

POSTMODERN HISTORIOGRAPHY
IN
D.M. THOMAS'S *THE WHITE HOTEL* AND MARTIN AMIS'S *TIME'S ARROW*

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ELZEM NAZLI

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Prof. Dr. Tlin Gen z
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bilal Kırkıcı
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

Assist. Prof. Dr. Nil Korkut Nayk
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Assist. Prof. Dr. Elif  ztabak Avc (METU, FLE) _____

Assist. Prof. Dr. Nil Korkut Nayk (METU, FLE) _____

Assist. Prof. Dr. Mustafa Kırca (ankaya U., MTB) _____

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last name : Elzem NAZLI

Signature :

ABSTRACT

POSTMODERN HISTORIOGRAPHY IN D. M. THOMAS'S *THE WHITE HOTEL* AND MARTIN AMIS'S *TIME'S ARROW*

Nazli, Elzem

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Postmodern historical fiction writers usually deviate from the traditional representation of past events. The aim of this thesis is to study the way history writing is reconfigured in two postmodern novels, D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* (1981) and Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow* (1991). In both novels the Holocaust plays an important part and both works transgress the expected characteristics of conventional historiography mainly through the use of metafictional techniques. However, the divergence from traditional representation in these novels foregrounds different concerns. In *The White Hotel* the Holocaust is used mainly to question the traditional understanding of history shaped by Enlightenment philosophy whereas in *Time's Arrow* the Holocaust itself appears to be the primary concern rather than problematica of traditional historiography. Based on this distinction this study argues further that while D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* is a clear example of what Linda Hutcheon calls "historiographic metafiction" in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988), Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow* does not fit equally well into this category since it does not engage in larger questions concerning the representation of the past and the attainability of truth.

Keywords: Postmodern, Enlightenment, historiography, D. M. Thomas, Martin Amis, the Holocaust, Linda Hutcheon, metafiction, historiographic metafiction.

ÖZ

D. M. THOMAS'IN *THE WHITE HOTEL*'İ VE MARTİN AMİS'İN *TIME'S ARROW*'UNDA POSTMODERN TARİH YAZIMI

Nazlı, Elzem

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Postmodern tarihsel roman yazarları çoğunlukla geçmiş olayların geleneksel tasvirinden saparlar. Bu tezin amacı D. M. Thomas'ın *The White Hotel* (1981) ve Martin Amis'in *Time's Arrow* (1991) romanlarında tarih yazımının nasıl yeniden şekillendiğini incelemektir. Bu iki romanda “Yahudi Soykırımı” önemli bir rol oynamakta ve her iki çalışma geleneksel tarih yazımından beklenen nitelikleri ağırlıklı olarak üstkurmaca teknikleri kullanarak ihlal etmektedir. Buna karşın, bu iki romandaki ihlaller farklı anlayışları ön plana çıkarır. *The White Hotel*'de “Yahudi Soykırımı” temelde Aydınlanma felsefesi çerçevesinde şekillenen geleneksel tarih anlayışı eleştirisini yapmak için kullanılır. *Time's Arrow*'da ise asıl odak noktasının tarih yazımına dair sorunlardan ziyade Yahudi Soykırımı'nın kendisi olduğu görülmektedir. Bu karşılaştırmanın bir sonucu olarak, bu çalışmada D. M. Thomas'ın *The White Hotel* adlı romanının Linda Hutcheon'un *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988) adlı eserinde ortaya attığı “tarih yazımcı üstkurmaca”nın açık bir örneği olduğu, Martin Amis'in *Time's Arrow* romanının ise geçmişin temsiliyeti ve gerçeğin erişilebilirliğine dair daha genel sorular ile ilgilenmediği için bu kategoriye kolaylıkla dahil edilemeyeceği iddia edilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Postmodern, Aydınlanma, tarih yazımı, D. M. Thomas, Martin Amis, Yahudi Soykırımı, Linda Hutcheon, üstkurmaca, tarih yazımcı üstkurmaca.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Historiography is the study of the writing process of history. “In its most general sense, the term refers to the study of historians’ methods and practices” (Little). The 19th century was the classical age of history writing because history emerged as an academic discipline in this century. This is the time when history found its basic methodology, which will be called “traditional” in this thesis. Traditional history writing is structured around positivist, scientific and empiricist ideals. The represented historical events and their narration by the historian are associated with the truth. The historian acts as a scientist during this process by supporting the presentation with evidence such as documents, diaries, artifacts, etc. There is a strict division between factual and fictive details.

With the advent of postmodern thought, however, history writing took a different turn. In the second half of the 20th century many philosophers of history and literary critics such as Hayden White, Linda Hutcheon, Alun Munslow and Keith Jenkins appealed to the role of historiography in the constitution of historical facts. Concerning this, the 19th century’s ideals of historiography were subjected to close scrutiny by various scholars, and the vehicles used in traditional writing were problematized. Empiricist ideals were challenged by transgressing the boundaries between fact and fiction. Contrary to the traditional understanding of the historian whose relation to historical events and to reality is never questioned, in postmodern understanding the historian does not appear as an authority figure, but s/he is self-conscious about the writing process like a fiction writer. The evidence is treated as text rather than as a tool to reach *the* truth. The narrative structure of traditional history is foregrounded to show the fictionality of traditional historical works. Thus, history is treated as a literary artifact rather than a scientific work. The problematization of the sharp distinction between traditional and postmodern historiography is a recurrent formal and thematic issue in many postmodern novels.

In this regard, this study will focus on two postmodern historical fictions: D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* (1981) and Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow* (1991). The aim of the study is to analyze the ways the writers use history and to discuss the main concerns of these novels regarding history and its representation. This thesis argues that although both novels converge in their departure from traditional historiography, they do this for different concerns. *The White Hotel*'s primary aim is to *challenge* the standpoints that traditional history writing builds itself around by making use of a well-known past event - the Holocaust. In that sense, *The White Hotel* can be said to belong to Linda Hutcheon's category of "historiographic metafiction," in which the basic motivation is to question the paradigms of traditional historiography. However, in *Time's Arrow* the main concern appears to be to *rewrite* the Holocaust itself and provide a unique moral insight into its comprehension rather than undermine traditional historiography. Therefore, this study finds the categorical relation of *Time's Arrow* to "historiographic metafiction" problematic.

The point of departure of this study is the seminal work of Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988). Hutcheon's book is quite significant in analyzing D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* and Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow* in terms of the representation of history. Linda Hutcheon holistically defines all postmodern historical fiction as "historiographic metafiction." She analyzes more than one hundred novels including *The White Hotel* to introduce the properties of historiographic metafiction. In line with her argumentation, *The White Hotel* is a good example of how traditional historiography is challenged through metafictional techniques. *Time's Arrow* also makes use of some of the techniques Hutcheon refers to and it also has metafictional qualities, but as this thesis will argue, it is difficult to categorize the novel fully under this label. Through this comparison between *The White Hotel* and *Time's Arrow*, the thesis will suggest further that Hutcheon's category of "historiographic metafiction" may not suffice to cover all postmodern novels dealing with history and its writing.

Although the problematization of traditional historiography by many postmodern novelists is a much-studied issue, that D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel*

and Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow* have been selected for this study is an informed choice. *The White Hotel* is mainly about the life story of Lisa Erdman who is mercilessly murdered in the Babi Yar massacre in 1941. *Time's Arrow*, on the other hand, tells the life story of a Nazi doctor, Odilo Unverdorben, starting from his death to his birth in the fashion of reversed chronology. Both novels offer an experimental handling of traditional historical representation by dealing with the Holocaust as an historical event, which is the central incentive for the selection of these novels. Both the Holocaust and traditional historiography have a significant relationship with modernity. Traditional historiography is one of the mainstays of modernity and has its roots in the understanding of modernity which is structured around Enlightenment ideas that preach political and social progress by overvaluing rationalization, or rather "instrumental reason" (18) as Zygmunt Bauman suggests in his *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989). As Dirk Moses claims, depending on the arguments of Bauman, "the Holocaust is . . . emblematic of Western modernity" (441). From this point of view, the Holocaust is the most appropriate stop in analyzing the understanding of history in modernity and postmodernity since the Holocaust is the line that marks the end of modernity and the beginning of a new understanding in many areas that lead to postmodernity. In this context, analyzing these postmodern novels dealing with the Holocaust in terms of their experimental approaches towards conventional historiography makes this study more meaningful.

In order to pursue its argument, this study will first elaborate on the theoretical discussions revolving around traditional historiography and the postmodern understanding of history writing. Chapter 2, then, will make a brief review of the theoretical background of historiography starting with the 19th century empiricist ideals of historiography and postmodern historiography by resting largely on the work of the postmodern philosopher of history, Hayden White. Hayden White addresses many issues regarding the narrative structure of historical works and thus problematizes traditional notions of history writing in both *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (1987) and *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (1978). The arguments regarding literature and historiography will be discussed through Linda Hutcheon's *A Poetics of*

Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction (1988), in which she coins a new term, “historiographic metafiction,” to describe a type of fiction which “uses metafictional techniques to remind us that history is a construction, not something natural that equates to the past” (Nicol 99).

Chapter 3 will examine the representation of history as it is taken up in *The White Hotel* by D. M. Thomas. This chapter attempts to analyze *The White Hotel* as an example of “historiographic metafiction” from Linda Hutcheon’s standpoint by resting largely on the techniques employed in challenging the paradigms of conventional historiography. These discussions regarding the use of history will always be in touch with the Holocaust, and in this respect the novel’s relationship with the Holocaust will also be investigated. This chapter will also include an analysis of *The White Hotel*’s critical attitude towards Enlightenment and modernity since it will be claimed that this aspect of the novel plays an important role in its categorization as historiographic metafiction.

Chapter 4 will similarly focus on the techniques that are put into practice to rewrite the Holocaust in Martin Amis’s *Time’s Arrow*. This chapter will begin by looking at the metafictional techniques employed in the novel. It will then argue, however, that these metafictional techniques do not necessarily place the novel under the category of historiographic metafiction. The discussion will continue with how *Time’s Arrow* seems limited to the Nazi context only rather than providing a general critique of traditional historiography. Besides, this chapter will discuss in what ways Martin Amis’s *Time’s Arrow* compares and contrasts with *The White Hotel* in terms of historiography. This will also lead to the investigation of how the two novels differ in their relationship with the Holocaust, and hence with Enlightenment and modernity.

Chapter 5 will be the concluding chapter where a short summary of the major points will be made, all the discussions carried out will be assessed in general terms, and the conclusions gathered concerning the functions of the novels in the representation of history will be discussed. This chapter will also make some suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THIS STUDY

The present chapter is mainly about the questions of history writing; in other words historiography. It is divided into three sub-titles: (1) “Traditional Historiography,” (2) “Postmodern Historiography” and (3) “Postmodern Historical Novel.” While traditional historiography is founded upon the notions of objectivity and the exact representation of the truth about the past, postmodern historiography is not only suspicious of the ideals of traditional historiography but also blatantly attempts to deconstruct these ideals. At the intersection point of these major approaches toward history does stand the postmodern historical novel, in which the theoretical discussions about historiography can be traced.

2.1. Traditional Historiography

It is possible to argue that in traditional historiography there are two mainstream ideas: (1) “History as Science” and (2) “History as Forward Progress.” “History as Science.” Although these approaches have slight differences between themselves, both sub-categories share a common ground because the main concern in both approaches is to reach the truth about the past and to construct or reconstruct the past events as they actually happened. Therefore, both approaches are called “traditional” in this thesis. These approaches will be explicated in detail in the following sections.

2.1.1. History as Science

One of the mainstream ideas in traditional history writing can be conceptualized as “History as Science,” in which the past is studied “for its own sake

by academics” (Jenkins, *Why History* 1).¹ In this type of history writing there is, in Keith Jenkins’ words, “continuous adherence to commonsense empiricism and realist notions of representation and truth” (Jenkins, *Reader* 1). The historian is a scientist who is drained of all ideological self-placement, and the historian with an objective eye constantly consults evidence to reconstruct the past.

The perception of science in historiography differs from the perception of science in the physical sciences. The historian does not have any chance to test or do an experiment in his occupation like a scientist because the historian cannot encounter or reencounter the past directly. Nonetheless, what makes history a science lies in its methodology according to this understanding. The task of the historian is to “shed light on what, why, and how of the past, based on inferences from the evidence of the present” impartially and try to figure out the truth about the past event (Little). The historian plays the role of a scientist by searching the eye-witness accounts, artifacts, governmental documents, etc. concerning an event that happened in the past from an objective perspective, which White calls “the innocent eye” (*Tropics* 53). The historian attains a scientific character by assuming for her/himself a neutral, unbiased, impartial, or “disinterested” position. Since the raw events do not tell anything on their own, what the historian does is see the relationships between the raw materials and compose a historical work on evidence. As Alun Munslow nicely puts it, “history is about the process of translating evidence into facts” (6).²

The 19th century, “the classic age of history,” is crucial to the perception of history as science because this is the time when history assumed a scientific character by separating itself from art. In this approach there is a strict division between fact and fiction. Leopold von Ranke, the famous German historian, was the most prominent historian who helped history to gain the status of an academic discipline. His treatment of historiography is quite significant to understand the characteristics of history as

¹ In *Why History?* (1999) and in *The Postmodern Reader* (1999) Jenkins divides traditional history writing into two: “lower case history” and “upper case history.” Her discussion of “lower case history” is in line with the arguments presented in “History as Science” in this study.

² Alun Munslow conceptualizes scientific historiography as “Reconstructionism” in *Deconstructing History*.

science.

What Ranke did that distinguished him from his predecessors was his new methodology in which “he used primary sources in archives with a zest and thoroughness quite new to historical scholarship” (Bentley 41). His enormous zest for primary sources reached such a point that “he opened the doors of archives nearly everywhere (in Europe) except for the Vatican” (Stunkel 102). Ranke tried to reconstruct the past as it actually happened. In order to do that, he gave utmost care to evidence. The more the historian is able to use evidence, the more possible it becomes to compose historical works accurately. The second important characteristic of the Rankean method is its insistence on objectivity. That is why the historian should avoid making subjective comments on the past. Ranke claims that “its [history’s] aim is merely to show how things actually were” (qtd. in Tosh 7). To represent the past as it actually was, the historian should not assert her/his personal or ideological viewpoint. Analyzing Ranke, Stunkel avers that “he [Ranke] was suspicious that the author of secondary works merely repeated one another’s information and errors. The cure for such uncritical history was eyewitness narratives and original documents” (102). Therefore, in his methodology, which formed the basis of scientific, academic and objective historiography, the critical reading of historical documents such as letters, memoirs, or official records is quite significant.

In the 20th century, the historians who followed Ranke and who can be classified in this sub-category like G. R. Elton, Lawrence Stone, John Tosh, Joyce Appleby, and Lynn Hunt, maintain that the truth in the past is attained by carefully analyzing evidence or doing proper research on the documents of that event. They have a strong faith in empiricism and objective access to the reality of the past. As Munslow claims, “the Western tradition of history-writing is built on the correspondence theory of empiricism firmly rooted in the belief that truthful meaning can be directly inferred from the primary sources” (20). What these historians assume is that their works correspond exactly to the events that happened in the past. They are of the opinion that the historian can reconstruct the past as it actually happened. Since they believe that they can reach the truth by carefully analyzing the primary sources, in their

understanding there can be no relativism. If there is a counter argument against their reconstructions, according to these historians it may stem from the historian's ideological stance. Similarly, according to the proponents of a scientific approach toward history such as G. R. Elton, "ideology is the arch-enemy of empiricism" (Munslow 20).

2.1.2. History as Forward Progress

The other mainstream in traditional historiography can be described as "history as forward progress" or "history as 'grand narrative,'" following Lyotard's term (51). This understanding of history writing portrays history as continuous linear progress. Grounding its methodological approach in Enlightenment philosophy, history as forward progress depends on empiricism. In this approach, the historian attempts to construct past events as they actually happened depending largely on evidence. For those who treat history as forward progress, "history can explain the past only when the evidence is placed within a pre-existing explanatory framework that allows for the calculation of general rules of human action" (Munslow 22).³ In that sense, it can be argued that these historians have strong ties with "social theory," because they attempt to present general laws through a historical explanation as social theorists do. To give an example, Marx explains the history of the world as the struggle of the classes. Hegel explains it through his notion of the dialectic: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Or, Freudian psychoanalysis explains human history as the repression of the libidinal desires. In all these approaches the theorists present all-encompassing narratives in their analyses.

This understanding of history has its roots in the 19th century. In the 19th century, Karl Marx, Auguste Comte, and Herbert Spenser were among the historians who approached history as forward progress. In the 20th century, E. P. Thompson, Antony Giddens, Robert Darnton, etc. can be counted among those who adopted this

³ In *Deconstructing History* (1997) Alun Munslow designates three major approaches in historiography, namely, constructionism, reconstructionism and deconstructionism. In this study Munslow's concept "constructionism" is in line with "history as forward progress."

approach. Regarding this understanding of history, Lyotard suggests that this dynamic sense of progress is related to “the governing principles of modernity” in which history “constructs accounts of human society and progress” (qtd. in Malpas 37). Therefore, it can be claimed that modernity brought with itself an understanding of history that preaches progress, development, and an ultimate aim to reach in the end. According to this understanding, history itself will naturally take humankind to a desired end, that is to salvation in a religious context, to the rulership of the proletariat in the context of orthodox Marxism, to a more civilized and rational world in the context of the Enlightenment, and to “harmonious capitalism in the context of bourgeoisie” (Jenkins, *Reader* 5). In this regard, history as forward progress is a future-oriented historiography. Malpas, interpreting Hegel, who is one of the most prominent thinkers of modern grand narratives, claims that although they differ in their aims “each of these [grand narratives] tends to follow the same sort of narrative development and presents a similar type of all-inclusive system that shapes identity, experience and destiny” (83):

According to Hegel, however, even the most terrible and vicious injustices, wars and atrocities will lead in the end, through the resolution of conflicts that give rise to them, to a better world and a more rational of understanding of humanity and its interactions. (Malpas 87)

From Hegel’s point of view, what Simon Malpas suggests here is that all grand narratives play an emancipatory role in that history as grand narrative creates a solution producing in the end and they load people with missions to fulfill. Besides, all these different historical grand narratives provide people with a moral outlook that designates the people’s place and aim in the world, so they construct identity, conscious and predetermined life. All people have a role to play during the course of history. According to this totalitarian understanding of history, no matter what happens in the world such as wars, drought, genocides, and all other anti-humanitarian practices, they eventually evolve into a desired target that explains all wrongdoings. These grand narratives, therefore, have such a system that may lead people to pay less attention to the catastrophes the world has experienced since it is believed that in the

end all problems will be solved. In line with this discussion, history as forward progress, “sired and developed within the experiment of modernity ... and shaped as normative projects in overwhelmingly bourgeois and proletarian forms,” has a normative function (Jenkins, *Why History* 11).

2.2. Postmodern Historiography

In stark contrast to the approach of traditional historiography towards history, i.e. “history as science” and “history as forward progress,” stands the postmodern understanding of history writing problematizes the assumptions underlying both approaches. On the one hand, the ideals of the Enlightenment such as objectivity, neutrality and empiricism in the representation of reality in are replaced with notions of subjectivity, interpretation and ideology in the construction of reality. On the other hand, the totalizing and teleological viewpoints regarding history as forward progress are replaced with notions of multiplicity and fragmentation. Along these lines, postmodernism emphasizes the similarity between history and literature. In this regard, the discussions in postmodern history writing, which can be formulated under three headings: (1) “Is History a Product of Science or Art?” (2) “Historiography: Interpretative or Objective?” and (3) “The Role of The Narrative Structure of History in the Constitution of Reality,” will be elaborated on in the following sections. These three items have significant overlaps with each other but they will be discussed separately for the sake of convenience.

2.2.1. Is History a Product of Science or Art?

“Postmodern thought,” as Butler claims, “by analyzing everything as text and rhetoric, tended to push hitherto autonomous intellectual disciplines in the direction of literature” (32). One of these disciplines that have been pushed in the direction of literature is history. One of the most problematized issues in the perception of history in postmodernism is that the boundary between history and art, which is a constitutive characteristic of traditional historiography, is blurred.⁴ This is, of course, related to the

⁴ The discussion over the nature of history is not a new phenomenon. The traces of the discussion on whether history is a form of art or not can easily be seen in the discussions of ancient Greeks. Aristotle

way postmodern understanding blurs the strict boundary between art and science. Postmodernism treats historical narratives as literary artifacts. Hayden White, who is one of the leading figures of the postmodern philosophy of history, avers that “historical narratives are verbal fictions, the contents of which are much *invented as found* and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in science” (*Tropics* 82). Rather than being scientific, history is, according to White, much closer to art. In this regard, postmodernism highlights the similarity between history and literature.⁵

Although he was mainly a 19th century figure, Jacob Burckhardt can be regarded as the first academic historian who saw the close relationship between art and history at the turn of the century. White relates Burckhardt’s withdrawal from the academy to his changing opinion of history, “proclaiming the necessity of its transformation into art” (*Tropics* 35). White analyzes Burckhardt’s methods in *Civilization of the Renaissance* (1860) as follows:

Like his contemporaries in art, Burckhardt cuts into the historical record at different points and suggests different perspectives on it, omitting, ignoring, or

states that “the difference is that the one [history] tells of what has happened, the other [poetry] of the kinds of things that might happen” (Murray 68). Aristotle simply distinguishes history from poetry based on its subject matter. This claim made by Aristotle shows that history and poetry are different callings, but this statement also acknowledges, in an alternative reading, that there are similarities between poetry and history. It can be argued that the reason why Aristotle essays to separate history from literature is the similarity between the two. Thus it is quite possible to argue that Aristotle wants to emphasize the division between history and art.

⁵ Pre-19th century historians did not follow the principle of traditional historiography in the way that it is expressed in this thesis. Hayden White remarks that before the French Revolution, “history was perceived as a branch of art” (*Tropics*, 123). “More specifically, it was regarded as a branch of rhetoric and its ‘fictive’ nature generally recognized” (White, *Tropics* 123). Before the 19th century, historiography was not seen as the sole representation of the facts. As White clearly states, the theorists from Bayle to Voltaire and De Mably made use of fictive elements in the representation of real events in historical discourse, and they were aware of the imaginary sides of their composition (*Tropics* 123). Thus they believed that imagination was an essential part of historical discourse. In a sense, the fictive elements helped to reconstruct the past event more accurately. These kinds of historical works include both invented and factual elements simultaneously. They were, therefore, closer to literature than science. Furthermore, another reason of mixing real events with fictive elements can be related to the aims of the authors. The representation of past events traditionally was to “educate,” instruct, or to entertain the audience (Little). Since the aim is not to study the past for its own sake, which is a characteristic of traditional historiography, the writer could easily make adjustments in her/his own vision. It can be held that the writer’s concern was not solely the value-neutral representation as in traditional historiography, but also the aesthetic and moral aspects of the composition.

distorting as his artistic purpose requires. His intention was not to tell the *whole* truth about the Italian Renaissance but *one* truth about it, in precisely the same way that Cezanne abandoned the dream of telling the whole truth about a landscape. (*Tropics* 44)

Unlike his contemporaries in history, Burckhardt was influenced by artists like Cézanne. White calls Burckhardt's method "impressionist historiography" separating him from the mainstream historians of the time (*Tropics* 44). Like a fiction writer, Burckhardt omits, ignores and distorts some parts of his historical account according to his artistic purpose. In a similar vein, Richard Slotkin in his article "Fiction for the Purpose of History" argues that history is a story and that it has inexpugnable fictional elements.

History is what it is, but it is also what we make of it. What we call "history" is not a thing, an object of study, but a story we choose to tell about things. Events undoubtedly occur: the Declaration of Independence was signed on 4 July, 1776, yesterday it rained, Napoleon was short, and I had a nice lunch. But to be construed as "history" such facts must be selected and arranged on some sort of plan, made to resolve some sort of question which can only be asked subjectively and from a position of hindsight. Thus all history writing requires a fictive or imaginary representation of the past. (Slotkin 222)

The first argument supporting the idea of history as a fictional product is the invented content of historical narratives since the historical record is always incomplete and needs to be filled by imagination. In traditional historiography, the historian is free to use his or her imagination within "the dark areas." "The dark area" is the unknown space where historical evidence is not available, or this is the space where the inner world of historical figures is inaccessible (McHale 87). Thus the historian has to invent some parts of her/his work by making use of what R. G. Collingwood called "the constructive imagination" (qtd. in White, *Tropics* 83). "The constructive imagination" is the possible conclusion deduced from different historical evidence. In a way, it is through the constructive imagination that any historical narrative is constructed by filling the gap left by evidence. Yet, what is important here is that the dark area, which is filled up by the historian's imagination in traditional historiography, is represented as if it actually happened. Its invented nature is kept out of sight.

The second reason behind the premise that history is a form of fiction is the way history is constructed, which White calls “emplotment” (*Tropics* 83). Both fictional works and historical narratives provide meaning through a plot structure. The construction of the succession of events and their explanatory system in historiography resemble fictions significantly. Historical records may not explain anything at all about the past. The record must undergo a process to be meaningful, and this process is the plot structure in historical narratives. As White suggests:

In historical discourse, the narrative serves to transform into a story a list of historical events that would otherwise be only a chronicle. In order to effect this transformation, the events, agents and agencies represented in the chronicle must be encoded as story elements; that is, they must be characterized as the kind of events, agents, agencies, and so on, that can be apprehended as elements of story types. (*Content* 43)

It is through this plot structure that history gains meaning. Due to the fact that a past event by itself does not constitute a story, narrative techniques that are used by the artist are needed to explain or reconstruct the past. As described by White, “narration is a manner of speaking as universal as language itself, and narrative is a mode of verbal representation of events” (*Content* 26). Conventionally attributed to fictional works, characterization, plot, point of view, narrator, time, stylistic concerns are implemented by a historian, as well. Both historical narratives and fictional narratives use the same mode of discourse. As Linda Hutcheon points out, citing the theorist of history Paul Veyne, history and the novel share a common ground: “selection, organization, diegesis, anecdote, temporal pacing, emplotment,” which are the features that originally belong to fiction (*Poetics* 111). The difference between them lies in their subject matter: the former deals with the representation of the factual, the latter is of the imaginary. However, Roland Barthes also challenges this notion of difference – reality and fiction – in his article “The Discourse of History.” He asks a rhetorical question:

The narration of past events, commonly subject in our culture, since the Greeks, to the sanction of “science,” placed under the imperious warrant of the “real,” justified by the principles of “rational” exposition - does this narration differ, in fact, by some specific feature, by an indubitable pertinence, from imaginary narration as we find it in the epic, the novel, the drama? (Barthes 127)

Barthes attacks the difference between factual and fictional representation in historical narratives in his essay. Narrativization produces meaning; it has nothing to do with the representation of reality. It provides explanation. The discourses of fiction writers and history writers overlap, resemble and correspond with each other. Considering the aim of the writers of these supposedly different genres, White concludes: “they both provide a verbal image of reality” (122). The verbal image of reality is represented through the same technical device. In a similar vein, Linda Hutcheon comments on the traditional distinction between fiction and history:

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. (*Poetics* 105)

As thus envisaged, the conventional distinction between fiction and history, that while fiction is the representation of the imaginable, history is the representation of the actual, no longer applies. As in the above words of Hutcheon, reality or objective truth is treated as a linguistic construct. “Language constructs rather than merely reflects everyday life” (Waugh 54). However hard the traditional historian tries to deepen the division between history and art, history is closely in touch with art in the postmodern understanding of history. This idea is solidified further by the interpretative nature of historical accounts.

