

*The historian tells you what happened.
The novelist will tell you what it felt like.*

- E.L. Doctorow¹

INTRODUCTION

The first two decades of the 21st Century with all its traumas and conflicts vividly foreshadow an intense and troublesome century for future generations on a global scale. In the light of today's political, economic, and social agenda, with obscure projections for the future, history and historical consciousness became vital elements for our survival. To be able to comprehend and grasp the meaning of such latest protests and movements as *Occupy Wall Street*, *Women's March* and *Me Too*, or *Black Lives Matter* a person should be aware or informed of the basic historical events that unfolded in the United States through the centuries. It is unrealistic to try to make sense of the anger of the African American community after George Floyd's death without any knowledge of slavery, racial violence, or Civil Rights Movement that this country experienced. Similarly, to understand how and why such a controversial personality as Donald Trump became the President of the United States, it is necessary to be aware of the character of the executive branch and its politics before Trump's election. Hence, knowledge of the past assures a more accurate assessment of the present condition and provides a multidimensional perspective on it.

Living in the Age of Information ensured an enormous number of sources of this kind of information, which ironically makes it harder to get the data upon which we can rely. Still, scientific history, although damaged by the postmodern mindset due to its ideological nature, remains an irrevocable informant. Particularly after World War II, history records underwent drastic changes due to the emerging new voices and representatives. Besides historical records another significant source of history that is highly valued is literature. Throughout the centuries, literary texts carried not just facts from the past but also the emotional and psychological characteristics of a particular period. The problematic relationship between history and literature always remained one of the core struggles within the humanities where they cohabit. On the one hand, "One might be seen as an 'immanent' quest for thoroughly grounded knowledge in relation to which literature or 'the literary' may be an object to be assimilated, perhaps even taken to be an irritant" states Dominick LaCapra in his *History, Literature, Critical Theory* (13). On the other hand, literature, according to LaCapra, "... becomes a document with referential functions, perhaps a symptom of history's hidden or secret dimensions" (14). Apparently, there is a common ground for both fields and the major difference between them is that a historian's target is an accurate record of events while a writer tends to interpret those events and create a different vision. Still, Beverley Southgate in his *History Meets Fiction* interrogating the relationship between history and fiction mentions

¹ *Time* (March 2006).

the unending confrontation between these two fields: “The relationship between history and fiction has always been close but problematic: as in any relationship, it has sometimes proved difficult to strike a mutually acceptable balance between interdependence and autonomy, and any equilibrium achieved has always proved temporary” (1). Therefore, valuing both history and literature on the same level, our study aims to investigate both of them and the way they collaborate and contribute to our historical consciousness.

The first chapter of our study, besides tracing the evolution of the perspective on historiography, also analyzes the evolving relationship between history and literature. Starting from the Greek and Roman examples, which established the backbone of historiography, it is crucial to visualize how, throughout the centuries, the boundaries between the two fields were established and demolished due to the evolving perception of history recording and its significance. Specifically, the intellectual atmosphere of the so-called Age of Reason, during which the popularity of historiography perceptibly declined, should be compared to the completely opposite standpoint of the 19th century or the Age of History. One of the key notions that promoted the field’s popularity became the birth of the concept of *culture*. The Romantics, who appreciated the cultural environment of the human being, vividly transformed the role of history in the life of a human being. Furthermore, the Hegelian dialectic and insight would help us reveal the logic of reality and how the events might unfold.

With the emergence of ideas of such 20th-century critics as R.G. Collingwood, Roland Barthes, and Hayden White, we proceed with the examination of the equalization process of history and literature. Collingwood’s ideas of narrative constructivism and historicists’ re-enactment slowly but surely blurred the borders between fiction and fact. The breakthrough that radically altered the position of historiography came with the ideas of Hayden White. Not that he valued one field over the other, but the idea of an equally significant, overlapping, and corresponding character of those brought a completely different perspective that would dominate the rest of the century. The major reason for such a tendency became the postmodern intellectual wave of ideas whose major objective was to break through the grand narrative that dominated the world. Revealing the existence of micronarratives and proving their significance, postmodernists demonstrated that history was not fixed and continued to evolve with the emerging voices. Hence, through the lens of such literary and cultural movements as New Historicism and Cultural Politics, the equal significance of the two fields would be exposed. Thus, the way fiction and history interact with each other and contribute to each other will be one of the focal points of this part of our study.

