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Florian Braitenthaller

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Throughout this thesis, the pronouns *he* and *his* are used to refer to gender-neutral nouns such as the historian, the novelist and the historiographer. These pronouns are adopted in a generic way and are not intended to show bias towards a particular gender.



INTRODUCTION

History is Myth

The study of history offers unquestionable truths. Past times can easily be recreated in the scholar's mind. The historian's work is founded exclusively on authentic historical documents. Invention belongs to the spheres of literature. Historiographical texts constitute mimetic transcriptions of past reality. The temporal level of historical research is irrelevant as historiographical texts are shaped by the past, not the present. The study of history is an unbiased discipline. The historiographer's only intention is to present an image of past actualities that is as objective as possible. Historiography has nothing to do with fictional writing and its techniques. History is reality, historiography its representation.

Fiction.

Such long-established views must be deemed outdated from a present perspective. Contemporary philosophers of history univocally deprive historiography of its mimetic function and thus question its supposed authenticity. The complexities of any past reality can never be expressed in the restricted form of a written composition. Any historical field consists of innumerable layers and aspects. Emphasising some of these, while disregarding others, and applying a specific perspective on them are inevitable processes in the composition of historical texts. Historiography is no longer considered the polar opposite of fiction but, like fiction, one of many textual genres. Its authoritative nature is not based on indubitable contents but on specific choices of style and discourse. Historiography asserts to depict the past as it happened. Still, different historical texts on the same matter vary and are not interchangeable. As a consequence, attributing historiographical texts with mimetic relevance, one must come to the conclusion that many different past realities should have existed. Historiography's claim to mimesis leads to the dissolution of history as a graspable field of knowledge. History is myth, historiography its representation.

History is not perceptible to the present moment in her naked, untouched shape. She is not blown ashore to the present in her purest form but observable only through contemporary eyes and mental conceptions. Historical understanding changes constantly. The ways in which history was understood before are now merely seen as pale and empty silhouettes. We are deprived of their true understanding. Historical facts are only clearly understandable in light of the present. But beware, conventional historiography is looming. One of the Horoae, the goddesses of the seasons, wants to obstruct our progressive view of history. She wants to cover her with a flowered cloak, unchanged for centuries. The cloak will mask history and she will be visible only in the way we have seen her so many times before. Historiography presents the past in a traditionalistic form, pretending that this is the only possible view. Innovative perspectives are deemed irrelevant.

The fundamental possibilities of historical representation are a primary issue of this thesis. Historiography is discussed as one option, but not as the only means. One consequence of assimilating historiographical compositions to the spheres of literature is that the perceived boundary between fictional and factual texts blurs. Fictional texts can be deemed an equally justifiable way of depicting bygone times and events. In the absence of mimesis, both types of writing are forms of historical presentation, rather than representation. Historical accounts are brought closer to fictional compositions, which, in turn, are accredited with historiographical relevance. The historical novel represents the epitome of this amalgamation of fictional and factual elements. Although historical contents lie at the core of the genre, it has always displayed a critical standpoint to purely historical accounts. Ever since the genre's foundation, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, writers of historical fiction have pointed to shortcomings of historiography and complemented it to their taste.

William Boyd 'is a literary chameleon; he refuses to be tied down to any particular subgenre of the novel' (Biswell, 32). Indeed, the writer's work covers various types of fiction; comic, diary and (auto)biographical novels, to mention but a few. However, many of his narratives also have historical issues at their core and thus qualify as historical fiction. The author demonstrates great skill 'in weaving his fiction into the real fabric of history' (Rennison, 30). Although the historical world is a dominant theme in many of his novels, most of the (admittedly small number of) secondary publications on Boyd's work emphasise the satirical and comical aspects to it. His exceptionally progressive techniques as a writer of historical fiction have so far been by-passed by the literary community.

The present thesis aims at analysing Boyd's historical fiction in light of contemporary philosophy of history and the tradition of the historical novel. For an understanding of the ways in which Boyd introduces historical facts, comprehension of both is necessary. As a first step, the commonly accepted boundary between the disciplines of history and literature needs reconsideration. As a result of stressing the narrative nature of supposedly

factual historical accounts, historical fiction proves to be an equally justifiable means of historical presentation. An analysis of the diachronic development of the historical novel reveals the standards of historical depiction over literary epochs. Although a contemporary writer, Boyd does not oblige himself to postmodernist norms. Rather, his historical novels are the result of picking and choosing from the tradition of the genre. Finally, Boyd's novels *An Ice-Cream War*, *The Blue Afternoon* and *Restless* are analysed considering progressive philosophy of history and the tradition of historical fiction. Thus, the essence of Boyd's mode of presenting historical issues is uncovered. The author clearly favours realistic depictions of past times and events. Still, he is aware of current advances in the philosophy of history and in no way pursues mimetic representation of the past. His historical novels emphasise the narrative and forever provisional character of any historical writing.

CHAPTER I

History and Literature

The distinction between history and literature is not as straightforward as it might originally appear. What the disciplines' defining features, respective tasks and limitations constitute was never inherent within the terms themselves but subject to changing definitions. When discussing the presentation of historical facts in contemporary historical fiction, one can not leave out the current stance that philosophy of history takes on its subject. Boyd might not entirely conform to postmodernist principles of writing or to the era's preferred mode of historical presentation. However, in the historical novels selected, he does indeed present a progressive view of history. This view foregrounds the fictional state of the discipline and opposes the idea of simplistic, objective representation. Historical writing is redefined as a fictional composition not dissimilar to literary production.

First of all, the terminology applied requires brief attention. The term *history* refers to the general study of past events, whereas its written composition is named *historiography* or *historical writing*. The literary operations of the study of history are revealed and historiographical productions are likened to narrative compositions. The form of the *narrative* can be said to consist of a series of events, whether true or fictitious, that is recounted from a narrator to a narratee. In the process of narration, events are selected and arranged in accordance with the narrator's desired effects. Historical writing finds itself assimilated to literature. Consequently, it appears necessary to distinguish between *fictional narrative* or *narrative fiction*, on the one hand, and *historical narrative* or *narrative history*, on the other. The former refers to narratives based merely on fictional contents, while the latter is dedicated to giving a narrative shape to the historical record. The literary genre that, by definition, is dedicated to the depiction of past actualities is the *historical novel* or *historical fiction*.

1.1. Traditional Distinctions

1.1.1. Common Sense

Based on common-sense assumptions, people do not usually find it challenging to differentiate between the two disciplines of the humanities. History deals with the events of the past, while literature presents fiction, in other words, invented stories. The writing of literature is supposed to be free and in no way bound to the real, while historiography exhibits language usage ruled by factuality, reason and, especially, realism (Cf. White, *Figural Realism*, ix). The difference between these two concepts therefore seems to be crystal clear. Critics, though, argue that such a simplistic differentiation must be rejected. Mink, among others, reduces the clearly perceived boundary between the two disciplines to a universally shared, *everyone knows* distinction of accepted common sense, which does not withstand critical analysis (Cf. Mink, 129). Common sense, in fact, has to be confined to its true meaning, that is to say, communal sense. The concept merely refers to the shared assumptions of a group of like-minded people and often attempts to oppose the elitism of academics (Cf. Widdowson, 2-3). Thus, common-sense assumptions can not be accepted as self-evident. Their validity has to be argued for or, as in the case of the *obvious* distinction between history and literature, refuted.

A common-sense perception that limits literature to the spheres of the imaginary and overvalues history's scientific nature has to be rejected. When considering the true meanings of the words, one must discard the assumed bipolar difference between history, as the factual discussion of historical truths, and literature, as the fictional presentation of invented stories. Etymologically, *literature* derives from the Latin word *litteratura* whose original meaning was writing, learning and scholarship (Cf. *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v. literature). The term *history*, on the other hand, originates from the Greek word *ἵστορία*, which denotes learning from one's inquiry and the account of one's inquiry (Cf. *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v. history). Thus, what both share is an emphasis on learning and the

communication of acquired knowledge. Contrary to customary perception, historical writing must not necessarily be seen as a factual report but can also be regarded as a 'methodical *narrative* [my emphasis] of events' (*The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, s.v. history). History and literature share a number of common characteristics, including a certain didactic purpose and the form of the narrative. As a consequence, the narrative and knowledge-mediating aspects of history, as well as the didactic function of literature, need to be emphasised. A definition of literature as the mere presentation of invented stories is as inaccurate as the claim that historiography directly presents unquestionable facts.

1.1.2. Evidently Distinct Disciplines?

Raw historical events lie buried in the past and are no longer directly accessible at the present moment. Every so-called authentic historiographical representation of these events actually constitutes a narrative created around selected parts of a chronicle. The challenge a historian sets himself in writing a historiographical account of a certain period is to create a narrative, a story, on the basis of available sources. In forming a plot, the writer of literature defines the area of description for himself. If we look at a composer of realist fiction, though, he subjects himself to the constraints of writing according to a reliable and authentic perception of reality. If the area of description lies in the past, then a credible presentation of these bygone events receives the writer's main attention. Such prose literature is commonly referred to as historical fiction or the historical novel. If the writer of historiography and the writer of realist historical fiction both base their writings on evidence from the past, the clear boundary blurs. Both genres are based on what is assumed to be trustworthy historical information and only vary in the extent to which fictional elements are added. The difference between historical and fictional writing can be reduced to the former being accepted by writer and reader alike as claiming to be a true representation of past actuality. The latter, however, fails to achieve the same recognition from the readership, even though historical fiction can be equally precise in portraying past events (Cf. Mink, 130).

Obviously, being likened to inventive fiction is experienced as a narcissistic offence by the historian. Collingwood can be named as one of those scholars who recognised the imaginative element of history. As a consequence, he dedicated much thought to the distinction between the two disciplines in order to emphasise the uniqueness of history. Determining the historian's, as opposed to the novelist's, task he argues that

[t]he novelist has a single task only: to construct a coherent picture, one that makes sense. The historian has a double task: he has both to do this, and to construct a picture of things as they really were and of events as they really happened (Collingwood, 246).

Collingwood's assumption contains two problems in itself: on the one hand, it only concerns literature that does not deal with the realistic presentation of historical events and, on the other, it rests on the outdated hypothesis that it is possible to mimetically represent historical facts. In order to comply with his *double task*, the historian needs to follow three rules that the novelist is not bound to. Firstly, the picture created must be clearly localized in space and time. Secondly, as there is only one historical world, all history and so all historiographical writing must be consistent with itself. Additionally, the historian needs to base his report on evidence as a truth that can not be justified is considered to be of no interest to the historian. The novelist, as Collingwood argues, need not clearly locate his invented plot in space or time. Moreover, fictional worlds are never at risk of clashing with anything apart from themselves and no evidence is necessary (Cf. Collingwood, 246).

Collingwood's distinguishing features seem useful at first sight only as they do not withstand critical analysis. The rules can not be applied for the purpose of differentiating between historiography proper and historical fiction. The historical novelist clearly locates his narrative in time and space and attempts to be consistent with authentic historical evidence. Undoubtedly, the same sources of historical information are available to the novelist as they are to the historiographer. Collingwood's analysis, as a consequence, leads to defining the historical novel as historiography and thus does not aid in establishing a boundary. Further criticism on Collingwood's attempt at a differentiation can be expressed. Space and time, elements according to

which the historian must clearly define his work, are not absolute categories but defined by historians themselves in the tradition of historiography. The first rule therefore links with the second. They demand that every historical work be consistent with the ensemble of existing historical publications. This consistency in terms of space, time and contents foregrounds historiography over actual history and requires concordance only within the established system. History appears to be created rather than described (Cf. Gossman, 248-249).

Furthermore, in requiring the historian to present a picture as it *really* was and events as they *really* occurred, Collingwood reveals his conviction that mimetic representation of past realities is possible. However, due to the inaccessibility of past events and the narrative nature of historiographical writing, the claim of mimesis is regarded as outdated within the field of contemporary philosophy of history. Hayden White and Louis O. Mink must be mentioned as important analysts of the fictional elements of historiography.

In trying to dissociate history from its fictional counterpart, traditional philosophers of history have tried to define historiography as a non-narrative. Ranke, one such philosopher, describes the ideal historiographical text as a presentation of the bare facts, free from any artificial decorations and without any narrative elements. Consequently, these raw facts would be able to speak for themselves (Cf. Ranke, quoted in Mengel, 35). In an attempt to be differentiated from literature, history has come to claim demands and characteristics that it is ultimately unable to fulfil. For instance, the point of view chosen is omnipresent in the narration of every historical text. The idea of *pure* historiography, free from such basic narrative elements, has to be rejected as an unattainable ideal. Eventually, we will have to come to terms with the fact that the narrative form that historiography as well as fiction displays is likewise the product of an individual's imagination. Yet, in the case of historiography, this has conventionally been accepted as representing past actuality in a trustworthy manner (Cf. Mink, 145).

1.1.3. The Diachronic Development of the Two Disciplines

When judging the validity of historiographical and literary presentations of history, one has to bear in mind the diachronic development of the two disciplines of history and literature. The two subject areas have not always been held as clearly distinguishable fields. In fact, it was only towards the end of the eighteenth century that history gained recognition as being a discipline independent from literature. During the Greek and the Roman periods, history was mainly regarded a branch of literature with specific rhetorical restrictions concerning the form of presentation (Cf. Gossman, 227-228). In other words, historical writing was infused with aesthetic elements rather than subjected to principles of authenticity and completeness of presentation. A similar conception remained valid until the final phase of Neoclassicism.

With reference to Herodotus or Tacitus, for example, one does not attempt to categorise their production as being either literary or historiographical but associates them with both disciplines. By accepting the 'literary nature of such historiographical classics' (White, *Figural Realism*, 6), one does not deny their successful transmission of factual knowledge. Rather, literature proves to be another effective vehicle for the communication of knowledge alongside exclusively *factological* compositions.

A twofold development emerged between the conflicting poles of Neoclassicism and Romanticism at the end of the eighteenth century. Especially in Romantic ideology, literature tended to be more closely related to poetry. Romantic concepts, such as the sublime, favoured dedication to the ideal over the clear presentation of facts. At the same time, historians started discussing epistemological principles in an attempt to assimilate history to the natural sciences. By adopting epistemological and methodological values of natural sciences, scholars of history desired to be associated with science's air of precision. Furthermore, history became institutionalised as it developed into a university discipline in many European countries. Eventually, history evolved from a branch of literature into an independently recognised field of research (Cf. Gossman, 229-230).

Nineteenth century historical consciousness can be subdivided into three stages. The last of these constitutes the starting point of the contemporary crisis of historiographical (re)presentation. In the first phase, different schools of historiography developed. Their common basis was nothing more than the rejection of the ironic way Enlightenment rationalists had considered history and a common enthusiasm for historical studies (Cf. White, *Metahistory*, 39). The second stage or *classic phase* was marked by significant self-confidence displayed by its historiographers. Many of them were trying to define the most objective way of presenting historical knowledge. Methodological issues were primary. Although many historiographers of the time were of the opinion that mimetic representation of history was possible, their respective historiographical accounts were in fact very different (Cf. White, *Metahistory*, 40). The recognition that an objective and mimetic representation of the past is an unattainable task led to the so-called *crisis phase* of historiography. The outcome of the *classic phase* had been a great number of 'equally comprehensive and plausible, yet apparently mutually exclusive, conceptions of the same sets of events' (White, *Metahistory*, 41). Presenting diverging narratives on the basis of the same historical facts, historiography could not stand up to the scientific claims of objectivity that it had pursued. As a consequence, some philosophers of history abandoned the claim of scientificity and assimilated the discipline to art, accepting the creative function of historiography (Cf. White, *Metahistory*, 41).

Historiographical and literary writing were only clearly distinguished at the end of the eighteenth century. At this time, history dissociated from literature by claiming to follow scientific principles. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, though, historiography had to recognise that it had not been able to meet the criteria set. This situation is the point of departure for contemporary philosophers of history when discussing the principles underlying the presentation of history in historiographical texts as well as in historical fiction. Instead of dwelling on differences, scholars emphasise the commonalities of historical and fictional writing. Both disciplines derive their effect from verisimilitude, rather than from any objective truth. Moreover, both represent

linguistic constructs which follow specific textual conventions regarding their narrative form (Cf. Hutcheon, *Poetics*, 105).

1.2. Contemporary Philosophy of History

1.2.1. Origins and Principles

The foundations of a more progressive view of history, that acknowledges fictional elements in historiography and contradicts the discipline's claims to scientificity, were laid well before contemporary philosophers of history communicated their thoughts. Still accepting the unity of historiography and fiction, Aristotle argued that historical writing should not merely portray the raw genealogy or chronicle of past events, but that it should recount historical matters as having an 'exposition', a 'central intrigue' and a 'denouement' (Gossman, 236). In opposition to demanding exclusively mimetic representation, Aristotle consciously draws on narrative terminology and practices for historical depiction. In 1752, Chladenius, a German historian, made a fundamental observation on the communication of historical knowledge.

Jeder wünschet sich, wenn er von einer Sache unterrichtet seyn will, eine unpartheyische Erzählung [...]. Es ist [jedoch] bey einer Erzählung nicht zu vermeiden, daß jeder die Geschichte nach seinem Sehепunckte ansehe; und sie also auch nach demselben erzehle [...]. Eine Erzählung also mit völliger Abstracktion von seinem eigenen Sehепunckte, ist [...] nicht möglich (Chladenius, 150-151).

Chladenius comments on an essential problem of historiography that many traditional historians, though, tend to neglect. Every historical text is based on a specific point of view and its contents can never be analysed independently from this perspective.

To a certain extent, contemporary philosophy of history refers back to the time before history claimed its place as a science and while it still acknowledged the narrative side to its reports. New approaches to

historiography focus on those processes that transform a certain set of chronological events into a historiographically significant narrative. Aspects such as the point of view chosen and the ascription of story features to the chronological record are highlighted. The issues of imposing a narrative form on historical events, as well as the historian's processes of selection in accomplishing this, are particularly important.

1.2.2. The Historian's Retrospective Narrative

The basic principle of contemporary philosophy of history is that every historiographical text is determined by fictional elements, that is to say, a narrative composition with a specific point of view and a certain way of ordering past actualities.

Historical events lie buried in the past and are thus no longer directly accessible from a later perspective. All historical research and resultant historiographical presentation are based either on the remainders of concluded events, or on the analysis of other texts dedicated to the relevant aspects. Consequently, the term *history* comprises two different concepts. On the one hand, there is the *res gestae*, the actual events as they occurred in the past. This first level needs to be kept separate from the second, the so-called *historia rerum gestarum*, which is the level of textual compositions based on these bygone events (Cf. Wesseling, 82). In a simplistic view, the *historia rerum gestarum* would directly mirror the *res gestae*. This opinion was held by traditional, *scientific* historians. Yet, the idea of a mimetic relationship between the two levels needs to be rejected as a myth. Due to the inaccessibility of the actual events of the *res gestae*, every possible version of the *historia rerum gestarum* is one of many. The specific perspective and methodology applied by the historian will define the characteristics of a particular description. Hence, every possible historical publication constitutes a different version of past events. The sum of these possible texts stands in an autonomous relationship to the one *res gestae* that all these narratives are founded on. Emphasising the fictional element of the *historia rerum gestarum*, some scholars refer to it as *res fictae*, standing

in contrast the *res factae* (Cf. Mengel, 52). Regardless of the terminology, in contrast to scientific texts in which evidence and proof lead the argumentation, historiographical writing is determined by the historian's interpretative and narrative choices. Historiographical accounts are not the result of direct analysis of evidence, but are generated '*ex hypothesi*' (Collingwood, 282).

Any given *historia rerum gestarum* is determined by choices of structure and perspective. Firstly, with reference to structure, no set of past events inherently constitutes a complete and self-contained story, as historiography suggests. Stories with identifiable beginnings and ends are not lived but created retrospectively (Cf. White, "Historical Text", 43). In an attempt to mediate past events, the historiographer transforms a chain of subsequent occurrences into a coherent storyline. Due to these operations of reorganisation, historiographical accounts will never mimetically represent historical events as they evolved, but will always produce modifications of them. Secondly, in terms of perspective, having rejected any demands for objectivity in historiography, one must acknowledge each account as a subjective perspective on historical actualities. To some extent, the historiographer's choice of perspective can be likened to the point of view determined by an author of fiction.

However problematic it may be, studying the historical record from a retrospective point of view appears to be the only possible way. The assumed advantage of an eyewitness is negated by his inability to understand issues in retrospect. An *Ideal Chronicle* would note everything the moment it happens and record the proceedings in every possible detail (Cf. Danto, 149). The result would be a perfectly objective transcript of events as they occur. Nevertheless, despite having all potential information at his disposal, an *Ideal Chronicler* would be inappropriately equipped to construct meaning out of these. As he can only examine phenomena as they evolve, he can not contemplate them with hindsight. Yet, some occurrences are comprehensible only in retrospect and make no sense in their immediate temporal position. They can only be fully understood by the historian who

reconsiders the past from a later perspective (Cf. Danto, 151-152). Without knowledge of future circumstances, one could not possibly comment on the beginning of the Second World War in 1939, for example. Only with hindsight can the simple chronological sequence of past facts (*chronos*) be turned into a set of events loaded with significance (*kairos*). This meaning can be derived exclusively from the single incidents' relation to following developments (Cf. Kermode, 47). Relevance is no longer considered intrinsically existent within the actuality, but retrospectively discovered; not objectively given but subjectively found (Cf. Mengel, 40). Retrospective narratives appear to be the only viable means of understanding history.