2.2.2. Historiography: Interpretative or Objective?

Traditional historiography basically approaches historical narratives as objective, scientific and neutral pieces of writing. By contrast, postmodern writers argue that historical narratives are not objective, scientific and neutral, but social or linguistic constructs. The historical “facts do not speak for themselves” (White, *Tropics* 125); rather, historical facts emerge through historiography which is the process of the writing of history. It is possible to deduce, then, that historiography is the decisive factor in determining the historical truth. By the same token, there can be thousands of different historical accounts of the same historical event since there can

be thousands of different people commenting on the same historical event. It is possible, therefore, to argue that history is a subjective comment on selected events that happened in the past, and that interpretation is an inextinguishable part of historical narratives.

Contrary to the understanding of evidence in traditional historiography, in his article “Fiction for the Purposes of History” Slotkin puts forward his distrust in the treatment of evidence in traditional historical accounts:

Anyone who has worked with historical records knows that the documentation of any large, complex human event is never fully adequate or reliable, and when one attempts to account for the motives and beliefs that govern human action, information becomes even more slippery. (223)

To Slotkin, the existing historical documentation cannot be full enough to represent an event that happened in the past as accurately as traditionally assumed. If a historian claims that what s/he does is the actual presentation of past events, then, according to Slotkin, what the historian claims is problematic and what s/he composes is nothing but a fictional work.

If you prefer the realization of the story to the perfection of the argument—if you feel compelled to express your full understanding of events, despite gaps in your knowledge—then what you are writing is historical fiction, not “history,” and should be unambiguously identified as such. (Slotkin 224)

Focusing on the interpretative nature of historiography is of great importance in terms of laying bare the constructedness of historical narratives. The conventional historian’s purpose was to reconstruct the past objectively to a great extent by providing an accurate reconstruction of the events reported in the past (White, *Tropics* 52). That is why historians try to collect as much data as they can to reach the “truth” or to construct the most accurate version of the specific historical events. However, in the final analysis postmodern thinkers state that the historians’ interpretation interferes in the historical narratives in many phases.

At the beginning of the research, historians begin to interpret the materials available to compose the historical narrative. Traditionally treated as “found” or “given,” historical facts are “made” or “constituted” in the contemporary perception

of history as it is expressed in the works of, to name but a few, Levi-Strauss, Northrop Frye, R. G. Collingwood, or Linda Hutcheon. The chronicle of events does not tell anything about the relationship between the events since there can be thousands of different pieces of underlying reasons behind a significant event. In this respect, the historian naturally selects some of the events even before composing the narrative. The postmodern perspective argues that in traditional historiography this selection is made in accordance with the dominant ideology of the time at the expense of some marginal groups. That is why some ethnic, gender, or ideological groups are almost always excluded from the narrative in traditional historiography. They are treated as if they never existed. However, in postmodern historical writing these excluded groups also find a place in historical representation. Hutcheon calls these groups “ex-centric;” by this she refers to the groups that are not in the center, but in the periphery (*Poetics* 68). Postmodern texts, by giving voice to those who have been left voiceless in traditional historical representation, on the one hand, foreground how traditional historiography ideologically construct the past, and on the other, postmodern texts “release history from the influence of the dominant totalitarian and patriarchal ideologies” (Kırca 11). Postmodernism does not create a center. In this regard postmodernism does not put these ex-centric groups in the center, and in this way it differs from traditional historiography. Instead, “it celebrates a multiplicity of histories” (Kırca 11). Postmodernism does this to disclose that historical narratives are all constructs. The reality that is constructed by the historian in traditional historiography is constructed ideologically by creating an illusion that historical texts are real. In this respect, this aspect of historiography questions the historical method, which means “the process of critically examining and analyzing the records and survival of the past” (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 92).

After collecting their historical data, historians have to select, and give shape to some events to compose the historical narrative according to their narrative purposes. According to plot structure, some of the events are included or excluded naturally by the historian. In that sense, it can be claimed that this selection of historical data is ideological and depends on historians’ subjective preferences. It can be argued

further that traditional historiography is ideologically positioned according to the postmodern understanding of history despite the claims of objectivity and neutrality. Traditional history writing, indeed, by drawing attention to its objectivity, hints at an ideological standpoint that is never explicitly revealed. The traditional historian's claims of objectivity can be seen as a tool of persuading people of her/his historical compositions' exact correspondence with past events. In other words, the traditional historian attempts to make people believe her/his ideological compositions. Considered from this perspective, it is quite possible to argue that objectivity is never attained in any kind of historical writing.

The relationship between past events is established through interpretation to compose a meaningful and a coherent narrative by the historian. The historian interprets the cause-effect relationship between these events through imagination. In this respect, as critics of history as a discipline claim, it is not wrong to state that "historical accounts are nothing but interpretation" (White 55). This characteristic of the historical narrative brings it closer to art rather than science since this process is quite similar to the composition of fictional works undergoing the same process. Hayden White presents a chart which shows three different levels on which interpretation enters into the construction of an historical account: "mode of emplotment," "mode of explanation" and "mode of ideological implication" (*Tropics* 70). In each phase the historian chooses an option while composing the historical account. The historian chooses the plot structure according to her/his interpretation. In "mode of explanation" the historian gives a shape to her/his arguments, e.g. the mechanistic mode where the emphasis is put on causal relationship between events. "Mode of ideological implication" refers to the historian's ideological stance, e.g. liberal, anarchist or conservative. In each mode the historian's interpretation of events interferes with the historical representation. Given that interpretation seems an inevitable part of the representation of history, the scientific side of the historian, which is thought to be objective and neutral, is shattered. In this respect, proper history, "a

history which is now no longer seen as proper at all,” as Keith Jenkins puts it, becomes “just another ideological expression” (*Why History* 6).⁶

In the light of all this, the authority of objectivity in traditional historiography, which is strengthened by the deification of evidence, is shattered. Instead of the deification of evidence in historical representations, the narrative structure of historical accounts is emphasized in the constitution of historical facts in the postmodern understanding.

2.2.3. The Role of the Narrative Structure of History in the Constitution of Reality

The narrative structure of historical works, which “flouts history,” (Ermarth 198) is one of the most important elements in postmodern understanding to challenge the conventional notions of history. Narrative form is accepted as the fundamental structure of historiography because as Hayden White explains, “historical narrative is a mimesis of the story lived in some region of historical reality” (*Content* 27). Hayden White describes narrative as “a meta-code, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted” (*Content* 1). Moreover, he sees this structure employed in historiography as natural: “So natural is the impulse to narrate, so inevitable is the form of narrative for any report on the way things really happened” (*Content* 1). In historical discourse, the narrative serves to transform into a story a list of historical events that would otherwise be only a chronicle (White, *Content* 43). Seen from this perspective, it is understood that the narrative structure of history occupies a central place in the production of meaning. Similarly, Alun Munslow relates that “history cannot exist for the reader until the historian writes it in its obligatory form: narrative” because it is the most appropriate way of reconstructing the past (2).

Although the narrative structure of historical accounts is attacked by postmodernism, all historians do not write their works in narrative form as a whole.

⁶ The term “proper history,” which is employed by Jenkins, is reminiscent of the approach of “history as science.”

They may compose their work by applying some other techniques such as “description and analysis” as in Tosh’s conceptualization (qtd. in Safran & Şimşek 203). Nonetheless, they still make use of narrative form in their composition.

The amount of narrative in a given history will vary, and its function will change depending on whether it is conceived as an end itself or only as a means to some other end. Obviously the amount of narrative will be greatest in accounts designed to tell a story, least in those intended to provide an analysis of the events of which it treats. (White, *Content* 27)

The amount of narrativity used varies depending on the aim of the historian. As White designates, some historians apply narrative form very moderately; Tocqueville, Burckhardt, Huizaga and Braudel are among these kinds of historians:

Tocqueville, Burckhardt, Huizanga, and Braudel refused to tell a story about the past, or rather, they did not tell a story with well-marked beginning, middle and end phases; they did not impose upon the processes that interested them the form that we normally associate with storytelling. (White, *Content* 2)

Although these historians use non-narrative modes of representation in their composition such as “the meditation, the anatomy, or the epitome,”⁷ they still construct “the truth” about the past by making use of narrative even if these elements do not seem to be related with the supposed characteristic of storytelling (White, *Content* 2). By the same token, Munslow avers that “no matter how extensive are the analytical apparatuses borrowed from the social sciences and brought to bear on the past, history’s power to explain resides in its fundamental narrative form” (2).

Narrative history has come under attack by a wide range of groups. Annalists (Braudel, Furet, LeGoff, Le Roy-Ladurie) regard narrative history as a nonscientific, even ideological representational strategy (White, *Content* 31). Structuralists and post-structuralists (Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, Todorov, Kristeva, Genette) demonstrate that “narrative was not only an instrument of ideology but the very paradigm of

⁷ The meditation, the anatomy and the epitome are the different ways of representing historical events. In these examples historical accounts do not tell a story with well marked beginning, middle and end phases (White, *Content* 2).

ideologizing discourse in general” (White, *Content* 33). Hayden White emphasizes the ideological side of traditional historiography in the following way:

Historiography is, by its very nature, the representational practice best suited to the production of the “law-abiding” citizen. This is not because it may deal in patriotism, nationalism, or explicit moralizing but because in its featuring of narrativity as a favored representational practice, it is especially well suited to the production of notions of continuity, wholeness, closure, and individuality that every *civilized* [my emphasis] society wishes to see itself as incarnating, against the chaos of a merely “natural way of life.” (*Content* 87)

The ideology of traditional historiography shows itself in its narrative structure. Traditional historiography represents a world that is finished and complete. That a historical work has a closure and wholeness constitutes a moral deduction for the reader. The narrative framework of traditional historiography creates a moralizing effect. “Where, in any account of reality narrative is present, we can be sure that morality or a moralizing impulse is present too” (White, *Content* 24). Furthermore, as White suggests, “in this world, reality wears the mask of a meaning, the completeness and fullness of which we can only imagine, never experience” (*Content* 21). Thus not only does traditional historiography use narrativity as it is the most suitable way of representing the past, but also behind that implementation lies an ideological purpose. That every civilized society wishes to see itself in an ordered way has a political dimension. In line with the ideas of Foucault on power, Munslow describes the relationship between history and power as follows:

Written history is always more than merely innocent story-telling, precisely because it is the primary vehicle for the distribution and use of power. The very act of organising historical data into a narrative not only constitutes an illusion of “truthful” reality, but in lending a spurious tidiness to the past can ultimately serve as a mechanism for the exercise of power in contemporary society. (13)

Alun Munslow asks at the beginning of his book titled *Deconstructing History*: “to what extent is the narrative or literary structure of the history text an adequate vehicle for historical explanation?” (1). What is most challenged in traditional historiography is the narrative structure of historical works as a tool to represent the reality, which brings historical works closer to literary works, since they both share the same vehicle.

Traditional historians defend narrative form by claiming that narrative already exists in the evidence. Or, to put it in another way, it is claimed the evidence of the past events itself tells the story. That is why, traditional historians reconstruct the past events in narrative form. In short, “the narrative is found by the historian in the events themselves and then produced” (Munslow 11). As Munslow quotes from the British theorist of history M. C. Lemon, “this happened, and that happened structure” already exists in the events in the past (4). However, this understanding is challenged by postmodern philosophers of history. Hayden White claims that “the historical data is invented as much as found” (*Tropics* 82).

In “The Discourse of History” Roland Barthes analyzes the narrative structure of history and literature to see whether they differ from each other. “Narrative structure, elaborated in the crucible of fictions (through myths and early epics) becomes both sign and proof of reality” (Barthes 140). Barthes argues that in historical narrative a “realistic effect” is created rather than reality. The supposed objectivity in historical accounts is attained through the “lack of signs of the ‘speaker’” (Barthes 132).

This occurs when the historian intends to “absent himself” from his discourse and where there is, consequently, a systematic absence of any sign referring to the sender of the historical message: history seems to *tell itself*. This accident has had a considerable career, since it corresponds in fact to so-called objective historical discourse (in which the historian never intervenes). (Barthes 131-2)

The key claim made by this passage is that the absence of the utterer is equated with the objective persona to create the reality effect of historical discourse. However, this is a created illusion. The same illusion is also created in realist novels in the 19th century by suppressing the signs of the “I” in their discourse (Barthes 132).

Language as a major determining component of narrative is an important aspect of historical composition that is brought forth by postmodern critics to deconstruct conventional historical practice. Munslow points out the role of language as follows: “our historical understanding is as much the product of how we write as well as what

we write,” because it is presented to us in a written form (6). To make it clear, it will be useful to analyze this premise with an example:

If we say in cold factual terms that the American President James Madison was “small of stature (5 feet, 4 inches; 1.62 meters), light of weight (about 100 pounds; 45 kilograms), bald of head, and weak of voice” this seems unproblematic – Madison was or wasn’t this tall, was or wasn’t slight, was or wasn’t bald, was or wasn’t weak voiced. The important point, however, is the meaning that these “facts” about Madison produce in the minds of the reader, rather than the inherent veracity of the “facts” themselves. Because he was short, slight, bald and had a squeaky voice, does this incline us towards an interpretation that he was weak, could not therefore hold his cabinet together, and eventually became a dupe of Napoleon? (Munslow 6)

In line with the example above, as Cmiel states in his article like many other postmodern thinkers, “language does not represent reality so much as constitutes it” (170). Certain words and adjectives come together such as “bald,” “weak,” “squeaky voice,” and this creates an image in the minds of the reader as in the example. This example shows how language uses certain factual details to compose an account shaped by the ideology of the author.

This section has focused on the postmodern problematization of traditional history writing by emphasizing its closeness to art, interpretative aspect and narrative structure as well as the role of language in the constitution of reality. The reflection of all these discussions can best be found in literature, especially in postmodern historical fiction. That is why the next section will look at the theoretical background of postmodern historical novels.

2.3. Postmodern Historical Novel

The present section is devoted to the issues of the representation of the past in fictional works. Radically different from traditional historical fiction, postmodernism appears with a new historical understanding in literature in which traditional ways that were implemented in both historiography and its counterpart in literature, “historical fiction,” are disturbed. An important concept in the realm of postmodern historical fiction discussed in this section is “historiographic metafiction,” the term coined by Linda Hutcheon.

2.3.1. Historiographic Metafiction

It is possible to talk about two main trends in fictional history writing: historical fiction and postmodern historical fiction. Before elaborating on what historiographic metafiction is, it is necessary to sketch the traditional historical novel to have a better perspective on historiographic metafiction. Historical fiction has its roots in 19th century realist novels and particularly in the works of Sir Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Alexander Dumas, Lev Tolstoy, among many others. The relationship between traditional historiography and historical fiction should not be overlooked since both genres nurture each other in the way they represent past events. Both genres are concerned with reaching the truth about the past and representing it.

A novel can be as accurate as a history in telling what happened, when, and how. It can, and should, be based on careful research and rigorous analysis of evidence. But the distinction and advantage of the fictional form lies in the way it uses evidence and represents conclusions. (Slotkin 221)

What is being focused upon here, to explain this by way of an example, is that both the historian in traditional historiography and the novelist in traditional historical fiction aim to assume an objective role while telling the story of a past account. Furthermore, both genres aim to reconstruct the past as accurately as possible depending on existing documents. The traditional historical novel “shows famous people from the past acting in ways consistent with the verifiable public record” (Lewis 132). Both the traditional historian and the novelist attempt to represent historical events by consulting external sources, and they act as if they were like mediators between the historical events and their representations. In this understanding “the real can be said to exist independently of our representation of it” (Joyce and Kelly 208) and the crucial roles of the author/historian, language or the narrative structure of historical accounts are not taken into consideration in the constitution of historical facts. Seen from this perspective, the rationale behind traditional realist historical fiction is the same as the motivation behind traditional historiography, regardless of the main features of these genres: the former is fiction, whereas the latter is non-fiction.

In order to understand the distinction between the traditional historical novel and the postmodern historical novel, it is crucial to see the shift of focus in both trends: the focus in the traditional historical novel is reaching the truth about past events and representing it accurately; the focus in postmodern historical novels shifts towards the writing process of past events. Starting from this shift in focus, Linda Hutcheon in her seminal book *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory and Fiction* (1988) defines a new term called “historiographic metafiction.” While composing her theory of the postmodern historical novel, Linda Hutcheon makes use of the theoretical discussions about history at her time, specifically using “the recent work of Hayden White, Paul Veyne, Michel de Certeau, Dominick LaCapra, Louis O.Mink, Fredric Jameson, Lionel Gossman, and Edward Said, among others” (Hutcheon, *Poetics* xii). Resting on the existing postmodern discussions of historiography, Hutcheon analyzes postmodern novels in terms of the representation of history. In other words, she attempts to see how the world of literary works is highly influenced by discussions in the world of the philosophy of history.

Historiographic metafiction refers to the novels that “engage and unveil the parallels between writing literature and historiography suggesting that both are acts of construction that do not reflect or naively represent reality or the past, but (re)invent and shape them from necessarily subjective and ideologically laden perspectives” (Shaffer 626). The shift in focus towards the writing process of history entails the problematization of traditional historiography: the writing process of fiction is considered “parallel” with the process of history writing in historiographic metafictional novels. The focus towards the process of history writing is the reason why Hutcheon uses “historiographic” in her label. In a further elaboration of the term, Hutcheon states that historiographic metafiction refers to “those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages” (*Poetics* 5). So these novels self-consciously include both historical facts and fictive elements at the same time. This characteristic of historiographic metafictional novels finds its expression in the term “metafiction” in her labelling. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that historiographic metafictional novels are both historical and metafictional. Or, to put it differently, the problematizing

of traditional historiography is achieved through the mode of metafiction. The prominent novelists who write in accordance with this conceptualization are, as they are exemplified by Linda Hutcheon in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, John Fowles, Jeannette Winterson, D. M. Thomas, Salman Rushdie, Julian Barnes, Gabriel García Márquez, Peter Ackroyd, among many others.

Given that historiographic metafiction refers to the novels which problematize the conventional methods of history writing in the mode of metafiction, it seems reasonable to elaborate on the definition of metafiction. The prefix “meta” usually means “above” or “beyond” (“meta-”). When “meta” is combined with “fiction,” it may be referred to as “fiction beyond fiction.” Or, it can be claimed that it is beyond what is expected from fiction. The term metafiction, as pointed out by Patricia Waugh in her book entitled *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (1984), is “the 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 2). Thus metafiction is a mode of writing which makes the problematization of the relationship between fiction and reality possible by constantly referring to its process of construction. In traditional realist fiction the idea that language “passively reflects the objective world” is dominant; in metafiction this credo is a matter of question. The questions in metafictional novels are directed towards “the well-made plot, chronological sequence, the authoritative omniscient author, the rational connection between what characters ‘do’ and what they ‘are’, the causal connection between ‘surface’ details and the ‘deep’, ‘scientific laws’ of existence’ in realist fiction” (Waugh 7). From a related perspective, Linda Hutcheon applies these problematic areas to the writing of history. That is why she labels the postmodernist historical novel as historiographic metafiction.

Having thus provided a general insight into both metafiction and its relation to historiographic metafiction, the focus can be redirected to the elaboration of historiographic metafiction. Hutcheon states, in tune with the arguments in the works of Hayden White, that in historiographic metafiction the distinction between the

historical and the fictional is blurred. She claims that history and fiction, previously regarded as different genres, share a common ground in terms of claiming the truth.

Historiographic metafiction refutes the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction. It refuses the view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity. (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 93)

Stressing that both history and fiction are discourses, in historiographic metafiction history is considered equivalent to a fictional work. In this respect, to foreground the similar construction of truth in historical accounts and fiction, in historiographic metafiction the line between fact and fiction is opaque to such an extent that history becomes fiction and fiction becomes history. As thus envisioned, the established borders between different genres or “art and life” are blurred (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 9). The old distinction between history and fiction is removed, and the discourses of the fictional and the factual intermingle to foreground the constructedness of both genres.

One of the techniques used to blur the boundary between history and fiction is the appearance of historical characters in fiction. In such novels historical figures interact with fictional characters, which can be called “transworld identities” (McHale 85). However, this characteristic of historiographic metafiction is not distinctively a postmodernist enterprise. As McHale points out, “the presence of such transworld-identical characters is typical of many realistic historical novels as well” (86). In traditional historical novels, however, the presence of real historical characters does not violate the boundary between fact and fiction because the treatment of real figures does not contradict official history, which is the history of the dominant power. In other words, the accounts of real characters are consistent with the commonly known historical accounts in traditional historical fiction. In the postmodern historical novel, on the other hand, the situation is quite different. As McHale points out, postmodernist fiction seeks to foreground the line between the historical and the fictional “by making the transition from one realm to the other as jarring as possible” (McHale 90). Gabriel García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), for example, presents realistically portrayed characters acting in fantastic ways; characters die and come

back to life (Waugh 37-38). Furthermore, historiographic metafiction stresses its suspicion of the accuracy of evidence or historical data.

In novels like *Foe* (1986), *Burning Water* (1964), or *Famous Last Words* (1981), certain known historical details are deliberately falsified in order to foreground the possible mnemonic failures of recorded history and the constant potential for both deliberate and inadvertent error. (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 114)

In historiographic metafiction, then, it can be held that constructed historical facts may contradict the ostensibly real accounts of official history.

Does history, then, cease to claim a truth about the past in postmodernism? In answer to this query, Bran Nicol suggests that the criticism intended by historiographic metafiction “is aimed at the writing of history, not history itself” (102). By the same token, to clear away the misunderstanding that postmodernism rejects any notion of history, one of the arguments put forward in Hutcheon’s *A Poetics of Postmodernism* is that postmodernism attempts to emphasize that the past is only known via texts which are human constructs. Contrary to the truth-claims of traditional mainstream historians in representing the past as it actually was, postmodern history writers are of the opinion that the past is a construct since the past appears only as text.

In arguing that history does not exist except as text, it does not stupidly and “gleefully” deny that the past existed, but only that its accessibility to us now is entirely conditioned by textuality. We cannot know the past except through its texts: its documents, its evidence, even its eye-witness accounts are *texts*. Even the institutions of the past, its social structures and practices, could be seen, in one sense, as social texts. (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 16)

Historiographic metafiction emphasizes the textual nature of historical works and its reference points as documents, evidence, eye-witness accounts etc. The evidence, which is assumed to be the most significant element that distinguishes history from fiction, is treated as text.

A consideration of the textuality of everything in postmodern historiography leads in turn to questions of reference. Traditional understanding of reference is that “what history refers to is the actual, real world; what fiction refers to is a fictive universe” (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 142). In historiographic metafiction instead of referring

to the observable and physical reality, supposedly historical facts or figures are textual products only and therefore the only reference they can make is to other texts. Thus the vaunted status of evidence to strengthen the illusion of reality in traditional historiography is shattered in historiographic metafiction. As Hutcheon exemplifies through Rudy Wiebe's *The Temptations of Big Bear* (1973), the historical figures refer to the texts rather than the external reality outside the text.

What a novel like Rudy Wiebe's *The Temptations of Big Bear* suggests, by its very form as well as its content, is that what language refers to—any language—is a textualized and contextualized referent: the Big Bear we come to know is not really the Big Bear of actuality (for how can we know that today?) but the Big Bear of history texts, newspaper accounts, letters, official and unofficial reports, but also of imagination and legend. (*Poetics* 144)

As Hutcheon continues: “There *was* a Big Bear, a famous Cree Indian orator and leader—though we can know him today only from texts” (*Poetics* 144). And texts are human products. This quality of the postmodern perception of history, that everything is a text, brings history closer to being an art form. In traditional historiography the historian, or in realist historical novels the novelist relates her/his historical accounts to the world of empirical reality and the primary aim is the correspondence of historical accounts to that reality which is shaped by official records. However, in historiographic metafiction, “the only referent,” as pointed out by Keith Jenkins resting on Berkhofer's arguments, that “can be found for historical accounts is in the intertextuality which results from the reading of sets of sources combined with the readings of other historians of these same sources as synthesized in their expositions” (*Reader* 21). As Nicol rightly claims, “history is not ‘the past,’ but a narrative based on documents and other material created in the past” (99). Thus, it is a truism that historical narratives are intertextual. What historians do, then, is to bring texts together, rather than representing the objective truth about the past in a positivistic manner.

In historiographic metafictional novels parody appears to be another common strategy of self-consciously undermining the authority of traditional historiography. Hutcheon defines parody as “repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signalling of difference at the very heart of similarity” (*Poetics* 26). Historiographic

metafictional novels thus self-consciously employ certain practices of the conventional understanding of historiography to make a criticism of the discourse of the past. Historiographic metafiction writers use either some techniques or subject matter used in conventional historical expositions. For example, John Fowles parodies the structures of 19th century realist conventions in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) (Waugh 4; Hutcheon, *Poetics* 45). Contrary to 19th-century employment of the omniscient narrator who controls everything, Fowles offers an omniscient looking narrator acting quite differently: "The various Chinese boxes of narrators and fiction-makers (Fowles, the narrator, his persona, Charles, and finally Sarah) enact the novel's themes of freedom and power, of creation and control" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 45).

Another important characteristic of historiographic metafiction, which is closely related to the problematization of traditional notions of history writing such as objectivity or neutrality, is self-consciousness, which means the author's "theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 5). In traditional historical writings, the role of the historian is supposed to be one of the most important elements in the constitution of reality. S/he is assumed to be the sole authority over the account. The historian constructs the account in a way that one does not need to question the reality status of what is given. However, in historiographic metafiction the author is fully aware that what s/he produces is a human construct, and deliberately emphasizes this feature which indirectly undermines the authority of the historian. The narrator in the historiographic metafictional novel is one of the elements that shows the self-consciousness of the writer. The narrator systematically draws attention to the work's status as a construct. As Kirca rightly puts it: "The presence of a self-conscious narrator who points to the rhetorical devices constructing the text is a means of breaking the illusion of reality" (Kirca 14). In practice, the narrator in historiographic metafiction explicitly discloses the writing processes (e.g. by making comments on what s/he writes) to show that reality is a construct. The self-consciousness in these novels allows the reader to gain critical insight or "incredulity" towards what is represented in the novel itself. Or, to put this in Waugh's terms, self-consciousness helps the reader to "explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text" (2). In this way, the critical insight leads the reader to revise

her/his early readings about history in terms of the representation of reality and to question the legitimacy of what is given as *the truth*. Serpil Oppermann explains the function of self-conscious writing as follows:

In historiographic metafictional novels the way history is presented draws attention to how historical facts are created. In this way the basis of empirical epistemology is destroyed as a whole. Consequently, the plausibility of the truths that traditional realist theory uses as criteria becomes debatable as well. ([my translation] 52)

The significance of this proposition is that the emphasis on the metafictional nature of postmodern historical fiction creates an opportunity for questioning or rethinking the claims of truth in traditional historical writing or all writing. The self-conscious author tries to show how reality is constructed through language.