The process of “reanimation” of the reader by the emerging postmodern narratives generated the analysis of one of the core concepts of our study: historical consciousness. Relatively new as a term, historical consciousness represents an intellectual competence or ability of a human being to process past events and apply this knowledge to the current political and social atmosphere and the potential future. Providing several definitions of the concept and explaining how it functions will help us understand its

significance not just on the personal level but also on the national level. The major components of the establishment process of the historical consciousness, which are historiography, collective memory, and history education, again would highlight the role of history in our lives and indicate the relationship between history and literature of a particular character.

At this point of our study, one of our key arguments emerged. If history and historiography are constructed, most of the time within the ideological frames, and have their linguistic turn and narrative imagination then a historical novel should equally play an important role in the formation of historical consciousness. Thus, after defining and determining the major characteristics of this literary genre, we will trace its major representatives, which would help us prove its depth. Beginning with the widely accepted first example of this type, Walter Scott's *Waverley*, we provide numerous European as well as American examples of the historical novel. Most of the titles within this list will verify that novels, which successfully represent a particular historical period or base their stories heavily on historical events, turned into classics and became indispensable elements of educational curriculums. Hence, not just scientific sources but also literary texts contribute to the establishment of our historical consciousness on macro and micro levels.

Going through the various ideas on history and historiography, particularly those of Karl Marx and Michel Foucault, revealed the link between history, politics, and power relations. Power, especially from the beginning of the 20th century, became the constant not just in politics and state diplomacies but in every aspect of our life. The history of humanity is based on the power struggle so deeply analyzed by Marx and Foucault in particular. Hence, power as the core element of politics became the focal point of our second chapter. Here, the major target would be to reveal the network of power relations within a society and the role of politics in every human's life. Aristotle claims that a human being is a "political animal;" this way he indicates our inevitable entanglement with a community and consequently a political structure. This idea became the background of our examination of politics and power struggles. Dividing opinions into two periods, pre- and post- Machiavellian, will help us trace the radical transformation of the perspective on the concept of politics, power, and leadership. If Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, and Cicero focused on the significance of *virtue* and based their theories on politics around this concept, Niccolo Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes arrived at a different standpoint where the center of the discussion became absolute power. Leaving behind these seemingly naïve ideas of their predecessors, two philosophers vividly supported authoritative and pragmatic leaders with enormous power in their hands. Therefore, it will be critical to scrutinize the concept of power itself and reveal the way it operates within a community.

Two major concepts, hegemony and ideology, became the cornerstones of contemporary political and cultural studies and are known as the major operative instruments of state politics. Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser developed these concepts to explain how power operates within society and what types of power are used on

various levels of social and political relations. Analyzing these perspectives brought us to the Frankfurt School and the ideas of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, in particular, whose ideas stressed the powerful character of cultural industry and its effect on the daily life of people. Hence, a short overview of media, precisely television, on politics and power struggles would demonstrate that influence and once again reveal the ideological apparatuses among us.

Talking about the types of power, it will be inevitable to consult the ideas of Michel Foucault who based his studies heavily on the concept of power. He believed that to understand politics it is vital to understand power, which he divides into two types, repressive and normalizing. Precisely the last one is entangled with the concepts of hegemony and ideology and, according to Foucault, due to its insidious character, it is *the real* power. Here, the connection between historiography and power once again will be exposed through Foucault's claim that science is one of the elements of normalizing power. Hence, for example, schools, historiography, and psychiatry are several among the numerous elements that determine our ideological frames.