Creating his narrative, the historian has two main possibilities of designing a plot out of the plain sequence of events. If logical reasoning underlies the events of the chronicle, causal relations can be established between the single incidents in order to allow a storyline (Cf. Mink, 145). If no causal laws can be identified, they can be emplotted by making use of specific cultural codes the historian shares with his audience, such as 'metaphysical concepts, religious beliefs, or story forms' (White, "Historical Text", 49). The result of either form of historical narrative is an artificially constructed story. Narrative accounts of historical circumstances give the impression of simplistic coherence in previous events and propose that straightforward understanding of the past is possible.

1.2.3. The Historian's Selection Processes

Selection processes constitute an important aspect in the historian's cognitive act of turning single historical events into coherent stories. Until the end of the eighteenth century, the concept of Universal History modelled the Western approach to history. The underlying principle is the idea that the entire number of human events can be organised within a single story. Accordingly, the world's history is based on causal laws and single events can be understood only when embedded in their wider temporal surroundings (Cf. Mink, 136-137). A claim of this sort would imply that historical narratives on successive sets of events should be able to combine to form more

comprehensive narratives. These, in turn, should easily fit together with other extensive narrative sets. However, this is not the case because objective presentation of past actuality is impossible (Cf. Mink, 142). As every historiographical account is characterised by the narrative choices of its writer, different accounts can not easily be merged. Selection processes undertaken by the historiographer can be deemed responsible for this incompatibility of historical accounts. They play an essential role in the restructuring of historical events as plots.

The question of selectivity can be approached from two angles. Firstly, historians can only consider those sources that have entered into the historical record; issues, however significant, that were never recorded in the course of history can not find their way into historical narratives. Historiography depends on previously documented historical accounts. These, however, mainly deal with the victors of the past. Those 'who suffered, rather than made history are quickly erased from our historical memory' (Wesseling, 126). The historical record remains incomplete. Historical research, though, never comes to a halt and the respective *status quo* of historical knowledge is always of a provisional nature. It may require revision when new evidence appears. Consequently, White argues that the truly reliable historian should draw attention to the forever provisional nature of his narrative which is based on an always incomplete historical record (Cf. "Historical Text", 42).

Secondly, even when only considering the data actually available in the historical record, the historiographer is still faced with an immense amount of information. In order to create a coherent narrative, he selects certain elements while he disregards others. Thus, the shape of any *historia rerum gestarum* of a given *res gestae* depends significantly on its narrator's selection choices. Every account of past events equals a story whose continuity is constructed around outlines that the historian imposes on the historical record in an attempt to define order in the complex organisation of history (Cf. Lévi-Strauss, 261). Any coherence identified in historical writing must be recognised as the coherence of the story, a consistency based on

modifying historical facts to the requirements of the story form. Historical occurrences do not display story forms themselves, they are constructed in the course of writing history by emphasising some aspects, neglecting others and tailoring those chosen. By emphasising significant and promising historical details, as well as omitting data which seem inconsistent with the desired narrative, the historian transforms the chronicle of past events into a historiographical account.

Selection processes are determined by the need to transform facts into stories and distort authentic representation of the past. The simile of a historiographical writer being like a landscape painter serves to illustrate the decisive role of selection.

The historian who tries to [...] accurately reproduce what he finds, [...] resembles a landscape painter who tries to [...] copy nature. He may fancy that he is reproducing in his own medium the actual shapes and colours of natural things; but however hard he tries to do this he is always selecting, simplifying, schematising, leaving out what he thinks unimportant and putting in what he regards essential. It is the artist, and not nature, that is responsible for what goes in the picture (Collingwood, 236).

Reflecting on the course of history, the narrator is guided, at least subconsciously, by his preconceptions and pre-existent mental frame of the subject matter when selecting for his narrative. Danto expresses this pointedly by remarking that 'one does not go naked into the archives' (101). Still, historical actualities, such as dates and deeds, serve as landmarks that must not be contradicted by any possible narrative. The historian deals with his sources in a similar fashion as a court does with pieces of evidence. The accessible remnants of an event are utilized to construct a coherent story of the past (Cf. Mengel, 37). Thus, provided that the result does not contradict the present facts and historical landmarks, a variety of possible explanations are allowed.

1.2.4. Hayden White – A New Approach to History

Many of the issues discussed above find their origins in White's theories. As he is indisputably the most influential contemporary philosopher of history, his exceptional ideas on the narrative nature of historiography deserve independent consideration. In short, historical knowledge as an autonomous domain is challenged and, by stressing the fictional character of historical reconstruction, White seriously questions history's place among the sciences.

The assumption that lies at the core of White's propositions is that the traditional distinction between literature and history as dealing with *the possible* and *the actual*, respectively, must be rejected. Based on these commonly held definitions, historiography has come to stand as 'a kind of archetype of the realistic pole of representation' (White, "Historical Text", 42). Such a view, however, ignores the fact that the narrative form chosen is an ever-present reminder of historiography's status as verbal fiction, which distinguishes it from scientific writing and associates it with literary production. As a result, history is assigned a hybrid position between science and art. While many historians have attempted to accentuate the scientific element, White underlines the artistic side of historiography and wants to reveal its poetic nature. Any academic discipline is strongly influenced by an agreed linguistic code as a means to grasp the relevant objects of study (Cf. White, *Metahistory*, xi). The language applied in historical writing is not a neutral means of knowledge communication, but itself an influential part of the presentation. Historiography commonly features a discourse that suggests indubitable truth in an attempt to create unquestionable realities. The poetics of historical texts influence the contents they feature. Historical writing, as a consequence, can be reduced to a specific use of language and style.

White dedicates much thought to the hypothetical difference between fictional and factual written production. Traditionally, the *factological* discourse applied in historical writing is considered the only means of historical presentation. White, however, proposes that the language of the narrative

can refer to reality just as faithfully as any literal discourse might do (Cf. *Figural Realism*, vii). The believed disparity between figurative and literalist speech must be understood as purely conventional (Cf. White, *Figural Realism*, ix). A new notion of the two types of writing is established. Emphasising the 'literariness of historical writing and the realism of literary writing', he demonstrates that both are practices 'not so much of representation as of presentation [...] of production rather than of reproduction or mimesis' (White, *Figural Realism*, ix). If figurative and literalist discourse can equally refer to reality, traditional historiography loses its monopoly on being the only means of realistic historical presentation.

At the core of his analysis lies a distinctive view of history. The aspect that concerns White is not the chain of actual events in the past, the *res gestae*, but the variety of written discourses on them, hitherto referred to as *historia rerum gestarum*. The essence of historiographical writing does not lie in the nature of the data available but in the historiographer's respective vision of the historical field (Cf. White, *Metahistory*, 4). Considering the inaccessibility of past events, White defines *history* not as a set of past objects but as 'a certain kind of relationship to the past mediated by a distinctive kind of written discourse' (*Figural Realism*, 1). Thus, historiographical presentation is not only more significant than the events themselves but historical knowledge, by definition, is constituted entirely of these accounts. Past occurrences become historical only for being subjects in historiographical accounts.

Having reduced history to an accumulation of texts, White regards each particular one as 'a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that *purports* [my emphasis] to be a model of past structures and processes' (*Metahistory*, 2). Any claim of mimetic factuality is denied. Consequently, literary theory can serve as a useful tool in analysing historical narratives in terms of their linguistic form and stylistic choices (Cf. White, *Figural Realism*, 4). This removes the boundary between history and literature entirely. White aims to prove that any *factological* presentation of history is nothing more than a narrative expressed in the shape of fact-based discourse. There are no objective statements on the past, only convincing interpretations.

The historian's work needs to be subdivided into two distinct tasks. At the beginning stands historical research in the archives, i.e. reading and analysing information on the past. In this phase, the historian tries to recover forgotten causalities in order to make sense of the remainders of the past. With this task completed, the phase of the historical writing commences. In terms of textual composition, the historiographer bears resemblance to a literary writer. The resultant text can be dissociated neither from the writer of literature nor from the historiographer, correspondingly. The historiographer is prominent in his work as

[t]he latent, secondary or connotative meaning contained in the historical discourses is [his] interpretation of the events that make up the manifest content' (White, *Figural Realism*, 8).

The historiographer transforms specific events into historically essential facts. 'Events happen, whereas facts are constituted by linguistic description' (White, *Figural Realism*, 18). The common basis of historical writing, however, constitutes more than linguistic conventions. The accepted paradigm concerning the form of historical explanation dictates the rules according to which historical writing is constructed. A certain amount of data, theoretical concepts for explaining these data and the narrative structure chosen combine in the course of this process. These standards form the metahistorical understructure of every historiographical account (Cf. White, *Metahistory*, x). In designing a historical narrative, the writer has to consciously choose a specific tropological mode of presentation and conform to its linguistic protocol, 'an essentially poetic act' (White, *Metahistory*, x). For instance, the historian can choose either a tragic or a comic way of presentation. As White points out, the choice is based primarily on moral and aesthetic rather than epistemological grounds as the various modes do not differ from each other with regard to realistic presentation (Cf. *Metahistory*, xi-xii).

The details of White's system of tropes will be dealt with only in the context of his model of historical narrative composition¹. In short, the concept of

¹ For a detailed discussion of the theory of tropes see White, *Metahistory*, 5-38.

tropology stresses the metalinguistic over the referential function of historical discourse (Cf. White, *Figural Realism*, 17). White argues that historical facts are not turned into discourse by any logic or significance inherently existent in history but by tropological operations performed by the historian. Foregrounding tropological rather than logical principles, one opposes historiography's claim of truthfulness with its alleged fictional nature (Cf. White, *Figural Realism*, 14).

1.2.5. The Narrative Composition of History

According to White's argumentation, every historiographical composition constitutes a narrative on the events under consideration. The realisation of any historiographical narrative results from the combination of three distinct levels: the *mode of emplotment*, *formal argument* and *ideological implication* (Cf. White, *Metahistory*, 29).

In the development from raw historical facts to a historiographical account, its writer will follow certain steps. Recognising the fictional nature of each historical narrative, White coined the term *emplotment*. Originally, the objects of the historical field are simply organised according to their temporal order of occurrence in the form of a chronicle. As a first step in mediating between historical field and audience, the historian applies processes of selection and thus transforms specific aspects of the chronicle into recognisable components of a story. Events are charged with historical importance. In creating a storyline based on the chronicle, the historian organises the events according to beginning, middle and final parts. Thus, inaugural, transitional and terminating motifs are assigned to events that otherwise simply find themselves in a mere temporal sequence (Cf. White, *Metahistory*, 5). The intentional nature of this operation can be illustrated by the following example. The objective fact that Spanish rule over the Philippines ended on 1st May 1898 due to US American military action can be interpreted as a terminating motif, acknowledging that Spanish colonisation ended that day. However, at the same time, the exact date marks the beginning of significant US American influence over the island group, and could therefore equally

exhibit an inaugural motif. Bearing in mind that for the population of the Philippines nothing much changed, as simply the main actors of colonisation were exchanged, the event represents a transitional motif in the history of foreign rule of the Philippines. Historical occurrences simply happen in time, it is the historian and his perspective that assign discernible story features.

Collingwood, too, supports the idea that one of the historian's main tasks must be to reconstruct the stories of history. He argues that the historian must use his imagination to bridge the gaps that he will be confronted with when reconsidering the past. In order to give full accounts of past events, the historian presents *what must have happened* in addition to *what did happen* (Cf. Collingwood, 240-241). In contrast to White, however, Collingwood seems to see these stories as intrinsically existent within history and not created by the historian. According to him, the historian's account resembles a web of imaginative constructs that is anchored at certain fixed points. Thus, the resultant web 'is constantly verified by appeal to these data and runs little risk of losing touch with the reality which it represents' (Collingwood, 242). According to Collingwood, this web of imaginative constructs is a representation of past actuality. In clear contrast, White argues that the relationship between events is not naturally given but developed in the historian's mind when reflecting on the course of history (Cf. "Historical Text", 55). The difference between *finding* or *founding* narrative structure is a key issue raised when contemplating the mimetic nature of historiographical accounts.

Emplotment, however, constitutes more than ascribing story elements to the historical record. After having generated a raw story form, the historian proceeds to attribute additional meaning to it. Depending on the events and the desired effect, different types of stories can be applied. Comic, tragic, satirical and heroic accounts are equally possible modes of historical presentation. These norms of emplotment are more aesthetic or ideological than historical. For example, White notes that the French Revolution has been emplotted in a number of differing, even conflicting ways. The same actualities that 'Michelet [...] construed as a drama of Romantic

transcendence, his contemporary Tocqueville emplotted as an ironic tragedy' (White, "Historical Text", 48). Even though both writers had the same knowledge of the particulars contained in the genealogy, they chose to ascribe different meanings to them. The person responsible for the associated meaning is solely the historian. Historical occurrences are not intrinsically comic, tragic or romantic. The historiographer achieves a desired effect by shifting perspectives and emphasising specific points of view. These processes are not historical but literary operations (Cf. White, "Historical Text", 48-49). It is thus necessary to clearly differentiate between the events themselves and the generic plot types exploited to endow them with meaning. Yet, no writer of historiography is completely free in his choices of interpretation. Cultural conventions prescribe norms in terms of how events should be appropriately described. With the example of the Nazi regime and the genocide of the Jewish population, White demonstrates that there are stories of history that demand certain genres for their representation. In the case of the Jewish population's fate, an epic or tragic form seems proper, while an ironic or comic representation would be considered inappropriate (Cf. White, *Figural Realism*, 31).

The specific plot type chosen is essential for the reader's understanding of the past. For example, whether historical events are mediated in a comic or a tragic way will heavily influence the reader's perception of those occurrences. Apart from its manipulative potential, the use of figurative rather than technical language also aids the didactic purpose of historiography. The historian's aim is clearly 'to familiarize [his reader] with the unfamiliar' (White, "Historical Text", 56). When history is described in the form of narratives, the reader is provided with concepts that he can relate to a preconceptual frame of interpretation. An unknown set of events is cast in the shape of an identifiable plot structure. The mysterious is connected to the known. According to White, the historian has four such archetypal story forms at his disposal: romance, tragedy, comedy and satire, each of which has specific implications and explanatory functions (Cf. *Metahistory*, 7-8).

When the chronicle has been emplotted, the historian proceeds by deciding how the historical field can be depicted in an attempt to retrospectively explain its significance. This can be achieved through White's four types of *formal argument*, namely *formist*, *organicist*, *mechanistic* and *contextualist*. *Formal argument* and *mode of emplotment* denote only two of the three means adopted by the historiographer in order to create his narrative. *Ideological implication*, the third means, resembles the ethical standpoint of any historical work. The *ideological implication* of a specific text becomes evident when the *mode of emplotment* and the *formal argument* are analysed in unison. The combination of aesthetic forms and descriptive approaches to history reveals ethical or moral approaches to them (Cf. White, *Metahistory*, 27). For the analysis of historical presentation in historical fiction, the *mode of emplotment* is the most relevant of the three operations. As most authors of historical novels refrain from dealing with the theoretical fundamentals of historical presentation in their work, *formal argument* and *ideological implication* are less significant.

1.3. Consequences for Historiography

In rendering evident the narrative construction of historiographical writing, White succeeds in demonstrating the artificial element inherent in every historical work. The issues discussed combine to form a new notion of historical writing that does not fulfil any scientific demand. Any customary association with the sciences is based on conventions of language and form. As White's model of the composition of historical narratives has shown, every historiographical text is the result of conscious narrative decisions, which are based on a particular interpretation of the historical record and not on scientific evidence and proof.

Accepting the narrative character of historical writing, however, one does not redefine historiography as 'mythical, fictional, substantially imaginary, or otherwise "unrealistic" in what it tells us about the world' (White, *Figural Realism*, 22). Any specific historical account should be interpreted as a possible version of reality and not as an absolute truth.

1.3.1. Acknowledging the Historiographer's Role

The historian has an essential role in the composition of historiographical writing. He alone defines which aspects are worth describing, assigns plot structures and gives them a certain moral significance. In reconsidering bygone events, every historiographer presents his opinion on them.

The historian's aim of retrieving meaning out of past events can be seen from a semiotic perspective, as well. Analysing the historical record corresponds to reading a system of signs and interpreting it, i.e. charging it with specific significance. The simple act of a coronation can be read as the beginning of a glorious era, for example. In the genesis of historical accounts, past events become relevant facts; 'the signs [...] become signifiers in a [...] system elaborated by the historian' (Gossman, 248).

Still, the question remains, why the notion of the historiographer as a direct reflector of historical truths is as pertinent as it apparently is. In this respect, Roland Barthes must be mentioned. With reference to the predominant belief in the mimetic function of historical writing, his concept of the *myth* is particularly interesting. Usually, the relation between a sign and what it represents has to be argued for and is itself an object of discussion. With regard to history, the sign refers to the historical facts (*res gestae*), while its significance indicates its narration in historiography (*historia rerum gestarum*). White, for example, emphasises the transitional processes from sign to significance, i.e. the narrative aspects. In the case of the *myth*, however, the relation between sign and significance is assumed unmotivated or even natural and no questioning appears necessary (Cf. Barthes, 113-115). As a consequence, the significance is taken as a direct representation of the sign and any transitional operations are denied; historiographical representation is considered an exact mirror of past actuality. In accepting a direct relationship between historical events and their historiographical presentation, one denies the historical writer's influences.

The assumed mimetic validity of historical writing prevails because historiographers tend to simply present the result of their research, 'without drawing [...] attention to the laborious efforts which have gone into the construction of a coherent version of history' (Wesseling, 120). The operations at work when uncovering and communicating historical events remain in the dark and are not commented on. Assertively exposing the production processes of historiographical accounts, however, would aid in ascribing the desired scientific element to the study of history. It is a key characteristic of sciences that methodological questions are discussed among its practitioners. Yet, historiographers tend to continue claiming a mimetic function and refuse to accept the fictional element of their creations. They fear that by acknowledging its narrative element, historiography would lose its claim to realistically present past actualities.

In revealing the transitional operations at work in the creation of historical writing, White attempts to lift the veil of mythology from the genre. Every historiographical account represents a reinterpretation of pre-existing knowledge. Historical information available to the historian is de-coded and then en-coded in a different way. What changes is the mode of the events' representation and not the events under examination (Cf. White, "Historical Text", 59). Discussing the fictional state of historiographical accounts, one does not equal historiography to entirely inventive literary genres.

1.3.2. Appropriate Definitions

A common-sense distinction between history and literature can be refuted on the basis of the aforementioned arguments. Historiography can never be a mimetic transcript of past incidents. Its narrative form serves as a constant reminder of its writer's presence. The consequence of accepting historiography's fictional element is that the difference between narrative history and narrative fiction appears less compelling. Defining the idiosyncrasies shared, White has adopted the term *mutual implicativeness*. Thus, he refers to the common 'techniques of composition, description, imitation, narration and demonstration' (White, *Figural Realism*, ix). Rather

than dwelling on possible ways of differentiation, we should accept the commonalities and appreciate the resultant effects. Being likened to fiction, historiography is not downgraded but an additional tool for the discipline's comprehension is created. Not only should the contents of historical accounts be contemplated but also the aesthetic modes of presentation must be deemed relevant. Similarly, in blurring the boundary, narrative fiction is no longer limited to the realm of the inventive but can be analysed as another narrative presenting reality. This is especially relevant for the case of historical fiction.

The historical novel is affected by the redefinition of the border between historical narratives and fictional narratives like no other genre of literature. It finds itself situated between the poles of inventive fiction and allegedly mimetic historical accounts. In a series of questions, White defends this *in-between* position and argues that its hybrid state makes it no less valid as a representative for either side. Confronting a critic he poses:

Would he wish to say that [literary] works do not teach us about real history because they are fictions? Or that, being fictions of history, they are devoid of tropisms and discursivity? Are [...] novels less true for being fictional? Are they less fictional for being historical? (White, *Figural Realism*, 13)

The difference in question does not relate to genres, i.e. historiography or fiction, but to the specific poetic form and contents of a text. Rather than ascribing any text to either fictional narratives or historical narratives, one should emphasise the narrative techniques the narrator employs to present reality.

The acknowledgement of hybrid forms opposes the desire for a clear cut definition. Fictional and historical writing should be seen as two independent marks on a scale of realistic presentation of actualities. A historical novel, committed to the principles of realism, might give a more authentic presentation of past events than a politically motivated historical account that tries to manipulate its reader. Conversely, postmodernist literary writing might

purposefully pervert the historical record while responsible historiography will attempt to approach mimetic representation as far as possible.

Although philosophers and historians have reasoned for decades that historiography is always a construct, the belief that mimetic representation is possible has remained a predominant idea for most historiographers until the present day (Cf. Gossman, 250). Historical texts still self-consciously feign to mirror the alleged logical sequence of past events. If historiography came to accept the narrative element in its texts, the genre would not be downgraded to ideological or even propagandist writing. Instead, the recognition of the inevitability of ideological implications would contribute to elevating the study of history to a new level of self-consciousness (Cf. White, "Historical Text", 60). In accepting this indispensable, fictional side of historiography, the reader would consciously read a piece of historical writing as one of many possible versions and not regard one to be the absolute truth.

