

REPRESENTATION OF HISTORY AND THE NARRATION
IN TWO POSTMODERN NOVELS: *THE HOUSE OF*
DOCTOR DEE AND *THE PUBLIC BURNING*



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BURNING

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to show how meta-fictional postmodern novels reflect historical knowledge within the scope of historiographic meta-fiction, how the authors transform the historical process into fiction. The general aim of the thesis is to examine in detail how historical consciousness and historical metafiction shape the identities of the characters in selected novels and how history and fiction are juxtaposed in the postmodern context. At the same time, this study examines how the past of postmodern history is handled by various theorists in the context of postmodern historiography, and also the difficulty of reflecting the past linearly. Historiographic metafiction doesn't deal with the past concretely and objectively, but deal with historical consciousness and facts with a different reality with a postmodern point of view. For this reason, this thesis aims to examine historical facts and metafictional elements within the scope of historiographic metafiction and examine how it is possible to rewrite history fictionally and imaginatively with a postmodern fictional point of view.

Key Words: historiographic metafiction, postmodernism, fiction, reality, facts, Hutcheon, Peter Ackroyd, Robert Coover

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, meta-kurgusal post-modern romanların tarih-yazımsal üst-kurmaca kapsamında tarihsel bilgiyi nasıl yansıttığını, yazarların tarihsel süreci nasıl kurguya dönüştürdüğünü göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Tezin genel amacı, tarihsel bilinç ve tarihsel üst-kurmacanın seçilmiş romanlardaki karakterlerin kimliklerini nasıl şekillendirdiğini ve tarih ile kurmacanın post-modern bağlamda nasıl yan yana geldiğini ayrıntılı olarak incelemektir. Aynı zamanda bu çalışma, post-modern tarihin geçmişinin çeşitli kuramcılar tarafından post-modern tarih yazımı bağlamında nasıl ele alındığını ve geçmişi çizgisel olarak yansıtmanın zorluğunu incelemektedir. Tarih-yazımsal üst-kurmaca, geçmişi somut ve nesnel olarak ele almaz, post-modern bir bakış açısıyla farklı bir gerçeklikle tarihsel bilinç ve olguları ele alır. Bu nedenle bu tez, tarihsel gerçekleri ve üst-kurmaca öğelerini tarih-yazımsal üst-kurmaca kapsamında incelemeyi ve post-modern bir kurmaca bakış açısıyla tarihi kurmaca ve imgesel olarak yeniden yazmanın nasıl mümkün olduğunu incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Key words: tarihsel meta-kurgu, post-modernizm, kurgu, gerçeklik, gerçekler,

Hutcheon, Peter Ackroyd, Robert Coover

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
ÖZET.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	iii
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Origin of History from Ancient Time to Middle Ages.....	7
1.1.2. Enlightenment Philosophy of History.....	20
1.1.3. Romantic Historiography.....	28
1.1.4. Modern Historical Novel.....	30
1.1.5. Postmodern Historical Fiction.....	33
1.1.6. Question of Realism in Postmodern Fiction.....	39
1.1.7. Historiographic Metafiction.....	42
2. CHAPTER 2.....	47
2.1. Past is Revisited.....	47
3. CHAPTER 3.....	72
3.1. Unredeemed Past.....	72
4. CONCLUSION.....	93

INTRODUCTION

Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it. [...] The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements—narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on... (Lyotard, 1984, p, 24).

As described in the quotation above, Lyotard defines postmodernism as an inclination towards “metanarratives” in which language loses its assertiveness and its certainty to define truth and reality, instead it revises it and elaborates it according to narrative functions. Thus, language becomes fluid and vague in terms of its usage in narratives. However, there is no consensus between critics whether postmodern narratives or simply postmodern art can or should represent reality genuinely. Or does it necessary for postmodern authors to represent reality as it is? According to Lyotard (1984), postmodernism does not have to represent truth genuinely however, it re-establishes it. “Our working hypothesis is that the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the post-industrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age” (Lyotard, 1984, p. 3). This postmodern age changes the perspectives towards objective knowledge and absolute truth. In the past, narratives followed the dogmatic truth and knowledge and there were some patterns in which authors strictly bonded with. However, in postmodern era the situation is altered down and completely re-invented. Similarly, history as a different field of narration has ascertained its reliability and objectivity in terms of its instructiveness and its representation of genuine reality. However, postmodern authors re-formulate

this theory of history and deny the absolute objectivity of writing past. Since realism has lost its effectiveness regarding of its objective description of history, then re-writing history has become hardened and questioned. According to postmodern theorists and critics, grand narratives or meta-narratives as Lyotard explains, has lost its genuine power and started to diminish. Rather than focusing solely on narrative, postmodern authors try to focus on the interpretation of the meaning and gaps that will be filled in accordance with reader's own imagination. Thus, present study will focus on postmodern fictional novels by Peter Ackroyd *The House of Doctor Dee* and *The Public Burning* by Robert Coover as notable examples of historiographic metafiction where the past is re-visited and re-created with the postmodern point of view. The term "historiographic metafiction" coined by Linda Hutcheon simply refers to questioning of "the grounding of historical knowledge in the past real" (Poetics, 1983, p. 92). According to Hutcheon and to most of postmodern critics, there is no genuine truth of recorded history. In fact, we can only grasp the past via texts is open to interpretation and suspicion of veracity of knowledge. Raymond Federman (1975) states as different from realist tradition, postmodern narratives do not "pretend any longer to pass for reality [and] for truth," (Federman, 1975, p. 8), instead, postmodern narratives do not refer to external realities and do not re-produce "pre-existing meaning" (Federman, 1975, p. 8). According to Federman, postmodern narratives accept its fictive world, thus; it does not claim its reality objectively, but instead it creates its own world. (Federman, 1975, p. 8). Thus, postmodern narratives are simply re-construction of the world, of the author's own imagination. Patricia Waugh (1984) 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" (Waugh, 1984, p. 2). Thus,

postmodern narratives usually approach language as a human construct, as meta-narratives and language systems. Linda Hutcheon (1988) states about postmodernism and historiographic metafiction:

[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 (historiographic metafiction) is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past. (Hutcheon, 1988, p.5 original emphasis)

Hence, it can be acknowledged that; while historiographic metafiction accepts its fictionality, it does not exclude reality. It both combines and re-invents the history. Besides, ontological questions can be also asked for questioning of historiographic metafiction. “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, 1983, p, 93). These similar questions are the topic of postmodern critics same as the philosophers that try to understand the meaning of the world. The same scepticism and questioning of reality is the core elements of postmodern metafiction. According to Hutcheon, history, -be it literary or real:

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. (Hutcheon, 1983, p, 104).

The primary focus of historiographic metafiction is on the textuality of history, often via showing the history-writing process. By analysing the past's contextualization as history, it highlights the text's historicity. Thus, historiographic metafiction “a novel about the attempt to write history that shows historiography to be a most problematic art” (Hutcheon, 1983, p, 112).

In line with all these, the present study will aim at discovering the relationship between fiction and reality by combining several postmodern critics' insight into the aforementioned novels. In the first chapter, the origin of history from Antiquity to the Middle Ages will be explored and looking at how history is represented in different time periods. Then, the beginnings of modern historical novels, postmodern historical novels and lastly historiographic metafiction part will be analysed. The second chapter of the present thesis focuses on *The House of Doctor Dee* by Peter Ackroyd together with analysing past and the present, its constructiveness, and self-reflexivity with references to Linda Hutcheon and particularly to her major work *The Poetics of Postmodernism*. *The House of Doctor Dee* narrates Mathew Palmer and Dr. Dee who were lived in the Elizabethan Era. Thus, the novel goes back to past and present with two narrators. Dr. Dee lived in the Elizabethan era and was known to be a famous alchemist and magician who gave advice to Queen Elizabeth. On the other hand, Mathew Palmer, as a first-person narrator inherits an old house from his father recently dead. When he moves into the old house, he encounters with mystic atmosphere and soon he realizes that Dr. Dee once lived in the same house. He tries to unearth the secret history of Doctor Dee with a great dedication. However, at the end

of the novel, readers realize that all the narration up to the present time of Mathew Palmer is just a fictive story of both narrators who construct and re-shape the same history with different point of view. At the end, Peter Ackroyd reveals himself and accepts the fictive status of the narrative. He accepts his fictional world in which he creates with his own imagination, and he gives new insights into his narrative as a postmodern fictional novel.

The third and last chapter of the thesis will focus on the novel *The Public Burning* postmodern fictional novel written by Robert Coover in 1968. The novel goes back to Cold War era between Russia and United States. It parodies and criticizes the political atmosphere of the American paranoia of fearing the explosion of Atomic bomb. Thus, Coover parodies the general atmosphere of the society by metaphorically using fictive characters such as: Uncle Sam and Richard Nixon. However, the incidents that Ethel and Julius Rosenberg case had been a catastrophe for American nation, the executions also symbolize the unbalance between justice & freedom. Robert Coover blends historical facts with his own imagination to create a fictive atmosphere of the American nation where anxiety and utmost paranoia is prevailed among the people. As a historiographic metafiction, the novel centres on the self-reflexivity of the narrator and the parodic language of postmodernism while focusing on the historical facts of execution of Rosenbergs. As a theoretical background, Elisabeth Wesseling's (1991) the theory of "*uchranian fictions*" and Linda Hutcheon's reflections on parody and postmodern historiography will be devised in the analysis.

In both novels, although reality is acknowledged as objective stance of the past, postmodern historiographic metafiction distorts the reality and objectivity, instead it revises and changes it. Since there is no certain employing of meaning in postmodernism, it is difficult to grasp "one" and "solid" facts. Simply, what is

understood is a culmination of author's own imagination and readers' interpretation that coexist together in order to achieve fictive status. Since, it is acknowledged that postmodernism distorts reality there is no certain truth and objective stance of the past. As a postmodern genre, historiographic metafiction revisits the past and it revises and recuperates it while acknowledging certain facts of the history. In historiographic metafiction, one should not expect to find only objective historicity. Thus, aforementioned novels are good examples for focusing not only historical facts but also author's subjectivity. I aim to demonstrate that, there is no objective history in postmodern narratives since, one can only know the past through accessible texts and narratives. While arguing that there is no such objectivity in postmodern texts, I intend to discuss how realism is situated and understood by readers. Therefore, it is necessary to examine wide range of theoretical background in order to analyse the texts thorough and better.

CHAPTER I

ORIGIN OF HISTORY FROM ANCIENT TIME TO MIDDLE AGES

Re-writing history is a debatable phenomenon for many critics and historians throughout history. Apart from its canonical demonstration and understanding of history as its solidity and linearity of important events, many critics attempted to identify history as an objective and unchangeable chain of events that represent the unity of certain cultures and their national consciousness. The historical consciousness of writing history is related to specific cultural background, mostly re-adapted and fused with the writer's own individual consciousness and background. Since it is a newly adapted term, historical consciousness is the ability or understanding of history and its application to certain cultural and political knowledge. Since every culture and nation may differ in their historical background, re-adapting or re-making the history of a nation is simply a controversial term regarding their application and representation of pure truth and reality. In one of his interviews, American author E.L Doctorow explains history as:

History is a battlefield. It's constantly being fought over because the past controls the present. History is the present. That's why every generation writes it anew. But what most people think of as history is its end product, a myth. So to be irreverent to myth, to play with it, let in some light and air, to try to combust it back into history, is to risk being seen as someone who distorts truth. (Schiavenza, 2015, np)

This critical understanding of Doctorow depicts the contradiction between the representation of history as genuinely true and objective and the re-writing of history which continuously combats with a radical truth and historical data of nations and cultures. Throughout the year, depiction and representation of history have drastically

changed and evolved into new angles and perspectives. Ancient Greek historian, later Cicero called him the “The Father of History”, Herodotus who was an ancient philosopher and important historian brought a new understanding of history and changed it into a recorded product. Before Herodotus historical knowledge and important information were passed down orally from one generation to another. It was Herodotus who gathered historical data with his clear explanation of events and recorded them chronologically.

What is new about Herodotus’ new understanding of history is that he combined all historical data with depictions and events and explanations and tried to evaluate them logically and meaningfully. As a great historian, he sought to define history as objectively recorded and attempted to solidify historical knowledge as truly and genuinely reflected. Due to the controversial position of writing history, as a reliable historian, Herodotus always questioned the truthfulness of history. “I am obliged to record the things I am told, but I am certainly not required to believe them – this remark may be taken to apply to the whole of my account.” (Herodotus, 2008, p. 458). Apart from Herodotus, Thucydides brought a different understanding of writing history. Differing from Herodotus, he based historical recordings on verifiable truth and eyewitnesses. He compiled his historical recordings objectively, relatively less commented on historical chronicles. By depending on his method of scientific inquiry, his account of verified historical knowledge differs him from his early predecessors.

I had almost said of mankind. For though the events of remote antiquity, and even those that more immediately precede the war, could not from lapse of time be clearly ascertained, yet the evidence which an inquiry carried as far back as was practicable leads me to trust, all point to the conclusion that there was nothing on a great scale, either in war or in other matters. (Herodotus, 2008, p, 11)

Both Herodotus and Thucydides agree on writing history is a process which meticulously represents the details of historical records truthfully. However, they differ from each other regarding their style, manner, and form. Since they had recorded historical events as close to genuine truth, such controversial debate about historians' original record of representing history had been aroused by ancient philosophers. One of the important debates was about whether history or re-writing history represents truth objectively or it has close affinities with literature or the realm of imagination. Since the realm of imagination or desire to represent reality truly related to literature and its fictitious theme, Plato (428-348 BC) had controversial debate about representing reality. For him, writers who attempted to represent reality are "the makers of tales". (Plato, 1991, p. 54,55). These tales, according to Plato were misrepresented, because writers could not represent original truth genuinely. He based on his argument specifically about mythical tales of Homer who according to him were fallacy, deriving their origin from a false interpretation of the writer's imagination. Thus, historical records were used as historical tales of the writer's realm. For Plato, the creation of historical tales of Homer and Hesiod "surely composed false tales for human beings". (Plato, 1991, p. 55). These false tales are derived from the writer's false supposition about Gods and human-being and they must be eradicated from the minds of young children.

A young thing can't judge what is hidden sense and what is not; but what he takes into his opinions at that age has a tendency to become hard to eradicate and unchangeable. Perhaps it's for this reason that we must do everything to insure that what they hear first, with respect to virtue, be the finest told tales for them to hear. (Plato, 1991, p.56).

The finest tale according to him must be likened as closely to the original truth, so narrative tales should be supervised by “nurses and mothers” before they take them into their opinions. (Plato, 1991, p. 55). According to Plato, narrative tales are “tellers of tales or poets a narrative of what has come to pass, what is, or what is going to be”. (Plato, 1991, p. 71). Since “teller of tales” largely depended on their truth on imitation of “what has come to pass”, narrative tales were simply creations or imitations of reality which were falsely represented and must be eradicated from Plato’s ideal state. Poets liken themselves as if they were someone else and he “likens his own style as much as possible to that of the man” he wanted to imitate. (Plato, 1991, p. 71) In that sense, poets or historians use imitation to liken their opinions as much closer as genuine truth.

On the other hand, Aristotle (384 – 322 BC), takes a different stand on differing history and fiction unlike Plato. According to him, a poet should represent the universal truth as best as he can, in this way, a poet tends to represent universal facts. The function of a poet according to Aristotle is “telling of such things that might be happened” (Aristotle, 2001, p. 106) whereas the function of the historian is to represent “what has happened”. (Aristotle, 2001, p. 106). He differs poets from historians in a distinct way:

From what has already been said, it will be evident that the poet’s function is not to report things that have happened, but rather to tell of such things as might happen, things that are possibilities by virtue of being in themselves inevitable or probable. (Aristotle, 2001, p.106).

According to Aristotle poet’s function is to follow the law of necessity and probability, however, the historian’s function is to represent the facts genuinely

without elaborating poetical license and such devours emotions. In that sense, from beginning of the ancient history, the roles that have been carried away by poets and historians were drawn drastically by important philosophers and rhetoricians. Even though Plato and Aristotle do not make a clear distinction between the function of historians and poets implicitly, facts and fiction or representing reality genuinely has been a debatable topic throughout the centuries.

In *Poetics* (384-322 BC) Aristotle claims that: “Poetry is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history, in that poetry tends rather to express the universal, history rather the particular facts.” (Aristotle, 2001, p. 106-107). For Aristotle universal is “the sort of thing that a certain kind of person will say or do either probably or necessarily...” (Aristotle, 2001, p. 107). However, historians deal with particular facts and record what “has already been happened” without giving thoughts and drawing conclusions. For this reason, the poet’s task is to express human thoughts and emotions which are universal and probable also higher than speaking of mere facts and particular things.

The difference between history or historiographic facts and fiction is derived from mainly ancient Greek and Roman civilizations. Homer’s epic writings and his culmination of representing historical details and his creations of fictitious mythical characters in fact, show the problematizing factor of differing historiography from fiction itself. According to Michel Grant (2005), “Everyone accepted the epic traditions as grounded on hard facts, and the Homeric heroes were believed in some sense to be the forebears of the Greek later times.” (Grant, 2005, p. 23). Homeric heroes in that sense, creates a sense of scepticism also a pleasure for readers. Since there are not enough verifiable accounts for proving Homeric heroes truly exist, the dilemma of whether historiography and fiction demonstrate genuine mere facts is

indeterminable. Since Homer was described as “the trickster figures of folk tales, or like Jacob, the ‘Artful Dodger’ of the Biblical world...” (Grant, 2005, p. 23), Herodotus and Thucydides culminated historical details and fiction by giving examples also taking references from Homer’s epic tragedies. Although Herodotus discredits Homer for denouncing falsehood “his dialogues and speeches and digressions are Homeric, and so is his stress on divine epiphanies and army catalogues and leaders’ individual valour, with little notice taken of strategic arguments.” (Grant, 2005, p. 24) Thus, it turns out that, historiography and fiction are intermingled in some sense, and the nuance between history and fiction is deeply rooted in Ancient Greek and Roman times. For this reason, our study first mainly revolves around the Ancient Greeks specifically Homer and his predecessors and other Ancient Roman rhetoricians such as: Livy (64 or 59 BC – AD 17) or Cicero (106 – 43 BC). They culminated the historiography and fiction together which shows the overlapping factor of using historiography and fiction.

The Greeks themselves, and the Romans, knew that there were two differences between history and epic poetry: history was written in prose, and was meant to separate facts from fancies about the past. [But] Homer was too much of an authority not to be used by historians as evidence for specific facts. (Grant, 2005, p. 25).

