Among the parts of the Poetics which have been most often quoted by later theorists, argue Wimsatt and Brooks, are the dicta that “poetry is a more philosophic and serious thing than history”, and that it “deals with the universals while history deals with the particulars” [1964:25]. In fact, Aristotle’s distinction between ‘poetry’ and ‘history’ survives even today, though in an invidious sense, because of the formalists’ claim that “the more closely great literature is examined the remoter its connections turn out to be with any sort of history”; and “sweet birds” of art “inhabit no identifiable veins; their songs refuse to acknowledge this or that ancestral origin” [Bateson 1970:122]. During the last three decades, however, there emerged in Anglo-American literary scenario a number of historians, critics, novelists and narrativist philosophers who emphasized the similarities between ‘fictional narrative’ and ‘historical narrative’, and reinterpreted Aristotle accordingly [Lukacs 1968:105]. Besides, we are
presently surrounded by "fashionable hybrids of historical fact and literary fiction" [Strout 1965:14] in such works as E.L. Doctorow’s *Ragtime*, Alex Haley’s *Roots*, Robert Coover’s *Public Burning* and Gore Vidal’s *Burr* – amalgams which are somehow both more and less than historical novels. These amalgams not only "make us acutely uneasy about what standards would be appropriate for judging them" [Ibid] but also obscure the traditional Aristotelian distinction between 'history' and 'poetry'. Under these circumstances it becomes obligatory to analyse and evaluate how Aristotle distinguishes 'poetry' from 'history'; what are the deeper implications of this distinction; and how his arguments were reinterpreted and reformulated by subsequent critics.

The distinction between 'history' and 'poetry' made by Aristotle in two famous passages of the *Poetics* is as follows:

a) *It will be clear from what I have said that it is not the poet's function to describe what has actually happened, but the kinds of thing that might happen, that is, that could happen because they are, in the circumstances, either probable or necessary. The difference between the historian and the poet is not that the one writes in prose and the other in verse .... The difference is that the one tells of what has*
happened, the other of the kinds of things that might happen. For this reason poetry is something more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history; for while poetry is concerned with universal truths, history treats of particular facts. [Penguin translation: 43-44]

b) As for the art of representation in the form of narrative verse, clearly its plots should be dramatically constructed, like those of tragedies; they should centre upon a single action, whole and complete, and having a beginning, a middle, and an end, so that like a single complete organism the poem may produce its own special kind of pleasure. Nor should epics be constructed like the common run of histories, in which it is not the exposition of a single action that is required, but of a single period, and of everything that happened to one or more persons during this period, however unrelated the various events may have been. [Ibid: 65-66]

These passages clearly reveal that to Aristotle, the historian could speak only of 'what has happened', of the particulars of the past; the poet, on the other hand, spoke of 'what could or might happen' and so could deal more with universals. The first distinguishing mark, then, of poetry is that it has a higher subject matter than history; it expresses the universal not the particular, the permanent possibilities of human nature and
while doing so it derives its value from being a ‘manifestation of the cause’, or the first principle of things. That poetry is always striving to give ‘universal form to its own creations’ and reveals a higher truth than history brings it very close or nearer to philosophy. However, in spite of having a philosophic character it is not philosophy because according to Aristotle it tends to express the universal not as it is in itself, but as seen through the medium of sensuous imagery. In other words, history is based upon facts, and with these it is primarily concerned; poetry transforms its facts into truths and hence is superior to history as well as to philosophy. Similarly, according to Aristotle, poetry exhibits a more rigorous connexion of events; cause and event are linked together in “probable or necessary sequence”. Historical compositions, on the other hand, are a record of actual facts, of particular events, strung together in the order of time but without any causal connexion. Poetry is not a mere reproduction of empirical facts, a picture of life with all its trivialities and accidents because the poet presents permanent and eternal verities, free from the elements of unreason which distort our comprehension of real events and of human conduct. The poet as ‘maker’ recreates the actual as a result of which not only in the development of plot but also in the internal working of character, drama, or poetry observes a more logical order than that of
actual experience. Poetic truth passes the bounds of reality without wantonly violating the laws which make the real world rational. Similarly, in poetry the matter depends on the choice of the artist: the form or essence lives truly only in the mind of the artist who conceives the work and transfers the form to the dead matter with which it has no natural affinity. Thus, “poetry in virtue of its higher subject-matter and of the closer and more organic union of its parts acquires an ideal unity that history never possesses; for the prose of life is never wholly eliminated from the record of actual facts” [Butcher, 1978:185].

Aristotle’s thesis regarding history and poetry formed the basis of the European criticism down to the Romantics when, according to Abrams, Aristotle’s ‘mimetic’ stance yielded place to the ‘expressionistic’ one [1953: ]. In a sense it can be argued that most of the European criticism from Aristotle to the nineteenth century Romanctics (particularly upto S.T Coleridge) is based on the ‘mimetic’ principle according to which the artist not merely reflects the external events as history does but also reshapes and reorganizes these events into an organic whole. In the eighteenth century, for example, Fielding made a distinction between the ‘artist’ and the ‘historian’ in the Aristotlean fashion: the historian deals with the particular; the artist
with the universal [See Chapter I, BK III of *Joseph Andrews*]. Fielding calls historian, a topographer or a chorographer because his chief concern is to "describe countries and cities" which, with the help of maps he does "pretty justly" and may be depended upon. But as to the characters and actions of men, Fielding adds, historians' writings can not be accepted so authentic because of "those extrernal contradictions, occurring between two topographers - who undertake the history of the same country" [Ibid]. Against this the artist (whom he calls a biographer) may have made a mistake with regard to time and place - as Alain Rene' Le Sage and Paul Scarron have done in some of their writings - but he is very accurate in the representation of universally recognizable human nature. Fielding gives the example of Cervantes' shepherd, Chrysostom, who "died for the love of the fair" Marcella, and asserts that we might doubt that such a fellow actually lived in Spain, but "will any one doubt but that such a silly fellow hath really existed?" [Ibid].