Since the self-consciousness attracts the reader's attention to the novel's writing process, historiographic metafictional novels are self-reflexive. The self-reflexivity of historiographic metafictional novels may have its effect on many aspects of the narrative. The traditional employment of narrative structure, causal relationship and linear time-sequence in both historical accounts and historical novels are vigorously contested in historiographic metafiction by referring to their construction process. For instance, one of the ways this is done is through narrative discontinuity. The author intrudes into the narrative and makes comments.⁸ Waugh contends that "through continuous narrative intrusion, the reader is reminded that not only do characters verbally construct their own realities; they are themselves verbal constructions, *words* not *beings*" (Waugh 26). The centrality of language in the constitution of meaning and reality is therefore more specifically emphasized through self-reflexivity. Similarly, the 19th century narrative continuity is threatened by problematizing the narrative closure (death, marriage; neat closure) to foreground how writers and readers construct endings as in Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*,

⁸ This convention was already present in the 19th century realist novel, but it is not an example of metafiction. Instead, "it functions mainly," as Waugh mentions, "to aid the readerly concretization of the world of the book by forming a bridge between the historical and the fictional worlds" (32). In other words, the fictional and the factual are complimentary in 19th century realist novels. In contrast, what metafictional novels do is foreground the "ontological distinctness of the real and fictional world" (Waugh 32).

where multiple (three different endings) endings are employed (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 59). This openness and flexibility in narrative closure destroy causal relationships and linearity at the same time. The reader cannot steady her/himself for any fixed perspective to identify the causes of what comes later. Thus the rational narrative structure of the traditional way of history writing is problematized by making the reader focus on the techniques employed.

Linda Hutcheon presents another important aspect of historiographic metafiction as the problematization of subjectivity. The subject (historian, narrator, character, or implied author), conventionally thought, was a unified, self-sufficient and coherent being who could observe the empirical world and produce knowledge. By contrast, in historiographic metafiction the subject seems dethroned from its old place. Hutcheon designates two ways of creating this problematization in novels: “multiple points of view and” or “resolutely provisional and limited” point of view (*Poetics* 11). In both approaches the subject is never sure about the past. The readers are left on a shaky ground where they are never certain about the truth of the past. In both of them subjectivity is challenged against the totalizing approach of traditional historians/narrators. In contrast to the traditional historian/narrator whose function is to represent historical account as the truth, most of the time the narrator is unreliable and fragmented in historiographic metafictional novels. For instance, in Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981), the protagonist, Saleem Sinai is so fragmented a character that his body, like the history of India of the time, falls apart towards the end of the novel (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 118). This fragmentation creates narrative holes that need clarification by the reader, and this leads in return to the comprehension of the narrator and narrative as a human construct. In addition to this, the illusion of reality created by the authority of the traditional historian and the novelist is broken through the problematization of subjectivity.

By way of conclusion, this chapter has aimed to draw the framework of the discussions about historiography focusing first on traditional historiography which can be categorized under two sub-titles: history as forward progress and history as science. Second, postmodern historiography as opposed to the implementation of traditional

understanding has been discussed in terms of its relation to art, its interpretative nature and its narrative structure. Finally, the focus has been set on the theoretical discussions about postmodern historical novels addressing the issues related to Linda Hutcheon's "historiographic metafiction." It has been discussed that historiographic metafictional novels self-consciously blur the lines between fiction and history. They problematize the conventions of traditional historiography through displaying self-reflexivity, parodic intertextuality, rejecting the status of reference, the conventional understanding of plot structure, causal relationship, linearity and subjectivity. Under the light of these arguments, the next two chapters will respectively center on the analysis of D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* and Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow* from the perspective of the framework of historiographic metafiction and then compare both works in terms of their relation to historiography. The following chapter starts with the analysis of D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* in order to see how the novel employs some of these techniques and gains the status of historiographic metafiction.

CHAPTER III

THE WHITE HOTEL AS AN EXAMPLE OF HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION

D. M. Thomas's novel *The White Hotel* was first published in 1981 in England. It is so multi-layered a novel that since the time of its publication it has been a great concern for many scholars and critics. *The White Hotel* embraces a wide range of issues such as the relationship between literary genres, history and fiction, reality and fantasy, modernity and postmodernity, psychoanalysis and history, and the Holocaust and art. The range of issues can also be extended to psychoanalysis and myth, death and sexuality, the individual and the community, woman and war, memory and reality. As all this suggests, this is a very rich novel open to a wide variety of perspectives. This chapter, however, will only look at the novel in terms of its handling of history writing.

The White Hotel is mainly about the life story of Lisa Erdman who once became a patient of the fictional Sigmund Freud.⁹ The novel includes Lisa's first engagement with Freud in 1919 and ends where Lisa is brutally murdered in the Babi Yar massacre in 1941. *The White Hotel* is made up of a prologue and six chapters. "The Prologue," which is written in the form of epistolary narrative, includes correspondence belonging to the early 20th century between Sigmund Freud, Sandor Ferenczi,¹⁰ Hanns Sachs¹¹ and Herr Kuhn.¹² These letters are mainly about Freud's patient who suffers from "a

⁹ D. M. Thomas states in the "Author's Note" that "the role played by Freud in this narrative is entirely fictional" although his imagined Freud "abide[s]" by some factual details about the historical figure Freud and his case history (Thomas, *Hotel* vii). Additionally, throughout this study Freud will be accepted as a fictional character from now on unless expressed otherwise.

¹⁰ Sandor Ferenczi (7 July 1873, Miskolc – 22 May 1933, Budapest) was "a Hungarian psychoanalyst, a key theorist of the psychoanalytic school and a close associate of Sigmund Freud."

¹¹ Hanns Sachs (10 January 1881, Vienna – 10 January 1947, Boston) was one of the earliest psychoanalysts, and a close personal friend of Sigmund Freud.

¹² Kuhn is represented as the secretary of Goethe Centenary Committee in 1931 in Frankfurt but there is not any information whether there is really a historical figure named Kuhn or not. So Kuhn may be an entirely fictional character.

severe sexual hysteria” (Thomas, *Hotel* 11). The first chapter of the novel, “Don Giovanni,” is a first-person account of Frau Anna G.,¹³ where she displays her hysteria through exaggerated pornographic fantasies and hallucinations in poetic form. Then follows, in “The Gastein Journal,” an extended prose version of the same poem, written in third-person narration authored again by the patient herself. The next section, “Frau Anna G.,” is Freud’s case study of Anna G., the writer of the poem and the journal. Following this chapter, in “The Health Resort,” Frau Elisabeth Erdman’s life, starting from 1929 to 1936 as well as her correspondence with Freud is narrated in third-person in the fashion of traditional realism. The next chapter, “The Sleeping Carriage,” is set in Kiev during the Second World War on 29-30 September 1941 when the massacre of Babi Yar happened, where “more than 30.000” people died (Quinn 37). In that sense, this chapter is about the last days of Lisa and Kolya, her stepson. The last chapter of the novel, “The Camp,” written in third-person, seems to be set either in actual Palestine or heaven where all the dead and wounded come back to life.

The characteristics that *The White Hotel* embodies, that it self-reflexively incorporates overtly different literary forms and styles, blends reality and fiction, and employs an unconventional plot structure, contribute significantly to its status as an example of “historiographic metafiction.” This chapter will first elaborate on the metafictional techniques used in the novel in relation to history writing. Then, Freud’s presence as a fictional character and his relation to historiography will be focused on. The chapter, then, will try to interrogate the novel’s wider implications about the relationship between experimental techniques, historiography, the Holocaust, Enlightenment, and modernity.

3.1. The Techniques Employed in *The White Hotel* for the Purpose of Questioning Traditional Historiography

The White Hotel employs a significant number of the techniques put forth by Linda Hutcheon in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*. *The White Hotel* deconstructs all the techniques and methods on which traditional historiography builds itself by employing

¹³ Frau Anna G. is the name used by Freud for Lisa Erdman.

self-reflexive intertextuality, unstable subjectivity, a nonlinear plot structure, multiple perspectives, an arbitrary ending, and a self-conscious author. The employment of these experimental techniques inevitably leads reader to think about the functions of these techniques, the writing process of the novel as well as the writing process of history in general. Moreover, these techniques, eventually, serve one of the most fundamental aspects of historiographic metafiction, which is blurring the boundary between historical fact and fiction.

The sharp boundary between fact and fiction, which is assumed in traditional historiography, is found problematic in historiographic metafiction. Historical fact is traditionally assumed to be the empirical knowledge about events, people, and situations, which is supported by evidence. Fiction, however, is an imaginary account of events, people or situations, which is not necessarily supported by any evidence. While fact is assumed to be independent of any intrusion, fiction is basically the product of a creator. Traditionally conceived, while fact is associated with truth in historical account, fiction is associated with the untrue or the imaginary. In *The White Hotel*, by contrast, fact and fiction are mixed to emphasize that the construction of fact and fiction involves the same processes.

One of the most apparent ways of problematizing the distinction between historical fact and fiction is the existence of historical figures in *The White Hotel*. The most significant instance of this is Sigmund Freud and his case history, but the presence of historical figures is not in accordance with official history. If this novel had been written in the mode of the traditional historical novel, the role played by Freud would have been consistent with the actual Freud. Or, it would have been consistent with historical documents. However, as D. M. Thomas self-consciously states in the "Author's Note," in *The White Hotel* the figure of Freud includes fictional (untrue) elements: "The role played by Freud in this narrative is entirely fictional. My imagined Freud does, however, abide by the generally known facts of the real Freud's life, and I have sometimes quoted from his works and letters, *passim*" (Thomas, *Hotel* vii). Although Freud in this novel is consistent with the actual Freud to a certain extent, the historical figure Freud did not have any patient called Anna G. He did not produce

her case history. Anna G. never existed historically. On the other hand, although Thomas claims that Freud, the letters, and the case history “[have] no factual basis,” (Thomas, *Hotel* vii) there are still many similarities with the actual life story of Freud and historical documents. The reader is not able to make a clear-cut distinction between two seemingly separate ways of knowledge. So the reality status of the information cannot easily be granted.¹⁴

Another obvious instance of mixing reality with fiction shows itself in the way footnotes are used. Conventionally, footnotes are not expected to be used in creative writing; this is rather a practice of traditional historiography. However, while Freud presents Frau Anna G.’s personal history, there are some footnotes used to give extra information about the text. The existence of the footnotes immediately creates the impression in the reader’s mind that these are factual writings by Freud. The reader also realizes that these are partly fictional because the historical Freud did not have such a case history. In this way the boundary between fact and fiction is blurred. As Hutcheon argues, the use of footnotes in historiographic metafiction serves to “undermine the authority and objectivity of historical sources and explanations” (Hutcheon, *Poetics*, 123). The existence of an unknown translator or editor in the novel complicates things further. The footnotes given in brackets refer to the translator’s comments on the text. For example: “[In the text there is a play on the word *niederkommen*, which means both ‘to fall’ and ‘to be delivered of a child.’]” (Thomas, *Hotel* 102). The implication creates an atmosphere suggesting that “Frau Anna G.” is originally written in German and then translated, and that it really belongs to the historical figure Sigmund Freud, which enhances the reality status of the case history. Although the case history is a fictional product of D. M. Thomas, the mixed footnotes invoke the perception that the case history is really written by the historical Sigmund Freud, and therefore this implication disturbs the traditional distinction between fact and fiction by subverting a convention of traditional historiography.

¹⁴ The detailed analysis of to what extent the fictional Freud resembles the historical Freud will be made later when intertextuality is discussed. However, that the fictional Freud is also a psychoanalyst may suffice to make this argument that Thomas’s Freud resembles the actual Freud.

The self-reflexively intertextual nature of the novel is another metafictional strategy that enhances the novel's relation to historiographic metafiction by problematizing the boundary between historical fact and fiction. Of course, traditional historical fiction is also intertextual because it relies on other texts (historical documents, interviews, historical artefacts). However, traditional historical fiction does not foreground this fact. In contrast, *The White Hotel* emphasizes the intertextual aspect of historical fiction. The novel overtly makes use of other texts mainly from two major areas: Freud and his psychoanalysis, and the Holocaust. The composition of both Freud and his approach in the chapter, "Frau Anna G.," depends to a certain extent on the actual Freud's life and psychoanalytic practices. "Frau Anna G." represents the case history of Anna who has a psychological disorder. It tells how Freud tries to treat Anna by digging her past, including the therapy sessions and interviews. The two texts used by the actual Freud in this chapter are *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis* (the case history of the Wolf man). The letters, Freud's case study, historical events and people have a factual basis to a certain extent contrary to what is claimed in the author's note that it "has no factual basis" (Thomas, *Hotel* vii). Yet, that these texts are fictional is also true, for they also contain imaginary sections that are not found in the actual documents. Thus they both have fictional and factual aspects.

The first letter in "The Prologue," for example, exists as a historical document. Ferenczi writes a letter to Gisela (Palos),¹⁵ containing his impressions of Freud and Jung on a journey to the USA for a conference.¹⁶ Thomas, however, adds a fictional paragraph for the purpose of blurring the line between fact and fiction.

But you will want to hear about the voyage . . . Jung especially was gripped by the conception of this "prehistoric monster" wallowing through the daylight-darkness towards its objective, and felt we were slipping back into the primeval past . . . (Thomas, *Hotel* 4)

The letter in the novel carries the same date and place (8 September 1909, Massachusetts) but the paragraph quoted above has been added for the author's own

¹⁵ Gisela Palos is "Ferenczi's mistress" (Kahn).

¹⁶ The real letter can be found in D. M. Thomas's article entitled "Freud and *The White Hotel*."

purposes. Moreover, some of the characteristics of Anna are borrowed from historical figures although Anna is a fictional character. During the therapy sessions, Anna goes on holiday at Bad Gastein where she produces her lyrical pornographic poem when she was “in a fever of physical desire” (Thomas, *Hotel* 183).¹⁷ Similarly, in “the case of Fraulein Elizabeth von R.,” the actual Freud recommends his patient, Elizabeth von R., to take a course of hydrotherapeutic treatment at Gastein due to her pains in the legs, where the patient’s erotic feelings as well as her pains reach their full height (Swinden 76). Fraulein Elizabeth von R.’s experience is quite similar to Frau Anna G.’s experience. “The Wolf Man’s case” is another instance of resemblance: Although Freud originally claims that he has cured his patient, who had the pseudonym the wolf man, later it appears that he has not cured him totally (Lougry 95). Just like the historical Freud, in the novel Freud is not able to cure Lisa fully as a result of therapy. Furthermore, D. M. Thomas states that while he was reading Ernest Jones’ biography of Freud, he encountered that one of Freud’s patients claimed, as in the chapters “Don Giovanni” and “The Gastein Journal,” that she had an affair with Freud’s son (Thomas, “Freud” 1958). Another example is the historical Freud’s analysis of “Dora’s case.” In Dora’s case Freud treats bodily pain as a symbolic representation of a problem in the past. Dora suffers from a limp which has no apparent organic cause, and Freud diagnoses the limp as a metaphor representing a false step that Dora took in her past (Vice 45). Dora’s situation reminds one of a similar Freudian approach to Lisa’s case. A clear example is that according to Freud, Lisa develops bodily pains as a conclusion of her repression of undesired urges such as homosexuality:

The incompatible idea had to be suppressed, at whatever price; and the price was an hysteria. The symptoms were, as always with the unconscious, appropriate: the pains in the breast and ovary because of her unconscious hatred of her distorted femininity. (Thomas, *Hotel* 140)

The same approach, therefore, is used in Anna’s case where the fictional Freud relates her pains to her homosexual urges. Therefore, “Frau Anna G.” contains factual or historical details in its fictional universe. The reader always feels lost to what extent

¹⁷ Freud tells Anna to write down her impression after she has come from Bad Gastein. In the next chapter, the reader learns that Anna has hidden the fact that she produced the poem at Bad Gastein.

s/he is reading fact or fiction. In this regard, the division between fact and fiction is opaque.

Other texts that foreground the intertextual nature of *The White Hotel* are about the Holocaust. “The Sleeping Carriage” chapter of *The White Hotel* where Lisa is murdered, which is written in the realistic mode, depends largely on Anatoli Kuznetsov’s documentary novel, *Babi Yar* which is about the Babi Yar massacre that took place in 1941.¹⁸ The Babi Yar massacre occurred after the German troops occupied Kiev, the capital city of Ukraine. More than 30,000 Jews were murdered in three days, and by the time the Germans had retreated from Kiev, the number killed at the Babi Yar ravine was more than 100,000, including gypsies, communists, and Russian prisoners of war (Quinn 37). In *Babi Yar* Kuznetsov documents down what he saw at Babi Yar as a 12-year-old witness of the massacre. In *The White Hotel* the events in the Podol (where Lisa and her stepson Kolya live), the way Jews are killed and they are thrown into the pit depend on Kuznetsov’s novel. Not only do most of the historical events depicted in “The Sleeping Carriage” depend on this documentary novel but also the characters in the novel have some affinities with historical figures such as Dina Pornicheva and Tolya Semerik – two of the few survivors of the Babi Yar massacre. Lisa, for example, shares some of the characteristics that Dina Pornicheva has. Dina is an actress in the Kiev Puppet Theatre; Lisa, who was born in Kiev, has been a dancer and an opera singer. Both women are Jewish, but neither is particularly Jewish in appearance and both have non-Jewish surnames (Brown 67). Lisa also shares some of the characteristics of Tolya Semerik’s grandmother. Tolya Semerik’s grandmother has the ability to foresee the future, which is similar to Lisa’s abilities of clairvoyance:

“[T]he time will come, a terrible time, when the enemy will swarm across the country and all the land will be covered with barbed wire, and there will be metal birds flying in the sky who will peck people with their iron beaks, and that will be just before the end of the world ...” . . . Everything has turned out

¹⁸ *Babi Yar* in censored form was originally published in Russia in 1966. The uncensored version was published in 1970 in the UK.

as Granny foretold – the wire and the iron birds, and I suppose we shall soon see the end of the world. (Kuznetsov 29)

The grandmother's premonition about the end of the world comes true in *Babi Yar*. Similarly in *The White Hotel*, Lisa foresees the deaths of many and herself in Babi Yar in a symbolic way just as Semerik's grandmother does. In "The Gastein Journal," where her absurd looking fantasies and hallucinations are narrated, some events significantly resemble the events in the massacre. The narrator, for example, tells how the guests in "the White Hotel" fall into the pit during a funeral service: "The young woman [Anna/Lisa] saw the mourners fall one by one, into the trench, as if intolerable grief afflicted them, one by one" (Thomas, *Hotel* 72). As in the grandmother's account where metal birds are associated with war crafts in the Second World War, in Lisa's journal falling mourners refer to the people who are thrown into the pit in Babi Yar in 1941. Tolya Semerik, too, bears similarities with Motya in *The White Hotel*. Tolya Semerik is the boy who escapes from the ravine with Dina Pornicheva in *Babi Yar*. Like Motya in *The White Hotel*, Tolya tells Dina: "Don't be frightened lady! I'm alive, too" (Thomas, *Hotel* 250; Kuznetsov 85).

Thus *The White Hotel* sometimes overtly and sometimes covertly makes use of other historical and fictional texts, hence blurring the boundary between fact and fiction. It is not just that the events are similar to other texts; it is also the properties of many characters that share some common points with historical figures. D. M. Thomas composes a fictional work by using historical events and figures. The deployment of other texts has led to a lot of criticism against *The White Hotel*. Many critics repudiate this novel as it has been either explicitly or implicitly composed by depending largely on other texts ranging from Freud's case studies to Holocaust documents. If an example is to be given to summarize the charges (not to mention the charges of plagiarism), Martin Amis's criticism could be discussed regarding the novel's employment of the eyewitness account of Anatoli Kuznetsov in "The Sleeping Carriage." Martin Amis condemns D. M. Thomas, for Thomas, in *The White Hotel*, excessively uses the same dramatic events and figures in the same manner as in *Babi Yar*. He harshly claims that "the testimony is unbearably powerful; it is the climax of

the novel; it is, in plain terms, the best bit – and Thomas didn't write it [himself]" (Amis, *The War* 142). Amis accuses Thomas of lacking the ability to create his own original piece about the Babi Yar scene in "The Sleeping Carriage," which is, according to Amis, the most powerful looking section of the novel. However, Amis seems to ignore the rest of the novel and the meaning emerging from the whole novel. Confining the intertextual nature of the novel only to the discussion of plagiarism, or to the discussion of the writer's ability/inability in this novel would be a shallow misreading. Ignoring how the novel questions the reality status of the representation of any event in the Holocaust would be trivializing the magnitude of the subject and reducing it to a shallow platform. This, at the same time, would be doing injustice to the writer and to the novel. A worthwhile attempt, instead, would be to discuss the reason why the author uses these texts and to try to understand the implications of this practice. This would make a better contribution to the literary criticism of the novel. By using these techniques, for example, the novel may self-reflexively be trying to highlight that any account is a text – hence a construct with a high potential of unreliability. Therefore, the novel's employment of many other texts can be seen as a way of emphasizing the intertextual nature of all historical accounts, which were traditionally assumed as original and representing the truth. Furthermore, *The White Hotel's* borrowings from *Babi Yar* naturally remind the reader of the claims about the unrepresentable nature of the Holocaust, which will be discussed later in this chapter.¹⁹

The White Hotel problematizes the traditional understanding of the subject in historiography, which is another characteristic of historiographic metafiction. In traditional historiography, the historian is a unified subject who has a consistent vision that helps her/him present past events or historical figures objectively by rationally interpreting them. The historian has an unshakable confidence in producing and representing her/his knowledge about the past. In a similar way, the historian approaches historical figures as unified subjects that can be clearly analysed and understood. This is similar in traditional historical fiction too: The historical characters

¹⁹ The significance of intertextuality in terms of historiography in a postmodern context will again be taken up later in this chapter while discussing Freud's relation to historiography.

are portrayed rationally, and there is not any inconsistency or uncertainty in the formation of the subject. *The White Hotel*, by contrast, problematizes this vision by employing a protagonist (Lisa) who is almost impossible to define because she lacks unity and a stable vision about herself.²⁰ The protagonist's religious identity is complicated, and this functions as a means of preventing her from building a stable identity. Her mother is a Polish Catholic while her father is a Russian Jew. Yet, she does not admit her Jewish identity until the very end when she realizes that there is no escaping the murder in Babi Yar (Thomas, *Hotel* 239). The name of the protagonist can be accepted as an indicator of her unstable identity, too. In traditional historical narrative, the identity of historical figures is introduced at the beginning, and it is never problematized. In *The White Hotel*, however, until Freud's case history, the reader does not know the real name of the protagonist. In Freud's case history the reader first comes across her name as Anna G. (Thomas, *Hotel* 90).²¹ The real name, Frau Elizabeth (Lisa) Erdman, is introduced in "The Health Resort," where Lisa's life after Freud's treatment is narrated (Thomas, *Hotel* 147). After she is married to Victor Berenstein, who is a Russian Jew, she gets his surname. When Lisa is asked her name at the beginning of the final chapter "The Camp," she hesitates in giving her name. Is it Berenstein (her husband's), Erdman (her German name), Morozova (her maiden name), Kanopnicka (her mother's maiden name)? (Thomas, *Hotel* 258). Thus Lisa has so many names that she is not sure which one defines her. This is yet another indication of how Lisa does not have a stable identity. As Hutcheon states, "Surely *The White Hotel* is . . . about the impossibility of a 'fixed subject-vision,' about the 'uncertainty of vision'" ("Subject" 79).

"What 'engenders' Lisa is a series of discourses," says Hutcheon (*Poetics* 171). In each chapter the protagonist's subjectivity is reformulated. Once the reader

²⁰ In this novel history writing will be treated in two distinct but related ways. The first is the construction of the personal history of Lisa Erdman through a variety of means, and the second is the representation of the Holocaust, which is also an event that terminates Lisa's personal history.

²¹ This is the pseudonym given by Freud to "protect" the patient's identity.

constructs a stable identity for Lisa, it is immediately deconstructed. Linda Hutcheon describes Lisa's subjectivity as follows:

The female protagonist is not fully or consistently a traditional Jamesian center of consciousness with whom the reader can identify as subject. Nor does she seem to be the reflection of any authorial subjectivity upon which she might be based. Instead, she is presented as the "read" subject of her own and of others' interpretations and inscriptions of her. She is literally the female product of reading. ("Subject" 80)

In "The Prologue" Lisa is constructed by the letters between psychoanalysts. Later, the details of her character are given through her pornographic poem and its extended prose version. In the following chapter she is formulated through a psychoanalytic perspective by Freud. In the next chapter, "The Health Resort," the character is given other dimensions from an unknown third-person's perspective. Following this, in "The Sleeping Carriage" Lisa's life is narrated by a distant narrator. As it is explained by Hutcheon, "she [Lisa] is presented as the read subject of her own and of other's" (*Poetics* 161). As Vieira emphasizes, the subject is never "composed:"

But to say that the subject is "composed" through these discourses is not accurate. Better to say that the subject is decomposed or deconstructed because we never get at whatever it is that constitutes Lisa Erdman. Rather than adding to a coherent self, these chapters undermine previous compositions of the self; not only do we find that we have not known the whole truth, but we discover that we have been fooled by our preconceived judgments and have grossly misinterpreted the subject; I am thinking of Freud's, and I might add our, tendency to read Lisa's telepathy as revealing her past, rather than prophesying her future. (Vieira 122-23)

Through Freud's reading of Lisa's past, the reader is allowed to formulate a fixed subjectivity, and s/he thinks that the patient definitely has a psychological disorder which has its roots in her childhood, but later events suggesting close links with Lisa's symptoms occur in the future. Freud tries to fix her identity but in the end of the novel it is suggested that Freud may have been wrong in the first place because he related her situation to her past and to "severe sexual hysteria" (Thomas, *Hotel* 11). At the end of the novel, however, the reader has received the impression that Lisa's symptoms were primarily related not to her past but to her future, when she would suffer severe

injuries in the Babi Yar massacre. In that sense, the second part of the novel falsifies, to a certain extent, the first part including Freud's reading of Lisa's past.

Lisa herself cannot construct a stable subject vision either. She is not able to form a fixed perspective about the events around herself, contrary to the traditional understanding of the subject who can observe the empirical world and produce consistent knowledge. In the chapter "The Sleeping Carriage" Lisa does not understand that she is going to die until the last minute. The narrator even portrays a German soldier and a Ukrainian policeman from Lisa's perspective as if she felt sympathy for the soldiers who would soon be responsible for her death: "It was hard not to admire his striking looks and air of authority; and equally hard not to feel, now, a grain of sympathy for the soldiers and police who were having to control the swearing, bad-tempered crowd" (Thomas, *Hotel* 237). Apart from that, Lisa has many forgotten memories which are thought to be crucial elements that form her. These forgotten memories are brought to the surface and a past is constructed for Lisa with the help of Freud. However, there are serious gaps here as well. Lisa sometimes deliberately subverts the events in her past for various reasons. After having read the case study and believed in the truth of the information provided there, the reader is surprised to read much later in "The Health Resort" chapter that much of the information provided in the case history was wrong simply because Lisa lied to Freud about certain of her experiences or had preferred not to refer to some of them. In a correction letter to Freud, for example, she confesses not having told him about a traumatic sexual event in her childhood, which might have been crucial in Freud's study of her:

[T]here are other deceptions which were, and I've decided I ought to tell you [Freud] about them, for you may feel that your case study needs changing – or even abandoning. I shan't blame you if you hate me for all the lies and half-truths I told. . . . On one occasion in my childhood I wandered onto Father's yacht when I wasn't supposed to, and I found my mother, and my aunt and uncle, there all together, naked. It was such a shock, I thought I was seeing my mother's (or perhaps my aunt's) face reflected in a mirror; but no, they were both there. (Thomas, *Hotel* 184)

This and similar revisions in the novel continually disorientate the reader, making her/him unable to put the parts together to form a meaningful whole. Since Lisa, as a character, is not a reliable personality or consistent subject, how can a traditional narrator/historian represent her as a stable subject? *The White Hotel*, therefore, “can be seen as a novel that overtly challenges both the realist novel’s representation of the world of consistent subjects who can offer an origin of meaning and action and also its presentation of a reader position from which the text is easily understandable” (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 169). Thus the novel questions the understanding of the traditional subject in historiography and historical fiction.