1.4. Historiography and Historical Fiction

Before the standards of historical presentation in fiction and historiography can be discussed, a justification of the shared form of the narrative must be presented. The narrative is the agreed means of communication in both genres. In contrast to the style of natural scientific accounts, which are dictated by evidence, historical and fictional narratives are heavily influenced by their composer. Still, this in no way denigrates the latter form of discourse. Even though most people will associate the form of the narrative primarily with fairy-tales and mythology, it actually represents an essential, cognitive instrument. In making knowledge and experience understandable to its reader it is rivalled by purely theoretical writing rather than subordinate to it (Cf. Mink, 131). Narratives serve as an indispensable tool in grasping experiences far removed from our own position as they convey a strong explanatory element. The narrative form must be accepted as a justifiable resource for the transmission of knowledge. Still, due to his decisive role, the narrator has a certain gate-keeper function to the contents presented, be they historical or not.

The historical novel and historiographical accounts share two central principles. Both are constructed in the form of a narrative. This style is applied in order to fulfil the second commonality – the discussion of bygone events. They differ, however, in the exact role that narrative and fictional elements play. The historical novelist may invent characters and events and have them intermingle with actual proceedings of the past in order to convey the desired illustration and effect. In contrast, the historian must not create additions to the record and, in theory, should even remark if observations are based on hypotheses and not on provable facts (Cf. Mengel, 52). The historian's task is less mimetic than this distinction might suggest. Admittedly, the historical novelist has the freedom to invent additions to the record. In selecting from the genealogy and assigning story features to parts of the chronicle, though, the historiographer commits an equally invasive act regarding the presentation of history. Both writers' researches are rooted in the historical record but, for compositional procedures, the resultant texts are the product of narrative processes and fictional additions.

In some respects, the historical novel appears to offer a more trustworthy approach to the presentation of historical occurrences than historiography. Historical fiction clearly finds itself in a hybrid position between historiography and merely inventive texts². The author creates characters and plot structures and places them in front of a historical background. Obviously fictional elements clash with past actualities. For its acknowledged status of fiction, the historical novel adheres to the limitations of the narrative form. While the historian does not accept his text as one of many possible viewpoints on the past, the writer of historical fiction consciously chooses one narrative perspective that will serve him in conveying his desired effect. By renouncing the demand of completeness, the historical novelist sets himself a more realistic task. He plans to present the chosen point of view as genuinely as possible. The claim to present an all-encompassing report of past actuality is opposed by the task of portraying a partial account only. Even if this angle should not be apparent due to internal narration, as in the

² The category 'merely inventive texts' only serves to illustrate the opposition to texts which claim to purely recreate past actualities. As much as no text can be a complete mimetic transcript of reality, none can be absolutely deprived of any relationship to it.

case of omniscient description, the educated reader still distinguishes between author and narrator and thus recognises the novel as following a specific point of view. In making the pursued perspective evident, the author of historical fiction conforms to the criteria that White sets for the writer of historiography by 'drawing historiography nearer to its origins in literary sensibility' ("Historical Text", 61).

To illustrate the issues raised, the archetype of the historical novel serves as an example. In *Waverley*, Sir Walter Scott does not attempt to give a mirror-like account of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1744-46 in all its possible facets. He rather sticks to the limited perspective that the novel's main character Edward Waverley has on the chain of events. Scott wants to demonstrate how a naïve, young Englishman directly experiences the Scottish uprising and the Stuarts' claim to the throne.

No protagonist is likely to find himself simultaneously on both sides of the conflict and neither will he be a participant in all relevant incidents. In *Waverley*, for example, the reader is denied the political English point of view. The only events which receive precise description are those that the author allows his focalizer to directly interfere with. If Edward Waverley did not attend an event, the reader is left without its depiction. Similar to the potentially manipulative techniques of selection in historiography, the historical novelist decides which aspects of history should feature in his narrative. The Jacobite Rebellion ended with the Battle of Culloden in April 1746 that resulted in the final defeat of the Scottish army against the English. Scott decided to omit its description in his novel. He rather chose to give an account of one of the first battles fought in the course of the uprising, the battle at Prestonpans in 1745, which exemplifies one of the Jacobites' victories (*Waverley*, 331-342). The defeat at Culloden was especially grim as it resulted in harsh governmental measures against Scottish Highland culture (Cf. Lamont, 15). Scott, sympathising with Scotland, decided not to have his main character participate in this battle and so managed to overlook the bitter defeat. In contrast, the author emphasises a battle that offers the desired political stance, even if it is historically less significant. Neither historiography

nor historical fiction can be regarded as objective means of communicating historical occurrences. In contrast to historiography, however, historical fiction does not assert to do so. Narrative decisions that influence historical presentation are not denied but are clearly perceptible in the text.

The historical novel is more sincere about the point of view presented and its status as fiction allows other narrative techniques to be used for the presentation and discussion of history, as well. Making use of framing devices, for example, an author can portray the process of retrieving historical knowledge and thus make explicit what historiography practices behind closed doors. Furthermore, acknowledging the insufficiency of one perspective, the historical fiction writer can present many opposing points of view. Especially the matters of historical retrieval and multiple perspectives are dominant in Boyd's historical works. Such narrative techniques are in no way restricted to historical fiction alone. Traditional historiography, however, limits itself to a specific predefined narrative situation that is characterised by a single, supposedly omniscient presenter of past occurrences and a type of discourse that suggests indisputable authority.

If historical fiction is to be accredited with historiographical significance, the literary genre needs to withstand defining criteria of this discipline. In an attempt to distinguish between good and bad historiography, White comments: 'we can always fall back on such criteria as responsibility to the rules of evidence, the relative fullness of narrative detail [and] logical consistency' ("Historical Text", 59). If the application of such principles can aid in distinguishing good from bad historiography, it is only reasonable to measure historical fiction by the same standards. Indeed, there is no reason why a historical novel should not be able to meet such requirements. Not all sub-forms of the genre will comply with these rules, though. One need only imagine the meaningful creativity in perverting the historical record applied in uchronian writing of the postmodernist period. Yet, those historical novels that endeavour historical presentation in a realist fashion will self-evidently act in accordance with such defining principles regarding their depiction of historical elements.

Considering historiographical elements in historical fiction, one must agree that there is no reason why they, in principle, have to be denied any historiographical relevance. White criticises historiography for denying its narrative nature. The historical novel embraces its status as fiction and does not pretend to give an all-encompassing description of past actualities.

CHAPTER II

The Historical Novel

2.1. The Historical Novel as a Literary Genre

The historical novel has always been a halfway house between literary production and the communication of historical knowledge. As a result, historical fiction has been subject to significant transformations throughout its diachronic development, caused by either changes in literary style or modifications to the view of history. The contemporary historical novel is particularly shaped by postmodernist literary trends and approaches to history that acknowledge its narrative state.

2.1.1. Origins

Defining a text as either a literary or a historiographical production only became a relevant issue towards the end of the eighteenth century when history and literature emerged as two supposedly distinct disciplines. History claimed mimetic representation of past actualities while literature found its artistic and universal nature emphasised. Until this point in time, historical events and fictional elements were not required to be clearly distinguishable in pieces of writing. From 1800 onwards, however, historians attempted to foreground the scientific element of their work and claimed independence from literature. The historical novel clearly opposes any approach that wishes to strictly set fact-based reports apart from fictitious narration. In contrast,

[i]n the historical novel, the generic properties of plot, character, setting, thought, and diction [...] operate on the materials of history to lend esthetic form to historical men's experience (Fleishman, 8).

As a hybrid form between history and literature, historical fiction presents the detailed factuality of historical discussion in combination with the universals attributed to literary discourse. As the amalgamation of historical presentation and literary form is not avoided but consciously sought, the historical novel

found itself in opposition to the discipline of historiography that emerged at around 1800. Thus, the time of the historical novel's introduction to the literary world holds particular significance, the year of 1814.

No other genre of literature can be attributed to a single author, as is the case with the historical novel. Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* was published in 1814 and is commonly agreed to be the first historical novel. This single novel's influence on the modalities of integrating historical facts into literary narratives was so substantial that Scott is often referred to as the *father* or *inventor* of the historical novel. '[H]is concept of the historical novel defined the boundaries of the playing-field for both his contemporaries and those who followed him' (Orel, 6). It is noteworthy that history's attempts to be recognised independently from literature and the rise of historical fiction both occurred at around the same point in time. The recognition of history as an independent field of research influenced Scott in the sense that he wanted to bring its fact-based results to a different level of presentation. His reader should not only be confronted with historiography's dry factuality but be able to comprehend what it was like to live in times of the past (Cf. Wolff, 21). Consequently, historical fiction should not be read as a return to previous notions of history, seeing it as a part of literature, but as a complement to it.

Before Scott, literature on historical topics has to be regarded 'as having a historical setting rather than [being] historical fiction' (Oergel, 436). The historical novel did not materialise from nowhere but can be firmly rooted in English literature. The genre clearly stands in the tradition of literary forms such as the novel of domestic realism, the heroic romance, the pseudo memoir novel and the historical drama (Cf. Wesseling, 32). All of the aforementioned genres display either realistic depictions or presentations of the past, both of which are key features of the historical novel. The general interest in the mediation and promotion of historical knowledge partly finds its origin in the Romantic fascination with the *otherness* of the past (Cf. Wesseling, 45). In light of the newly developing scientific view of history, interest in the exceptionality of other times was increasing and people longed for more details than antiquarian historiography could offer. Additionally, in

the evolution of the historical novel, the regional novel occupies an essential part. Scott was fascinated by Maria Edgeworths' novels on Ireland in which the particularities of remote Irish regions are depicted (Cf. Wolff, 19). The geographical distance between the reader's perspective and the distant areas described contributes to the reader's fascination. In the historical novel, Scott applies the same principle but, in addition, introduces the temporal distance between the reader and the novel's contents.

Scott himself was a dedicated reader of epic poetry, adventure novels, histories and travel narratives (Cf. Wolff, 18). This selection displays an equal interest in fictitious adventure stories as well as *factological* discourse of historical occurrences; a combination that will be essential in his later literary productions. Shakespeare's historical dramas provided an acclaimed model of retrospective depiction of past events and influenced Scott in his choice of plot structures, motifs and characters. Most importantly, however, Scott was predetermined by his own earlier works. Before turning to the literary form of the novel, he had first collected Scottish folklore and oral historical accounts. Thus, when working on his historical novels, Scott had a rich collection of records from which to draw (Cf. Schabert, 104-105).

Apart from literary influences, the historical novel finds itself in a close relationship to theories of history. At around 1800, philosophers of history at the University of Edinburgh developed a view of history that promoted the idea that every historical field is distinguished by specific characteristics. This unique character is supposed to make its mark on every aspect of that period (Cf. Wesseling, 31). Scott knew some of these philosophers personally and in his novels he tried to successfully identify the uniqueness of each period by means of their literary depiction. Still, the historical novel can not be regarded an additional tool in the study of history (Cf. Wolff 26-27). Scott simply introduced these elements of historical philosophy into his novels as paradigms of historical description.

Viewed from a different angle, the development of the historical novel found its origins in society's greater interest in national history. Due to political

events that shook the European continent, the desire for national independence and more clearly defined national characters increased. The French Revolution and the later Napoleonic Wars evoked national enthusiasm in many European countries (Cf. Lukács, 22-23). As a result, episodes of national history became regular themes in literature, even with writers who were far from sympathising with revolutionary tendencies. Additionally, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries represented times of significant social change. The rise of capitalism and its terrible consequences for the working classes were contrasted with an alleged social idyll of the past. Especially the Middle Ages were perceived as a period that had been characterised by 'peaceful co-operation among all classes, an age of [...] culture' (Lukács, 23). The emphasis on the supposedly *better* times of the past seems to resemble a certain escapist motif when compared to the harsh conditions endured at the time of writing.

2.1.2. Definitions

Defining the historical novel is a complicated task as the genre has undergone significant development since its original form was determined by Scott. One of the first scholars to attempt a detailed analysis and description of the historical novel was Fleishman. Even though he eventually presents the historical novel's development in a diachronic fashion, his general approach to delineating the genre seems strongly based on Scott's model. The first important feature presented regards the temporal distance between the time of composition and the historical field in question. This should be 'liable to be considered historical' (Fleishman, 3) and thus be separated from the present time of writing by at least 40 to 60 years. This time frame is not arbitrary. Scott originally gave his *Waverley* an additional title, '*Tis Sixty Years Since*', in order to underline its historical contents. Fleishman adopts this time frame as a basis when attempting to distinguish between the historical novel and its sub-genre the novel of the recent past. Additional prescriptive criteria are that the plot must include a number of historically relevant events that affect the life of its main character and that real historical characters should appear.

It is necessary to include at least one such figure in a novel if it is to qualify as historical. [...] When life is seen in the context of history, we have a novel; when the novel's characters live in the same world with historical persons, we have a historical novel (Fleishman, 3-4).

Does the historical depiction of an era really suffer when there is a lack of historical figures in the novel's plot? This restrictive criterion rather aids in making a distinction between historical novels that remained close to Scott's model and more progressive varieties. Fleishman also states that the historical novel must be set against a realistic background (Cf. 3). What the critic presents as general principles of historical fiction rather seems to be an analysis of Scott's original form of the genre.

The historical novel can not be reduced to descriptive principles such as the appearance of real historical figures or the minimum temporal distance between the occurrence of past events and their literary discussion. The genre represents the most important form of literature that writers apply in order to present their vision of past actualities and to make sense out of them. Thus, the only relevant unifying characteristic of historical fiction is that its statements must be based on relics of the past. The writer's task to attribute significance to the past from the present perspective is an omnipresent issue in historical fiction. While Scott mainly wanted to portray his chosen periods to the reading public, other writers offer different interpretations of history. The means by which writers create meaning out of past events has changed significantly over time; from presenting mainly the relics of the past to purposefully perverting them, from the precise description of eighteenth century Scotland in Scott's *Waverley* to a fin-de-siècle Vienna under Turkish siege in Louis Ferron's *Turkenvespers*.

Acknowledging the historical novel's position between history and literature, Aust argues that '[w]as ein historischer Roman ist, ändert sich mit dem, was >Geschichte< bedeutet und Erzählkunst vermag' (22). Due to its dedication to historical contents, the historical novel has become the literary genre that is used to exemplify different approaches to history. Many of the previously discussed philosophical thoughts on history have found their imprints in historical fiction. In this respect, contemporary literary periods are especially

relevant. White, for example, did not present his ideas on the constructed and narrative nature of historiography before 1973. Particularly in postmodernist literature, the historical novel has become acknowledged as an independent discourse by which writers attempt to construct a version of reality (Cf. Hutcheon, *Poetics*, 40). The literary approach can not be assumed subordinate to allegedly mimetic historiographical representation but must be accepted as an autonomous means of historical discussion.

For the purpose of this paper, the historical novel needs to be freed from restrictive definitions as outlined above. Defining literary *must-have* criteria restricts the genre to fiction and neglects its historiographical elements. Historical fiction should not be considered to merely present invented stories against a true historical background that has been pre-defined by historiography. Both the historical novelist and the historiographer define their historical field and shape its presentation. With reference to contemporary philosophy of history, each individual historical novel on a historical subject resembles one possible *historia rerum gestarum* of the *res gestae* in question. Historical fiction and historiography, alike, construct a view of events that lie inaccessibly in the past. Neither approach can be regarded as superior to the other. As both genres are defined by narrative choices, historical fiction can be seen as equally significant in terms of the discussion of historical contents.

2.2. Historical Presentation in the Historical Novel

As a consequence of being a hybrid form between history and literature, historical fiction traditionally stands in opposition to archivist historiography when regarding its modes of presenting historical facts. Especially during the nineteenth century, the genre was criticised for its characteristic mixture of fact and fiction as the desired objective representation of reality demanded utter faithfulness to evidence (Cf. Mengel, 14). Bisecting the novel and, consequently, marking invented from historical contents was equally criticised because this would have led to the collapse of the aesthetic unity of any piece of literature (Cf. Wesseling, 42). Only after

the fictional side to traditional historiography had been acknowledged, historical fiction could be understood as an equally justifiable means of discussing historical actualities.

Different demands are placed on historical fiction and historiographical texts with regard to their modes of historical presentation. In this respect, Collingwood's distinction between the novelist's and the historiographer's task requires elaboration. He argues that the former must create a world that needs to be coherent only within itself, whereas the latter meets the challenge of creating a picture that, as well as being coherent within itself, has to conform to events as they really happened (Cf. Collingwood, 246). The historiographer's and the historical novelist's approaches to describing the historical record are based on different methods. In designing a narrative purely on the basis of the genealogy, the historiographer's task equals the designation of causal chains. His textual result represents a series of arguments that promote an analysis of the historical field according to his point of view. The historical novelist is not limited to constructing his narrative exclusively on the basis of evidence from the past. Therefore, Collingwood belittled the historical novelist's work and emphasised the historiographer's *double task*. However, the narrative of historical fiction must not be regarded as subordinate to historiography. In its first phase, the realist historical novel's compositional process resembles the historiographer's two tasks. By introducing an additional storyline, historical fiction actually proves to be the more complex form of historical presentation. This way, the historical novelist can be seen to be confronted with a *double task*, as well. His first step is similar to the historian's in imposing a narrative form onto the historical record. Secondly, he has to devise a storyline that conforms to the established historical background.

Through his fictional storyline, the novelist's aim is to bring the historical field back to life and to show the reader what it could have been like living in the circumstances of the past (Cf. Wolff, 21). In order to present this in as trustworthy a manner as possible, the novelist reconstructs the characters' possible experiences on the basis of reasoning and hypothesis. In this

respect, the temporal distance between the composition and the events described deserves particular consideration. Similar to his task of looking back and retrospectively ascribing narrative structures to past occurrences, the historical novelist is deeply rooted in his present perspective when contemplating on the possible life-experiences of his historical characters. He can not possibly know how people emotionally reacted to historical changes or were affected by them. Any access to the minds of people from the past is denied and the study of authentic reports, such as diaries, can only bridge this gap to a small extent. The writer of historical fiction is bound to his position in the present when speculating what perceptions his characters of the historical world would have had. The time of composition is an essential analytical criterion when reading historical fiction, in terms of its fictional as well as its factual aspects.

Consequently, a hypothetical risk in any retrospective analysis of bygone events is to transfer the moral values and cultural understanding of the time of composition to the period under examination. Admittedly, though, no direct representation of historical times is possible and the present perspective of writing will always influence its textual description. Every author of historical fiction will attempt to produce an image of the past that acknowledges the relevant realistic material situation as well as mental conceptions. Bad historical presentation is marked by the appearance of characters that seem plucked from the modern world and put into a historical environment. Every period is characterised by a particular cultural frame of mind that determines people's perceptions and actions. In writing historical fiction, the novelist needs to not only depict the historical situation but re-conceptualise motivations and experiences of his characters in a realistic fashion (Cf. MacLeod, 32-33).

In contrast to a narrative that is based exclusively on the historical record, the historical novel offers a richer presentation of the historical field than plain historiography's standards allow. Consequently, historical fiction tends to be placed in a complementary position to historical writing. A deeper

understanding of the historical field should be facilitated by offering a more comprehensive picture than historiography does. Thus,

the use of invention in the service of vivification, embellishment, and the fleshing out of details where historiography only offered rough outlines was a highly desirable compensation for the shortcomings of a stylistically unattractive historiography (Wesseling, 33).

Historical fiction, on the one hand, offers an aesthetic alternative to historiography and, on the other, extends its field of vision. In diverging from the facts, historical fiction shows the domestic side of history that historical writing traditionally cut out. The historian is restricted to historical evidence and other accounts of the events in question, while the historical novelist, in contrast, has all the tools of narrative fiction at his disposal. The latter is better equipped for a more profound presentation. Classical historical novelists felt themselves to be vital contributors to the propagation of historical knowledge and its comprehension (Cf. Wesseling, 45). A similar claim can be made about Boyd's novels. At their heart lies a very realistic presentation of past actualities which seems enriched by the detailed depiction of life's circumstances in the respective periods. As new perspectives and alternative interpretations of history are offered, the author of fiction adds to an understanding of factual history.

The historical presentation provided by the historical novel is the result of the interplay between historical and fictional elements. In order to demonstrate the increased value of historical presentation in historical fiction as opposed to historiography, Fleishman proffers an interesting simile. While the historical account is a legitimate historical construction, based exclusively on evidence,

[t]he [historical] novelist goes a bit farther than the inferentially necessary; some of the threads with which he fills the web of historical knowledge are inserted for the sake of the total design rather than for the discrete data to be linked. His web is not a causal chain but a picture, whose meaning is a formal whole. We might compare the historical novelist to the restorer of a damaged tapestry, who weaves in whole scenes or figures to fill the empty places [...]. [I]f the insertion is made on the basis of sympathy, experience, and

esthetic propriety, it can lend revived expressiveness and coherence to the tapestry (Fleishman, 6-7).