There is no denial that Ancient Greeks and Romans combined historiography and epic poetry at the same time to create a poetical flow of emotions to please readers. They “often preferred general poetical ‘truth’ to factual accuracy.” (Grant, 2005, p. 25). According to the modern critic and author Lytton Strachey, “every history worthy of the name is, in its own way, as personal as poetry” (qtd. in Grant: 25). However,

Eratosthenes (274 – 194 BC) explains that “the purpose of poetry is not to instruct but to entertain.” (qtd. in Grant: 25).

At some phases of Ancient Greek and Roman history, ‘tragic history’ was brought into being as the culmination of two genres: history and tragedy. “There was not always a very clear-cut distinction between ‘tragic’ and ‘rhetorical’ history: both sought to entertain and serve (supplanting the poets) as popular teachers.” (Grant, 2005, p. 27). Although the amalgamation between tragedy and history coexisted together, Polybius (203 – 123 BC) mentioned the clear-cut difference between epic tragedy and history:

A historical author should not try to thrill his readers by such exaggerated pictures, nor should he, like a tragic poet, try to imagine the probable utterances of his characters or reckon up all the consequences probably incidental to the occurrences with which he deals, but simply record what really happened and what really was said, however commonplace. For the object of tragedy is not the same as that of history but quite the opposite... In the one case it is the probable that takes precedence, even if it is untrue, the purpose being to create illusion to spectators; in the other it is the truth, the purpose of being to confer benefit on learners. (Grant, 2005, p. 27)

Polybius saw the difference between a historical author and a tragic poet regarding their purpose of writing, as historians are supposed to record what has happened, Polybius follows the steps of Aristotle for, poetry is broader and philosophical at the same time it flourishes emotions for appeal readers. Polybius considers history as a didactic form that functions as an objective point of view. However, he explains further that “history that was too close to tragedy and appealing too much to the emotions, with the consequent sacrifice of accuracy.” (Grant, 2005,

p.27). He believes that tragic heroes were depended on ancient Greek histories in which tragic characters took their references from ancient history.

Cicero, (106 – 43 BC) also commented on the difference between history and poetry during his conversation with his brother Quintus. For Cicero, “in the history the standard by which everything is judged is the truth, while in poetry it is generally the pleasure one gives.” (qtd. in Grant, 2005, p. 27). Cicero saw himself as the value of accuracy and truth were deeply embedded to historians, as their role was to record the things directly without combining thoughts and emotions. “On the one hand, he saw and appreciated their close connection. Indeed, he believed that history was ‘a kind of oratory’ and owed a lot to rhetoric and needed the embellishment that it could offer.” (Grant, 2005, p. 30). In that sense, Cicero considered history as rhetoric, a form of oratory which combines both rhetorical and poetical skills that teaches at the same time delights reader. Similarly, “Roman historians drew on the devices taught in the schools of rhetoric to praise or discredit their subjects.” (qtd. in Grant, 2005, p. 29).

Thus, history was little more than rhetorical invention; capitulating to popular demand, historiography was essentially rhetorical intended to entertain. That was why it was sometimes witty, barbed with anecdotal or epigrammatic humour. But it was also, at the same time, serious, because history and oratory had a single serious aim, the instruction of public opinion. And it seemed that history could achieve this only by ‘oratorical writing’—by producing an ordered, artistically composed whole, in keeping with the rules of rhetoric. (qtd. in Grant, 2005, p. 29)

Regarding their sharing of similarities between historiography and epic tragedy, Ancients Romans and Greeks considered history as an invention of rhetorical form which was used to promote public demand and political reasons to arouse emotions

for their nation. That is why history in the first place, was indebted to accuracy and truthfulness. The fact that oratory's purpose is to instruct public opinion and mould it correctly to persuade the public to choose the right political manner and decide wisely. However, the relationship between history and poetry at the same time tragedy in ancient times can't be undermined, since they share similar artistic purposes to teach and delight, at the same time, history is similar to oratory, needed to embellishment with rhetorical language to flourish its accuracy to attract reader's attention.

According to Grant (2005), tragedy is "a dramatized historical tableau" which explains the ancient tragedy takes historical references mainly from Greeks and Romans that are combined with dramatic and poetical functions. Likewise, Tacitus (56 – 120 AD) was a Roman historian who used poetical and rhetorical techniques and his language was quite embellished with theatrical forms. When his account of the stories of Nero who was believed to have murdered his mother "—patterned on the tragic story of Clytemnestra and Orestes, or Agave and Pentheus. It is no surprise to learn that when Tacitus was young, he had written plays." (Grant, 2005, p. 28). It is an undeniable fact that historiography had been revolved around epic tragedies which continuously takes its precedence from imparted past deeds and ancient stories. If the truth and accuracy had been considered fundamental elements of writing history, the stories that historians recorded accurately would not have been appealing to the reader, since there was not enough evidence for historians to base their stories on truth, they depended on their stories an epic and took references from Ancient Greeks. Thus, one can infer from the statement given above that, an attempt to record history accurately leaves it places to a fictitious amalgamation of stories that both contain fiction and history.

Up to the Middle Ages history was not seen as a separate branch of narrative, it was considered an excessive part of grammar and rhetoric. Spiegel (1983) defines Medieval historiography in the Middle Ages as “medieval historiography, by all critical odds, is inauthentic, unscientific, unreliable, ahistorical, irrational, borderline illiterate, and, worse yet, unprofessional.” (Spiegel, 1983, p.43,44). Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis (2003) considers writing history as personal strategies which are used for personal accounts and purposes. (Deliyannis, 2003, p.1). She further claims that writing *Historia* had a long way back to ancient times. Thus, classical antiquity and medieval literature assimilated this long tradition of recording events. (Deliyannis, 2003, p. 1). “There was thus no question, in the Middle Ages, that history should be written, as one suitable strategy for remembering a particular set of events or people.” (Deliyannis, 2003, p. 1). Being a distinct branch of rhetoric, historiography had a pivotal role since writing had an immense role for recording and memorizing important events. That is why; historiography grounded itself into hard facts, factuality, and objective point of view.

Historia literally means ‘story’. In the Middle Ages it could refer to narrative works of art, saints’ lives, parts of the Bible, the literal sense of scriptural texts, liturgical offices, epic poems, and other texts and objects. The common thread is ‘narrative’, which is perhaps useful to remember, but without any specific connotation of the form or factuality of the given story. (Deliyannis, 2003 p.2, 3).

In the Middle Ages, writing history or attempting to write an objective history was not enough to evaluate history-writing precisely whether it was correctly illustrated or simply taken from Ancient or Roman literature together with fictitious

elements. Since they were not enough written materials to prove a fact, Middle Ages historians wrote about mostly religious treaties which intended to convey moral lessons to the public. Isidore of Seville (560-636) discussed the function of history as related to rhetoric and grammar. (Deliyannis, 2003, p. 3). In his book *In the Etymologies* (636), he pointed out the difference between fiction and history which he likened to *fabulae* and *historia*. “*Fabulae* are fables, fictional accounts (such as those about speaking animals) intended to prove a point. History, as the parallel to *fabulae*, likewise is intended to prove points.” (Deliyannis, 2003, p. 3). For him, *fabulae* and *historia* were distinct branches of narratives as, “*fabulae* are things which neither have been nor could be done”. (Deliyannis, 2003, p.3). *Historia*, on the other hand, “are things which really have been done.” (Deliyannis, 2003, p. 3) Up to the Middle Ages, Isidore Seviles’ distinction between *fabulae* and *historia* paved the way for writing history as a mixture of genres which were put together to produce a written text consisted of fact and fiction. However, there was still a distinction in writing history in that, the coexistence of fact and fiction was not known in a literal sense, but writers took references from several fictional accounts which demonstrated the one hard fact of differing history from fiction.

In Middle Ages, there were not still enough documents which provided several examples for scholars since, writing history was not considered a distinct branch of narrative and was not professionalized. “Many historians mixed format or subject matter or both in one text—a little hagiography, a little annal, a little universal history, a little eyewitness account, a little brevity, a little prolixity. No one seems to have played by any “rules” for writing history.” (Deliyannis, 2003, p. 6) As, there was no professionalized history-writing as a distinguished branch of writing, history-writing was based on the stories of monks, bishops, clerks and saints to remember the past.

Besides, they were written for both official and religious purposes. In the late Middle Ages, the form of history-writing began to change and the distinction between subject matter and historical manner started to erupt. There were a lot of texts which were written by different people who eye-witnessed military wars or crusades. However, no matter how their historical matter seemed to be historically accurate, there were still some points to be evaluated regarding of their subject matter was accurate or not. “It is important to consider those epic and legendary texts alongside more “factual” historiographical ones, to remind us how interrelated were the literary forms. Nonetheless, some categories—like universal history, biography and hagiography, and national history—continued as subjects for historians, although of course with changes in focus and purpose.” (Deliyannis, 2003, p. 12). Lionel Gossman (2001) noted the transition between past and present which he interlinked together to demonstrate the historian’s aims from Middle Ages to the end of the 18th century as:

The historian’s aims in narrating such histories, which were often dynastic histories, was to reconfirm the continuity of the present with the past and, by reciting the links in the chain of that continuity, to attest the due transmission of authority in language appropriate to each new generation. At times of social and cultural ferment, however, as during the Renaissance and Reformation or the Enlightenment, history assumed a more investigate, questioning character. (Gossman, 2001, p.152).

With the coming of the Renaissance, history-writing changed its locus into a new phase of writing history following classical models and antiquity. By putting men at the centre of the universe, historiography changed its way from religious and didactic purposes to a more humanistic perspective as men were assumed to comprehend and analyse things with a critical perspective. Humanism was put at the

centre of narratives and in this way, history was written with a humanistic focus, rather than divine schemes or a Christian perspective. “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” (Gossman, 2001, p. 228). History-writing, rather than presuming another branch of the narrative had linked with rhetoric and stylistic manner. In that way, the acuteness of representing objective history fell behind the appeasement and satisfaction of readers who preferred to read narratives which were written by rhetoric, rather than the scientific. However, when Renaissance hit the Europe, the prevalent element of illustrating human-being with life-like descriptions and vivid transference of history had been a general topic for many historians. In his notes about Renaissance history, “Sartre observes that the gap between writer and reader in seventeenth century was not great. Every reader was himself, in a lesser way, a writer.” (qtd. in Gossman 2001, p.28). Thus, literature was linked to practice of writing, rhetoric. History, along with eulogies, eye-witnessed accounts, sermons, and religious affirmations was also a writing which could be put into practice.

Jacob Burckhardt (1818-1897) art historian compared the human consciousness with Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and he resembled the world and history as “were seen clad in strange hues.” (Burckhardt, 2021, p. 70). Human consciousness “lay dreaming or half- awake beneath a common veil” (Burckhardt, 2021, p. 70). This veil was corrupted with false suppositions, religious misleads and illusions of the state.

Man was conscious of himself only as member of a race, people, party, family, or corporation—only through some general category. In Italy this veil first melted into air; (an objective treatment and consideration of the state and of all the things of this world became possible. The subjective side at the same time asserted itself with corresponding emphasis; man became a *spiritual individual* and recognized himself as such. (Burckhardt, 2021, p. 70).

With the development of individualism, Renaissance men had broken their cycle of false suppositions and corruptions of state and become “all-sided”. (Burckhardt, 2021, p. 73). Thus, literature had freed itself from false schemes of divine culture and led itself into a new phase of discovering the human world and its history from a different perspective. As the same for history, could also free itself from chronicles, annals and biographies and its directions turned toward men and a humanistic focus.

1.1 Enlightenment Philosophy of History

Up to the Enlightenment period, history had been mainly about rhetoric and the art of presentation, and the difference between rhetoric and the art of presentation was not great. Since history writing had linked with rhetoric and mostly with divine narratives, there was a lesser extent to which history could be placed. Generally, there were a lot of discussions concerning poetry (fiction) and history since they were incorporated with both fictional materials derived from mainly Ancient times and Biblical histories and also facts which were collaborated to create demandable also rhetorical texts that could appease readers. However, when the Enlightenment period began to develop, the accuracy of narratives and histories started to be questioned. As fundamental elements of denying falsehood and fictitious amalgamation of stories were considered as misleading and false realities of the world which could dissuade

mankind from the truth and the reason itself. Thus, in that period narratives started to focus on “real facts” and “accurateness”. Edward Gibbon (1776-1788), “expressed a common view when he wrote that histories become of less and less interest to readers as the events of which they tell become more remote.” (1990:228). At the end of neoclassicism, the long term relationship between literature and rhetoric started to split up. Literature started to be associated with poetry, figurative writing and abstract narratives related to sublime, beauty, and divine emotions, “especially among the Romantics and their successors, took on the meaning of a corpus of privileged and sacred texts ... which could be opposed to the empirical world of historical reality and even, to some extent to historiography as the faithful record of that reality.” (1990:229). When the urge to illustrate reality accelerated in the middle 17th and the last part of the century, figurative language and prose narratives gained importance regarding their limit of representing reality and the methods of achieving real and representing it truly. Thus, writers’ main concerns were shifted from applying style and matter to demonstrating historical knowledge and how this historical knowledge could be applied to human understanding by the validity of the historical narratives. Reason and scientific achievement had broken the long-term chain of the relationship between discussion about reality and fiction. One of the pioneer supporters of Enlightenment philosophy and ideology was Rene Descartes who supported his view of judging true and false by depending on his claims on human reason. In his *Discourse on Method* (1637), Rene Descartes championed the Reason above human nature. He believed that each human being has relatively “good sense” or accurate judgment and in this way, our faculty of distinguishing false from the true has a pivotal role in human capacity. Good sense, or distinguishing true from false is related to the Reason and our thoughts makes us different from all living things. Since our

way of directing thoughts in different ways, Descartes claims that, “the diversity of our opinions arises not from the fact that some of us are more reasonable than others, but solely that we have different ways of directing our thoughts, and do not take into account the same things.” (Descartes, 2006, p. 5).

This culmination of directing of thought in different ways demonstrates the sole reason for difference among people and thus, our judgment. Descartes who claimed that reason is the sole judgment of the human faculty of cognition put knowledge on top of the nature. Knowing and at the same time judging true from false is the core of empirical knowledge which would later pave the way for 17th century Enlightenment ideology. According to Descartes, “those who reason most powerfully and are the most successful at ordering their thoughts so as to make them clear and intelligible will always be best able to persuade others of what they say, even if they speak in the thickest of dialects and have never learned any rhetoric.” (Descartes, 2006, p. 6). On the other hand, Descartes claims that our imagination and our senses may deceive us, and this leads to the false judgment of things. Without reason, our senses and imagination may trick us into judging things correctly. That is why he defames history due to its relationship with false romances and fables and its fictitious character:

Fables make us conceive of events as being possible where they are not; and even if the most faithful of accounts of the past neither alter nor exaggerate the importance of things in order to make them more attractive to the reader, they nearly always leave out the humblest and least illustrious historical circumstances, with the result that what remains does not appear as it really was, and that those who base their behaviour on the examples they draw from such accounts are likely to try to match the feats of knights of old in tales of chivalry and set themselves targets beyond their powers . (Descartes, 2006, p. 8,9).

Descartes claims that even historians might mislead the accuracy of history by cultivating their thought with their imaginations and their senses. This led to misjudgement of events and historical information. They might alter the facts or exaggerate the important things of the past to appease the reader's mind. They might shape or reshape the historical facts and creates fictional story different from the actual past.

Another school of Enlightenment philosopher was Hegel who regarded history as a “rational process” of development. In his *Philosophy of History* (1837), Hegel divides history into three main branches: original history, reflective history, and lastly philosophical history. The three kinds of history Hegel proposed it, carries a big significance for Enlightenment philosophy as Hegel linked reason with history-writing as a rational understanding. Thus, “the history of the world, therefore, presents us with a rational process” (Hegel, 1991, p. 22). The first type of history is *original history* “whose descriptions are for the most part limited to deeds, events, and states of society, which they had before their eyes, and whose spirit they shared. They simply transferred what was passing in the world around them, to the realm of representative intellect.” (Hegel, 1990, p. 14). Thucydides, Herodotus and Guicciardini fall into this category of original history since they transferred what they had seen or eye-witnessed accounts into narratives without the connotation of the meaning. “What is present and living in their environment is their proper material. The influences that have formed the writer are identical with those which have moulded the events that constitute the matter of his story. The author's spirit, and that of the actions he narrates, is one and the same.” (Hegel, 1990:15). Original historians reflected what had happened before

them whether the true eye-witnessed account or not and simply shaped them to accommodate the function of the historical matter. Historians reflected “their views of their political relations, and of their moral and spiritual nature; and the principles of their designs and conduct.” (Hegel, 1990, p. 16). The Second kind of history which Hegel proposed was *reflective history* “whose mode of representation is not really confined by the limits of the time to which it relates, but whose spirit transcends the present.” (Hegel, 1990, p. 17). In this kind of history, writer purely transcends his limits of age which bears the national and political affairs of representation to which it belonged and, represents the events and chroniclers or battlefields as though he was present and saw from the first account, instead he put his spirit and moulded the events into his perspective and narrated the events in following the age in which he lived. Thus, Hegel proposed that “a history which aspires to traverse long periods of time, or to be universal, must indeed forego the attempt to give individual representations of the past as it actually existed.” (Hegel, 1990, p. 19). However, *reflective history* was not appealing at all for readers since each reflection of history was in question of its age. That means, that when a writer aspires to reflect on or describe the events or chroniclers of his nation, he unconsciously reflects on them with his perspective, moulding reality with his mind which leads to the duality of reality and fiction. “One Reflective History, therefore, supersedes another. The materials are patent to every writer: each is likely enough to believe himself capable of arranging and manipulating them; and we may expect that each will insist upon his own spirit as that of the age in question.” (Hegel, 1990, p. 20).

Another form of *reflective history* is *critical* which means “a history of history, a criticism of historical narratives and an investigation of their truth and credibility.” (Hegel, 1990, p. 20). This form of reflective history is worth mentioning since our

discussion about reality and fiction and co-existence of reality with fiction takes its roots from the ancient period to the modern period and lastly to our present day. In this kind of *critical history*, Hegel proposes that “higher criticism” of philology and then turns itself towards historical literature “has been the pretext for introducing all the anti-historical monstrosities that a vain imagination could suggest.” (Hegel, 1990, p.21). That is, a combination of subjective fancies with historical data of the past makes the past as a living reality. (Hegel, 1990, p. 21). This kind of last species of reflective history builds a bridge with the last part of history *philosophical history* which Hegel favoured mostly. To explain philosophical history, the duality of truth and spirit has pivotal role in comprehending the world history of philosophy. Since the truth is and has always been an important element for writing history, it has culminated with the Spirit which Hegel explains as “rational and necessitated will of that conductor, is and has been the director of the events of the World’s History.” (Hegel, 1990, p. 21). To get acquainted with philosophical history, one must acquire the knowledge of the Spirit and the Idea which is in truth itself. “The most general definition that can be given, is, that the Philosophy of History means nothing but the *thoughtful consideration of it*.” (Hegel, 1990, p. 22). According to Hegel, thought, cognition and understanding are peculiar to humankind, and these distinguish us from the animal or brutes. However, it is not always true to base our understanding on thought itself when referring to history, since our thought relates to the “realities of fact” (Hegel, 1990, p. 22). On the other hand, philosophy takes its roots from the “self-produced ideas, without reference to actuality” (Hegel, 1990, p. 22). However, if a writer wants to adhere to his/her age of history objectively without dwelling on subjective ideas, false speculation might be aroused regarding of representing factuality of given history. Thus, according to Hegel: “The only Thought which Philosophy brings with it to the contemplation of History, is the

simple conception of Reason; that Reason is the Sovereign of the World; that the history of the world, therefore, presents us with a rational process.” (Hegel, 1990, p. 22). With this approach, Hegel championed the Reason above all anything else, and shed light on upcoming critical approaches to empirical thought and scientific experiments.

