CHAPTER II

INTERTEXTUALITY: READING QUA WRITING

Researcher: After having published two chapters of Julian in 1962 as part of a work in progress you declared, "The thing threatened to become endless arbitrarily I stopped reading and began to write...." On another occasion replying to Gerald Clarke in Fall 1974, (in an interview), to his question "When did you start writing?". You replied, "Whenever I learnt how to read". This relation between your reading and writing seems to be a very conscious process where your writing becomes the product of your reading. Would you agree? Can we label this as "Intertextuality?"

Gore Vidal: I started to read at 5 and promptly started to write a different book from the one that I was reading-Intertextual or Extratextual?

(See Appendix)

2.1.0 Deconstructive satire, like deconstruction, from which it derives, is a textual process, a phenomenon that occurs within the boundaries of textual space. It is effected by the relationship of conflict and contradictions between texts and pretexts, texts and subtexts, and texts and paratexts. Thus deconstruction is intimately involved in textual relationships, in other words, in an intertextuality. While, deconstruction, as an activity of critical practice, can be described as a strategy of reading which uncovers the conflictive discourses within the text thereby undoing its closedness and proving its plurality,
the creative activity of reading qua writing or intertextual productivity results in a deconstructive text, as an author translates his/her reading into writing. A study of deconstructive satire, therefore, entails a discussion of intertextuality.

2.2.0 Intertextuality posits that every text exists in a textual space and that each text can be comprehended because of its relationship to other texts. This derives from the fact that the text by itself is a product of other texts -- a reading of other texts. Intertextuality as a concept grew out of the efforts of theorists like Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva in their attempt to define the 'text' (Miller 1985, 20). But this notion of intertextuality, the text as a product of other texts, was pushed to the background by the practitioners of the theory, who used intertextuality, like the aesthetics of reception, as a critical approach to read a text. Therefore, in intertextual studies, various methodologies are employed in reading the text. Culler propounds the theory of logical and pragmatic presuppositions (Culler 1976, 1381-96), Riffaterre applies his concept of idiolect and sociolect (Riffaterre 1981, 1984), while Miller, rejecting both, proposes a new poetics of intertextuality based on Derrida's concept of supplement (Miller 1985, 33-36).
2.2.1 Originally, however, the term meant a mode of production of the text. Kristeva, who coined the term, derived it from Bakhtin. She credits Bakhtin with having introduced this insight into literary theory. In *Desire in Language*, Kristeva praises Bakhtin for adding a dynamic dimension to structuralism by his idea of the word as an intersection of textual surfaces. This, she says, positions the text within history and society, "which are then seen as texts read by the writer, and into which he introduces himself by rewriting them" (Kristeva 1980, 65). Bakhtin's spatial concept of language with the three dimensions, subject, addressee and context, forms the essence of his theory of dialogism and ambivalence, which, in turn, suggests to Kristeva a poetics of intertextuality. Noting the ambiguity of Bakhtin's concepts, Kristeva, however, says:

Yet, what appears as a lack of rigor is in fact an insight first introduced into literary theory by Bakhtin: any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations, any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double (ibid., 66).

2.2.2 Kristeva's definition emphasises the fact that a text is constructed out of other texts, a reading of other texts. This is explicit when she explains another term from
Bakhtin. 'Ambivalence', she says, is placing the text within history and history within the text. Such a relationship occurs in the process of writing, which according to Bakhtin is "a reading of the anterior literary corpus and the text as an absorption of and a reply to another text" (ibid., 69). In effect, Bakhtin defines intertextuality without naming it so. Barthes is not far behind when he says that "the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original" (Barthes 1977, 146). Culler equates writing, that is, "a taking up of a position in a discursive space" with an intertextual study which also places the text in a discursive space and reads it in relation to other texts (Culler 1976: 1382-83). However, he sums up intertextuality as a reading/writing dialectic where "writing is the historical praxis of reading made visible" (ibid., 1383).