Analyzing the power and its apparatuses also triggered the discussion of powerlessness, resistance, and repressive tolerance. The correlation between power and powerlessness and how it triggers resistance or tolerance revealed a different angle of the concept. On the other hand, Foucault's, as well as Herbert Marcuse's, emphasis on the significance of knowledge, authentic information, and historical awareness within the process of resistance disclose the link between historical consciousness and power. Here the idea that words have power would bring us to the necessary analysis of the relationship between aesthetics and politics. Again, the transformation of the perception of this duo proved an influential characteristic of the 20th century with its ideological pressure and cultural industry. If previously the distance of artistic work was valued so that its purity was protected, modernity and capitalist society integrated art into its ideological apparatuses and turned it into one of their weapons. Particularly Marxist ideas and understanding of art will help us to comprehend how art, or literature, became the potential medium for political action or domination. Moreover, the ideas of Cultural Materialists, who believe that literature is a product of a specific political and social condition, prove that it can also be the medium of change. That is why, every sphere of a society and its culture, including literature, can turn into a battleground where the power struggle prevails.

In this context, it will be crucial to analyze the character of the political novel. One of the major guides here turned out to be Irving Howe and his insights within the genre. Howe stresses the internal tension within this type of novel; therefore, to be able to understand it, the reader has to grasp its historical background. Several problematic points discovered within the genre also proved its density. Firstly, the definition of a political novel struggles with the expanded aspect of politics, particularly in the ideological age when everything appears to be political. Secondly, the criticism towards the genre developed when this type of novel turned into a polemical and propagandistic tool that damaged the aesthetic dimension of this type of artistic work. Nevertheless, a

wide range of American political novels, which we traced from the 19th century, demonstrated the range and significance of this particular genre. Furthermore, the examples that will be provided in this survey would unveil a common character of a political novel that became the last major focal point of our study.

While analyzing the representatives of the American political novel, the satirical tone within almost all of them indicated the importance of humor in this type of literary work. Hence, placing satire at the center of our study, besides politics and historical consciousness, added a third dimension to our discussion.

Satire, which is one of the oldest literary genres, provides a different perspective on such issues as politics and power relations. Bringing forth several definitions, its components, and devices would reveal the multilayered structure of the concept. Major categories such as political satire, social satire, and religious satire prove the integration of the genre into every aspect of our life. Through a wide historical background and a survey of its major representatives, it became obvious that satire spread its roots through the centuries and managed to evolve under the effect of different personalities. Hence, before passing on the Romans, the ancient origins of the genre were dominated by such Greek satirists as Archilochus, Aristophanes, and Mennipus. However, the main division of the genre would be established by such Roman poets as Horace and Juvenal. Therefore, the major characteristics of Horatian and Juvenalian satire will be examined through the major representatives of the particular category. Furthermore, tracing back the prominent names of the Renaissance and Neoclassical periods, as well as modern and postmodern ones, will prove the capacity of the genre and its kaleidoscopic nature.

The major target of this part has been to find the connection between satire and the historical and political aspects of our study. Hence, since satire, due to its ruthless nature, is not easily embraced by literary critics, its relationship with such movements as Marxism and New Historicism discloses a significant role of the genre within cultural criticism. Particularly after the industrial and market revolutions and with the expansion of the capitalist society, satire turned into a vital tool for criticism. Its ability to move the masses towards awareness and expose solemn political and social problems within a society will make it a valuable contributor to our argument. Eventually, it will be demonstrated that if there is a satirical tone then there is a problematic situation and if satire appears in a historical or political novel then it provides critical insight into the political or historical agenda. Finally, satire, despite being a powerful and effective weapon, also has its limits and a risky side. That is why a short overview of how these problems may arise appears to be necessary, which would disclose such nuances within the genre as ethical borders, censorship, and genderization.