Consequently, historical and fictional elements are strongly interlinked. Historical elements serve to establish a reliable background to the storyline. The fictional elements, however, do not simply present the foregrounded story independently of its historical setting. In contrast, fictional aspects are strongly linked to the historical field and attempt to complement it. Fictional elements, thus, play an important role in the propagation of historical knowledge and are employed in order to render evident the desired historical aspects and perspectives. By defining his main protagonists and their respective points of view, the historical novelist decides which aspects of the historical field will be emphasised. Analysing any historical novel, one has to focus on the interplay between the two levels of historical and fictional elements. This relationship defines the specific character of the *historia rerum gestarum* presented.

2.3. The Historical Novel over Time

In the development from its classical form, defined by Scott, to later adaptations, the historical novel has undergone significant changes. The following overview attempts to illustrate the three main phases of historical fiction; its classical model and modernist and postmodernist variations. Boyd, a contemporary writer of historical novels, can not be ascribed exclusively to one or the other form of historical fiction. Rather, elements from all the three main phases can be identified in his work.

Just as the majority of present-day historians still adheres to criteria defined by nineteenth century historiography, the classical historical novel is still written today (Cf. Wesseling, 73). Nonetheless, ideological changes have caused modifications to the genre in an attempt to render it appropriate to meet the demands of literary periods. Historiography, however, seems to have remained in a position that must be judged outdated from a present

perspective. The historical novel would have run a similar risk of turning into an antiquated literary genre, had certain adaptations not taken place.

Historical fiction's relationship to historiography has been subject to momentous alterations. Nineteenth century historical novelists desired to complement historiography by revitalising the available historical information in the interest of entertainment and education. Contemporary novelists do not attempt to support historiography but rather question the very nature and function of historical knowledge, in other words, historical novelists have come to question the discipline's fundamental principles (Cf. Wesseling, 193).

At the heart of every historical novel lies a specific understanding of the concept of history. This view, however, is not perceptible on the level of the contents only. Any approach to history will also find its implementation in the poetic conception of the piece of writing. For example, omniscient narration alludes to the belief in absolute historical truths, while first person narration and the *second-hand* discussion of personal accounts serve to emphasise the individual nature of each presentation of history. Consequently, in analysing the attitudes towards history expressed in a specific text, not only the contents but also the poetic form deserves consideration (Cf. Mengel, 14).

Apart from identifying characteristics of historical fiction it is important to focus on the relation between fiction and reality over the genre's development. In the shape of a literary piece of writing, every historical novel relates to an outside world. Due to different demands placed by the respective literary eras, authors approached the description of this reality in another way.

2.3.1. The Classical Historical Novel

The historical novel as defined by Scott represents a landmark in the evolution of the genre. Its characteristics influenced many historical fiction writers. Even those attempting to emancipate their production from the model

à la Scott tend to be measured against it. Some critics judge Scott's influence to be so great that the entire history of the historical novel, in all its possible facets, can be analysed in terms of proximity or distance to the *father* of the genre (Cf. Aust, 63). Apart from Scott's own historical literature, the phase of the classical historical novel includes those works that seem to fulfil the standards set by him. This type of historical fiction remained prevalent well into the Victorian period and was eventually deemed outdated according to new requirements which modernism demanded. Already during the Victorian period, private history and personal evolution were important issues in a very popular genre of the time, the *Bildungsroman* (Cf. Sanders, 23). Yet, particularly in literary spheres outside *high literature*, writers have never stopped writing novels that resemble the classical model.

One of the criteria that marks the classical phase and differentiates it from subsequent stages is the strong dedication to the propagation of supposedly authentic historical knowledge. Scott and his followers in no way question the possibility of historical representation and see their works as complementary publications to trustworthy historiography. In the nineteenth century, historical writing had not yet been attributed with its compositional element and was therefore considered a mimetic transcript of past events. Consequently, classical historical fiction limits itself to abide by certain conventions. First, any conflicts with historiographical writing have to be avoided. As a result, historical fiction tends to focus on those areas of the record that historiography remains silent on. Second, the historical period has to be presented in a unifying fashion and any anachronisms in the discussion of the material circumstances and mental preconceptions of the time are to be avoided. Last, convinced they should be faithful to absolute historical truths, classical historical novelists choose to constrain themselves to verisimilitude and so define the genre as realist fiction (Cf. McHale, 87-89). An authentic representation and reinvigoration of past actualities is a key aim of classical historical novelists. The literary modes and styles applied are subordinate to the historical contents discussed and merely give an aesthetic shape to the relevant issues of the historical field. In other words, the most important aim of classical historical fiction is the presentation of historical events. All literary

and narrative operations, such as the adopted style and the storyline chosen, serve to present the historical facts and are secondary to them.

In contrast to other forms of historical fiction, the classical historical novel does not discuss philosophical ideas in relation to history. The set task is to entertain its readership by telling a tale that is set against a realistic background. Thus, the classical historical novel rests on a common-sense idea of history that denies the crucial role of the narrator in historiography as well as historical fiction. The historical background presented is not understood as a creation that is based on the narrator's choices of selection but as a mirror image of past reality. What is denied is that the realistically presented world is actually a subjective construction, and not a neutral reconstruction, of history as it evolved. History is not seen to be created by the historian or the historical novelist but is supposed to consist of a collection of imminently existing stories that its writer simply takes and represents (Cf. Mengel, 19).

Classical historical novelists feel obliged to represent the past as authentically as possible. Aside from philosophical principles, there are also other reasons why their resulting compositions can not be acknowledged to do so. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, historiography found itself in its initial phase of development. Many different schools materialised and competed in their view of what was the most *objective* way of representing past actualities. The subsequent result was a great number of diverging historiographical narratives. Thus, the question remains as to which of the many allegedly mimetic transcripts of history historical fiction attempted to complement. Instead of turning to historiography, many historical novelists of the time based their texts on previous literary discussions of historical occurrences. Scott, for example, drew on Shakespeare's historical plays when working on his novels (Cf. Orel, 9-10). The fact that historical fiction in the nineteenth century tended to be based on other literary compositions strongly invalidates the claim of objective representation. Additionally, in contrast to Scott's novels on relatively recent Scottish history, his medieval novels could not be checked against people's memory. Historical novelists

seem to have described 'the kind of history in which they wished to believe' (Orel, 13).

Lukács is one scholar who defends the historical novel's claim to effectively represent the past. From a Marxist point of view, he emphasises Scott's social realism. According to Lukács, Scott portrays the great transformations of the past by showing their effects on the material and psychological situations of his characters. In doing so, Scott presents the totality of social life and depicts both the *above* and the *below* of society (Cf. Lukács, 52). The essence of social realism lies in the presentation of everyday life within the broad fabric of history. The type of presentation that Lukács praises in the classical historical novel is achieved by the following three criteria. The depiction of a protagonist who represents the synthesis of humanity of his time is quintessential. This *typical* character has to be contextualised within a genuine historical setting which is based on the so-called *real* historical world. Eventually, the events he undergoes during the course of the novel must lead the protagonist to a higher level of understanding of his relation to the world and his role in the workings of history (Cf. Butler, 12). To exemplify these demands, *Waverley*, the epitome of the historical novel, appears useful. Scott adheres to all three criteria. His main character Edward Waverley serves as an example for humanity in general, as most of Scott's characters do. He finds himself in a realistic description of the Jacobite Rebellion and eventually has to accept his minor role in history and the superior power of progress that will not come to a halt for Scottish Highland culture.

Apart from the issue of realistic presentation of the past, other defining characteristics of the classical historical novel can be described. One of the widely known features is the typical *mediocre* hero. The term coined by Lukács has been adopted by most critics of the genre. *Mediocre* alludes to the *averageness* in most of the protagonist's traits.

He generally possesses a certain, though never outstanding, degree of practical intelligence, a certain moral fortitude and decency which even rises to a capacity for self-sacrifice, but which never grows into

a sweeping human passion, is never the enraptured devotion to a great cause [but the] correct, decent, average representative of the English petty aristocracy (Lukács, 32-33).

This quote helps to demonstrate the importance Lukács assigns to the moderate nature of the classical historical novel's hero, if he deserves this title. In every possible respect, he never goes beyond the unexceptional. The main intention of the genre's classical phase was the presentation of past events. Featuring a shallow and unremarkable protagonist appears useful in two ways. First, rather than drawing attention to himself he remains unobtrusive and therefore leaves the main stage to the historical events under depiction. Second, Scott did not aim at presenting an individual's career. The characters in his narrations are introduced for the purpose of representing entire social groups. Consequently, the less defined and the more typical they are, the easier it is to associate them with the broad group they stand for. Characterisation occurs only to the extent that is relevant for the presentation of historical facts. The emphasis remains on the external world, while the inner lives are considered secondary. What is sought is the creation of exemplary characters and not the possibility of thorough identification with them. It is only through these average characters that Scott is able to show how historical 'disturbances make themselves felt in [everybody's] everyday lives, in their immediate, emotional responses' (Lukács, 46).

Additionally, Scott's heroes tend to be defined as easily influenced, reactive rather than active and observant (Cf. Schabert, 63). This *pensive* aspect, in particular, needs consideration. Detailed presentation of the past is only made possible by a 'contemplative fellow, who is inclined to dwell on everything that crosses his path' (Wesseling, 48). As the classical historical novel mainly follows its main character's perspective, the reader depends on his accounts of the events that he participates in.

Another characteristic of the classical historical novel is the appearance of historical figures such as Bonnie Prince Charlie, Mary Stuart or Oliver Cromwell, who occur in Scott's literature. If the *mediocre* hero seems

reduced to a sole reflector of the events, the historical personalities are condensed to their historical significance. To Scott, the retrospective relevance of authentic figures lies in their function as representatives of 'important and significant movement[s]' (Lukács, 38). Real historical personalities, consequently, serve as *stand-ins* for historical phases and politics. The characteristics ascribed to leading figures of the past in fact 'concentrate in themselves the salient positive and negative sides of the movement concerned' (Lukács, 41) and do not attempt to resurrect the actual person.

Another way in which classical historical fiction authors present their works with more authenticity is by including descriptions of *local colour*. The reader should be confronted with the living conditions at the time of historical events in as much detail as possible. In particular, the detailed descriptions of dialects and customs serve as tools for the revivification of past life (Cf. Aust, 67).

In his day, Scott and his classical version of the historical novel were considered to be evidence that the presentation of historical events could be brought back to life without the intrusion of a narrator. He was regarded as having created the ideal model of objective representation (Cf. Aust, 68). Nevertheless, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the classical form of historical fiction found itself under severe criticism from historiography and literature alike. Scott's historical understanding was influenced by the Enlightenment notion of a universal human nature. From 1860 onwards, however, historians started to foreground the individuality of each historical epoch. They denied the universal fundamentals of history that Scott had heavily emphasised. The common ground between past and present upon which Scott had constructed the possibility of historical understanding was declared void (Cf. Wesseling, 56-57). Additionally, changes in literary trends demanded deeper characterisation and rejected Scott's shallow protagonists. Apart from deeper psychological introspection, the reader started demanding moral comments on the events described in historical fiction (Cf. Wesseling, 55-56).

2.3.2. The Historical Novel and Modernism

Literary phenomena associated with the era of modernism heavily influenced the genre and aided in establishing a new form of the historical novel. While classical historical fiction emphasises the universal aspects of history and focuses on a collective past, its modernist counterpart deems personal experiences and individuals' histories to be more important. By means of psychological introspection, a certain inward realism replaces the realistic presentation of the outside world. James, Woolf and Faulkner are three of the most important representatives of modernist historical fiction.

Modernist standards demand that the characterisation of the novels' protagonists be significantly different to that of the genre's classical phase. While Scott and his followers interpret their characters in view of the Enlightenment notion of a universal human nature, modernist writers want to identify their uniqueness. Writers of the classical form accentuate qualities that supposedly all humans share in order to bridge the gap between the past period described and the later situation of reception. The idea of a universal human nature assumes that all humans have the same mental preconceptions. Consequently, if the same patterns of thought and action are common to both the characters and the readership, the latter will easily be able to identify with the former.

For modernist writers it is insufficient to present a character as a representative of a milieu. Instead they want to emphasise the individuality of their characters and their inner worlds. Modernism no longer demands that the background be presented as objectively and in as much detail as possible. Rather, authors discuss how an awareness of the past will shape the character's personality and how a retrieved personal history can be integrated into the individual's consciousness (Cf. Wesseling, 74-75).

This new focus on the characters' inner lives has significant implications for the presentation of historical occurrences. Subjective attempts to interpret the historical world replace classical historical fiction's bid to objectively present past events (Cf. Mengel, 21). Due to the consequential distortions of reality,

critics who were in favour of the classical historical novel criticised its modernist variant for violating the traditional conventions (Cf. Butler, 13). At first, the new modes of historical presentation were not considered to be the result of changing conceptions of history but as the downfall of the allegedly genuine classical form. In fact, changing beliefs in the nature of history initiated these transformations. Additionally, the historical novel was adapted to more complex methods of narration that are associated with modernism in general (Cf. Mengel, 15). The evolution of modernist realism must not be seen as a rejection of the realist project as such. Rather its development can be put down to the fact that authors of the time had to admit that traditional realism had failed to present history in all its complexity (Cf. White, *Figural Realism*, 41).

Modernism was the first literary period in which authors seriously questioned whether it was possible to objectively present history, as the classical historical novel had attempted to do. In recognising the extent to which both historian and novelist are influenced by their present perspective, authors deny any mimetic representation of past actualities. As aforementioned, one clearly needs to differentiate between *res gestae* and *historia rerum gestarum*. While classical historical novelists assume their narratives to be direct presentations of the events of the past, modernist writers of historical fiction foreground the processes that shall demonstrate the impossibility of mimetic representation and highlight the narrator's role. In this respect, the concepts of *self-reflexivity*, *multiple focalization* and *subjectivization* need elaboration.

Self-reflexivity implies that history should not be presented as an objective state of affairs but rather as a particular mode of consciousness. To acknowledge the inaccessibility of the events as they occurred, the re-enactment of past experiences in the mind of a historian character becomes primary. Thus, historian characters appear on the surface of the novel and display the processes of retrieval and understanding of historical knowledge. The general focus lies on a meta-level of historical retrieval and not on the level of mimetic representation (Cf. Wesseling, 82-83).

By means of *multiple focalization*, authors attempt to uncover the subjectivity inherent in every historical perspective. Juxtaposing views are presented without any judgement on their reliability in an attempt to render evident the 'polyinterpretability of the past' (Wesseling, 85). The principle of introducing several perspectives is not new as it was already present in Scott's works. Then, however, all differing points of view were subordinate to the omniscient narrator. Modernist fiction does not usually display any hierarchy in terms of narration. Classical historical fiction presents several perspectives on an established and agreed fact, while writers of modernist historical novels introduce several points of view in order to question the basic facts of history.

Classical historical novelists mainly focus on the external description of the historical world. Opposing this disapproved *shallowness* of historical presentation, modernist writers strive for the *subjectivization* of history. The mere description of historical events is no longer considered sufficient and therefore needs to be complemented by the depiction of the gradual formation of a character living through history. The representation of history in this personalised form is referred to as *subjectivization* (Cf. Wesseling, 75-76). While in Scott's fiction characters serve as screens onto which historical issues are projected, in modernist fiction history is presented through the influences it has on an individual's development. For example, the writer of a novel that revolves around a war or a revolution emphasises its main character's development during the events, instead of centring political concerns.

Due to this new focus, the typical omniscient narrative situation of the classical historical novel is also subject to change. As writers want to show how each individual consciousness actively forms the surrounding historical world, omniscient narration has to be considered an inappropriate tool. The focalizer is no longer seen to passively reflect his historical background but to actively form it. While in classical historical fiction an omniscient narrator mediates the main character's perceptions to the readership, modernist fiction directly confronts its reader with the observations and thoughts of its focalizers.

2.3.3. Postmodernist Historical Fiction

Classical historical fiction aims at complementing historiography and avoids any conflicts with the traditional way of describing history. Authors of the modernist historical novel place personal accounts in the foreground and are more interested in the development of a personality in times of historical change than in depicting the events authentically. However, postmodernist historical fiction is characterised by

a resistance to old certainties about what happened and why; a recognition of the subjectivity, the uncertainty, the multiplicity of truths inherent in any account of past events; and a disjunctive, self-conscious narrative, frequently produced by eccentric and/or multiple narrating voices (Rozett, 146).

These issues clearly distinguish postmodernist historical fiction from its classical form and show the development from modernist approaches. By stressing the possibility of different readings of the past, the current literary mode pays tribute to recent advances in the philosophy of history. The authoritative approach of historiography is seriously questioned as postmodernist writers acknowledge the fictional aspect to historiography. Consequently, the traditionally accepted boundary between fictional and historical compositions gets blurred. Historiography and historical fiction both present historical knowledge in the shape of a narrative. Any writing on history is seen to be based on fictional scenarios and not on the inherent significance of the events under description (Cf. Wesseling, 135). White's echo is clearly perceptible. Even though Boyd's historical novels do not adhere to all postmodernist principles, they are nevertheless useful when analysing the way he approaches the issue of historical presentation.

In contrast to modernist historical fiction that emphasises an individual's past, postmodernist writers take a renewed interest in collective histories. Historical fiction must be seen as an important genre in postmodernist literature. Especially from the 1980s onwards, retrospective fiction has become very popular and critics even refer to 'near-epidemic proportions' (Bradbury, 404). The postmodernist historical novel equals its classical

counterpart in its interest in historical actualities. However, instead of supporting a simplistic view of history, writers now critically reflect on the possibilities of historiography and discuss metahistorical processes. Thus, key assumptions that seemed to mark classical historical fiction are dismantled. Postmodernist literary production in particular rejects the ideas

(1) that there is such a thing as ascertainable “historical reality”; (2) that this reality can be identified and articulated by an authorial consciousness; (3) that human action is history that is accessible to later generations [and] (4) that history [...] is linear and progressive [...] (Elias, 60-61).

In opposition to historiography’s authoritative stance, postmodernist historical fiction tends to focus on the production processes of historical knowledge. Modernist historical fiction features historian characters. Postmodernist fiction goes beyond this and draws attention to the limitations of each particular historical report and refers to the multiplicity of narratives that can be devised from the same raw historical events (Cf. Butler, 10). The *self-reflexive* historical novels of modernism are greatly concerned with the constraints of the retrospective retrieval of the past. Yet, they still attempt to define authentic historical knowledge within the confines they set themselves (Cf. Wesseling, 181). Postmodernist fiction no longer sees the propagation of historical knowledge as the main task. Rather, the underlying possibility, nature and use of historical knowledge, from political and epistemological perspectives, are the focus of attention (Cf. Wesseling, 73). The complementary positions of history and literature are no longer found on the level of historical contents but in relation to metahistorical processes. Rather than discussing issues of objectivity, postmodernist historical fiction aims at freeing historical material from its androcentric and ethnocentric contexts (Cf. Wesseling, 181).

Postmodernist fiction foregrounds the search for the past. By means of historian characters or external narrators, for example, the reader is involved in the process of retrieving history as the narrator openly comments on his endeavours and the problems encountered (Cf. Wesseling, 119). Thus, the postmodernist historical novel is not usually considered to just present the

historical world it revolves around but to comment on the possible readings of history and how it is created in a textual form (Cf. Baker, 126). While the classical historical novel mainly focuses on the level of the past, its modernist and postmodernist counterparts accentuate the production processes of history. As a logical consequence, the present perspective of looking back on events of the past becomes an important theme in many novels. Due to this emphasis, one can argue that actually historical novels have come to consist of highly reflective and individualised accounts on the investigation and reconstruction of bygone events and their attribution with meaning. With reference to the lesser importance of the historical contents, some critics rather refer to such historical novels as historical non-fiction books of a highly reflective type (Cf. Borries, 145).

Discussing the ways in which historical facts enter the narrative of postmodernist historical fiction, one can argue that seemingly authentic forms occur as well as strongly manipulative types. While the former feigns to be a mirroring image of past reality, the latter consciously perverts established historical facts.

Firstly, in an attempt to discuss the possibility of authentic historical representation, authors might directly present *real* historical documents or pseudo-sources of the past. The narrative seems constructed around this supposedly genuine historical information. Taken to the extreme, a historical novel could be deprived of any narrative elements. The resulting text would resemble a set of unedited documents that are allowed to speak for themselves. This technique is referred to as *strategy of the collage* and eventually creates a deliberately fragmented picture of the historical field. (Cf. Wesseling, 123-125). However, the achieved objectivity is deceptive. Any narrative that might result out of the set of documents originates exclusively in the author's choice of records provided. The *strategy of the collage* particularly helps to render evident the historian's decisive role in creating historiographical texts. No set of documents, however complete, will ever produce an absolutely consistent historical account. Yet, presenting

historical *proof* alone is exactly what historiographers purport to do when creating a supposedly mimetic transcript of history.

