visual text with a referential quality. In this sense, *Hollywood* is in league with the premises of historiographic metafiction which points to the “discursive nature of all reference—both literary and historiographical” (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 119). As Hutcheon notes, historiographic metafiction underlines the referent’s “identity as construct, rather than as simulacrum of some ‘real’ outside,” and so “it only conditions our mode of knowledge of the past. We can know it only through its traces, its relics” (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 119). In the novel, it is Caroline who presents a similar approach to the reader. Caroline draws attention to the fictitious qualities of the movie, which alludes to how the knowledge of reality is conditioned and how history can be constructed:

> They [the audience] had watched the fictitious Emma Traxler impersonate Madeleine Giroux, a Franco-American mother, as she picked up a crucifix that looked to be metal but was not and struck a French actor impersonating a German officer in a ruined French church that was actually stage-set in Santa Monica. The audience knew, of course, that the story was made up as they knew that stage plays were imitations of life, but the fact that an entire story could so surround them as a moving picture did and so, literally, inhabit their dreams, both waking and sleeping, made for another reality parallel to the one they lived in. . . . Reality could now be entirely invented and history revised. (Vidal 225)

Further, Caroline discusses the issue of representation with Farrell. According to Farrell, the aim of the movies is to represent the outside world, and he instructs Caroline about movie-making by saying "'[s]how things the way they are but carefully angled, the way the camera is, to make the audience see what you want them to see . . .'" (Vidal 416). However, Caroline believes that Farrell and others are "approaching this new game from the wrong direction. Movies are not there simply to reflect life or tell stories but to exist in their own autonomous way and to look, as it were, back at those who made them and watched them" (Vidal 416). At this point, Caroline, living in the 1920s, anachronistically ruminates the issue of representation from a postmodern perspective, which asserts that postmodern texts create their own reality by not claiming to represent reality but by emphasizing "the process of the construction of the *fictive* 'world'" (Waugh 102, original emphasis).

In *Hollywood*, it is actually the novel itself that looks back at "those who made" the movies in line with Caroline's suggestion. *Hollywood* treats movies as texts and humorously reveals their production process. For instance, Caroline's make-up process and the effect of make-up over the audience are discussed:

> The make-up man kept fiddling with Caroline's face like a painter with an unfinished canvas. He added white greasepaint to the white layer already in place. We look like dead people, she thought. Yet, on the screen, a transformation took place: the ghoulish white faces in life came alive, while the imagination of the audiences made lips red, cheeks rosy. (Vidal 160)

By analogy, this is similar to conversing with the reader on how a character in the novel is constructed, as in a metafictional text. Besides, the director's interference in the movie and the dialogues between the players are also revealed. Although the movie is silent, the players are supposed to follow the script because many of the audience "become skilled lip-readers" (Vidal 161). When Caroline and Pierre run out of dialogues in the script before the shooting finishes, Tim, the director, commands them to "Go on" and "Make them up" (Vidal 162). Yet since Caroline and Pierre have no words to say each other, they begin a funny dialogue: While Pierre says, "'In my script it say [sic] now I rape you, madame,'" Caroline replies to him as follows: "'In my script, too. Rest assured that I will resist like a tigress. I am incredibly brave'" (Vidal 162). Here, the novel which draws attention to the fictionality of movies implies that movies do not reflect or replace reality. Yet *Hollywood* also suggests that movies can create a certain type of reality, which may paradoxically influence the perception of reality outside the set. At the very last page of the novel, the dialogue between Blaise and Caroline complements this implication:

> "Are you settling in out there [Los Angeles]?"
> Caroline nodded. "After all, that's the only world there is now, what we invented."
> "Invent or reflect?"
> "What we invent others reflect, if we're ingenious, of course. Hearst showed us how to invent news, which we do, some of the time, for the best of reasons. But nothing we do ever goes very deep. We don't get into people's dreams, the way the movies do—or can do."
> "The way you and Tim mean to do. Well, it must be very nice to be so . . . creative." (Vidal 502)

All in all, the discussions on the Wilson administration imposing power over Hollywood to manipulate public opinion and the scenes showing the movie in progress demonstrate the constructed nature of reality. In this sense, different from the historical novel that aims to create a sense of past reality, *Hollywood* delves into the issue of how reality is created.

Within the framework of the manipulation of reality through biased mediums, the Wilson administration, using the Espionage Act to silence the movies and voices against the war, is seriously criticized in the novel. Although Caroline works for the

administration and is fully involved in the movie business in favor of the administration, she actually becomes "conscious of true danger" (Vidal 120) when she sees that people, like Hearst publishing pro-German news and the movie producers releasing pacifist and anti-war movies, are pressured to become silent. Since her guilty conscious reveals the novel's critical perspective to the reader, it is worth citing at full length:

> Although she and Blaise had contributed to the war spirit—the *Tribune* was the first for going to war on the Allied side—she had not thought through the consequences of what she had helped set in motion. She had learned from Hearst that truth was only one criterion by which a story could be judged, but at the same time she had taken it for granted that when her *Tribune* had played up the real or fictitious atrocities of the Germans, Hearst's many newspapers had been dispensing equally pro-German sentiments. Each was a creator of "facts" for the purpose of selling newspapers; each, also, had the odd bee in bonnet that could only be satisfied by an appearance in print. But now Hearst's bee was stilled. The great democracy had decreed that one could only have a single view of a most complex war; otherwise, the prison was there to receive those who chose not to conform to the government's line, which, in turn, reflected a spasm of national hysteria that she and the other publishers had so opportunistically created, with more than usual assistance from home-grown political demagogues and foreign-paid propagandists. . . . Nevertheless, she was astonished that someone had actually gone to prison for making a film. Where was the much-worshipped Constitution in all of this? Or was it never anything more than a document to be used by the country's rulers when it suited them and otherwise ignored? (Vidal 120-21)

Additionally, Caroline's thoughts serve to display the novel's interest in the production of discourse. Blaise and Caroline supporting the government and Hearst backing up the Germans compete to create their own discourses. As Foucault notes, discourse "is the thing for which and by which there is struggle" ("The Order of Discourse" 52-53) in the traditional sense, and discourse is not free of ideology. In this context, the quotation above refers to the creation of facts in relation to ideology and subjectivity. Here it ought to be noted that, as Hutcheon notes, a fact and event are different in that while an event does not have meaning, a fact comes to existence when people give it a meaning (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 122). Hence, Blaise, Caroline, and Hearst, who are called creators of facts, are embodiments of the discussions on ideology and subjectivity in relation to the textuality and fictionality of any narrative. Further, the quotation above can also be related to history writing since the novel chooses to ruminate on how movies as visual

texts re-present a historical event by hinting at the constructed nature of history. In this sense, *Hollywood* again diverts from the traits of the historical novel.

Hollywood also deals with director William Desmond Taylor's unsolved murder in February 1922 in Hollywood. Taylor's murder is functional, and it serves to draw attention to how an event is misrepresented by newspapers, which are documents to be evaluated by future writers and historians who might be interested in the event. After the murder, newspapers publish a lot of news about the incident; however, they include a great deal of misleading information. In 1985, a group of people even got together and started an electronic newsletter entitled *Taylorology: A Continuing Exploration and Review of the William Desmond Taylor Murder Case*, which has been released annually. The first issue of the newsletter underlines the unreliability of the news about the murder case: "so much misinformation has been written about the case and accepted as fact" and "we feel certain this publication can help correct some of the errors and clear away some of the mythological fog" (Long 2). The newsletter, by giving both official testaments of the people related to the murder and the newspaper coverage, indicates the incongruity among the textual data. *Taylorology* is very much interested in the representation of the murder in the press because, as it is stated in the introductory part of the newsletter, "[e]veryone was really at the mercy of the press, the only news medium at the time" (Long 2). *Hollywood*, too, speculates on the same event by implying how it is represented in different manners in newspapers, which eventually turn out to be historical records for further investigations and narratives.