In this retrospect, both Hegel and Descartes put knowledge on the top of God and championed human reason. According to their view, philosophical history was inferior to the scientific realities of facts since “self-produced” ideas could mislead historians when interpreting real history. As Hegel put it, historians’ “thinking-powers” could filter the actual data of history with pre-established ideas. Because “he brings his categories with him, and sees the phenomena presented to his mental vision, exclusively through these media...” (Hegel, 1991, p. 24).

A different perspective for historiography was brought forward by Leopold Van Ranke (1795–1886) who sought to form a “scientific history”. “He was viewed as the prototype of the technically trained historian and as a great representative of the positivistic scientific tradition of the nineteenth century.” (Ranke, 201, p. 15). In his method of viewing history was strictly attached to the scientific verification of historical materials and “his insistence upon entire objectivity in the treatment of the past.” (Ranke, 2011, p. 15). By this approach, Ranke differed himself from Enlightenment philosophers whose focus on “generalization of facts” however “history is always concerned with the particular, the individual. Its task is not an explanation of general relationships but an understanding of the uniqueness of a situation, individuality...” (Ranke, 2011, p. 44). Thus, the subject matter of history was taken from human, unique individualism. According to Ranke comprehending human individualism, “demands a reconstruction of the past ‘wie es eigentlich gewesen’ which begins with a strict dedication to the relevant facts.” (Ranke, 2011, p.

44). A historian, like a poet, re-creates the situation. “Unlike to poet however, he is required to rely on empirical observation and is bound by the reality of his subject matter.” (Ranke, 2011, p. 44). Thus, a historian should not reflect on his/her pre-conceived ideas reflecting on historical data. These preconceived ideas might intervene with the subject matter of the historians’ mind and mislead the situations or events of the real past. By doing this, Ranke differed historians from philosophers as the latter had pre-conceived ideas as they were dealing with human thought. “The kind of the ideas which the historian seeks are, however, basically different from those of philosopher, for example that of Hegel, is a lifeless abstraction; the idea the historian searches for is concrete, alive and temporal.” (Ranke, 2011, p. 44). In that sense, the scientific inquiry of Ranke’s perspective of treating history differed from the philosophers. However, Ranke also realized that the historical process of collecting data is also an art form creates, and re-creates the subject matter of history. “History is a science in collecting, finding and penetrating; it is an art because it recreates and portrays that which it has found and recognized. Other sciences are satisfied simply with recording what has been found; history requires the ability to recreate...” (Ranke, 2011, p. 8). The fact that Ranke considered history as a science form, as well as the presentation of art implies that both history (facts, reality) and fiction (poetry) as an art of creating and re-creating the real events of the past deals with empirical knowledge and imagination. While the philosophers dwell on the realm of human imagination and human nature, history seeks to particular within the eternal and at the same time dwells on reality. However, the art of re-telling real events from historian’s perspective might be related to the art of fiction.

Similar to Ranke’s approach of treating history as the creation of humankind, Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), treated history as a “modification” made by men.

Apart from the natural scientist's approach towards philosophy and history, he favoured that only men could know what they made (nations, civil societies, etc...).

But in this dense night of darkness which enshrouds earliest antiquity so distant from us, appears the eternal light, which never sets, of this truth which is beyond any possible doubt: that the civil world has itself been made by men, and that its principles therefore can, because they must, be rediscovered within the modifications of our own human mind... (Vico 1982, p. 198).

According to Vico, historical epochs could change progressively and with each development phase, men enter into a new phase of history which is an endless cycle of regarding history as infinite. It is a remarkable understanding of "modifications" of the human mind that Vico proposed since he pointed out that the cycle of nature had continuously revolved in that, man at the centre of what he created throughout this process. So, each accumulation of entering each epoch brings new modifications of history that illustrate the very fact of treating history as "modified" or "man-made". "So long, therefore, as we can reconstruct the vocabulary of past civilizations, we can re-enter their thought world and understand their history." (Bentley, 1999, p. 6).

1.3 Romantic Historiography

No matter how Ranke and Vico linked history with "real facts" they did not deny the fact that history and fiction both immersed with each other. It is in this view that, approximately from 1770 to 1830, history and literature were rigidly separated from each other. However, the regarding of historiography is a different branch of literature was not recognized as a distinctive branch of the narrative until modernism started. Rationality which was the core element of Enlightenment philosophy paved

the way for regarding reality based on “facts” and scientific experiments. With the help of the notion of empiricism and reason, fictitious narratives and historical narratives differed in terms of their purpose of writing. Up to the end of the Enlightenment, empiricism and scientific treatment of facts gained importance. Thus, history along with its fictitious elements was recognized as unreliable truths which were fashioned by men. By this approach, Romantic age historiographers took their method from intuitive narratives of humankind which stressed the factor of a sophisticated view of human history:

Romantic historiography took its focus and its audience in resistance to the cold and clinical perspectives associated with rationalism. Not that it abandoned evidence or wanted to see historical accounts reduced to hagiography: many of the Romantics held a sophisticated view of the relationship between evidence and text and criticized their Enlightenment predecessors for behaving in a cavalier spirit when faced with stubborn facts. (Bentley, 1990, p. 25).

As a different approach from Enlightenment philosophers, Romantic historiographers chose to both rely on facts but at the same time, they took their impulse from imagination. They supported that without having enough description of people and nations, narratives were simply deemed with rigid facts of reality. They tended to express each detail of human nations. “They chose to make history learn from literature and to function in the same way.” (Bentley, 1990, p. 26). In this approach towards the end of the 19th century, literature and history were regarded as unified unity that encompasses both poetic truth and facts together. “Poetic truth and narrative method brought another impulse: the need to silhouette the guiding historical personality, the luminous moment of action...” (Bentley, 1990, p. 28).

This thought serves Romantic historiographers in that, they chose to focus on both historical facts and the nature of the human being. Different from Enlightenment ideas, historical consciousness and historical personality of events gained importance. Rather than depending solely on facts, the romantic notion of writing history went one step further by treating history as subjective. This idea paved the way for postmodern thinking of viewing history as fluid, flexible at the same time re-created for personal purposes.

1.4 Modern Historical Novel

After the 18th century Enlightenment era, Romantic historiographers attacked their predecessors of Enlightenment ideology of rigid dedication to real facts and scientific empiricism which swept through all of Europe. The Romantic ideology of writing history chose to focus on individuality, particularly of the nation rather than generalizing nations and civilization. Without poetic language and imagination, they could not reflect historical facts of human nature. In the same way, they chose to use literature and history in the same manner. It was in this period that, after Romantic contemplations of history, the modern historical novel emerged in the first half of the 20th century. Bentley explains modernist history as:

It was in this period that history discovered its identity as a discipline: a distinctive way of organizing and representing knowledge. During these years its practitioners acquired the rationale, the techniques and the self-awareness that would lead to their displaying the characteristics that we think of as 'modern' attributes in historiography. (Bentley, 1990, p. 1)

Modern characteristics of historical novels emerged as a shifting period from the 19th century to the 20th century as, writers in that era focused on human nature, individualism, alienation and emotions and most of them sought to describe each detail of events with vivid descriptions. According to George Lukács (1885-1971), the first historical novel emerged in the 19th century with the publication of Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814). "What is lacking in the so-called historical novel before Sir Walter Scott is precisely the specifically historical, that is, derivation of the individuality of characters from the historical peculiarity of their age..." (Lukács, 1989, p. 19). Thus, individuality and a human-centred approach to writing history had their peak after the French Revolution "and the quick succession of these upheavals gives them a qualitatively distinct character, it makes their historical character far more visible than would be the case in isolated, individual instances..." (Lukács, 1989, p. 23). Lukács saw the era of the 19th century as a shifting focus for people which helped them comprehend social upheavals and in turn, a new historical understanding of the new era. Thus, the new historical consciousness of the era helped them "see in history something which deeply affects their daily lives and immediately concerns them" (Lukács, 1989, p. 24). Similarly, David Brown quoted David Daiches (1912-2005) about Scott's narratives of history claiming that, "it was his tendency to look at history through character and at character through the history that had worked on it that provided the foundation of his art." (Brown, 1979, p. 3).

According to Alun Munslow, modernism "as the product of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Enlightenment, produced the dominance of certain ways of thinking about how we create knowledge." (Munslow, 2006, p. 3). Munslow based his argument on the modernist philosophy of history which was entailed in the Enlightenment era. These two fundamental notions were the central view of modernist

history as ‘empiricism’ in its basic form “the observation of the **evidence** of our senses and the **inference** of its meaning...” (Munslow, 2006: 3, original emphasis), and second, ‘positivism’ “as the derivation of the laws that govern the sensible world.” (Munslow, 2006, p. 3). Thus, positivism and empiricism which were the fundamental approaches to attain pure knowledge was the basic ground for modernist historians. Munslow explained the ‘proper history’ of modernism that “bases its claims to legitimacy as a discipline by discovering the meaning to the pattern of past reality: a meaning that is enduring and can be described or represented faithfully by the suitably distanced historian.” (Munslow, 2006, p. 3) Thus, the historian’s main aim was to know “the meaning of the past.” (Munslow, 2006, p. 3). “It is this claim of needing to know the past as it actually was, in order to know ourselves” (Munslow, 2006, p. 3) was the basic argument for modernist historians to know their actual past, and their people who were before them to know their nations. According to Munslow, this notion of knowing the past in its purest sense was related to the 18th century liberal humanism “that places the rational, purposive and undivided thinking self at the centre of all things – the intentional and centred subject, ‘Man’, ‘the self’, ‘I’, the ‘I’ was also taken to be, as convenience dictated, ‘reality’ or ‘the evidence’.” (Munslow, 2006, p. 4). In that way, as Munslow argues that the “I” can be also taken as an “evidence” or “reality”. (Munslow, 2006, p. 4). This ideology that prevailed throughout Western analytical thinking gave birth to many dualisms which could create a discrepancy between “of the self/subject from the other/object, but also the conscious from the unconscious, fact from fiction, **truth** from invention, world from word, signifier from signified, real from unreal, and presence from non- presence.” (Munslow, 2006, p. 4, emphasis original). As modernist inconsistency of separating dualities above mentioned had created discrepancy and scepticism about knowing

subject “I” and the “the self” as a reality or evidence, the modernist ideology of historians shifted their focus from content (which was a determining factor for historical explanations that needed to be represented objectively and impartially) to historical derivations and consciousness which required both knowing subject (evidence) and form (fictitious character) to demonstrate the true representation of history. These combinations of historical explanations and historical imagination gave birth to an urge to question the reality of the past whether they were (re)represented or man-made descriptions.

1.5 Postmodern Historical Fiction

In the second half of the 20th century, postmodernism, or in other terms breaking from old modernist traditions in terms of literature, culture, and socio-economic factors have changed the way we perceive the world. Thus, the main question became rather than perceiving the world in its literal sense, but how and in what extent we perceive and understand the world had been the main focus for postmodernists. Up to the postmodernist era, narratives about history and fiction had relatively been categorized in terms of their subject matter and objective historical explanations. Thus, writers chose to write upon facts which were objectively approved. However, after the second half of the 19th century, with the changes in the political atmosphere of the West, (World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Civil Right Movements...) narratives were being questioned in terms of their ability to represent genuine insights into human nature. With political corruptness of the world, nature of human beings started to alienate from the society in which they lived. Thus, the ultimate effects of these important elements had gained much importance regarding in representing what is “real” or how the “real” could demonstrate the genuine side of human nature in

literature. Writers did not content with what previously had the importance of representing human nature as modernists did, then they shifted their focus toward a new approach to literature which was known as post-modernism. According to many critics, postmodernism did not have a concrete explanation, and the time when post-modernist thinking started to erupt become vague. However, in the second half of the 20th century, postmodernism developed as a reaction to the old traditionalist understanding of literature. According to Brian Mchale (2015) postmodernism “was the dominant cultural tendency during the second half of the twentieth century in the advanced industrial societies of the West, spreading eventually to other regions of globe.” (Mchale, 2015, p. 1). In his essay “What Was Postmodernism?” (1997), John Frow saw postmodernism as a continuation of modernism. In his perspective postmodernism is a precursor of modernism which “is driven by the imperative to innovate, and every innovation is rendered obsolete by the next one so that modernism is constantly distancing itself from its own most recent manifestation, which then ‘slides into past.’” (Frow, 1997, p. 31). In that sense, postmodernism regards itself as a successor of modernism with an urge to renew itself through innovations. According to Richard Kostelanetz postmodernism “is a petty prefix, both today and historically, for major movements are defined in their own terms, rather than by their relation to something else.... No genuine avant-garde artist would want to be “post” anything.” (Kostelanetz, 1969, n,p) Likewise, Charles Newman argued that postmodernism “inevitably calls to mind a band of vainglorious contemporary artists following the circus elephants of Modernism with snow shovels.” Rather, Mchale emphasized from a different angle discussing postmodern fictions “are all literary-historical fictions, discursive artifacts constructed either by contemporary readers and writers or retrospectively by literary historians.” (Mchale, 1987, p. 4). Thus, he defined

postmodernist fiction as a literary constructed artefact which could be constructed variously since they all combine the term “fiction”. Mchale, took another step further to describe postmodernism by quoting Roman Jakobson’s lecture in 1971 about “dominants” of the genre. According to Jakobson,

The dominant may be defined as the focusing component of a work of art: it rules, determines, and transforms the remaining components. It is the dominant which guarantees the integrity of the structure...a poetic work is a structured system, a regularly ordered hierarchical set of artistic devices. Poetic evolution is a shift in this hierarchy... (Jakopson, 1971, n.p)

“Dominant” has vital importance for Mchale to describe postmodernism effectively. In terms of language and narratives, several dominants determine their literary genre. Thus, according to Mchale, by these multifaceted organizations of dominants, we could explain postmodern fiction as a heterocosm of various dominants where each dominant creates their entity. Likewise, there are a lot of dominants, and these dominants may be categorized in terms of their genre, level, and their scope. (Mchale, 1984, p. 6). “Furthermore, one and the same text will, we can infer, yield different dominants depending upon what aspect of it we are analysing...” (Mchale, 1984, p. 6). And this heterocosm creates a heterogeneous atmosphere of language where each dominant intersects with one another. Mchale defined the dominant of postmodernist fiction as “ontological”. Thus, such ontological questions may be aroused in the reader’s mind: “What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ? What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?” (Mchale, 1984, p. 10). Thus, these ontological questions have shaped the understanding of

postmodernist fiction as such questions could be asked to grasp the meaning of the universe. In that sense, “heterocosm” as Mchale puts it, is a multi-layered aspect of postmodernist fiction that lays a lot of different angles to analyse a narrative. Likewise, the dominants of genre might be equal to the heterocosm of the literature which, in a sense shares similarity with each other. Further, Mchale resembles postmodernist fiction as a “mimetic” representation of the world “between the fictional heterocosm and the real world.” (Mchale, 1984, p. 28). In that sense, mimetic representation of nature is similar to the real world in so far as “the imitation must be distinguishable from the imitated: the mirror of art must stand apart from and opposite to the nature to be mirrored...” (Mchale, 1984, p. 28). Thus, this similarity “implies difference—the difference between the original object and its reflection, between the real world and the fictional heterocosm.” (Mchale, 1984, p. 28). In accordance with Mchale’s ideas about postmodernist fiction which he resembled as heterocosm between the real world and the fictional world, postmodernist fiction incorporates the real world and the constructive discursive of the literary artifact to attain its fictitious character. In a similar manner, Hayden White differs history from fiction:

It is sometimes said that the aim of the historian is to explain the past by "finding," "identifying," or, 'uncovering" the "stories" that lie buried in chronicles; and that the difference between "history" and "fiction" resides in the fact that the historian "finds" his stories, whereas the fiction writer "invents" his. This conception of the historian's task, however, obscures the extent to which “invention” also plays a part in the historian's operations. (White, 1974, p. 6,7).

The difference between the historian’s role and the author’s role clearly identifies the blurring line between re-writing the history and official history which are

unprocessed without any given meaning. White, clarifies the distinction between the re-writing of history as a processed or re-made discourse of narrative and the facts which are taken from original chroniclers. Thus, a fiction writer makes use of this official account of historical facts and shapes them into his own preference which is called an “invention” or “re-invention” version of history. In line with these ideas, White regarded these narratives as “neutral discursive” which could not represent the real facts and events but rather, were most likely written for ideological and political purposes with an ontological and epistemological point of view. (White, 1987, p. xi). Thus, many modern historians regarded narrative discourse as a “very stuff of a mythical view of reality, a conceptual or pseudo-conceptual “content” which ... endows them illusionary coherence ...” (White, 1987, p. xi). Thus conceived, White clearly based his argument about historians on “form of content” which comprises ideological and political purposes. He believed that, apart from its genuine reality, historians make use of their cultural background as a political and cultural stance, and they culminate these events to narrate fiction. Then, he defined narratives as a “meta-code, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about a nature of a shared reality can be transmitted.” (White, 1987, p. 1). Thus, a narrative is a common tool for historians and fiction writers who wish to tell a story. However, these narratives can’t represent the truth. “The story told in a narrative is a mimesis of the story lived in some region of historical reality...” (White, 1987, p. 27). As a similar perspective to history as mimesis of reality, R.G Collingwood regarded history as “contemporary” which renews itself in every age thus, it is “post-modern”.

All history is contemporary history: not in the ordinary sense of the word, where contemporary history means the history of the comparatively recent past, but in the strict sense: the consciousness of one's own activity as one performs it.