Aristotle's distinction between 'poetry' and 'history' - not so much between history and literature as the eighteenth century writers propagated - was reformulated in the twentieth century into a distinction between 'history' and 'fiction'. It was argued that
Aristotle’s own analysis is primarily based on the difference between descriptive (history) and creative or imaginative (poetry/fiction); and this is what was adhered to by the writers of the subsequent ages. Even in the Middle Ages, for example, history and fiction were conceptually distinct, or what S. Fleischman calls “discrete categories” [1979: 278]. Fleischman examines some ‘selected literary and historigraphical texts’ (from medieval Spain, France and England) of different genres (epic, romance, historical drama) under six different perspectives or what he calls “parameters”: authenticity, of events and personages in relation to historical facts; intentionality, of the writer in terms of fact or fancy; reception by the intended audience; social function of the text – instruction and edification (moral) or exemplification and propaganda; narrative syntax or the manner of narrating; and narrator involvement, with respect to narrative distance. After analysing such Medieval texts as chanson de geste, chronicle of the war between the English and the Scots; The life of the Black Prince, Infantes De Lara from these six parameters, Fleischman concludes that the purveyors and consumers of medieval texts did discriminate between historical and fictional modes, although this distinction cuts across different lines from our own.
Although the medieval audience generally considered epics and legends to be accurate representation of historical fact, the "official" historiography of the medieval period, according to Fleischman, was the "annals" and the "chronicles" which lack a logical connection between the events. This form of historiography displayed a very rudimentary paratactic structure, filled with apparent gaps and discontinuities, and organized solely according to the principle of chronology. The events are characteristically non-explanatory in contrast to medieval romance, where causality and "focus" are expressed through explicit narrative subordination. The postmodern historiographers, therefore, argue that both the annals and the chronicles — the historical modes in the middle ages — are "imperfect" form of history in that they lack a narrative dimension. Events in the medieval historical texts, they argue, are not represented as having a coherent structure, an order of meaning; they are simply ordered sequentially. Of the two forms — annals and chronicles — the latter is, however, generally acknowledged to be a higher "form" of historical representation [See Barnes 1962:65-68]. Though Hayden White, as will be analysed later, departs from this view particularly while differentiating between 'annals', 'chronicles' and 'history', the medieval analysis of the opposition between 'historical fact' and 'romance' goes back to Aristotle who defined history and
poetry antithetically: poetry is unified, intelligible, and based on proper subordination of the part to the ends of the whole, whereas history knows only the paratactic organisation of contiguity or succession.

Following Aristotle, William Brandt, while surveying old French and Middle English chronicles, observes that the aim of the aristocratic chronicler of the middle ages was not so much to relate actions for their historical or documentary interest as to celebrate the values implicit in these actions [1973:90]. Similarly, after examining a number of medieval texts, Fleischman asserts that the “facts of history” are characteristically presented as subordinate to a higher truth. Events are spelled out not for their intrinsic historical value, but in a way that makes them intelligible as a variation on a paradigmatic story, a repetition of a mythic – or, for the Middle Ages particularly scriptural – intertext. The significance of an event lies precisely in demonstrating “how it instantiates in the present the pattern of human agon and divine intention of an authoritative event of mythic significance” [Nichols:2].

Viewing three different historical texts of medieval period – the *Ecclesiastical History* of orderic vitalis, *Gesta Guilelmi* of William of Poitier’s and *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio* of Amiens – Nichols finds that despite differences of purpose and situation, all of these historians,
in common with the practice of their time, "structure meaning in such a way as to make the discourse an interpretation, a directed vision or reading determined in advance of the actants and their deeds" [Ibid:9].

Even Fleischman, while substantiating his argument by various references – particularly by the arguments of Jean Bodel (a composer of fiction) and Alfanso (a recorder of so called history) – claims that a distinction did exist in the minds of medieval text producers and their publics between historical and fictional discourse – though this difference is different from the one conceived by the modern historiographic writers. He does not argue with W.B. Gallie’s Philosophy and the Historical Understanding (1964) according to which the criterion for historical discourse is ‘an acceptable level of accuracy with regard to the information, and ‘the assumption of a critical scrutiny of source materials’ because it takes us away from the medieval concept of history pieced together. For Alfanso and most medieval chroniclers the determining criterion of historiography was not a desire for objectivity and comprehensive reporting but rather the function of the work – typically propaganda and/or panegyric – coupled with what Brandt calls “‘the principle of interest’”, that is, telling a good story. “Most medieval story tellers”, says Fleischman, “understood full well the value of telling a good story” [1979:280], and Hayden
White’s theory of “narrativity”, if applied to these story tellers (as observers or recorders of events or even as entertainers), may fail to find the two orders of events unmixed. That does not, however, mean that a distinction between history and fiction did not exist for them: the truth is that the terms of opposition were construed differently from the way they are today. The collective testimony of the texts (cited by Fleischman and others) clearly indicates that there was a concept of history which was distinct from fiction, and which was linked to a particular criterion of truth. But historical truth did not imply, as it does for us, the authenticity of facts and events: history was what was willingly believed. This is probably the main reason that even when the medieval poets blurred the line of demarcation between history and legend, the medieval audience generally considered these works to be an accurate representation of historical work. The issue involved was not objective truth as distinct from subjective belief, as in the modern time, because for the Middle Ages, historical truth was anything that belonged to a widely accepted tradition, “familiar”, “legendary” or “held to be true” [Fleischman 1975:295]. Taking all these facts into consideration, Fleischman asserts that in the Middle Ages, the distinction between history and fiction was strictly in accordance with Aristotle’s distinction, though their conception of history was not the
same as that of modern analysts who have assumed the task of classifying their stories according to a typology of forms of discourse developed on the basis of our intellectual presuppositions.

The Renaissance historiography marks a departure from the simple annals of the medieval period. History in the Renaissance came to be recognized as a continuous, selective and integrated narrative, distinguished from mere records of facts, such as annals, as well as from poetry which was regarded as 'an art of imitation'. Truth was universally reckoned the objective of the historian, and impartiality the most necessary of his virtues which primarily differentiates him from poets. The modern concept of history as an imposition of form upon the past, it is very important to point out here was a development of the Renaissance. Viewing history as a part of rhetoric, Robertello – Italian translator of Aristotle's Poetics – differentiates history from poetry as truth opposed to verisimilitude and particulars as opposed to generals. In method too it is distinguished from poetry in that it follows the course of events in time as they happened, while poetry may plunge in medias res [Campbell 1964:31-32]. However, it needs to be noted here that poetry was a more inclusive term then, covering drama and much of what we call creative literature. In the Renaissance period some
philosophers even attempted to reverse Aristotellean hierarchy by elevating history above poetry and with them history took precedence over poetry as teachers and guides to what was ‘useful to states and to human lives’. Stephen Gosson, for example, defended history as true and rational and argued in his Apologie of the School of Abuse: “ancient poets are the fathers of lies, pipes of vanitie and Schools of Abuse” [1579]. Even Quintilian in his Institutes draws upon this difference by saying that the “fictitious narrative” in tragedies and “poems is not merely not true but has little resemblance to truth”, the “realist narrative of comedies” “though not true has yet a certain verisimilitude”, but the “historical narrative” is “an exposition of actual fact” [BK. x. Vol.iv. p.21]. The defence of poetry in the Renaissance, however, was largely based upon Aristotle’s Poetics, which was framed about the issues raised by Plato in his attack on the arts of imitation. Of all the defenders of poetry, it was Sidney who penetrated most deeply into the nature of the charges against poetry and into the nature of the rival claims of history and philosophy. In selecting poetry as supreme among the verbal arts, Sidney “embeds his claim for poetry within a favourite field of Renaissance debate” [Shepherd 1965:28]. He maintains the prestige of poetry while attacking the very claims of the historians. The historian, he asserts, is
always “loden with old mouse – eaten records”, (“pick truth out of partiality”), tied not to “what should be” but to “what is”, to the “particular” truth of things and not to the “general” reason of things and that “hys example draweth no necessary consequence, and, therefore, a less fruitful doctrine” [1965:120-130]. Refuting the most direct attack upon poetry as lying, Sidney asserts: “of all writers under the sun the poet is the least liar ... a poet can scarcely be a liar” [Ibid:123]. The other artists, he adds, especially the historians “affirm many things”, “hardly escape from lies. But the poet never affirmeth” [Ibid:124] Sidney holds that the world revealed by poetry is an ideal and perfect world – a world more intelligible than the world of experience. Since the fictions of poetry transform facts into truth, the poetic imitation according to Sidney is really a heightening process, an exercise of the creative faculty. Hence, both Aristotle and Sidney agree in seeing poetry something more than mere fancy or a bare transcript of life and both maintain that it embodies elements of real and permanent value. But, whereas according to Sidney, the poet inspired arrives intuitively at glimpses of an ideal and perfect world, by Aristotle the poet is held to take a philosophical view of things as they are, thus arriving at the universal through the particular.
Poetry, as a product of the imagination, according to Francis Bacon is ‘nothing else but feigned history’. However, poetic narrative of a purely fanciful kind, represents deeds ‘greater and more heroical’, events rarer and more surprising, and actions that work out more in accordance with poetic justice than can be found in ordinary life, in this way satisfying man’s longings for a more perfect world. In other words, the poetic process, despite its element of distortion, conduces to magnanimity, morality and delectation; and in general, it has an uplifting effect “by submitting the shows of things to the desires of the mind, whereas reason doth buckle and bow the mind unto the nature of things” [Bacon 1965 : ii, iv : 22]. Bacon’s classification of poetry into narrative (i.e., epic) descriptive (i.e., dramatic) allusive or parabolical (i.e., allegorical) is based on his conception of poetry as ‘feigned history’ dealing with the deeds of the past and consequently his arrangement is determined by the different treatment accorded to such deeds. Epic poetry, Bacon states, treats of the dignity of man, which, history for the most part denied. Even to William Shakespeare, poetry was something more than mere idle figments:

More witneseth than fancy’s images
And grows to something of great constancy
[A Midsummer – Night’s Dream VI.1, 25-26]
In these lines Shakespeare seems to be hinting at Sidney’s ‘high-flying liberty of conceit’ of the poet as a means of arriving at substantial truth. According to him, the function of drama is “to hold, as ’twere, the mirror up to nature”, [Hamlet, iii, ii, 25]. Shakespeare too, it can safely be argued, not only asserts the superiority of poetic art but also revives Aristotle’s principle of artistic logic of a “probable or necessary sequence”, requiring a rigorous connection of the incidents employed in the coherent structure of his plays.

Renaissance reflection on historiography conformed to the precepts of the ancients whose theory of history was limited largely to questions of technique and presentation. History writing was viewed as an art of presentation and argument rather than a scientific inquiry, and its problems belonged, therefore, to rhetoric rather than to epistemology. Though seventeenth and eighteenth century theories of poetry usually left room for a neo-platonic notion of divine inspiration inherited from the Renaissance, “the main tenets of late eighteenth century theorists and the assumptions they are founded on, constitute what might be called a ‘rhetorical’ conception of poetry” [Stone 1967:83]. Literature, in the eighteenth century, referred to the practice of writing and history was one of the kinds of writing that could be
practised; and writing, according to Gossman, "always implies selection, organization, signification or the making of meaning" [1990:240]. Again, during the eighteenth century, history emerged as an independent discipline by separating itself from religious and secular establishments that had simultaneously given warrant to its general narrative structures and made the conclusion of anyone historian dubious to all outside the establishment within which he wrote. Hume’s pride in thinking himself "the only historian that at once neglected power, interest and authority" [Handel 1955:70] and Gibbon’s disdain for those who clamored against his attack on Christianity – because "my diligence and accuracy were attested by my own conscience", [Saunders 1961:175] – suggest both the newly declared independence and its accompanying problem. In his article "Historical Talent" in Dictionnaire historique, Bayle remarks:

*I observe that truth being the soul of history, it is an essential thing for a historical composition to be free from lies; so that though it should have all other perfections, it will not be a history, but a mere fable or romance if it wants truth [Quoted by Hayden White 1978:140].*
It also needs to be taken into consideration that although the eighteenth century theorists distinguished rather rigidly between “fact” and “fancy”, they did not on the whole view historiography as a representation of the facts unalloyed by elements of fancy. While granting the general desirability of historical accounts that dealt with real rather than imagined events, theorists from Bayle to Voltaire and De Mably recognised the inevitability of a recourse to fictive techniques in the representation of real events in the historical discourse. Truth was not equated with fact, but with a combination of fact and the conceptual matrix within which it was appropriately located in the discourse. The imagination, no less than the reason, had to be engaged in any adequate representation of the truth, and this meant that the techniques of fiction making were as necessary to the composition of a historical discourse as erudition might be. Hence, the eighteenth century historian was not content with mere compilation of annals and chronicles but tried “to infuse into history the esprit philosophique, to narrate in such a manner as to give the reader a background experience profitable for reflection on human nature and destiny” [Bredvold 1950:156]. The historians of the century considered themselves men of letters, and their aims were humanistic. Though they set high standards of accuracy, they did not value scientifically ascertained facts merely for their own sake.
It was Voltaire, already famous as dramatist and poet, who inaugurated modern historical writing in France by his brilliant works on Charles XII, on the age of Louis XIV and on the history of civilization. The difference between the historian and the epic poet, for Voltaire, lay in the nature of the material out of which each composed his work, otherwise the essential concerns of both were the same: careful selection of an appropriate subject-matter and skilful narrative composition. Accordingly, the major historians of the period were deeply concerned with their performances: Hume declared a "love of literary fame" to be his "ruling passion", [Handel 1955:10] while Gibbon described the achievements of his immediate historiographic fore-bearers – Hume and Robertson – in purely literary terms. Voltaire wrote: "History like tragedy requires an exposition, a central action and a denouement" [Gossman 235] and even Fenelon 1990 : urged a reform of the manner of writing history:

A dry and dreary compiler of annals knows no other order than that of chronology ... But the historian of genius selects among twenty possible places in his narrative the one where a fact ought to be placed to throw light on all others" [Ibid : 236]
Hugh Blair allowed "Annals," "Memoirs" and "Lives" to be comprehended under historical composition but these

*are its inferior subordinate species. In the conduct and management of his subject, the first attention requisite in an Historian is to give as much unity as possible; that his History should not consist of separate unconnected parts merely, but should be bound together by some connecting principle, which shall make the impression on the mind of something that is one, whole and entire [Ibid].*