In *Hollywood*, Charles Eyton, General Manager of Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, a noteworthy movie corporation at the time, is concerned with the image of Hollywood after Taylor's murder: just before the murder, the press has already started to damage the movie business by picking on the scandals in Hollywood. For instance, newspapers have continuously published the scandal of comedian Fatty Arbuckle, who bursted a woman's bladder in a wild party in San Francisco by "hurl[ing] himself onto a young woman" (Vidal 438). According to Eyton, Taylor's murder, just following the Arbuckle scandal, would not look good, and he feels that he has to cover up any mischievous news about Taylor and Hollywood. For this reason, when Eyton receives the news of

the murder, he dispatches someone to Taylor's home "to take away anything that would look bad for the studio. Bootleg whisky, love letters. Articles of feminine apparel" (Vidal 454). Although Eyton does not know who killed Taylor, he has assumptions about the identity of the killer, and wants to impose his assumptions on the press and the police. Eyton is convinced that Eddie Sands, once Taylor's valet, is the most possible suspect because he has found a blackmail letter from Sands to Taylor in which Sands says that he will expose Taylor's "[s]oliciting boys" (Vidal 458). Eyton explains his theory as follows: "last night Eddie paid Bill [Taylor] a call, and asked maybe for money and there was this quarrel, and then Eddie . . ." (Vidal 456). In line with his assumption, Eyton plans to pay the police "*not* to find him [Eddie]—alive, anyway" (Vidal 456, original emphasis) in order to prevent Eddie from telling "*his* story" (Vidal 456, original emphasis): If Eddie talks to the police and Taylor's interest in men is revealed, Hollywood would be with tarnished with another scandal.

In order to protect the image of Hollywood, Eyton calls on Caroline, who was Taylor's close friend and who was together with him the night before his murder, and asks her for help: "'If we all work together, we can all stay clear of this thing. As you know, we can pretty much control the press from the studio, if we're all agreed on just what to feed them'" (Vidal 455). Caroline accepts the offer because she is "the press, too" as the publisher of the *Tribune* (Vidal 454), and is capable of publishing her own choice of stories. In this context, the power of the press is underlined by famous star Mabel Normand, Taylor's girlfriend who is listed as one of the suspects of the murder by the press and who is not going to be hired by the movie producers because her name is blacklisted. Mabel, who asks Caroline to speak to the "bigwigs of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributers" (Vidal 460) in favor of her, explains her fear of the press as follows: "'They're afraid of you.' . . . 'Everyone in politics is afraid of people who own newspapers. The way we are, too. The way I am, anyway" (Vidal 461).

While drawing attention to the influence of the press over the motion-picture business, the novel at the same time emphasizes the discrepancy between the news released by the press and the police: "While the press continued to print salacious stories about Taylor's womanizing, the police spoke only of the thief, Eddie, who had vanished" (Vidal 459).

Likewise, what Eyton tells and what the police release are incoherent: “what the police were releasing to the public and what Eyton was manufacturing were often contradictory” (Vidal 458). In this context, *Hollywood* points to the manipulation and interpretation of the murder case. In the case of Taylor’s murder, the press, Eyton, and the official statements released by the police provide different meanings. Hence, neither the press, nor Eyton or the official statements are able to give a true account of the murder case. Furthermore, *Hollywood* does not deliver an explanation for the murder either. It just re-writes the story of the murder to underline how the stories around the case are created.

Although the novel draws a parallelism between the events in Washington and in Hollywood through Jess’ mysterious death and Taylor’s unsolved murder, the title of the novel only refers to Hollywood. At first glance, the title seems to be misguiding because it suggests that the novel is only about Hollywood. However, granted that the major theme of the novel revolves around the scandals in both cities, this title actually does not exclude Washington, D.C. As predicted, *Webster’s Online Dictionary* defines Hollywood as “The film industry of the United States.” Yet other connotations of the word are dramatically different from the first meaning: “A flashy vulgar tone or atmosphere believed to be characteristic of the American film industry,” “Flashy and vulgar,” and “Being hypocritical or insincere.” Synonyms of the word are even more intriguing: as a verb it is “lying”; as an adjective it is used for “hypocritical, insincere, devious, dishonest, disingenuous, double-dealing, double-faced, duplicitous, faithless, false, feigned, feigning, fishy, fraudulent, fulsome, hollow” (Hollywood). In relation to these connotations of the word, the title of the novel gains a comprehensive meaning beyond just being the city or the movie industry. Actually, Burden, who both witnesses at first hand the improper actions of the Harding administration in Washington, and follows the intriguing incidents in Hollywood through Caroline, hints at the connection between these two cities by saying, “We’re having,’ . . . ‘more scandals here [Washington, D.C.] than Hollywood’” (Vidal 479).

To wrap up, all the discussions above could provide a legitimate ground to label *Hollywood* as a historiographic metafiction. The re-contextualization of the events of

the years between 1917 and 1923 in *Hollywood* depicts the historicity of the novel, and it is possible to spot the traces of the 1980s political atmosphere in *Hollywood*. The use of the historical characters in *Hollywood* serves to provide alternative narratives about these historical figures and a place where the novel criticizes American ideals and the political system. By focusing on the representation of reality or truth in movies concerning the power relations between the administration and the motion-picture business, *Hollywood* questions the constructed nature of reality. It also questions the reliability of the interpretations of an event and the reliability of the newspaper reports as the records of the past. Thus, in line with the premises of historiographic metafiction, *Hollywood* is a novel which underlines the constructed nature of reality, hence histories in plural sense.

CONCLUSION

This section will provide a synopsis of the discussions in the previous chapters and refer to *Washington, D.C.* and *The Golden Age*, the two remaining Gore Vidal novels that were not particularly dealt with in the body of discussion. These novels were not discussed because their foci and themes are similar to those of the previously analyzed novels and such an analysis would have been repetitive. Yet, to underline the connection between these novels and the rest of the *Narratives* it is essential to refer to them. This connection is noteworthy since, first, Vidal rewrote the historical period recounted in *Washington, D.C.* in *The Golden Age* by expanding the time frame to 2000, an act of re-writing which falls into the framework of the earlier discussions. Second, *The Golden Age* is the final novel in the *Narratives* that concludes the series. Hence, a brief evaluation of these novels intends to present an inclusive wrap-up for the analysis of the *Narratives of Empire* and may provide thoughts for further research.

As the historical survey about the conceptualization of history in Chapter I shows, history and literature have had a contested relationship throughout the centuries. Both disciplines are concerned with the representation of truth in relation to historical knowledge. Historiography, which was considered as a branch of rhetoric until the French Revolution and which included fictional elements to represent reality, has been conceptualized as science, discourse, and a literary artifact since then. The perception of language and knowledge has also influenced the approaches to historiography. Although the rise of positivist historiography in the second half of the nineteenth century caused a rift between history and literature, with the belief that it is possible to record the past in an objective manner by escaping from ideology and imagination, the twentieth century poststructuralist thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Roland Barthes underlined the discursive nature of any text. Identifying (historical) narratives with discourse draws attention to the relationship between narrativization and dominant ideologies, hence this connection emphasizes the subjectivity of any discourse. Similarly, Jean-Francois Lyotard depicts his disbelief in metanarratives, such as History with a capital H, by pointing to the relationship between the legitimation of

scientific knowledge and power structures, and he underscores the inescapable ideological implications of (historical) narratives.

Likewise, philosopher of history Hayden White focuses on the form of the content in historiography as an ideological orientation. As he claims in an interview, “the form of the representation is a part of the content itself” and “To choose the form is already to choose a semantic domain,” which is not free of ideology (Domańska 21). Additionally, White points to the fictionalization process of writing history by drawing attention to the narrativization in historical accounts where a past event is turned into a fact. White’s approach to historical narratives as linguistic constructs, which is called the linguistic turn in historiography, is also related to the importance of the context in writing history: Like White, Frank Ankersmit, Dominick LaCapra, and Louise Montrose remark on the textual characteristic of the context in which past events are narrated. Additionally, Robert Berkhofer Jr. draws attention to the subjective nature of the context since the historian is also the subject of history. New Historicist critic Louise Montrose contributes to the discussions on the textuality of history by emphasizing “the historicity of the text,” which stands for the social embedding of the text. He notes that text and context cannot be separated from one another, whether it be literary or non-literary. These discussions reinforcing the textuality of history and the historicity of texts in relation to the change in the perception of language and knowledge depict the impossibility of composing a historical account as “the true” record of the past.