The novels that were selected for our study represent remarkable examples of historical and political fiction. Philip Roth in one of his essential works *American Pastoral* (1997) scrupulously investigates the atmosphere of the second half of the 20th century through a personal story that emotionally moves the reader. While designing a private tragedy the author manages to project a national tragedy that affected American society in general. Known for his satirical tone and radical comments, Roth will contribute to

our study on every level. Likewise, Don DeLillo, another prolific writer of the 20th century, with his *Underworld* (1997), which is another critically acclaimed novel that includes numerous intertwined themes and has a dense historical background, will play a significant role in our study. Through the responses of the main characters to significant historical events, the political atmosphere of the Cold War will reveal the ability of a historical novel to raise the awareness of its reader. Tom Wolfe, on the other hand, who is known for his humor and perceptive character as a writer, with his *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (1987) will bring about another satirical perspective on 1980s American politics, economy, and society. Finally, Richard Condon's *Emperor of America* (1990) and Larry Beinhart's *American Hero* (1993) were selected to exemplify how far satire can go while dealing with significant political events which determine the domestic as well as international agenda. Hence all of the novels that are selected for our study are heavily based on the historical and political events that occurred during the second half of the 20th century. Moreover, all of them are eager to criticize and expose the troubled social, economic and political aspects of American society by satirizing those on a different scale.

E. L. Doctorow, an American author and a master of the historical novel, in one of his interviews, states:

History is a battlefield. It's constantly being fought over because the past controls the present. History is the present. That's why every generation writes it anew. But what most people think of as history is its end product, myth. So to be irreverent to myth, to play with it, let in some light and air, to try to combust it back into history, is to risk being seen as someone who distorts truth. I meant it when I said everything in *Ragtime* is true. It is as true as I could make it. I think my vision of J. P. Morgan, for instance, is more accurate to the soul of that man than his authorized biography ... (Schiavenza np)

These words summarize almost all of the issues and conflicts that are going to be discussed in our study. Moreover, the most precious part of his statement is that literature, by which he obviously indicates historical novel, illuminates and airs out the room of the historical past.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN AMERICAN NOVEL

*...had Achilles never lived, Alexander had never
conquered the whole world.*

- Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors*

The understanding of history and its record drastically changed through the centuries arriving at the point today when the field is questioned and criticized from various angles. This evolution of history as a concept reflects the dynamics within the understanding of such basic notions as historiography, narration, storytelling, and memory. This innate desire to record stories and transmit information through generations often puts the concept of history at the center of the humanities. An ancient Greek historian and philosopher Herodotus, who later was called by Cicero “the Father of History,” revolutionized the way the past was recorded once and forever. “It does not mean that before him no one wrote anything that could be called history,” states Sean Sheehan in his *A Guide to Reading Herodotus’ Histories*, “but it does mean that Herodotus was the first to achieve in writing the expression of a historical consciousness with the intellectual scope of the *Histories*” (13). What is crucial about Herodotus’ approach is that he aimed to attain a more rational and deeper understanding of events. Before Herodotus, the past had been recorded as a list of events that didn’t include any type of explanations but were just accepted as the will of Gods. With Herodotus, the perspective on history recording drastically changed because he preferred to analyze the events from different angles and tried to understand the reasons behind them. On the other hand, Thucydides, whose contribution to this field is exceptional and who is known as the father of “scientific history”, became another name for the researchers to base their studies on. The more objective nature of the Thucydides records and the absence of bizarre details that were peculiar to Herodotus’ writing, made Thucydides a more valuable source for historians. Frequently both philosophers and their historical records are compared or contrasted and although “Thucydides displays more complexity and sophistication than his predecessor” according to Virginia Hunter, “the two historians worked within the same theoretical framework, on the same epistemological terrain” (287). This tradition of Greek historiography was sustained by Polybius, a Roman historian, whose detailed record of the historical events concerning Rome and its political agenda turned into a significant source for future generations.

Up until this point, it is essential to mention one of the well-known comments on the relationship between history and literature, or poetry in this case, that came from Aristotle who, by comparing both fields, triggered the discourse that would last for centuries:

For the historian and the poet differ not by speaking in metrical verse or without meter (for it would be possible to put the writings of Herodotus into meter, and they would be a history with meter no less than without it.) Rather, they differ in this, that the one speaks of things that have happened, but the other of the sort of things that might happen. For this reason too, poetry is a more philosophical and more serious thing than history, since poetry speaks more of things that are universal, and history of things that are particular. (*Poetics* 32)

Praising the amplitude of poetry, Aristotle implies that it is not the process of writing that makes poetry greater, since in either way it is a similar activity, but the essence of the written material that makes it more significant. Thus, beginning from ancient times the question of whether history or literature is more important, or which one is more valuable continued to occupy critics of different opinions.