The multiplicity of literary forms/styles is another characteristic of the novel that makes it historiographic metafiction. D. M. Thomas constructs each chapter in a different literary form and style. Using, respectively, epistolary narrative, poem, prose, case history, traditional realism, documentary realism, and allegoric vision, the reader is left in a shaky ground in terms of making sense of the events narrated and their relation to historical reality. Each different form and style has a certain function through which the reader is directed to a certain interpretation of the events. “Genre,” as Robert Eaglestone writes, “is not a just way of writing: it is simultaneously a way of reading, too” (6). Thus each chapter implies to the reader what s/he will read and how s/he will read it. What is more, in each subsequent chapter there are some extensions, revisions and modifications of earlier chapters. It would not be wrong to suggest that the whole novel is built on constructing a reality and deconstructing that reality.

The epistolary form in “The Prologue” creates the impression that the patient has definitely some problems with her past. The patient’s poem, the product of her imagination, has many sexual, symbolic details and catastrophic details, and it encourages a reading of the patient’s past from a psychoanalytic perspective.

I gave birth to a wooden embryo
its gaping leaps were sucking at the snow
as it was whirled away into the storm,
now turning inside-out the blizzard tore
my womb clean out, I saw it spin into

the whiteness have you seen a flying womb. (Thomas, *Hotel* 21)

The persona gives birth to “a wooden embryo,” her “womb” is cleaned, and the embryo flies. As it is previously evoked that the patient is ill (Thomas, *Hotel* 11), the reader thinks that her writings have “symbolic meaning” which has its ground in the protagonist’s childhood. Once the reader is engaged with the poem, s/he immediately establishes the relationship with the patient’s damaged psychology and the necessity of a Freudian approach, which has previously (via letters) been evoked in the reader’s mind. Following this chapter, the reader is introduced with the prose version of the same poem. “The poem and the journal with its intense sexual imagery cry out for a Freudian interpretation” (Tanner 139). The following chapter then gives the analysis of the patient in the form of Freud’s case history. At the end of “Frau Anna G.” the reader has a firm belief that the patient is almost cured, that the illness of the patient stems from her childhood experiences. Thanks to Freud’s help, the patient’s repressed memory has come to the surface, and Freud has made her encounter with her past possible, and recovery is mostly achieved.

In “The Sleeping Carriage,” however, the protagonist’s life after Freud’s treatment is introduced to the reader in the mode of realism. The reader is inclined to believe the events in this chapter are representing the truth about Lisa since the events are described in a realistic setting and mode. For instance, in Lisa’s poem there is a fire in the hotel (Thomas, *Hotel* 20), and the reader treats it as Lisa’s imaginative product. Freud then relates this detail to an incident in Lisa’s childhood: Lisa learns that her mother has died as a result of “a fire that destroyed the hotel in which she [Lisa’s mother] was staying” (Thomas, *Hotel* 93). However, later in the novel, in “The Sleeping Carriage” another hotel fire incident appears again during Lisa’s adult years. Occupied by the German troops, the luxurious flats of Kreshcatik in Kiev, which can be related to the “white hotel” in her poem, are exploded by the Russians (Thomas, *Hotel* 233). Although the events are referred back to the patient’s past in Freud’s case history, similar events are realistically portrayed in Lisa’s future in “The Sleeping Carriage.” As a result, Freud’s whole analysis and way of looking at the protagonist’s life is demolished and replaced by other constructions. The reader is left in a difficult

position: s/he is not able to decide which version is correct. The novel never provides the reader with any firm belief about the actual past (if there is any). The novel plays with forms to leave the reader on a fluid floor. There are always questions on the reader's mind about the truth status of Lisa's past:

Its multiple and often contradictory forms and points of view (first-person poem, third-person expansion of it in prose, "Freudian" case history, third-person limited narration, first-person epistolary form used by many characters) call attention to the impossibility of a totalizing narrative structure. (Hutcheon, "Subject" 83)

Although different chapters are written in different genres and literary forms, all of them share similar qualities in terms of reflecting the truth. In each different mode the expectation of the reader is confounded as to who Lisa is and whether she really foresees the future or not. There is not any hierarchical order between these modes in terms of truth in the past since neither genre or form leads the reader to a firm conclusion about Lisa's life. The novel does not provide a stable way of reading. As a result of an overt play with genres and forms, the reader cannot construct a stable interpretation about Lisa's past. So, if it is seen from the representation of the history of a person, the suggestion is that one can never have a fully reliable construct.

Multiple narrators and points of view are other aspects of this novel that separate it from traditional historical fiction. The traditional historical fiction writer usually employs an omniscient third-person narrator to compound the reality effect. However, in *The White Hotel* the multiplicity of narrators and perspectives is one of the reasons of not reaching a stable and monolithic conclusion about the novel, and this strengthens the novel's ambivalent atmosphere concerning the truth about the patient's past. "The narrative unity within each section of the novel is disrupted by the start of another section with a different point of view" (Hutcheon, "Subject" 84). Freud's letters to Ferenczi and to Herr Kuhn in "The Prologue," although limited, give insights into Lisa Erdman's case. Lisa's poem in the first person and journal in the third-person are written by the patient herself. Then Freud's account of the protagonist life in the form of a case history is introduced, and the reader constructs the patient's past.

The remaining three chapters, “The Health Resort,” “The Sleeping Carriage” and “The Camp,” are third-person narratives. In these third-person narratives, however, the point of view does not always belong to Lisa. Although in “The Sleeping Carriage” Lisa is generally the focalizer, it starts with her stepson’s perspective abruptly, and then the focalization passes to Lisa again. A similar construction is also present at the end of the chapter. After Lisa and Kolya are thrown into the pit, the events are interestingly narrated from another’s perspective, which belongs to Dina Pronicheva, who is one of the few survivors of the massacre (Thomas, *Hotel* 248):

An SS man bent over an old woman on her side, having seen a glint of something bright. His [a soldier] hand brushed her breast when he reached for the crucifix to pull it free, and he must have sensed a flicker of life. Letting go the crucifix he stood up. He drew his leg back and sent his jackboot crashing her left breast. (Thomas, *Hotel* 248)

The “old woman” who is crushed by the soldier is Lisa, and “her” refers to Dina Pronicheva. Lisa was the focalizer up to this point when she is murdered in Babi Yar. In this quotation Dina is the focalizer. The multiplicity of narrators and perspectives puts the reader in a difficult position to build a coherent perspective about the historical event. This characteristic of the novel also allows to undermine the role of the traditional historian which is to construct a clear, consistent and meaningful account.

The unconventional chronology and plot structure of *The White Hotel* also contribute greatly to the novel’s status as historiographic metafiction. In traditional narratives, time flows forward, and it is linear. The events follow such a pattern that an event leads to another event successively, and therefore the causal connections are easily established. Contrary to linear succession of the events in forward elapsing time sequence in traditional history writing, in *The White Hotel*, the events do not follow a coherent structure. There are letters at the beginning of the novel, but it is not clear why they are there. The first letter is written in 1909, and the last is written in 1931. Although most of the events in the novel take place before 1931, the last letter appears first. There is a poem and a prose version of it, but no one knows when they are written, what purpose they serve, or why they are written. The questions are answered much later by Freud in the chapter, “Frau Anna G..” The reader is informed that the

psychoanalyst has asked his patient to write down her impressions of her holiday at Bad Gastein (Thomas, *Hotel* 113). Although Freud has asked this after he has started examining Lisa, the poem and the journal appear first. In conventional fiction, the narrative would instead start with Freud's case history. Thus, the time sequence is so chaotic that there is not any coherence between the chapters.

The arbitrary narrative closure in *The White Hotel* is another component of historiographic metafiction that questions the neat narrative closure in traditional historical fiction. In traditional historical fiction, closure is neatly drawn because all the events that have been narrated before serve the closure. At the same time, the closure gives legitimacy to the previous events. If there is a proper closure in the narrative, then all the questions are answered and the order is established. It may be the order itself (or, the illusion of the order) that makes people believe a historical construction. However, the closure (the final chapter titled "The Camp") in *The White Hotel* does not fit this traditional understanding. In the previous chapter it has been narrated that Lisa, as a Holocaust victim, was bestially murdered in the Babi Yar ravine in 1941. Although the portrayal of the massacre is quite realistic, in "The Camp" Lisa, strangely, comes back to life in another realm. This kind of ending is, in its simplest meaning, a completely unsuitable ending for any conventional narrative and hence for traditional historical fiction since they are highly concerned with representing the truth about the past. Because no one can come back to life again in reality, this ending is traditionally not suitable. In that sense, this section is "the perfect anti-closure" as Hutcheon calls it (*Poetics* 176).

Another reason that makes "The Camp" contradict traditional closure is its uncertainty. "The Camp" simultaneously consists of two distinct discourses: fantastic and historical. It is fantastical because it is a portrayal of an afterlife; it is historical because it looks like a depiction of Israel. The simultaneous presence of two different discourses can be seen in the opening of this final chapter. The first paragraph of the

chapter is like a continuation of the previous chapter where the Jews were believed to be sent to Palestine by train instead of being massacred in Babi Yar.²²

After the chaos and overcrowding of the nightmarish journey, they spilled out on to the small, dusty platform in the middle of nowhere. They struggled over a little bridge; then it was good to breathe the sweet air, and to be ushered through without bullying or formalities. Outside, there was a line of buses waiting. (Thomas, *Hotel* 257)

Just as the Nazis promised them in “The Sleeping Carriage,” they arrive at Palestine after “the chaos” of Babi Yar. The reader is provided with some places where Lisa and other characters stay namely, Cana (Thomas, *Hotel* 266), Emmaus (262-264), Dead Sea (272), and the mountains of Bethel (264). Although these actual places are allusions to the Bible, there are studies that associate these places with some locations in Israel and Lebanon.²³

However, that the characters come back to life adds a fantastic element to this realistic representation. Lisa reunites with all of her family members, Freud and his daughters, her friend Luiba Shchadenko and her children, Kolya’s mother Vera, Ludmila Kedrova, her friend in Petersburg etc. In a sense, it is also close to the portrayal of afterlife where characters meet and problematic aspects in life are getting better. The two different discourses, reality and fantasy, come together in this chapter. Linda Hutcheon claims that this chapter foregrounds the arbitrariness of closure, which is also a characteristic of historiographic metafiction:

All the narrative ends are tied up: characters meet and sort out their difficulties (even the abandoned cat reappears). Yet it is fundamentally inexplicable by normal narrative logic, and its time (after Lisa's death?) and place (Israel?) cannot be fixed with any certainty. What this ending does is foreground the arbitrariness of traditional novelistic closure, while nevertheless allowing, even demanding, it. (*Poetics* 176)

There is an ambiguity because realistic and fantastic elements are processed simultaneously. The characters still bear the traces of the wounds that they have in

²² Lisa and many others who were sent to death in Babi Yar thought that they were leaving for “Palestine” (Thomas, *Hotel* 232).

²³ Additional information about these places can be obtained at *Catholic Encyclopedia* website.

their previous life. Freud “attempt[s] to eat” food with his “heavily bandaged jaw” (Thomas, *Hotel* 260). Lisa’s mother has “dead skin” on her left side from face to foot (Thomas, *Hotel* 266). Thus it is neither a perfect portrayal of an afterlife nor a portrayal of real life; neither heaven nor Palestine: it is a mixture of them. Contrary to its practice in traditional history writing where closure reinforces moral values with its monolithic structure, it is quite possible to claim that the final chapter here provides the reader with multiple endings or uncertainty where the reader can adopt any approach. It could also be argued that this kind of ending disturbs the understanding of linearity and the assertion of moral values expected of a traditional historical narrative. It is hard to observe any emancipatory situation in this ending because it stands inconsistent with, and independent of, the previous sections. It does not offer any monolithic approach because it is ambivalent. Therefore, it is against a monolithic perspective in its celebration of multiplicity and ambiguity.²⁴

In the light of the above discussion about the employment of experimental techniques, it would not be wrong to argue that *The White Hotel* exhibits characteristics that are quite different from what is normally expected of traditional narrative fiction. In *The White Hotel*, D. M. Thomas mixes fact and fiction, emphasizes intertextuality, employs an unstable protagonist who has the ability of clairvoyance, uses multiple literary forms and genres, multiple narrators, nonlinear plot structure and arbitrary closure. It can be claimed that all these techniques systematically draw attention to the writing process of *The White Hotel* and all writings in general, making the text highly self-reflexive. This prevents the reader from approaching the novel as a traditional narrative and therefore the presentation of actual historical figures like Freud or events like the Holocaust is also problematized. In fact, at the beginning of the novel, in the “Author’s Note,” Thomas himself refers to the process of the construction explicitly, claiming that Freud in this novel is fictional (Thomas, *Hotel* vii). The multiplicity of forms and perspectives, the unconventional plot structure, its arbitrary closure, the presence of Freud and his case history constantly lead the reader to think of the novel

²⁴ The issue of closure and its relation to a sense of utopia will be taken up again in this chapter while discussing the way the novel questions some of the ideals of modernity.

as an artefact, and the reader becomes fully aware that the novel has something to say about the composition of any text. The techniques employed foreground how the traditional novelist creates the illusion that what s/he represents corresponds to the truth. In this regard, it breaks the illusion of reality created by traditional fiction. Furthermore, the novel uses historical figures and events and creates confusion as to the boundary between fact and fiction in order to undermine historical representation both in fictional and nonfictional historical writings.

Apart from the self-reflexivity of the text, the employment of these techniques foregrounds the self-conscious attitude of the author as well. The author foregrounds that what s/he produces is a fictional product, and its relation to reality is not as traditionally conceived. This characteristic of the author and all the authors who write in the mode of historiographic metafiction fashion in general has a profound effect on the composition of text. In traditional historical fiction, the novelist is in struggle for making the reader forget what they read is a fictional product. To heighten the reality effect, the traditional novelist divides fact and fiction strictly, hides the intertextual nature of the account, employs one-to-one correspondence between characters and figures in real life, suppresses multiplicity, and uses rational exposition. However, the self-conscious author is aware that s/he cannot represent the truth about the past and knows how and why the traditional historian uses certain methods and practices. Having “theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs” (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 5), D. M. Thomas and other historiographic metafiction writers question these techniques and make comments on the writing process itself. The presence of the Freudian case history in *The White Hotel* can also be thought of in relation to this approach because it provides readers with a suitable ground to discuss how the traditional historian works. The next section will explore this issue in more detail.

3.2. Freud’s Role and His Relation to Traditional Historiography in *The White Hotel*

To have a better insight into Freud’s role and his relation to history writing, it would be more appropriate to divide *The White Hotel* into two because there are two

different discourses in the novel. The first half of the novel, which contains “The Prologue,” “Don Giovanni,” “The Gastein Journal,” and “Frau Anna G.” revolves around Freud and his psychoanalytic practice. Having read Lisa’s poem, the prose version of it and their psychoanalytic analysis by Freud, the reader makes sense of the events and thinks that the events symbolically refer to Lisa’s past and her dreams. Furthermore, as a conclusion of the therapy, Lisa gains her health to a certain extent thanks to Freud’s treatment. The second half, which includes “The Health Resort” and “The Sleeping Carriage,” includes the realistically portrayed life story of the patient. The events narrated in these chapters resemble some crucial events narrated in the first half of the novel although the events narrated in these chapters occur later in Lisa’s life.

David Cowart claims that “psychoanalysis is an ideal structural device for a fiction concerning appearance and reality” (216). It is also a good device in analysing the relation between historical reality and fiction because in “Frau Anna G.” Freud constructs Lisa’s past like a traditional historian. In this regard, Freud’s case history can be seen as an account of a personal history. The metafictional quality of the novel, however, gives the reader the opportunity to evaluate the process of construction in Freud’s writing. Freud’s methodology depends largely on the construction of the patient’s past and aims to make her admit the repressed emotions. In his construction process Freud behaves like a traditional historian who believes to have absolute authority over his construction, relies objectively on documents and interviews, and comes up with a general rational empirical scheme. After reading the case history of Lisa, the reader immediately thinks that it is a very successful account telling the true history of the patient and identifying the causes of her troubles. However, the second part of the novel falsifies Freud and his construction of the patient’s past. This leads the reader to question the validity of Freud’s approach to Lisa’s life. In this context, it would be worthwhile to analyse the approach Freud adopts.

The chapter, “Frau Anna G.” can be regarded as an example of a traditional historical account because Freud constructs the patient’s past here just as a traditional historian does. If “Frau Anna G.” is seen as a historical account, then the poem in “Don

Giovanni” and the journal in “The Gastein Journal” and the interviews during the therapy sessions will be evidence for the construction of Frau Anna G.’s past.²⁵ As it is discussed earlier, from a postmodern perspective, since raw materials do not tell anything on their own, they should be given in a context or a frame based on evidence. The poem and the journal, the first and the second chapter, the content of which seems nonsensical at first, gain meaning later through narrative development. Without a narrative structure they do not make any sense. Later in the novel, through the narrative account, the reader makes sense of all these sections. With a proper beginning, middle and end, the raw materials turn into historical truth in Freud’s case history.

Freud’s construction of Lisa’s past can be seen as an example of how history is always constructed as forward progress, for Freud’s analysis of the events is given in a linear progressive structure. Freud reaches the results on Lisa’s case after many years of careful examination. According to Freud, for example, Lisa wanted her mother to die as every young child in “the Oedipal stage,” and her mother died after her liaison with Lisa’s uncle (Thomas, *Hotel* 138). At 15, Lisa was threatened and insulted by a group of insurgents and from them she learned that her mother was immoral. According to Freud, after that particular event she developed her first experience of the breathless condition (Thomas, *Hotel* 139). As a result of her friendship with Madam R,²⁶ who saved her when Lisa was deserted by her Russian lover in Petersburg, Lisa established a homosexual nature.²⁷ As a result of the suppression of this feeling, she developed hysteria, and hysteria caused “the pains in [her] breast and ovary” (Thomas, *Hotel* 140). Starting from the patient’s early childhood to her existing state, Freud establishes a causal relationship between the events in a traditional fashion. An event happens and that event leads to another – a structure that is the basic tenet of traditional historiography and historical fiction. This,

²⁵ The reader is presented with the knowledge that there have been interviews with Lisa but these are not given directly in the novel.

²⁶ Lisa’s ballet teacher whom Lisa sees as a “motherly” figure (Thomas, *Hotel* 139).

²⁷ As Freud indicates, Lisa is generally “preserved by the affection of mother-surrogates” (nurses and governesses) (Thomas, *Hotel* 139).

however, is undermined later in the novel since Freud's results appear flawed and based on lacking evidence, and Lisa's pains appear to be caused more by what she will suffer in the future during the Holocaust than by her repressed memories.

Freud also has a general frame for his construction of any individual's history, regardless of the patient's individuality. He places the patient's undesired memories and emotions into this pre-existing large frame, and makes his analysis. However, most of his results about the patient open his methodology to debate later in the novel. One instance of it occurs when Freud rereads Anna's journal and is "struck afresh by the rank and shameless energy of sexual products" (Thomas, *Hotel* 120). He deduces that she "hadn't won her victory over her sexual needs without severe struggles, and her attempts at suppressing this most powerful of all instincts had exposed her to severe mental exhaustion" (Thomas, *Hotel* 120). According to Freud, this is the reason why Anna used vile language in her poem and journal. Yet, in her letter to Freud in 1931 Lisa claims that the vile language she used in her poem and journal was caused by the harassment she experienced in the hands of the sailors from a merchant ship that carried grain for her father (Thomas, *Hotel* 187). The sailors reviled at her being Jewish (Thomas, *Hotel* 187). After that event, she would repeat to herself the words they used and she was "re-enacting" in her mind what they wanted her sexually to do (Thomas, *Hotel* 188). According to Lisa, this is the real reason. Lisa's "belated responses show that Freud had not 'imagined the real' Lisa, but rather, without quite realizing it, had subordinated her to the imperatives of his own narrative" (Robertson 469). Freud's frame constitutes the reality he creates. Since his frame depends on explaining the individual's history as the repression of libidinal desires, Freud in his analysis is proved to be inadequate. But then how could Freud easily establish his authority over the truth about the patient's life?

One of the reasons why the fictional account of the Freudian case history in "Frau Anna G." makes the reader believe its reality status stems partly from the historical figure of Sigmund Freud. His authority should not be overlooked since Freudian psychoanalysis has quite a long history of hegemony over the treatment of psychological problems. The novel, to a certain extent, draws its strength from this

hegemonic power since there is quite a resemblance of the novel's case history with Freud's real case history.²⁸ Having noted that Freudianism is not valid and therapeutic, Barnsley relates its ongoing popularity to its target group.

These are questions for the sociology of knowledge, but part of the answer to the latter one may lie in Freudianism's particular appeal to a liberal individualist society, with the flattering "depth," drama, and apparent meaning it ascribes to the otherwise "homeless" individual's life. (Barnsley 455)

Apart from this quality of Freudianism, "the exploration by Thomas's Freud of those dark recesses of the human psyche is wonderfully depicted and we are seduced by the confident logic of his voice and by his ability to establish connections and make sense out of the experiences described" (Lougy 98). Freud's way of constructing past events is displayed in a rational exposition. With a well-marked beginning, middle and end, the plot makes the reader comply with what is being presented. One can easily be astonished by Freud's nuanced analysis. He rationally finds the reason of the protagonist's problem in her childhood, and the reader is inclined to assume it as the truth. Lisa in a letter to Freud claims the same thing:

Frankly I didn't always wish to talk about the past, I was more interested in what was happening to me then, and what might happen in the future. In a way you *made* me become fascinated by my mother's sin . . . I don't believe for one moment that had anything to do with my crippling with pain. It made me unhappy, but not ill. (Thomas, *Hotel* 191-192)

Lisa herself admits she is "fascinated" by Freud's way of looking at the past although she never fully believes that her pains are related to her mother's sin. Although Lisa has some objections to Freud's frame of analysis, Freud never deviates from his way and he is quite sure of what he is doing. In her letter to Freud, Lisa explicitly states that she told lies about some of the events: "I'm sorry I did not tell you I'd already written 'Don Giovanni.' I do not imagine it's important. But there are other deceptions . . . , for you may feel that your case study needs changing – or even abandoning" (Thomas, *Hotel* 184). However, Freud does not give up publishing her case history: "I prefer to go ahead with the case study as it stands, despite all imperfections. I am

²⁸ For the elaboration on this claim, the intertextuality section of this chapter can be revisited. Please see pages 37-41.

willing, if you will permit, to add a postscript in which your later reservations are presented and discussed” (TWT 195). Thus Freud secures his authority by silencing or attaching minor importance to the objections directed by Lisa.

Another characteristic that strengthens Freud’s authority is his deliberate deafness to certain social facts. Freud never attaches enough importance to social events regarding Jewish identity. When Lisa suffers from a respiratory problem in 1905 for the first time, in Russia there were massacres of the Jews, political disturbances, anti-Jewish organizations, and violent street demonstrations.²⁹ However, Freud does not care about them much since he is attached firmly to his psychoanalytic approach. He never considers, for example, that Lisa’s problems may be related to the anxiety she feels because of her Jewish connections. Robertson claims that one of the things that the relation of Freud and Lisa shows is “how much the psychoanalytic discourse remained defensively deaf to real social facts and thus, in one way, betrayed the patient’s ‘hysterical’ insights and capacities because of faulty symbolization of the facts” (469). However, Freud is not fully deaf to social facts. If the social facts consolidate his psychoanalytic perspective, then Freud makes use of them. When Freud gets Lisa’s letter, saying that she foresaw the death of his daughter, Freud, closing his eyes to Lisa’s arguments, says that she has a sensitive mind since it is the time when there were many epidemics (Thomas, *Hotel* 111). Similarly, Freud does not make any progress in his attempt to diagnose the reason of hysteria, and he blames the harsh conditions of the winter, and a footnote provided supports him: “[Fuel for heating and lightening was in desperately short supply after the war. Ed.]” (Thomas, *Hotel* 99). Therefore, Freud cares about social circumstances provided that these circumstances support his vision.

Freud assumes an objective role in therapy sessions like a traditional historian, which adds to the realistic effect created in the case history. In the letter to Herr Kuhn, Freud explicitly states his role: since the patient’s writings have pornographic details,

²⁹ The 1905 pogrom against Jews in Odessa was the most serious pogrom of the period, with reports of up to 2,500 Jews killed. This information is extracted from Wikipedia; the extensive elaboration of this claim can be found in *The Revolution of 1905 in Odessa: Blood on the Steps* (1993) by Robert Weinberg.

Freud reminds him that “the compositions belong to the realm of science, where the principles of *nihil humanum* is universally accepted and applied” (Thomas, *Hotel* 12).³⁰ Freud tries not to mix his personal feelings with the case history like a traditional historian. This statement sets the tone of Freud’s role regarding his devotion to science. As a historian Freud uses evidence as the crucial component of his construction. However much he seems to be objective, seen from a postmodern perspective, he is partial in his construction as he has a general scheme for his analysis. Besides, it is clear that Freud selects some important issues according to his purpose. Although Lisa mentions his husband’s parent’s “anti-Semitic views,” Freud never goes deep in this issue (Thomas, *Hotel* 125). Yet, it could be an important point because this event might have been an important factor of departing from her husband. Thus objectivity fails in Freud’s analysis. In a sense, he disregards some points in the patient’s life.

Consequently, Freud’s case history shows how Freud analyses and represents the patient’s past in quite a conventional way, by displaying the patient’s past in a rational structure, by fitting evidence into his larger frame, by repudiating the counter claims to protect his larger frame, and by closing his eye to certain social facts. What is more, he behaves as if his case history was the truth about the past regardless of his limited and subjective perspective. When Lisa is murdered in the Babi Yar ravine, the narrator suggests that very little of Freud’s analyses was useful in understanding Lisa’s condition.

The soul of a man is a far country, which cannot be approached or explored. Most of the dead were poor and illiterate. But every single one of them had dreamed dreams, seen visions and had amazing experiences, even the babes in arms (perhaps especially the babes in arms). Though most of them had never lived outside the Podol slum, their lives and histories were as rich and complex as Lisa Erdman-Berenstein’s. If a Sigmund Freud had been listening and taking notes from the time of Adam, he would still not fully have explored even a single group, even a single person. (Thomas, *Hotel* 250)

Thus it would not be wrong to argue that using a traditional method in analysis and representation of the patient’s past, Freudian psychoanalytic perspective is shown to fail against both personal and social life. In this context, the construction of the case

³⁰ *Nihil humanum* can be translated as “no human.”

history pushes the reader further to think of the writing process of the rest of the chapters, and all narratives or historical narratives in general.