The perception of language and knowledge is directly related to the conceptualization of history, and the approach to historiography influences literature. The rise of the historical novel during the eighteenth century overlaps with the understanding of history as rhetoric, and history and literature are not viewed as separate subjects of inquiry. In contrast, they mutually feed on each other. Yet the positivist history of the Enlightenment Era cuts all the ties between history and literature, and literary historical narratives cease to compete with or complement historiography. However, in the postmodern era history and literature seem to merge when the boundaries of all fields of inquiry are blurred. Historiographic metafiction is concerned with the kind of questions

the philosophers of history address. This particular genre, combines history, literature and philosophy of history and questions the writing of history.

As it has been discussed in Chapter I, although the historical novel and historiographic metafiction are interested in history as their subject matters, their tendency of dealing with history is completely different. The historical novel, as Avrom Fleishman states, is constructed to give "the feeling of how it was to be alive in another age" through the "imaginative sympathy" (4) of the novelist. Besides, as Harold Orel suggests, the historical novel has been seen as "an output of escapist literature" (1) as a form of entertainment and therapy. However, the main aim of historiographic metafiction is not to give a sense of nostalgia for the past but to critique the constructed nature of the past. Secondly, in the historical novel, the use of details is considered as a tool to achieve "historical faithfulness" (Lukács 59) since the major point is to create a sense of past reality. Yet, as Hutcheon notes, historiographic metafiction manipulates the historical details to question the reliability of the historical record (*Poetics* 114). Historiographic metafiction is critical about the process of writing history. In other words, the main purpose of historiographic metafiction is not to create a past reality, but to question the way the past reality is created. Thirdly, historical figures in the historical novel are used just to show the historical context of the novel; "their presence is not a mere matter of taste" (Fleishman 3), and they generally have minor roles (Lukács 38-39). On the other hand, historiographic metafiction makes use of historical figures to cause an awareness in the reader that these personalities are linguistic constructs and are part of the representation process, for these historical personalities are also known through "their textualized traces in history" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 153). Finally, while the protagonist of the historical novel reflects the atmosphere of the period, the protagonists of historiographic metafiction do not necessarily deploy a type character or the popularized version of historical figures. Rather, they are "ex-centrics" and marginalized figures to underline "a postmodern ideology of plurality" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 114). Radically different from the historical novel, historiographic metafiction is a novel which questions and problematizes the writing of history.

Vidal's novels *Burr*, *1876*, *Empire*, and *Hollywood* examined in Chapter II can be interpreted as historiographic metafictions. Although each of these novels seems to be a historical novel at first glance, all of them bear the characteristics of historiographic metafiction. In these novels, Vidal's contextualization of the past events in relation to his contemporary historical context, the use of characterization, and the novels' interest in history writing are compatible with the premises of historiographic metafiction. These novels provide alternative narratives about the periods they narrate and in this way question the received versions of history. Besides, although they represent the characteristics of the historical milieus they narrate, these novels do not give a sense of nostalgia for the past both because they are extremely critical towards the representations of the past events in other historical accounts and because they are critically engaged in the issues of representing the past events as history.

Reviewing the aforementioned novels briefly will reiterate the nature of these historiographic metafictions. *Burr*'s publication in 1973 coincided with the turbulent years of America when the presidents had abused their presidential powers in relation to both the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal in the presidential election of 1972. Vidal's critical perspective of the current politics of his time can be traced in the themes of *Burr* where he deals with the abuse of presidential power and democracy. In line with the New Historicist perspective, Vidal's contextualization and construction of the past depicts the formative influence of the present. Having a two-layered narrative structure including Charles Schermerhorn Schuyler's journal written in the years between 1830 and 1840 and Aaron Burr's autobiographic notes regarding the years between 1775 and 1808, *Burr* also demythologizes the historical figures such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton. Narrated partly from Aaron Burr's perspective, *Burr* shatters the grand narratives around these historical figures by manipulating the historical details and by representing them as "despoilers of the infant republic" (Kiernan 76). Aaron Burr, as one of the protagonists of the novel, provides an alternative historical account from his own perspective, which might not be found in other, particularly official, historical narratives. In the novel, both Burr and Charles appear as ex-centric characters which conform to the features of the premises of historiographic metafiction: Burr is a marginalized historical figure trying to produce an

alternative history to the received versions of history, and Charles is a character depicted as a writer having trouble in narrating his own account. The form of the novel consisting of a journal and autobiographical notes also contributes to the discussions about using autobiographies as historical documents and their unreliability as the records of the past. Additionally, *Burr* is intensely interested in history writing, and Charles' struggles in writing Aaron Burr's life story depict the difficulties of achieving a truthful account while he is trying to create such a composition.

Likewise, *1876*, published in 1976, could be interpreted with the premises of New Historicism in depicting the historicity of the novel. Vidal's critical perspective about anti-communist hysteria in America during the 1950s can be inferred from *1876* when Vidal deals with the Paris Commune of 1871 by using certain references anachronistically and sarcastically. *1876* provides ex-centric characters such as Baron Jacobi and Charles who ruminate about history writing. The novel consists of Charles' journal in which he identifies himself as a historian. He recounts the election of 1876 by focusing on how the election was manipulated by the corrupt Republican politicians through the help of the press. In this sense, Charles' writings become a means to question democracy as a grand narrative because his observations about the election depict how the democratic election process is prevented by corrupt politicians. While writing articles for the different newspapers, Charles also observes how the press becomes a tool to record history falsely. In this context, the novel questions the validity of past documents and narratives as the sources of knowledge. Through certain references to how biographies are manipulated and distorted, *1876* also questions the genre of biography in relation to history writing. Hence, the novel problematizes history writing by questioning the tools and agencies used in the process of creating history.

Like *Burr* and *1876*, *Empire*, published in 1987, depicts the formative influence of the present on the construction of narratives about the past. In *Empire*, Vidal focuses on the expansionist politics of America during the 1890s such as America's intervention in the internal affairs of the Philippines after the Spanish-American War of 1898. Yet this novel is also Vidal's criticism of American politics in the 1980s where events like Nicaraguan Civil War mark the Reagan Administration's intervention in the internal

affairs of other nations. Hence, *Empire* depicts the inseparable nature of the text and context and their subjective nature in accord with the premises of New Historicism. In this novel, Caroline exhibits ex-centric behavior patterns which are not compatible with the expectations of the period in which she lives. Rather than conforming to the accepted traditional gender roles, Caroline yearns for power in the public sphere through her career in journalism. In this sense, the characterization of the novel coincides with the principles of historiographic metafiction. In *Empire*, Vidal directly focuses on the constructed nature of history by presenting the influence of the press in the creation of history. He examines how the press manipulates the government to create an atmosphere of war between Spain and America. The press ends up as the political power, and thus provides the official history. The novel represents newspapers as unreliable historical documents of the past and directly questions the writing of history by dealing with the limits of knowing past reality.

Similar to the previous novels analyzed, *Hollywood*, published in 1990, reveals the dialogue between the past events and Vidal's present social environment. Although *Hollywood* explicitly criticizes American political life between 1917 and 1923, Vidal's criticism of domestic politics and valued American ideals in the 1980s can be deduced from the text. *Hollywood* provides a link between Woodrow Wilson of the 1920s and Ronald Reagan of the 1980s due to their connection with the Hollywood film industry, although their relation with the industry is contextually different. Likewise, the novel creates a connection between Harding of the 1920s and Reagan of the 1980s by ruminating about the similar nature of the political corruption of these periods. The historical figures such as Wilson and his successor Harding occupy major roles in the novel unlike the period-marking characters of a historical novel, and they go beyond type characters. This kind of treatment presents alternative narratives about such historical figures which are not necessarily part of the official narratives. In the novel, Vidal reiterates the constructed nature of reality or truth, and he focuses on how Hollywood, as a manipulative industry in history making, is used as a political tool in shaping the public opinion and sedating people in favor of the government.