Blair argued that in history we should be able to trace all the secret links of the chain which binds together remote, and seemingly unconnected events, and Fenelon declared that the main point is to place the reader at the heart of things and to reveal to him the links among them. Gossman, while talking about the narrative of the eighteenth century history, says that instead of being placed in immediate relation to the object of narration, the reader, like the narrator, was to be placed at a distance from it, so that it appeared to him as if it were situated in a framed and closed space, upon which he could look out, as through a window. While following the sequence of events, in other words, the reader was to anticipate the entire plot, so that each event as it was narrated would fit into allotted place. Accordingly, in neoclassical historiography the part is subordinated to the whole, the particular to
the general, the syntagmatic to the paradigmatic. What the reader of history observes is the unfolding of a distinct, autonomous action, which is already inscribed, from the beginning, in the elements that constitute it.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the spectrum, the novel was giving itself an air of history and offering itself to the reader as reportage, the order of which is prescribed by events as they occur, not by art. The main feature of the eighteenth century Fiction, like Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, Fielding’s *Tom Jones* and Smollet’s *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, is the ironic distance these novels establish between the narrator and the narrative, and the complicity they set up between the reader and the narrator. While the eighteenth century historians were striving to achieve maximum narrative coherence and to approximate their coherence to the forms of fiction, certain novelists were trying to undercut these very forms and conventions by an appeal to history. This also characterizes Voltaire, Hume and Gibbon as historians. These historians tell their tales under the same condition as the eighteenth century novelists did and like them engage the reader as an ironic spectator of the historical scene. In other words, history in the eighteenth century raised questions and created conditions in which the
individual subject and his critical reason could exercise and assert freely. It did not present itself as an objectively true entity that could lead to the discovery of historical reality itself. On the contrary, its truth and validity were always problematic, provoking the reader's reflection and thus renewing his freedom. This blending of history and fiction subsequently gave rise to a new type of novel – the historical Novel. The historical novel received its first theoretical expression in Sir Walter Scott's novels like \textit{Waverly}, \textit{Rob Roy}, \textit{Old Mortality}, \textit{Ivanhoe}, \textit{The Heart of Midlothian}. Scott presents the most important stages of the whole of English history in his writing and fully succeeds in portraying the struggles and antagonisms of history through the psychology and destiny of his characters who are taken from popular life. The heroes of his novels, as Ian Vohu in \textit{Waverly}, Burly in \textit{Old Mortality}, Cedric and Robin Hood in \textit{Ivanhoe} and Rob Roy in \textit{Rob Roy}, though directly interwoven with the life of the people, are historically more imposing than the well-known figures of history. While interpreting the historical accuracy of Walter Scott's novels Heine says: "Walter Scott's novels sometimes reproduce the spirit of English history much more faithfully than Hume" [Lukacs 1962:56]. This is further described vividly by Georg Lukacs: "What in Morgan, Marx and Engels was worked out and proved with theoretical and
historical clarity, lives, moves and has its being poetically in the best historical novels of Scott” (Ibid). Both Lukacs and Fleishman think of the historical novel not as a tight fictional kind with specific requirements but rather as a novel with a peculiarly strong kind of commitment to man’s life in history and to the problems of uniting these two poles, private and public, personal and historical in the hybrid art. Scott does it by choosing his hero as a man who finds himself a small participant in major historical event. Such a hero turns out to be an ideal mediating agent between the personal and the impersonal: a man primarily concerned with his private affairs, with whom we may feel the usual novel reader’s sympathy through identification, yet a man whose somewhat accidental role in the larger events of his time allows him to be a moving lens through which we may view history itself [Maynand 1975:237-365]. While talking about the historical novels of Scott, Carlyle says:

These historical novels have taught all men this truth ...
that the bygone ages of the world were actually filled by living men, not by protocols, state-papers, controversies and abstractions of men [Carlyle 1872:77].

Scott found his counterparts from Russia (Pushkin and Tolstoy), France (Balzac), Germany (Willibald Alexis), and Italy (Manzoni) who
followed his methods and techniques in writing their historical novels. "Scott's influence on Balzac is extremely strong" says Georg Lukacs, as Scott transformed Balzac’s urge to portray French history, from 1789 to 1848, in his novels with all its historical connections. The only difference between the two, according to Lukacs, is that, "with Balzac the historical novel which in Scott grew out of the English social novel, returns to the presentation of contemporary society" [Lukacs 1962:86].

The normative character of this transition from the historical novel of Scott to the artistic history of contemporary bourgeois society is emphasized once again by Tolstoy’s works. Tolstoy, even to this day remains one of the most powerful depictors of Russia’s period of transformation from the 1861 Emancipation of the Peasants to the 1905 Revolution, and succeeds in depicting the major historical problems which formed the prehistory of this transformation and created its social preconditions. His War and Peace, for example, is a unique historical novel created out of the real life conditions in the transitional period and constitutes "a brilliant renewal and development of Scott's classical type of historical novel" [Ibid]. Tolstoy creates a real popular hero in the figure of Kutuzov - a man who is important because he wants only to be an executive organ of the powerful forces. The historical concreteness of feelings and thoughts, the historical
genuineness of the peculiar quality of reaction, in suffering and deeds, to the outer world have been presented in a magnificent way in the novel. However, the greatness of Tolstoy lies in the fact that he has no confidence in the “official leaders” of history, neither in the open reactionaries nor in the liberals. What concerns him most is to depict the economic and moral life of the people, the great problem of the peasantry and how different classes, strata and individuals were related to it. Georg Lukacs is very right in stating:

**War and Peace** is just as much a product of the previous realistic social novel of Russia and France as Scott’s portrayal of history is of the English social – critical realism of the eighteenth century [1962:88].

The historical novels of Scott, Tolstoy and Balzac tend towards the defictionalization of history, probably under the impact of new trend among the historians who were hostile to all forms of fictionalizing in their own writings. The historians of early nineteenth century generally believed that the bad impacts of the French Revolution were only due to the false or “fictional” representation of history. As a result of it they concentrated upon that mode of representation which was truly “objective” or truly “realistic”: thus history and fiction came to be known as the study of the real versus the study of the mere imaginable.
Although they made claims of objectivity, they produced different forms of the historical discourse and ignored that facts do not speak for themselves, but it is the historian who speaks on their behalf, and weaves the fragments of the past into a whole – an integrity which in its representation is a purely discursive one. However, the second half of the nineteenth century stressed a worthy historical representation rooted in fictional settings. Flaubert and Meyer, who were the chief representatives of this period, present history with a deliberate and conscious subjective attitude. They depict the malice and indignation of the masses, whose real desires were not fulfilled by the bourgeois revolutions which took place during 1789-1848. However, in actual practice both writers differ because of the difference in socio-historical circumstances. This naturalist development in the history of novel, particularly in its transition to a lyrical subjectivism, underlines the tendency to make history private. Thackeray also faced the same dilemma in his portrayal of historical events and had to choose between public pathos and private manners. He comes out of the dilemma by believing that "everything can be seen from the proximity of everyday life" [Lukacs 1962:202] as a result of which even Steele and Addison – the well known characters of the epoch – are objectively degraded in his novel Henry Esmond, as their personalities reveal no more than the
normal, sociable habits of everyday life. The novel vividly presents the prevalent tendency to flee from history into a defensive and seemingly private world.