2.2.3 Intertextuality, then, is a reading qua writing method of construction of texts. It is the domain common to reading and writing, where both reading and writing partake of a symbiotic union. As a poetics of imitation, it, however, differs from Aristotle's concept of mimesis. The question is not whether it refers to reality but that what it imitates is an anterior literary corpus read by the writer, absorbed, transformed and produced as his writing.
The author then is not a sublime creator but a reader who converts his reading material into his writing, that is, the text.

2.3.0 Such a reading/writing process of textual production existed in the past. Christopher Robinson says that in the 2nd century B.C. Schools of Rhetoric taught how to read critically and thereby to transfer what one reads into one's own writing (Robinson 1982, 1082-83). Robinson adds that a modern reader may not be able to reconcile himself to a theory of this kind, nevertheless, it was the basis of European literature from Vergil to Racine, being only formally overthrown by the Romantics (ibid., 1083).

2.3.1 Terence Cave contends that during the Renaissance, Erasmus in his De Copia had formulated a theory of intertextual imitation, about which he remarks: "In that it associates the practice of writing with an exhaustive programme of reading, the De Copia already constitutes a major episode in the history of imitation. In imitation indeed the activities of reading and writing become virtually identified" (Cave 1979, 35). Cave characterizes the renaissance theory as a kind of "intertextual conflict or dialogue" (ibid., 36). He admits, however, that intertextuality differs in one respect from the renaissance
theory in that it describes "the interplay of texts without fabricating the image of an author who creatively determines the nature of his own text" *(ibid.*, 77). It is telling that Cave follows his discussion of intertextual imitation with an analysis of Rabelais, Montaigne and Ronsard, the first of them being illustrated as dialogic by Bakhtin.

2.3.2 Nearer this century, Edgar A. Dryden, in "Writer as Reader: An American Story", shows that the reading/writing dialectic informs the tradition of American literature. Dryden opines that one who reads becomes the one who writes and in this context describes reading as an activity that is not passive and parasitical but "productive and active, associated with the practical researches of Egyptologists and archaeologists who open up sites and descend into crypts in order to decipher and repeat the mystery of an original act of writing" *(Dryden 1979, 190)*. Dryden then analyses the works of Hawthorne, Melville and Barth to show them in their role of writers as readers. Thus Hawthorne's tales are "twice-told". The *Scarlet Letter* is primarily a reading of a faded scarlet 'A' which presents itself as "most worthy of interpretation" (qtd. in *ibid.*, 193). Similarly, Melville as a reader, views creative thought as the process by which existing great works are brought together into a pantheistic whole. His *Moby Dick*,
therefore, is woven of the threads of many texts that fill Ishmael's library. And Ishmael's relation to the world is that of a reader to a text. John Barth represents the apex in this consciousness of the role of a reader as writer. His books, he says, are "novels which imitate the form of the Novel by an author who imitates the role of the Author" (ibid.).

2.4.0 A text, whether critical or creative, is indeed a product of a writer's reading of other texts. The critic, as he writes, is invariably involved in reading the text he seeks to evaluate. Review essays, critical articles, commentaries, etc., all exist in an intertextual space by being supplements to the original text. Similarly, creative writing exists in an intertextual space through the absorption and transformation of texts prior to it. But it would be naive to conceive all intertextual production as always a pure and passive activity, uncritical and unquestioning. Of course, some works, like the commentaries of the Bible, through their exposition and explanation only add to the original without any critical questioning. The same could be the case with many other critical and creative texts. Yet, in many others, the reading is not ipso facto translated into writing. The reading is not an innocent activity, it questions, contaminates, spoils and, in effect,
alters the intertext even as it is inscribed as a recognizable element in the new text. It is this kind of a critical spirit by which the author/critic undercuts the text he reads into his writing that defines deconstruction.

2.4.1 Deconstruction follows a reading/writing dialectic like all other intertextual production. Derrida's texts are in fact products of his reading of other texts. As a Professor of Philosophy, Derrida's reading encompasses the whole history of philosophy and traverses the work of several prominent philosophers including Plato, Hegel, Eckhart, Descartes, Kant, Nietzsche, Freud, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Levinas, Foucault among many others, whom he translates into his writing. Barbara Johnson in her introduction to Dissemination rightly points out:

Derrida's writing, indeed, is always explicitly inscribed in the margins of some preexisting text. Derrida is first and foremost a reader, a reader who constantly reflects upon and transforms the very nature of the act of reading (Johnson 1981, x).