Like *Burr*, *1876*, *Empire*, and *Hollywood*, both *Washington, D.C.* and *The Golden Age* question the existing versions of history and raise questions about the writing of history. According to the chronological order of the events in the *Narratives of Empire*, *Washington, D.C.*, although the first novel written in the series of seven novels, can be placed as the sixth one. *Washington, D.C.* takes place in the years between 1937 and the middle 1950s. The plot traces the events connected with the Sanford family and focusses on Blaise's relationship with his son, Peter, and his daughter, Enid. Through his newspaper *Washington Tribune*, Blaise promotes his son-in-law Clay Overbury's career in politics and helps him in securing his political power. Blaise's support to Clay becomes a matter of concern for Peter. First, Peter views Clay as an adversary for stealing his father's affection since Clay and Blaise share an intimate father-son relationship denied to Peter. Secondly, Clay and Blaise act together in committing Enid to an asylum due to her alcoholism and her wish to end her stifling marriage to Clay. With Enid out of the picture, Blaise and Clay are able to protect Clay's political career since they will be able to escape the issue of divorce, which would ruin the image of a politician. Meanwhile, the reflections of World War II and the Korean War are narrated from a critical perspective. Vidal also criticizes US presidency, which is a recurrent theme in the *Narratives of Empire*, for the presidential office is endowed with powers that contradict with democratic ideals. In the novel, Senator James Burden Day echoes Vidal's criticism by saying that "'We now live under a Presidential dictatorship, with periodic referendums which allow us to change the dictator but not the dictatorship'" (*WDC* 379).

In *The Golden Age*, Vidal re-writes the same period covered in *Washington, D.C.* by focusing mostly on the incidents revolving around Caroline. However, *The Golden Age* refers to the events that have taken place in *Washington, D.C.*, as well. *The Golden Age* not only covers the period narrated in *Washington, D.C.*, but it also recounts the events taking place from the mid-1950s to 2000. In 1939, Caroline is back home from France and takes a part in publishing *The Tribune* together with Blaise. She uses her personal political connections for her business, and these political figures, in turn, try to gain benefits through the newspaper she owns. For instance, Caroline befriends President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Roosevelt wants her to create a public opinion which

favors US intervention and involvement in World War II. Meanwhile, America enters the war when Japan attacks the Pearl Harbor navy base. *The Golden Age* ponders on the Pearl Harbor bombing, asserting that President Roosevelt had information about the bombing beforehand, but kept it as a secret and waited for the Japanese to attack. The reason for Roosevelt's silence is explained by Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's advisor, to Caroline as follows: "'The Boss [Roosevelt] is guilty of only one thing. He kept saying *they* must strike the first blow. That was his order because he knew that if he hit first, our isolationists would say *he* had started the war. So in spite of all the information we had about their plans, he held back, and waited and waited until . . .'" (*TGA* 263, original emphasis).

While the political events are developing in the background of the novel, Peter comes across young Gore Vidal in an academic meeting for the possible publication of a quarterly periodical. Peter recognizes Gore Vidal from Washington, D.C.:

> Each had been at St. Alban's; each had attended Mrs. Shippen's; then war had taken Vidal to the Pacific and Peter to the far more perilous corridors of the Pentagon. Now, to Peter's bemusement, Vidal had dropped his Christian name [Gene] and as Gore Vidal had published a first novel [*Williwaw*]; a second novel [*The City and the Pillar*] was on the way. (*TGA* 294)

The friendship between Peter, who is an esteemed guest of TV programs reporting on the current issues, and Vidal, who writes plays for TV shows, continues throughout the novel. Meanwhile, Caroline dies in the 1950s, and in 1999, Aaron Burr Decker appears as the descendant of the Schuyler family since he is Emma's grand-son and Caroline's great-grandson. A. B. Decker, who bears the physical features of his great-great-great-grandfather Burr, is in the TV business, and he arranges a talk-show in which Peter and Vidal are the hosts. The final chapter of the novel, entitled "On Air," takes place in the year 2000, and is narrated in the first person by Gore Vidal. This chapter includes the conversations among Peter, A. B. Decker, and Vidal about the creation process of the fictional world where these characters, including Vidal, exist.

As Baker and Gibson note, when *Washington, D.C.* was published in 1967, the novel was interpreted as Peter's "coming of age in a psychologically destructive family" or

Peter's "searching for personal integrity in a corrupt world" (136-37). The publications of *Burr* (1973) and *1876* (1976) in the following years changed the interpretation of *Washington, D.C.*:

> by 1976 Vidal had published both *1876* and *Empire* [sic] and the critics were looking at a trilogy. In 1982 the critic Robert F. Kiernan, reading *Washington D.C.* in a new context, described Peter Sanford not as an exemplar of personal integrity, but as the emblem for a republic in decline. . . . What seemed in 1968 a fairly straightforward story of one individual, by 1982—in its new context—had become a commentary on national decline. (Baker and Gibson 136-37)

If *Washington, D.C.* is evaluated separately, that is without any connection to the other novels in the *Narratives*, the interpretation would be totally different, as the quote above indicates. Those comments on *Washington, D.C.* depict the early interpretations of the novel before *The Golden Age* was written. *The Golden Age* completes the *Narratives*, and evaluating *Washington, D.C.* in the light of *The Golden Age* and the rest of the *Narratives* would further alter the approach to *Washington, D.C.*

In his web page, Harry Kloman, scholar in journalism, notes that after the publication of *The Golden Age* in 2000, *Washington, D.C.*

> no longer stands as the closing volume in the Chronicles. Nonetheless, it remains unique among the seven books, arguably the best, and surely—with its introspective look at Washington politics, revealed through the experiences of Vidal's provocative fictional creations—the most intimate and original. (*Washington, D.C.* (1967), par. 3)

Kloman furthers his argument by claiming that *The Golden Age* "is the narrative *Washington, D.C.* might have been had Vidal written the books chronologically" (*The Golden Age* (2000), par. 3). Although Kloman's argument is sound, evaluating *The Golden Age* as the replacement of *Washington, D.C.* is just a limited approach. Re-contextualizing *Washington, D.C.* in relation to *The Golden Age* might open a fruitful discussion for further research. In this sense, Vidal's re-writing of the same period (roughly between 1939 and 1954) in both texts is notable since the re-writing of the same period by the same writer is indicative of the possibility of continuously re-

contextualizing of the past, and this act in itself depicts the constructed nature of history. The publication of *The Golden Age* thirty-seven years after *Washington, D.C.* and narrating the same time period epitomize the plurality of history. Hence, this approach complies with the revisionist perspective towards history.

The re-writing of *Washington, D.C.* in *The Golden Age* also causes the former to become an inseparable part of the latter. In this context, Vidal deliberately works to integrate *Washington, D.C.* into the *Narratives* via *The Golden Age*. Baker and Gibson note that there is "an apparent gap in the fictional continuity between this novel [*Washington, D.C.*] and its immediate predecessor in the series chronology, *Hollywood*" (131). Although Caroline occupies a major role in *Hollywood,* she is absent in *Washington, D.C.* because when Vidal wrote *Washington, D.C.* in 1967, he had not created such a character. (According to the sequence of the events in the *Narratives*, *Washington, D.C.* falls between *Hollywood* and *The Golden Age* in which Caroline reappears as one of the major characters.) Yet Vidal uses this gap as a tool to connect *Washington, D.C.* to the other novels. By providing a synopsis of *Hollywood* in the very early pages of *The Golden Age*, the narrator claims that sixty-year old Caroline, who lived in France between the years 1923 and 1939, has now returned home to America. Likewise, the quote below is an overt allusion both to *Washington, D.C.* in which Enid's shooting of Blaise is narrated and to *Burr* in which Burr and Hamilton's duel is recounted:

> The eyes of three men [Blaise, Clay, and Peter] were now on the portrait of Aaron Burr over the fireplace. In the middle of the left eye there was a small round hole where Enid, aiming unsteadily at her father with a pistol, had managed to do what Alexander Hamilton had failed to do so many years ago at Weehawken, New Jersey—shoot Burr, if only in effigy, dead. (*TGA* 246)

Vidal connects *Washington, D.C.* to the *Narratives* through similar references in the same paragraph, which shows his effort to establish a firm connection between these texts.