However, unlike Thackeray, Dickens holds steadily to his faith in social and moral progress. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, he chose a more individual and distinctive form to depict the problems of popular unrest and revolution. The novel moves Britons abroad to France and observes their reactions to a foreign political crisis. Unlike Scott’s novels, however, it includes no well-known historical figures amongst its characters, and, as its title suggests, it deal with phenomena which are common to both London and Paris. Dickens’ knot of fictional characters are only partly detached from the Revolution which overtakes them, but the novel takes family connections, private histories and the ties of responsibility, and uses them as a means of explaining, and then privately resolving, the public divisions between philosophies, classes and nations. Dickens uses his plot as a kind of myth which contains the historical problem examined in his novel. *A Tale of Two Cities* transforms a Dickensian formula, a private resolution of a public challenge into an emotionally charged historical context.
A study of Thackeray’s and Dickens’ novels, particularly Henry Esmond and A Tale of Two Cities and the works of Voltaire reveal that the nineteenth century historical narrative shares important structural features with the nineteenth century fictional narrative. Both explicitly reject the separation of object and subject, past and present, narrative and commentary or discourse. As Lionel Gossman writes:

_The dominant feature of both fictional and historical narrative in the nineteenth century is the replacement of the overt eighteenth century persona of the narrator by a covert narrator, and the corresponding presentation of the narrative as unproblematic absolutely binding_ [1990:244].

The nineteenth century narrator, according to the writer, appears as a privileged reporter recounting what happened, and accordingly, the historical text is not presented as a model to be discussed, criticized, accepted or repudiated by the free and inquiring intellect, but as the inmost form of the real, binding and inescapable. In otherwords, whereas the eighteenth century historian accepted his ideological function unquestionably, in the nineteenth century the historian’s ideological function and the rhetoric he deployed in its service were denied in the deepest sense since the historian himself did not recognise them. A similar argument has been put forward by LaCapra in his book
History and Criticism. LaCapra spends a great deal in showing how in the nineteenth century the novel and narrative history often exhibited noteworthy parallels; and how the masters of narrative could be found in both areas of prose discourse (history and fiction). Historians such as Michelet, Carlyle and Macaulay, according to him, were "great narrators and might even compete with novelist for audiences" [LaCapra 1985:38]. However, towards the end of the nineteenth century, he argues, there can be seen, by contrast, a parting of the ways in historical and novelistic narrative. Narrative in history tends, with some exceptions, to remain steeped in its nineteenth century ways and the developments in narrative history tend to favour the "scientific" level of documentation and data collection. Such an attitude towards history is revealed in Nietzsche who in his The Use and Abuse of History (1874) sharpened his conception of the opposition between the artistic and historical imaginations and claimed that wherever the "eunuchs" in the "harem of history" flourished, art must necessarily perish. "The unstrained historical sense", he wrote, "pushed to its logical extreme, uproots the future, because it destroys illusions and robs existing things of the only atmosphere in which they can live" [See White 1978 : 27-50]. The next generation learned from Nietzsche and took up his hostility towards history as practiced by late nineteenth
century academic historians with a vengeance. Similar indictments, more or less explicit, can be found in writers as different in temperament and purpose as George Eliot, Ibsen and Gide.

In *Middlemarch*, published in the same year as *The Birth of Tragedy*, Brooke and Mr. Casaubon try to provide a suitably English indictment of the perils of antiquarianism. Miss Brooke, a Victorian virgin of assured income who desires to do just one self-transcending thing in her life, sees in Mr. Casaubon, twenty-five years her senior, "a living Bossuet, whose work would reconcile complete knowledge with devoted piety" (47). And in spite of their difference in age, she resolves to marry him and dedicate her life to the service of his proposed historical study of the religious systems of the world. But during her honeymoon in Rome, her illusions are shattered. When Casaubon reveals his incapacity to respond to the past which lives about him in the monuments of the city and, moreover, his inability to bring his own intellectual labours to completion in the present. "With his taper stuck before him," the author says of Casaubon, "he forgot the absence of windows, and in better manuscript remarks on other men's notions about the solar deities, he had become indifferent to the sunlight" (230). In the end, Dorothea denies her obligations to Casaubon the
scholar and marries young Ladislaw the artist, achieving her escape from the incubus of history thereby. George Eliot does not worry over the matter, but the gist of her thought is clear: artistic insight and historical learning are opposed, and the qualities of the responses to life which they respectively evoke are mutually exclusive.

The modernists decided to save the world through an art purified of history – an art conceived as the reinvigoration of human capacities blocked, thwarted, and denied by modern social existence. In other words, the socially redemptive capability of art came to depend on its separation from the common life of society, its repudiation of the history that produced it. But the modernist writer, particularly the writer of fiction, also had a contradictory aim: to tell the whole truth to make each fiction the book of the world. Within the pantheon of modernist fiction (Joyce, Proust, Kafka, Gide, James, Conrad, Lawrence, Woolf, Forster, Hemingway and so on) the treatment of history varies widely: sometimes history is visible but subordinate to the issues of consciousness, time, art, epistemology, sexuality and the nature of the self; at other times it seems entirely absent. But in many cases, even when history seems to have disappeared the contradictory double imperative – to represent history and society and, at the same time, to
deny them – has surfaced in varying degrees and kinds. For example, both George Eliot and Joseph Conrad were confident that they addressed historical problems in their own fictional way. In his preface to *Under Western Eyes*, "a sort of historical novel dealing with the past", Conrad asserts that "truth alone is the justification of any fiction which makes the least claim to the quality of art", yet he also insists that he has given "free play" to his "creative instinct" and his feeling for the "dramatic possibilities of the subject" [1951:VII, X]. Similarly, George Eliot called for the novel to be constructed by the "voracious imagination", working out "the various steps by which a political or social change was reached using all extent evidence and supplying deficiencies by careful analogical creation" [1963:446-47]. She even sets her earlier novel *Romola* (1863), in distant Renaissance Florence and merges, in the manner of Scott, great personages and private heroes and heroines. *Romola* investigates an historical crises, and it considers its impact on the future through its effect on a select group of historical characters. The novel proposes a parallel between the progress of the individual towards self-awareness and enlightenment, and the forward movement of the broad mass of humanity in a wider, creative historical process. While Scott can give us both a feeling for the romance of the past and valid symbols of the underlying class struggles which shape
the future, George Eliot gives us the cultural texture of an entire civilization at a point of crisis. For Romola, as for Dorothea after her, there is the need to find oneself in finding one's relation to the greater world of society and history where the individual fate touches on the common fate of all. With a feeling for the problems of the historical novel that came from a major effort in the traditional genre, George Eliot was able to make the leap in Middlemarch to something greater, from the Provincial Scott tradition. In this novel the great gap between public and private is effectively replaced by a historical understanding of every aspect of social life. Accordingly, along with her intention to make a study of provincial life as true a picture of the England of 1829-1932 as any study of great figures of the Roman Bill would be, George Eliot also added an epic aim: to provide within the scene of one provincial city as comprehensive a picture as possible of the mutual relations of all individuals and all classes. While Dickens is content to caricature the popular forces of revolution, or Scott is content to embody the middle class, George Eliot gives us a living fabric of society as many individuals, all responding throughout the book in personal complexity to the great and small events of their age. To know the history of Middlemarch in its fullest significance is to know the history of England or a civilization. Its history is indeed what the author
calls it, a "parable" in which may be read concretely a typical historical experience. And she explicitly recommends to us the "efficiency" of "historical parallels" (Chapter 35) by which we may generalize this one experience to every sphere of the country.