History is thus the self-knowledge of the living mind ... it lives only, as a present interest and pursuit, in the mind of the historian when he criticises and interprets these documents, and by doing so relives for himself the states of mind into which he inquires. (Collingwood, 1946, p. 43)

A similar approach to Collingwood's idea of history as a "living mind of the historian" (Collingwood, 1946 p. 43), can be interpreted as a continuous cycle of historical consciousness of the living mind which renews itself while interpreting and processing the historical narratives. For that reason, Linda Hutcheon puts emphasis on the unattainability of reality which she puts forward as a fundamental discussion about postmodernist fiction. She claims about postmodern narratives "both install and then contest our traditional guarantees of knowledge, by revealing their gaps or circularities. They suggest no privileged access to reality. The real exists (and existed), but our understanding of it is always conditioned by discourses, by our different ways of talking about it." (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 157). Thus, our senses of conceiving reality mainly depend on our own cognition to understand it, likewise; it can be changed, modified, and re-interpreted as a multi-layered heterocosm of discourses as Brian McHale put it. The fact that hardship of attaining the pure reality of fiction thus is a controversial topic for postmodernist thinkers. According to Hutcheon, postmodernism is a contradictory word. "It 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..." (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 106). Thus, postmodern fictions take its stand from both discourses whether real or fictional.

The postmodern, then, effects two simultaneous moves. It reinstalls historical contexts as significant and even determining, but in so doing, it problematizes the entire notion of historical knowledge. This is another of the paradoxes that characterize all postmodern discourses today. And the implication is that there can be no single, essentialized, transcendent concept of “genuine historicity” no matter what the nostalgia (Marxist or traditionalist) for such an entity. (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 89).

Thus, Hutcheon claimed that; “postmodern is ahistorical”. (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 86).

However, this is not denying the accumulated historical knowledge of the past, but rather it is “an acknowledgement of the meaning-making function of human constructs.” (Hutcheon: 1988, p. 89). Likewise, “the meaning and shape are not *in the events*, but *in the systems* which make those past “events” into present historical “facts.” (Hutcheon: 1988, p. 89, emphasis original).

1.6 Question of Realism in Postmodern Fiction

In the postmodern era, the rationality that governed and determined human reason and understanding had determined the narrative constructions of the modern era. Yet, postmodernism questions the authorial power of rationality of modernity with an existential perspective. While modernism placed the importance of authorial subjective reality upon constructive narratives, postmodernism took an extreme of what modernist philosophy had initially started and defies all the hierarchies of narrative constructions and any kind of subjective authorial figures which are placed upon authors. Thus, the question of the power of reality within postmodern philosophy has gained importance. Michael Luntley (1995) explains the questions of objective realism in postmodernism as a fashion that “denies any objective standard of belief is sometimes called ‘postmodernism’”. (Luntley, 1995, p. 1). According to Luntley,

there are some questions and skepticism about “concept of legitimate objective truth” about the world, and such questions are natural to be asked: “Is there such a thing as what we ought to believe with regard to the natural world? ... Is there such a thing as what we ought to believe about art and literature?” (Luntley, 1995, p.2). These existential questions shape our understanding of the world with a distinctive way of criticizing reality. According to Luntley’s claim about postmodernism, there are four basic problems with “plural reality” of postmodernism. (Luntley, 1995, p. 15). These questions are about the notion of attaining experience, skepticism about grand knowledge, inability of language to represent our notions and locality of languages which employ skepticism of gaining “pure truth”. (Luntley, 1995, p. 15,16). Henceforth, “truth”, “knowledge” and “self” become fragmented realities of notion of the world in which plural realities create multiple meanings of the universe. Thus, the reality is constructed via subjective multiple realities of perceptions. What is at stake here is that the notion of objective, scientific and pure reason of thought is impossible to be attained; hence, multiple varieties of knowledge create multiple “fragmented realities”. Thus, writing and transferring pure historical knowledge into historical narratives comprise multiple versions of knowledge and these varieties include fictive elements of the narrative thus, it makes it difficult for readers to detect the real components of the history. Similar to Luntley’s ideas on the question of realism in the postmodern era, language philosopher Jerome Bruner explains the human mind cannot work “solo”. (Bruner, 1991, p.3). That is mean, the human mind is not independent of the external material objects of the world. According to Bruner, we transmit our knowledge, our experiences or our memory in the form of narratives such as stories, myths, fables, novels etc... (Bruner, 1991, p. 4).

However, unlike the scientific verification of knowledge, “narrative constructions can only achieve “verisimilitude.”” (Bruner, 1991, p. 4). In that sense, narratives “are governed by convention and “narrative necessity” rather than by empirical verification and logical requiredness...” (Bruner, 1991, p. 4). Thus, readers can’t grasp “objective real”, instead, what we grasp is the “verisimilitude” of the external material objects which are bound in linear, temporal language systems. As human beings transmit their knowledge by using language, such interpretations or shifting meanings are deemed to be changed or open to subjective evaluations. As postmodernists discuss the unattainability of objective language systems of thoughts, all our thoughts and experiences are multi-layered, fragmented subjective thoughts. Thus, it is hard to write objective history from an omnipresent perspective. What postmodernist theorists have been discussing about the question of reality in fiction is a “multi-dimensional and multi-layered web of thoughts and perceptions of authors which are doomed to be evolved and transformed through the years”. (Bruner, 5)

Similar to the question of reality in the narrative, Hilary Putnam in his book *Mind Language and Reality* (1975) further discusses that language is the main phenomenon that constantly renews itself thus, it changes and transforms itself.

As language develops, the causal and non-causal links between bits of language and aspects of the world become more complex and more various. To look for any one uniform link between word or thought and object of word or thought is to look for the occult; but to see our evolving and expanding notion of reference as just a proliferating family is to miss the essence of the relation between language and reality. (Putnam: 1975, p. 290).

Since language is complex and varied, human cognition to understand what is perceived currently process that language and new information through faculty of the mind. Thus, what is represented is linked to language itself. So, narrative forms are depended on the human mind which is subjective and attributes the “meaning” in a subjective stance. According to Hutcheon postmodernism is a “contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and subverts the very concepts it challenges” (Hutcheon, 1988, p.3). Similar to a language where meaning is dependent on subjective perceptions that define our “being” so does the meaning itself. In that view, where language and meaning are collapsed, and the border between fiction and reality blurred.

1.7 Historiographic Metafiction

In order to understand the bond between history and fiction, one might have a look at the relationship between history writing and fictional. As discussed in the previous section, postmodernism is a broad term where meaning and grand narratives are subverted or changed, thus in postmodern historical novels, one should not expect to find objective and real historical facts since, authors of postmodern fiction envisage their own subjective perspectives and make it up their own stories. In contrast to realist novels, the postmodern historical novels do not seek to reflect the truth of history, because there is no reliable truth value of history. Thus, in postmodern historical novels, there is “a denial of the fixity of the past, of the reality of the past apart from what the historian chooses to make of it, and thus of any objective truth about the past” (Himmelfarb: 1999, p. 72). Postmodern authors deny the relationship between the fixity of the language and the reality. Thus, postmodern view of history differs from conventional history writing. In a postmodern historical novel, the past is

not fixed. So, history is written with a multiplicity of authors' points of view in which facts and fiction get blurred. In this respect, Brian McHale (1987) defines postmodern fiction as "revisionist" as "it revises, indeed transforms, the conventions and norms of historical fiction itself." (McHale, 1987, p. 90). In other words, since postmodern fictions are inclined to deviate from the "genuine historicity" of the texts, critics have debated over the years whether they are verifiable account of history or combination of writers' subjective point of view. To define "historiographic metafiction" Hutcheon states: "They have both been seen to derive their force more from verisimilitude than from any objective truth, they are both identified as linguistic constructs ... they appear to be equally intertextual, deploying texts from the past within their own textuality." (Hutcheon, 1989, p. 105). As a result, reading works of historiographic metafiction is a great way to remember the past and learn from historical narratives. As a subgenre of metafiction, historiographic writing treats the past, theory, and literature as interconnected. Readers' firm comprehension of history is challenged by the work's subjective and self-reflexive components of narratives and its unique novel tactics. As a result, historiographic metafiction provides a fresh and an alternative perspective towards the past. By means of fictitious atmosphere of the past, Linda Hutcheon exerts that: "[historiographic metafiction] puts into question, at the same time as it exploits the grounding of historical knowledge in the past real. This is why I have been calling this historiographic metafiction" (Hutcheon, 1989, p. 92). Thus, in historiographic metafiction, past and present are intertwined and coexisting. By this way the distinction between fiction and reality gets blurred. In other words, the goal of historiographic metafiction is to employ historical material within the metafictional parody of self-reflexivity that undermines realism. However, according to Hutcheon: "All past 'events' are potential historical 'facts,' but the ones that become facts are

those that are chosen to be narrated. [...] This distinction between brute event and meaning-granted fact is one with which postmodern fiction seems obsessed” (Hutcheon, 1991b, p. 75). In other words, postmodern writers might exclude or change history in an attempt to create alternative stories of the past. In postmodern historiographical metafiction, readers always keep in their mind that; the product that they read is a cultivation of historical facts and authors’ own point of view in regarding of history. Since historiographic metafiction provides competing accounts to the dominant one, more than one history might emerge. Elisabeth Wesseling (1991), in her *Writing History as a Prophet* defines “alternative histories”:

It locates utopia in history, by imagining an apocryphal course of events, which did not take place. Alternate histories can be unfolded from different perspectives within the context of a novel. An *uchronian* fiction may be set in the past, where it shows alternate history in the making. It may also be set in the present whose shape has been determined by an alternate course of historical events. (Wesseling, 1991, p.100)

Uchronian fiction is a term which Elisabeth Wesseling put forward for alternative histories. It is a combination of two terms: utopia and fiction. (Wesseling, 1991, p.101) Apart from its definition; Wesseling states like Hutcheon does, there is no objective point of view in historical fiction. Postmodern historiographic metafiction is reconstructed and mainly subverts the past events to add details and subjectivity to history.

Alternate histories are inspired by the notion that any given historical situation implies a plethora of divergent possibilities that far exceed the possibilities which happened to have been realized. From this point of view, the progress of

history appears as a tragic waste, not merely of human lives, but of options and opportunities in general, as a single possibility is often realized by the forceful suppression of alternatives. Alternate histories can be regarded as attempts to recuperate some of these losses. (Wesseling, 1991, p. 100).

In other words, novels set in the past written in the postmodern era have the capacity to depict several historical possibilities, as opposed to a single possibility maintained at the expense of others. Similar to Bakhtin's idea of dialogism in language, postmodern historiographic metafiction is "double-voiced discourse" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 325) which means a multiplicity of narratives, dialogism and voices that come together to bring forward fictional atmosphere. Through this approach, it can be seen how historiographic metafiction functions as a two-way conversation about a single historical event, with competing narratives and views coexisting alongside the canonical ones. The author of postmodern fictions draws on historical research but uses the information "to serve a second master," or for the novelist's own purposes (Bakhtin, p. 300). Thus, historiographic metafiction re-writes the canonical history with some changes to undermine the realism. Wesseling argues that:

"Uchronian fiction may be regarded as a subspecies of counterfactual historical fiction, that is, fiction which deliberately departs from canonized history." (Wesseling, 1991, p. 102). In other words, past is deliberately changed in favor of historian's perspective of the history. Similar to postmodern historiographic metafictional novels where past and present are intertwined, *uchranian* fictions dwell both in past and present. This leads to postmodern parody of changing history by adding "fabricated" thoughts to actual story. Wesseling gives examples from Hutcheon: "the target of parody can be a single, clearly identifiable work, a group of texts, a genre, or, in its widest reference, any form of codified discourse." (Hutcheon, 1985, Wesseling,

1991). In other words, interpretations of the canonized history open new perspectives to the canonized history. Besides, texts that are parodies reuse "prefabricated" literary materials with a sarcastic twist. However, the parody text is not simply repeated; rather, it undergoes a number of transformations. (Wesseling, 1985, p. 105).

“Hutcheon's theory of parody is also relevant to our subject in that she points out that parodies do not by definition ridicule their targets, but that they may express a great many different attitudes, ranging from "respectful admiration to biting ridicule" (Hutcheon, 16, Wesseling, 106). This is relevant for *uchranian* history which “which does not necessarily debunk official historiography.” (Wesseling, 1985, p. 106).

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Past is Revisited

Peter Ackroyd, English author and biographer was born in London on October 5th, 1949. Besides being a poet and critic, he is also widely recognized for his novels. He attended Clare College in London and afterwards Yale. Before becoming a book reviewer for *The Times*, he worked as an editor for *The Spectator* in London, where he had previously studied. The city of London is central to most of his stories, which he uses to fictionalize the mysterious metropolis in his best-selling novels. He has written extensively about notable authors and critics, such as William Blake, T.S. Eliot, Charles Dickens, and Sir Thomas More, as well as London itself. His fictional characters, which he blends with real historical figures from England's past, are central to his writings, which focus on English culture and history (particularly that of London). Ackroyd was profoundly influenced by English history and culture, leading to his writing multiple novels and biographies centered on the country's urban history. His first book was *The Great Fire of London* (1982), and he has since published *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* (1983), *Hawksmoor* (1985), *Chatterton* (1987), *First Light* (1989), *The House of Doctor Dee* (1993), and *The Clerkenwell Tales* (2003), *The Lamps of London* (2004), *The Death of King Arthur: The Immortal Legend - A Retelling* (2010), and *Three Brothers* (2012). (2013) In addition, he has other works of nonfiction and poetry in which he also devotes himself emotionally to storytelling. The CBE was bestowed to him in recognition of his significant and widely recognized contributions to the fields of fiction and biography.

Many of his works feature discussions of Victorian-era London and its customs, landscapes, and society, and he often draws parallels between the old and the new, the mystical and the modern, as seen through the lens of his own thoroughly modernized

worldview. Beginning with *The House of Doctor Dee* (1993), one of his best-known works, he discusses the life and work of Elizabethan-era magician John Dee.

Furthermore, in *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* (1983), he fictionalizes the biography of the renowned English author Oscar Wilde, in *The Lamps of London* (2004), he tells the stories of famous English essayist and poet Charles Lamb, his sister Mary Lamb, and the Shakespearean fraud story of William Ireland, and in *Milton in America* (1996), he concentrates on the famous American poet John Milton. He is a fantastic postmodernist fiction writer because of his desire to reconstruct the past.

In Ackroyd's novels, London has a central role not only for the characters, but also for the author himself. In his novels, he commemorates the old city with its traditions and cultures. By this way, he pays special attention to the old city environments and relics that afflict him greatly. He makes a comparison between the past and the present and explores the city of London through fictionalized themes. Thus, the past is crucial in Ackroyd's work, whereby he intertwines contemporary elements with London's ancient history. According to Linda Hutcheon, the past is revisited and rebuilt in postmodern historical novels. (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 73) In that retrospect, the past becomes the present, sometimes, the present becomes the past where two initial figures intersect to create an artificial or fictional world. From a postmodern point of view, writers make use of the past or historical figures in favour of creating fiction. Thus, the main question arises for readers: Is this really happened? Or is it the author's imagination? As Linda Hutcheon states;

The question is never whether the events of the past actually took place. The past did exist – independently of our capacity to know it. Historiographic metafiction accepts this philosophically realist view of the past and then

proceeds to confront it with an anti-realist one...the past exists *for us now* – only as traces on and in the present. (Hutcheon, 1988, p, 73).

As previously stated, the past finds itself in the present in postmodern historical novels. The main figure of historiographic metafiction is the intersection of the past and historical figures, as well as fictionalized themes where reality is blurred. In many of the examples of historiographic metafiction, the past is recreated by the author or the characters; at the same time, past is revisited and devised according to author's mind. Thus, reality mostly depends on the readers' perspectives. In *The Death of the Author* Roland Barthes explains that "...a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the message of the author God) but a multidimensional space in which variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash." (Barthes, p, 146). Postmodernism investigates the blending figures of literary elements in which there is no centre to employ its certainty, in accordance with Barthes' ideas about the multidimensionality of text. Thus, postmodern fiction is the creation of illusion, which is the combination of the writer's own realm, and the reader's imagination.

In Ackroyd's novel, there are a lot of postmodern themes and literary figures such as; parody, irony, pastiche, unfixed time, intertextuality, and the most importantly, historiography. This shows that he combines both imagination and fictive worlds at the same time gets examples from real-life historical figures to create a balance between two distinct worlds. These two distinct worlds, which I call "opposite worlds" of postmodernity indicate the dilemma of human existence. It is not awkward to say that Ackroyd, with his playful language and his irony parodies reader's mind and imagination. In the novel, the main character Matthew Palmer and his friend Daniel Moore, who are re-adaptation of historical figures of John Dee and Edward

Kelley are the real figures of history. This re-adaptation or re-version of history is fictionalized and, at the same time it creates a fictional space where readers and the author are blended. As a result, in his novels, Ackroyd uses his imagination to create his own point of view, while also blending reality with real-life historical data, settings, and people.

The novel begins with the introduction of Matthew Palmer, who has inherited a house from his father in Clerkenwell. After the death of his father, the old house starts looking strange to Matthew as he seeks to learn more about the old house and its initial inhabitants: "...as I made my way down Turnmill Street towards Clerkenwell Green, I realized that this was like no other part of Central London. It seemed both more open and more desolate as if at some point the area had been laid waste." (Ackroyd, 1993, p, 11) The early description of the house and its environment may trigger reader's mind as; the house is full of mystery. After Matthew Palmer searches the house, he discovers that the old house in Clerkenwell actually belonged to the old alchemists and magicians who lived in the Elizabethan Age. When he looks into the house more closely, the atmosphere of the house becomes mystical.

There were one or two items of furniture – a chair, a sofa, a wooden chest- but they only served to emphasize the bareness and silence of this place. I was baffled and I suppose, rather depressed: I knew that all this was now mine, but I did not feel I could claim any possible connection with it. But if I did not own it, then who did? (Ackroyd, 1993, p, 13)

Matthew suffers from the atmosphere of the house in which he resides, and he feels alienated and desperate as he does not know anything about the house's history. The more he searches the old house, the closer he will get to the truth. Once he is

determined to find the truth about Dr. Dee who lived in the old period, he starts to examine the house carefully. “I was still a stranger here, and now I experienced a distinct though related sensation – that somehow this house and myself within it, had no connection with the world which surrounded house.” (Ackroyd, 1993, p, 14). The second chapter starts with Dee’s narration about his life. The novel shifts time back and forth, and this creates an ambiguous environment for readers. Dr. Dee lives in the Renaissance period, whereas Matthew lives in the 19th century in England. It is an undeniable fact that the style of narration, the theme of the novel, and the unfixed time between the past and the present are mere representations of postmodernity, in which non-linear time and space create ambiguity and surprise. Thus; novel both sets in the present and at the same time turns back to past. This duality between the past and the present consists of the “opposite worlds” of reality and fiction. This duality also is reflected in Matthew’s case as he states: “If my work meant that I often viewed the past as my present, so in turn the present moment became part of the past”. (Ackroyd, 1993, p, 25). The novel then continues with Dr. Dee's life and his desire to create gold in order to gain power, as well as Palmer's search for his devotion to the past. This shift in setting and time makes the novel have two narrators: Dr. Dee and Matthew Palmer. The shifting focuses on both narrators keep readers intact, and at the same time, it helps readers make a bridge between two worlds: the past and the present. The combinations of two-time shifts are not the same, however; Dr. Dee’s and Matthew Palmer’s fates resemble each other. As the novel progresses to the end of the chapter, it is revealed that the two main characters, despite having lived in different eras, have become similar. Their fates are similar, and at the same time, the same desires accompany with them.