At another level, this approach above also points to the intertextual relations among texts in the *Narratives*. Roland Barthes interprets text as a kind of "network" which

includes other texts within it, “at varying levels, in more or less recognizable forms” (“Theory of the Text” 39). In a similar manner, Julia Kristeva defines the text as “a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another” (36). Barthes and Kristeva draw attention to the textual characteristic of any narrative, whether it be literary or non-literary, by emphasizing that a text lacks the reference to reality. In this context, the fact that *The Golden Age* consists of references and allusions to the previous novels in the series is the embodiment of these ideas. *The Golden Age* is then a kind of network, which comprises of the ideas uttered in the other novels of the *Narratives*. In this sense, *The Golden Age* also reflects the paradoxical nature of historiographic metafiction. According to Hutcheon, in postmodern fiction history is viewed as both intertextual and extratextual, and these views “co-exist and operate in tension” (*Poetics* 143). Likewise, although *The Golden Age* is based on historical facts, it also hints at its fictionality via the intertextual references to the previous novels in the series.

Another intricate point that leads one to evaluate *Washington, D.C.* as a part of *The Golden Age* is the representation of Peter, the protagonist of *Washington, D.C.* In *The Golden Age*, Peter is not happy with the fictional universe in which he exists, and reveals his discontent to Vidal as follows: “‘you should have constructed a better universe for us’” (*TGA* 462). Vidal’s reply to Peter depicts the idea that the writer or the historian is also subjected to the historical reality: “‘One works with what one has and knows, as you know as well as I, in *your* universe’” (*TGA* 462, original emphasis). With this dialogue, the novel hints at the importance of the context in which the past is constructed as history. If the context of experience changes, the construction of the past changes with it. From the publication of *Washington, D.C.* in 1967 to that of *The Golden Age* in 2000 in which Vidal completed the *Narratives*, it is obvious that Vidal’s historical context also changed, and the result of this new context is the re-written version of *Washington, D.C.* in *The Golden Age*. In parallel with the premises of historiographic metafiction, this act also proves the idea that there is no conclusive history. Hence, Vidal’s *Narratives* both complies with the characteristics of historiographic metafiction thematically as has been discussed in the previous chapters

and furthers the possibility of multiple historical texts through Vidal's act of re-writing one of his novels in the series.

Similar to the previously analyzed novels, Vidal's perception is influential in contextualizing the past events in *Washington, D.C.* As Donald E. Pease, one of the early critics who spots Vidal's writing as a New Historicist approach, observes, "Political events from *Washington, D.C.* weirdly recall 1960s events: the death of Roosevelt in office prefigures Kennedy's; Truman's election seems reminiscent of Johnson's; the Korean War anticipates the war in Vietnam" (267). According to Pease, "By reexperiencing events of the 1960s in terms of a counterimperialist historical memory from the postwar era, Vidal fostered the recognition of the difference between historical narratives we can collectively choose against a political mythology whose enactments we are otherwise compelled to repeat" (267-68). Within the framework of the discussions on historiographic metafiction and New Historicism, Vidal's conceptualization of the past as reflected in *Washington, D.C.* underlines the dialogue between the past and present along with the subjectivity of the writer as a historical subject.

As in the case of the novels analyzed earlier, *Washington, D.C.* is interested in the constructed nature of history. Yet the references to the writing of history are not as numerous as in the previous novels. In *Washington, D.C.*, Peter is the character who particularly ruminates on history. According to him, history is "'gossip,'" but "'the trick [is] in determining which gossip is history'" (*WDC* 184). Peter's remark on history as gossip connotes contesting narratives in history, which are not necessarily found in official historical accounts. Within the framework of the novel, Peter's comment also refers to the story published in Blaise's newspaper to falsely promote Clay as a heroic figure. Blaise recommends that Clay should involve in a notable act to represent him as a hero in his newspaper: "In the cold voice, Clay heard power. 'If you do anything notable, Harold will write about it and I'll publish it. You see, I want you to go far'" (*WDC* 204). With this in mind, Clay joins the army as a major and goes to the Philippines. In the airbase where he is stationed, a hangar explodes. Actually, at that moment Clay is outside the airbase receiving medical treatment for a minor foot injury.

Blaise, who sees the explosion as an opportunity to manipulate the event, publishes an article by Harold Griffith in which Clay is presented as a heroic major who saved a private by risking his own life. Upon this news the President is advised to decorate Clay with the Distinguished Service Cross. Moreover, Harold Griffith plans to make a film based on Clay's story.

Many people, such as Peter, the journalist Aeneas Duncan (Clay's brother-in-law), and Senator Burden Day know that Clay's story is not true. The novel includes several references to this incident, one of which is worth mentioning. Aeneas Duncan complains that "it [is] wrong to say something is what it is not" and "'even worse is not to *know* what is real and what is illusion'" by "deliberately confus[ing] people with something false'" (*WDC* 263-64, original emphasis). According to Aeneas, Clay is represented in that article "as a kind of cheap fiction hero" and "'Everything they [the newspapers] touch withers, becomes *kitsch*.'" (Vidal 263-64). Aeneas criticizes the press and its style, and emphasizes how the press creates grand images by fictionalizing events in accordance with the dominant ideology. Peter is also bitter about the constructed nature of this story, which eventually becomes a historical record. He asserts, "'History has to do with results; motives and intentions are the business of ethics'" (*WDC* 367). Peter sarcastically draws attention to the roles of the great people in making history by referring to Clay, whose image as a heroic major is created through false stories: without people like him "'there would be no history. The great things go to voracious'" (*WDC* 396). *Washington, D.C.* exemplifies how power structures like newspapers are able to create discourses to support their own ideological inclinations and how metanarratives are deployed by the media and are passed as truths.

Likewise, *The Golden Age* presents an interest in revealing the constructed nature of history through Peter, which also helps to reiterate the relationship between *Washington, D.C.* and *The Golden Age*. In *The Golden Age*, Peter still continues to meditate about history and the ways in which history is written. He "wonder[s] how history could ever be written without knowing the motivations of those who appeared to be making it" (*TGA* 99). He questions if it is possible "to excavate it [history] from under so many other long-lost nations. Troy upon Troy upon Troy, some with, some

without Helen, but all once afire with wrath" (108). Peter tries to figure out "'what it [history] is, if it is anything at all except different versions of something that probably never was'" (*TGA* 97). Peter's thoughts about history depict the novel's direct involvement in history writing in line with Hutcheon's claim about historiographic metafiction. As discussed earlier, Hutcheon notes that historiographic metafiction shows "skepticism or suspicion about the writing of history" (*Poetics* 106).

Peter's skepticism on the unreliability of history writing also includes his critical attitude towards the official versions of history. When Peter turns seventy-seven in 1999 having witnessed the turbulent years of World War II, the Korean War, and the Cold War, an academic historian, Robert L. B. Sturtevant, a middle-aged history professor from a New England college, is "commissioned by a university to write the life of Peter Sanford" (*TGA* 430). From Peter's perspective, this appointment is questionable since Dr. Sturtevant "did not appear to be much interested in getting to know anything that he did not already know. Very much a court historian, he did not question the prevailing myths about the nation-state in general and the United States in particular" (*TGA* 430). Peter is not comfortable with Sturtevant's approach to history, because he believes that Sturtevant is not genuinely searching for information. Peter wants him to question the myths, or the grand narratives, but Sturtevant's quest does not go beyond the common knowledge. Peter not only criticizes the official history and history makers, but he is also suspicious about the media as a manipulative history maker. While he talks to A. B. Decker, who is currently in the TV business, Peter points out to the influence of media in making history by saying that "'Certainly, those of you who make the news—or those who hire you to create it—are literally history-makers, as William Randolph Hearst was the first to discover'" (*TGA* 448). He calls the media barons "the unacknowledged legislators of the world'" (*TGA* 449).

The Golden Age reiterates the subjectivity of history. The most intricate reference appears when Caroline talks about her grandfather Charles Shermerhorn Schuyler's memoir, which is actually Vidal's *1876*, and Aaron Burr's life story written by Charles, which is Vidal's *Burr*. While these references reinforce the connection among *The Golden Age*, *1876*, and *Burr*, they also underline the ways in which history undergoes a

selection process depending upon the dominant discourses. Caroline edits these two manuscripts with the intention of publishing them and turns them over to Mr. Macrae, the owner of E. P. Dutton publishing house in New York City. Macrae agrees to publish the manuscript about the centennial year of 1876 but he rejects the other one. Dumas Malone, who is currently writing the biography of Thomas Jefferson, is influential in Macrae's change of heart. Malone does not like Charles' biography of Burr because Jefferson is portrayed as "'[t]reasonous'" (*TGA* 180). He also "objects to Burr's observations that some of Jefferson's slaves were his own children" (*TGA* 180). Mr. Macrae ends the discussion by saying that "What Mr. Jefferson was means a lot to us . . . and we reject this [Charles'] story" (*TGA* 181). This conversation between Caroline and the publisher recaps the basic question of historiographic metafiction: Whose history survives? In this case, the owner of the publishing house seems to be in the position to decide. Eventually, the novel questions both Macrae's and Malone's authority to legitimate their own versions as history, and criticizes their rejection of publishing an alternative history. All in all, it demonstrates how grand narratives are deployed and alternative histories are suppressed.