2.4.2 The reading, however, questions, challenges and represents the preceding texts in a new light. In deconstructing the text that he reads into his writing, Derrida uncovers the texts' opposing signifying structure, which puts the text against itself and undoes the domination
of one mode of signifying over another. His reading of Rousseau is a case in point. Rousseau in *Confessions* claims that writing and masturbation are supplements to speech and intercourse. He privileges speech and copulation because of their seeming sense of immediacy through the presence of a partner both in oral discourse and intercourse. However, Derrida shows how Rousseau contradicts himself. In spite of privileging speech, Rousseau states that because of his innate shyness, he presents himself better in writing. Thus he says: "the part I've taken of writing and hiding myself, suits me most" (qtd. in Derrida 1976, 142). Similarly, Rousseau exalts masturbation, since, by the act of his imagination, the masturbator conjures up a partner and experiences a symbolic union, the effect of which gives greater pleasure. In both cases, it is absence, rather than presence, that acts as a catalyst. By uncovering such a contradictory discourse in Rousseau's text, Derrida ruptures its primary thesis.

2.4.3 Derrida's reading thus puts Rousseau's text through its signifying possibilities beyond his conscious intentions. Or as Barbara Johnson puts it, it reveals "how Rousseau's text functions against its own explicit (metaphysical) assertions, not just by creating ambiguity, but by inscribing a systematic 'other message' behind or
through what is being said" (Johnson 1981, xiii). Derrida's close reading calls attention to the opposing forces of signification within the textual surface and thereby puts the writer's hold over any conscious meaning in jeopardy. Derrida himself describes deconstruction as a reading that "aim[s] at a certain relationship unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of the language that he uses" (Derrida 1976, 158). As a reading qua writing enterprise, then, deconstruction exists in an intertextual space, but it is also unique in its reading of the intertext, which it completely ruptures.

2.5.0 Similarly, Gore Vidal is a voracious reader who translates what he reads into what he writes. He began reading "grown-up" books like the constitutional law and the congressional record to his blind grandfather even at the age of six or seven. Soon enough Livy, Petronius, Juvenal, Apuleius, Shakespeare, Peacock, Meredith, James, Proust, Mann, among a host of others, including his contemporaries like Mailer, Bellow, Roth, Calvino, etc. fed him and provided him the material for writing (Vidal 1981b, 300). Apart from literature, his reading ranges from politics to philosophy and religion to sexuality.

2.5.1 The obviousness of this reading/writing method is explicit in many of his paratextual statements. Asked in an
interview, "when did you first start writing?", Vidal replies, "I suppose at five or six, Whenever I learned how to read" (Vidal 1981b, 284, emphasis added). He reiterates this in his conversation with Mallory: "I started to read my first book at about the age of six. I started to write a book simultaneously" (Vidal 1991, 105). On another occasion, when asked directly "Whether reading created the impetus to become a writer?", Vidal casually points out that he began reading at the age of five and soon he was writing at the age of seven or eight. In his words, he "simply could not not write" (Vidal 1981, 61). The most direct statement on this reading qua writing process is his comment to Sanoff about his method of writing. His method is that of a research scholar looking up bibliographies and hunting for the right material and then weaving out the whole thing:

Let's say I am doing the battle of Gettysburg. I keep seven or eight accounts on a huge table. I've read them, but before I start writing I re-read everything and lie down and think, "How am I going to make it come alive?" (Vidal 1987b, 62).

The statement would beg the approval of Macheray who opines that the author has been replaced by the worker who transforms a given raw material into a new whole (Macheray 1978, 137). His writings are clearly the product of a conscious, laborious and time-consuming programme of reading like any well-researched thesis. As he says of Julian, "the
thing threatened to become endless .... Arbitrarily I stopped reading and began to write" (Vidal 1962c, 234).