With the rise of Christianity, historiography naturally became dominated by religious ideas, and the major ideology of the field became the moral drive of history and God's control over it. The following Medieval period turned out to be in a way more productive, although the methods of recording history were still underdeveloped. Nevertheless, medieval records succeeded in affecting the Renaissance historiography that managed to place human beings, rather than God, into the center again though with a different character.

1.1 Establishing Boundaries between Fiction and History

One of the most influential philosophers of history, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel believed that if you want to understand any kind of an idea or a concept as well as a society or an individual, you need to analyze its/her/his historical context. Only through this kind of evaluation can we comprehend the real essence of the subject, according to the philosopher's point of view. However, the 19th century, when ideas of Hegel affected the intellectual circles, was significantly different and the perspective on the field was unlike the previous epoch. Precisely during the early 19th century, some crucial ideas about history and its importance emerged and, as Carl Hempel² would probably state according to his theory on laws in history, it was a cause and effect mechanism that brings us back to the 18th century.

During the 18th century, or as it was called the Age of Enlightenment and the Age of Reason, significance was put on the ability of a human being to reason and think for him/herself thus reaching the state of maturity and enlightenment. Immanuel Kant in his essay "What is Enlightenment?" states:

² Carl Hempel is known for his laws of cause and effect in history. According to Hempel historical events follow a particular pattern and repeat themselves. Howard Zinn in his *The Politics of History* refers to this idea and explains it (322).

Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage. Nonage is the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance. This nonage is self-imposed if its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in indecision and lack of courage to use one's own mind without another's guidance. *Dare to know! (Sapere aude.)* "Have the courage to use your own understanding," is therefore the motto of the enlightenment. (np)

Hence, the major guiding principle of the philosopher was that instead of following someone else's ideas, people should follow their own minds. Bigotries, taboos, and dogmas became the major targets for the philosophers of the Enlightenment who invited people to learn to reason and work on themselves to become better humans. The crucial point here is that norms and beliefs that were guiding the communities were changing according to geography and time, which meant that every society had its own problems, while reason, according to the intellectuals of this period, was the same regardless of place or time. In this context, the major idea of the Enlightenment became the necessity of stripping yourself from the historical and environmental context in order to reach that true state of reason. Consequently, this idea of evading history in order to reach a kind of abiding rationality directly affected the perspective on the field in general, that is why the popularity of the field declined, although there were still important names who continued to work in this sphere.

Nevertheless, the 19th century brought about a completely different vantage point that changed the whole understanding of history and its place in human life. During the Romantic period, intellectuals believed that studying history was one of the most substantial activities that we needed to do and saw reason, unlike the philosophers of the previous century, not as a fixed notion but as a variable concept. "Romantic historiography took its focus and its audience in resistance to the cold and clinical perspectives associated with rationalism" (25) states Michael Bentley and continues:

Not that it abandoned evidence or wanted to see historical accounts reduced to hagiography: many of the Romantics held a sophisticated view of the relationship between evidence and text and criticized their Enlightenment predecessors for behaving in a cavalier spirit when faced with stubborn facts. (25)

Romantics denied the possibility of escaping history and defended the idea that everyone was affected by his/her environment and past. According to this perspective, there was no chance for people of different periods and places to think the same way or arrive at the same truth by reason. While the philosophers of the Enlightenment view those elements of environment as bigotries, Romantics came with a different concept, known as *culture*, that had a more positive character and invited people to learn and develop on it, instead of trying to escape it. Hence, the enormous attention to the field of history and other fields of humanities is obvious during this period which, in addition, is frequently called the Age of History. "Thus the eighteenth century is sometimes called the Age of Reason or Enlightenment, and the nineteenth the Age of Ideology or the Age of