As a historiographic metafiction, *The Golden Age* provides an apt closure to the *Narratives* since it ironically refers to its own fictionality, which underlines the constructed nature of the novels in the series. As Patricia Waugh claims,

> [m]etafictional deconstruction has not only provided novelists and their readers with a better understanding of the fundamental structures of narrative; it has also offered extremely accurate models for understanding the contemporary experience of the world as a construction, an artifice, a web of interdependent semiotic systems. (9)

This argument is also valid for historiographic metafiction, which deals with the relationship between literature (fiction) and history (the past as a social reality). The past is only known through its textualized versions. As Hutcheon observes, historiographic metafiction uses self-reflexivity as a metafictional element "to signal the discursive nature of all reference—both literary and historiographical," and postmodern self-reflexivity "is the text's major link with the 'world,' one that acknowledges its identity as construct, rather than as simulacrum of some 'real' outside. Once again, this

does not deny that the past 'real' existed; it only conditions our mode of knowledge of that past. We can know it only through its traces, its relics" (*Poetics* 119). Hence, through metafictional comments, historiographic metafiction opens up venues for discussion on these subjects.

In this context, Gore Vidal's appearance as a character in *The Golden Age* is also noteworthy. Vidal parades in the novel a few times, but his most eminent appearance is the one where he discusses his novels with his characters. In the very last chapter of *The Golden Age* entitled "On Air," Vidal, Peter, and A. B. Decker get together at Vidal's home in Italy to record the TV show A. B. Decker has organized in 2000. Vidal talks to both A. B. Decker and Peter about the novelistic world of their characters. A. B. Decker seems to be curious about what Vidal thinks about the fictional universe of his characters. Vidal, thinking that "It is not often a character frees himself from the text" (*TGA* 460), replies to A. B. Decker as follows: "'What does mine seem like to you?' . . . 'After all, you are in my narrative'" (*TGA* 460). Interestingly, A. B. Decker thinks that Vidal is in A. B. Decker's narrative. He says, "'And I *think* you are in mine. I suppose that's how every being—invented or not—perceives the world'" (*TGA* 460, original emphasis). Through this dialogue, *The Golden Age* draws attention to its own fictional quality. Later on, Peter also engages in a similar conversation with Vidal. Peter, referring to the event taking place in *The Golden Age*, says that "'Personally, I always liked Truman. You know, he once gave Diana and me a ride in his train . . .'" (*TGA* 462). When Vidal says that he knows about the ride, Peter nods and says, "'Of course you do. You made him up. Then you made me up, too'" (*TGA* 462). At this point, the novel once again points to its own textuality through Peter's acknowledgement that he was created by Vidal. While Peter accepts his fictional existence, he at the same time draws attention to the textual or fictional characteristic of a historical figure, Truman, in the narrative. In this way, *The Golden Age* is in parallel with historiographic metafiction because, as Hutcheon remarks, historiographic metafiction makes the reader "see all referents as fictive, as imagined" including historical personalities who are only known through "their textualized traces in history" (*Poetics* 153). This is one of the basic differences between the historical novel and historiographic metafiction. As Hutcheon claims,

> [i]n many historical novels, the real figures of the past are deployed to validate or authenticate the fictional world by their presence, as if to hide the joins between fiction and history in a formal and ontological sleight of hand. The metafictional self-reflexivity of postmodern novels prevents any such subterfuge, and poses that ontological join as a problem: how do we know the past? What do (what can) we know of it now? (*Poetics* 114-15)

In the light of the dialogues between the fictional characters and Vidal, it is relevant to claim that *The Golden Age*, which combines and comments on the other novels in the *Narratives*, turns out to be a metatext which questions the constructed nature of the whole *Narratives*. When Peter in the same conversation aforementioned asks Vidal "'How does it feel to play god'" (*TGA* 462) by referring to the creation of this novelistic world, Vidal says "'Unreal . . . 'Do I wake or sleep?'" (*TGA* 462). Furthermore, Vidal takes a look at a book entitled *The Golden Age*, which has been written by Aenaes Duncan, a fictional character in the novel. Hence, Vidal's *The Golden Age* is ironically, doubly, fictionalized. While the novels in the *Narratives* draw on the historical events, they paradoxically reveal their constructed nature as fictions. As Hutcheon observes, this kind of representation is "part of the postmodernist stand to confront the paradoxes of fictive/historical representation, the particular/the general, and the present/the past. And this confrontation is itself contradictory, for it refuses to recuperate or dissolve either side of the dichotomy, yet it is more than willing to exploit both" (106). This postmodern self-reflexivity in the novel, as in the case of other historiographic metafictions, "acknowledges the limits and powers of 'reporting' or writing of the past, recent and remote" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 117).

In the last chapter, Vidal also gives the *Narratives* a circular-like closure by creating a bond between the character Burr, who appeared in *Burr*, and A. B. Decker. While talking to A. B. Decker, the fictional Vidal has some suspicions about the connection between the two characters. Giving a surrealistic atmosphere to the novel, Vidal asks: "'You're Aaron Burr, aren't you?'" (*TGA* 460). Not surprized, A. B. Decker "grinn[s]. 'If you say so'" (*TGA* 460). At that very moment, called "limbo" by Vidal (*TGA* 460), A. B. Decker turns out to be Burr's surrogate. Vidal wants to learn about A. B. Decker's plans about the future and asks: "'You started our nineteenth century off with a bang. You were the vice president who made Jefferson president. So how do you plan to start

our new century?'" (*TGA* 460). A. B. Decker claims that he is not interested in politics anymore because, according to him, "'That's for puppets'" (*TGA* 461). His new interest is energy, which he refrains from explaining. The resurrection of Burr in the reflection of A. B. Decker gives a sense of circular and surreal closure to the series which begins chronologically with Aaron Burr's life story in *Burr* and ends with the appearance of the surrogate of Burr in *The Golden Age*.

Considering all the differences between the historical novel and historiographic metafiction, Vidal's novels *Burr*, *1876*, *Empire*, and *Hollywood* in the *Narratives of Empire* series can be identified as historiographic metafictions in the light of the discussions provided in this dissertation. As the brief discussion above indicates, *Washington, D.C.* and *The Golden Age* can also be evaluated as historiographic metafictions. All these novels problematize the writing of history and question American history as a grand narrative together with the narratives about historical figures and abstract concepts such as republic and democracy. Different from historical novels, which are generally considered to be escapist narratives, Vidal's novels re-present alternative fictional accounts to counter the official American history and become critical stories underlining the constructed nature of history. Hence, evaluating these novels within the framework of historiographic metafiction also sheds light on the subtexts of these novels.

To conclude, as a dissenting voice who has been overlooked in American literature partly because of his diverse writing style and partly due to his controversial stance, Gore Vidal provides alternative narratives. *Narratives of Empire* closes the gap between literature and history and these novels reveal the ongoing and conflicting relationship between these two areas. At the same time Vidal reminds the reader that history and literature are interdependent since both are the results of linguistic processes. In this sense, while making the reader question the received versions of history, Vidal also uses the *Narratives* to demonstrate the hazy boundaries between literature and history.