A dominant feature of postmodernist historical fiction is the rejection of traditional stances on history that its classical form had pursued. Fleishman, in defining the genre, suggests that it has to put forward 'a realistic background' (3) and that life under the influence of the historical background should be described. These clearly realistic constraints show the classical belief in a reality that can be objectively described. Postmodernist writers clearly reject this view. While in classical historical fiction the novelist's additions to the record have to remain in the spheres that historiography neglected, postmodernist historical novel writers consciously present 'violent clashes between [the] invented and [the] documented' (Wesseling, 178). In addition, postmodernist historical fiction tends to counter the linearity of time. Historical events and figures are re-interpreted by being re-ordered in an unconventional fashion. The intrusion of fictive elements into supposedly established historical understanding and anachronistic tendencies constitute the main devices by which postmodernism parodies the genre's classical form. History is no longer painstakingly put together as realistically as possible but serves as a reservoir of sources that can be used in order to establish new meanings out of them.

The creation of alternative histories must not be seen as a uniform process. Actually, postmodernist fiction displays a wide range of alternative views on history; from substantial incursions into the record to simply emphasising unconventional points of view on historical actualities. Boyd generally avoids wilful and haphazard transformations of the historical record and seems to restrict himself to the limitations of realistic presentation. His historical novels are marked by the propagation of lesser known perspectives and the presentation of alternative readings of historical events.

The contortion of traditional history is the most discussed and criticised feature of postmodernist historical writing. Fact and fiction are no longer easily differentiable as history is made up, falsified and re-considered.

Reducing these techniques to absurdity, however, would mean taking no notice of the political commitment that lies at their core. Canonised history is not modified at random (Cf. Wesseling, 156). Contrary to merely complementing historiography, as classical historical fiction does, postmodernist literature adopts a questioning and politically concerned stance on history. By focussing on usually marginalized perspectives, it undermines the hegemonic hold on historical discourse (Cf. Baker, 123). Many of the techniques developed by modernist writers, such as *self-reflexivity* and *multiple focalization*, are now applied in order to shed light on formerly neglected perspectives and to allude to the polyinterpretability of history.

Whereas considerable differences exist between classical and postmodernist historical fiction, significant parallels can be drawn between the modernist and the postmodernist historical novel. Both share an emphasis on the subjectivity of historical presentation. In modernist writing, authors emphasise the distortion that results from an individual's looking back at the past. Postmodernist fiction appears less interested in the personal aspect of subjectivity but deals with conventionalised subjectivity on a large scale, as can be found in traditional historiography. The commonly chosen point of view, be it male, white or European, is opposed by foregrounding marginalized points of view. Thus, presented are

the histories (in the plural) of the losers as well as the winners, of the regional (and colonial) as well as the centrist, of the unsung many as well as the much sung few, and I might add, of women as well as men (Hutcheon, *Politics*, 66).

Especially from a Marxist perspective, the postmodernist historical novel finds itself under severe criticism. Jameson, one of its main critics, argues that the postmodernist form of the genre 'no longer set[s] out to represent the historical past' but only promotes ideas and opinions of it (Cf. Jameson, 25). Clearly, what Jameson thinks to be lacking in postmodernist historical fiction is that it no longer abides by rules of realistic presentation. Jameson even talks about a 'crisis in historicity' (25). Jameson's position is opposed by the idea that mimetic representation of the past needs to be rejected as a myth.

Narratives on historical events are therefore all there has ever been. However realistic any given narrative might appear, it is ultimately just one of many potential views on the historical field. Jameson's desire for the representation of the historical past seems, to a certain extent, founded on an outdated understanding of historical writing, fictional and factual alike. Postmodernist historical literature corresponds to contemporary views of history and thus averts simplistic, mimetic representation.

Boyd's literary compositions can in fact be seen to bridge the gap between the demands of realistic presentation, on the one hand, and contemporary philosophy of history, on the other. The author achieves a realistic historical description while, at the same time, the applied narrative situation alludes to the inaccessibility of the past from a later perspective.

Postmodernist literature's alterations to the historical record have significant implications for the characters of historical fiction of the period. As McHale describes, the characters of classical historical novels remain in those areas that historiography has not commented on, the so-called *dark areas* of history (Cf. 87). Historical and fictional characters can move and act quite freely as long as they remain in this sphere. Postmodernist historical fiction, however, introduces characters that actually infiltrate into the *light areas* of history and can therefore directly oppose historiographical writing. Analysing Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Wesseling defines four possible ways in which the characters of historical fiction may come into contact with their historical surroundings (Cf. 170). *Passive-literal* and *passive-metaphorical* are the first two modes of connection and primarily involve history's *dark areas*. Therefore, these are the forms prominent in classical historical fiction. The former refers to the traditional way of presenting the impacts that historical events have on the daily lives of individuals. On a more complex level, the latter creates metaphorical parallels between public history and the lives of the novel's characters. The light areas are penetrated in *active-literal* and *active-metaphorical* relationships between characters and historical world. *Active-literal* involvement with history means that the characters actively interfere with established historical facts and cause changes to the historical

record. This clearly violates the traditional constraint that no historical significance must be attributed to fictional characters. The *active-metaphorical* mode even breaks with the standard of verisimilitude, as a kind of magic relationship is established between historical events and characters. For example, a protagonist might be able to control the movement of armies by means of his thoughts only.

In an attempt to define the particular shape historical fiction takes in postmodernism, Hutcheon has come to coin the term *historiographic metafiction*. It resembles a renunciation of historical fiction as it was previously composed because the traditional mode of unreflected historical discussion is rejected (Cf. Bölling, 40). Thus, at the core of *historiographic metafiction* lie the acceptance of the inaccessibility of the past and a highly theoretical self-awareness of the fictional state of history. Instead of featuring events that seem to present themselves, their narrative composition is consciously demonstrated in the text. Nonetheless, the existence of a past *real* is in no way denied (Cf. Hutcheon, *Politics*, 66-67). Consequently, Hutcheon redefines the difference between historiographical writing and historical fiction in a similar way to White. Both genres attempt to create meaning out of past events that are not directly accessible. The same act of *refiguration* is common to factual and fictional historical writing, inasmuch as they shape their readers' experience of time by certain plot configurations (Cf. Hutcheon, *Poetics*, 100). In making the production processes visible to its reader, *historiographic metafiction* functions as a critique of historiography that feigns objective representation.

The postmodernist historical novel offers the most complex form of historical fiction. Its main aim is to provide alternative readings of the established historical record and to free historical discourse from hegemonic forces. The close analysis of the historical presentation in Boyd's literary production will exemplify how a contemporary writer meaningfully selects from a range of literary tools in order to create his desired effect.

CHAPTER III

(Re)Presenting History – Boyd’s Historiographical Fiction

A great number of Boyd’s fictional texts are set in a historically significant period. While some novels have historical issues at their core, others deal with political change to a lesser extent. Novels belonging to the latter group are, for example, *A Good Man in Africa* and *Brazzaville Beach*. A characteristic feature they share is that historical matters and themes of social change occur but are not given primary importance. Furthermore, these novels are not necessarily based on actual historical events. Historically significant issues seem to be mentioned rather in passing and the protagonists’ involvement with their historical surrounding does not develop into the main concern of the plot. *Brazzaville Beach* is set during a military coup in the Republic of Congo. The political conflict, however, never turns into the novel’s main focus. *A Good Man in Africa* focuses predominantly on the consequences of European colonisation in Africa. Nevertheless, the author chooses not to discuss matters such as bribery and the clashes of cultures in relation to an actual country, but to show their effects on the invented country of Kinjanja.

The first group of novels, however, is characterised by a clearly defined temporal background and significant interaction between protagonists and historical circumstances. *An Ice-Cream War*, *The New Confessions*, *The Blue Afternoon*, *Any Human Heart* and *Restless* are novels that clearly belong to this group. These titles seem particularly promising when analysing Boyd as an author of historical fiction. Rather than just alluding to the historical period in question, they seem to evolve around these historical events. The novels’ characters do not simply act alongside historical occurrences but find themselves in a relationship of reciprocal influence with the historical world they live in.

3.1. Boyd's Novels – Just Historical Fiction?

Before pointing out key characteristics of Boyd's historical fiction, the author shall be placed in relation to the historical novel's development. When reconsidering the various features that have defined the genre over its development, one can make certain assertions about Boyd as a historical novelist. However, his works can not be labelled as entirely one type of historical fiction. Boyd's particular way of integrating and discussing historical contents is the result of his picking and choosing the most promising aspects of different forms of historical fiction. In brief, the author's style of historical writing seems a combination of acknowledging contemporary advances in the philosophy of history, on the one hand, and the effort of a very realistic presentation of historical occurrences, on the other.

Authors of postmodernist historical fiction tend to apply historical elements quite freely and sometimes even aim at perverting established facts. The associated meanings of historical events appear primary to their realistic discussion, which is regarded as outdated. The idea of history as a conventional set of facts is denied and the retrospective reconstruction of historical accounts is stressed. Boyd acknowledges the idea of the inaccessibility of past times by introducing historian characters who attempt to uncover and understand past occurrences. At the same time, however, the author refuses to renounce realistic descriptions of bygone times and events. On occasion, Boyd alludes to the *strategy of the collage* by quoting possibly authentic material such as letters and encyclopaedic entries. This strategy seems yet another technique to anchor his literary productions in the real world.

One essential step forward from classical historical fiction to its modernist form is the preference for inward realism as opposed to merely realistic descriptions of the outside world. Boyd seems to aim at a synthesis of the modernist and classical viewpoints. His novels feature detailed descriptions of the historical world inhabited by the characters without presenting plain protagonists. His characters are very elaborate and their inner lives and struggles occupy a significant part of the narrative. Other features of

modernism that are often adopted in Boyd's works are the concepts of *self-reflexivity*, *multiple focalization* and *subjectivization*. Firstly, history tends to be presented indirectly through the mind of a historian character, secondly, several perspectives on the same occurrences are provided without an authorial preference of one over the other and, thirdly, history is presented through its influence on the characters' personal development.

Writers of classical historical fiction present the historical world in as much detail as possible and display no critical awareness of historical depiction. While Boyd denies the possibility of a simplistic mimetic representation of history, he still assigns great importance to substantial minutiae in his portrayals of the past. The employment of *local colour* defines both the classical historical novel and Boyd's literary production. In his depictions of the historical world, the author restricts himself to the rules of realism, which is yet another way in which his historical fiction mirrors the classical form.

I want to make my fiction seem as REAL as possible – and so, like the cannibal who eats the brain of his enemy to make him stronger – I bring the realm of facts, of reportage, of history, of biography into my novels to make the reality of the world I create and invent seem all the more potent and convincing (Boyd, "Interview on *Restless*").

Boyd's approach seems a successful combination of realistically presenting bygone times while still acknowledging the impossibility of a mimetic representation of past events. The contents of his novels tend to remain faithful to the established dates and deeds of history whereas the narrative situation emphasises personal or indirect viewpoints and thus rejects an omniscient perspective.

Boyd mainly focuses on historical fields that tend to be disregarded by dominant Western historiography. Thus, apart from entertaining his readership, the author clearly aims at the promotion of historical knowledge when choosing his topics. The course of World War I in East Africa, the Philippine independence movement against the US colonial power around 1900 and British Secret Service operations in the USA during World War II are not well-known historical subjects. Boyd's novels do not simply fit a

storyline around popular historical issues. The contents communicated and the narrative situation applied serve to promote historical fields that are usually neglected. Consequently, the *title* historiographical novel seems to be truly appropriate when discussing Boyd's literary productions, as they exceed the conventional aim of historical fiction.

The decision to acknowledge Boyd's writings as historiographically significant contributions can be justified by considering White's theory on the difference between factual and fictional textual compositions. The scholar points out that the contrast between the two types of text rests on the commonly adopted discourses. We tend to accept factual discourse as trustworthy, while we distrust any fictional mode of writing. This distinction, however, is one of convention. White clearly states that

figurative language can be said to refer to reality quite as faithfully and much more effectively than any putatively literalist idiom or mode of discourse might do (*Figural Realism*, vii).

Therefore, fiction has to be recognised as an equally acceptable way of exploring and communicating historical knowledge. Traditional historiography currently faces severe criticism for continuing to deny the fictional aspect of their supposedly mimetic productions. In light of this, one might even argue that historiographical fiction, as Boyd composes it, is quite close to the type of historiography that White, Mink and other philosophers of history desire. Its narrative state is not denied but embraced, and history is not presented as proven facts but as contents one has to argue for and research thoroughly.

3.2. The Author's Take on the Communication of History

At the core of the author's historical fiction lies a particular view of history that appears as influenced by contemporary concepts as by traditional ones. In the early stages of the historical novel, a key motivation for their composition was the didactic urge to educate their reader about historical occurrences. Thus, traditional historical novels conformed to historiography. Nowadays, however, authors rather express a critical attitude towards it and

prefer to show a complimentary view of history and present metahistorical commentary (Cf. Wesseling, 90). Boyd is no exception in this respect. In many ways, the type of historical fiction written by him opposes traditional historiography and deems it obsolete. This is not to say that Boyd does not aim at creating an interest in historical knowledge. Indeed, quite the opposite holds true, for his novels are packed with historical information. What Boyd clearly rejects, though, is a simplistic and allegedly objective mode of presenting history. Many of the subsequent chapters will deal with Boyd's attempt to present historical events and periods in great detail while constantly acknowledging the subjectivity inherent in any one perspective.

In the eighteenth century, many historians strongly believed in the idea of Universal History, according to which it should be possible to organise all historical events into a coherent whole (Cf. Gossman, 241). From a contemporary perspective, such a viewpoint must be rejected. Today, the dominant opinion is that history can be considered from a variety of perspectives and each represents a different story. In presenting diverging points of view on the same events and stressing the subjectivity of individual perspectives, Boyd opposes the simplification of history and recognises its multifaceted nature. For evidence of this, one only has to think of the opposing views of US American colonists and the Philippine population in relation to Emilio Aguinaldo and the *insurrectos* in *The Blue Afternoon*. While the colonial power would refer to them as *terrorists*, Filipinos would consider them *freedom fighters*. Depending on the perspective taken, historical accounts differ significantly.

The diverse viewpoints that individuals and nations have in relation to history are further emphasised in Boyd's work by the use of a variety of languages. Throughout the novels, characters with a range of nationalities appear, for example Germans, Iranians, French and Portuguese, to name but a few. Even though nearly all of them speak English, they occasionally utter words or phrases in their native languages that the author does not necessarily translate. The 'polyglot British Army' (*An Ice-Cream War*, 332) in Boyd's novel on the Great War is an excellent example of this. Likewise, a number of

different variants of English are depicted throughout Boyd's novels. South African, Scottish and US American speakers of English, for instance, are clearly distinguishable from each other on the basis of their accents. The various language forms assigned to the different characters serve as an analogy for their dissimilar perspectives on history. The myriad of languages, dialects and accents is a simile for the many opposing opinions and potential perspectives on world's history.

To Boyd, it seems, the study of history can not be reduced to the mere collecting and recording of past human affairs. In *Restless*, Ruth remembers her first impressions of Hamburg University's history department, where she studied for nearly four years in the 1970s.

[T]here was a huge hand-painted sign across the façade – put up by the students – saying: *Institut für Soziale Angelegenheiten* – “The Institute of Social Conscience” ... Not “The History Faculty”, or whatever. For these students in 1970, history was about studying their social conscience (*Restless*, 135).

Even though the direct translation is puzzling, the author's point is clear. History is more than the documentation of past events. Analysing history one has the obligation to draw consequences from the past for the present day. This critical approach clearly distinguishes Boyd from old fashioned and traditional views of history. From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, historiography started to be abused by nationalists and other mythmakers (Cf. Gossman, 154). A common aim was to highlight one's own viewpoint and stress the superiority of the respective nation over others. Historiography served as a justification for the present. In clear contrast, Boyd uses his historical fiction as a means of reconsidering the past with the intention of uncovering traditional myths. Traditional historiography is critically reflected on. Neither his depiction of the British army during World War I, nor the reports on the US American colonisation of the Philippines present the UK or the USA in a favourable light. Instead, the novels represent an opposing stance to traditional, nationalistic historiography.

The subsequent chapters aim at demonstrating the ways in which the author's view of history materialises in the three selected novels. By choosing certain narrative situations and selecting particular themes, the author's critical attitude to simplistic historiography and classical historical fiction is expressed. Rather than situating his novels in commonly studied historical fields, Boyd centres on settings that are usually ignored by historiography. An analysis of the *dramatis personae* chosen reveals the author's tendency to pick and choose from the various forms of the historical novel. Boyd's main aim, however, is to question the certainty and unambiguity that is commonly associated with historiography. The use of multiple perspectives and the *second-hand* presentation of history highlight the unattainable nature of mimetic historical representation and hint at the limitations of historical comprehension. Eventually, historiography's status as a trustworthy discipline is discredited.

3.3. The Novels under Consideration

Boyd's particular mode of discussing historical issues will be demonstrated by the close analysis of his novels *An Ice-Cream War*, *The Blue Afternoon* and *Restless*. Common to all is the fact that historical issues are right at the core of the narratives. The protagonists not only live their lives under the influences of their historical circumstances but are themselves active in shaping them. Thus, they are a significant part in the evolution of history, be it fighting in World War I, supporting modern advances in medicine or leading the life of a British spy during World War II. Before the novels are analysed with regard to their historical presentation, their narrative situation and structure shall be outlined.

3.3.1. *An Ice-Cream War*

The author's second novel offers a detailed description of the course of World War I in East Africa. At today's border between Kenya and Tanzania, then known as British East Africa and German East Africa, British

and German troops carried the European conflict to the African continent. The narrative revolves around very different characters that all share the same destiny – their lives are affected by the military confrontation. The main focus is on the English upper-class family Cobb and the American farmer Temple Smith, who lives in British East Africa.

The novel consists of four parts that are named *Before the War* (I), *The War* (II), *The Ice-Cream War* (III) and *After the War* (IV). The Great War functions as an essential structural device and the four parts of the novel cover the four years that the conflict lasted, from 1914 to 1918. Part I mainly serves to introduce the characters and set the scene. Parts II and III deal with the war proper and occupy two thirds of the novel. However, the general focus slowly changes from *The War* to *The Ice-Cream War*. In part III, the last traces of heroism and beliefs in a rightful war vanish and private motivations become primary³. Part IV sees the soldiers leave the front line and seek their own personal justice. Additionally, the author provides a prologue and an epilogue. The former consists of a supposedly authentic letter from a soldier written in 1914 in British East Africa and the epilogue sees the surviving Cobb brother leave Africa and thus brings the novel to an end.

The narrative situation applied is characterised by *multiple focalization*. In total, there are six characters whose perspectives lead the reader through the novel: Felix, Gabriel and Charis Cobb, Erich and Liesl von Bishop and Temple Smith. The applied third person narration at any particular time is limited to the knowledge and perception of one of the six focalizers. Part I and II display two main locations, East Africa and England. From part III onwards, all focalizers find themselves in Africa and present different perspectives on the ongoing conflict. Due to the great number of characters, it is hard to define the central protagonists. Depending on the focus of their analyses, literary critics defined different characters as primary. Focussing on the novel as a satirical critique of the British army and Victorian society,

³ Boyd's decision to name the entire novel after this part stresses the critical attitude he evinces for the Great War in Africa. What is more, the application of the indefinite article *an* over the definite article *the* in the title of the novel extends the author's disapproving opinion to wars in general. The indefinite article can be used to denote 'any example of something' (Swan and Walter, 19).

Elices decided to place Felix Cobb and Temple Smith in the centre of his analysis (Cf. 97). Ridley, however, who highlights the colonial aspect of the novel, defines both Cobb brothers, Felix and Gabriel, as the novel's protagonists (Cf. 364). Even though the three aforementioned characters are the ones whose perspectives are followed the most, their perceptions can in no way be considered superior to the others'. The fact that scholars see different characters as the protagonists shows that Boyd successfully attempted to present the various perspectives as equally important.

3.3.2. *The Blue Afternoon*

Published in 1993, Boyd's sixth novel deals with a father who reveals the story of his life to his grown-up daughter. At the heart of the plot lies a love story, but in his account Salvador Carriscant digresses and gives deep insights into the colonial Philippines around 1900. Fundamental is the general issue of modernisation, in terms of public transportation and advances in medicine. On a political level, the author sheds light on the Philippine independence movement against the US colonial power and informs about US American war crimes that were committed in the course of the conflict. However, in contrast to *An Ice-Cream War* and *Restless*, *The Blue Afternoon* deals with historical issues the least explicitly. None of its characters is actively involved in significant historical occurrences. The following paragraph exemplifies the protagonist's involvement with history and Boyd's mode of presenting it.

Everywhere were the remains of old trenches and earthworks overgrown with grass and straggly milim bushes. This had been the American front line when the rebels attacked in 1899. Carriscant remembered the day well, standing on his *azotea* in the city, with a cup of tea in his hand, listening to the mumbled boom of artillery, feeling the air shiver, setting the dust motes dancing to the distant percussion, the teaspoon rattling on the porcelain (*The Blue Afternoon*, 83).

The three part novel is introduced by a prologue that gives a brief glimpse into the later developing father-daughter relationship. Part I is set in the Los

Angeles of 1936, the primary temporal level of the narrative. The narrator is Kay Fischer, Carriscant's daughter who lives and works as an architect in Los Angeles. She finds herself approached by a man claiming to be her father, someone she believes to be dead. Slowly she comes to trust him and they embark on a journey across the Atlantic Ocean to Lisbon, Portugal. While on board, Carriscant tells Kay his life story, she keeps notes meticulously and eventually composes a narrative out of them. Part II, by far the most extensive of all parts, consists of Kay's third person account of Carriscant's report. It recalls his life in Manila, Philippines, in the early years of the twentieth century and the occurrences that shaped his life forever. The final part continues where the first one ends, Lisbon in 1936. It is relatively short and consists of five diary entries over five consecutive days in which Kay tries to make sense of the story she has been told.