2.5.2 Apart from a reading of the world of texts, Vidal's reading qua writing constitutes a re-writing of 'the text of the world' as well. His reading of 'the text of the world' traverses many fields. Kiernan's remark about the character of Vidal's fiction is pertinent here. He says, "Vidal crams gossip, journalism, sociology, philosophy, history and christens the mix a novel in the name of god Vitality" (Kiernan 1982, 143; emphasis added), thus exposing the transpositional nature of his novels. Similarly, he lists the sign systems in Kalki: genetics, ecology, entropy, eastern religion, and feminism, (ibid., 26). Vidal's only power, in Barthian terminology is "to mix writings" (Barthes 1977, 146).

2.6.0 Like Derrida, Vidal's reading qua writing method of production of texts is deconstructive. In his reading of Jefferson, Vidal exhibits a semblance of Derrida's reading of Rousseau. He ruptures Jefferson's thesis of taxation by bringing to the foreground the contradictory structure of Jefferson's discourse. This he does by juxtaposing the opposing statements on taxation in the first and second inaugural speeches of Jefferson. Thus in the
first speech, Vidal points out that Jefferson spoke of a minimum required taxation with no unnecessary ones to be levied. In Jefferson's words, the government would allow the people freedom "to regulate their own pursuit of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of the labor the bread it has earned. This is the sum of good government..." (qtd. in Vidal 1972a, 436). But in the second inaugural speech Jefferson contradicts himself. Having hinted that only a minimum of taxes would be levied on the people, Jefferson lists the number of items on which taxes could be levied: "... to rivers, canals, roads, arts, manufacturers, education and other great objects within each state" (ibid.). Thus, by bringing to the fore two opposing statements, Vidal ruptures the stand of Jefferson. He considers Jefferson's opinion on the levying of taxes in an intertextual space, whose difference undoes its singleness of voice, relativizes, questions and undermines its own discourse.

2.6.1 The satirical intent of Vidal in this reading of Jefferson is represented by his ironic voice, the invective in the essay. Criticizing Jefferson he says, "Subverting the Constitution Jefferson bought Louisiana from Napoleon, acquiring its citizens without their consent", and adds, "The author of the Declaration of Independence was quite
able to forget the unalienable rights of anyone whose property he thought should be joined to our empire -- a word which crops up frequently and unselfconsciously in his correspondence" (ibid.; emphasis added). The deconstructive satirical spirit of these lines is obvious. Having declared the U.S a republic with the charter of inalienable rights for all men and after having fought for freedom from monarchy, Jefferson in his correspondences repeatedly refers to the republic as an 'empire' and in practice acquires provinces such as Louisiana. This contradictory discourse undercuts his pose of inalienable rights and democratic governance as stated in the Declaration as well as the U.S. Constitution (Vidal 1972a, 436).

2.6.2 Vidal's critique of the Mosaic Law of homosexuality (Vidal 1982, 159-160), in conjunction with the story of Sodomy, is indeed another instance of his deconstructive reading. Taking the Levitical text which rules "If a man... lie with mankind as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination", and must be put to death, and contextualizing it in its background, that is, after the Jewish exile in Babylon, Vidal's reversal of meaning takes its cue from the word abomination (derived from the Hebrew, "to'ebah", meaning, idolatrous). The point, as Vidal views it, is that during the time of
Leviticus and even prior to its writing, the great goddess, having as many different names as Cybele, Astarte, Diana, Anahita, etc., was worshipped throughout the Middle East. Her worship included rituals of sexual orgies to which many Jews were attracted. Thus, it was imperative that Jewish law denounce the ritual of sex associated with the goddess as an abomination or idolatrous, since they were to worship Jehovah alone. The abomination in Leviticus, Vidal remarks, therefore, refers not to sexual acts as such but to sexual acts associated with the cult of Diana. Thus, by taking a single word and putting it against the traditional hermeneutical interpretation of the Levitical text, Vidal ruptures / deconstructs the Mosaic Law on sodomy.