Similarly, In **The Political Unconscious** Frederic Jameson discovers in *Nostromo* what he considers a unique metamorphosis of historical content into pure form:

*Nostromo is thus ultimately, if you like, no longer a political or historical novel, no longer a realistic representation of history; yet in the very movement in which it represses such content and seeks to demonstrate the impossibility of such representation, by a wondrous dialectical transfer the historical "object" itself becomes inscribed in the very form [1981:280].*

In *Nostromo*, Conrad makes a deliberate use of historical and political material. The setting of the story in the imaginary South American Republic of Costaguana is a remarkable *tour-de-force*; Costaguana is almost painfully real in every aspect of its history and geography and its reality is conveyed to the reader not only by the persuasive use of detail but even more by the uncanny perceptiveness with which Conrad traces the impact on the behaviour and attitude of his characters of the
political and economic forces inevitably set in motion when a backward state suddenly finds itself possessed of independence and in the orbit of the western industrial world. The various revolutions which form the history of Costaguana are not employed by Conrad simply as devices for projecting crisis which move the action along in the desired direction; they are shown – with an accuracy that any historian of nationalism, imperialism, capitalism, and democracy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries well might envy – as part of the pattern which is bound to develop, and has, in fact, so often developed, under the given historical and geographical circumstances. Mr. Irving Howe has commented on the startling resemblance between the imaginary political history of Costaguana as Conrad told it in 1904 and the actual political history of Cuba from 1933. But this insight into forces at work in the modern world is used only to provide the background of the novel, to ground in an over-all reality that the reader has no choice but to know and accept. David Daiches while talking of Nostromo says:

Nostromo is a novel about the springs of political action in the modern world, and, as we might by now expect of Conrad, the view that comes across is that political action can never be real and at the same time it can never be avoided. When we say it can never be real, that does not mean that it cannot alter the lives of men; it does some
times with appaling cruelty but it is never directly related to what it professes to be concerned with and never deals with the problems it is commonly supposed to deal with [1960:43].

David Daiches goes to the extent of saying that what Aristotle said of tragedy – it is more philosophical and more serious than history – can also be said of Nostromo with the addition that it is also more convincing as history than history itself. It is history without illusions, written with the tragic calm of desperate knowledge.

With Virginia Woolf’s To the Lighthouse, however, we move from the suppression and veiled representation of particular historical phenomenon to the suppression and veiled representation of a chunk of chronological history itself. The novel’s three parts correspond to Woolf’s contemporary history: the beauty and the destructive hollowness of Edwardian society “(The Window)”, the effort to survive and redeem something of value in the postwar society (“The Lighthouse”). However, the war – the central event of the novel – is mentioned only in throw away asides. The actual depredations of contemporary history are eternalized as the universal depredations of time: the title of the war section is “Time Passes”, and the recurring image of time’s destruction of the world is the eternal ocean wearing
away the ephemeral shore. Woolf seems to think that she was trying to use her art only to save us from the destruction wrought by time itself – to lift moments out of time, just as Mrs Ramsay does, and thereby redeem them by freezing them into art – when in fact, she is struggling just as much to save us from the particular trap of Edwardian society, primarily the trap of its gender definitions, and to salvage something from the near total ruin, as it then appeared, inflicted by World War I.

The case for the novel as a living form of art has been made by none other than Henry James himself. He says:

*The only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life ... as the picture in reality, so the novel is history ... But history also is allowed to represent life; it is not, any more than painting, expected to apologize. The subject-matter of fiction is stored up likewise in documents and records, and if it will not give itself away, it must speak with assurance, with the tune of the historian ... To represent and illustrate the past, the actions of men, is the task of either writer, and the only difference that I can see is, in proportion as he succeeds, to the honour of the novelist, consisting as it does in his having more difficulty in collecting his evidence* [1972:30-31].
A good deal of postmodernist fiction, therefore, suppressed history, instead of repudiating or denying it totally, in order to concentrate more on what Richard Sheppard calls ‘the problematics of European modernism’ [1993:1-51]. The complex, powerful techniques of figuration available to modernist fiction writers allowed them to turn away from the devastating facts of modern history – a gesture of survival as well as of denial – and at the same time to render those facts with greater power than direct representation would give. Since these writers attempted to simultaneously muffle and assert the historical referent in their novels, these novels make us experience history as an unassimilable, subterranean dissonance, denying as any illusion of clarity, mastery or resolution. This, according to Harry E. Shaw, was the result of “a self-proclaimed wish to transcend the nightmare of history – and of the novelistic form” [1990: 538]. The various critical movements of the twentieth century (the New Criticism and Structuralism in particular) not only attacked on the importance of historical representation but also tended to place historical fiction on the periphery. Yet despite an artistic and philosophical climate that might be seen as inimical to the creation of historical fiction, Faulkner created Absalom! Absalom! (1936) and Virginia Woolf Orlando (1928), both significant mediations on history and tradition. Such
novels as these, as well as the works of such continental writers as Hermann Broch make it unwise to identify the historical novel entirely with its 'classic', nineteenth-century form.

Aristotle's distinction between 'history' and 'fiction', therefore, survived up to 1960s, in an invidious sense, mainly because of the formalist criticism. In the second half of 1950s, for example, the 'Genre Critics' or the "neo - Aristotelean" at Chicago "pushed the Aristotelian type of theoretical analysis far beyond the point where Aristotle himself left off", [Crane 1957:160] and applied the inductive method of Aristotle to various literary genres, like the lyric and the novel, which Aristotle had left untouched in the Poetics. Though these formalist critics paved the way for others to reinterpret Aristotle in the light of new philosophies and theoretical constructs, they insist on the difference between novels and histories, in spite of the similarities between these two genres, so far as their employing the narrative, description, presentation of motives, and analysis of characters is concerned. Even the historians, following this tradition meticulously, came out with similar arguments. Collingwood, for example, argues on the one hand, that both historian and novelist make the relation between a character and his situation so intelligible that "we cannot imagine him
as acting otherwise" and on the other hand, emphasizes that the historian's picture of the past is "meant to be true" – a picture of things "as they really were and of events as they really happened" [1946:245-46]. For this reason alone, he argues, histories, unlike novels, must be consistent with each other relying entirely on an empirical evidence.

However, in the 1960's itself the gap between history and fiction started narrowing when a number of historians, critics, novelists and narrativist philosophers emphasized the similarities between the two and reinterpreted Aristotle accordingly. John Lukacs, for example, while reinterpreting Aristotelian distinction between fiction (poetry) and history, stated: "A fact originally meant something done, an action; and a fiction meant an act of fashioning or imitating" [1968:105]. Obviously, this distinction does not coincide exactly with the difference between something that 'happened' and something that 'could happen' because here both words (fact and fiction) are rooted in the idea of an action. However, Lukacs rightly points out that Aristotle's distinction between the 'actual' and the 'possible' as the dividing line between a history and a novel, if taken literally, ignores the role of possibility in historical analysis and the role of actuality in the writing of novels. Similarly, Raymond Williams asserted that the proper response to the
fictionalizing of everything is not to restore the distinction between Poetry and History merely by negatively defining fiction as ‘what did not actually happen’ and positively defining fact as ‘what really happened’. This binary system, according to him, leaves out the way in which a more complex series includes also “what might/could have happened, what really happens, what might happen, what essentially (typically) happened/happens” and this series enters into the major forms of “epic, romance, drama and narrative” [1977:148]. By enlarging the spectrum Raymond Williams draws our attention to the ‘substantial overlap’ of these categories in histories, memoirs, biographies, dramas, epics, romances and novels. This recognition prepares us for a more imaginative response to historical writing and a more historical response to literature. In The Open Boundary of History and Fiction, Suzzanne Gearhart rightly states:

Contemporary criticism abounds with theories of history and fiction; some are concerned with the integrity of these objects or domains, others stress their overlapping [1984:4].