Like similar postmodernist fictions, this novel is a product of the “facts” and “imagination” of two distorted realities. In historiographic metafiction, it is ascertained that; the past is not fixed but rather fluid, like postmodernity, which could be reversed or readapted in accordance with one’s subjective accumulation of thoughts and imagination. While the historical facts are derived from certain historical figures, as John Dee, who was a real alchemist in the Elizabethan Age, the combination of other fictional endorsements of literary elements (author’s point of view, his subjective stance toward history, and his creative imagination) make the novel fictional. Hutcheon asserts that: “Historiographic metafiction puts into question; at the same time, it exploits; the grounding of historical knowledge in the past real. This is why I have been calling this historiographic metafiction.” (Hutcheon, 1989, p, 22). In her explanation of historiographic metafiction; she emphasizes the fictionality of past events and stories, which are simply human-constructed products. Thus, it is an undeniable fact that, it is not possible for readers to detect reality at first glance. She also claims about historiographic metafiction that “realizes that we are epistemologically limited in our ability to know the past, since we are both spectator of and actors in the historical process.” (Hutcheon, 1989, p, 122) Since it is not possible for us to witness all historical process, we are limited to know things by nature.

As a postmodern author, Ackroyd was into history, and he might be aware of the power of employing the past with London’s mysticism. As a fiction writer, he chooses the main character of the novel from history and blends it with fictional elements to add mysticism and creativity to the novel. This shift in time and setting, as well as the two narrators, are combined with Ackroyd’s self-referentiality and his sophisticated literary style. In the novel, the main character Dr. Dee, was taken from history by

Ackroyd. He was a well-known scientist, at the same time, an alchemist who was believed to conjure black magic in the 16th century in England. According to Christina Knellwolf King; “many monarchs and princes of the late sixteenth century consulted horoscope makers who were credited with the skill of illuminating future events. That they should do so reflects the deeply human desire to know the future.” (King, 2012, p, 286). The desire to gain power and knowledge to foresee the future is an undeniable powerful ability to which most monarchs and politicians seek to aspire. Because, as Michael Foucault asserts, "knowledge is power," it is not surprising that people seek knowledge in order to gain power. As it is in the novel, Dr. Dee, whose original name was John Dee, was an important political figure for England.

A historical model for such a character is John Dee (1527 – 1608), a striking personality who gained extraordinary political power in the 1580s and lost royal favour when his supposed ability to foresee the future led him to propose too drastic political measures. (King, 2012, p, 287).

John Dee’s ability to foresee the future helped him gain political power and popularity during the Renaissance era. It is not a coincidence that the aspiration to seek power and knowledge is a popular element of the Renaissance period in that, “the new men” or “re-birth” of art, culture, and science make it possible for humankind to flourish and go beyond their limits. Thus, humanity, which was thought to be born sinful in Catholic religion, completely changed in the Renaissance era toward perfection and the incredible power and knowledge of humans. Thus, in such an environment where knowledge and power were accessible to human-beings, there were such powerful figures as John Dee. According to King;

John Dee is a fascinating and controversial character of the Elizabethan era who reconciled the role of political adviser to the Queen with the study of mathematics, philosophy, technology, astronomy, antiquarianism, alchemy and hermetic knowledge...In his function as royal adviser, he was a regular member of the courtly circle of artists and writers until the 1590s ... In addition to his work on horoscopes, Dee also studied astrology with a view to improving naval technology, so that it would be easier to turn expansionist aspirations into reality. For example, he suggested to the Queen that she should aspire to the possession of Greenland. (King, 2012, p, 287, 288).

Not only was he known for his famous secret knowledge of the universe, but he also attended hidden conferences and meetings where he poured out his knowledge and his beliefs. "Dee was admired and feared for his secret knowledge. While he continues to have admirers into the present day, he was slandered by his contemporaries and attacked for meddling with unhallowed forces, particularly towards the end of his life." (King, 2012, p, 287,288). The environment where John Dee was born was not a safe place for alchemists and scientists to flourish. His secret knowledge, and his ultimate vision of horoscopes, as well as his ability to foresee the future, drew Queen Elizabeth's attention. However, his ability to see into the future put him in danger. According to Benjamin Woolley;

His passion was mathematics. As a subject, it was regarded in some circles with suspicion... Mathematics was still popularly associated with the magical "black arts," the term "calculating," sometimes corrupted to "calculating," being synonymous with conjuration. Pythagoras, the semi-mythical figure hailed as one of the founding fathers of mathematics, was himself considered to be a magician. (Woolley, 2001, p, 12).

The power of numerology and calculating was used mostly in geography, astrology, and cosmology. They believed that numbers had immanent power and represented secret knowledge of the cosmos. “Even Kepler and Newton, the founders of modern cosmology, allowed such numerological considerations to shape their work.” (Woolley, 2001, p, 12). In such an environment, Dee sought to embellish his intelligence with numbers and mathematics, calculating and assessing the spheres which helped him overtake countless experiments. In his *Mathematicall Praeface* “Dee discussed an "art mathematical" he called "thaumaturgy," (Woolley, 2001, p,13). Dee believed that the power of numbers and numerology was embedded in mathematics, which was equal to “thaumaturgy” or “art of magic.” To Dee, the power of mathematics was an important element in understanding thaumaturgy. Thus, “it was mathematics rather than magic that was the key to thaumaturgy” (Woolley, 2001, p, 13). It is not a surprise for John Dee to base his knowledge on mathematics in which numbers are the fundamental components of the science. Apart from his fellows, he sought to find divinity in numbers to understand nature. “De believed such artificial marvels showed that, with mathematics, man could achieve miracles to rival God, and in his production of *Peace* he had his first opportunity to prove it.” (Woolley, 2001, p, 14). Dee believed that reason and calculation are the core philosophies of nature. Thus, he published several books about mathematics and astrology.

Dee published *Propaedeumata Aphoristica* a famous book about mathematics, astrology, and magic. “In the book, Dee theorized that every entity in the universe emanated "rays" of a force that influenced other objects it struck.” (Woolley, 2001, p, 49). He dedicated his book to Queen Elizabeth, whom she sought advice from him in astrology and future-telling. He travelled across the “Low Countries,” where he spent

his years educating himself in astrology and mathematics. "The Low Countries covered the coastal region that has since become Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg... "intertraffique of the mind," as Dee called it." (Woolley, 2001, p, 17). When he came back to England, he was accused of conjuring black arts and magics and his accusations were various. Astrologers and mathematicians were thought to be practicing the same thing as black magic during the 16th and early 17th centuries. "This was certainly the case with Dee. He was charged with "calculating," "conjuring," and "witchcraft" on the grounds that he had drawn up horoscopes for Mary, her husband Philip of Spain, and Elizabeth." (Woolley, 2001, p, 34). Since he was known for his ability in astrology and foreseeing the future, his home was attacked by religious society on the grounds of not following Catholicism and its requirements. He died in 1608 after losing his wife and two children. However, his legacy inspired many alchemists and mathematicians who followed his footsteps on the way to seeking truth in astrology and science. Because he believed that, God granted humans an extraordinary capability to understand the nature through astrology and mathematics. "If was to the movements of the stars and the pages of ancient texts that humanity must look to find the common ground upon which the church had originally been built." (Woolley, 2001, p, 46). This was a strong belief for John Dee in that; he also prepared expansionist plans for the Queen Elizabeth and drew maps for overseas voyages.

In addition to his work on horoscopes, Dee also studied astrology with a view to improving naval technology, so that it would be easier to turn expansionist aspirations into reality...Dee did not only try to persuade Elizabeth to colonise Greenland but he actually outlined the strategic plan which would lead to this goal. (King, 2012, p, 288).

Apart from his ambition to study horoscope and naval technology, he was known as a “great magus” of the Elizabethan age. Thus, John Dee was an inspired source for many literary characters and authors.

Doctor John Dee was also an inspiration for Peter Ackroyd that is why he fictionalizes the real character of John Dee from history with his imaginative creation. In the novel, John Dee first encounters readers in his prologue:

So, I, Doctor Dee, am come to dazzle your imagination with *mirabilia*: these are my shows and apparitions which draw the eye cunningly – and what knave, gazing about like a fool with an apple or piece of spice-cake in his mouth, can unriddle their mystery? In all affairs of the world which we command, there is somewhat that is true and somewhat that is false: so, who here can tell me what is real and what is unreal? (Ackroyd, 1993, p, 22).

In his prologue to readers Doctor Dee explains why he wants to dazzle readers' imagination with his “*mirabilia*”. In the novel Latin word, *mirabilia* is used for wonderful things or marvels that evoke miracles and wonders. (<https://www.wordsense.eu/mirabilia/>, n.d.) It refers to phenomena that arouse awe and amazing occurrences. Thus, Doctor Dee's attempt to amaze readers with his “cunning apparitions” makes explicit the boundary between reality and unreality, which can't be dissolved easily. When he is an audience member in a play, he hears other spectators' comments about the play. While they think that “all these things are but toys” (Ackroyd, 1993, p, 22), Doctor Dee thinks that: “here was no deceit, no, nor even any magic; here was thaumaturgy, or the science of wonders. It is the mathematical art which gives order to appearances and make strange work of the senses of men.” (Ackroyd, 1993, p, 22). In the novel, Doctor Dee believes the reason is the

fundamental element of nature, similar to theatrical arts, as there is no deceit or magic but thaumaturgy and mathematics. What is striking in the beginning of the novel is that, Ackroyd takes references from history in the 16th century Elizabethan Age, the great magus Dr. John Dee, and he combines two similar characters in the novel with a fictional character: Doctor Dee. In the first chapter, he visits Nathaniel Cadman, for constructing a stage where a play is staged. Nathaniel Cadman admires Doctor Dee for his skills in calculation and thaumaturgy and his great ordering skills. However, his stage does not draw as much attention as he expects, and he feels saddened. "I had created wonders but, truly, there is no wonder greater than the folly and forgetfulness of the world." (Ackroyd, 1993, p, 43). This quotation explains the Renaissance's perspective toward "new science."

In *John Dee: Interdisciplinary Studies in English Renaissance* (2006), Nicholas Clulee in his chapter of *Dee's Natural Philosophy Revisited* discusses the beginning of the Renaissance ideology and new humanism which centred on the rationality and the science. However, he explains that Renaissance ideology must be inhibited between Medieval ideology and 17th century Enlightenment philosophy, thus, being the "intermediate ancestor" (Clucas, 2006, p, 25) of combining two philosophies.

This ultimately centred on presenting Dee, because of his recognized scientific activities, as a key vehicle through which a strand of Renaissance culture flowed into the progressive movement that became the Scientific Revolution. Consequently, the Scientific Revolution actually offered a framework for legitimating Dee, including even his apparently non-scientific diversions, as an important historical figure. (Clucas, 2006, p, 25).

With this Renaissance ideology and the rationality of the 17th century, John Dee becomes a historical figure and he represents the “new-man” and the “rationality” whose power resides in searching truths and working hard continuously to endeavour the opponents of Neo-Platonic idealism. Ackroyd demonstrates Doctor Dee in the novel through his many similarities to the historical figure of John Dee and his ideology.

For the past thirty years continually,’ I began, ‘in diverse manners, and in various countries, with great pain, care and cost, I have sought to come by the best knowledge that anyone might attain in this world. I found at length that no man living was able to teach me those truths I desired and longed for, so I concluded with myself that it was only in books and histories I might find the light for which I searched. I do not cast figures and conjure, as you fondly imagine, but rather built upon the wisdom I have gained in all these years –’ (Ackroyd, 1993, p, 50).

Through his own point of view, Dee expresses his obsession with seeking out the best knowledge and finding out the truths in order to advance science. In addition to Dee’s portrayal in the book, Robert. W. Barone quotes from Dee's *Autobiographical Tracts*, where he discussed his ability for mechanics and his own views on the nature of scientific inquiry. Barone explains this aptitude by giving examples from Dee’s autobiography, where he made comments on the play *Pax* written by Aristophanes. He sets up a setting for the play “where a character flew on the back of a Scara-beetle.” (Barone, 2009, p, 8). Dee expressed his admiration for this play, which he is attempting to stage.

Hereupon I did sett forth...a Greeke comedy of Cristophanes, named in ... Latin, Pax; with the performance of a Scarabeus [dungbeetle] his flying up to Jupiter's

palace, with a man [Trygaeusthe "vine dresser" who wished to consult with Zeus] and his basket of victuals on her back: whereat was great wondering, and many vaine reports spread abroad of the meanes how that was effected. (qtd. in Barone, 2009, p, 8, Dee, Autobiographical Tracts: 5,6.)

Although there was no certain record of the event, it was a mechanical play rather than magical which demonstrates Dee's passion and at the same his suspicion through his works. "It clearly shows Dee's ability as a technician more than anything else." (Barone, 2009, p, 8). Apart from his mechanical skills and being a technician, there are similar occurrences referred to in Ackroyd's representation of John Dee and his real-life obsession with mechanics and science. It is possible for readers to make a connection between a fictional character and a real, historical name that exists in history. Linda Hutcheon explains this dichotomy between history and fiction:

They have both been seen to 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 own complex textuality. (Hutcheon, 1988, p, 105).

According to Hutcheon, these are also the elements of historiographic metafiction, where fiction and history will concur in time. This encounter between history and fiction emphasizes to the artificiality of the language construction and its fictional elements, as well as their dual relationship with history. "And this is what accounts for the scepticism rather than any real denunciation; it also accounts for the defining paradoxes of postmodern discourses." (Hutcheon, 1988, p, 106). Thus, the

culmination of the past and the present and their dual relationship in the novel are apparent in terms of revisiting the past and reviving it.

One of the striking examples in the novel is the similarity between the real historical figures and the fictional ones. This is apparent in Ackroyd's desire to demonstrate John Dee as a real, historical figure who strives for power and knowledge. Readers will be transported back to 16th-century England, when Christopher Marlowe, Ben Johnson, and William Shakespeare ruled the country. As it is known from history, Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) was a playwright and poet who lived in the Elizabethan era. In the Renaissance era, the "renaissance man" or "universal man" was the main focus of the Renaissance philosophy, and the idea of accomplishment, success, and limitless knowledge resided in it. With the rise of humanism and individualism, men were put at the center of the universe, where everything seemed possible and reachable to human beings. Thus, desire to yearn for limitless capacity and acquire utmost power was the Renaissance's fundamental philosophy. In *The House of Doctor Dee*, John Dee lives in the 16th century and he nourishes himself with books and the best knowledge he can reach, and he comments on his studies:

[...] Such is the infinite desire of knowledge and, as I have proved for myself, such is the incredible power of man's search and capacity: it is the learning of that which lives for ever and not of that which passes through time. No doubt these studies are dispraised by those who understand them not, but there must come an age when all true lovers of wisdom turn their hands and bend their mind to these doctrines. (Ackroyd, 1993, p, 105, 106).

Like John Dee's studies to attain power and knowledge, Christopher Marlowe also preferred a similar character who craves for power and limitless knowledge in his famous tragedy: *The Tragical History of The Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* (1592). It was a great representation of the Renaissance era, which showed the limitless possibilities of Renaissance men who were multi-sided, courageous and open to the new possibilities of the new world. John D. Jump explains Christopher Marlowe's Faustus as: "His Faustus has the restless curiosity, the riotous imagination, and the audacious desires of a man responding fully and delightedly to the new trends in his age and the possibilities they seem to open up." (Jump, 1965, p, 25). Thus, Marlowe took this opportunity to create his Faustus as a character who was apt for power and knowledge.

These metaphysics of magicians
 And necromantic books are heavenly;
 Lines, circles, letters, and characters:
 Ay, these are those that Faustus most desires.
 O, what a world of profit and delight,
 Of power, of honour, of omnipotence,
 Is promis'd to the studious artisan! (Marlowe, 1592, p, 52).

Faustus' desire to gain power and omnipotence as well as his passion for black-magic and alchemy are similar to John Dee's desire to work diligently and tirelessly to become a master of magical arts, astrology and mathematics. In similar fashion to Dee's beliefs about his studies, Faustus also realizes the effect of his studies, which will help him attain his desires of success and accomplishment. In his prologue; Faustus emphasizes the great importance of consulting magic as he openly compares

himself with God. “A sound magician is a demi-god.” (Marlowe, 1592, p, 52). As striking as that sentence is, comparing himself to a god and his desire to achieve worldly goods through the art of magic is the prevailing Renaissance ideology that Marlowe advanced in the 16th century. “Such qualities mark him unmistakably as a man of the Renaissance; and a whole series of allusions maintains throughout the scene our sense of the extended horizons of that age of discovery.” (Jump, 1965, p, 28).

What is deduced from these two similarities between Faustus and John Dee is a new form of fictional similarity between the real and the fictional. Aside from the similarities between the two examples, there is also an intertextual link between the texts, in which textual meanings shift from singularity to plurality. Julia Kristeva (1987) explains this relationship as: “The text is therefore a productivity and this means: first, that its relationship to the language in which it is situated is redistributive [...] second that is permutation of texts, intertextuality: in the space of a given text [...] intersects and neutralize one another.” (Kristeva, 1987, p, 36). Thus, these intersections between two fictional characters regarding their similarities represent the fundamental ideology of postmodern fiction, in which there is no single and unique text but multiple meanings and “productivity” of texts that are coexist together.

Another notable example for the intertextual implications of the novel is Shakespeare's famous play *The Tempest*. In the play, Prospero is the Duke of Milan, but he has been deposed by Antonio, his brother. Thus; he longs for power and omnipotence by applying the power of magic and enchantment. “The play teems with supernatural agents and characters from classical mythology who mainly contribute to the aesthetic appeal of the play.” (King, 2012, p, 286). Thus, the play scrutinizes the 16th century Elizabethan magus and enchantment. Prospero, like John Dee, is a

powerful character with supernatural abilities and knowledge that enable him to perform on his subjects. With such a well-known character as Prospero, it is thought that Shakespeare was inspired by the real historical name John Dee and created his own character, Prospero, who is similar to John Dee. (King, 286). “There are historical assessments of Dee which question whether he possessed magical skills. By contrast, *The Tempest* never doubts that Prospero is genuinely capable of predicting and shaping the future. But it interrogates what it might mean to be a magus.” (King, 2012, p, 287). Prospero seeks advice from astrology and his horoscope for predicting future events. In his speech, he wishes to get an answer to his current situation.