2.6.3 This kind of deconstruction is similar to Derrida's in that it uncovers in the pre-existing text, "the always already differentiated structure of deconstruction" (Spivak 1976, lix) and ruptures the text by bringing to the fore the opposing signifying structure present within the pre-existing text. But as a novelist Vidal works in a different way, however, with the same end-results. The method of deconstruction in his novels is indirect. Instead of uncovering an already differentiated structure of deconstruction in the intertext, Vidal (un)consciously introduces opposing signifying
systems/discourses in his text as he re-writes the intertexts. The juxtaposition of the opposing signifying system challenges, questions and relativizes the intertexts and thereby prevents closure. The opposing forces of signification subvert the intertext and the text produced has no claim (as Johnson defines deconstruction), "to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another" (1981, xiv). Thus Vidal's novels are rendered deconstructive. The difference between the direct deconstruction of Derrida in his discourse on philosophical texts and the indirect deconstruction of Vidal in his novels can be put in the words, 'deconstruction' and 'deconstructive' respectively. The noun form explains a direct application of a close reading strategy that uncovers the intertext's opposing significations while the adjectival form describes the indirect incorporation of opposing elements along with the inscription of the intertext in a narrative, so as to engender deconstruction.

2.6.4 The reading qua writing method of novelistic production in Vidal thus renders his novels deconstructive. As already seen, Vidal's intertextual reading encompasses an enormous body of works that are inscribed and re-written in his novels. The novels on history, for example, present themselves as deconstructive by virtue of an ironic
rewriting of the past. The ironic structure is made possible by the opposition and difference between the other versions of the past incorporated into the novels and the re-written version, both of which exist in an intertextual space. This produces a deconstructive text. Bakhtin was perhaps the first to see this connection between intertextual production and deconstruction though he does not call it so. Describing writing as a reading of an anterior literary corpus (an intertextuality), he adds that it is "a perpetual challenge of past writing" (qtd. in Kristeva 1980, 69). In his classification of words within narrative, he proposes a category of word through which a writer "can use another's word, giving it a new meaning, while retaining the meaning it already had. The result is a word with two significations: it becomes ambivalent" (ibid., 73). The ambivalence is a product of a "joining of two sign systems" (ibid.). Bakhtin cites stylization, parody and the hidden polemic as examples of ambivalent discourse which he says characterizes the polyphonic novel.

2.6.4.1 Kristeva carries Bakhtin's concepts to their logical conclusion and designates the novel as a polylogue. She defines a polylogic novel as a composition "where the sentence is a minimal unit" (Kristeva 1980, 168) and which raises sentential (monological or dialogical) meaning "to
the power of an open infinity ...." (ibid., 173). Her example of a novel of this kind is Philip Sollers' H. This kind of novel is not ambivalent alone but polyvalent; not just a joining of two sign-systems but multiple sign systems. As a plural dialogue, the text traverses many discourses -- "the history of philosophy, science, religion, and art" (ibid., 201), as H does.

2.6.4.2 Whether ambivalent or polyvalent, the juxtaposition of several opposing sign-systems relativizes the text. The texts read into the writing are questioned and challenged by opposing significations. The interacting sign systems always signify in the process of saying more than one thing at a time, modifying one signifying system with another and never allowing one to dominate over the other. What the reading/writing dialectic thus engenders is a deconstructive text, through structures of subversion which the text reads into itself. Jerome Schwartz discovers such a process in Rabelais and analyses the deconstruction of ideological discourse as an effect of a reading/writing dialectic. He describes this deconstruction as the effect of writing "as the plural discourse of the text is always saying in the process of saying more than one thing at a time, modifying one ideological discourse with another" (Schwartz 1990, 199).
2.6.5 Yet another difference shows itself between Derrida's and Vidal's deconstruction. Derrida's deconstruction is a critique of the traditional discourses of philosophy, and its target is therefore a world of texts, that have little or no reference to an extratextual reality. In evaluating this discourse, Derrida puts into question the validity of philosophical beliefs as well as making a snide remark on the philosophers who uphold this belief. The debasement of the philosophers may not be meant by Derrida, but it is the effect of his deconstruction. In fact, Lang suggests that Barthes might call Derrida's texts "a parody that does not advertise itself as such" (Lang 1988, 56). The parody of the intertext, therefore, ridicules the philosophers as it mimics the texts they have written. To this extent, Derrida's deconstruction can be called satirical. Vidal, on the other hand, uses the intertext to target 'the text of the world' which is inscribed in his novels as ideological discourse. His text in inscribing extratextual reference and evaluating it with specific target in mind, therefore, constitutes a 'deconstructive satire'.