The novel is particularly interesting for the choice of narrative situations. Parts I and III already reveal on their surface that they are narrated by Kay. Part II, however, is Kay's written account of Carriscant's oral report. His story is therefore not presented directly, but filtered through Kay's mind.

3.3.3. *Restless*

Similar to *The Blue Afternoon*, *Restless* also offers two different temporal levels. However, in this case both are described elaborately, whereas *The Blue Afternoon* clearly focuses on the period of 1902 in Manila. *Restless* follows the occurrences that Ruth Gilmartin and her mother, known under the various names of Eva Delectorskaya, Eve Dalton, Sally Fairchild and Sally Gilmartin, experience in their mid- to late twenties. The primary temporal level is set in England in 'that interminable hot summer of 1976' (*Restless*, 1) while the secondary level is set in various places throughout Europe and the USA during the early years of World War II.

In the summer of 1976, Ruth's mother decides to reveal the truth about her past to her daughter and starts composing narrative accounts of the events she lived through between 1939 and 1942. These were the years in which

she was working as a spy for the British Secret Service. She regularly hands her daughter these instalments to read. The novel contains 14 chapters of which all, except the last two, have two parts. The first part of each chapter is set in the 1970s and focuses on Ruth, while the second represents the latest instalment of her mother's revelations. The reader is directly confronted with the mother's accounts and at the same time follows the daughter's attempts to understand and come to terms with her mother's past. Ruth's parts of the chapters are written in first person narration, while her mother chooses a third person narrative for the composition of her memoirs.

In contrast to *The Blue Afternoon*, the reader is not presented with the product of the historian character's analysis of her parent's accounts. Rather, he follows Ruth step by step as she continues reading her mother's memoirs and observes her as she tries to comprehend history from a retrospective perspective.

3.4. Historical Themes Discussed

3.4.1. Side-Shows of Historiography

Ever since the genre's beginnings, the historical novel has occupied a complementary position with respect to historiography (Cf. Wesseling, 32-33). While classical historical fiction aims at supplementing historiography with psychological and every-day aspects, Boyd's historical fiction attempts to complement traditional historiography more fundamentally. Instead of subordinating himself to historiography and merely adding domestic detail to established contents, Boyd focuses on those historical issues that canonised Western historiography tends to leave in the shadows of the past. Accordingly, disregarded conflicts appear on the centre-stage and less commonly known facets are highlighted. Centring on usually neglected historical issues does not constitute any break with the principles of verisimilitude and realistic descriptions, to which Boyd seems devoted. Historiography is not contradicted but supplemented. The term *historiography*, as opposed to *history*, has consciously been chosen for the

title of this chapter. The relevant historical issues are not imminently predisposed to their status of side-shows. Dominant Western historiography has chosen to focus on other aspects and, thus, whether incidentally or purposefully, to leave certain matters unnoticed. In the introduction to his detailed analysis of the Great War in Africa, Farwell accurately notes that

[m]any books on the First World War do not even mention the African campaigns, yet Europeans, Indians, Arabs, and Africans from dozens of tribes and more than a dozen countries took part (Farwell, 14).

Usually, the African Campaign is only mentioned under headings such as, 'Other theatres of war' (Tucker, v), for example. *An Ice-Cream War*, however, uncovers the untold story of World War I in Africa in great detail. Elices identifies two main differences that distinguish this novel from traditional literature on the Great War. A substantial amount of World War I literature strongly emphasises the European battlefields and applies a sinister and pessimistic tone. Boyd's novel, conversely, hardly mentions Belgian or French battlegrounds but highlights the hostilities between British and German troops in East Africa. As irony, satire and humour are significant markers of the narrative, the tone applied is in no way sinister (Cf. Elices, 85). The focus on the African Campaign of World War I emphasises the absurdity of the armed conflict. It is so far removed from its causes that neither side seems to understand what they are fighting for. In contrast to the European scenarios that were marked by trench warfare and a great number of human losses, the Great War in Africa was characterised by only a few set battles and extreme mobility. Troops pursued each other over tens of thousands of square miles that were mostly unexplored and unmapped (Cf. Farwell, 14). Accordingly, the most recent analysis of the African Campaign has been titled *Tip & Run* (Cf. Paice). No battles fought on African soil turned out to be decisive for the course of the Great War. European powers rather used *successes* in Africa to disguise defeats in Europe, the centre-stage of World War I.

The Philippine-American War is yet another sub-plot of historiography. Usually, the conflict is solely remembered as a side-show to the Spanish-

American War that lasted from 1895 to 1902 and turned the US into an imperialist power. Philippine guerrilla troops, led by General Emilio Aguinaldo, had been fighting the Spanish colonial power since 1896, aiming at independence for the Philippines (Cf. Foner, Vol. I, 123-125). Due to the lack of financial means, Aguinaldo was forced into a truce with the Spanish colonists and had to leave the Philippines for exile in Hong Kong. In the course of the Spanish-American War, the USA helped Aguinaldo to return to the Philippines, supplied money and weapons, and asked for his support in fighting the Spanish (Cf. Smith, 178-179). In due course, the Spanish army had to withdraw to the capital city Manila and negotiations on the future of the Philippines between Spain and the USA commenced. Aguinaldo had expected the USA to support the Philippine independence movement in return for their assistance in ousting the Spanish. However, no Philippine representatives were invited to the peace talks and it soon became clear that the USA would simply replace Spain as a colonial power, rather than granting the Philippines independence. The Philippine Islands were seen as an excellent gateway to the growing Chinese market (Cf. Foner, Vol. II, 409-410). The result was a three-year-long guerrilla war against the new colonial power. It began in 1899 and ended in 1902, when, as the historiographer (!) notes 'the back of the insurrection had been broken' (Cf. Foner, Vol. II, 626). In the course of the ongoing operations, US atrocities against the civilian population became infamous (Cf. Smith, 223-224). The American army was guilty of erecting concentration camps and executing males over the age of ten who would not surrender. Aguinaldo, who was previously re-established and supported by the USA, was declared their main enemy. It seems this should become a pattern for US American foreign politics.

Kay's narrative of Carriscant's report in *The Blue Afternoon* is set in the years 1902 and 1903. The United States have already been established as the new colonial power and major warfare against the Philippine independence movement has ceased. Still, particularly in rural provinces, guerrilla activities prevail. Boyd does not focus on the central war operations but gives a detailed picture of the changes that the Philippines underwent due to US

American influence. Pantaleon Quiroga, Carriscant's Philippine friend and colleague, is very critical of the US Americans but comments:

I hate to admit it, the arrival of the Americans has made everything so much easier. They're at the forefront, you see. [...] We were rotting out here, [...] [n]othing had really changed since the eighteenth century (*The Blue Afternoon*, 100).

Throughout the Manila episode, US Americans are associated with progress and modern advances. The motto seems to be '[s]o new, so American' (*The Blue Afternoon*, 225). US Americans, however, are not only associated with positive changes. For instance, Sampaloc, Manila's red-light district, is suddenly overcrowded with US Americans' 'loud white voices [...], bustling swaggering confidence' (*The Blue Afternoon*, 102). However, it is mainly US American war crimes that Boyd critically focuses on. On several occasions during part II, American massacres of the civilian population are described. They were acts of retribution for the losses of US soldiers inflicted by the *insurrectos*. In particular, the mass execution of the male population of San Teodoro, near Balangiga, is described in great detail (*The Blue Afternoon*, 308-311).

Restless focuses on British Secret Service operations that took place during World War II and which aimed at luring the USA to join the conflict in support of the UK. Today, however, these undertakings are hardly part of popular historical knowledge and publications on the issue are scarce. Lacking historiographical literature, the reader is left to trust the author when he states that

running two radio stations, planting fake stories in US wire services and newspapers, [a]ll this was routinely carried out by the British throughout the US in the years before Pearl Harbor. The stories of the fake maps – showing Nazi ambitions in South and Central America is [*sic!*] also completely authentic (Boyd, "Historical Background").

However, a recognised fact is that World War II saw a considerable rise in the number of secret service agencies in the UK (Cf. Davies, xv). One of the reasons why there is hardly any literature available might be that, eventually,

the British attempts at gaining military support from the USA were outdone by another event that catapulted the country right into the midst of World War II: the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. For the most part, common themes of World War II literature, such as European battlefields, Nazi war crimes and nuclear bombs, are disregarded in *Restless*. Again, Boyd foregrounds those aspects of history that established historiography neglects. Even though secret service operations are not comparable to war crimes, spreading fear in potential allied countries is not an act of war one associates with heroism and glory. In a complementary text on *Restless*, Boyd comments that secret service operations remain 'something of a historical and political embarrassment' due to their 'exquisite moral ambiguity' (Boyd, "Historical Background"). Yet, the work of secret services is an essential tool in every war. In *Restless* the reader sees the main protagonist Eva manipulating the foreign press in Europe and then follows her to the US where she is involved in a plan to uncover supposed preparations by the Germans to reorganise the political landscape of South America.

By introducing additional information to historical fields that are generally perceived as well-studied, Boyd undermines the certainty that is commonly associated with the study of history. Moreover, the emphasis on lesser-known aspects reveals the selection processes canonised historiography employs.

3.4.2. Segmental Histories

Apart from focussing on unfamiliar historical fields and topics, the analysis of specific historical fragments can be identified as a second characteristic of Boyd's historical fiction. Emphasising particular aspects rather than attempting a complete depiction of a past era can be attributed to the perception that historical periods are too complex to be presented in their entirety. This view appears to be a logical consequence of questioning the concept of Universal History. In the same way that all human history does not accumulate to make a whole Universal History, the various segments that combine to form one historical period are too diverse to form one self-

contained entirety. Consequently, Boyd's historical novels do not discuss all possibly relevant matters of a respective period but focus on certain aspects. Segments of history are emphasised through the deeper analysis of chosen themes, as opposed to skimming over a whole era. Therefore his work contrasts the classical historical novel that can be described as a 'time machine, which takes the reader on a diverting sight-seeing tour through the past' (Wesseling, 49). In the same vein, Boyd rejects an omniscient narrative situation. His application of specifically acknowledged points of view opposes the idea that history can be presented as a single homogeneous narrative, as the idea of Universal History would imply.

Each of the three novels studied appears to focus on certain matters when exploring the respective historical field. This concept is most clearly apparent in *The Blue Afternoon*. The modernisation that Manila undergoes around 1900 is depicted primarily in two respects, public transport and progress in medicine. Means of transportation such as horse trams, *barcas*, *kastilas*, *carromatos*, *caraboa* carts, steamships, lateen-rigged schooners, junks, ferry boats, *lorchas*, *cascos*, trains, automobiles or carriages are mentioned throughout the novel. The repeated reference to means of transportation, and thus accelerated physical movement, seems to be a symbol of the general motif of modernisation and progress that runs through the novel. The idea of progress is most evidently introduced with Pantaleon's efforts to construct the first airplane for the world to see, the so-called Aero-mobile. The second theme of modernisation is the continuous contrast between *old* and *new* medicine. Carriscant is presented as an early advocate of modern-day medicine which is marked by hygiene and open-mindedness, and favours new scientific research and methods of treatment. Dr. Isidro Cruz, however, the protagonist's colleague and rival, is depicted as a dedicated supporter of the so-called *pre-Lister* medicine, oblivious to the importance of cleanliness for the medical profession. This disparity is illustrated best by the significant differences between the two respective operating theatres.

Carriscant removed his coat, put on a freshly laundered white gown, changed his shoes and washed his hands with a powerful carbolic

soap before going through into the operating theatre. Here the smell of disinfectant made his eyes tingle (*The Blue Afternoon*, 77-78).

In clear contrast, Cruz is characterised by his persistence 'in operating in a black frock coat, its revers and front encrusted with dried pus and blood like some obscene blazon honouring his trade' (*The Blue Afternoon*, 80).

Cruz's operating theatre was, to Carriscant's eyes, a scene from one of the circles of hell. Old cracked terracotta tiles on the floor and smudged plaster walls [...], ancient wooden trays and tables. Cruz stood tall in his domain, in his famous frock coat with its filthy veneer, its pustulent lichen, the cuffs unbuttoned and the sleeves of his coat and shirt folded back to reveal his powerful forearms with their pelt of dark hair. His hands were smeared with blood as he towelled them off on a scrap of cloth (*The Blue Afternoon*, 209).

Apart from its primary aim of presenting the life of a spy during World War II, *Restless* also highlights the differences between life in Europe and the USA in the 1940s. Whereas the situation in Europe is presented as claustrophobically dark and threatening, the US is portrayed as a wealthy land of plenty whose population is optimistically looking forward to the future. Political intentions of joining the war in support of Britain are extremely unpopular. The US American population feels far away from the European battlefields and unconcerned by the conflict. 'They don't want to be in this war [...]. Life's good here. They're happy. Why mess it up going to war 3000 miles away?' (*Restless*, 175). Organisations such as the America First Committee and the German-American Bund stir up opinion against any US involvement in European issues. Especially the subjects of *food* and *living* are used to underline US American prosperity. Burgers and sandwiches are of a size that startles Eva and the luxurious apartment blocks described stand in clear contrast to the living conditions portrayed in England. The United States' lack of interest in European developments is mirrored by the media's treatment of the ongoing conflict. Browsing through a newspaper for information on the war, Eva can only find 'some items [...] on page nine' (*Restless*, 197). When waiting for a colleague in a cinema, the protagonist also notes that the programme mainly consists of 'a succession of [...] cartoons interspersed with newsreel that occasionally contain[...] news of the war in Europe' (*Restless*, 241).

The second temporal level that Boyd presents in *Restless* is the 1970s. The aspect that he particularly emphasises is societal change. Instead of focussing on differences between the US and the UK, as is the case with the previous temporal level, the United States are not discussed in relation to the decade in question. Boyd portrays the beginnings of the Iranian Revolution and introduces the German left-wing organisation RAF. Both movements concerned themselves with the condition of their countries and aimed at a new political and social organisation. While the Iranian Revolution succeeded and led to the formation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the RAF was disbanded and its members imprisoned. Changes in society are also introduced through the example of England. As an emancipated single-parent, Ruth epitomises changing social norms. When a patronising lorry driver directs her past his truck in a narrow street she refuses to be timid and subordinate but winds down her window and replies: 'If you'd get your fat gut out of the way it'd be a whole lot easier, you fucking arsehole' (*Restless*, 4). Other matters regarding social norms are changes in university life and organisation, shifting attitudes to sexuality and fashion choices of the decade that allude to the hippie movement.

Similar to *Restless*, the theme of societal change is taken up in *An Ice-Cream War*, as well. The England of the early twentieth century is presented as moving away from the traditional Victorian worldview. The Cobb residence Stackpole Manor and its inhabitants are depicted as decadent, 'as members of a social class whose Victorian mentality is completely anchored to the past' (Elices, 86). They are clearly opposed by Holland's family who lives in London and is characterised by open-mindedness and an interest in contemporary arts and literature. Whereas the Cobb family clings to past glory, the Hollands appear to live actively at the beginning of the twentieth century. Conservative and reactionary attitudes are opposed by liberal and progressive views. Particularly Philip Holland, Felix's friend from Oxford University, calls himself a socialist and influences his fellow student in this respect. Still, in comparison to the political movements portrayed in *Restless*, the university students' ideas on socialism appear rather like adolescent fantasies.

Furthermore, Boyd focuses on the historical segments of colonisation and issues of class distinction. Particularly the character of Wheech-Browning stands in the satirical spotlight of Boyd's criticism of British colonisation. Dressed in a white suit, the area's Assistant District Commissioner seems utterly misplaced in the realities of African life. The British Empire's army employs very different parameters for its soldiers, depending on race and military rank. Travelling from India to Africa, Gabriel wonders 'what it must be like for the other ranks, the Indian soldiers [...] quartered below decks, sleeping in hammocks slung only a foot apart' (*An Ice-Cream War*, 137). Later on in the novel, Felix observes the difference between the funeral of a white, higher ranked soldier and the disposal of lower ranked soldiers' and porters' bodies. While Officer Loveday is buried 'at the foot of a baobab tree' (*An Ice-Cream War*, 360),

[t]he three dead men had been dragged from their shelters and left for their burial party. The men were naked, their scraps of clothing and few possessions already appropriated [...]. Unceremoniously they were pitched into the turbulent brown water (*An Ice-Cream War*, 325).

The African native population in particular is treated with little respect. Africans are limited to the roles of porters or *askaris*, in other words badly paid soldiers, by both the German and the British army.

3.5. Bringing History Back to Life

The introduction and discussion of historical issues in Boyd's novels seem to follow certain principles. The first striking parameter is the author's absolute dedication to the realist style. Restricting himself to the constraints of realism is what makes his depictions of historical periods as convincing as they are. The classical realistic mode he adopts stands in contrast to contemporary literary trends of postmodernism, 'in which experimentation, subversion or transgression of the fixed artistic canon prevail' (Elices, 23). The author's choice of composing realistic historical novels might be one reason why his publications draw less attention than some of his

contemporaries' do (Cf. Elices, 15). At first sight, Boyd's preference for realistic presentation appears to associate his novels with classical historical fiction. However, as Boyd acknowledges and introduces contemporary advances in the philosophy of history, his literary production can in no way be regarded old-fashioned or backward-looking. The author is conscious of the discrepancies between his literary style and current literary trends.

I'm aware of it. I find myself in a rather curious position because I taught literary theory at Oxford and I've been a critic myself, but my own writing taste is to write in the realistic tradition. It's as conscious a decision as somebody who says: 'I'm going to write a magic realist novel, or I'm going to write a fabulist, fantastical novel'. My conscious decision is to write a realistic novel (*Writers Talk: Ideas of Our Time*, quoted in Elices, 24).

Boyd's historical fiction is marked by a certain didactic aspect. The author's novels are historiographically relevant because they introduce alternative ways of interpreting historical occurrences and offer new perspectives on them. Consequently, his realistic style of presentation serves the purpose of associating his work with the domain of historiography rather than with experimental literature. Another argument which strengthens Boyd's position as a writer of historiographically relevant literature is his faithfulness to irrefutable historical occurrences. Boyd's suggested new interpretations of history never constitute a break with established facts but highlight possible alternative readings. In Boyd's works, traditional historiography is supplemented rather than opposed.

Boyd's historical novels can be characterised by being overtly rich in historical information and allusions to events of the past. Still, the author avoids a patronising or educating tone in his works. Historical realities are sometimes mentioned only in passing and could easily go unrecognised by the reader. For instance, many of the fictitious situations described in his novels are tightly knit around real historical events. One example is the waiting time Gabriel and his division have to endure off the coast of India before embarking for Africa (*An Ice-Cream War*, 144). This mirrors an actual occurrence which is described in historiographical literature (Cf. Paice, 41). Likewise, on 6th June 1914, the *Königsberg*, the most powerful German

battleship ever seen at the time, arrived into the German East African port town of Dar-es-Salaam (Cf. Farwell, 128). The opening chapter of *An Ice-Cream War* is set on that very day. Boyd has his character Temple Smith walking through the streets of Dar-es-Salaam, describing the town, its architecture and its people. Passing by the harbour he stops and observes the arrival of the *Königsberg*. Joining the crowds, Temple watches the captain of the ship walking ashore. He is welcomed by Lieutenant Colonel Paul Emil von Lettow-Vorbeck, one of the most influential characters of the German East African Campaign (*An Ice-Cream War*, 7-13). These scenes serve as typical examples of the way Boyd introduces historical occurrences into his narratives. Temporal and geographical locations might, at first, appear randomly chosen. At closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that the author selects them consciously in order to present historically significant times and places to his reader.

When presenting historical periods and events in his narratives, Boyd usually rejects omniscient perspectives and favours specific characters' points of view. Thus, the author demonstrates how events we now consider historical facts were once experienced by real people who observed and experienced them. This is true for the following example. The first weeks of the conflict between German and British East Africa were marked by short German incursions into British territories (Cf. Paice, 37). *An Ice-Cream War* shows the fate of British settlers through Temple's perspective. In the early days of the war, he is forced away from his farm in British East Africa by German troops (112-117).

Boyd mentions some historical details in such a way that they might easily be overlooked. For example, early hopes that the colonies could remain neutral while England and Germany are at war are only alluded to through Temple's remark: 'But wait, aren't the colonies staying neutral?' (*An Ice-Cream War*, 108). Indeed, colonists on both sides pinned their hopes on the Berlin Act of 1885 which had guaranteed the colonies' neutral state in preceding military conflicts (Cf. Farwell, 114). This historical information, however, is not provided by Boyd. The author is content with basing his novel on as much

historical detail as possible without lecturing the reader about historical context. Every detail mentioned in his novels might potentially be a clue to another aspect of historical information.