“The interdependence of theories of history and fiction”, she continues, “has been increasingly apparent in the work of a broad range of contemporary theorists” [Ibid]. Out of this ‘broad range’ Gearhart
selects a few in order to explore 'the open boundary' between history and fiction. She begins with the French Structuralist anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss and argues that much of Levi Strauss's work, particularly *The Savage Mind*, is based on the distinction between history and fiction (or myth). According to her,

> Levi-Strauss's approach to the problem is typical of the most complex theories of history and fiction in that he sometimes defends the integrity of boundary between them and at other times allows this boundary to be over run, erased or simply ignored [Ibid:5].

Gearhart does not relate Levi-Strauss either to the Aristotelian tradition or post-modernism but concludes her discussion by stating, very casually, that Levi-Strauss does not belong to those contemporary theorists who are directly concerned with exploring the boundary between history and fiction; it is in fact, Hayden White, an American historian, who directly deals with this question. Hayden White, according to Suzanne Gearheart,

> Though accepting to some degree the distinction between history and (fictional) literature, none the less posits history as ultimately determined by formal and rhetorical structures and urges that the impasse history now faces can be overcome only through an ironic consciousness of
White applies Northrop Fry's literary categories—comedy, tragedy, romance and irony—to the organization of all histories, and, at the same time claims that "different theories of the nature of society, politics and history" are only appearances, veiling the ultimate reality of "figurative characterization" [1974:299]. In “the Fictions of Factual Representation”, White categorically states that there are many histories that could pass for novels, and many novels that could pass for histories, if considered purely in formal terms. "Viewed simply as verbal artifacts", he argues, "histories and novels are indistinguishable from one another" because "any linguistic protocol will obscure as much as it reveals about the reality it seeks to capture in an order of words" [See 1978:121-34]. This is so, he argues, because no actual set of past events has an intrinsic plot, and so in fitting any chronology into a chosen emplotment, the historian is necessarily adding a certain amount of produced meaning. From the materials of simple chronicle as a series of events, a set of facts, the historian, he thinks, provides explanations only by providing formal coherence; the story, that is to say, is never simply there in the fact but must be created. Such presumably elementary matters as what events will be considered as
"causes" and which as "effects" depend precisely on how the events are emplotted. Thus the modes in which the resulting history will be understood (i.e., comedy, tragedy, romance or satire) depend, among other things, on the structure of plot. The same argument has been put forward in much of the contemporary literary theory and philosophy of history from Hayden white to Paul Veyne. Paul Veyne, for example, calls history “a true novel” thereby, signalling the two genres shared conventions: “selection, organization, diegesis, anecdote, temporal pacing and emplotment” [Hutcheon:III]. Hyden White’s strategy of finding fictive structure in historical writing was paralleled in literary criticism by a marked interest in ‘fiction’ in general, and metafiction, fabulation, surfiction, the new novel, anti-fiction, non-fiction, and self-reflexive fiction in particular. [See Berryman:1996].

In the 1960s the journal Novel: A Forum on Fiction was also founded, and “the aesthetic and human value of fiction studies seemed so evident that a variety of new journals devoted to the genre soon sprang up: Studies in the Novel (1969), Studies in Short Fiction (1963), Studies in American Fiction (1973), and the Journal of Narrative Techniques (1971)”. [Spilka, 1922:1] Since the concern of criticism itself had been changing – in view of the shift from
structuralism to post structuralism, from modernism to postmodernism – the contributors to these journals were, in effect, forced "to wrestle with the question of how – or even whether – the novel continues to 'matter' to individual and social lives in postmodern times" [Ibid].

Meanwhile, according to Patrick Swinden:

_Saul Bellow in Chicago, Allian Robbe – Grillet in Paris, Patrick White in Australia and Gunter Grass in West Germany were demonstrating how the novel form might be adopted to confront the realities of the mid twentieth century, in ways that seemed to be untranslatable into English Literary Practice [1984:1]

Swinden is very right in stating that soon after 1960s, the publication of Richard Hughes’s _The Fox in the Attic_ (1961), V.S.Naipaul’s _In a Free State_ (1971) and Paul Scott’s _The Raj Quartet_ (1971) changed the entire fate of the English novel, What Hughes, Scott and Naipaul had achieved, according to Swinden, “was a revivification of the novel of history used as a means of interpreting contemporary problems – of competing nationalisms, colonial exploitation and distress and clashes of race, class and ideology” [Ibid:12]. These novelists deliberately eschewed myth and fantasy for the realities of history and contemporary or near contemporary politics. They were followed by such powerful
novels as Anthony Burgess's *Earthy Powers*, D.M. Thomas's *The White Hotel*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Robert Coover's *The Public Burning*, Norman Mailer’s *The Armies of the Night* E. L. Doctorow’s *Ragtime* and Gore Vidal’s *Lincoln* – novels in which there is a conscious and deliberate attempt to mix real with imagined history in a curious manner. These postmodern novels, or what Linda Hutcheon calls "*Historiographic metafiction*" [1988 : XII] raise the same issues about narrative conventions in (historical) fiction as the work of Hayden White, Paul Veyne, Dominick LaCapra, Louis O. Mink, Fredric Jameson and Edward Said has raised about historical discourse and its relation to the literary : issues such as those of narrative form, of intertextuality, of strategies of representation, of the role of language, and the relation between historical fact and experiential event. In otherwords, what the postmodern writing of history and fiction has taught us is that both historical narrative and fictional narrative are signifying systems in our culture : both are cultural sign systems, ideological constructions whose ideology includes their appearance of being autonomous and self-contained. Patricia Waugh notes that metafictions like *Slaughterhouse – Five* or *The Public Burning* suggest "*not only that writing history is a metafictional act, ranging events conceptually through language to form a world model, but that*
history itself is invested like fiction, with interrelating plots which appear to interact independently of human design” [Hutcheon 1988: 128]. Doctorow, in his essay “The False Documents”, while describing the history – fiction overlap, states, that the historian, in order to create a specific picture introduces his subjectivity as a result of which many versions of historical reality are possible; and a fiction writer, accordingly, sometimes imposes his pattern on historical facts by introducing his point of view. Hence, according to Doctorow, “history is a kind of fiction in which we live and hope to survive, and fiction is a kind of speculative history ... by which the available data for the composition is seen to be greater and more various in its sources than the historian supposes” [1983, 25]. Since many historians have used the techniques of fictional representation to create imaginative versions of their historically real worlds, the postmodern novel has done the same and the reverse. The metafictionality of novels, acknowledging their own construction, selection and order but shown to be historically determined acts, is termed by Linda Hutcheon as “Historiographic Metafiction”. She applies this phrase to those well known and popular novels which are both intensely reflexive and yet paradoxically lay claim to historical events and personages. A close examination of these postmodern novels shows that there are many subtle ways to respect
both the documentable and the imaginative without sacrificing either to
the other. The artist has no monopoly on imagination, the historian no
monopoly on the past.