2.7.0 Vidal's manner and method of re-writing the intertext by retaining its primary significance while at the same time introducing an opposing signification is not only
deconstructive but also satirical. This is because, the juxtaposition of sign systems which Bakhtin calls ambivalent, and Kristeva polyvalent, is in effect an ironic discourse. The ironic discourse, therefore, as it engenders a semantic difference between the sign systems, also makes an evaluation, makes a judgement of its ideological base which bears an extratextual reference. The deconstructive satire of his novels is thus signalled by an ironic and parodic veneer. Both of these are weapons of satire while being deconstructive in nature.

2.7.1.1 Irony has been variously viewed as a rhetorical technique, as a trope based on reality/expression, meaning/expression dichotomies. Booth's *Rhetoric of Irony* is the classic case of reading irony as a function of authorial intent so that even in the case of his discussion of Beckett, he concludes that Beckett is ironically speaking of the values dear to him. His criticism presupposes a coherent universe. He cannot conceive of the infinite instabilities of irony signalling a *nada*. Muecke in *The Compass of Irony* hovers between considering 'irony as technique' and 'irony as vision'. He defines irony as a contrast between reality and appearance. This undermines his idea of irony as vision by positing a separation of consciousness and the world.
2.7.1.2 Others have defined irony as a mode of consciousness. This philosophical stance was first taken by Kierkegaard in his *Concept of Irony*. Alan Wilde in defining postmodern "suspensive irony" as against modernism's 'disjunctive irony', views it as a "mode of consciousness". Irony, he says, is "pre-eminently a way of perceiving the world ... its suspensiveness is the tolerance, that is to say, of a fundamental uncertainty about the meanings and relations of things in the world and in the universe" (Wilde 1980, 9). But, as Lang points out, Wilde falls into the reality/appearance trap of Booth when he defines the anironic as a vision of disparity that is also complemented by a vision of wholeness (Lang 1988, 46-47).

2.7.1.3 But irony in Vidal's case is not the "art of depths or heights", related to the classic dichotomies of reality/appearance and meaning/ expression models, as a function of authorial intent and meaning-oriented criticism, but it is an "art of surface", that is, a textually produced element relating to Saussure's theory of the differential aspects of language. In certain aspects it is close to Lang's concept of "humour" which he derives from Barthes' *autre ironie*. For Barthes, Lang points out, irony is a "meta-citation, the quotation of other codes as quotations" (Lang 1988, 58). He insists upon irony as a cultural code
which rejects authorial intentionality altogether. This kind of irony, by refusing to hierarchize the voices within the text, prevents closure, the reduction of the text to a single or final meaning. By being different, it can only flow into a differance in the Derridean sense -- thus forestalling closure (ibid., 59). It is in this sense that Vidal's method of intertextual positioning of several different significations on the textual surface makes the text ironic, engenders deconstruction and speaks satire.

2.7.2 Irony, then, in Vidal's novels is to be read as a function of the reader. It is the tension which the reader perceives, arising from the intersection of conflictive discourses or opposing significations in the text. Such conflicts or warring forces may be between the ideological content and the formal element, between the ideological discourse of an intertext and its functioning through rewriting in the new context in which it is placed and between the ideological discourse of the extratextual reality and its rewriting in the text.

2.7.3 Parody, wherever it occurs in Vidal, works on the same principle as Vidal's deconstructive irony. It imitates the ideological content or formal elements of a particular work of art, a genre, school, etc., but inscribes it with a
critical difference (Hutcheon 1985). Significantly, Bakhtin characterizes parody as ambivalent. Vidal's use of parody touches both satiric parody and parodic satire, fulfilling thus both intramural and extramural aims (see Hutcheon 1985, 62).