NOTES

[1] The official website of Gore Vidal, accessed on August 3, 2012, lists 24 novels, 2 short-story collections, 6 plays, 12 essay collections, 3 memoirs, 1 non-fiction book and mentions numerous screenplays as the published works of Vidal. (*The Official Website of Gore Vidal*. 2012. Web. 9 September 2012. <http://www.gorevidalnow.com/published-works/ >). In his detailed website about Gore Vidal, journalist Harris Kloman cites 5 more Vidal novels published between 1950-1954 under different pseudonyms such as Edgar Box, Katherine Everard, and Cameron Kay. (*The Pseudonyms of Gore Vidal: 1950-1954*. 2005. Web. 9 September 2012. <http://www.pitt.edu/~kloman/pseudo.html>)

[2] S. T. Joshi's *Gore Vidal: A Comprehensive Bibliography* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2007) lists 17 academic studies on Vidal's work, 10 of which are Ph.D. dissertations, 4 M.A. thesis, 1 M.S. thesis, and 1 Honors thesis. 12 of these works were conducted in the United States, 1 in Hong Kong, 1 in France, and 1 in the United Kingdom. 10 of these studies were done in the 1990s, which depicts the increasing interest in Vidal's writings in the academia during the 1990s (Joshi 293). The following is the list of the academic works cited in Joshi's book.

1. Barker, Andrew David. "Creating Art Against the Sky-Gods: Gore Vidal's Manifesto and Didacticism." Ph.D. diss.: University of Hong Kong, 2002.
2. Bensoussan, Nicole. "La Théme de la décadence dans l'oeuvre de Gore Vidal." Ph.D. thesis: Université Michel de Montaigne-Bordeaux III, 1991.
3. Bremer, Brian W. "Reading Camp: Gay Theory and *Myra Breckinridge*." M.A. thesis: University of Kentucky, 1990.
4. Bryant, Christopher William. "The Cold War and the American Media in the Fiction of Gore Vidal." Ph.D. thesis: University of Edinburgh, 2001.
5. Eisner, Douglas J. "The Homophile Difference: Pathological Discourse and Communal Identity in Early Gay Novels." Ph.D. thesis: University of California at Riverside, 1996.

6. Launier, Eugene Scott. “History and Narrative: Challenging the Power of the Official Record in *Midnight’s Children* and *Creation*.” M.A. thesis: St. Cloud State University, 1999.
7. Livesey, Matthew Jerald. “From This Moment On: The Homosexual Origins of the Gay Novel in America.” Ph.D. diss: University of Wisconsin, 1997.
8. Moncef, Salah. “Hysterical Labor: Formal Reproduction and the Rhetoric of Commodification in Three Narrative Moments of Postmodern America (Kesey, Updike, Vidal).” Ph.D. thesis: Indiana University, 1992.
9. Neal, Green B., II. “In(di)visible Men: The Problems of Defining Sexual Difference in the Novels of Gore Vidal and James Baldwin.” Honors thesis: College of William and Mary, 1994.
10. Neilson, Heather Lucy Elizabeth. “The Fiction of History: Gore Vidal, from *Creation* to *Armageddon*.” Ph.D. thesis: University of Oxford, 1990.
11. Osborne, Cindy. “Historical Fiction: The Representation and Misrepresentation of Fact and Fiction as an Approach to Writing History.” M.A. thesis: Northern Michigan University, 2001.
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13. Schultheis, Kathleen J. “Born for Combat: The Education of Gore Vidal.” Ph.D. thesis: University of Southern California, 1993.
14. Simpson, Richard Hunter. “The Television Plays of Gore Vidal.” M.S. thesis: University of Wisconsin, 1964.
15. Smithpeters, Jeffrey Neal. “‘To the Last Generation’: Cold War and Post Cold War U.S. Civil War Novels in Their Social Contexts.” Ph.D. diss.: Louisiana State University, 2005.
16. Sullivan, Andrew George, Jr. “‘Buckley v. Esquire’: Libel and a Legendary Editor.” Ph.D. diss.: Indiana University, 1999.
17. Wahler, Gloria Ann. “Gore Vidal: Journalist.” M.A. thesis: University of Florida, 1985.

Additionally, my research in the Library of Congress reveals two more academic studies on Vidal. One of which is an M.A. thesis written in 2007, and the other one is a Ph.D. dissertation submitted in 1997. These works are cited as follows:

18. Murphy, Michael. “Gore Vidal’s Historical Novels.” M.A. thesis: Concordia University, 2007.
19. Snowitz, Michael Leigh. “Waking into History: Forms of the Postmodern Historical Novel.” Ph.D. diss: University of Miami, 1997.
20. Eubanks, David B. “Purely Coincidental Resemblance to Persons Living or Dead: Worry and Fiction in Contemporary American Life Writing.” Ph.D. diss: University of Maryland, 2005.
21. Davis, Vernon Tad. “The Character of Government: Governing Institutions in U.S. Political Narratives, 1959-1972.” Ph.D. diss: University of California, Irvine, 2008.

[3] As Altman indicates in his book *Gore Vidal’s America* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), Vidal’s works have been translated into at least 35 languages by 2005 (16).

[4] In *Refiguring History New Thoughts on an Old Discipline* (London: Routledge, 2003), Keith Jenkins clarifies Derrida’s concept of *difference*. As Jenkins claims, if a word is meaningful “‘in and for itself’” it would be a transcendental signifier. In other words, if “a word whose meaning was both self-evident (so that as soon as you heard it or saw it you would know what it definitely meant)” and if “its meaning would remain the same for everybody throughout space and time” (2003; 20), it would be a transcendental signifier. However, there is no such signifier because “no signifier’s meaning is immediately obvious outside of all contexts, then signifiers necessarily get their specific meanings *relative to other signifiers*” (Jenkins 2003; 20, original emphasis). A signifier is dependent on “supplementing by another signifier or set of signifiers to become a concept, what Derrida calls a signified” (Jenkins 2003; 20). Jenkins gives the example of the word/signifier God to exemplify Derrida’s point. In order to explain the word/signifier God, many supplements, such as “Father, redeemer, omnipotent, Saviour,” are needed, and the point here is that “there is not a logical or

finite number of such terms (or adjectives or predicates) that can be used so as to make them all add up to, be identical with, the word God 'once and for all'," and, thus, it is not possible to "close down every possible description of God, then the word's meaning always escapes us and so becomes logically open forever" (Jenkins 2003; 21). As Jenkins suggests, for Derrida, meanings are "constituted not by self-sufficient signs/words, but through the phenomenon" *différance* (2003; 21). A signifier gains its "never-fully-completed meaning *relative* to other signifiers" through "*supplementing* by another set of signifiers to become a meaningful concept" (Jenkins 2003; 21, original emphasis). However, it should be remembered that the relationship between two signifiers is not "automatically derived or fixed or uniformly patterned" and, the meaning as the outcome of the relationship between the signifiers is "always contingent, arbitrary and logically unstable" (Jenkins 2003; 21). It is possible to claim that there is no guarantee that future meanings of the signifier will be the same as the previous one in a text because "there is no logical guarantee that next time the supplementary or qualifying predicates that come will be the same as those which arrived before" (Jenkins 2003; 21). Furthermore, since words and their meanings are "generally embedded in chains of signification (in sentences, paragraphs, pages and texts) then the meanings of the words within these various con-texts cannot be relied upon to retain their meanings in a stable way" (Jenkins 2003; 21). According to Derrida's perspective, the second signifiers will be different spatially and temporally from the first. That is, as Jenkins notes, "they are spatially laid out so that those qualifying terms always come late—we need time to read them. This space/time structure is universal and everywhere; even though terms are repeated they are always slightly different according to the words surrounding them—when you arrive at the same words in a new context after you have met them in a previous one, the meaning will not be exactly the same" (2003; 21). In this sense, "With *différance*, then, there is no way of getting meaning into the world that you can be absolutely certain of forever. Language like history . . . never repeats itself" (Jenkins 2003; 21-22, original emphasis).

[5] In *life. after. theory e*dited by Michael Payne and John Schad (London: Continuum, 2003), as Christopher Norris emphasizes, Derrida cannot be interpreted as a person who "doesn't believe that there's any reality beyond language or the play of

textual representations" (20). That is, the aim of Derrida's claim is to underline the idea that language is a kind of barrier to reflect outside reality, due to its deferential and temporal nature.