A remarkable illustration of postmodern 'historiographic
metafiction' is Doctorow's The Book of Daniel, which besides being
an impressive model of what George Eliot specified as the novelist's
power of the "voracious imagination" and of "analogical creation", is
an invented memoir written by Daniel – a graduate student at Columbia
University whose parents were executed for supposedly being atomic
spies for the Soviet Union. Daniel, in the course of the novel, tries to
clear his parents' name by figuring out what really happened: by
gradually developing his alternative hypothesis that another couple
actually committed espionage. The reader with his gradual involvement
with the contents of the novel soon identifies this story with the
historical situation of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. The author's
ingenious way of presenting the historical event in a fictional way
engages the feelings of the reader with his characters and situations. All
the characters in the novel are fictional, but nearly all are analogues of
actual persons. The events involving members of the family from the
Popular Front era, the Peekskill riot of 1949, and the trail of the
Rosenbergs in 1951, to the march on the Pentagon in 1967, and the student uprising at Columbia University in 1968, are historical. Though the reader may not be acquainted with the history of Rosenbergs, he can still respond to the drama of the novel's extraordinary story created by Doctorow's imaginative talent. Doctorow's projecting the scene in which a wife, at the trail, is shocked to discover what her husband had been up to, is consistent with the historian's account. He cites evidence to show that FBI agents never knew whether Ethel had been cognizant of her husband's secret activities, even though the government cynically included her in the indictment in order to pressurize her husband to reveal details of a postwar espionage network. Doctorow's imagination not only anticipated the outlooks of the children in the memoir without ever knowing them; he also anticipated much of the historians' recent verdict without ever seeing any FBI files. However, the novel could not have been written without an extensive pursuit of historical understanding gained from reading historians.

Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel* and his other novels provide ample points to differentiate between the traditional historical novel and the historiographic metafictional novels of postmodernism. Doctorow's novel contains three essential characteristics which we find in all his
writings, as well as in writings of his contemporaries like Coover and Vidal Gore. First of all, Doctorow’s fiction is rooted in history and each of his major novels deals with a significant movement in the American past: the transformation of the American life at the turn of this century in *Ragtime*; and the legacy of political radicalism and repression in post-war America in *The Book of Daniel*. Yet each of these novels is not simply a re-creation of an historical event but rather an imaginative revisioning of an historical epoch. In other words, he is concerned with *what happened* rather than with *what really happened*. For example, *The Book of Daniel* transforms an actual event – the trial and the execution of the Rosenbergs – into a meditation on Post-War American Radicalism. This leads us to the second characteristic of the historiographic metafictional novels i.e., to choose the issues of the past not nostalgically but critically. The historical context in these novels becomes significant not only for its own sake but also for allowing the writer to problematize the entire notion of historical knowledge. In *Ragtime*, for example, Doctorow projects Freud’s judgment that America is a “Gigantic mistake” in order to describe the gap between American reality and its ideals. In *The Book of Daniel*, even while portraying the political ambivalence of the years of 1960s, Doctorow is ironical as is testified by the concluding lines of the narrator:
"Everything is elusive. God is elusive. Revolutionary Morality is elusive. Justice is elusive. Human character" [1971:54]. In the words of Linda Hutcheon:

There is a deliberate contamination of the historical with didactic and situational discursive elements, thereby challenging the implied assumptions of historical statements: objectivity, neutrality, impersonality and transparency of representation [1988:92].

Doctorow's revisioning of history also reveals a concern with form as well, which leads him, like his contemporaries "to fracture both chronology and narration in order to create necessary energy of his fiction" [Levin 1985:18]. Doctorow's experiments with discontinuous narrative and multiple narrators suggest a connection with self-reflexive postmodernism. These experiments at the same time reveal how in the postmodern historical novels private experiences are elevated to public consciousness which is not expanding the subjective. Doctorow's The Book of Daniel tends to define political public issues in personal terms: Daniel comes to see, at the end of the novel, that "cultural" politics can not be separated from "real" politics or practical life. Daniel learns that he cannot isolate himself - as writer - from the practical world of every day life or even from political life. In those parts of the story which
trace the past of the Isaacson family as Daniel remembers it, the book evokes some important conventions of the classical historical novel. In spite of this, while rendering Daniel’s recollections of the past, Doctorow undermines the basic assumptions of such a novel, where behind the effort to create a representative microcosm lies the idea that the writer can finally perceive the truth of history and give it authentic artistic form. History is conceived of as a process that can be objectively understood, having an orderly, unfolding meaning to which all the particularities of daily life can ultimately be related; while the proper function of the author is to capture and convey the truth of that historical process and to provide a coherent picture of that ordered universe. In Doctorow’s novel, even if Daniel brilliantly shows that his parents epitomized a certain type of American communism and that their experiences were linked to a historically specific set of circumstances, he cannot establish through memory alone whether they were guilty or innocent, and if guilty, why their punishment was so harsh. Consequently, in place of the confident evaluation typical of the classical historical novel, his account conveys a more modern sense of uncertainty about being able to grasp the full meaning of history.
Postmodern 'historiographic metafiction' raises a number of pertinent questions which the historians, critics and novelists have tried to answer. One of the most important questions is its relationship with the traditional historical novel which has already established itself as a distinctive genre ever since Walter Scott popularized it in the nineteenth century. The traditional historical novels either portray the evolution of the people, through the crisis of the past up to the present, or they portray the historical reflections of present-day problems in history. The historical themes in these novels emerge organically from the development, spread and deepening of historical feelings. The traditional historical novelist took history either as an objective experience, or as a background to understand the problems of contemporary society which is possible only when one understands the society's pre-history or formative history. Hence, the traditional historical novel, as the artistic expression of an historical attitude to life, of a growing historical understanding of the problems of contemporary society, necessarily led, as we have seen earlier, to a higher form of the contemporary novel in Balzac and, again, in Tolstoy. Indeed, it can be argued that in the twentieth century the historical novel has largely been the province of the continental novelists, for whom themes of Revolution or foreign occupation are much closer to
the bone than studies of middle-class manners and morals in a relatively stable society such as England’s. A case in point is Indo-Anglian partition novels, dealing with the greatest historical fact of contemporary India – the partition and the subsequent emergence of Pakistan and India. These partition novels characterize the period and provide a sad commentary on the break down of human values. However, the actual development in these novels has been revealed through a narrative or what Hayden White calls “emplotment”. All these novelists construct the important historical event, the partition of India, with all its associations and repercussions, in their own way and give it order, coherence and structure which help us to understand the predicament of contemporary India as it shed the colonial bondage and entered the era of independence. How these novels can be interpreted in the light of postmodernism and how for they are different from historiographic metafiction of 1965 to 1985 are issues with which the remaining part of the present thesis deals.