Boyd's preference for personal accounts as opposed to omniscient narration conforms well to contemporary beliefs in the philosophy of history. The actual chain of past incidents, the *res gestae*, is no longer directly accessible to people from the present day. From a retrospective viewpoint, we have to make do with the numerous possible versions of past events. All three novels present several points of view on the same set of events. Each of these perspectives constitutes one possible *historia rerum gestarum* of the actual *res gestae* under consideration. No mimetic representation of the past is possible as any subjective imagination skews the *res gestae*. *An Ice-Cream War* confronts the reader with different outlooks on the same events. *The Blue Afternoon* and *Restless* focus especially on differences in the understanding of historically significant occurrences over time. In these two novels, the point of view of someone who has undergone past events is complemented by another person's attempt to reconsider and understand them in retrospect.

On occasion, the respective point of view is supplemented by omniscient comments. This method is particularly prominent in *An Ice-Cream War*. Repeatedly, an omniscient voice interjects and puts the African Campaign into perspective by informing about military actions on the main stages of World War I.

On the twenty-first of February the German Army of the Western Front – in a completely unconnected response – attacked Verdun, thereby initiating a four-month siege (*An Ice-Cream War*, 265).

In October 1917 the third battle of Ypres – Passchendaele – was well on its way to its half million casualties. Between the fourteenth and sixteenth of October the most savagely fought battle on African soil took place at Mahiwa (*An Ice-Cream War*, 332).

Without such omniscient interruptions, the narrative voice is limited to the perspectives of the novels' focalizers. Accordingly, World War I is never

referred to with this name but begins as the Anglo-German War and later develops into the Great War. At the same time, however, the author uses the reader's wider knowledge on the course of history as a structural device. Part I of *An Ice-Cream War* ends with Gabriel reading about Austria's declaration of war on Serbia. He immediately alludes to the following events that eventually led to World War I and comments: 'I knew *it* [my emphasis] would happen. [...] It's the European War.' In a similar fashion, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor is inferred in *Restless*. At the end of one of her memoir chapters, Eva simply mentions the date 'Sunday, 7 December 1941' (*Restless*, 253). Although not specifically explained, the reader will instantly associate the date with the attack and the subsequent declaration of war against Japan and its ally Germany. The United States entered World War II. History and its events provide a fixed structural framework around which the narratives are organised.

An element that *Restless* and *The Blue Afternoon* share is that the historical issues are *rounded off* towards the end of the novels. In both cases, apart from bringing the storyline to an end, the final chapters present additional historical information that has been withheld from the reader so far. During the last chapter of *Restless*, Ruth studies the historiographical analysis that Timothy Thoms has compiled on the basis of her mother's accounts. In the process, she reports on Russian infiltration of the British Secret Services during World War II. Only with the information provided can the reader understand the conspiracies in which Eva was involved. In *The Blue Afternoon*, only the last part, Kay's diary entries, contains detailed information on US American war crimes and so leads to a fuller understanding of the Philippine resentment towards US imperialist power.

3.6. Mediators of History – Boyd's *personae*

3.6.1. Picking and Choosing

The choice of *dramatis personae* in historical fiction has been a significant matter since Scott laid the foundations of the literary genre. The

mode of presenting historical issues depends substantially on the types of character an author selects for his work. Thus, throughout the development of the historical novel, the choice of characters has received significant attention from authors and critics alike. The classical historical novel is distinguished by the presence of a specific kind of protagonist, the Waverley-type character. His main purpose is to mediate the historical period in as much detail as possible to the readership. In order to do this, he is usually a stranger to his setting who comments extensively on it. His personality is secondary to his informative role. With modernism, such shallow commonplace characters are rejected. Protagonists no longer merely serve as means to convey historical contents but have elaborate inner lives. Historical themes are often introduced through the effects they have on a specific character's inner development and personal growth. Postmodernist literature renounces the belief that history can be presented from single perspectives only. As a consequence, several, and possibly even opposing, viewpoints are presented to the reader. Characters leave their domestic spheres and penetrate historiographically researched areas in order to question old certainties of history.

Boyd's historical fiction can not be unequivocally assigned to one of the aforementioned categories. The author's choice of characters demonstrates the liberties he takes in picking and choosing from the tradition of the historical novel. Does Boyd's fiction feature Waverley-type characters? An immediate answer would have to be no. The author's protagonists are complex and can not be reduced to screens that merely mirror historical issues. Boyd's characters do not stumble through history but actively participate in it and comment on both its progress and, in retrospect, on its consequences. Nevertheless, Boyd's protagonists share some characteristics with the classical form's archetype. Similar to most heroes of classical historical fiction, a number of Boyd's protagonists are alien to the historical field depicted. Eva, Carriscent and the Cobb brothers, for example, are in the position of foreigners in their historical surroundings of East Africa, the Philippines and the USA, respectively. As a consequence, the protagonist's viewpoint is similar to the reader's. Both are confronted with a

new world to discover. Classical historical fiction introduces political movements of the time by featuring historically significant persons that represent them. Boyd generally makes little use of real historical characters. Thus, fictitious characters serve as stand-ins for movements and attitudes associated with historical periods. In *Restless*, Hamid, Ruth's student of English, is a dedicated supporter of the Iranian Revolution and introduces the topic into the narrative. Similarly, Ludger, her former brother-in-law, serves as a means to incorporate the German Red Army Faction. In *An Ice-Cream War*, Felix's best friend Holland introduces the liberal, arty and socialist attitude that was popular among British university students of the time.

To a greater extent, however, Boyd's choice of characters can be analysed from modernist and postmodernist points of view. While the classical historical novel primarily focuses on the historical background and uses protagonists simply as mediators, modernist and postmodernist forms emphasise the interdependence between the historical field and characters. The relation between personal growth and historical circumstances becomes particularly evident with the Cobb brothers in *An Ice-Cream War*. Gabriel enthusiastically joins the war, naively chasing illusions of heroism and manhood. On his arrival in Africa, he is quickly disillusioned by the cruelty of war and the disorganisation of the British army. During his first battle he is injured and eventually transferred to a German prisoner-of-war camp. Having regained strength, Gabriel starts assisting the German medical team and decides against rejoining the British armed forces. He has come to reject war and the military services as symbols of manhood and has found fulfilment elsewhere. Gabriel gains confidence and finally develops the maturity he has pretended to have from the start. This development is symbolised by his gaining sexual confidence. His sexual experiences begin with disappointing attempts with his bride Charis before the war and eventually peak in a satisfying sexual relationship with Liesl von Bishop, the wife of a German *Schutztruppe* captain.

Equally, Felix matures over the course of the war. In his case, the distance between his pre- and post-war selves demonstrates the changes he

underwent. Reconsidering his traumatic encounter with a prostitute, Felix comments 'It seemed like decades ago, in another world' (*An Ice-Cream War*, 379). In the early sections of the novel, Felix is characterised by a strong revolutionary spirit. He rejects everything his father stands for and seeks refuge in the bohemian world his friend Holland inhabits. Most of all, however, he experiences great inadequacy in comparison to his elder brother Gabriel. Felix gains inner strength and confidence as a result of having grown through the hardships he experienced. Historical circumstances are presented through the effects they have on a character's personal growth, a technique referred to as *subjectivization*.

According to postmodernist fashion, it is not the historiographical result which should be highlighted but the production processes of history. Boyd appears to acknowledge this view by introducing historian characters in *The Blue Afternoon* and *Restless*. Both novels display two distinct temporal levels, with the narrative emphasis put on the one closer to the present. Historian characters reconsider the past and try to understand bygone occurrences from a later perspective.

Boyd's chosen characters blend perfectly with their historical surroundings. None of them are drawn from the present time of composition and put in a historical world. The characters' frames of mind represent cultural attitudes typical of their temporal surrounding. One example of this is Charis, in *An Ice-Cream War*. She chooses death as it appears the only way out of an unsatisfying marriage to Gabriel and an extra-marital affair with his brother Felix. Similarly, in *The Blue Afternoon*, Delphine needs to devise a plan to fake her own death in order to escape her husband. In both cases, officially ending their marriages is not even suggested as a possibility, which reflects the moral opinions and legal realities of the time.

3.6.2. *Dark and Light Areas of History*

Some of the novels' characters move actively in their historical surroundings and thereby shape the course of history themselves. Ergo, they

interfere with history's *light areas* and do not limit themselves to the so-called *dark areas* of history, i.e. those historical issues on which traditional historiography passes no comment. For the most part, however, Boyd appears to follow the constraint that invented characters should not interfere with actual historical developments. In *The Blue Afternoon*, Carriscant's life is only affected by historical occurrences and not involved in their development. Boyd's novel on the Great War also focuses on its characters' perception of the ongoing events.

With *Restless*, however, Boyd has mastered the balancing act of corresponding to contemporary literary trends without violating historiographically verified actualities. The author has chosen a compromise between limiting himself to the fringes of historiography and presenting characters that expose themselves to the lit scenes of history. Boyd walks a fine line between breaking the set conventions and adhering to them. Eva and her team of British Secret Service agents are actively involved in plans that aim at US American involvement in World War II. As the author assures, all plans carried out in the course of the novel are based on genuine British Secret Service operations of the time (Cf. Boyd, "Historical Background"). Does Eva therefore sally-forth into the *light areas* of history? Yes and no. To a certain extent, Boyd's novel certainly would oppose historiographical accounts of the events. At the very least, the actual personnel working for the British Secret Service certainly had different names than *Restless* suggests. However, due to the lack of historiographical literature on the matter, the entire theme of British Intelligence operations in the USA belongs to the *dark areas* of historiography. Boyd's novel does not oppose historiographical accounts but can be seen as a possible stimulus for further research on the topic. His account of the occurrences must be attributed with historiographical significance.

Within the framework of Wesseling's four possible modes of fictional characters' involvement with their historical surroundings, Eva's undertakings

would qualify as *active-literal*⁴. The protagonist of *Restless* is actively involved in the making of history, and not restricted to an observing role. In contrast, Carriscant in *The Blue Afternoon* and most of the characters in *An Ice-Cream War* are in a *passive-literal* relationship to their historical world. This is the mode traditionally applied by historical novelists. Characters remain in the *dark areas* of history and serve to demonstrate the effects that historical events had on the lives of individuals.

Less common modes of character involvement are *active-metaphorical* and *passive-metaphorical*. While no incidences of the *active-metaphorical* relationship can be identified in the three novels, one character displays a clear example of a *passive-metaphorical* link to his historical context: Temple Smith in *An Ice-Cream War*. On a metaphorical level, parallels can be drawn between the life of the character and public history. The American farmer's relationship to World War I appears a reflection of the general US American position to the conflict. The USA only joined the Great War in 1917. Although previously *neutral*, the USA had nevertheless made huge profits selling weapons and ammunition to the Allies in Europe. Throughout the first years of World War I, Germany continuously conspired against the USA by allying with Mexico and carrying out sabotage activities on US munitions plants. In 1917, however, Germany started its unrestricted submarine campaign and within the next weeks sunk several US merchant ships returning from Europe. As a reaction, the US declared war on Germany in the spring of 1917 (Cf. Tucker, 133-134). Turning to Temple Smith's position, one can draw significant parallels. Right from the beginning of the novel, he is presented as an alien to both the Germans and the British. He mockingly comments on the 'neatness and efficiency' (*An Ice-Cream War*, 11) of German East Africa's capital city Dar-es-Salaam and is infuriated by British bureaucracy (*An Ice-Cream War*, 36-37). He regards himself as an American and is not interested in the commencing British-German conflict. When war is declared, he stubbornly stays on his farm, hoping not to be affected. Still, due to German raids, Temple and his family are forced to withdraw to Nairobi. While still watching German *askaris* destroying his farm,

⁴ The possible relationships between characters and their historical surroundings are analysed in more detail on page 57-58.

he had an idea. Reparations, he thought, I can demand reparations. He started doing quick sums in his head. Often this sort of disaster could be turned to your advantage. It should be seen as an opportunity [...]. Fortunes of war (*An Ice-Cream War*, 115).

Temple only withdraws from his neutral position and actively joins the war when he finds out that in the course of German raids his much treasured Decorticator has been taken, possibly destroyed. He starts his personal quest against von Bishop, who he deems responsible for the loss of his agricultural machine. Parallels between Temple and the US American position can be identified on the levels of initial neutrality, war profiteering and revenge as a motivation for joining the military conflict. This analysis is based on Elices (106-107) but has been adapted according to actual historical occurrences.

3.7. Retrieving History

Contemporary philosophy of history rejects the assumption that mimetic representation of historical events is possible. Historical facts themselves are agreed to have no imminent significance. It is only in the process of looking back and reconsidering, that historical occurrences can be attributed with meaning (Cf. Hutcheon, *Politics*, 66-67). The retrieval of history, the meta-level of historical presentation, is deemed more important than the historical facts themselves. The historian's role in the retrospective uncovering and interpretation of the past must not be underestimated. Especially in *The Blue Afternoon* and *Restless*, Boyd emphasises the subjectivity inherent in the resurrection of history. The fundamental possibilities of historical representation become a key issue in the historical novels. Rather than focussing on the result, the production processes of historiography are stressed.

The historical novel has always comprised two distinct levels, the past under description and the retrospective view of looking back. Traditionally, however, the latter was not accredited with the importance it holds for historical understanding.

The past can only be known by way of the present, but it need not be interpreted for the sake of the present. The present may give a clue to the past, but it need not become a structural model for the reconstruction of the past (Fleishman, 14).

Even though Fleishman acknowledges the inevitability of the present perspective, he still undervalues its significance. Of course, the past does not have to be interpreted *for the sake* of the present. Yet, it is impossible to depict the object of study independently of the time of reading it. Writers of classical historical fiction were oblivious to such discussion and convinced of the mimetic character of their work. Other writers, however, recognise the many possible views of history. Their historical novels oppose the idea of an objective history and emphasise the constructed nature of every historical account. The inevitable *hiatus* between historical actuality and historical fiction is accentuated, not denied. Historical fiction of this kind has been named the *other* historical novel (Cf. Geppert, 36). *Restless* and *The Blue Afternoon* undoubtedly qualify for this category.

The changing attitude towards historical understanding can be interpreted in light of the dialectic relationship between history and memory. While history is traditionally seen as a set of imminent contents, memory has always been regarded as reconsidering the past from a later perspective. Even though memories are based on past experiences, the stress lies on the present moment. Over the last decades, the concept of memory has become increasingly relevant for the study of history and the possibilities of historical retrieval. This development can be seen as a critique of traditional historiography (Cf. Huyssen, 6). Considering the two novels in question, in both cases, the collective public past recedes to the background whereas private historical accounts, derived from memory, take centre-stage. Likewise, the historical issues presented are based on a character's memory and recollection and not on chronicles. The certainty of historical knowledge, supposedly resting on profound evidence, is opposed and supplemented by accounts that originate in personal memories.

The appearance of historian characters, in *The Blue Afternoon* as well as *Restless*, expresses the importance of the present perspective in

understanding the past. Kay and Ruth, who fulfil this role, are confronted with their parents' (hi)story and attempt its understanding.

In *The Blue Afternoon*, Kay is faced with the tragic experiences her father underwent at the beginning of the twentieth century in the Philippines. On a cruise from New York to Lisbon, Carriscant tells her about the chain of events and touches upon historical issues of the Philippine-American War. Having arrived in Lisbon, Kay creates a narrative account of her father's report, which constitutes part II of the novel. The reader is not directly confronted with Carriscant's recollection but only with Kay's writing. As is the case with historiographical texts, the original details are altered through Kay's revision of them. In clear contrast to traditional historiography, however, the narrator of the account provides an introduction to her narrative in which she comments on her methods.

I kept copious notes of everything he told me and wherever possible attempted to catch him out or corroborate details. In the relaying of his story I have allowed myself some of the license of a writer of fiction, have embellished it with information I obtained later and with facts gleaned from my own researches. But in the end this is Salvador Carriscant's story and I have had to trust the teller, as we all must in these circumstances, but what follows is, I believe, as close to the truth as anyone could come (*The Blue Afternoon*, 69).

Traditional historiographical writers claim to be absent from their compositions, which allegedly present historical objectivity. Kay does not claim to simply give a mimetic transcription of Carriscant's report. She admits that her account has been influenced by research on the topic. On the basis of Kay's first person narrative of part I, certain aspects can be identified that demonstrate her presence in part II. Due to her profession, Kay is deeply interested in design, architecture and town planning. Many passages throughout part I offer detailed descriptions of buildings and comment on the expansion of the city of Los Angeles at the time. Particularly the architectural descriptions are typified by an extremely accurate and specific use of language. At the very beginning of the novel, Kay comments on her preference for a precise linguistic style: 'I thought for a second or two before replying. I wanted this to be right, to be exact, scientific' (*The Blue Afternoon*, 4).

Turning to the depiction of Manila in part II, significant similarities to part I can be observed. Kay's wordy description of the hospital at which Carriscant works as a doctor reveals the deep architectural knowledge of its composer. Resemblances to architectural styles are noted, building material is mentioned and the practicality of the layout discussed (*The Blue Afternoon*, 73-74). Turning to the style of writing adopted, the accuracy associated with architectural descriptions in part I, now applies to the discussion of medical issues. Whilst architectural elements can be attributed to Kay's prominence in the text, details in medicine obviously show Carriscant's perspective. Although Kay strives to present a report of the events that should be 'as close to the truth as anyone [can] come' (*The Blue Afternoon*, 69), her textual result serves to show that no mimetic representation, void of a narrative voice, is possible.

A similar, yet different, situation is presented in *Restless*. Ruth, too, is confronted with revelations about her parent's past; in this case her mother's. However, the way it is introduced in the narrative is different. Kay provides a written report that she has put together based on her father's oral account, of which the reader is deprived. Ruth is handed her mother's memoirs in written instalments throughout the novel. While the reader is denied Carriscant's own perspective in *The Blue Afternoon*, *The Story of Eva Delectorskaya*, as the episodes are named, are equally available to Ruth and the reader. In *The Blue Afternoon*, the reader only learns about the events through Kay's revised version, the historiographer's final draft. *Restless* offers the possibility to observe the historian character as she attempts to verify and understand the information on hand. Ruth interviews her mother and tries to resolve uncertainties with the help of two historians, one of them specialised in the field. Although she and Timothy Thoms eventually come to understand the events of the time and their wider context, the fact remains that without having lived in past times, complete understanding is denied. 'Perhaps I was too young – perhaps I needed to have been living during World War Two? I had a feeling I'd never truly understand' (*Restless*, 181).

On a theoretical level, the novels discuss the basic possibilities of historical understanding and representation. Kay's attempt illustrates that the objective representation of history is an impossible task. Ruth is frustrated by knowing about the facts, yet not being able to grasp what it must have been like living in the past. This implies that no matter how much information one gains on a historical field, complete comprehension of past times is unachievable. Regardless of how thoroughly any given *historia rerum gestarum* is researched, the true experience of the *res gestae* is denied.

How does *An Ice-Cream War* relate to the issues discussed? The novel is set on a single temporal level and therefore does not feature a historian character like Kay or Ruth. Considering the two novels discussed, one can argue that the historian character is the reader's ally inside the narrative. In relation to the historical field in question, both are in a similar position. As the reader's representatives inside the plots, Kay and Ruth research historical issues and compare their findings to the personal accounts described to them. *Restless* and *The Blue Afternoon* contain two distinct levels. On a secondary level, historical contents are described, i.e. Garriscant's and Eva's original reports, and on a primary level, historian characters analyse them. It can be argued that the plot of *An Ice-Cream War* is entirely on the secondary or historical level. Through six different points of view, the occurrences of the Great War in Africa are presented. No superordinate level is introduced that evaluates and judges the various perspectives. For the lack of the analytical level, with its mediating function, the reader is put into the investigative position.

Boyd refrains from explanatory comments on historical aspects. Throughout *An Ice-Cream War*, abbreviations and contextual information are mentioned without further clarification. The acronym KAR serves as an illustration. Even though it is cited quite early on in the novel, the author only reveals later that it stands for the King's African Rifles. However, the fact that this name refers to troops of African soldiers fighting for the British army is never explicitly commented on. Furthermore, one night Gabriel overhears German officers discussing *the Chinese Business*. When he is discovered, the officers are

exceptionally worried about the information he might have gained, even though the term truly means nothing to him (*An Ice-Cream War*, 343-345). In the later course of the novel, the term is used again but no clarification is provided at any point. Only the consultation of further historiographical publications can aid the reader in comprehending the matter. German army strategists had planned to transport arms, ammunition and medical supplies by airships from Europe to remote regions in Africa to support their troops. The plan was incredibly daring for the time and thus classified as Top Secret (Cf. Paice, 347-350). The reader is challenged to take Kay or Ruth's position and do further research on the contents presented. In parenthesis, neither *The Blue Afternoon* nor *Restless* explain every fact mentioned. The narrators leave questions to be answered by the reader, for example the meaning of 'the whole Enigma/Bletchey Park secret' (*Restless*, 192) and what General Esteban Elpidio really did to the US army in Tabayan (*The Blue Afternoon*, 140).

The previous examples demonstrate the way in which Boyd alludes to historical contents without further explanations. The reader is urged to investigate further and thus actively contributes to his deeper understanding of the novel. In the absence of a Waverley-type character, who is typically rather pensive and comments extensively on his surroundings, the reader needs to take the historian character's task of verifying and clarifying historical information.