[6] In *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* (London: Routledge, 2000), as Alun Munslow states, metanarratives or grandnarratives are totalizing stories "told about how we gained and legitimated knowledge in the past, underpinned human progress and history. Such stories or narratives are various and broad, encompassing philosophical, political, economic and cultural processes like Hegelianism, Marxism, liberalism, **hermeneutics**, modern science/scientific knowledge, **the Enlightenment**, even the very notion of transcendent legitimacy" (155, original emphasis). For Lyotard, the two significant metanarratives in the past are history and knowledge. According to Lyotard, history symbolizes progress towards human emancipation while knowledge or scientific knowledge stands for progress towards totalization as in the case of the belief in the Enlightenment and the modern period until the postmodern age.

[7] As Hayden White remarks in *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987), annalists reject narrative history as a scientific account (44). Some modern historiographers such as Tocqueville, Burckhardt, Huizanga, and Braudel denied narrative in "certain of their historiographical works, presumably on the assumption that the meanings of the events with which they wish to deal did not lend itself to representation in the narrative mode. They refused to tell a story about the past, or rather, they did not tell a story with well-marked beginning, middle, and end phases" (White, *The Content of the Form* 2).

[8] It should be noted that although Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, published in 1850, was written in romance tradition, as Ernest E. Leisy states in *The American Historical Novel* (Norman, Oklahoma: U of Oklahoma P, 1950), it provided "a more detailed" and "a correspondingly better-humanized inner drama" (13). As Emily Miller Budick observes in her work *Fiction and Historical Consciousness* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989), American romance "did evolve a form recognizably different from its British counterparts" (2) when particularly Hawthorne is taken into

consideration. However, this dissertation will not deal with these differences since it is out of place for the purpose of this study. Hence, this study tends to categorize American romances into historical fictions in line with Leisy.

[9] As Sarah L. Johnson notes in *Historical Fiction II: A Guide to the Genre* (Westport, Connecticut: Libraries Unlimited, 2009), after the 1990s people have again grown interest in historical fictions, and by the year 2000, "the perception of historical fiction as lowbrow was finally beginning to change" (3). Many famous publishing houses such as Harper and Crown were "aggressively developing historical fiction lines, with books designed to appeal to a new generation of readers" (3). According to the statistics Johnson provides, *Booklist* allots its April 15 issue each year to historical fiction, and *The Historical Novels Review* publishes more than 800 reviews of new historical novels each year (3-4).

[10] Although Hutcheon's formulation of historiographic metafiction is the reference point of this dissertation, it is pertinent to mention scholar Amy J. Elias' approach to historical fiction to give insight about a relevant study closely related to historiographic metafiction. Elias, who has been doing research on contemporary literatures, history studies, and narrative theory, uses the term metahistorical romance, to define what Hutcheon calls historiographic metafiction. Elias states that her work "is deeply indebted to the brilliant and groundbreaking work of Linda Hutcheon concerning history and contemporary fiction" (164), but Elias' ideas differ from that of Hutcheon's. She does not accept that there is a rift between historical romances of Scott's style and the kind of novels Hutcheon calls historiographic metafiction. In contrast, Elias argues that metahistorical romance is a kind of continuation of the historical romance:

> "metahistorical romance" to some extent repeats the contemporary debate about history in historiography. I claim that metahistorical romance is historical fiction which morphs the historical romance genre into a literary form that is able to encompass the historiographical debates of its own time. Just as Scott's historical romance reflected the historiography of his own time, the metahistorical romance reflects the postmodern turn on history. Scott's novels illustrated a stadialist view of history perfectly in keeping with the Enlightenment historiography of the Scottish philosophes, and today's metahistorical romance illustrates our own historiography's lack of

> faith in, but continuing desire for, "historical" knowledge. Rather than historical romance, it is "metahistorical," obsessed with historiographical questions in a self-reflexive mode. (163-64)

According to Elias, the term metahistorical romance is much more suitable to define such novels Hutcheon calls historiographic metafiction because there is a specific connection between the historical romances of Scott's kind and those novels called historiographic metafiction. She discusses how the historical romance is "congenial" to a postmodern moment as follows:

> [T]o Walter Scott, one of the progenitors of the genre, the historical romance wed two incompatible literary genres (the romance, based in myth and magic, and history, based upon empirical truth) as well as two incompatible ways of looking at history (as romance or myth, evincing timeless truths about humanity and the world, and as empirically derived sociological hypothesis, which revealed specific truths about specific cultures in historical time). The metahistorical romance (one can see the influence of Hayden White on my own work here) continues this oxymoronic tradition that sees history as romance and romance as history—that is, that sees the truth in both ways of looking at history without feeling the need completely to subordinate either to the other. Metahistorical romance just reverses the dominant of Scott's generic form: Scott privileged the historical side over the romance side of the equation, finally showing that the mythicized Highland cultures were doomed in the face of an epistemic shift to rationalist modernity; the postmoderns privilege the romance side of the equation, showing repeatedly how rationalist modernity fails in the face of the chaotic violence of history. (164)

Elias also differs from Hutcheon in evaluating the purpose of postmodern novels whose subject matter is history. While Hutcheon claims that historiographic metafiction aims "to prevent it [history] from being conclusive and teleological" (*Poetics* 110), Elias argues that metahistorical romance does not reject the possibility of certainty. She states:

> At the heart of my argument was the idea that the metahistorical romance confronts the historical sublime as repetition and deferral. What I meant by that was something different, I think, from what Keith Jenkins means by deferral in a Derridean sense, though clearly there are affinities between these ideas. For Jenkins, postmodernism rids itself of metaphysics and ontology. I disagree, based on my analysis of presentations of history in a large number of post-1960s historical novels. By "deferral", I was referring

> to the movement towards the historical sublime by this metahistorical romance: if colonial history and empirical thought construct "linear" history dependent upon a figure-fulfilment paradigm (White 1999), metahistorical romance constructs history as a "weirdly healthy repetition compulsion, a loss of the self and a journey from the center to the margins that is repeated endlessly because the borders of knowable history it seeks are themselves constantly receding. The crisis of postmodern history is the endlessly repeated movement toward the historical sublime/History" (Elias 2001, p.202). This is not a rejection of the possibility of certainty; it is a frustrated attempt to find it. (165-66)

Hence, it could be said that Elias assumes that the struggle of these kinds of postmodern novels dealing with history displays a kind of aspiration to reach the sublime history/History. She refers to her findings about the novels written during the 1960s through the 1980s and the novels written after the 1980s. She argues that in historical fiction of the 1960s through the 1980s, there is a "play and yearning that characterizes poststructuralism creating a definition of the historical sublime that shared poststructuralism's heretical and deconstructive psychology" (163). In later novels, she realizes "a distinctive move towards an ethical negotiation with others in the pluralist atmosphere of contingency that resembled more what is now a realist historiographical perspective" (163). Elias also mentions a similarity between these novels written in different periods:

> Both kinds of postmodernist historical fiction return to history with a vengeance, and they do so because their writers hail from countries that have experienced the postmodernist crisis of faith in the historical narratives and values that had traditionally defined them. The postmodern turn on history, at base an assertion of the sublimity of History, is from this view a desire for meaning that paradoxically insists on an incomplete answer to "Why?" (163)

According to Elias, in these novels there is "an ongoing negotiation with the chaos of history that continually strives towards completion and fulfilment, towards final knowledge, and is continually thrown back from the barrier of language and culture" (163).

[11] In the online *Encyclopaedia Britannica* yellow journalism is described as follows: It is "the use of lurid features and sensationalized news in newspaper publishing to

attract readers and increase circulation. The phrase was coined in the 1890s to describe the tactics employed in furious competition between two New York City newspapers, the *World* and the *Journal*." In her Forward to David R. Spencer's book *The Yellow Journalism: The Press and America's Emergence as a World Power* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern UP, 2007) in which Spencer traces the genealogy of the Yellow Journalism, Geneva Overholser, scholar in Journalism, lists the downfalls of the Yellow Journalism as follows: "The blurring of fact fiction. Hyperbole and sensationalism. An overemphasis on the negative. The undermining of society's essential institutions. And, perhaps, most chilling of all, the notion of journalism as mere commodity" (Overholser ix).

[12] The intricate relationship between the media and the government is also one of the everlasting themes of the Hollywood movie industry. For instance, director Barry Levinson's 1997 movie *Wag the Dog* stages how the media can cooperate with the government officials to fabricate a war to cover up the current President's sex scandal. In the movie, the media tries to draw the public's attention to a fictional war situation by making up stories so as to secure the coming-up presidential election for the President.

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