By accident most strange, bountiful fortune
 (Now, my dear lady) hath mine enemies
 Brought to this shore; and by my prescience
 I find the zenith does depend upon
 A most auspicious star, whose influence
 If now I court not, but omit, my fortunes
 Will ever after droop. (1.2, p, 179,184)

In his speech, Prospero bases his “prescience” on “a most auspicious star” whose influence in celestial world will also affect the future of the country. “Prospero’s consultation of the stars therefore leads him to recognise that the moment has come. He has to act [...] However, he has not only recognised this but he has also prepared himself to utilise his vital energies (or his spirit aids) to harvest the promises of his star.” (King, 2012, p, 295,296). Prospero, the ambitious ruler of the country, prepares his downfall in the final stages of the play as he is agonized by his excessive ambition for power. Like John Dee and his occultist skills to foretell the future, it

might have led Shakespeare to create Prospero as an ambitious character who uses his magical skills to seek political advice for his country. Furthermore, prior to the accession of James I in the 16th century, Queen Elizabeth held high regard for occultism; John Dee was the Queen's political advisor and conjuror. Thus, these similarities between textuality and fiction and between the historical and literary worlds coexist in postmodern fiction. This intertextual relationship between the texts as multiple voices of the texts which M. Bakhtin named as “heteroglossia” consists of variations of texts and forces readers to decide what is real or not. Linda Hutcheon makes this condition explicit by giving an example from Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose*: “I discovered what writers have always known (and have told us again and again): books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told” (qtd. in Hutcheon, p, 128, 1983, 1984, p, 20). “This is the parodically doubled discourse of postmodernist intertextuality.” (Hutcheon, 1988, p, 128). Along with Marlowe and Shakespeare, Goethe’s *Faust* is another literary example which will be touched upon in next pages. These intertextual combinations between the literary “worlds” of the texts are combinations of texts that have no centre.

Matthew Palmer, the second important character who inherits a house from his own father where John Dee is believed to have lived before, tries to search the old house for John Dee. Palmer becomes obsessed with finding the traces of John Dee believing him to be a timeless figure from history in which he has a present affliction to the house. Thus, the book's revolving chapters are about Palmer and his friend's sympathy to find John Dee, and about Dr. Dee and his scryer friend Edward Kelley, with whom he attempts to communicate with angels using "Enochian" or "Angelic" language. The name "Enoch" originates with Noah's ancestor and Jared's son.

(Genesis, 5:21) Among Christians, the good character of Enoch led to the widespread belief that he was allowed to enter heaven in his mortal body. When Palmer encounters the book of history of Doctor Dee written by Frances Yates, he states “In Frances Yates’s history Doctor Dee was described as a ‘Renaissance Magus’ who continued in England the same hermetic tradition that encompassed Ficino, Pico Della Mirandola, and Giordano Bruno.” (Ackroyd, 1993, p, 178). Similarly, Frances Yates, (1899-1981) was an English Renaissance historian who mentioned John Dee and his life in his book *The Occult Philosophy of the Elizabethan Age*. According to her book, John Dee was a historical figure who practiced black magic and was interested in alchemy and astrology, and who, in fact, followed the footsteps of famous German cabalist and alchemist Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535), who was heavily influenced by Kabbalah and Hermeticism in the 16th century.

Like Reuchlin, Agrippa, and the Christian Cabalists generally, Dee was intensely aware of the super celestial world of the angels and divine powers. His studies in number, so successful and factual in what he would think of as the lower spheres, were, for him, primarily important because he believed that they could be extended with even more powerful results into the super celestial world. (Yates, 1979, p, 96).

In her description of John Dee and his predecessor, Yates examines the roots of Cabbalism or mysticism through her vivid search into the deep spheres of Renaissance occultists. Her example of John Dee and Agrippa demonstrates that historiographic metafiction derives its facts from existing historical works. Thus, Ackroyd create a fictional atmosphere in the novel to demonstrate that re-writing of history is fictional and reconstructed. Hutcheon argues that; “The present, as well as the past, is always

already irremediably textualized for us (Belsey, 1980, p, 46), and the overt intertextuality of historiographic metafiction serves as one of the textual signals of this postmodern realization.” (Hutcheon, 1988, p, 128). Thus, the textuality of the past and the present are interwoven in postmodern fictions, hence; the present-day-reader can only learn about the past through narratives. “The past really did exist, but we can “know” that past today only through its texts, and therein lies its connection to the literary.” (Hutcheon, 1988, p, 128). The primary aspect of historiography is intertextuality, which is achieved through a combination of history and fiction. In addition to providing a reliable picture of the past, historiography also serves as a vital source of information for the present, as seen in the examples above.

John Dee’s scribe Edward Kelley accompanies him through his journey to communicate angels. Since Kelley was the pioneer in establishing contact with angels, he eventually became Dee's trusted companion as their shared passions shifted yet again. At this point in the conversation, Kelley brought up alchemy, claiming his special gift was in transmuting base metals into gold. For this reason, Dr. Dee and Kelley kept working together and made a new objective for themselves. This objective is to find the true knowledge of the nature and its mystery through communicating with angels. “Then, sir, with these antique papers we may open such a window that the light shall for the first time be seen. Two thousand years have passed, but now all may be revealed.” (Ackroyd: 1993, p, 210). Similarly, Frances Yates mentions John Dee and his companion Edward Kelley:

Another very important aspect of Dee’s mind was his belief in alchemy. The studies prosecuted with Kelley included not only the angel-magic, but also, and above all, alchemy. Kelley was an alchemist and was believed, according to some rumours, to have succeeded in effecting transformations and in making

gold. Practical Cabala and practical alchemy thus seemed to go together in the Dee–Kelley partnership. (Yates, 1979, p, 97).

Edward Kelley (1555-1597) shares Dee's interest in angels too. His primary duty is to hold séances to establish contact with angels. Dr. Dee and Kelley said that after many séances, they received a new alphabet from angels. The original name for this new language was *Angelic*, but afterwards *Enochian* was used. The private notebooks of late-16th-century Englishmen John Dee and his associate Edward Kelley contain writings in what may be interpreted as an *esoteric* or *angelic language*. The name "Enoch" originates with Noah's ancestor and Jared's son in Bible. According to Christianity Enoch made it to heaven in one piece because of his exemplary character. "Dee hoped to gain mystical knowledge through the angelic conversations which would arm him with universal knowledge. To possess this knowledge, he believed, one had to learn the lost primordial language, the *lingua adamica* ..." (Clucas, Szönyi, 2006, p, 215). According to the historical facts about John Dee and his companion Edward Kelley, there are multiple information and written materials which indicate the "reliability" of the sources, one of which takes its roots to the 16th century and old cabalistic rituals in which Ackroyd has based his main theme on alchemy and old mystic rituals. Hutcheon exerts that;

Historiographic metafiction, like both historical fiction and narrative history, cannot avoid dealing with the problem of the status of their "facts" and of the nature of their evidence, their documents. And, obviously, the related issue is that of how those documentary sources are deployed: can they be objectively, neutrally related? Or does interpretation inevitably enter with narrativization? The epistemological question of how we know the past joins the ontological one of the status of the traces of that past. (Hutcheon: 1988, p, 122).

According to Hutcheon, historiographic metafiction, takes a firm stance against the practice of imposing one's own values and views from the present onto the events of the past and instead emphasizes the uniqueness and particularity of each individual occurrence from the past. Despite this, it acknowledges that our capacity to know the past is restricted on an epistemic level due to the fact that, we are simultaneously 'observers' and 'participants' in the process of history. A contrast between "events" and "facts" is implied by historiographic metafiction, which is a distinction that is held by the majority of historians. (Hutcheon, 1988, p, 122) Likewise, in the novel, Peter Ackroyd has used several historical materials and facts that are to be found in the 16th century Renaissance in England. However, as readers, we can only refer to the past by accepting its textuality; thus, we can only make sense of its fictional aspects by seeing both the present and the past.

Historiographic novels provide readers with a wealth of anecdotes, spanning the ages. The novel's historical account centres on a homunculus which Dee mentions it in his old documents as "DOCTOR DEE'S RECIPE" which Matthew Palmer comes across while he searches the old house.

So that it may grow without the help of any womb! This is the secret of all secrets and must remain so until that time of the end when all secrets will be revealed. Let the spagyricus take the seed and place it within a sealed glass, for preference the glass of Antwerp in which all light and heat seem to prosper. Bury it within a horse dung for the next forty days, together with four true magnets in the shape of a cross, without forgetting to renew the water within the glass by pouring in the liquid of fresh dew each fourth day; then on the forty-first day it will begin to breathe and move its limbs. It will seem to you like a perfect human shape, but transparent and without any eyes. Now it must imbibe *Arcanum sanguinis*

hominis for the space of one year, all the while remaining beneath the glass, and at the end of that time it will be a little infant thing. It will be a true homunculus, therefore and can be taught like any other child; it will grow and prosper with all its intellect and faculties, until its thirtieth year when it will fall asleep and return to its first unformed state. (Ackroyd, 1993, p, 166, 167).

In Latin, a “homunculus” is a term for a miniature human. (*Definition of Homunculus | Dictionary.com*, n.d.) It's supposed to look like a human, but it's tiny. It was widely used in alchemy during the 16th century and in fiction during the 19th. It was Paracelsus who first shared the concept of the homunculus with the world. From 1493 through 1541, he worked as an alchemist. Written in 1537, his book *De Natura Rerum* details how to make a homunculus. The homunculus could be thought of as a small artificial person. The homunculus was developed by alchemists in the 16th century to test whether or not it would be possible to construct a sentient artificial being. Similarly; *Faust* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe is yet another literary masterpiece that features a homunculus (1790). Given that Doctor Dee goes to Germany's Witterburg in *The House of Doctor Dee*, this is a quite unremarkable fact. He encounters Hegelius there, and the latter shows him the way to reach Doctor Dee. While walking around, Hegelius reveals to Dr. Dee that Dr. Faustus formerly lived in Witterburg around the year 1500, and he offers to show Dr. Faustus' home in which he once resided. (Ackroyd, 165) In Goethe's *Faustus*, Wagner performed the work of creating homunculus in a laboratory setting. Homunculus is a small man who looks like a flame and lives within a small glass. This tiny human represents the pinnacle of scientific achievement during the Enlightenment era. Goethe's *Faustus* and *The House of Doctor Dee* have many common themes and motivations. Doctor Dee, the novel's magus, tries to achieve immortality, resurrect a deceased character, and create a

homunculus similar to Wagner himself. Thus; Peter Ackroyd is an author that weaves together history and fiction in his work. Not only does he make use of historical allusion, but he also makes use of intertextuality. The crucial theme of historiographic metafiction is the intersection of the past and the present.

If the past is only known to us today through its textualized traces (which, like all texts, are always open to interpretation), then the writing of both history and historiographic metafiction becomes a form of complex intertextual cross-referencing that operates within (and does not deny) its unavoidably discursive context. (Hutcheon, 1988 p, 81)

Because Ackroyd distorts such facts, the question arises as to whether or not standard biographies and histories can be trusted genuinely, or whether or not they are just as fictitious as Ackroyd's own fiction. In the novel, the past and present are intertwined to create a "discursive context" for the history. However, as readers, we assume that access to the past is only possible through texts that have also contained other texts — a vicious cycle of intertextuality — which calls into question the credibility of the text's facts, regardless of whether they are based on history or are simply a culmination of the author's imagination to apply the meaning. This calls into question the text's credibility of facts. In postmodern historiographic metafiction, the past is openly subjective and mostly depends on the author's judgement of events and characters and his own creative and imaginative mind that build-up the whole story. Because the line that used to separate reality from fiction has become increasingly blurry, it is no longer possible to guarantee that readers will be able to differentiate between the two. Instead, it is up to the reader to decide and evaluate whether or not it is true. Thus, what is historically approved might be changed and re-constructed for

the sake of textuality. Beside, in the novel, the lines between fact and fiction begin to blur, and all of these different worlds begin to blend together.

Ackroyd makes an appearance and joins his characters in the last chapter of *The House of Doctor Dee*. He reveals his true identity as an artist, a maker of worlds.

And that at least is true – to the extent that I do not understand how much of this history is known, and how much is my own invention. And what is the past after all? Is it that which is created in the formal act of writing, or does it have some substantial reality? Am I discovering it, or inventing it? Or could it be that I am discovering it within myself, so that it bears both the authenticity and surviving evidence and the immediacy of present intuition? *The House of Doctor Dee* itself leads me to that conclusion: no doubt you expected it to be written by the author whose name appears on the cover and the title-page, but in fact many of the words and phrases are taken from John Dee himself. If they are not his words, they belong to his contemporaries. Just as he took a number of mechanical parts and out of them constructed a beetle that could fly, so I have taken a number of obscure texts and have fashioned a novel from their rearrangement. But is Doctor Dee now no more than a projection of my own attitudes and obsession, or is he a historical figure whom I have tried genuinely to recreate? (Ackroyd, 1993, p, 274-275)

In his last address to the reader, Ackroyd makes implicit that he has invented and created the story of Doctor Dee with his own imagination and subjective point of view. At the end, Matthew Palmer and Doctor Dee are reunited and see each other in the gateway of London. They realize that both Matthew Palmer and Doctor Dee are the same creations of Peter Ackroyd. They are both obsessed with old houses and London's history; as the novel progresses, readers realize how similar the two protagonists become. "The imagination is the spiritual body, and exists eternally. It is done." (Ackroyd, 1993, p, 276). Thus, Peter Ackroyd compares the imagination with

the spiritual body of humans; it does not cease and end. It will continuously evolve until the last man on the earth vanishes. At the end, Doctor Dee addresses Matthew Palmer: “Oh you, who tried to find the light within all things, help me to create another bridge across two shores. And so join with me, in celebration. Come closer; come towards me so that we may become one.” (Ackroyd, 1993, p, 277). Dee’s address to Matthew indicates “two shores” of the world which are past and present become one in historiographic metafiction. Like the novel, past and present are the inventions of authors’ perspectives which tend to be evolved and changed. As the craftsman of the novel, it is quite clear that Peter Ackroyd demonstrates his capability in integrating historical events and fictional narratives.

CHAPTER THREE

2.1 Unredeemed Past

The Public Burning is another novel that disrupts an objective perception of history and its effects on society in terms of socio-cultural and political background in the 20th century in United States. Particularly for those in post-World War II America who, according to their own perceptions, struggle to fit into society. The novel creates a fiction out of the politically sensitive incident in addition to transforming the historical reality into fictitious form. This section of the research will examine the novel as historiographic metafiction form of the existed history through Coover's perspectives to the real events with a fictive demonstration and the history of Cold War America with its effects on society and to the public atmosphere.

Coover began writing *The Public Burning* in 1968, but it wasn't released until 1977. A lawsuit was filed to prevent publication of the novel due to its usage of real-life historical and political personalities. The novel was complete in 1976, but Viking Press did not have the resources to publish it until 1977. The novel, however, ran into issues and was taken off shelves for over twenty years. When Grove Press decided to reprint the novel, it became available to readers again. After the publication, Coover's reputation as a fiction writer increased. Beside; Coover was the first writer of his era to employ both historical figures and modern individuals in an unconventional manner. (Evenson, 5)

The book has a total of 534 pages and is divided into 28 discrete chapters including a prologue, four sections, and a conclusion. There are essentially four sections fragmented by Intermezzos; its sections, for the most part, depict modern and analysis of historical awareness in a postmodern context. Nixon's point-of-view dominates the novel's narration and by the unnamed narrator of the third person. The perspective of Richard Nixon alternates with the author's every other chapter. The

other chapters illustrate the international and domestic events that led up to the Rosenbergs' execution in a variety of styles. The novel centers on the early twentieth-century American execution of the Rosenbergs. Although it primarily covers the three days in June 1953 that led up to the death of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg for treason, this work is a well-constructed metafictional journey through American history. In addition, Nixon, who was the vice president at the time of the assassination, made for a compelling first-person narrator. Coover commented on his novel:

Grew out of [his] concept of the book as a sequence of circus acts. That immediately brought to mind the notion of clown acts, bringing the show back down to the ground. You have a thrilling high-wire number, and then the clown comes on, shoots off a cannon, takes a pratfall, drops his pants and exits. And then you can throw another high-wire act at them. (Wolff, 54).

Thus, the novel is an important example of historiographic metafiction because of the way Richard Nixon and the other fictitious characters in it provide an alternate perspective to the so-called factual views of that age. Brian K. Evenson depicts Robert Coover as:

He is interested in the ways in which the real and the fantastic can be made to play off one another in a work of fiction, and he often explores the gap between real events and how these events are interpreted. Coover examines storytelling and the ways in which fiction develops and comes to seem significant; he wants his readers to understand the dynamics not only of the story but also of the fictions people create in the world at large." (Evenson, 2003, p, 10).

According to Coover, when people look at the world and its institutions, they do so through the lens of their own attitudes and beliefs, which in turn are shaped by the models and constructs with which they were raised. People interpret the world

according to the language they speak, but all languages, or at least all live ones, are bound up in particular political and cultural assumptions. (Evenson, 2003, p, 11). Thus, each new language enters its own territory and creates new meanings. Fiction can accomplish this via cultivating the reality and the imagination. It has the potential to offer novel perspectives on the world while also calling into question widely held ones. For Coover, “The world itself being a construct of fictions, I believe the fiction maker’s function is to furnish better fictions with which we can reform our notion of things.” (qtd. in Evenson, 11). In that sense, *The Public Burning* is an example historiographic metafiction in which historical raw data and historical consciousness of America fuse with fictional representation of characters in a well-played stage.

Coover wanted to bring back into public attention the treason killings of Rosenbergs and the incidents that happened to them because he was dismayed by the American public's readiness to forget. For Coover, the Rosenberg case was a “watershed event in American history, and we’d all repressed it. So it occurred to me then to restage it—with special added attractions—in Times Square, where we could all have another look at it.” (Evenson, 2003, p, 103). Coover’s perspectives to Rosenbergs’ trials are made of both fictional elements and historical reality. Thus, when confronting with real and fiction, readers may tend to ask these questions. Is the novel's truth different from that of the past? Is history essentially a story that was made up? How much do the fantastical elements that Coover introduces into the historical period reveal aspects of the Cold War that a basic historical account would not? In that sense, all fiction, whether based on actual events or not, distorts and alters reality to some extent. “In historical fiction, the fiction not only imitates life as realism does, but insists on imitating a certain era or a certain place specific notion of actual life, in capturing a historical moment.” (Evenson, 2003, p, 109). Thus it can be

acknowledged that, Coover both focuses on historical reality, and fantastic elements that he brings forward two distinct genre of literature. As similar in the *The House of Doctor Dee* two distinct “worlds” of literature –past & present, real & fictional, reality & imagination – coexists together in Coover’s *The Public Burning*. These coexistences of the two worlds become one and lines that draw the limits of reality and fiction gets blurred. Thus, readers are confronted with bewilderment and amazement and being alone in solving the puzzle.