3.8. History through (Many) Different Eyes

The classical assumption that world's history (in the singular) can be presented by a single authorial voice has since been refuted by philosophy of history. The legitimacy of established historiography has been challenged and history's multifariousness and polyinterpretability have become central. The possibility of authentic and reliable historical presentation by a single point of view is rejected and the multiplicity of truths inherent in any historical event is focused on. Whereas classical historical fiction aims at an accurate

depiction of the past, its postmodernist form seems primarily concerned with the question: '[a]ccurate according to whom?' (Butler, 185).

As with classical historical fiction, traditional historiography is marked by pursuing a single perspective only. Especially in *An Ice-Cream War*, Boyd communicates his critical attitude towards this paradigm. Opposed to Scott and conventional *white man's history*, Boyd is aware of the fact that history must not be reduced to one viewpoint only. *An Ice-Cream War* offers six very different points of view on the same historical period. The choice of Felix and Gabriel as focalizers allows the author to explore the British army from an insider's perspective. Liesl and Charis represent the female point of view, the former being active and seemingly in command of her own destiny, the latter passive and a victim of her circumstances. Von Brown alludes to the German side of the conflict and Temple introduces a politically independent outlook. Of the three novels, only *An Ice-Cream War* explicitly offers several contemporaneous points of view. However, different views on the same events are implied in *The Blue Afternoon* and *Restless*, as well, despite the fact that there is only one narrative voice.

Still, although Boyd alludes to the many possible perspectives on history, his attempts have to be seen in relative terms. The author touches on postmodernist principles instead of thoroughly implementing them. According to Hutcheon's definition, postmodernist historical literature aims at presenting an alternative outlook on historical occurrences. Instead of the often delineated *white male* perspective, the histories (in the plural) of usually neglected groups are emphasised (Cf. Hutcheon, *Politics*, 66). Boyd's application of several perspectives seems less progressive. Even though two focalizers of *An Ice-Cream War* are female, all six of them are white and thus represent the colonial power. The African population is restricted to serving the colonists as housekeepers, *askaris* and prostitutes. Admittedly, Boyd widens his focus from a customary androcentric perspective but still fails to break out of ethnocentric boundaries.

All three novels under consideration acknowledge the different life situations that men and women experienced in the past. In *An Ice-Cream War*, Charis, in particular, is a victim of her time. Her and Gabriel's honeymoon is interrupted by the approaching war and the little time she and her spouse spend together is dissatisfactory in every perspective. Gabriel is mainly concerned with reading newspapers, his 'relentless joking and gaiety' unnerve her (*An Ice-Cream War*, 90) and their sexual life leaves her wholly disappointed. When Gabriel departs for Africa, she begins an affair with his brother Felix. Their relationship shows how an affair was a much higher risk for a woman, considering the lack of contraception devices. One morning after Felix has left the room, Charis inserts a piece of sponge soaked in a solution into her vagina in order to prevent pregnancy⁵. In the process she reflects, 'Does Felix ever think of taking precautions [...]? Was it something that ever crossed his mind?' (*An Ice-Cream War*, 251). The responsibility was clearly with the women. Charis falls for Felix and finds it increasingly difficult to 'summon up an image of [Gabriel] and their brief life together' (*An Ice-Cream War*, 287). However, in 1914 divorce was no option and suicide seems the only way out of her dilemma. At first sight, Liesl from *An Ice-Cream War* appears the emancipated counterpart to Charis. To some extent, she finds fulfilment in running the medical section of a prisoner-of-war camp. However, similar to Charis, Liesl is unhappy in her marriage. Having spent some time without von Bishop in Europe, she reluctantly returns to Africa. Even though Charis and Liesl no longer love their spouses, their marriages are legally binding. The female role is prominent in *The Blue Afternoon* and *Restless*, as well. The former demonstrates how women were closely associated with the domestic sphere around 1900 and hints at the problems women encountered in business-life in the 1930s. The latter depicts female emancipation in the 1970s. The position of women over history is a recurrent theme in Boyd's literary production.

Less progressive, however, is the author's treatment of ethnic minorities. Boyd's focalizers and narrators are all part of the dominant groups of society. Native populations are, at times, commented on but never given a voice of

⁵ In *The Blue Afternoon*, Delphine carries out the same procedure after sharing the bed with Carriscant (232).

their own. *An Ice-Cream War*, in particular, must be tarred with this criticism. The analysis of the Great War in Africa only focuses on the conditions of white settlers and soldiers. The African population and their terrible situation are only briefly referred to by the white focalizers. On the basis of such observations, scholars have come to downgrade the novel as an example of traditional *white* colonial literature which ignores the victims of colonisation and lacks critical examination of the past (Cf. Ridley, 359-360, 362).

Nevertheless, Boyd does not completely disregard the situation of subordinate groups. Felix and Gabriel, in particular, repeatedly comment on the worse circumstances native soldiers have to face in contrast to European officers. For instance, travelling by train through conquered German East Africa, Felix observes the differences between his relatively comfortable lamp lit compartment and the cattle trucks carrying the native soldiers (*An Ice-Cream War*, 309-310)⁶. Interestingly, the only characters who mention the locals' harsh situation are strangers to the colonial setting. Temple, Liesl and von Bishop seem to accept the natives' status as subordinate servants without questioning the matter. The author does not overtly moralise the ethical concern of colonial politics on the surface of his novel. However, he does not ignore the issue. Boyd offers his reader an image of the realities of social order in colonial East Africa and, rather than passing moral judgement, he challenges his reader to critically reflect on the raw views presented.

The Blue Afternoon equally centres on white characters and their perspectives. Even though the main part of the novel is set in the Philippines, the only significant Filipino character is Dr. Pantaleon Quiroga. In the predominantly European and US American society of Manila, he functions as a constant reminder of the oppression that the Philippine rural population suffers due to US military operations. Nonetheless, advocating Western medicine and moving confidently among the colonists, Pantaleon is everything but a typical representative of the subjugated and impoverished Philippine population.

⁶ Further instances of unfair treatment due to class and race are mentioned on page 77.

A literary writer's choice of perspective is comparable to processes of selection that are an essential tool of historiography. Adopting or neglecting specific points of view shapes the presentation of historical occurrences significantly. Clearly, if *An Ice-Cream War* followed Temple's farm foreman's point of view, or that of a native soldier of Felix's brigade, the resulting depiction of the Great War in Africa would have been dramatically different. The particular *historia rerum gestarum* that any historical novel represents, depends on the author's choice of viewpoints.

The application of several points of view clearly expresses Boyd's resistance to trust a single, supposedly objective, viewpoint on historical occurrences. *An Ice-Cream War* consists of six different narratives that overlap and are intertwined, but are still based on six distinct outlooks on the chain of events. *Restless* and *The Blue Afternoon* reveal the author's distrust of single perspectives in a different way. In both cases, characters are confronted with their parent's revelations regarding their respective pasts. Kay and Ruth are both unwilling to trust the accounts explained to them. In order to verify the details, they consult other sources, such as history books and historians, and thus collect several perspectives on the same events. Boyd conveys that in order to gain a profound understanding of history as many points of view as possible need to be gathered, compared and contrasted.

3.9. The Study of History – a Trustworthy Discipline?

In *An Ice-Cream War*, *The Blue Afternoon* and *Restless*, Boyd conforms to postmodernist principles and foregrounds the dependence of historical narratives on 'subjectivity, community, and civilization in general' (Butler, 179). In other words, every historiographical account is subject to its composer's point of view and the political and cultural situation of its composition. Historiographical accounts can only include those pieces of information that are available at the time. Due to further research and changing cultural conventions, historiographical texts will inevitably require revision.

Particularly in *The Blue Afternoon*, Boyd exposes historiography's ethnocentricity and limited perspective. Before presenting the account of her father's life, Kay quotes a passage from a history book on the American-Philippine conflict. The excerpt proves to be a typical example of old-fashioned and misleading historiography. General Aguinaldo is referred to as a *rebel leader*, a term loaded with negative connotations. Moreover, citing the war's death toll, the writer has chosen the expression 'brave American soldiers' and states the financial cost the war meant for the US American taxpayer (*The Blue Afternoon*, 68). No reference is made to war crimes committed by US American soldiers nor to the human tragedy and economic disaster that the conflict meant for the Philippine population. The passage is clearly written from an American perspective, aiming at a US American audience. Kay's subsequent narrative opposes this example of *white man's history*. She names several examples of war crimes and, to some extent, expresses the Philippine perspective on the armed conflict.

The forever provisional nature of historical knowledge is clearly demonstrated in *Restless*. The primary temporal setting is in England in 1976. At this time, attempts of the British Secret Services to lure the USA into World War II were not part of popular historical knowledge. Thoms comments that facts regarding the matter 'are beginning to come out now' and that information is exclusively available from former agents (*Restless*, 192). In this respect, the 1970s represent a period of necessary historiographical rewriting.

The supposed incontrovertible nature of historical knowledge is further questioned by the interplay between fiction and reality. When Ruth starts reading her mother's memoirs, she initially appears inclined to dismiss them as fiction. The fact that, of all people, her mother should have worked as an active spy for the British Secret Service during World War II is unimaginable. However, the more Ruth unearths about her mother's past, the more she has to accept that she is confronted with reality. Everything she thought to be true about the life of Sally Gilmartin suddenly becomes fiction and history needs to be rewritten. Fiction and reality are not mutually exclusive categories. Just

as unbelievable facts might turn out to be historical truths, so too can accepted truths turn out to be historical lies.

Additionally, *Restless* questions the reliability of historical sources. Historiographers rely on authentic historical material as the basis of their research. At first sight, newspapers might qualify as a promising resource for the historian. However, propaganda and the manipulation of information, that are common influences on the media in times of war, could lead the historian astray. Before being sent to America, Eva works with a group of British agents in Ostend, Belgium, running the news agency *Agence d'Information Nadal* or, as some 'preferred to call it[,] 'The Rumour Factory' (*Restless*, 69). The team's task is to sell false information to the European media and thus influence the course of the war in Britain's favour. Information is presented as a tool of war which is as efficient as military hardware.

Information wasn't neutral, [...] false information can be just as useful, influential, as telling, transforming or as damaging as true information. [H]ow could you tell what was genuine and what was the product of a clever, devious and determined mind? (*Restless*, 72)

Historiography's claim to objectivity is opposed by the fact that historical sources themselves are not neutral. In this way, the possibility of trustworthy historical evidence is seriously called into question. Still, throughout the novel, Eva consults newspapers and newsreel presentations to gain information on the ongoing war. Even though she herself was once actively involved in the forging of information, she never seems to seriously doubt the facts with which she is presented. The wilful manipulation of information hinders the historiographer in his task of retrospectively reconstructing the past on the basis of its traces.

Boyd seriously doubts the possibility of historical reconstruction. Not only must the authenticity of every historical document be distrusted, the forever provisional nature of history holds the risk that allegedly fact-ridden scientific accounts might become obsolete and turn to fiction. No solution for historiography is provided. The last resort for the reader seems to be high

critical awareness when confronted with historical accounts, be they historiographical texts or historical fiction.

CONCLUSION

The *New Historical Novel*

Historiographical texts offer specific viewpoints on historical occurrences, not their direct transcriptions. Mimesis is an ideal, yet unobtainable goal. The temporal level of historical research is extremely influential for the reception of history, as is the moment of reading history for its understanding. Historical significance is not inherent in past actualities. It can only be recovered in retrospect. Any textual reconstruction of the past is shaped by narrative operations such as foregrounding, backgrounding and choosing a specific perspective. These are literary operations. Therefore, historiography's supposed authority can be reduced to issues of discourse. The historical novel and historiography are two parallel genres which both attempt the reconstruction of past actuality.

Reality.

The analysis of White's theories on the narrative nature of historiographical accounts has helped redefine the realist historical novel as an equally reliable presenter of past events. Neither historiography nor historical fiction can achieve objective transcriptions of reality. Recognising the subjective and fictional character of historical accounts, however, does not mean that historical presentation in the textual form is an unachievable task that should be abandoned altogether. Boyd's historical novels reveal the opposite. Even though Boyd acknowledges the problematic nature of historical knowledge, he still believes that studying the past is an important and worthwhile task. By introducing historical matters in the form of personal accounts and avoiding an omniscient narrative situation, for example, the author acknowledges progressive views on the mediation of history and incorporates them into his narratives. Rather than abandoning historical fiction in the face of new demands, Boyd adopts certain narrative techniques in order to fulfil them.

The present thesis has knocked historiography off its throne as the only viable means of historical representation and upgraded historical fiction to another legitimate vehicle of historical understanding. The analysis of Boyd's novels, in relation to both historiography and the diachronic development of the historical novel, exemplifies how a contemporary writer of historical fiction recognises and integrates new advances in the philosophy of history, while still honouring the tradition of the genre. *An Ice-Cream War*, *The Blue Afternoon* and *Restless* display many characteristics of various epochs of historical fiction. Yet, they all demonstrate that supposedly mimetic historical presentation must be deemed outdated and that it no longer fulfils the demands posed by contemporary philosophy of history.

The study of history must be unbound from the idea that the past can be mimetically reconstructed and understood in its pure form. We are subjected to our position in the present and can not interpret the past independently from this perspective. We can not see Venus with the eyes of Renaissance man. Historiography only reluctantly recognises this necessary dogmatic change. Being a literary genre, the historical novel does not have to meet the same expectations and demands as historiography. Historical fiction can take liberties and explore more appropriate ways of presenting historical matters. Maybe the genre of the historical novel can provide historiography with alternative models for the representation of bygone events.

Beyond the present work, there are a number of promising tasks for further exploring the fictional character of factual texts and the factual relevance of fictional compositions. Boyd's other literary productions provide more examples of progressive historical novels worth studying. *Any Human Heart*, for instance, constitutes historical fiction in the shape of a diary novel and sees its protagonist Logan Mountstuart interfere with significant aspects of twentieth century European history. By supplementing his novel with explanatory annotations and an index of significant persons and matters, Boyd adopts an air of scientificity and links his fictional text to reality. Another promising task would be the profound analysis of historiographical compositions. Focusing on narrative techniques and other literary concepts,

the fictional character of historical accounts could be highlighted. A promising object of study appears to be Farwell's *The Great War in Africa: 1914-1918*. The historical account features dialogues and, over great parts, clearly reveals the narrator's opinion on the conflict. However, particularly appealing seems the direct confrontation of fictional and factual texts on the same historical occurrences, in other words, comparing and contrasting the ways in which the historical novelist and the historiographer introduce and discuss the same historical issues. Such analysis would demonstrate the strategies applied by writers of the two genres.

Boyd's main achievement is composing historical novels that are deeply rooted in the tradition of the genre, yet exceed the conventional limitations of historical fiction. By exploring historical fields and issues that traditional historiography usually neglects, Boyd creates historiographically significant novels. Boyd, however, is not the only author who is encouraged by the historiographical relevance recently attributed to fiction. Bryson's *Shakespeare* and Bolt's *History Play* are two novels that focus on the life of William Shakespeare in a mode that must be positioned somewhere between a factual account and a fictional narrative. Despite its obviously fictional character, Welsh's *Tamburlaine Must Die* attempts to shed light on the historical mystery of Christopher Marlowe's sudden disappearance and possible death.

Boyd must be named as one of those writers who take the historical novel to a new level. The boundary between fiction and reality is wiped away and conventional categories disregarded. Writers of fiction are no longer content to limit themselves to the *dark areas* of history. Apart from entertaining his readership, the *new* historical novelist equally aims at a historiographically relevant novel, thereby positioning his work between fact and fiction.

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‘To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism;
to steal from many is research’
(Steven Wright)

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DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Geschichte überdenken

William Boyds historische Romane

Der traditionellen Auffassung nach stellen geschichtswissenschaftliche Texte mimetische Abbildungen vergangener Realität dar. Zeitgenössische Geschichtsphilosophen lehnen eine solch vereinfachende Ansicht ab und plädieren dafür, geschichtliche Darstellungen als narrative Konstrukte anzusehen. Die konsequente Assoziation mit Literatur führt zu einer Annäherung geschichtswissenschaftlicher Texte an das Genre des historischen Romans. In diesem Spannungsfeld ist es erforderlich traditionelle Abgrenzungen zu überdenken und die Prinzipien geschichtlichen Wissens und dessen textlicher Darstellung neu zu definieren. Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit nimmt sich zum Ziel herauszuarbeiten, wie William Boyd, ein zeitgenössischer Autor von historischen Romanen, solch modernem Geschichtsverständnis Rechnung trägt, während er sich weiterhin klar über die Tradition der literarischen Gattung definiert.

Der historische Roman spannt seit jeher die Brücke zwischen fiktiver literarischer Komposition und der faktologischen Darstellung historischer Ereignisse. Seit seiner Begründung im neunzehnten Jahrhundert haben sich die Konventionen geschichtlicher Präsentation jedoch vielfach verändert. Der klassische historische Roman sah sich der authentischen Vermittlung historischer Inhalte verpflichtet. In der Moderne verliert die Präsentation der äußeren Realität gegenüber der des inneren Erlebens geschichtlicher Ereignisse an Bedeutung. Der postmoderne historische Roman ist von einem neuen Geschichtsverständnis geprägt, welches geschichtliches Wissen als Konstrukt erkennt. Er reflektiert darüber hinaus kritisch über die Möglichkeiten geschichtstheoretischer Darstellung und sieht sich in einer komplementären Position zur Geschichtswissenschaft.

Die Analyse von Boyds Romanen *An Ice-Cream War* (Deutsch: *Zum Nachtisch Krieg*; Rowohlt, 1986), *The Blue Afternoon* (Deutsch: *Die Blaue Stunde*; Rowohlt, 1995) und *Restless* (Deutsch: *Ruhelos*; Berlin Verlag, 2007) zeigt, dass der Autor nicht einfach einer dieser drei Hauptströmungen zuordenbar ist. Boyds historische Romane zeichnen sich durch eine bedeutungsvolle Kombination von Merkmalen aller drei Perioden aus. Klassische, moderne und postmoderne Charakteristika treten in ähnlichem Maße auf und ergeben so die für den Autor typische Form historischer Fiktion.

Vor allem durch die jeweilige angewandte Erzählsituation drückt Boyd seinen kritischen Standpunkt zur üblichen Geschichtsdarstellung aus. Anstelle eines auktorialen Erzählers, der angebliche historische Wahrheiten präsentiert, sind es in der Geschichte handelnde Personen, deren subjektive Wahrnehmungen kommuniziert werden. *An Ice-Cream War* konfrontiert den Leser mit mehreren, teilweise kontradiktorischen Perspektiven und widerspricht damit der Eindeutigkeit, die oft mit historischem Wissen assoziiert wird. *The Blue Afternoon* präsentiert, ähnlich der Geschichtswissenschaft, historische Inhalte gefiltert durch eine Erzählperspektive und demonstriert so den Einfluss der narrativen Ebene auf die geschichtlichen Inhalte. *Restless* macht die retrospektive Sinngebung des Historikers zum Thema. Der Leser beobachtet die Protagonistin bei ihren Versuchen, sowohl die Vergangenheit ihrer Mutter als auch historische Zusammenhänge zu verstehen.

Das Verwischen der Grenze zwischen geschichtswissenschaftlichen Texten und historischer Fiktion führt zu einer Abwertung der Geschichtsschreibung als einziger Form geschichtlicher Darstellung und zu einer Aufwertung des historischen Romans in seiner Funktion als Medium historischen Wissens.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Persönliche Daten Florian Braitenthaller
geboren 05.10.1980, Wien
Österreichischer Staatsbürger

Ausbildung

Oktober 2002 – November 2008	Studium der Anglistik und Romanistik (Italienisch) auf Lehramt, Universität Wien
September 2006 – Juni 2007	Auslandsstudium University of Edinburgh, UK (ERASMUS)
Oktober 2001 – Oktober 2002	Studium der Biologie und Romanistik (Italienisch) auf Lehramt, Universität Wien
März 2001 – Oktober 2001	Studium der Biologie, Universität Wien
September 1991 – Juni 1999	8 Klassen AHS, Wien. Abgeschlossen mit ausgezeichnetem Erfolg am Bundesrealgymnasium und Bundesoberstufengymnasium Anton-Kriegergasse 25, 1230 Wien
September 1987 – Juni 1991	4 Klassen Volksschule, Wien

Berufserfahrung

September 2007 bis dato	Unterrichtstätigkeit (Englisch und Italienisch) an der Humboldt Maturaschule, 1040 Wien
August 2002 bis dato	Kursleiter EF Sprachreisen, 1010 Wien. Unterrichtstätigkeit und Organisation von Freizeitaktivitäten von Jugendlichen in England, Irland, Malta und den USA

März 2000 bis dato	Kursleiter (Englisch) Liesinger Schulverein, 1230 Wien
Februar 2000 – Januar 2001	Zivildienst Rotes Kreuz, 1030 Wien. Sanität und Krankentransport
1997 bis dato	Nachhilfetätigkeit (Englisch und Italienisch)

Besondere Kenntnisse

- Englisch (14 Jahre)
 - Italienisch (10 Jahre)
 - Grundlegende EDV Kenntnisse, MS Office Paket
 - Stimmtraining (2000-2001) bei Mag. Noemi Fischer
-

Interessen

- Sprachen
- Reisen
- Fremde Kulturen
- Englische Literatur
- Europäisches Kino