By paying attention to the process of construction in Freudian psychoanalysis, one can easily adopt a similar approach to “The Sleeping Carriage” in the second part of the novel where Lisa’s life is narrated based on Anatoli Kuznetsov’s documentary novel *Babi Yar*. Linda Hutcheon claims that *The White Hotel* is “a novel about how we produce meaning in fiction and in history” (“Subject” 83). There are two major discourses through which the reader is allowed to construct meaning: fictional and factual representation.

. . . [T]he fictional and the factual narrative elements are presented in a non-hierarchical order, sometimes supporting, sometimes undermining each other. It is up to the reader to decide whether and at what point the documentary text undermines the fictional discourse. . . . Those who are familiar with the discourse of the persecution of European Jewry will likely be disposed to construct a hierarchy in favour of the factual. (Ibsch 190)

Although the reader tends to evaluate factual representation as the window to the truth, this is not the case because both undergo the same process of production if the factual details are taken into account. The composition of any text depends largely on the initiative of the person who composes it. As it is seen in Frau Anna G.’s case history, Freudian psychoanalysis may not represent the whole truth about the patient’s life; it is just the product of Freud’s limited understanding. While Freud and his case history are, as Thomas states, fictional, “The Sleeping Carriage” is not thought to be fictional from a traditional perspective because the reader knows that the Babi Yar massacre really happened. Besides, the reader is aware that this part relies heavily on Kutnetzov’s documentary novel *Babi Yar*. The reason behind this statement is the other texts. However, as discussed earlier in relation to the intertextual aspect of the novel, it would not be wrong to argue that both Freudian psychoanalysis in “Frau Anna G.” and Babi Yar section in “The Sleeping Carriage” are equally fictional because both discourses undergo the same process of construction.

When the accounts in “The Sleeping Carriage” are compared to Kutnetzov’s *Babi Yar*, it can be argued that there are some differences between the two:

Compare Kuznetsov's "Suddenly an open car drove up carrying a tall, well-knit, elegant officer carrying a riding crop. At his side was an interpreter" (74) to Thomas's "Suddenly an open car drew up and in it was a tall, well-built, smartly turned-out officer with a riding crop in his hand. At his side was a Russian prisoner" (1981, 216). (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 171-172)

While in Kuznetsov's novel the interpreter is not identified clearly, in *The White Hotel* Thomas specifies the interpreter as being Russian. Correspondingly, Kuznetsov also made certain amendments in his documentary novel. Sue Vice discusses that Kuznetsov's novel, which was published in USSR in 1966, underwent a change as the result of being censored by the Soviet authorities, in relation, for example, to evidence of Ukrainian collaboration with the Nazis (40). In Hutcheon's quotation above, it is seen that the person near the officer is described just as the "interpreter" in the early edition of *Babi Yar*; however, in later editions of the novel (1970 in Britain) Kuznetsov added this extracted detail: "Suddenly an open car drew up and in it was a tall, wellbuilt, smartly turned-out officer with a riding crop in his hand. He seemed to be in charge. He had a Russian interpreter" (82). Thus, in Kuznetsov's novel there are certain facts which were deliberately changed for various reasons. Moreover, *The White Hotel* intentionally changes some known facts. Towards the end of the book, in "The Camp," when they are sitting on the riverside, Lisa asks her mother whether the name of the river is Dead Sea or not. "'Oh, no!'" said her mother, with a silverly laugh; and explained that it was fed by the Jordan River, and that river, in turn, was fed by the brook Cherith" (Thomas, *Hotel* 272). Although the specific location of the Dead Sea is just as her mother describes, her mother says it is not. This may be an indication of "possible mnemonic failures of recorded history" (Hutcheon, *Poetic* 114). In Freud's case history there is a deliberate change in representing the truth too. Although Anna G. is an opera singer, Freud identifies her as an instrumentalist. As the footnote suggests, "['Frau Anna G.' was, in fact, an opera singer, not an instrumentalist. Freud's desire to protect her identity gave rise to the change; though he always regretted having to depart from the facts, even in apparently trivial details.]" (Thomas, *Hotel* 113).

Therefore, from the perspective of history writing, "Frau Anna G.," "The Sleeping Carriage" and *Babi Yar*, although they belong to different genres, make similar changes in terms of representing the truth. However, what makes *The White*

Hotel different from traditional representations in this issue is that it foregrounds that there are certain factual details deliberately misused. Since each representation has problems in representing the truth about the past, it can be held that accurate representation cannot be attained. After reading these accounts written in different genres and forms, the real figures (Dina Pornicheva, Anatoli Kuznetsov etc.) in each account would have probably found the novel both real and fictional if they had had a chance. And probably they would have expressed their impression of the texts like Lisa did after Freud's case history: "It has been like reading the life story of a young sister who is dead - in whom I can see a family resemblance yet also great differences: characteristics and actions that could never have applied to me" (Thomas, *Hotel* 182).

In this context, it can be argued that the two major discourses – fictional and factual – in *The White Hotel* resemble each other in terms of their relation to reality. While the first part of the novel, which contains a replica of Freud's psychoanalysis, is a scientific analysis of a patient in the form of a case history, the second major discourse, the documentary part of the novel, which depends to a large extent on the eyewitness account of survivors are both inadequate in terms of representing reality. This assertion tells a crucial thing about the texts used in historical accounts: all texts are human constructs. In this novel it is seen how Sigmund Freud and Anatoli Kuznetsov and D. M. Thomas interpret the events, how they distort some aspects of their accounts, and how they select, emphasize or disregard some events in their immediate surroundings. In this regard, it can be held that any claim of representing the truth about the past events is problematic regardless of whether this presentation is fictional, factual, or scientific. This stance is an important component in historiographic metafiction.

This stance in historiographic metafiction also supports Theodor Adorno's and Primo Levi's claims about the inability of the representation of the Holocaust. With respect to the Holocaust, Adorno writes that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (xv). Primo Levi similarly argues about the impossibility of transmitting the severity of the barbarity in the Holocaust as "We, the survivors, are not the true witnesses [...] we are those who by their prevarications or abilities or good luck did

not touch bottom. Those who did so, those who saw the Gorgon, have not returned to tell about it” (qtd. in Richardson 7). As Levi suggests, it is impossible to present the reality about the Holocaust, which requires the knowledge of the people outside the physical realm. This claim about the unrepresentable nature of the Holocaust provides a suitable ground to discuss historiography. Postmodernism indicates the impossibility of knowing the truth about the past and of representing it whereas traditional historiography claims the opposite. In this regard, given the limitation of any realist representation of any event, the historiographic metafictional way of handling the Holocaust, without any claims of representing the truth about its ferocity, is in line with Adorno’s and Levi’s claims. However, in historiographic metafictional works there is a great potential of moving beyond the limitation of the traditional realist portrayal of the catastrophe at the same time. *The White Hotel*, with its undermining of many traditional approaches, methods and techniques can be claimed to succeed in exposing the rationale behind the Holocaust and many tenets of modernity and Enlightenment. The next section will make some further remarks about how a historiographic metafictional work like *The White Hotel* can also engage in a serious criticism of certain aspects of Enlightenment and hence of the project of modernity.

3.3. *The White Hotel* and its Relation to the Holocaust, Historiography, Enlightenment, and Modernity

In *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, Linda Hutcheon claims that “what would characterize postmodernism in fiction would be what I here call ‘historiographic metafiction’” (ix). She, in a sense, sees historiographic metafiction as equal to postmodernism in literature, particularly in fiction. Therefore, historiographic metafiction has a wider concern. Although *The White Hotel*’s relation to historiography and how it questions traditional historiography have been discussed so far, the term historiographic metafiction should not be confined to a narrow area as though it were simply concerned with history writing. By deconstructing the implications of traditional history writing, historiographic metafiction, in fact, calls into question the conventional beliefs about rationalism, the fixed subject, utopian

vision, scientism etc. In other words, it attempts to deconstruct the major standpoints of Enlightenment, and in corollary, of modernity.

Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno write, “Enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought, has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters. Yet the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity” (1). In other words, Enlightenment aims to liberate humanity from “its self incurred immaturity” (Kant 1). To reach this aim, reason is given utmost care. By reasoning, the human being can liberate her/himself, and establish a wealthy, healthy, peaceful society. This is also what defines modernity: the term modernity defines both a historical period and a cultural, political, social norm. In this regard, Enlightenment is tied to modernity. Or, it is the intellectual branch of modernity. However, as Horkheimer claims, “Enlightenment is totalitarian” (4). While it aims to liberate humanity, it has the potential to lead to destruction at the same time. At this point, the Holocaust is the most pertinent example. Nazism aimed to create a “master race” by killing subsidiary species and it engaged in this pursuit using “rational” argumentation. Societies created nation states by ignoring “the other” (Or, to create nation states they created the other). Science, which was thought to be devoted to human welfare, appeared to lead to humans’ destruction. Rationalism was used to rationally manipulate the irrational (Adorno, 16).³¹ From this perspective, the Holocaust showed the other face of Enlightenment, and hence of modernity.

In *Modernity and The Holocaust*, Zygmunt Bauman analyzes the relation between the Holocaust and modernity. Contrary to claims that the Holocaust is “a transgression of human values” (Heiler 243), Bauman claims that the Holocaust is not a deviation, rather “modern civilization” is the cause of it (6):

[The Holocaust was] more than an aberration, more than a deviation from an otherwise straight path of progress, more than a cancerous growth on the otherwise healthy body of the civilized society; that, in short, the Holocaust was not an antithesis of modern civilization and everything (or so we like to think) it stands for. (7)

³¹ The original claim is that “propaganda, the rational manipulation of what is irrational, is the prerogative of the totalitarians” (Adorno, 16).

According to Bauman, the Holocaust is a “‘paradigm’ of modern civilization, its [modern civilization’s] ‘natural’, ‘normal’ (who knows – perhaps also *common*) product, its historical tendency” (6). Modernity’s major characteristics such as “the differentiation of state from society, the apotheosis of instrumental reason in professional establishments and an omnipotent state bureaucracy, and the evacuation of morality from the public sphere” led to this genocide (Moses 442). This understanding stands in contrast to viewing the Holocaust as a transgression. If this event is seen as a transgression of human society, then it will entail the idea that there was not any problem with the Enlightenment or modernity. Or, in its mildest form, this perspective attaches an importance to a narrow perspective, to Nazi ideology only.

Therefore, it can be claimed that there are two mainstream trends in the apprehension of the Holocaust and its relation to modernity. While some (like Bauman) claim that the Holocaust is the “normal” consequence of modernity, some others (like Bernard-Donals) hold that it is an abnormality and “an exceptional scar on the ‘skin of civilization’” (qtd. in Heiler 243). Lars Heiler regards the Holocaust as a “transgression,” and thus relates *The White Hotel*’s “obliqueness” as the aesthetic transgression of the traditional representation of the Holocaust (Heiler 244). The transgression of traditional representation of the Holocaust is definitely the correct aesthetic depiction of *The White Hotel* because the techniques, methods and approaches do not fit into traditional history writing process. However, the cause-effect relation, that this transgression has an organic relationship with “the abnormality in the infringement of basic human rights and values” (Heiler 243), does not work well with respect to the novel’s approach toward modernity and its praxis. *The White Hotel* does not see the Holocaust as abnormality; instead, with its brilliant composition it highlights how this barbarity could easily be the result of the rationalistic ideals of Enlightenment and modernity. In this regard, the main distinctive feature is that *The White Hotel* undermines and deconstructs all the methods, approaches and techniques that have close links with the Enlightenment project.

The closing chapter of *The White Hotel* is perhaps the most obvious link that is drawn between the criticism of modernity, the Holocaust and traditional history

writing. The utopian impulse is an indispensable component of grand narratives because grand narratives often preach utopias in the end. All the events that have happened before gain meaning in the utopic vision at the end. This utopian vision also has close ties with Nazism. The Nazi ideology saw social, economic, and biological emancipation in annihilating the Jews, and other “secondary” species. And it should be kept in mind that “the emancipatory view of modernity began with the Enlightenment” (Finney 101). The utopic vision of the Enlightenment has its effect on traditional history writing as well. It can be argued that a proper beginning, middle and end structure is a utopic structure. In reality, nothing is as meaningful, proper and consistent as in traditional historiography. The closure constitutes the most important component of this utopic vision because the closure is the place where all meaning is generated. In traditional historical fiction this is the same since there is the same proper structure. The end is not an exception in this regard. If *The White Hotel* is evaluated from this perspective, it is seen that there is not a proper structure in the novel. The last chapter, “The Camp,” obviously provides a scathing critique of this understanding of a traditional ending because this ending is not constructed conventionally (it could even be seen as a parody of a proper ending). Seen from this perspective, the arbitrary and unsuitable end in *The White Hotel* gains more meaning: it criticizes and undermines utopias. Furthermore, this utopic vision of traditional narrative structure finds its concrete expression in the constitution of two spoiled utopias: an afterlife and kibbutzim.³²

“The Camp,” the last chapter, blends two utopic visions: a religious and a secular grand narrative. The religious grand narrative is shaped by the Christian portrayal of an afterlife whereas the secular grand narrative takes the birth of Israel and kibbutzim as its basis. If the structure of the last chapter is taken into account, it can be claimed that “The Camp” emphasizes the danger of utopias because neither utopia is a perfect solution. From a religious stance, the people are still not fully recovered. Freud eats food “with a heavily bandaged jaw” (Thomas, *Hotel* 260). From

³² A kibbutz is a collective community in Israel that was traditionally based on agriculture. It is ideologically a blending of socialism and Zionism (Wikipedia).

a socialist stance, this place is not satisfactory because “conditions were tough” (Thomas, *Hotel* 264). It can be deduced that each utopia has disadvantages as well. These two distinct utopic narratives are not presented as they would traditionally be conceived. What is more, neither utopia finds a concrete ground. If it is thought of as a portrayal of afterlife, things are not quite heaven-like. As the first paragraph of the chapter is revisited, it is seen that the journey was nightmarish, they stand on “a small and dusty platform in the middle of nowhere” (Thomas, *Hotel* 257), and they are about to suffocate. The description of the place does not look like a heaven. Moreover, if it is Israel, then there are still certain limitations over people such as “tough conditions” or some people are “imprisoned” (Thomas, *Hotel* 264). Furthermore, Lisa’s mother and father stay in different locations in contrast to what is expected from a conventionally constructed utopia. Thus, this utopic vision does not look like the best solution.

It is possible to argue, then, that the author problematizes traditionally perceived utopian understandings. Apart from that, giving two utopic narratives implies that they are similar in their nature. The author’s idea concerning narratives of utopias are akin to Baudrillard’s ideas: “‘Utopia’ is no more than the act of turning ideas into realities; it has nothing to do with the creation of a better place” (qtd. in Vieira 119). And these ideas could easily create dystopias. Lisa asks her mother what conditions are like in her settlement which is at Cana, and her mother replies: “Well, it is not the lowest circle, by any means” (Thomas, *Hotel* 266). There is still a hierarchical understanding there. Besides, from a secular utopic stance, Alexei³³ is imprisoned for a short time there (Thomas, *Hotel* 264). Although utopias are good for some people, they are still bad for some other people. As Robertson asks, “What guarantee do we have in ‘The Camp’ that the Gestapo will not show up a bit later, somewhat sheepish, to be nurtured by Lisa and the others?” (472).

³³ Alexei is Lisa’s Russian lover who deserts her for his ideological purposes.

Contrary to some critics who think that “The Camp” lacks seriousness (Robertson, Saurberg), the last chapter is not deprived of ethical seriousness.³⁴ It has ethical seriousness but this ethical understanding is not suitable to traditional readers and understanding. When the novel as a whole is considered, the last chapter stands separate from the other chapters in its absurd position, which is arbitrary. Also, it is against the rationalist aspect of traditional historiography and novel writing. This kind of situation deliberately directs critics to discussing the last chapter. And when its arbitrariness is taken into account, the utopic nature of the last chapter becomes more open to criticism. The danger of having utopias is foregrounded:

That Thomas seems unsure of the ending is understandable. In writing about the Holocaust he is writing about the dangers of utopianism. Lisa is a victim of the Utopian drives of Nazi Germany, and it is the experience of such twentieth century utopias as National Socialism and Soviet and Chinese communism, that have made us wary of utopia. (Vieira 124)

In a similar vein, modernity’s grand narratives, which are similar to the construction of traditional historical narrative and the reconciliatory power of literature, have the potential of creating catastrophe. What if Thomas tries to underscore “The Camp” as a desired end that can also produce other holocausts? What if he wants to criticize the effect of creating utopias and closures that provide the reader with moral deductions? What if heaven causes millions to die? As he states in the epigraph to the novel:

We had fed the heart on fantasies,
The Heart’s grown brutal from the fare;
More substance in our enmities
Than in our love ... (Thomas, *Hotel* xi).

Although this is not the sole meaning to be deduced from the novel, one thing that the novel may be trying to foreground is that the fantasies have the potential to cause destruction rather than solutions. As the title of the chapter suggests, these utopias (Christian afterlife, Socialism, traditional narrative closure) are actually nothing, but “camps” which function as a means of dividing people. Thus the novel could be said to criticize modernity and traditional history writing in this way, too.

³⁴ Robertson and Saurberg read “The Camp” as the solution of the massacre.

In conclusion, this chapter has attempted to show that D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* is a clear example of historiographic metafiction. The novel deconstructs every element of traditional narrative and hence of history writing. *The White Hotel* self-consciously blurs the boundary between fact and fiction to problematize the traditional implication which serves as a means of hiding the problematic construction of past events. It employs an unstable protagonist who does not have a fixed idea about herself and her past in contrast to the traditional subject who has the most important role in actualizing her/himself by using her/his mind. Instead of a monolithic voice, the novel employs multiple narrators and perspectives to leave the reader in a difficult position to reach a fixed vision. In contrast to traditional linearity of history and historical representation, the novel employs an anti-linear time sequence. Rational exposition with a clear beginning, middle, and end where causal relationships are neatly drawn and the events are presented successively, is demolished by employing an unconventional plot structure. Traditional closure is deconstructed by employing an arbitrary and discordant end. What is more, by drawing attention to its writing process and employing self-reflexive intertextuality, *The White Hotel* breaks the illusion created by traditional writing. This chapter has also discussed a further dimension of historiographic metafiction by focusing on the novel's wider implications about Enlightenment and modernity in the context of the Holocaust. Consequently, as an example of historiographic metafiction, *The White Hotel* presents not only a criticism of traditional history writing (both fictional and non-fictional) but also of Enlightenment, and Modernity.

Having provided the analysis of *The White Hotel* as historiographic metafiction, the next chapter will focus on Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow* in terms of its approach towards history writing. Moreover, the similarities and differences between *Time's Arrow* and *The White Hotel* will be detected, and then the novel's relation to historiographic metafiction will be interrogated. The next chapter will again try to focus on the novel's stance toward Enlightenment and Modernity.

CHAPTER IV

***TIME'S ARROW* AND ITS RELATION TO HISTORIOGRAPHY**

Like his father Kinsley Amis, Martin Amis was counted among the 50 greatest British writers since 1945 by *The Times* in 2008. Martin Amis's much discussed Holocaust novel entitled *Time's Arrow* was first published in the UK in 1991. Although Amis does not have any Jewish heritage himself, he has a great concern for the Holocaust so that his latest novel, *The Zone of Interest* (2014), is again about the Holocaust. Describing himself as "a philosemite," Martin Amis states: "I'm attracted to the Jews. My wife is half Jewish, my daughters are a quarter Jewish; the fact that they have one Jewish grandparent would have been enough to doom them in Nazi Germany" (qtd. in Christie). Besides, concerning his Jewish wife and children, Amis claims: "I'm pleased, I am proud. It makes me more inside history than I would be" (qtd. in Elgot). Maybe that is the reason why Amis is so concerned with the Holocaust.

Time's Arrow is an experimental novel which tells the life story of a Nazi doctor, Odilo Unverdorben, starting from his death in the late 1980s to his birth in 1917. In other words, the life story of the protagonist is narrated backwards. The narrative starts when Tod T. Friendly (originally Odilo Unverdorben) is in his death bed due to a heart attack in a city in USA, and the narrator, who may be thought of as his "lost soul," (Amis, Interview) is born at the moment the protagonist biologically dies. The narrator, who has no control over the protagonist's behaviour, starts the life journey of Tod T. Friendly in reversed chronology. The protagonist goes back in time to revisit Auschwitz of Nazi Germany in the Second World War. Tod T. Friendly becomes John Young later in life (in reversed chronology as the narrator tells it) and works as a doctor in New York. He then moves to Portugal and Italy and changes his name to Hamilton de Souza and afterwards he goes to Auschwitz where he, as a Nazi doctor, is responsible for many deaths under the supervision of Josef Mengele.³⁵

³⁵ Josef Mengele (1911 – 1979), who is also known as "Uncle Pepi," was an infamous Nazi doctor in Auschwitz, who conducted various inhumane experiments on patients. He is especially notorious for his experiments on children and twins.

Eventually he emerges as Odilo Unverdorben which, the reader understands, is his original name. The narrator repeatedly claims that the world does not make sense within the reversed narrative. However, there is only one time in the novel when the world makes sense for him, and this happens in Auschwitz because it is the first time that the dead and ill/injured Jews return to life, and the narrator thinks that their mission was to create Jews.

Since *Time's Arrow* tells the story of a Nazi doctor through the employment of experimental methods, it is apparent that it stands in contrast to traditional narratives. The common idea is that it is a postmodern novel. However, if it is compared to *The White Hotel*, which is a clear example of historiographic metafiction, it can be seen that *Time's Arrow* differs from it in many aspects. Rather than offer a critique of traditional historiography, *Time's Arrow* dwells just on the Holocaust itself in a more narrow sense. This chapter begins by analysing the techniques applied in *Time's Arrow* such as reversed narration, fragmented subjectivity, self-reflexivity, and intertextuality. This analysis will make the metafictional quality of the novel quite clear. The chapter will argue, however, that despite its obvious metafictional qualities, it is difficult to categorize *Time's Arrow* as a typical example of historiographic metafiction. This chapter will then compare *The White Hotel* and *Time's Arrow* in this respect and explore both novels' relationship with the Holocaust, Enlightenment and modernity.

4.1. The Experimental Techniques Employed in *Time's Arrow*

The traditional perception of time is always a matter of question for postmodern writers. Traditional history writing employs time which is progressive and forward-moving. The basic element that distinguishes *Time's Arrow* from novel writing in general is that time elapses backward. Quite unusual to traditional historical fiction, in *Time's Arrow* the story starts when Tod. T. Friendly dies, and ends when he is born. Everything is narrated backwards. He walks backwards (Amis, *Arrow* 14); the dialogues take place going backward (Amis, *Arrow* 14). It is like "the film is running backward" (Amis, *Arrow* 16). The most appropriate example of running backwards

could be seen in the following conversation where the narrator exemplifies how he hears the conversation:

“Dug. Dug,” says the lady in pharmacy.
“Dug,” I join in. “Oo y’rrah?”
“Aid u too y’rrah?”
“Mh-mm,” she’ll say, as she unwraps my hair lotion. I walk away, backward, with a touch of the hat (Amis, *Arrow* 14).

The conversation starts when it ends, and it ends where it begins. The reader can reconstruct the dialogue as follows:

I come in, forward, with a touch of the hat. As she wraps my hair lotion, she’ll say, “Mm-hm,”
“How are you today?”
“Good,” I join in. “How are you?”
“Good. Good,” says the lady in the pharmacy.

In order to understand what is going on, the reader has to reverse the order of the sentences because forward narration is the only way the reader is used to in the perception of the events. The last sentence becomes first and the first becomes the last. Moreover, the reader should replace some words with their reversed forms: “unwrap” becomes “wrap,” “walk away” becomes “come in,” and “backward” becomes “forward.” Although the narrator hears the conversation backwards, he understands in the progress of time that “the pitiable chirruping [is] . . . , in fact, human speech” (Amis, *Arrow* 14). This is the first and the last instance of a reversed spelling in the novel. Although the narrator hears human speech in reverse, he continues narrating the words or sounds in normal spelling for practical purposes, perhaps. However, the direction of actions and the order of sentences are still given in chronologically reversed order throughout the novel. In order to make the dialogues find meaning, the reader reconstructs them by reversing the order of the sentences represented while reading the text.

Not only are conversations narrated backwards, but every event or situation is given in reversed time sequence. Tod T. Friendly is getting younger and taller through time (Amis, *Arrow* 15), the dates of gazettes run backwards (Amis, *Arrow* 16). “It goes like this. After October 2, you get October 1. After October 1, you get September 30”

(16). He defecates in reverse order (19). Eating is interesting too. He first “collect[s] some scraps from the garbage” and then puts them into the plates (19). He vomits food instead of eating, and after packing the food he takes the packets to the market to get money (19). He starts reading the magazines, which are brought by “the garbage people,” from the bottom to the top (20). A lightning over electrical wires can “erect a city in half an hour,” thus “creation ... is easy” (23). “He takes toys from children, on the street,” and goes to the toy store to get money (22). He starts working at 6 o’clock in the evening at the hospital (30). Patients come to the hospital in a healthier state and they get worse in time (36). The style of clothes change as the time passes (99). The “government” dispenses rubbish at nights “with trucks” (51). Cars and weapons turn into “carbon and iron,” and so the weather is cleaned (57). He protests against “the Vietnam War” (58). There is another war (the Second World War) approaching, but there are still “25 years” to it but there are preparations (58). It takes years for Thomas to destroy his garden till only the weeds remain, so “destruction is slow” (26). Taxis are there whenever he needs them, and drivers always know where to go, and they give money to Tod (74). Time passes and “cars are getting fatter and fewer” (98).

The most significant dimension of reversing the order of the events is the reversed moral meaning of the events. As Martin Amis claims in an interview, “the arrow of time is not just the arrow of reason but the arrow of morality and you turn anything around, all violence, all morality is controlled by the arrow of time and becomes its opposite” (Amis, Interview). When they are narrated backwards, positive events become negative while negative events become positive. The narration of the life of whores could be the most suitable example of the consequences of reserved chronology. The wounds on the whores are healed by men who come to rape them in reversed chronology.

The welts, the abrasions and the black eyes get starker, more livid, until it is time for women to return, in an ecstasy of distress, to the men who will suddenly heal them. Some require more special treatment. They stagger off and go and lie in a park or a basement or wherever, until men come along and rape them, and then they are okay again. (Amis, *Arrow* 39)

In truth, what is presented here implies that the whores are tortured by men during intercourse. Concerning the whores, Brad, the orderly, claims that “there is nothing wrong with them – meaning the woman in the shelter – that a good six inches won’t cure” (Amis, *Arrow* 39). Although the narrator hates Brad, he finds him right because what he says is quite true in reversed order. “How could the world fix it so that someone like Brad could ever be right?” asks the narrator (Amis, *Arrow* 39). In this chronologically reversed world, pimps become good people who “shower money on them [“poor girls”] and ask nothing in return” (Amis, *Arrow* 39). As the narrator indicates, if compared with Tod, the pimps are helpful, not Tod (Amis, *Arrow* 39). While Tod just goes there to rub dirt in the girl’s wounds, the pimp comes and “knocks the girl into shape with his jewelled fists” (Amis, *Arrow* 39-40). However, in truth Tod cleans the dirt in the girls’ wounds after the pimp hits them. Thus the events are naturally morally reversed as a consequence of reversing the time sequence.