The novel's historical context is the United States during the Cold War. The novel's historical elements revolve around the paranoia of the 1950s and the subsequent execution of Rosenbergs. In 1946, the Allies and the Soviet Union divided the defeated Germany. The Soviet Union occupied the eastern half, while the Allies controlled the western half. The United States declared war on Communism and the Soviet Union became the new enemy. American confidence was spurred by the knowledge that, unlike Russia, the United States possessed nuclear weapons. Russia exploded its first atomic weapon in August 1949. The United States government believed that the Russians had conspired against United States for secretly stealing atomic bomb secrets. As a result, suspicions arose that communist spies were operating within the United States. (Evenson, 2003, p, 111-112).

On February 2, 1950, physicist Klaus Fuchs was arrested for passing information about the atomic bomb to a Russian spy. On May 23, chemist Harry Gold was arrested and accused of being that spy. A few weeks later, David Greenglass, a former Army machinist who has been stationed at Los Alamos, the site where the atomic bomb was developed, was arrested and charged with passing secret information to the Russians. On July 17, Julius Rosenberg, the brother-in-law of David Greenglass, was accused of being part of a chain of espionage, a charge which he termed fantastic. Soon, his wife Ethel was arrested

and similarly charged. Both the Rosenbergs consistently claimed innocence from the charges. (Evenson, 2003, p, 112).

There are many reasons why the Rosenberg case is significant in American history. It's easy to see why this case became a flashpoint during the Cold War, and how insight into the case's dynamics could help throw light on the intricacies of American society and fear of spreading communism at the time. Coover's fictionalization of the case serves as a window into the state of the American psyche at a given moment in history.

Coover's achievement in *The Public Burning* comes from his ability to transform a historical event into a kind of circus, a transformation which reveals a great deal about the American political system. Coover mixes fact with fiction, moving effortlessly from one to another and using the first as the petri dish in which to grow the second. (Evenson, 2003, p, 114)

Like the previous novel analyzed within the framework of historiographic metafiction, the novel's main characters and narrators are real historical characters such as: Richard Nixon, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, David Greenglass etc... These characters represent juxtaposition of reality and fiction. Coover uses his creativity and imagination to build up a fictitious atmosphere of the Cold war era. Thus, the novel can be considered as a vivid representation of the real hysteria and paranoia of the Cold war era. Besides, it constructs a bridge between reality and fiction and between fantasy and the real. The novel's style is diverse, encompassing anything from realistic to fantastical passages which makes the novel as postmodern fiction.

The lines between reality and fantasy are blurred in *The Public Burning*. Coover employs authentic settings to emphasize the work's fictitious nature. He brings

forward Times Square as a place which is a sacred and holy for Americans at same time, he ridicules and parodied the fear of the communism and political atmosphere of the city.

[...] Times Square itself is an American holy place long associated with festivals of rebirth; and spring is still in the air. It is even hoped that a fierce public exorcism right now might flush the Phantom from his underground cells, force him to materialize, show himself plainly in the honest electrical glow of an all-American night-on-the-town give Uncle Sam something to swing at besides a lot of remote gooks. (Coover, 1977, p, 4)

Times Square demonstrates the unity at the same time fear and paranoia of Americans. Coover uses Times Square as a front-line which draws public attention. However, the real execution place is not in Times Square, but in the Sing Sing Prison where Julius and Ethel Rosenberg are held captive. This prison is considered for many Americans as a holy place and Coover parodies the atmosphere and the public attention to the prison in a sarcastic manner. While doing that, he elaborates postmodern techniques which evoke sarcastic notion and humor. With the postmodern writer stepping down from his or her position as God-like author, the reader is given more flexibility to interpret the work for him or herself. Postmodern historiographic metafiction frequently uses parody as a method of rewriting because, like history, contemporary works include and depart from previous styles, texts, and genres. As in the quotation above, Coover uses Times Square as a parody of American anxiety and public rebirth. Patricia Waugh in her *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* states “Parody fuses creation with critique” (Waugh, 68). Hutcheon describes postmodernist parody as: “The collective weight of parodic practice suggests a redefinition of parody as repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signaling of difference at the very heart of similarity.” (Hutcheon, 26). Perhaps parody's paradoxical absorption of the past into its fundamental forms has made it a

preferred method of postmodern formal self-reflexivity, since it more directly alludes to these ideological settings. It would appear that parody provides a window onto the past and present that enables an author to engage with a discourse while remaining somewhat embedded in it but ultimately unredeemed. (Hutcheon, 35). Coover uses the lights of New York Square as a metaphor for American dominance, and he parodies with the American hegemony and power in a ridiculous way. In Times Square, the electrical sign changes continuously from “AMERICA THE HOPE OF THE WORLD” to “AMERICA HATE OF THE WORLD” (Coover, 1977, p, 36).

In Times Square, the “c” has vanished from the SILENCE sign tacked up over the stage door of the execution chamber mock-up, and the letters are scrambled to spell SENILE, a cross-eyed Uncle Sam chalked crudely on the wall above it. The electrical sign reading AMERICA THE HOPE OF THE WORLD has been altered to AMERICA THE DOPE OF THE WORLD and now, metamorphosing a letter at a time right before the eyes of astonished passerby, becomes:

AMERICA THE ROPE OF THE WORLD

AMERICA THE RAPE OF THE WORLD. (Coover, 1977, p, 36).

U.S. citizens' understanding of the Rosenbergs' case can be acknowledged as an instructive ritual play. Thus, Coover also describes the situation as “a little morality play for our generation.” (Coover, 2003, p, 119). As if directing a morality drama, Uncle Sam has cast some citizens as villains. Deliberately, he picks this event to demonstrate how everyone in the past observed the execution as if it were a theater play and to remind people of their own responsibility. The dialogue is mostly critical and parodic, and the characters reflect on themselves. Coover mocks and attacks the

true enemies of society, who previously were thought of as the enemy within the American society. Coover, as a fiction writer reminds out that it is always impossible to determine what is true and what is not in terms of reliability of the history. Similarly, verbal folklore can be found in the novel as Coover wants to satirize the social values and atmosphere of the society. In the first prologue, the title “Groun’-Hog Hunt” is also a popular ballad “whose verses alternate with the prose description” (Estes, 242). “It is a reminiscent of “Bangum and the Boar” (the American version of the English ‘Sir Lionel’), in which Old Bangum goes into the forest to kill a blood thirsty wild boar.” (Estes, 242)

Call up yer dog, O call up yer dog,
 Let’s go a huntin’ to ketch a groun’hog!
 Whet up ye knife an’ loaden up ye gun,
 Away to the hills to have some fun! (Coover, 2003, p, 15-26).

In Coover’s fictional ballad, Senator Joseph McCarthy and Uncle Sam try to catch the ground-hog and their preys are Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. “Therefore it is possible to read the song as foreshadowing the novel’s epilogue in which Richard Nixon, presumably one of the men in his hunting party, becomes the unwitting prey who is sodomized by Uncle Sam.” (Estes, 242). Larry McCaffery argues about Coover’s fictions:

In most of Coover's fiction there exists a tension between the process of man creating his fictions and his desire to assert that his systems have an independent existence of their own. For Coover, this tension typically results in man losing

sight of the fictional basis of his systems and eventually becoming trapped within them. (McCaffery, 25-26)

Adding elements to a realistic narrative can leave the reader confused and unsure of what to make of the story. When the techniques that readers rely on as to how something is interpreted or read, the readers may feel like they have been misled or that they are no longer on the right path. (Evenson, 2003, p, 107). Similar to Coover's fiction in which variety of postmodern techniques have been used to illustrate the banality of the reality in modern world, historiographic metafiction derives its root from reality but re-construct it and devise it in terms of author's own imagination and his/her own perception of reality. "Since people live in the factual world but also have a rich interior imaginative life, perhaps they have something to gain from work such as Coover's that blurs the distinctions between realism and the fantastic." (Evenson, 107-108). When writing about the past, writers of historical fiction not only try to capture the essence of the time and location in which the story is set, but they also insist on doing it in the same way that realist writers do. Coover's story often begins in the real world before shifting into the fantastic, following a predetermined set of norms before gradually deviating from them. Thus, fiction has its own rules and norms. "But what Coover recognizes is that finally all rules are arbitrary—fiction can concern itself with anything, real or not. He refuses to give the consolations of fixed genre, instead throwing readers into the world of his fiction and demanding they sort things out for themselves." (Evenson, 2003, p, 109). These new kinds of postmodern methods are called as fiction, metafiction or in Coover's own terms "Exemplary Fiction". "Exemplarity can be described as a comic disruption of older forms and dogmas, a tension both moral and ontological to undermine a fixed notion of reality." (Dainotto, 11). Coover exerts that:

Maybe the struggle I had as a young writer against the old forms had made me overly aware of their restrictive nature, such that I found myself burdened with a vast number of metaphoric possibilities, all of which were touched by this sense of dogma invading the world and turning it to stone. (Coover, 1983, p, 69).

Thus, in the novel, Coover problematizes the effect of realism on social life and political life which is corrupted like realism does, and breaks the boundaries between fiction and reality, so that writers can enter into his own horizon. The lines between reality and fantasy are blurred in *The Public Burning*. Coover uses realistic settings in the novel to draw attention to the work's fictional nature. He uses the news –Times Magazine- to deceive the realistic and conventional expectations of earlier works of fiction. Times Magazine reports the arresting as:

Julius Rosenberg and his wife were listening to the Lone Ranger with their two young sons when a stranger rapped on the door of their battered and drab apartment near the Manhattan end of the Brooklyn Bridge. Twelve men marched in from the small hallway and announced that they were from the FBI. They arrested 32-year-old Julius Rosenberg as a spy. (Coover, 1977, p, 8)

Coover utilizes The Times' to demonstrate that it is difficult to write an objective history by incorporating both true historical details and fictional additions. Since "the so-called truth" is not simply objectified and it is not compulsory for public to follow a universal truth, it can be considered as, the fact and fiction are intertwined in the production of history, and distinguishing between the two is impossible. Coover's novel questions the authenticity of history as it interprets and reflects on actual

historical events and personalities. It's up to the novel's readers to draw their own conclusions about the past. On the very first page of the work, Coover demolishes the logical progression and verifiability of historical events. The first section of the prologue makes it sound like a very realistic story. "Two New York City Jews, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, are arrested by the FBI and charged with having conspired to steal atomic secrets and pass them to the Russians" (Coover, 1977, p, 3). The Rosenbergs were known to have been put to death in Sing Sing Prison. By blending reality with fiction and Sing Sing Prison where the execution had been made was a real place that had been converted into a melodrama of society whose realities are blunt and intertwined with fiction itself. Times Square is used as a depiction of American society –salad bowl-, whose public affliction to the nation is corrupted, thus the audiences act like a spectator of the drama where everything is planned and devised. There is nothing but creation. Furthermore, Uncle Sam who is a mythical personification of American history and its ideals comments on the executions of Rosenberg in Times Square:

We ain't goin' up to Times Square just to fulfill the statutorial law, if that's what you mean" Uncle Sam said. He blew a smoke ring, then another and another, each inside the other, ending with a little puff of smoke for the center. "This is to be a consecration, a new chapter of the moral and social order of the Western world, the precedint on which the future is to be carn-structured to ensure peace in our time! (Coover, 1977, p, 91).

Thus, Times Square is used as allegorically to ensure the peace and moral codes of American society which has to be regained and kept strict in the hands of Phantom (communism). Richard Nixon also depicts Times Square as "place of feasts, spectacle, and magic --- it is the ritual center of the Western World." (Coover, 1977, p, 166). It is no surprise for Coover to create a fiction in which he sarcastically parodies with the paranoia and so-called justice and freedom that American legacy provides for its

nation. In a similar manner, Times Square can be considered as a carnivalesque environment where the acts of executions are taken place. According to Bakhtin: “During carnival time life is subject only to its laws that are the law of its own freedom. It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world [...] (Bakhtin, 1985, p, 7). In a similar manner, Times Square is considered as a carnival in which all the people gather together to defy Phantom – the enemy of American capitalism-. Furthermore, Nixon also depicts Times Square and American society as “circus atmosphere, the special ceremonies: form, *form*, that’s what it always comes down to!” (Coover, 91). Thus, Times Square is an act of circus play for Coover and American society is also the characters of the circus acts. As Hutcheon argues:

“The postmodern, then, affects two simultaneous moves. It reinstalls historical contexts as significant and events determining, but in so doing, it problematizes the entire notion of historical knowledge. And the implication is that there can be no single, essentialized, transcendent concept of “genuine historicity” (as Fredric Jameson desires), no matter what the nostalgia for such an entity.” (Hutcheon, 1995, p, 89)

“Genuine historicity” has been mainly discussed throughout years among literary critics. However, there is no objective truth so does objective historicity. What the writers grasp is a culmination of human thought with creative perspectives that put into the narratives. If there is no authentic and objective historicity, it is not possible to convey reality in fiction. Coover argues that people will be better equipped to deal with life if they are allowed to use their imaginations freely and write fictions that reflect their unique experiences and perspectives. As one might expect, the author creator bears a heavy burden in this regard, as it is the writer who will be tasked with

generating those new perspectives in the first place. The author's task is then to convince readers through fictional works that individuals construct meaning systems that aren't necessarily grounded in any objective reality but have the capacity to harden into precepts over time and with repeated exposure to them. When a fiction writer exposes his or her "fictional plays" to the public, he or she gives readers a fresh lens through which to better comprehend the stories they read and the media they consume. Similarly in the novel, Richard Nixon the narrator of the story has likened Rosenberg's executions and the stage in Times Square as "a little morality play" for our generations.

The play is over. The girl has made her tearful exit, and her brother, the condemned prisoner, has gone through the act of clutching his throat and quoting Shakespeare on the fear of death, amazing the Warden and the Chaplain. The Jailer has arrived to call the prisoner to his execution, and the prisoner, standing erect like a soldier at attention, regarding them all fixedly and with a voice low and steady has replied: "All right, let's go." They've have gone. The curtain's come down and the audience, if there is any, is now applauding. (Coover, 1977, p, 111).

It is a striking example of a metaphor "little morality play" which is adapted into Rosenberg's case in the time of the anxiety and fear. Coover deliberately chooses this quotation to demonstrate that the nation is in turbulence and there is no sensible action regarding of executions of Rosenberg's. It is similar to "morality play" of Rosenberg executions on the ground that, American society in need of instructions and teachings of Uncle Sam (mythical figure of the American nation) in terms of his brevity and his devotion to the nation. However, what makes the novel is a quite striking metafiction is the usage of language and mixing up reality and author's fantasy that blurs the line

between objectivity and subjectivity. Uncle Sam is a fantastical demonstration of American nation and it is not alive character in American history. What Coover does is blending historicity with fantastic and mythical elements to explicit the dying elements of American idealism and justice so does the postmodern grand narratives like realism; is tended to dissolve into fictional narratives.

Who could tell what was on Uncle Sam's mind? Certainly it was very theatrical. There was the drama of a brother sending his big sister to the electric chair; the implied tragedy of the Rosenberg children – who would be left orphans; the curious spectacle of Jews prosecuting and judging Jews, then accusing each other of tribal disloyalties; and almost Wagnerian scope to prosecution's presentation, incorporating many of the major issues of our times, whether or not relevant to the crime charged; the sense throughout that this was clearly a struggle between the forces of good and evil... and a lot of pretty fair spy stories to be bargain, if the prosecution was to be believed: secret codenames, recognition signals, covert drop sites, escape plans, cover stories, payoffs, cat-and-mouse games with FBI surveillance teams, border intrigues. But there was more to it than that. Not only was everybody in this case from the Judge on down – indeed, just about everyone in the nation, in and out of government, myself included – behaving like actors caught up in a play, but we all seemed moreover to be aware of just what we were doing and at the same time of our inability ... (Coover, 1977, p, 117)

Coover draws a parallel with the executions of Rosenberg as a dilemma between good and evil forces that prevails the country. However, it can be also thought as a dilemma between grand meta-narratives similar to American justice and ideals which have lost their impact on society. Beside, Uncle Sam is shown as another mythical figure of the American nation who sarcastically demonstrates the fallen ideals of American dream. In that way, fictional occurrences that lead up to the Rosenberg

executions in Times Square are crucial examples of historiographic metafiction.

“Even the Rosenbergs seemed to be swept up in this sense of an embracing and compelling drama, speaking in their letters of sinister “plots” and worldwide “themes and “setting the stage” and playing the parts they had been...” (Coover, 1977, p, 117)

Thus, all the characters in the novel are caught up in a play in which they perform their roles. If this perspective can be taken example, Elisabeth Wesseling offers a new term for postmodern paradoxical of historical reality as “uchronian” or “alternate histories” (Wesseling, 100).

The term is used in two different ways, only one of which interests me here. Some scholars use it in order to express the difference between an ideal society which is situated in a nonexistent place (utopia) and the type of Utopian fantasy which is projected forward into the future (*Uchronie*). (Wesseling, 101)

In Rosenbergs case, players act in accordance with their assigned roles in “a morality play.” The major similarity between the novel and the Wesseling’s term of “uchranian” history (Wesseling, 101) can be seen in Coover’s narrative in which he sarcastically and deliberately changes the chain of events. One example can be given for the place and the time of the Rosenberg execution. What Coover does is to recuperate the background story of Rosenbergs to a new and cynical narration. In other words, Coover re-invents the story with his “alternate” perspectives. It is known that, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg died at Sing Sing Prison in Ossing, New York. (*Julius and Ethel Rosenberg | Biographies & Facts*, 2022). However, in the novel Coover changes the place of the execution and uses Times Square as a new setting for the execution. Not only he recuperates the story, but also he resembles the execution as a well-staged

play. Thus, the reality and the narration of history coexist together. According to Wesseling:

Alternate histories can be unfolded from different perspectives within the context of a novel. A uchronian fiction may be set in the past, where it shows alternate history in the making. It may also be set in a vaguely defined present or future whose shape has been determined by an alternate course of historical events. (Wesseling, 102).

The Public Burning can be accepted as “uchronian” as Wesseling puts forward, in terms of its textuality, self-reflexivity of the unreliable narrator (Richard Nixon and his personifications) and also its re-version of history from Coover’s perspectives.