2.8.0 Deconstructive satire is thus a function of the textual play of conflictive discourse in Vidal's novels. As an art of textual surface it rules out authorial intentionality. By the textual play, Vidal successfully puts forth several voices that drown the singular voice of authorial supremacy. The intertextuality of his texts rules out any position to him as an author. But the satirical intent of his novels are inscribed in the discourse as encoded intent. While most of the intertextual theorists have ruled out the author in the text, Jakobson, Chatman and Eco have emphasised the role of the sender/encoder, the text, and receiver / reader. Their understanding of the encoded intent is that it does not suggest a romantic interest in a god-like creator but is more like "the matter of inferring the activities of an encoding agent", as Hutcheon points out (Hutcheon 1985, 86). Foucault designates the enunciator as "a particular vacant space that may in fact be filled by different individuals" (Foucault 1972, 96). Kristeva, in describing the status of the word
in Bakhtin, defines it as the intersection of a horizontal axis (subject-addressee) and vertical axis (text-context) (Kristeva 1980, 69). The author/producer is thus not a person but "only a position to be filled within the text, as inferred, in other words, by us as readers" (Hutcheon 1985, 86), or as "subject positions" (Eagleton 1983, 119). The deconstructive satire of a typical Vidalian novel is, therefore, not contradictory to its textual enterprise. It is to be viewed as the encoded intent / message that is to be culled out as the inferred activity of the text by the reader. Moreover, deconstruction is not to be construed as a textual phenomenon alone. Dean and Juliet MacCannell have succinctly shown the nature of the deconstruction of social reality in The Time of the Sign (MacCannel & MacCannel 1982, 55-67).

2.9.1 In this study, Deconstruction is not meant as a plea for reading the texts of Vidal as plural. The emphasis of the study is on the deconstructive process itself which engenders the satire and is to be revealed by the participation of the reader with the text. The study takes for granted the role of the reader in actualizing the experience of textuality. As Eco puts it, "The reader, as an active principle of cooperation is part of the picture of the generative process of the text" (Eco 1979, 4). The text
is read in the perception of irony and parody, which is the meeting point of the intertextual (opposing sign systems) as well as deconstructive forces of signification. It studies how in the subversiveness of these elements lies the satire of ideology. Both intertextual and deconstructive theories are used as reading strategies. The reading aims at approximating the writer's role as a reader, the relationship between the interacting intertexts and the deconstructive process which satirizes the ideology.

2.9.2 Finally, since Vidal's novels inscribe the world text, (place the text within history and society) by their reading / writing dialectic, the reading takes into account the historical as well as the sociological context in which the text is placed. The reading then uses historical and sociological scholarship, in so far as the texts' discourse -- specific ideological context allows it to be read in such a space. Ideology in this thesis is defined according to Raymond Gauss's classification of it: (1) in a 'descriptive sense' which broadly includes the beliefs, concepts, attitudes of a group, (2) in a 'pejorative sense', since it constitutes a 'false consciousness', delusions or doctrine used to confer legitimacy on the social order, and (3) in a 'positive sense' which, unlike the other two, is neither found nor isolated for criticism, but to be created
or invented, a _verite' a' faire_ (qtd. in Schwartz 1990, 4). The prefix 'de', that is conjoined to the title of each of the following chapters - 'Demythification', 'Dehistoricisation', Deprofanation', 'Detheorization' - is used in the sense of decentering / unmaking / undoing / uncovering / problematizing. This is evident from Vidal's decentering of Christ/Kalki and centering of Julian, the apostate, in the 'mythological' novels (Chapter III); displacement of Washington, Jefferson and Hamilton from the center of American history and replacement by the 'excentric' Burr in the 'historical' novels (Chapter IV), reversal of heterosexual / homosexual and thereby problematizing, undoing and abandoning of all sexual categories in the 'sexual' novels, (Chapter V) and unmaking of Criticism / Literature opposition in the theoretic / postmodern novels (Chapter VI).