One of the most important reasons why *Time’s Arrow* employs a reversed time sequence is the changes the Holocaust will undergo in this kind of narration. *Time’s Arrow* represents a longing for “undo[ing]” the Holocaust (McGlothlin 220; Heiler 248). The employment of time reversal in the novel functions as a means of taking time back during the Second World War and focuses on a desire of bringing dead people to life again. While traveling from Italy to Poland, right before Odilo Unverdorben comes to Auschwitz, the narrator tells what he sees during their journey:

By jeep and truck we moved swiftly up through the towns and cities of middle Europe. Much of it was junk and trash, awaiting collection by war. Buildings were black, awaiting the colour of fire. People were smudged, trampled, awaiting the hooves and treads of armies. (Amis, *Arrow* 122)

Many cities and towns in Europe were destroyed as a result of the Second World War. Buildings were burnt or bombed, and people were beaten by armies. Amis finds the solution in the reversal of the time in *Time’s Arrow*. If time was taken back, cities and buildings would be restored, and people would come back to life. Under these conditions Odilo Unverdorben, who is a uniformed doctor-soldier, reaches Auschwitz, “fused for a preternatural purpose” (Amis, *Arrow* 124): “To dream a race. To make

people from the weather. From thunder and from lightning. With gas, with electricity, with shit, with fire” (Amis, *Arrow* 128).

As Richard Menke states, “[t]he local reversals of *Time’s Arrow* range from the jocular to the portentous” (961). The narrator depicts how dead people are brought to life in a detailed way. They are carried “on a stretcherlike apparatus” to the Chamber and “bodies stacked carefully, babies and children at the base of the pile, then women and the elderly, and then the men” (Amis, *Arrow* 129). They come back to life by gas. Odilo Unvedorben uses “Zyklon B” to bring Jews back to life (129). “To prevent needless suffering, the dental work was usually completed while the patients were not yet alive” (129), and “most of the gold used, of course, came directly from the Reichsbank” (130). Clothes were supplied by “the Reich Youth Leadership” (130). “Hair for Jews came courtesy of Filzfabrik A.G. of Roth, near Numberg” (130). Families, some of them coming from “Sprinkleroom” and some of them coming from labour services, were united on the ramp, also known as “*selections on the ramp*” (132). The Nazi doctors made use of “Phenol” to bring the Jews back. It was “absolutely a routine” for them (137). In the spring of 1944 in Auschwitz, they “were doing the Hungarian Jews, and at an incredible rate, something like ten thousand a day” (149). With the progress of time, ghettos were dispersed, and Jews were “deconcentrated” and “channelled back into society” (154). After Auschwitz, Odilo moves to Schloss Hartheim where they “produced” from ashes some deformed people (around 5000) who had “clubfoot” and “cleft palate” (154).³⁶ They lose the war, and Jews come from all over the world (163). Blind and deaf Jews now wear armbands (164). They are permitted to have pets, buy meat, cheese and egg, and allowed to have friendly relationship with Aryans (164). Curfew for Jews is lifted (164) and life turns to normal. So the employment of reversed time sequence has such a function to bring the Jews back.

³⁶ Schloss Hartheim is one of six main “killing centers” (Lifton 71). It was a converted “mental hospital” (Lifton 71). The psychically and mentally handicapped people were killed here either by gassing or injection under the name of “Euthanasia Program” (Lifton 46).

The use of reversed chronology in *Time's Arrow* also leads the reader to think of its process of construction, and therefore emphasizes "its status as an artefact" (Waugh 2). In this regard, it can be claimed that the novel is an example of metafiction. Contrary to traditional historical fiction where the author attempts to conceal the process of writing and researching and the fact that what s/he produced is a "human construct" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 5), *Time's Arrow*, with its employment of reversed chronology, constantly makes apparent that it is a fictional product. This reversed chronological development (or undevelopment) does not have any realist concerns. The construction of the novel in this way, therefore, makes it an example of metafiction. What is more, the narrator, at the beginning of the novel, comments on the process of writing when he struggles to figure out how this strange world runs as if he wanted to make the reader understand the working of the world of the text better:

Each day, when Tod and I are done with the *Gazette*, we take it back to the store. I have a good look at the dateline. And it goes like this. After October 2, you get October 1. After October 1, you get September 30. How do you figure *that?* . . . The mad are said to keep a film or stage set in their heads, which they order and art-decorate and move through. But Tod is sane, apparently, and his world is shared. It just seems to me that the film is running backward. (Amis, *Arrow* 16)

Incapable of comprehending the world turning around him at first, the narrator gradually understands how the textual world runs. This kind of remark, which is given at the beginning of the novel, can be seen as an obvious sign of making the reader alert about the process of writing. Since the events are narrated in reverse order and this is emphasized by the narrator from time to time, the reader is fully aware that what they are reading is a fictional construct.

Another apparent instance of referring back to the novel's process of construction is the humorous comment that the narrator makes about Tod's dialogues with women. As the narrator indicates there is only one instance in which the dialogues make sense in either way (Amis, *Arrow* 60). In both ways, backward or forward, the dialogues "still get no further forward" (Amis, *Arrow* 60).

"Please. You can sleep over."

“This is goodbye, Tod.”
“Beth,” he’ll say. Or Trudy or whatever.
“It just doesn’t sit well with me anymore.”
“Give me one more chance” (Amis, *Arrow* 60-61).

At the beginning or at the end of the conversation Tod pleads with women to stay with him after the quarrel. The conversations with women create similar meaning regardless of being written backwards or forwards: “I have noticed in the past, of course, that most conversations would make much better sense if you ran them backward. But with this man-woman stuff, you could run them any way you liked – and still get no further forward” (Amis, *Arrow* 30). The narrator’s humorous comment on the way the narrative proceeds draws attention to the process of construction. A similar comment on the way of writing of this book appears when Tod and Nurse del Puablo visit Metropolitan Museum. After looking at the paintings on the wall, the narrator says: “Like writing, paintings seem to hint at a topsy-turvy world in which, so to speak, time’s arrow moves the other way” (Amis, *Arrow* 95). Thus the novel discloses a secret kept by the traditional novelist that the world described is primarily a construct. In this way *Time’s Arrow* dissolves the illusion of reality often created in traditional historical fiction.

At first glance, it can be suggested that by employing a chronologically reversed narrative *Time’s Arrow* makes a criticism of traditional history’s forward-going construction. This claim can be accepted to a certain extent. However, a closer look suggests that the linear progress of history is not a matter of question here. Even if the story is narrated backward in time, *Time’s Arrow*, in fact, reflects a linear moving historical understanding, which is quite traditional. In other words, the novel employs linear backward narration instead of linear forward narration. *The White Hotel*, by contrast, employs an anti-linear time sequence when the discordance between the chapters is taken into account. This, at the same time, shows that *The White Hotel* questions the traditional perception/presentation of history’s linear structure. Yet, the same questioning stance is not available in *Time’s Arrow*. As it is discussed previously, the most important aspect of reversed narration can be seen in its effect over the reversed moral dimension of the Holocaust in *Time’s Arrow*. Furthermore, if it is taken

into account that the reader naturally restores the events in the forward way to produce meaning, then it can be claimed that *Time's Arrow* is away from problematizing the traditional representation of history by employing reversed time order.

Another characteristic of *Time's Arrow* that separates it from traditional historical fiction is the way the narrator is employed. In traditional historical fiction the narrator is a unified self who produces objective knowledge about the past, and objectively constructs/reconstructs it. In *Time's Arrow* the unnamed narrator, who emerges when Tod Friendly's biological death occurs, has a limited perspective of the world surrounding him, which constitutes a controversy about the traditional role of the narrator. He fails to produce any accurate comment on the world. He does not even know his identity. The author does not provide the reader with stable information about his identity or his age. The narrator questions: "The other people, do they have someone else inside them, passenger or parasite, like me?" (Amis, *Arrow* 16). He is like a "parasite" living in Tod Friendly's body. He does not have any control over Tod.

I kept wanting to relax and take a good look at the garden – but something isn't quite working. Something isn't quite working: this body I'm in won't take order from this will of mine. Look around, I say. But his neck ignores me. His eyes have their own agenda. Is it serious? Are we okay? (Amis, *Arrow* 13)

He is not able to direct him or communicate with him. He does not have any role or effect on Tod's actions. The narrator has "no access to his [Tod's] thoughts" but he is "awash with his emotions" (Amis, *Arrow* 15). Thus, it can be claimed that he may be "a soullike observer imprisoned in Tod's body" (Mullan). This ambivalence regarding the narrator's identity, role and function unavoidably attracts the reader's attention to the formation of the narrator. The reader understands that the narrator is a construct, which adds to the novel's metafictional aspect.

This "soullike observer imprisoned in Tod's body" is not capable of comprehending his immediate surroundings. Although the narrator figures out the way the world runs, claiming that "it just seems to me that the film running backward" (Amis, *Arrow* 4), he is so naive that he "continually misreads the signs and misanalyses the events" (Tredell 128).

Intellectually I can just about accept that violence is salutary, that violence is good. But I can find nothing in me that assents to its ugliness. I was always this way, I realize, even back in Wellport. A child's breathless wailing calmed by the firm slap of the father's hand, a dead ant revived by the careless press of a passing sole, a wounded finger healed and sealed by the knife's blade (Amis, *Arrow* 34)

Although he knows everything in this inverted world goes backwards, he still tries to evaluate the situations by their backward effects. Although, in fact, a father's "slap" causes his child to cry, or a finger is severed by a "blade," in this reversed world the narrator finds this inverted "violence" useful because a slap, a tread, or a blade can make the living creatures good. That is why, according to the narrator, "the violence is salutary." While the world he lives in runs backward, he keeps evaluating everything in a forward fashion. He tries hard to understand what is going on, but he eventually fails. The narrator, who has a forward looking mind in a backward moving world, perpetually complains that "the world won't start making sense" (Amis, *Arrow* 37).

The world, however, starts making sense to the narrator in Auschwitz (Amis, *Arrow* 124), where Odilo Unverdorben and the narrator "produce" Jews, and where the backward running world is perfectly in tune with a forward looking mind. The moment when the world starts making sense, the narrator quite explicitly identifies himself with Odilo Unverdorben. Before the Auschwitz section, the narrator has an ambivalent relationship with the protagonist. He sometimes refers to Tod as "I," sometimes as "he," and sometimes as "we." The most apparent example of this ambivalence is present just before they produce Jews. "I [the narrator] was keen to exercise my German, but we [the narrator and Odilo] didn't speak. He [Odilo] held his coffee cup as a woman does, with both palms curled around it, for warmth" (Amis, *Arrow* 126). In a minute-long process the subject pronoun shifts from "I" to "we," from "we" to "he." The places where the narrator uses "I," "he," and "we" cannot be situated categorically; the use of the subject pronouns seem to be arbitrary. However, what is certain is that after the Jews start to be created, the narrator identifies himself with Odilo in a consistent way. For instance, when the Jews' gold teeth are inserted into their mouths in Auschwitz, the narrator uses the subject pronoun "I." "I *knew* my gold had a sacred efficacy. All those years I amassed it, and polished it with my mind:

for the Jews' teeth" (Amis, *Arrow* 139). Thus, for the narrator, this backward world in Auschwitz goes utterly parallel with his forward mind.

When Odilo works in Schloss Hartheim, the narrator is still with him. However, seeing that what he (the narrator who is identified with Odilo) produces is not quite proper any more,³⁷ the narrator leaves Tod's body. The world again does not make sense.

What was wrong? What was the matter? Were the ovens malfunctioning? Was the Chamber faulty? Because the people we produced just weren't any good anymore. All the wizardry and delirium, all the insomnia and diarrhoea of Auschwitz—it was failing. Yes, that's right: the wards, the examination rooms, the silent gardens of Schloss Hartheim were heavy with a sense of failing magic. At first the patients really weren't that bad. Some little defect. Clubfoot. Cleft palate. But later they were absolutely hopeless. I try not to look at them closely, the patients, as I lead them in their paper bibs from the Chamber. (Amis, *Arrow* 154)

Since the people who come to life in Schloss Hartheim are physically disabled or mentally disturbed people, the narrator cannot bear Odilo anymore. In Auschwitz people were not disabled or "hopeless," so the narrator felt happy about the situation, and there was no problem. But now, the narrator claims that "you shouldn't be doing any kind of thing with human beings. . . . The part is over," and he leaves Odilo alone (Amis, *Arrow* 156). From this point onward, the narrator again refers to him as "he."

If the narrator is accepted as a kind of historian here, then he does not comply with the role of the traditional historian. The traditional historian is assumed to be a unified subject who can interpret and analyse the events fully or in a correct way in the mode of rational thinking. However, the narrator in *Time's Arrow* is quite opposite of this. On the one hand, the narrator has a limited perspective, and on the other hand, he misjudges the events. He is limited because he cannot even read the newspaper since he cannot control Tod's body. "I am at Tod's mercy. What's going on – in the world, I mean? I wouldn't know about that either. Except when Tod's eye strays from the Kwik Crossword in the *Gazette*" (Amis, *Arrow* 6). Due to the lack of insight into

³⁷ Please refer to footnote 36 for information on the program followed in Schloss Hartheim.

the world in which he lives, the narrator is not able to gather objective, meaningful and accurate information. What is more, the narrator misjudges the events. For instance, he gets angry at Odilo Unverdorben and leaves his body after seeing that people whom they produce in Schloss Hartheim are not as healthy as before. These people are “the mad,” the “clubfoot[ed],” the disabled etc. (Amis, *Arrow* 154), who were killed by “the Nazi euthanasia program.” Yet, the narrator is not aware of this fact, and therefore, he finds this situation unbearable and leaves Odilo’s body. Thus the narrator is inadequate to produce reliable and correct knowledge about the events. In this regard, the narrator is not like a conventional narrator in traditional historical fiction.

In this context, the status of the narrator in *Time’s Arrow* and the narrators in *The White Hotel* (Lisa, Freud, and the anonymous third-person narrator) share similar traits. In both novels, the narrators are unable to give a full account of the events in terms of their ability to represent the truth about the events. However, there is also a big difference between the novels in terms of the function of the subject who narrates the events. In *Time’s Arrow* the reader is able to produce the intended meaning. The reader knows the narrator is unable to comprehend the events around him, so s/he does not believe in the narrator’s interpretation. Instead, the reader constructs her/his own meaning, and it is quite a stable one. Unlike the narrator, the reader in *Time’s Arrow* understands the world of the novel and what the Nazis do comprehensively and clearly. By contrast, in *The White Hotel*, the reader is not allowed to construct a fixed knowledge about the events. There are many questions left unanswered on the reader’s side. Ambiguity is everywhere in *The White Hotel*, which constantly disorients the reader. While in *Time’s Arrow* the reader can produce a stable interpretation of the events in spite of the unreliable narrator, the reader cannot reach the ultimate meaning in *The White Hotel*. This again suggests that, compared to *The White Hotel*, *Time’s Arrow* is much less interested in questions about reaching the objective truth in history.

Furthermore, the protagonists in both novels look similar in terms of identity issues. Just like Lisa in *The White Hotel*, Odilo keeps changing names, which may, at first look, refer to a kind of identity crisis (Tod T. Friendly, John Young, Hamilton de Souza, and Odilo Unverdorben). However, there is still a major difference between the

two novels in this respect. In *Time's Arrow* the reader gets the impression that the protagonist does not feel lost concerning his identity. His major motivation in changing names is to hide his Nazi identity following the Second World War. This situation is very different in Lisa's situation where Lisa, the narrator and the reader all feel at a loss about the truth about her identity. In this regard, in two novels identity issues are processed in different directions, and *The White Hotel* again appears more suspicious as to the possibility of reaching a stable meaning and hence a single truth.

Intertextuality is another device used in *Time's Arrow*, which may foreground the idea that everything is a text. In the novel's "Afterword," Martin Amis clearly states that he made use of other writers' texts such as Robert Jay Lifton's book published in 1986: "Lifton gave me a copy of his book *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*. My novel would not and could not have been written without it" (Amis, *Arrow* 175). The detailed description of Auschwitz and Schloss Hartheim are in line with the description used in Lifton's book, which is a detailed study about the role and the psychology of the doctors who collaborated with the Nazis on the massacre. There are lots of events and phrases in the novel that describe Auschwitz or Schloss Hartheim: "selections on the ramp" (Amis, *Arrow* 132), or the killing of the Jews in Auschwitz or euthanasia program in Schloss Hartheim. The narrator describes Odilo as if he is a "biological soldier" (Amis, *Arrow* 158), which is a direct phrase extracted from *The Nazi Doctors* (Lifton 30). The narrator describes impaired people for the "euthanasia" program as "Life unworthy of life" (Amis, *Arrow* 154); this phrase also appears in *The Nazi Doctors* (Lifton 25). There is a lot of information taken from *The Nazi Doctors* about Josef Mengele (Uncle Pepi): how he measured the twins or dismantled them, how he looks, or his new laboratory.³⁸ The "omnipresence" of Josef Mengele (Amis, *Arrow* 136) is described in detail in *The Nazi Doctors* (Lifton 341-342). As it is stated in *Time's Arrow*, Mengele has "a box

³⁸ "Twin children frequently called him 'Uncle Pepi'; and other twins told how Mengele would bring them sweets and invite them for a ride in his car, which turned out to be 'a little drive with Uncle Pepi, to the gas chamber'" (Lifton 355).

full of eyes” on his desk, and carries a head wrapped in newspaper, which is not “uncommon” (142).³⁹

In his book Robert Jay Lifton analyses the role played by the Nazi doctors in the Second World War. The most significant effect of Lifton’s book on *Time’s Arrow* is, perhaps, the formation of the narrator. Lifton designates two major psychological traits of the Nazi doctors: “psychic numbing” and “doubling.” “Psychic numbing is a general category of diminished capacity or inclination to feel” (Lifton 442), whereas “doubling” is a term defining “the division of the self into two functioning wholes, so that a part-self acts as an entire self” (Lifton 418). So Lifton states that the Nazi doctors produced two distinct selves, which enabled them to commit murderous acts. Thus, it can be claimed that the narrator is the other self of Odilo Unverdorben – the self which tries to make itself distinct from the atrocities happening during the Holocaust. The reason why the narrator has no access to Odilo’s thoughts can best be explained through Lifton’s ideas on the Nazi doctors. What is more, the moment of the separation of the narrator from Odilo after Schloss Hartheim is in line with Lifton’s scheme because when Odilo is about to leave Schloss Hartheim, the narrator leaves him. If this event is chronologically restored by the reader, it is realized that the narrator emerges when Odilo begins murderous acts in Schloss Hartheim, as in Lifton’s arguments. In that sense, the formation of the narrator is close to the arguments produced by Robert Jay Lifton.

The other sources that Amis used in this novel belong to Primo Levi. As Amis states in the “Afterword”, he used Levi’s *If This Is a Man* (memoir) (1947), *The Truce* (memoir) (1963), *The Drowned and the Saved* (essays) (1986), and *Moments of Reprieve* (biography) (1981) “in particular” (Amis, *Arrow* 175).⁴⁰ In a similar vein, Amis states that “[my] alternative title was *The Nature of the Offence* – a phrase of Primo Levi’s” (Amis, *Arrow* 176). There are other phrases created by Levi that Amis uses in the novel: “*Hier ist kein warum*,” for example. In *If This is a Man*, Primo Levi

³⁹ Please see Chapter 17 in *The Nazi Doctors* (337- 383) for a detailed analysis.

⁴⁰ These works by Primo Levi depend on his eyewitness accounts in Auschwitz where he survived as a prisoner.

writes: “‘*Warum?*’ I asked him [a guard in Auschwitz] in my poor German. ‘*Hier ist kein warum*’ (there is no why here), he replied, pushing me inside with a shove” (24). The Auschwitz part of the novel actually resembles the way Levi writes his eyewitness account. Both Amis and Levi use German language for certain phrases such as “*Hier ist kein warum*,” or “*Arbeit macht Frei*,” and both writers translate them to their mother tongues.

Another source that has contributed a lot to *Time’s Arrow* is “a certain paragraph – a famous one – from Kurt Vonnegut” (Amis, *Arrow* 175). Amis here mentions a paragraph from *Slaughterhouse 5* (1969) where the protagonist of the novel “watches a Second World War movie forwards and then backwards” (Wood).

American planes, full of holes and wounded men and corpses took off backwards from an airfield in England. Over France, a few German fighter planes flew at them backwards, sucked bullets and shell fragments from some of the planes and crewmen. They did the same for wrecked American bombers on the ground, and those planes flew up backwards to join the formation. (Vonnegut 74)

When Billy Pilgrim, the protagonist of *Slaughterhouse 5*, watches the movie backward, the planes undo the war. The same logic is apparently applied in *Time’s Arrow*. All these examples suggest that the novel has intertextual qualities, and this aspect of the novel is clearly expressed in the “Afterword.”

In the light of above discussion, at first look, it can be thought that both *The White Hotel* and *Time’s Arrow* are similar in terms of intertextuality.⁴¹ This similarity is obvious even in the fact that both writers include references to the texts they used while composing their novels. However, on second thought, one realizes that there is still a major difference in the way these two novels employ intertextuality. In *Time’s Arrow* the events, historical figures and institutions do not contradict the official history. As Frank Kermode argues in the *London Review of Books*, “the supply of information is maximised in quite the usual way” (qtd. in Vice 37). The information about Josef Mengele, Adolf Eichmann, the events in Auschwitz and Schloss Hartheim

⁴¹ It is seen that *Time’s Arrow* is as equally intertextual as *The White Hotel*. In this regard, Amis’s harsh criticism of D. M. Thomas about the borrowings in *The White Hotel* seems unfair.

are all in line with what is accepted as the truth. If it is seen from this perspective, it can be suggested that in *Time's Arrow* Amis, like a traditional historian, does research and employs the "facts" in other texts as they appear without problematizing them, which stands contradictory to *The White Hotel* where the boundary between factual and fictional details is blurred, and where intertextuality is put to work to enhance the metafictional effect. If these arguments need to be summarized in a sentence it can be stated that in *The White Hotel* the intertextuality functions to enhance the ambivalence of what is presented as historical truth while in *Time's Arrow* the intertextuality aims to strengthen the impression that what is represented is historically true.

In the light of all this, it can be claimed that *Time's Arrow* is written in the mode of metafiction because the reversed chronological order and the naive narrator attract the reader's attention to its process of construction, and therefore they strengthen the idea that this novel is a fictional construction only. Thus it breaks the illusion created by the traditional novelist. At this point a second question emerges: To what extent is it possible to categorize *Time's Arrow* as historiographic metafiction? Stefen Baker, in *The Fictions of Postmodernity* (2000), claims that the novel's reverse narrative structure and intertextuality can make it "identify with" Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction (139). The fragmented narrator can also be added here. If purely the techniques which have been employed are concerned, it can be claimed that these techniques are also the components of historiographic metafiction. However, if the functions of the techniques are thought of in relation to historiography, there occur some problems. One may claim that the novel makes use of historical documents, and at the same time the novel draws attention to its process of construction; therefore, it may be seen as an example of historiographic metafiction. Yet, does this novel explicitly exploit historical data to make the novel historiographic metafiction? The answer appears to be negative. *Time's Arrow* does not seem to have any questions about traditional historiography. The linear structure of history is not problematized. If the reversed chronological order, which is the most distinguishing characteristic of the novel, is reconstructed by the reader (this is also what the novel asks the reader to do), it can be observed that there is not much ambiguity in terms of making sense of

the events; rather, the meaning is quite clear, which is in sharp contrast to *The White Hotel*. Therefore, it can be argued that the linear structure is not called into question although a reversed time chronology is employed. Furthermore, the fragmented narrator is not able to produce consistent knowledge about the events, which can be seen as the problematization of the traditional historian's role. However, the reader perfectly can. The most important component of historiographic metafiction is, maybe, to problematize the reality status of traditional representation of historical events. However, *Time's Arrow* does not bring such issues forth. The novel exploits historical data to convey its ultimate meaning about the Holocaust, which is to give a new dimension to the comprehension of the Holocaust. In other words, the novel, in quintessentially traditional fashion, exploits facts for its fictional construction. The reality status of other texts is not a problematical issue in the novel. The intertextual aspect of the novel does not refer to its process of construction as in *The White Hotel*. While the boundary between historical fact and fiction is blurred in *The White Hotel*, it does not seem to be questioned in *Time's Arrow*. In this regard, it seems problematic to categorize *Time's Arrow* as historiographic metafiction when it is compared to *The White Hotel*, which can be considered a clear example of historiographic metafiction.

Since the novel is about Auschwitz, Adorno's statement that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" cannot be dismissed (xv). It is important to note that in *The White Hotel* the unrepresentable nature of the barbarity in Auschwitz was considered in relation to history writing and to the impossibility of reaching objective truth in history. *Time's Arrow* and *The White Hotel* share similar points to a certain extent because both novels suggest that this atrocity cannot be presented in a traditional way. "Amis may be trying to express the inexpressible. It is a truism that the holocaust is incomprehensible. The reverse narration provokes readers into a thought process that enables them to grasp its horror" (Wilson 400). *Time's Arrow* therefore shows that Auschwitz cannot be comprehended by human beings in a traditional way. Or, in order to comprehend it you need to reverse the time's flow. Since you are not able to reverse time's arrow, you cannot understand it, and therefore you cannot represent it. A naïve narrator who cannot fully understand this backward going world is the other instance

of showing the “inexpressible” nature of the Holocaust. When Primo Levi is asked if he understands the Holocaust, he says that not only does not he understand it but also “there is a secret human duty not to understand it. To understand something is to include it, to accommodate it, to bring it into yourself” (qtd. in Amis, Interview). Levi’s argument of not understanding the Holocaust is a consequence of a moral stance. The same moral stance is in line with the naivety of the narrator in *Time’s Arrow*. The narrator does not understand this world, and if he could understand it, then the immorality of this event would be even more disturbingly obvious. Thus the employment of reversed chronology and an innocent narrator ultimately supports the “inexpressible” nature of the Holocaust. *The White Hotel*, by contrast, suggests that you can represent the Holocaust or any other historical event but you should be aware that your representation may always be problematic in terms of reaching the ultimate truth. *The White Hotel*, then, tries to ask larger question about how accurately history can be represented.