Therefore, the historian is in a very different position than the people who actually made history and took action in the face of uncertainty about the future. (Wesseling, 104). “Thus, the victors of history tend to create the past in their own image.

Uchronian fiction, however, disputes the monopoly of the realized possibilities on “the land of reality” by making alternate developments visible.” (Wesseling, 110). William H. Gass also comments on the depiction of Nixon:

Coover’s Richard Nixon is a rich and beautifully rendered fictional character. The real Richard Nixon is a caricature. This is one of the profound ironies of Coover’s achievement. . . . The allegedly real Nixon does not speak in sentences, but in sputters and jabs. His clichés are mostly scatological. He talks like a mob boss.” (Gass, 104, Evenson, 117)

When compared to the one-dimensional portrayal of Nixon that became popular in the media following Watergate, Coover's version seems more complex and interesting. His Nixon is passionate in speech and thought; he appears flawed but not dishonest. (Evenson, 2003, p, 117). Thus, Coover’s “alternate” or “counterfactual” history is the recuperation of the history-making process. (Wesseling, 110). In other words, according to Wesseling “this degenerate imaginative faculty does not stop at

any distinction between fact and fiction, but indiscriminately allows the fictional part of historical fiction to gobble up the factual component.” (Wesseling, 155). This can be seen from Nixon’s point of view when he tries to understand the chain of bizarre events all around the country:

The Rosenberg episode was a single act, I was principal actor – if not, before the play is ended, the *principal* actor – but within this scene alone, I was more like a kind of stage manager, an assistant director or producer, a presence more felt than seen. This was true even of the trial itself: I felt somehow the author of it –not of the words so much, for these were, in a sense improvisations, but rather of the *style* of the performances as though I had through my own public appearances created the audience expectations, set the standards, keyed the rhetoric, crystallized the roles, in order that my generation might witness in dramatic form the fundamental controversy of our time! (Coover, 1977, p, 120)

As the above quotation demonstrates, Nixon feels himself inside of the well-staged play in which all actions and characters are devised before. According to him, the case is a “single act” of a play and he is the “actor” who plays his /her assigned role. Rather than demonstrating reality, what Coover tries to achieve to show is how reality and along with meta- narratives are inclined to decline. Thus, there is a historical reality but it is constructed and re-invented as McHale discusses:

What kinds of worlds are there, how are they constituted and how do they differ? What happens when different kinds of worlds are placed in confrontation or when boundaries between worlds are violated? what is the mode of existence of a text and what is the mode of existence of the world (or worlds) it projects?; How is a projected world structured? And so on. (McHale, 1987, p, 10)

In postmodernist fiction, two worlds of reality and fiction clash together. Their enemy is reality whose essence is rooted in Enlightenment ideas of philosophers who try to rationalize and question the meaning of the world. However, there is no fixed meaning in postmodernist fiction since, they are built up like patch-work, a combination of genres and styles and narratives. Thus, Coover's narratives are combination of reality and fiction. McCaffery comments about Coover and his narratives:

Coover is directly expressing a viewpoint that lies at the center of his work . . . that, partially due to human nature and partially due to the nature of the universe, we can never objectively know the world; rather we inhabit a world of fictions and are constantly forced to develop a variety of metaphors and subjective systems to help us organize our experience so that we can deal with the world.” (McCaffery, 1982, p, 8)

By means of these fictions, people make senses of the world and understand the world that they live in. Similarly, Lois Gordon defines Robert Coover as “the Coover man” who searches “significance in both concrete and metaphysical terms.” (1983, p, 8). Such concrete and metaphysical elements of the book help readers confront with outside of realities that are different than ours. McCaffery comment about the notion of metafiction as “invented, purely made-up entity” (1982, p, 5) Thus, historiographic metafiction is consisted of made-up stories in accordance with the author's perception of history. There is no objective point of view, but subjective realities.

Nixon tries to solve the Rosenberg case and find clues about the mystery of chain of events. However, like a reader; he is in between of historical reality and historical fiction.

Raw data is paralyzing, a nightmare, there's too much of it and man's mind is quickly engulfed by it. Poetry is the art of subordinating facts to the imagination, of giving them shape and visibility... objectivity is an impossible illusion, a "fantastic claim"... and as an ideal perhaps even immoral, that only through the frankly biased and distorting lens of art is any real grasp of the facts—not to mention Ultimate Truth—even remotely possible. (Coover, 1977, p, 320)

Coover's work offers an interpretation of and commentary on actual historical events and personalities while raising doubts about the veracity of historical accounts. Readers are left to draw their own conclusions about the past as a result of the narrative. By breaking down the chronological order of historical events, Coover reveals the fallacy of the positivist interpretation of the past. Thus, he destroys the ontological perspective of the past. According to Nixon, objectivity is impossible to gain and it is a raw delusion of people who claims the find ultimate truth of history.

History had a plot because one was being laid on, but not here—that was what freedom was all about! It was what Uncle Sam had been trying to tell me: Act—act in the living present! . . . This then was my crisis: to accept what I already knew. That there was no author, no director, and the audience had no memories—they got reinvented every day! I'd thought: perhaps there is not even a War between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness! Perhaps we are all pretending! (Coover, 1977, p, 362).

Nixon has finally reached a determination of not trusting historicity and politics. According to him, history is a narrative, a kind of acts and there are no audiences; because they are all re-invention of history. Beside, Nixon tries to “step in and change

the script” (Coover, 1977, p, 363). Script is a narration of the history as Nixon wishes to change and construct every day. He assures that, he and other characters that lead up to the political drama of the U.S are just creations of history. Thus, there is no concrete answer whether there is truth or not in terms of Nixon’s narration. Ayşegül Gündoğdu states about Coover’s fiction as “game players” [...] “the best expression to describe Coover’s ironic attitude to those people since those players do not so much play freely than cling rigidly to their constructed realities against the threat of unexplainable, the disorderly and the chaotic.” (Gündoğdu, 28). Coover challenges “those players of fake games” (Gündoğdu, 28) by distorting reality so as to draw attention to narratives’ fictive and constructed status. Since historiographic metafiction distorts the reality and re-invents the past, Coover deliberately makes uses of fables, myth and folkloric culture to emphasize the man-made artificial nature. Larry McCaffery states in his *The Metafictional Muse: The Works of Robert Coover, Donald Barthelme, and William H. Gass*: “Coover’s real subject remains the relationship between man and his invented creations –the creations we have broadly termed ‘fictions’” (1982, p, 29). For Coover, it is natural for humans to attach to myths, fables and fictions to make their life bearable. In that way, people can live meaningfully and more secure. In his interview Coover asserts that: “...Men live by fictions. They have to. Life’s too complicated, we just can’t handle all the input, we have to isolate little bits and make reasonable stories out of them.” (Kennedy, 1997: 101). Similarly, just like Coover fashions Richard Nixon and Rosenbergs with his imagination, he creates fictional atmosphere where there is no objectivity but only artificiality. Evenson asserts about Coover’s fiction that: “Much of Coover’s fiction maintains that the world cannot be objectively understood-there is just too much to sort through. In the face of an overwhelming amount of data people take another

route.” (Evenson, 12, 2003). When the day Rosenbergs’ execution arrives, Nixon describes the public atmosphere as:

They are really piling in now, everybody jamming up together; old and young, great and small, of all records, colors and sexes, shoulder to shoulder and butt to butt, missionaries squeezed up with hottentos, pollyannas with press agents and plumbers and panty raiders –it’s an ingathering of monumental proportions, which only the miracle of Times Square contain! (Coover, 1977, p, 355).

It is a really striking example of description of Times Square as a public attention which draws millions of people for the executions. As in the title of the book states “*The Public Burning*, Rosenbergs’ execution are held in Times Square in order to instruct and give moral lesson to the American society. No matter how individual it seems to executions are, Coover sarcastically make use of the notion of justice to show the real situation that American society are actually in. This situation is chaotic at the same time like series of “circus acts” that Nixon wishes to change in order to reach true condemnation. But he realizes that everything “ it had all been scripted out in advance...There were no scripts, no necessary patterns, no final scenes, there was just *action* and then *more action*!” (Coover, 362). Nixon has realized that he is in some kind of a play where he can be a director at the same time an editor of the play. He desires to changes the script and reinvents it. Nixon as the main character of the story bridges the gap between fiction and reality while drawing attention of the fictitious nature of the story. Coover, as a fiction maker, makes readers realize that this is all just in part of a dramatic play.

This, then, was my crisis: to accept what I already knew. That there was no author, no director, and the audience had no memories – they got reinvented every day! I'd thought: perhaps there is not even a War between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness! ... (Coover, 1977, p, 362).

At the final chapter of the novel, Nixon goes into the prison to talk to Ethel Rosenberg. When they see each other, Nixon tells her that: “all just been an act Ethel and you know it! Part of the strategy.” (Coover, 1977, p, 435). Nixon has realized that, all have just been an act and they are the “victims of the same lie”. (Coover, 1977, p, 436). Then, he finds himself on the stage “in the middle of the Times Square... my shirttails bunched up in my armpits and my pants in a dangle around my ankles, my poor butt on fire.” (Coover, 1977, p, 470). Nixon is ashamed of being on the stage, since everyone laughs at him. Then he gives a speech which is a fictionalized version of Richard Nixon's real speech ‘Checkers’ after the Watergate Scandal. Coover blends the real life historical events with fiction to satirize and parodies the American ideals and justice. At the end, both Ethel and Julius Rosenberg are electrocuted, and like a shine into the sky, they both transforms into light.

CONCLUSION

Many critics and historians have debated the practice of re-writing history. Critics have tried to separate the canonical demonstration and understanding of history in its solidity and linearity of key events with the premise history is an objective and unchanging sequence of events that represents the unity of specific civilizations and their national identity. Writing history requires a historical consciousness that is tied to a particular culture, and this consciousness is often reworked and merged with author's own historical consciousness and background. A relatively new concept, "historical consciousness" refers to an awareness of the relevance of past events to the present day's cultural and political understanding. Simply put, the word "re-adapting" or "re-making" a nation's past is fraught with controversy because of the inherent diversity across cultures and nations.

New perspectives and interpretations have emerged during the course of the year in how the past is portrayed and represented. Greek philosopher and historian Herodotus, shaped "The Father of History" by Cicero, revolutionized the way history was understood and written down. (Grant, 23). It was through oral transmission from one generation to the next that historical knowledge and vital information were preserved before Herodotus. Herodotus compiled historical information, explaining and recording events in chronological order. Similarly, Plato (428-348 BC) had a contentious dispute over expressing reality, since the domain of imagination or the desire to do so related really to literature and its fictional topic. He labels as "the makers of tales" authors who have tried to depict the world as they see it. (1991, p, 54-55). According to Plato, these stories were distorted because it was impossible for authors to accurately portray the original truth. The mythical stories of Homer were the focus of his argument because, in his view, they were founded on a

misunderstanding of the author's intent. So, the author used the past as a source for fictionalized accounts of his or her country.

Although Aristotle (384-322 BC) disagrees with Plato on several points, he does agree that history and fiction can be distinguished from one another. In his view, a poet's job is to accurately portray objective reality, thus most poets accomplish this task. Aristotle states that a poet's role is to adhere to the laws of necessity and probability, whereas a historian's role is to present the facts accurately without embellishing them with lyrical license and the resulting emotional exploitation of the reader. (Aristotle, 2001, p, 106) From the very beginning of ancient history, then, major philosophers and scholars radically defined the functions of poets and historians.

In the Middle ages, writing history or even attempting to compose an impartial history wasn't enough to determine if a historical account was accurately depicted or just borrowed from Ancient and Roman literature and supplemented with fictitious parts. Due to a shortage of primary sources, historians of the Middle Ages focused on religious treaties meant to teach moral precepts to the general public rather than establish concrete facts. However as the Enlightenment era progressed, historians and storytellers began to challenge the veracity of their work. As cornerstones of denial, falsities and manufactured tales were seen as deceptive and false realities of the world that may lead people away from the truth and logic. So, at about that time, stories shifted their emphasis to include more "actual facts" and "accuracy." Rene Descartes, an early advocate of Enlightenment thought, based his concept of truth on the fallibility of human reason. René Descartes, in his *Discourse on Method* (1637), argued that the Reason is superior to human nature. Humans, he said, had a basic capacity for "good sense," or accurate judgment, and that the ability to tell a falsehood

from the truth is crucial to our development as social beings. (Descartes, 2006, p, 6)

Hegel, another philosopher from the Enlightenment, saw historical development as a "rational process." Philosophical history, reflective history, and original history are the three fundamental categories Hegel uses in his *Philosophy of History* (1837). (Hegel, 1991, p, 22) Hegel's proposal of three distinct types of historical writing has profound implications for Enlightenment thought because of the importance Hegel placed on reason and historical analysis. As the modernism began, , writers in that era focused on human nature, individualism, alienation and emotions and most of them sought to describe each detail of events with vivid descriptions. Historians' modernist ideology shifted their attention from content (which was the deciding factor for historical explanations that needed to be represented objectively and impartially) to historical derivations and consciousness, which necessitated both a knowing subject (evidence) and a form (fictitious character) to demonstrate the true representation of history. (Munslow, 2006, p, 4)

Postmodernism, profoundly altered our worldview in the latter half of the twentieth century. Thus, for postmodernists, the central concern shifted from a literal interpretation of the world to the question of how and to what extent we experience and understand it. Prior to the postmodern era, it was reasonably easy to classify historical and fictional tales based on their specific subjects and the relative objectivity of their historical explanations. After the second part of the nineteenth century, however, as the political climate of the West shifted (World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movements, etc.), the veracity of narratives was brought into doubt. Postmodernism, a radical departure from modernist philosophy, rejects both the established hierarchies of narrative constructs and the subjective authorial figures that modernism had established as central to the value of narratives.

Apart from that, postmodernism emerged as a movement which questioned most aspects of modern philosophy, ethics, politics in the aftermath of two world wars and genocide. The western critics felt the need to question losing their confidence in the allegedly well-established values of their civilisation. Thus, postmodern narratives question the reality of the texts whether they represent truth or not. In postmodern fictions, there are some questions that can be asked regarding of the text's function to demonstrate reality. Postmodern writers disavow any connection between fixed language and permanent reality. In this way, the postmodern worldview diverges from traditional realistic notion. In postmodern historical novel, the past is fluid in a way which makes it hard to determine the realistic stance of the texts or events. Thus, history is re-written from a variety of perspective, often blurring the lines between fact and fiction. In postmodern historical novels, there is "a denial of the fixity of the past, of the reality of the past apart from what the historian chooses to make of it, and thus of any objective truth about the past" (Himmelfarb: 1999, p, 72). According to Linda Hutcheon (1983), a narrative which combines fiction and past is called as historiographic metafiction in which the history re-visited and adapted into author's own imagination. Thus, historiographic metafiction questions the reality and the reliability of history. That's why the present and the past coexist and are interwoven in historiographic metafiction. There's less of a line between what's real and what's fictional. Simply put, historiographic metafiction aims to utilize historical elements inside a metafictional parody of self-reflexivity that contradicts realism. In historiographic metafiction, the marginalized events are brought to the forefront, their narration is repeated, and alternative histories are produced. Therefore, a variety of histories have been produced thanks to the works of historiographic metafiction, providing alternatives to the generally accepted versions.

Peter Ackroyd's *The House of Doctor Dee* can be considered as a good example of historiographic metafiction due to its revisiting the past events and questioning the reality. Doctor Dee is a real-life historical character who is regarded as alchemist, black magician, astrologist, and adviser to the Queen Elizabeth. According to many resources, Dr. Dee is a prominent alchemist in Renaissance era. In the novel, past and present are intertwined in the way which makes it hard to determine the veracity of the events. Dr. Dee's and Mathew Palmer's narrations are coexisting and juxtaposed in order to create the fictional atmosphere. Matthew Palmer lives in 20th century but at the same he has a deep connection towards Dr. Dee that lived in 16th century, England. Their connections and the events that are unfolded throughout the novel enable reader question the fixity of the past. There are historiographic metafictional and postmodern aspects in the novel to prove that not only historical references are grounded facts but also they are fictive and intertextual materials to emphasize fictitious status of the novel. In the novel, Ackroyd makes uses of pastiche, intertextuality, parody, non-linear time and self-reflexivity of the narrators that make the novel as a good example of postmodern fiction. This demonstrates how he finds a balance between the real and the fantastical by drawing on real-life historical personalities as examples. Ackroyd, through the use of irony and witty language, plays with the intelligence and creativity of his readers.

The second postmodern novel is *The Public Burning* by Robert Coover. The novel's major characters and narrators, like those of the preceding novel studied within the framework of historiographic metafiction, are historical figures like Richard Nixon, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, David Greenglass, etc. The juxtaposition of historical and fictional elements is embodied by these individuals. Coover uses his imagination and creativity to create a fictional, an alternative setting of the Cold War Era setting. The

work, then, might be seen as portrayal of the hysteria and fear that actually existed during the Cold War. In addition, it serves as a link between the fantastic and the real. The novel's wide range of styles, which includes both realistic and mythical elements, classifies it as postmodern literature. Coover, a postmodern novelist, ridicules the conventions and behaviour of past eras. Since at the time nearly everyone believed the Rosenbergs were responsible for selling the atomic bomb's secrets to the Soviets, he uses their death as a satirical widespread acceptance of a certain epistemic truth like American fallen ideals (justice, equality etc...) (Evenson, 112). Also, Coover does not believe in absolute truths and instead values a diversity of viewpoints. Coover uses the Rosenberg executions as an example of the struggle between good and evil in the American society. Yet another comment can be seen as a conflict between principles that have lost their social weight and grand meta-narratives like American justice. At the same time, Uncle Sam is portrayed as a mythological figure of the United States who ironically represents the debased values of the American dream. As such, the fictional events preceding the Rosenberg executions in Times Square are significant examples of historiographic metafiction. Like the previous novel, Coover uses intertextuality, parody and mythical figures to draw attention to the fictitious status of the novel. As a historiographic metafictional novel, it uses the past as a vessel to satirize the conventional norms of society.

Overall, this thesis aims to explore the link between reality and the fiction. The purpose of this analysis is to demonstrate how, within the framework of historiographic metafiction, postmodern metafictional novels reflect reality and historical knowledge while simultaneously transforming the historical process into fiction. The thesis' main aim is to examine how history and fiction are presented in the postmodern context, with a particular focus on how historical consciousness affects

the personalities of the protagonists in abovementioned novels. This research also delves into the challenge of reflecting the past in a linear fashion, as well as how various thinkers in the field of postmodern historiography approach the study of the past. Historiographic metafictional novels, written within a postmodern perspective, do not represent the past in the traditional sense, but instead explore historical consciousness and facts through the lens of an alternative reality.



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