4.2. *Time’s Arrow* and its Relation to the Holocaust, Historiography, Enlightenment, and Modernity

It is crucial to see that Modernity is interwoven with the Enlightenment perspective. When it is taken into consideration that Enlightenment is basically a rationalist philosophical perspective, to inquire about this novel’s attitude towards Enlightenment will be a practical step in evaluating its outlook towards Modernity. From this perspective, *Time’s Arrow* seems to support the idea that the Holocaust occurred as a consequence of subverting the project of Enlightenment. At this point it is necessary to recall that Enlightenment is based on the power of reason (the idea that by reasoning the subject can liberate her/himself and always progress for the better). This consideration can be observed in the relation between the narrator and the protagonist in *Time’s Arrow*. Martin Amis, building his frame on Lifton’s analysis of the Nazi doctor, divides the protagonist into two different selves. It is seen that these two separate identities of the self emerge when Odilo starts murderous acts in Schloss Hartheim. The Auschwitz self, the protagonist, is a self who acts without his emotions or morality, and who is quite a rationalist. Thanks to this quality of the mind, he is able

to commit horrible acts as Lifton suggests. The statement that the narrator makes, that he has “no access to his [protagonist’s] thoughts,” but is “awash with his emotions,” supports this argument (Amis, *Arrow* 15). Since the narrator has no access to Odilo’s thoughts but to his emotions, it can be claimed that the only thing that the protagonist has is the thoughts which are the product of a rational mind. This shows, similar to Adorno’s claim, how a Nazi doctor, Odilo, has been able to use rational argumentation to manipulate an essentially “irrational” act into the realm of reason.

Another instance of the effect of Enlightenment can be seen in the novel in an event in Auschwitz, where the word “Enlightenment” can be seen for the first and last time. The narrator complains of the existence of shit everywhere in Auschwitz since “Auschwitz universe, it has to be allowed, was fiercely coprocentric” (Amis, *Arrow* 132). The narrator does not understand why there is shit everywhere in Auschwitz, but he eventually realizes the reason when he encounters the “fundamental strangeness of the process of fruition” (Amis, *Arrow* 132). “Enlightenment was urged on me the day I saw the old Jew float to the surface of the deep latrine, how he splashed and struggled into life, and was hoisted out by the jubilant guards, his clothes cleansed by the mire” (Amis, *Arrow* 132). The latrine functions as a tool for the advantage of the Jews. The author, through the narrator, uses the word “Enlightenment” during a process conducted by the Nazis in Auschwitz. In a sense, the narrator attributes the word Enlightenment to the Nazis. It is also quite noteworthy because if it is read in a normal way (in reverse direction of the novel), it is seen that the Jews are thrown to the latrine, not “hoisted out.” In this regard, when the naïveté and limited perspective of the narrator, and the Nazi’s “enlightened” mindset are taken into account, it is quite possible to suggest that this instance indicates how Enlightenment is exploited and subverted by the Nazis, and where the Nazis carried rationalism to.

As most critics suggest, the reversed chronological order in the novel can be seen as a tool of highlighting how inverted the Nazi ideology is. “If you reverse time, Nazi logic gains meaning. Only in a completely upside-down, backward world, he suggests, are their actions comprehensible” (Kakutani). For instance, the phrase

“*Arbeit macht frei*” can only gain meaning in reverse in Auschwitz.⁴² It is known that the Jews were a part of production in Auschwitz. The Jews, who were selected to work, were forced to work in many different areas. In truth, this phrase (*Arbeit macht frei*) or the ideology led many to die due to harsh working conditions and inadequate nutrition in concentration camps. In the novel’s inverted world, it is seen that “work liberates: Friday evenings, as they [workers] move off toward it, how they laugh and shout and roll their shoulders” (Amis, *Arrow* 57). Although this instance is given before the Auschwitz section in the novel, the same logic can be applied to Auschwitz universe because in reverse order the Jews (who are meant to work) will be liberated when the Holocaust is undone. As the narrator says in Auschwitz, “[t]he men, of course, as is right, walk a different path to recovery” (Amis, *Arrow* 131). This phrase comes literally true in the novel’s subverted world.

The purpose of reversing the order, evidently, is to disclose that the Nazis have an inverted logic or ideology. This thought, then, alludes to the idea that the Nazis abused or misused the Enlightenment ideals. This claim can also be supported by the novel’s most significant characteristic: backward flowing time. As the narrator claims, the world does not make sense until Auschwitz because everything goes backward. According to the narrator, the only time when the world starts making sense is at Auschwitz and Schloss Hartheim (to a certain point); after them the world again loses meaning. This approach towards the Holocaust evokes the impression that *Time’s Arrow* expects the reader to blame the Nazis for their inverted understanding of Enlightenment and modernity. It also goes so far as to suggest that Enlightenment and modernity are not a matter of question in *Time’s Arrow* as to whether they nurtured the Nazi ideology or not. This idea is later supported by Martin Amis himself. In a conversation, Amis claims: “I believe in the exceptionism of the Holocaust. I think it was the terminal point of man’s madness, and barbarity, and stupidity” (Amis, Interview). Isolating the Holocaust from any other event may entail the idea that the Holocaust should be evaluated in itself only from a narrow perspective. However, it is also possible to disagree with Amis and argue that claiming that the Holocaust is an

⁴² “*Arbeit macht Frei*” means “Work Liberates.”

exception can also be seen as equal to a claim that the Enlightenment ideals and modernity have had no role at all in the making of the Holocaust.

Constructing a Holocaust novel like *Time's Arrow* in this way makes way to a tendency to disregard the role the Enlightenment project may have had in the happening of such an atrocity. To return to the technique employed in the novel, the employment of linear plot structure, which is a significant feature of traditional historiography and historical fiction, is not really problematized in *Time's Arrow*. If the novel is read backward as the author wants the reader to do, it will be seen that the plot structure is quite linear and conventional. As Frank Kermode argues, "the progress of the tale is fairly orthodox, it heads towards a recognition" (qtd. in Vice 37). The protagonist was born in 1917 in Solingen. After graduating from a medical school, he joined the Nazis and participated in the execution of Jews and others as a doctor. After the war ended, he fled to Italy, Portugal and the USA respectively. He eventually died in the late 1980s. An event leads to another event respectively.⁴³ This structure is, maybe, the most desirable method used by an enlightened traditional historian because linear time sequence is the most basic technique used in any narrative. It also suggests, in line with the Enlightenment ideals, that history always involves forward progress toward the better.

It should not be dismissed that the "emancipatory view of modernity began with the Enlightenment" (Finney 101). This emancipatory view of the Enlightenment can be related to the Nazi ideology. The Nazis dreamed of a utopia by making use of the progressive and rationalist aspects of science. This utopia required to annihilate mentally ill people, physically deformed people, and "subspecies" – Jews, gypsies etc. As the narrator describes Tod's feeling towards some people, he portrays Nazi's ideology as well:

Tod has a sensing mechanism that guides his responses to all identifiable subspecies. His feeling tone jolts into specialized attitudes and readiesses: one for Hispanics, one for Asians, one for Arabs, one for Amerindians, one for blacks, one for Jews. And he has a secondary repertoire of alerted hostility

⁴³ This is also the reason why Menke calls this novel "unbildungsroman" (959).

toward pimps, hookers, junkies, the insane, the clubfooted, the hare-lipped, the homosexual male, and the very old. (Amis, *Arrow* 23)

This is the way the Nazis were going to be able to create the *übermensch* and fulfil their dream. This understanding was also supported by some research areas in the scientific world of that time. Eugenics,⁴⁴ for instance, strengthened the political, social, moral, cultural, and economic environment of that time which would make way for Nazism to execute “secondary species.”⁴⁵ In this light, it can be claimed that “the emancipatory view of Enlightenment” is also implemented by Nazism. *Time’s Arrow*, by using linear plot structure and ignoring the larger questions about reaching objective truth through narrative, makes use of a method that is put to work by the historical understanding of the Enlightenment, hence, indirectly, of Nazi ideology. As a result of this situation, the novel is not able to avoid creating another utopia, or another grand narrative. As James Wood claims, “Amis turns the story of the concentration camps into a Utopian narrative” (Wood) and Auschwitz becomes a good place. To bring back the Jews, who are massacred by the Nazis, by narrating the event in reverse order is, in fact, creating another utopia reminiscent of the one created by Nazism.

Thought in this way, does *Time’s Arrow* really achieve “undo[ing] the Holocaust [?]” The answer is, most probably, no. *Time’s Arrow*, by reversing the time, helps to understand that the logic of the Nazis was inverted. This statement draws attention to the Nazis, not to what may have caused them to emerge, unlike in *The White Hotel* where many elements that Modernity itself builds are problematized. So, was *Time’s Arrow* able to claim anything that may prevent another Holocaust from happening again? The best response to this inquiry is, maybe, the end of the novel. When Odilo Unverdorben’s symbolic death occurs, the arrow of time moves counter to the novel’s time (Amis, *Arrow* 173). Is the Holocaust happening again? The answer can be found in the narrator’s words: “Modest Solingen harbors a proud secret. I’m the only one who happens to know what that secret is. It’s this: Solingen is the

⁴⁴ “‘Eugenics’ is a term coined by Francis Galton in 1883 to donate the principle of strengthening a biological group on the basis of ostensible hereditary worth; despite its evolutionary claims and later reference to genetic laws, eugenics has no scientific standing” (Lifton 24).

⁴⁵ Social Darwinism can also be considered in this regard.

birthplace of Adolf Eichmann. Schh ... Hush now. I'll never tell. And if I did, who would believe me?" (Amis, *Arrow* 170). Aware of his powerlessness, the narrator believes the idea that he has no effect over the people in real life. Even if the arrow of time turns to its normal flow after Odilo dies, the narrator's foreknowledge about the Holocaust which will happen approximately 25 years later will not be able to change anything. In addition to this, if the narrator could at least tell Odilo that Adolf Eichmann will be responsible for the deportation of Jews to killing sites, no one would believe him because in the 1920s Adolf Eichmann had not joined the Nazis yet. The same approach can be developed for the novel: the novel does not have any effect over readers in terms of shattering the ground the Holocaust stands on, so it is not able to "undo the Holocaust." Thus it would not be wrong to suggest that Martin Amis's novel *Time's Arrow* does not go beyond a naive attempt that simply wishes the Holocaust had not happened.

In this context, can *Time's Arrow* be categorized under the label of Linda Hutcheon's "historiographic metafiction" when the novel's relation to the Enlightenment and modernity is concerned? At this point it will be useful to remember *The White Hotel's* relation to the Enlightenment. *The White Hotel* makes a criticism of traditional historiography which is based on the Enlightenment viewpoint with its employment of an unstable protagonist against the traditionally perceived unified subject, multiple narrators against the power of a single voiced narration in historiography, anti-linear time sequence against the linearity of the traditional perception of history, an arbitrary ending against rationalist narrative exposition, a blurred boundary between fact and fiction against the objectivity of historical presentation, and self-reflexive intertextuality against the illusionary effect that hides the aspect of traditional history's status as text and human construct. As discussed in detail above, however, *Time's Arrow* does not engage in any of these in the way *The White Hotel* does. Therefore, it may be said to present a narrower stance by dealing with the Holocaust and Nazism only and not with wider implications.

As previously noted, there are two main approaches towards the Holocaust: one (e.g. Bauman) sees the Holocaust as a "normal product" (Bauman 6) of modern

civilization which is shaped by the Enlightenment and thereby modernity while the other perspective (e.g. Bernard-Donals) sees it as an abnormality and “an exceptional scar on ‘the skin of civilization’” (qtd. in Heiler 243). It has been discussed that *The White Hotel* shares the first understanding. It can also be argued that *Time’s Arrow* shares the latter perspective which sees the Holocaust as an abnormality. *Time’s Arrow*, in a narrower sense, highlights how inverted the Nazi ideology was and how abnormal and reverse the Auschwitz universe was. “The book’s world mimics the very inversion or explosion of moral values that the Holocaust enacted” (Wood). Thus it can be claimed that the methods and approaches employed in *Time’s Arrow* are only related to Nazi ideology and its practices. In this regard, it can be claimed that *Time’s Arrow* is away from criticizing the Enlightenment and, in corollary, traditional historiography. In addition, Lars Heiler’s idea about *Time’s Arrow* that the transgression of the traditional aesthetic representation of the Holocaust stems primarily from the “transgression of human values” in the Holocaust makes sense (244). Since the Holocaust is a transgression of societal, moral, humanist, positivist and progressive values of that time according to the latter perspective which characterizes *Time’s Arrow*’s wider perspective, then its presentation naturally deviates from the traditional way of historical representation.

In the light of this perspective, the explanation of the way the narrator has been constructed in *Time’s Arrow* becomes easier. The narrator is the emotional side of the protagonist, the Nazi doctor. Thus Odilo has a split identity, and therefore he is fragmented contrary to the perception of the subject in the Enlightenment. That the subjectivity of the protagonist is fragmented stems from his being a Nazi soldier. Unlike the narrator in the novel, the reader, just as s/he is perceived in the Enlightenment stance, does not feel lost or fragmented. Once the reader grasps the reversed logic of the narrative, his sense of unity concerning the novel’s meaning is restored. The reader can produce consistent, objective, and empirical knowledge about the Holocaust and the novel as a whole. Therefore, the problem of subjectivity in the novel relates not to the reader but to the Nazi doctor only. Thus, *Time’s Arrow* seems to be limited to just the Nazi context unlike *The White Hotel* which constantly

disorientates the reader, and thereby leads her/him to ask larger questions about historiography and the truth. So *The White Hotel* encompasses a wider question, and it is about the Enlightenment ideals. In a similar vein, that *Time's Arrow* does not problematize the traditional understanding of the linear progress of history, which is supported by the Enlightenment historians, is the result of *Time's Arrow's* indifference towards modernity. A closer look at the structure of the novel suggests that it is actually simply reversing the linear narrative – hence creating another kind of linearity and another kind of – relatively – traditional historical fiction.

To conclude, the main problem of *Time's Arrow* does not seem to be with history and historiography in general, but with a single event in the progression of history. The main concern of the novel is to revision the Holocaust, to show how inverted the Nazi logic was. Since the aim of the novel is not to problematize traditional history writing, its relation to historiographic metafiction seems problematic. The novel diverges from traditional representation practices but the main reason of it may stem from the nature of the Holocaust. Since the holocaust is “unique . . . in its style” (Amis, *Arrow* 176), its representation is not in accordance with traditional presentation. In that sense, Amis's focus is on the moral dimension of the Holocaust rather than history writing. If *Time's Arrow's* relation to modernity is compared to *The White Hotel's*, which is a clear example of historiographic metafiction, it can easily be seen that the two novels stand on two opposite ends of the spectrum. It can therefore be argued that *Time's Arrow* does not appear to meet the larger expectations built by historiographic metafiction.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This thesis has analysed two postmodern novels, D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* and Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow* in terms of the way these novels deal with the Holocaust. It has been claimed that both novels deviate from traditional historical representation in their employment of experimental methods mainly through the use of metafictional techniques. However, it has been argued further that these novels' relation to Linda Hutcheon's term "historiographic metafiction," which is the starting point for this study, seems different. It has been observed that while *The White Hotel* is a clear example of historiographic metafiction, *Time's Arrow* does not fit into this category equally well although its metafictional aspect is acknowledged.

In the theoretical framework section of this study, this thesis has tried to elaborate on the basic elements of traditional history writing and the rationale behind it in order to make the comprehension of historiographic metafiction easier. Traditional history writing is structured around the Enlightenment ideals which emphasize rationalism, empiricism, and objectivism. For the sake of convenience, traditional historiography is discussed under two slightly different approaches, namely "history as science" and "history as forward progress." What is common to both approaches is that they claim to represent past events as correctly as possible by giving utmost care to evidence and the significant role of the historian. However, in postmodern understanding of historiography, which constitutes the second part of the theoretical chapter, this traditional understanding is a matter of question. Postmodernist understanding sees traditional historiography as an instrument of shaping the past through subjective assessments in order to impose a certain moral and political stance. In this context, the works of Hayden White, Keith Jenkins and Alun Munslow have been made use of in order to formulate the postmodern discussions put forward by these scholars. The discussions are formulated around subtitles, such as "Is History a Product of Science or Art?," "Historiography: Interpretative or Objective?," and "The

Role of Narrative in the Constitution of Reality.” Postmodern history theoreticians emphasize the similarity between the writing process of history and literature to deconstruct the traditional perception of history as science. Instead of the alleged objectivity of the historian and her/his construction, it has been discussed that the historical accounts are the products of the interpretation of the historian’s subjective judgement. Additionally, the role of the narrative structure is highlighted in the construction of historical reality to undermine the vaunted status of evidence in traditional historiography.

In the third part of the theoretical chapter, the major characteristics of historiographic metafiction have been introduced. The significance of historiographic metafiction lies in its embodiment of a general critical approach towards traditional history writing. Historiographic metafictional novels blur the boundary between historical fact and fiction to foreground that both of them are human constructs. The intertextual aspect of historical fiction is highlighted to show that everything, including evidence, is text. These novels parody the conventions of traditional historical fiction by overtly playing with the techniques and narrative structure such as multiple endings. They are self-reflexive texts which draw attention to the process of construction to undermine the methods employed in traditional historiography. The subject (the narrator/s or the protagonist) is a problematic entity in these novels: the narrator is either fragmented or multiple to show that s/he is just a construct in historical fiction, which at the same time undermines the role of the traditional historian who hides her/his presence in historiography. Furthermore, all of this problematization is done through a self-conscious author who knows and foregrounds what s/he produces is an artefact. In this way historiographic metafiction problematizes both traditional historical fiction, and undermines the status of traditional historiography.

Following this theoretical framework, in Chapter 3, *The White Hotel* has been the focus of attention under the framework of historiographic metafiction. It has been argued that *The White Hotel*, which tells the story of Lisa Erdman, a victim of the Babi Yar massacre, in quite an unusual way, is a powerful example of historiographic metafiction. In *The White Hotel* the boundary between historical fact and fiction is so

opaque that the reader has difficulty in making this distinction, and also the way of constructing factual and fictitious details foregrounds the parallelism of both. Freud's case history of Lisa enhances the metafictional effect because the case history can be read as a suitable example of how traditional historiography constructs past events. The intertextual aspect of the novel containing borrowings from Freud's works and Anatoli Kuznetsov's *Babi Yar* attracts the reader's attention to the novel's writing process, which shows that fictional and factual narratives undergo the same process of construction. The multiplicity of literary forms and genres enhances the ambivalence of the reality status of the events and makes the reader question their functions. The multiplicity of the narrators leaves the reader on a slippery ground so that s/he is not sure whether Freud's or Lisa's narration of past events is correct. The novel employs an anti-linear plot structure since the events do not chronologically proceed successively. The proper beginning, middle and end structure is disturbed by employing an arbitrary and unsuitable ending in *The White Hotel*. This way of constructing the novel, which makes use of many unconventional techniques to draw attention to the writing process, is an indicator of the author's self-consciousness. Thus D. M. Thomas breaks the conventions of traditional historical fiction and undermines traditional methods of historiography.

Given that the techniques employed support the novel's categorical placement as historiographic metafiction, the focus has then been shifted to *The White Hotel's* wider remarks about historiography, the Holocaust, the Enlightenment and modernity. This attempt helps, on the one hand, the comprehension of historiographic metafiction's wider concern better and on the other, allows us to establish the connection between the Holocaust and the problematization of traditional historiography, which has close ties with Enlightenment and thereby with modernity. It has been argued that this novel supports the idea that the Holocaust is a possible consequence of modernity, and therefore it severely criticizes the method of traditional historiography which has its roots in the Enlightenment. In other words, by deconstructing the standpoints of traditional historiography, it criticizes the Enlightenment and modernity at the same time. In this sense, *The White Hotel* also

addresses and criticizes a huge issue such as modernity through deconstructing the main tenets of traditional historiography.

In Chapter 4, this thesis has focused on Martin Amis *Time's Arrow* from the perspective of history writing. The Holocaust occupies the centrepiece of *Time's Arrow* and employs many experimental methods like *The White Hotel*. The chapter argues that the major concern of *Time's Arrow* is rewriting the Holocaust to give a new perspective dwelling largely on the moral dimension of the massacre by employing a highly experimental technique. Amis puts the life of a Nazi doctor Odilo Unverdorben, whose life is narrated backwards, in the center in *Time's Arrow*. It employs a fragmented narrator who lives in the protagonist's body, but the narrator has a limited perspective and misjudges the backward-moving events. The reversed narration and fragmented narrator draw the reader's attention to its process of writing, and therefore the novel has metafictional aspects. In addition to this, *Time's Arrow* is intertextual like *The White Hotel*. At first look, these qualities of *Time's Arrow* make one think of it as an example of historiographic metafiction. One may argue that *Time's Arrow* employs backward narration against forward narration of traditional historiography, a fragmented narrator against the traditional role of the historian who is assumed to be unified, and self-conscious intertextuality against the claims of objectivity of the historical account. However, on closer examination one finds that there are strong reasons to believe that *Time's Arrow* does not seem to put much stock in the problematization of traditional history writing. The main concern of *Time's Arrow* is not to criticize traditional history writing practice. *Time's Arrow* employs backward narration to create a moral effect regarding the Holocaust to underline that the Holocaust was a deviation from the expected positive progress of history. The novel employs a fragmented narrator to show that the Nazi doctor has two split identities that help him commit murderous acts in Auschwitz. The intertextuality is not employed in relation to the idea that everything is a text. By contrast, it functions as a means of enhancing the truth status of the events in the novel's fictional universe. Apart from that, *Time's Arrow* does not question the linear exposition of historical events or the attainability of truth in historical accounts. In this context, it has been discussed that

whereas the Holocaust is used mainly for the purpose of questioning traditional historiography in *The White Hotel*, the Holocaust and therefore Nazism are the centerpiece of *Time's Arrow* to show how the Holocaust was morally wrong.

The wider implications of *Time's Arrow* are also important to distinguish these novels' attitude towards history writing. It has been claimed that by making traditional historiography problematic, historiographic metafictional novels such as *The White Hotel* criticize the ideals of Enlightenment and modernity. Thus it has been discussed that historiographic metafictional novels have a wider concern. By contrast, it has been seen that the scope of *Time's Arrow* is limited to the Nazi context only. What the novel emphasizes is the subverted ideology of Nazism and the inverted world of Auschwitz. In this regard, it has been argued that the main concern of *Time's Arrow* is not to criticize traditional historiography and hence Enlightenment and modernity. Thus, it has been discussed that a postmodern novel like *Time's Arrow* which deals with a historical event and which is written in the mode of metafiction does not fit well into the category of historiographic metafiction.

Under this light, this study claims that the term historiographic metafiction is so broad in scope that not each postmodern novel dealing with history may be placed under this label. As Ansgar Nünning states in "Crossing Borders and Blurring Genres: Towards a Typology and Poetics of Postmodernist Historical Fiction in England since the 1960's" (1997), "Hutcheon's characterization of postmodernist fiction fails to answer the question of where to draw the line between historiographic metafiction and other narrative and generic modes for presenting past and present reality in fiction" (220). As this study has discussed, *The White Hotel* and *Time's Arrow* have different concerns, and *Time's Arrow* does not meet the criteria expected from historiographic metafiction. This thesis, therefore, suggests a reconsideration of historiographic metafiction as a general labelling for all postmodern historical novels.

The story Hutcheon tells about historiographic metafiction as defining postmodernism indeed sounds suspiciously like yet another master narrative, and it is by no means the only, or even the best, story, but merely one of several competing "narratives of postmodernism." If it seems to be more appropriate and sensible to argue, as [Rüdiger] Imhof does, "that historiographic

metafiction is one class of metafiction among many,” then the fields of metafiction and postmodernist historical fiction need to be remapped. (Nünning 219)

This study, in this regard, may inspire other researchers in this area to multiply these kinds of research, and instead of Hutcheon’s all-encompassing treatment, a new category can be proposed to define novels like *Time’s Arrow*.

In the confines of this study some wider remarks about the relationship of *The White Hotel* and *Time’s Arrow* with Enlightenment and modernity regarding historiography have been provided. However, these remarks have been limited to the scope of this study and a detailed discussion has not been presented. Further research, however, can always make up for this and explore the relation of these huge concepts with historiography. Moreover, other postmodern historical novels’ relation to Enlightenment and modernity in a history writing context can also be looked into.

That *The White Hotel* and *Time’s Arrow* are concerned with the Holocaust, which is probably the major traumatic event in the 20th century, also reminds us of trauma studies. A comparison of the experimental narrative techniques used in these novels may provide a remarkable insight into trauma narratives. To what extent and how reliably can trauma be represented through narrative? These questions may constitute the main subject of further studies about these novels and others employing similar topics. Another way of looking at the issue might be that while *The White Hotel* tells the story of a victim of the Nazi massacre, *Time’s Arrow* narrates the story of a perpetrator of this slaughter. A narratological analysis in this respect may bring forth interesting results regarding the representation of trauma from two opposite perspectives.

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APPENDIX A: TURKISH SUMMARY

Postmodern romanlar geleneksel tarih anlatılarının yanlı, eksik, ideolojik ve ahlaki öğretilerin empoze edildiği ve genel olarak egemen anlayışa hizmet eden bir araç olduğunu öne sürerler. Bu yüzden postmodern romancılar yerleşik tarih anlayışının bu özelliklerini açığa çıkarmak için tarih yazım sürecine dikkat çekmek istemişlerdir. Bu anlayıştan hareketle, postmodern romanlarda geleneksel tarih yazım biçimi bir sorun odağı olagelmıştır. Bu tez, bu bağlamda, D. M. Thomas'ın *The White Hotel* (1981) ve Martin Amis'in *Time's Arrow* (1991) adlı eserlerinde geleneksel tarih anlayışlarından nasıl saptıklarını ve bu sapmalar neticesinde ortaya çıkan anlamları incelemeyi amaç edinmiştir. Bu incelemenin ardından, bu tez bu romanlarda var olan sapmaların çoğunlukla üst kurmaca teknikleri aracılığıyla gerçekleştiğini öne sürer. Bu noktada; Linda Hutcheon'ın "tarih yazımcı üst kurmaca" olarak adlandırdığı postmodern roman bu iki romanın analizinde hareket noktası olarak belirlenmiştir.

Fakat; bu çalışma aynı zamanda Hutcheon'ın tarih yazımcı üst kurmaca olarak adlandırdığı postmodern romanın kategorik olarak her postmodern tarzda yazılmış üst kurmaca romanını kapsayamayacağını belirtir. Bu iddiayı desteklemek için *The White Hotel* ve *Time's Arrow* adlı yakın dönemde yazılmış iki postmodern üst kurmaca roman seçilmiştir. D. M. Thomas'ın *The White Hotel*'i tarih yazımcı üst kurmaca için iyi bir örnek olduğunu kabul edip Martin Amis'in *Time's Arrow*'un ise geleneksel tarih yazımını eleştirmek gibi bir amacının olmadığını, bu yüzden bu konsepti uymadığını savunur. Bu iki romanın seçilmesinin diğer bir nedeni ise bu romanların Yahudi soykırımını ele almalarıdır. Yahudi soykırımı; sosyal, siyasal, ekonomik, kültürel ve entellektüel alanda varolagelen Aydınlanma ve modernite anlayışının ciddi şekilde kuşku uyandıran olgular olarak değerlendirilmesine olanak sağladığı için bir kırılma noktasını ihtiva eder. Dolayısıyla, geleneksel tarih anlayışının modernite ve Aydınlanma felsefesinin bir ürünü olduğu düşünüldüğünde, romanların postmodern düşün dünyasına geçiş zeminini hazırlayan Yahudi soykırımını ele almaları bu tartışmayı yapmak için onları uygun zeminler haline getirmiştir. Böylece, bu

romanların Aydınlanma ve moderniteye ilişkin yaklaşımları da bu romanların geleneksel tarih yazımına karşı tutumlarını belirlemek açısından önem kazanmıştır.

Tezin 2. Bölümünde, bu tartışmayı yürütebilmek için önce geleneksel tarih yazımının ne olduğu üzerinde durulmuştur. Bu çalışma, geleneksel tarih kavramını 19. yüzyılda yöntem ve yaklaşımlarını akademik bir düzlemde geliştiren tarih yazımı özelliklerine atıfta bulunarak resmetmeye çalışmıştır. Bu çalışmada geleneksel tarih yazımı iki alt başlıkta incelenmiştir: ilki kabaca tarihi, sadece geçmiş olayların nasıl meydana geldiğini ortaya çıkarmak için objektif ve kanıtı yücelten bir anlayışı barındıran “bilim olarak tarih;” diğeri ise tarihi, devam eden doğrusal bir ilerleme biçiminde gören “ileriye doğru gelişen tarih”tir. “Bilim olarak tarih” anlayışında tarihçi, bir bilim insanı edasıyla geçmişteki bir olaya ait belgelere olabildiğince ulaşmaya çalışır, bu belgeleri akıl süzgecinden geçirerek bağımsız ve ideolojisinden arınmış olarak inceler ve geçmiş olayları resmeder. Bu anlayış, geçmiş olayların anlatıda birebir olarak verilmesi amacını güder. Buna örnek olarak tarihin bir akademik disiplin olarak kurulmasına büyük katkı sağlayan Alman tarihçi Leopold Von Ranke verilebilir. Ranke için tarihin amacı; sadece olayların nasıl meydana geldiğini göstermektir (Tosh 7). Diğer taraftan, buradaki ikinci yöntem olan “İleriye doğru gelişen tarih” anlayışında “tarihin geçmişi ancak daha önceden var olan bir taslak içerisinde konulduğunda insan faaliyetlerinin genel kurallarının öngörüsünün yapılabileceğini” varsayan bir anlayıştır (Munslow 22). Yani, bu anlayışta asıl olan geçmiş olaylardan insan eylemlerini açıklayan genel kurallar çıkarmaktır. Örneğin; Marks’ın toplumların tarihini sınıfların çatışması olarak görmesi veya Freud’un insan tarihini libidinal isteklerin baskılanması ile açıklamasıdır. Bu iki anlayış bu çalışmada geleneksel olarak adlandırılmıştır. Çünkü; aralarındaki küçük farklara rağmen bu iki anlayışın kökleri Aydınlanma felsefesine dayanır. Geleneksel tarih yazımının, temelde pozitivist ve bilimsel ideallere dayandığını söyleyebiliriz. Tarihi olaylar ve anlatımı gerçekte eşdeğer olduğu düşünülür. Tarihçi anlatıyı belgelere dayandırarak bir bilim insanı gibi hareket eder. Gerçek ve kurgusal detaylar arasında keskin bir çizgi vardır ve amaç gerçeği ortaya çıkarıp resmetmektir.

Fakat bu anlayış postmodern düşünceyle beraber bir sorun haline gelmiştir. Postmodern tarih anlayışındaki sorunsallar üç düzlemde tartışılmıştır: 1- Tarih bilimsel mi yoksa edebi bir tür müdür? 2- Tarihyazımı: Yorumsal ya da objektif midir? 3- Gerçeğin yapılandırılmasında tarihin anlatı yapısının rolü nedir? “İleriye doğru gelişen tarih”teki teleolojik anlayış yerini çoğulculuk ve parçalılık olgularına bırakmıştır. Buna bağlı olarak, “Bilim olarak tarih” anlayışındaki objektiflik, bağımsızlık ve akılcılık yerini öznellik, yorum ve ideoloji kavramlarına bırakmıştır. Bu bağlamda, postmodern tarih anlayışında gerçeğe kurgu arasındaki ayrım belirsizleşmeye başlamıştır. Tarihçinin tarihsel olaylarla ve gerçeğe ilişkisinin hiçbir zaman sorgulanmadığı geleneksel anlayışın aksine, tarihçi/yazar bir otorite figürü olmak yerine, ürettiği şeyin bir insan eseri olduğunun farkındadır. Kanıt gerçeğe ulaşmanın bir aracı olmaktan çıkıp bu anlayışta bir metin olarak kabul görür. Bunlara ek olarak, geleneksel tarihi eserlerdeki kurgusalılığı vurgulamak için geleneksel tarihin anlatı yapısı ön plana çıkarılır. Tarihçi tıpkı bir edebiyatçı gibi kurgu öğelerini kullanır, ideolojik olarak yorumlar, olayları seçer ve organize eder. Böylece tarih, bilimsel bir eser olmaktan ziyade edebi bir eser olarak kabul görür. Postmodern anlayıştaki soyut tartışmalar pratik alanda kendini edebiyatta özellikle postmodern tarihi romanlarda kolaylıkla göstermiştir.

Tarih yazımcı üst kurmaca’nın bu tartışmalara pratik olarak gösterebileceğimiz uygun ve yaygın biçimde kabul edilen bir akım olduğunu söylememek mümkündür. “Tarih yazımcı üst kurmaca” kavramı Linda Hutcheon tarafından *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988) kitabı ile ortaya atılmıştır. Kendi kavramsallaştırmasıyla: tarih yazımcı üst kurmaca romanlar “hem yoğun bir biçimde kendini yansıtan ama aynı zamanda paradoksik olarak tarihsel olay ve kişilere atıfta bulunan çokça bilinen ve popüler romanlardır” (*Poetics* 5). Dolayısıyla, bu romanlar bir taraftan kendi yazım süreçlerine dikkat çekerek kurgusal bir ürün olduklarını vurgularken (üst kurmaca) diğer taraftan tarihsel öğelere de yer verirler (tarihsel). Böyle yaparak gerçek ve kurgu arasındaki derin köklere sahip olan geleneksel ayrımı belirsizleştirirler. Bu yaklaşım aynı zamanda yazım sürecine dikkat çektiği için edebiyat ve tarih yazımının paralel niteliklerini ön plana çıkarma gibi bir durumu da beraberinde getirdiği ve de bu tarz romanların en temel özelliklerinden biri haline

geldiğini söylemek yanlış olmaz. Bu tarzda yazılmış romanlarda kullanılan deneysel teknikler ve yaklaşımlar şöyle özetlenebilir: Bu romanlarda tarihsel olaylar ve figürler kurgusal detaylarla iç içe olduğu için gerçek ve kurgu arasındaki ayrım belirsizdir. Bu romanlar geleneksel tarihi eserlerdeki kanıt ve gerçek ilişkisini sorgulamak için metinsellik ve metinlerarasılığa vurgu yaparlar. Kurgusal ve kurgusal olamayan geleneksel tarih yazımı biçimlerini sorgulamak için bu yazım biçiminde kullanılan bazı yöntem ve tekniklerin parodisi yapılmaktadır. Geleneksel olay örgüsü yapısı, anlatı yapısı, nedensellik, doğrusallık ve zaman öğeleri deneysel teknikler neticesinde problemleştirilir. Bu romanlar kendi yazım süreçlerine dikkat çektikleri için kendilerini yansıtır. Geleneksel olarak tutarlı, bilgiyi kuşkuya yer vermeden objektif olarak araştırıp, gözlemleyip mantıklı bir biçimde üretebilen tarihçi anlayışı parçalı, tutarsız, çeşitli kimliklere ya da gerçek kimliğini bilemeyen öznel aracılığıyla sorunsallaştırır. Ve kullanılan tüm yöntem ve metodlar tarih yazımcı üst kurmaca yazarının öz bilincinin varlığını gösterir. Yazar, kullanmış olduğu bir çok teknik ile geleneksel tarih yazımının okuyucular üzerindeki yaratılmış olan kusurlu algının farkında olduğunu ve daha da önemlisi kurgusal bir ürün ortaya koyduğunun farkındadır. D. M. Thomas'ın *The White Hotel* ve Martin Amis'in *Time's Arrow* eserleri bu bilgiler ışığında sırasıyla incelenmiştir.

Bu çalışmanın 3. Bölümünde D. M. Thomas'ın *The White Hotel* adlı romanının, tarih yazımcı üst kurmacanın iyi bir örneği olduğu iddia edilmiştir. Thomas bu romanında bir zamanlar Freud'un hastası olan ve 1941 yılında Nazilerin sebep olduğu Babi Yar katliamında öldürülen Lisa Erdman'ın hayatını anlatır. Thomas, romanında geleneksel tarih yazımı unsurlarını sorunlu hale getirir. Tarihsel olarak Sigmund Freud'un Lisa Erdman adında bir hastası olmamasına rağmen romandaki Freud gerçek Freud ile o kadar benzer özellikler taşır ki okuyucu için bu ayrımı yapmak neredeyse imkansızdır. *The White Hotel* bariz ve gizli bir biçimde iki farklı alanda yazılmış metinlerden faydalanır. Bunlardan ilki Freud ve eserleri, diğeri ise Anatoli Kuznetsov'un *Babi Yar* (1970) romanıdır. Yazar bu iki odakta hareketle romanı yapılandırmıştır. Bu romanda vurgulanan metinlerarasılık, tarihsel ve kurgusal eserlerde gerçek algısının nasıl oluştuğunu ve geleneksel olarak ayrı iki yazım biçimi olarak kabul edilen tarihi ve kurgusal eserlerin nasıl paralel özellikler taşıdığını

vurgulamaktadır. Geleneksel özne algısı, romanda Lisa karakterinin kurgu özelinde eleştiri odağı haline gelmesi şeklindedir. Lisa geleneksel kabulün aksine kendisi hakkında doğru bilgilere sahip değildir. Kendi geçmişi hakkında tutarlı bilgiler üretmekten acizdir. Romandaki Freud, hasta ile olan görüşmelerinde hastanın yazdığı pornografik şiirin ve onun düz yazı biçiminde tekrar yazılışından hareketle Lisa'ya sabit, tutarlı bir kimlik kazandırma eğilimindedir. Fakat Freud'un Lisa hakkında vardığı sonuçların doğruluğu romanın ileriki bölümlerinde meydana gelen olaylar itibariyle okuyucuda şüphe uyandırmıştır. Dolayısıyla, Lisa gibi okuyucu da Lisa'nın geçmişi hakkında net ve nihai bilgilere sahip değildir ve okuyucunun da kafası sürekli karışıktır. Bu durumdan hareketle, romanın geleneksel özne algısından ve onun tasvir ediliş biçiminden saptığını söyleyebiliriz. Ayrıca, romandaki özneye olan bu yaklaşım tarzı dolaylı olarak tarihçi hakkında da şüphelere yol açmaktadır. Tarihçi, eserinde olayların doğruluğundan kuşku uyandırmayacak biçimde bahseder fakat; geçmişteki gerçeği tam olarak bulabilir mi? Onu gerçeğine uygun olarak tekrar tasvir edebilir mi? Anlatısında ne kadar objektif olabilir? Romanın diğer bir özelliği ise bünyesinde birçok edebi formu barındırıyor olmasıdır. *The White Hotel* her bölümde sırasıyla mektup, şiir, düzyazı, vaka geçmişi, geleneksel gerçekçilik, belgesel gerçekçilik ve fantezi formlarını kullanmıştır. Bu formların hepsi de farklı yazım biçimleri gibi görünse de aslında romanda benzer özellikler taşır. Her formun gerçek ile olan ilişkisi aynı ölçüde problemlidir ki bu da metinselliği vurgular. Romanda birden fazla anlatıcı vardır. Romanın bu özelliği geleneksel tarih anlatısındaki tek sesliliği ortadan kaldırmak ve aynı zamanda farklı anlatıcılar kullanması yine Lisa'nın gerçek hikâyesini öğrenmemiz noktasında bir engel teşkil etmektedir. Freud'un hastanın geçmişini anlatması, okuyucuya hasta hakkında gerçeği bulduğunu hissettirir. Diğer yandan Lisa olayların başka biçimlerini de anlatır. Ayrıca bilinmeyen 3. tekil kişi de Lisa'nın ileriki yaşamını anlatır. Okuyucu hasta hakkında gerçeğe ulaştığını düşündüğü andan itibaren bu his olayların gelişmesi ile hemen yıkılır. Zaman algısı, sorun odağı haline getirilen diğer bir noktadır. Olaylar geleneksel anlatıda olduğu gibi zamansal olarak “bu oldu ve ardından bu oldu” yapısı taşımaz. Okuyucu önce mektuplarla karşılaşır. Son mektup 1931 yılında yazılmış fakat; romanda yer alan sonraki bölümler ise bu zamandan önce olmuştur. Mektupların ardından şiir bölümü

okuyucuları bekler ama neden oradadır, ne zaman yazılmıştır, kim yazmıştır gibi sorular okuyucuya geleneksel bir anlatıda beklenilen biçimde sunulmaz. Romandaki bu yapı geleneksel tarihsel anlatı yapısının dışına çıkar. Buna bağlı olarak roman, geleneksel tarihî anlatıdaki son algısını da sorunlu hale getirir. Geleneksel olarak sonlar bütün soruların cevap bulduğu ve bununla birlikte bir bütünlük ve bitmişlik algısı oluşturmaya açıktır. Fakat, *The White Hotel*'de son bölüm Lisa'nın öldükten sonra başka bir hayatta yeniden ortaya çıkışını anlatır. Bu son, önceki bölümlerdeki gerçekçi anlayış tarzından ani bir kopuş sergilediği için uyumsuz bir sonudur. Buna ek olarak, romandaki son Lisa'nın tekrar hayata gelmesi itibarı ile “öteki yaşam” fikri oluşturduğundan dinsel bir eğilim algısı yaratırken aynı zamanda gerçekçi bir Israil betimlemesi de yapmaktadır. Bu yüzden, romanın sonundaki belirsizlik okuyucunun kafasındaki soruları daha da arttırmıştır. Sonuç itibarıyla, bu son geleneksel anlatıdaki son ile uyumsuzdur. Bu bilgiler ışığında, *The White Hotel* kullandığı tekniklerle kendi yazın sürecine dikkat çektiği için kendini yansıtan bir romandır. Tarihsel eserlerin yazımına dikkat çektiği için de tarih yazımcıdır.

Linda Hutcheon edebiyatta postmodernizmi tanımlayan şeyin tarih yazımcı üst kurmaca olduğunu iddia eder (*Poetics* ix). Başka bir deyişle, tarih yazımcı üst kurmaca, edebiyat alanında postmodernizm ile eşdeğerdir. Buradan hareketle tarih yazımcı üst kurmaca sadece tarih yazımına ilişkin sorunlar ile ilgilenmek yerine çok daha geniş sorunlarla ilgilenmesi bakımından daha geniş bir alana denk düşer. Bu noktada, *The White Hotel*'in Aydınlanma ve modernite ile olan ilişkisi önemlidir ve bunun yanında bu ilişki romanın tarih yazımcı üst kurmaca olup olmadığı hakkında önemli ipuçları verir. Romanın yukarıda bahsedilen teknikleri kullanması ve geleneksel tarih yazımına ilişkin bir eleştiri yapmasının yanında, moderniteye köktenci bir eleştiri getirmesi açısından da değerlendirilebilir.

The White Hotel Aydınlanma ve moderniteye getirdiği köklü eleştiri Yahudi soykırımı ile de ilgilidir. Geleneksel tarih yazımı bağlamında Aydınlanma zihniyetine getirdiği eleştiriler aynı zamanda Yahudi soykırımını ortaya çıkaran entellektüel, siyasal, sosyal, ekonomik, kültürel zemine yapılan bir eleştiridir. Horkheimer ve Adorno'nun dediği gibi akıllı temel alan “Aydınlanma totaliterdir” (4). Bu akılcılık

hayatın her alanında kendini göstermiştir ve bunun sonucunda Yahudi soykırımı gerçekleşmiştir. Yahudi soykırımını modern toplumun değerlerinden sapma olarak nitelendiren anlayışın aksine, bu romanda Yahudi soykırımı tıpkı Bauman'ın söylediği gibi “modern medeniyet’in bir paradigması” “doğal ve normal ürünüdür” (6). Bu noktada romanın sonu modernite eleştirisinin görülebileceği en açık örneklerden biridir. Romanın “The Camp” adlı son bölümü iki ayrı ütopyik anlayışı aynı anda bünyesinde barındırır: “öteki dünya” ve “İsrail.” Bu iki ayrı dini ve seküler ütopyanın aynı anda verilmesi, ikisinin benzer özellikler taşıdığını gösterir. Fakat bu ütopyik anlatı geleneksel biçimde kurgulanmamıştır. Ölen insanlar tekrar öteki dünyada buluşurlar, fakat halen geçmiş hayatta sahip oldukları fiziksel ve manevi yaralara sahiptirler. Öte yandan, İsrail’deki coğrafik yerlere atıfta bulunan bu tarz bir son yine aslında kendi içinde sorunlar barındırır. Romandaki bazı karakterler halen hapistedir ya da buradaki koşullar oldukça sıkıdır. Bu bağlamda ne öteki dünya ne de İsrail geleneksel bir ütopya biçiminde tasvir edilmiştir. Bunun yanında, romanın son bölümü formal olarak da diğer bölümlerden ayrılır. Önceki bölümlerin gerçekçi anlatımının aksine bu bölüm fantastik öğeler içermesi bakımından kendinden önce gelen diğer bölümlerle oldukça uyumsuzluk teşkil etmektedir. Diğer taraftan, bu son bölümün uyumsuz olması geleneksel tarihsel romanlardaki bütünlük ve akılcı tasvir biçimlerinden oldukça farklıdır. Geleneksel tarih anlatısının aksine, bu romandaki son hiç bir soruya cevap vermediği gibi, okuyucunun kafasındaki soruları daha da arttırmıştır. Bu bağlamda, geleneksel kurtuluşçu ve ilerlemeci tarih anlayışını düşündüğümüzde – ki bu anlayış Aydınlanma ve Modernite ile iç içedir – bu bölümün Aydınlanma ve modernite eleştirisine odaklandığını söylemek mümkündür.

4. bölümde Martin Amis’in tarih yazımı ile olan ilişkisi incelenmiştir. *Time’s Arrow* da *The White Hotel* gibi geleneksel tarih tasviri biçiminden çoğunlukla üst kurmaca teknikleri aracılığıyla sapar. Fakat buradaki sapma *The White Hotel*’deki tarih yazımı eleştirisi yapmak yerine, daha dar bir kapsamda Yahudi soykırımı ile ilgilidir. Bu argümanı desteklemek için öncelikle romandaki teknikler incelenmiş ve bu tekniklerin hangi amaca hizmet ettiği araştırılmıştır. Ardından, yine *The White Hotel* gibi, bu romanın Aydınlanma felsefesi ve modernite ile olan ilişkisi inceleme odağı

olmuştur. Bunların neticesinde, romanın Hutcheon'ın bahsettiği tarih yazımcı üst kurmaca örneği olarak adlandırılmayacağı sonucuna varılmıştır.

Time's Arrow'un temel amacı, geleneksel tarih eleştirisi yapmak yerine, Yahudi soykırımının anlaşılmasına dair eşsiz bir öngörü kazandırmak için tekrar yazılmasıdır. *Time's Arrow* bir Nazi doktoru olan Odilo Unverdorben'in hayatını 1980'lerden 1917 yılına doğru tersten anlatır. Konuşmalar, yemek yemek, okumak, tuvalet yapmak, yürümek vb. her şey tersten gider. Zamanın terse akmasının temel boyutunu bu durumun olayların üzerindeki ahlaki boyutunun tersine çevirmesi bağlamında önem teşkil eder. İyi olaylar kötü; kötü olaylar iyi olarak resmedilir. Zamanın tersten akması Yahudi soykırımı sürecinde tarihsel olarak olanın aksine Yahudiler ve diğer "ikincil türler"ın tekrar hayata gelmesinin önünü açmıştır. Romanın, başkahramanın hayatını tersten anlatması oldukça deneysel bir yöntemdir. Zamanın tersten anlatımı okuyucuya kitabın yazım sürecini düşündürür ve dolayısıyla bir kurgu olduğu gerçeğini gözler önüne serer. İlk bakışta, kronolojik tersten anlatım *Time's Arrow*'un geleneksel tarih anlatısındaki zamanın ileriye dönük akışının bir eleştirisi olarak görülebilir. Bu iddia, bir ölçüde kabul edilebilir. Fakat detaylı bir inceleme geleneksel tarih yazımında uygulanan zamanın doğrusal hareketinin bir eleştisini yapmadığı için bunun öyle olmadığını gösterir. Dolayısıyla, *Time's Arrow*'un temel kaygısının tarih yazımını olmasından ziyade, bu tersten anlatının Naziler döneminde yapılan Yahudi soykırımının üzerinde yaratacağı ahlaki etkidir. Roman, Yahudi soykırımının tarihin normal akışı içinde terse giden bir durum olduğunu vurgular.

Time's Arrow'da uygulanan diğer deneysel bir yöntem anlatıcının/öznenin kurgulanış biçimidir. Romandaki anlatıcı Tod Friendly (Odilo Unverdorben) öldüğünde ortaya çıkar; çevresi ve kendi hakkında tutarlı bilgilere sahip değildir. Geriye doğru akan zaman karşında ileriye doğru bakan akli, olayları yanlış ve eksik okumasına sebebiyet vermektedir. Anlatıcı tersine akan zamana anlam veremez, tek anlam verdiği yer Auschwitz'dir. Normalde Auschwitz'de öldürülen Yahudiler ve diğerleri, romanın zaman kurgusunda hayata döndürülürler. Anlatıcı için romandaki dünya sadece bu everede anlam bulur. Buradaki anlatıcıyı bir tarihçi olarak

düşünürsek, geleneksel anlayışın dışında kalır. Geleneksel tarihçi yerine, adını bilmediğimiz anlatıcı, olayları tutarlı ve akılcı bir biçimde değerlendiremez. Bu bağlamda romandaki özne, geleneksel tarihçi rolünü dolaylı olarak eleştirdiği söylenebilir. Fakat bu durum *The White Hotel* ile kıyaslandığında farklılık gösterir. *The White Hotel*'de okuyucu ve anlatıcı(lar) olaylar hakkında sabit ve tutarlı bilgiye sahip değilken, *Time's Arrow*'da anlatıcı çevresinde olup bitenler hakkında tutarlı bilgi üretememesine rağmen okuyucu romanda ortaya çıkan anlam itibariyle tutarlı bilgi üretebilmektedir. Hâliyle, *The White Hotel* ile karşılaştırıldığında, *Time's Arrow*'un bu doğrultuda yine tarih yazımında objektif ve tutarlı bilgiye ulaşmaktaki sorunlar ile çok ilgilenmediği söylenebilir.

Metinlerarasılık *Time's Arrow*'da her şeyin metin olduğu düşüncesini akla getirebilecek diğer bir araçtır. Thomas gibi Amis de yararlandığı kaynaklara atıfta bulunur. Her ikisi de başka metinlerden faydalandığını okuyucuya açık bir şekilde söylemektedir. *Time's Arrow* Robert Jay Lifton'un *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* ve Primo Levi'nin *If This is a Man; The Truce, The Drowned and The Saved* ve *Moments of Reprieve* adlı eserlerinden faydalanmıştır. Fakat, iki roman arasında çok önemli bir fark vardır. *The White Hotel*'de diğer metinler gerçeklerinden saptırılarak kullanılır. Tarihsel olaylar kurgusal olaylarla iç içedir ve okuyucuda gerçeklik algısı ortadan kaybolmuştur. Ama *Time's Arrow*'da durum böyle değildir. *Time's Arrow*'da tarihsel olaylar ve kurumlar gerçek kabul edilen olaylar ile birebir örtüşür. Dolayısıyla, okuyucuda bu dokumaların gerçek olup olmadığına dair bir kuşku uyandırılmaz. Kısacası metinlerarasılık, *The White Hotel*'de tarihsel gerçek olarak tanımlanan olaylar hakkında okuyucuyu sürüncemede bırakırken, *Time's Arrow* da ise metinlerarasılık, resmedilen olayların gerçek olduğu izlenimini güçlü kılmak için kullanılır. Bu noktada *Time's Arrow*'un bir tarih eleştirisi yapmadığı, aksine daha dar bir alanı kapsadığı söylenebilir.

Time's Arrow'un Aydınlanma ve modernite ile olan ilişkisi de bu doğrultuda romanın tarih yazımı ile ilişkisini ortaya çıkarması bakımından önemlidir. *The White Hotel*'in aksine *Time's Arrow* Yahudi soykırımına sebep olan modernite projesini eleştirmek yerine, Nazi ideolojisinin aydınlanma felsefesini çarptırdığı için soykırımın

gerçekleştirdiği anlayışını benimser. Romanın en çarpıcı özelliği olan tersten anlatım da bu anlayışı destekler niteliktedir. Anlatıcı tersine giden dünyayı Auschwitz'e kadar anlam veremez ve dünyanın ilk defa anlam kazandığı yer burasıdır. Eğer anlatı, okuyucu tarafından normal zaman akışına göre tekrar düzenlenirse ortaya çıkan durum şudur: Dünyada herşey normaldi ve Auschwitz'e herşey tersine döndü. Bu anlayış modernite ve Aydınlanma anlayışının eleştisini sadece Nazi ideolojisine sığdırdığı için *The White Hotel* ile ayrılır. *The White Hotel*'de geneksel tarih anlayışının dayandığı Aydınlanma ve modernite eleştiri odağı iken, *Time's Arrow*'da Nazi ideolojisinin ortaya koyduğu çarpıtılmış Aydınlanma anlayışı eleştiri odağıdır.

Bu sebeple, *Time's Arrow* tersine çevrilmiş bir zaman akışını uygulamaya koyması, naif bir anlatıcıyı işe koşması açısından kendi yazım sürecine dikkati çeker. Bu yüzden üst kurmaca özellikleri taşır. Peki Hutcheon'ın ortaya koyduğu şekilde tarih yazımcı üst kurmaca olabilir mi? Kullanılan teknikler itibariyle değerlendirildiğinde tersine akan zaman, metinlerarasılık, parçalanmış özne özellikleri Hutcheon'ın bahsettiği özelliklerdir. Fakat bu teknik ve yaklaşımların işlevleri göz önünde bulundurulduğunda *Time's Arrow*'un geleneksel tarih eleştirisi yapmaktan uzak olduğunu söyleyebiliriz. Her iki roman da geçmiş olayların geleneksel tasvir biçimlerinden saparlar fakat; bu sapmalar farklı anlayışları ön plana çıkarır. *The White Hotel*'deki sapmalar geleneksel tarih yazımı eleştirisi yapmak için kullanılırken, *Time's Arrow* da bu sapmalar Yahudi soykırımının yarattığı insanî değerlerden sapmasından kaynaklanır. Bu bilgiler ışığında bu çalışma Linda Hutcheon'ın tarih yazımcı üst kurmaca konseptinin her romanı aynı ölçüde kapsamayacağını iddia etmektedir.

APPENDIX B: TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enformatik Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>

YAZARIN

Soyadı : Nazlı
Adı : Elzem
Bölümü : İngiliz Edebiyatı

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce) : Postmodern Historiography in D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* and Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow*

TEZİN TÜRÜ: Yüksek Lisans ☒ Doktora ☐

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir. ☒
2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir. ☐
3. Tezimden bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz. ☐

TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ: