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### HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION IN THEODORE DREISER'S TRILOGY OF DESIRE

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#### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to explore the correlation between history and metafiction and how it turned to recast the past events of Charles Tyson Yerkes's life in fictional dress, *Trilogy of Desire* (1972). It is universally acknowledged that one cannot escape from history. This research is based on descriptive qualitative method while following Linda Hutcheon's theory of historiographic metafiction that deals with four issues in the novel; identity, representation, past and ideological association. The current analysis covers representation with special reference to the textualized extra-textual reference. The findings show that the emotional attachments, business activities and deep love for art of Frank Cowper wood, the protagonist in *Trilogy of Desire* (1972) are the reflection of Charles Tyson Yerkes's life events. To get the valid data, the note taking and colour pen instruments are used in this research. The protagonist is portrayed through his words and actions as well as he is perceived by other characters. The analysis concludes that the author did reconstruction in historical events of the character which is a postmodern technique of parody to highlight the events of past in the current time in fictional dress. It is an attempt to make the reader aware of its fictionality along with the knowledge of the past events. Actually, it is a fiction about fiction.

#### INTRODUCTION

Historiographical Metafiction is associated with postmodernist literature. Postmodernism is a concept which appears in different areas; sociology, communication, art, architecture, literature etc. Linda Hutcheon (1988) in her book, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory and Fiction* highlights that

the function of postmodernism is to reject the concepts of modernism historically and philosophically. It is a theory in literature which overcome the traditional narrative form, methods of interpretation and analysis (7). The term was coined by Tony Bee, British Historian, at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. This period is characterised with social change, Industrial Revolution, French Revaluation. Postmodern age is time of "trouble marked" (Hutcheon, 9) especially in "collapse of nationalism and ethos of enlightenment" (Hutcheon, 9).

Historiographical Metafiction is a term used by Linda Hutcheon. It highlights certain historical touch in the novels through fictionalise the historical events as well as characters. It declares the specificity and identity of person and past events. Historical metafiction crosses the boundaries of fiction and considers history of the author as a shaping force. It represents microcosm of history which is particular and general at the same time. The authenticity of history is recreated by incorporating it in the narrative. She attempts to define historiographic metafiction and recommends that the well-known novels which are self-reflexive having historical figures and events (5). Furthermore, she added that "The intertextual satire of historiographic metafiction offers a feeling of the presence of the past, yet a previous that can be known distinctly from its writings ... to spoof isn't to annihilate the past; indeed, to spoof is both to revere the past and to address it. What's more, this is the postmodern mystery" (125). "The peruser is compelled to recognize not just the textuality of our insight into the past, yet in addition both the worth and the constraint of that inevitably verbose type of information" (127).

Historiographical metafiction is worried about history; "it concerns chronicled occasions; it impacts the world forever and it centers around historiography. It joins metafictional components with remarkable and profound verifiable concentration across three classifications, writing, history, and hypothesis as one. It is exactly the anecdotal, hesitant combination of history and fiction" (37). It can be used as an effective device for achieving specific intellectual and ideological purpose. The book of Michael Butter entitled *The Encyclopaedia of Twentieth-Century Fiction* explains the term by writing about and writing in order to make the reader aware of its fictionality and the presence of the author to preserve emotional distance as a narrator (Butter, 626). "Metafiction is a term given to fiction writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Walsh, 39).

*Trilogy of Desire* is considered as a postmodernist historical novel written by Theodore Dreiser, a famous American novelist. *The Financier* (1912) *The Titan* (1914) and *The Stoic* (1947), constitute *Trilogy of Desire* (1972), are allegorical narratives that expose the corruption and immortality of so called American progressive society. It is a story of American person who exploited the innocent people and misused city funds. It is an attack on American capitalist system by securing economic monopoly with special reference to Charles Tyson Yerkes who rose from rages to riches and amassed wealth disproportionate to his income. Frank Cowperwood, the protagonist of trilogy, exploits the labour of millions and earned huge profits which leads to luxurious life while the workers

sweated and toiled in factories. In *America is Worth Saving* (1941), Theodore Dreiser highlights that “Eight million families continually face starvation, eleven million families fighting poverty, forty-one percent families live on an average of \$758 year and only ten million families have enough or more than enough of the essential of life” (18). Man is a victim of power and the battle was and still is to become the predator or prey. According to Dreiser’s opinion, it is better to be a predator than to be a prey.

### ***Historiographic Metafiction in Trilogy of Desire***

*Trilogy of Desire* (1972) is a historical novel comprised of many histories. It is relentlessly factual in its narration, with its central character modelled so faithfully upon the real-life Yerkes that critic such as Philip L. Gerber (1973) has described it as “biography in fictional dress.” (117) Alison Shonkwiler (2009) has found that Dreiser strays so frequently from his chosen moment and milieu in the trilogy that it becomes markedly unstable, as though its author were searching for a way to “negotiate between competing models of history” (43). Both interpretations are correct, but many more are possible, for the trilogy contends that one understands the past only after attempting several methods of historical investigation, especially those methods that might initially seem to be in conflict with one another. Dreiser is on some occasions an archivist of mid-century historical materials, a document hound who stuffs his novels with speeches, newspaper articles, and mind-numbing, step-by-step descriptions of financial transactions.

Charles Tyson Yerkes (June 25, 1837 – December 29, 1905) was an American financier. The life events of Charles Tyson Yerkes are the key sources for the plot of Theodore Dreiser’s *Trilogy of Desire* (1972). His life is best immortalized in *The Financier* (1912), *The Titan* (1914) and *The Stoic* (1947). It is a story of the titan who rose from rags to riches, from a flour to commission agent, from stockbroker to investor looking for franchise which might allow him to city transportation lines. Frank Algernon Cowperwood, the protagonist in trilogy, is the fictional portrayal of the famous business tycoon, Charles Tyson Yerkes, who made a fortune by controlling the city transportation system and by misusing public funds.

Theodore Dreiser highlights the key connections of American hero, Charles Tyson Yerkes, in his *Trilogy of Desire* with his protagonist, Frank Algernon Cowperwood. The events portrayed in *The Financier* (1912), *The Titan* (1914), and *The Stoic* (1947) followed verbatim the events of Yerkes' life as established in Dreiser's working notes and verified by newspapers, periodicals, and books of the era. *Trilogy of Desire* (1972) not only deals with three novels but also deals with three desires of Frank Cowperwood as well as Charles Tyson Yerkes; desire for money, desire for women and desire for art collection.

### ***Historiographic Metafiction in Business***

The aim of this research is not to justify the phrase for economic history but to integrate it into our historical understanding of capitalism. The young men (both fictional and real) began their business career in a very early age because both

(Frank Cowperwood and Charles Tyson Yerkes) were not highly educated. They are by nature businessmen and earn profits at the very beginning of their career. They came to know that they had specific genius, an instinctive understanding of how to squeeze wealth out of a city. Frank Cowperwood of *The Financier* (1912) isn't just portrayed as youthful yet in addition a "agent by sense", however more critically as an individual to whom "all the information that related to that incredible craftsmanship was however normal as the feelings and nuances of life seem to be to a writer" (11). As Alex Pitofsky (1998), a celebrated pundit of Dreiser, has noticed "this delineating of individual desire makes Frank's dad take after the saints of Horatio Alger, while Frank himself, who moves from freedom to better freedom without a hesitation or a regressive look, doesn't" (17).

They were celebrated among individuals of Philadelphia despite the fact that they were in their twenties and held onto the monetary control of the whole city. "200 offers had been conveyed for him and sold at 100, which got him 2,000 dollars. It was ill-conceived acquire, deceptive; yet his heart was not a lot of pained by that" (99). A panic has created in Philadelphia exchange by the Chicago fir in 1871 through which both are suffered. Both suffered in prison by violating the rules and misuse of public funds and the collapsed of national bond market. Both (Fictional and Real) decided to keep the mental strength unaffected and think about the chances of recovering the previous financial position. They soon returned to utilize the money for earning purpose and quickly remade their fortune. The authors fabricated their plots and characters from the nearby locales to benefit openings by mishandling certain qualities, passionate and social qualities. Law is furthermore harmed for the said reason. A battle of monetary triumph is made between human requirements, solicitations of society and need for additional as he expressed that life is coordinated when "Strength would win and shortcoming lose" (241).

They are strategically and morally natural residents and remained against the person who harms the morals. "Philadelphia was done satisfying to him. In spite of the fact that now free and rich, he was as yet an embarrassment to the actors, and the monetary and social world was not set up to acknowledge him" (404). He conveys his strong conviction on money and wealth for the explanation that money can do anything and achieve any status which is the reason for his psychological maladjustment through which he overlooks all morals; social, strict and legitimate. "I (Cowperwood) attempt to follow the line of personal responsibility, on the grounds that, through my eyes, there could be no other guide" (645).

"The correct thing is the economically and, particularly, monetarily most catalyst thing. No other basis is permitted to interfere. Servitude is shrewd, war is damaging, popularity-based government is a disgrace, however detestable, obliteration and trickery are really essential for progress of the world and individuals live in" (245). Ethical quality is just in unique structure which has been seen by the various characters however there is no functional way to deal with profound quality and "debasement isn't accidental to the framework; it is the framework" (123). There is an exceptionally huge distinction among "own"

and "control". Honest Cowperwood isn't in a situation to have the cash yet control in particular.

### *Historiographic Metafiction in Emotional Attachments*

Theodore Dreiser is a great novelist who painted life of Charles Tyson Yerkes as he observed, truthfully, with a delicate brush dipped in various shades of life through the protagonist of *Trilogy of Desire* (1972), Frank Cowperwood. Although different from each other, both are alike in their approach towards life, business and art. It is these subtle links and strands of similarities which this paper probes into.

Both (fictional and real) are not stable in their emotional attachments. Frank Cowperwood married with a widow, Lilian Semple "altogether ordinary" (Dreiser, 44), and contains a "none too reasonable psyche" (Dreiser, 216). She is more established than he by numerous years. She contains a "mothering warmth" (Dreiser, 425) as far as he might be concerned, and he feels in her "a goliath, generous, mothering insight which could see, feel and get" (Dreiser, 422). The fascination is an impossible to miss one, hard to clarify. "Exactly what it was about her that pulled in him at this age it is difficult to say with respect to she was truly not fit to him inwardly, mentally or something else." (Dreiser, 36) She isn't splendid or energetic, anyway she is fine-looking, "shapely, imaginative in structure and highlight" (Dreiser, 37) ("creative" in look entirely, for her psyche doesn't tend that approach in any sense), and similarly she has "a specific oblivious placidity of soul, which came more from absence of comprehension than from power of character" (Dreiser, 37).

Frank Cowperwood involved emotionally with other and say good bye to Lilian Semple just like Charles Tyson Yerkes. He had become weary of the wife who became the mother of his six children, and ultimately divorced her in 1881. That was the end of any chance he might have to move into a society in Philadelphia, but he didn't care. He married a local beauty, called Mary Adelaide Moore, and moved to Chicago the following year. Mary failed as a hostess altogether, partly because of the merciless business tactics of Yerkes and her decay in age.

The two strings of Cowperwood's story: his business and private life, run in equal anyway separate tracks till Edward Malia Butler brings them significantly. Aileen Butler minds nothing (from the start) with respect to society's assessment of her odd conduct. Aileen sets "his sentiments and thoughts jumping and plunging like energetic ponies" (Dreiser, 113). She goes through this existence alongside his cool, direct "I fulfill myself" disposition" (Dreiser, 268). She betrays him "in a practically fierce way" (Dreiser, 423) which prompts disunity between the two.

The author is prepared to advise with some conviction of the semi-romanticized job she plays as to Cowperwood at any rate; she is everything to him- - little girl, mother, special lady, accomplice (in practically the lawful sense), companion - and she moves from one job to other without any problem. "it was not Berenice but rather himself who was most violated intellectually and exotically" and "She wouldn't allow herself either to be lost in or completely

violated by the male" (Dreiser, 59). self-assured. She knows about what she wants. "I figure I ought to like to be discontent with abundance than to be without it" (Dreiser, 400). "She considered life to be a game, a decent possibility, that could be played from various perspectives" (Dreiser,481).

Frank Cowperwood and Charles Tyson Yerkes account for the temporary, and wide-ranging, nature of their attractions toward girls. They have matured enough at the end of her life and considers the marriages as "mistake[s] due to inexperience" (Dreiser, 4). They have a single moto "I satisfy myself" It is not that Dreiser lacked the necessary detail to fill out his last novel. As Gerber has demonstrated that Dreiser's research about the life of Charles T. Yerkes, the historical basis for the Cowperwood story, was extensive. And early on Dreiser had every intention, it seems, of using this detail to shape *The Stoic* (1947), Pizer notes that when Dreiser resumed earnest work on the novel in 1932, he "planned to describe in some detail the disastrous marriage of Mrs. Yerkes" and the dwindling of Yerkes's fortune after his death (333); yet the fate of Aileen Cowperwood, the fictional counterpart to the second Mrs. Yerkes, and of Cowperwood's fortune and art collection receive relatively little attention in *The Stoic*. Instead, choosing to summarize Aileen's story, Dreiser invented a more exalted destiny for Berenice and focused on her spiritual elevation, deviating from the biographical facts of Emilie Grigsby, the Yerkes dependant who provided the model for Cowperwood's mistress.

### ***Historiographic Metafiction in Art Collection***

Both (Frank Cowperwood and Charles Tyson Yerkes) desires to maintain their art collection. Both (fictional and real) take keen interest in business activities and art collection. Both have galleries in which the beautiful and various art pieces are assembled to satisfy the aesthetic sense in art galleries. He himself mentioned that "My collection is very modest" (389). His strong sense of art collection not only suffered the other desires "Cowperwood's monetary virtuoso and desire for power were tempered, to a certain extent, by his affection for workmanship and magnificence" (367). Besides, "he directed his concentration toward his #1 interest: his craft exhibition, to which he needed to add such artistic creations as would make it an extraordinary assortment" (396). He educated Berenice Fleming with respect to his craft assortment that "it is so imperative to keep the house flawless as a permanent place to stay for my specialty objects" (405). Notwithstanding, he said, "At her passing, his craft exhibition and assortment of artistic creations and model, esteemed at \$3,000,000, were to be given to the City of New York for the instruction and delight in the general population" (427).

It is not only in life that Frank Cowperwood collected art objects but when he realises that death is approaching so he called the architecture to build his future tomb. He has his own school of thought and performs activities according to the same philosophy which are centred. "his thought for the burial place inclined toward the Greco-Roman style of engineering, however not in its most perfect origination. Maybe, he might want it to be an alteration, with some inventiveness of plan in its subtleties. It was to be enormous, on the grounds that he had consistently loved space, and was to be made of rock dark stone of

rich surface. He might want a tight cut of a window toward one side, and a spot for two stone caskets, with two hefty bronze entryways opening into the burial chamber itself" (Dreiser, 401).

The moment of balance between the realistic and romantic, the metonymic and the metaphoric, in *The Stoic* (1947) occurs during Cowperwood's funeral. In rendering this scene Dreiser deviates from the reported facts of Yerkes's life. Contemporary newspaper accounts of the funeral focused on Yerkes's career and the status of his will and fortune. Little was written about the death and funeral, except to note that Yerkes had "built a massive tomb in (Brooklyn's) Greenwood Cemetery, which cost \$50,000" ("Charles T. Yerkes Dead") and that there had been a brief service at the Yerkes mansion on 5th Avenue and 68th Street ("Said He Was Yerkes' Nephew"). *The Chicago Daily Tribune* insisted flatly, "There was no service at the tomb in Greenwood cemetery" ("Yerkes' Friends"). As part of his research, Dreiser kept newspaper clippings on Yerkes, and he was aware of accounts of the funeral (Gerber, "Dreiser's Financier"). Aside from the tomb, however, Dreiser invented most of the details for Cowperwood's funeral. Most significantly, he changed the place of the funeral oration from the mansion to the cemetery.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up the entire discussion of describing the life events of Charles Tyson Yerkes, the novelist has reconstructed the historical events through Frank Algernon Cowperwood, the protagonist in *Trilogy of Desire* (1972). Although the novelist used historical events accurately, but, in some situations, exaggerate the real events and present it in fictional dress. This literary piece is impressed as master fictional work with some references of the past. The current research highlighted the three different aspects of Charles Tyson Yerkes; business activities, emotional attachments and love for art collection. This research suggests that the readers to be keener observer when they read this historical novel as a reconstruction of the historical events with different version. He depicts the movement of history as essentially magical and historical personages as mythic archetypes rather than human beings.

After reading the trilogy, one might conclude that Dreiser's historical perspective is that of a biological determinist, or a fatalist, or a believer in mysticism, or a proponent of American exceptionalism, or all of these at once. The work, therefore, comes to seem as much a historiographical novel as a historical one, and its assorted approaches to history-writing advance an argument that literary fiction is a uniquely unbounded, and thus superior, instrument for exploring the past. To sum up, there is a clear use of historiographic metafiction and the techniques show that *Trilogy of desire* is a historiographic metafiction work. The result of the analysis gave equal interest to the content and form through the adaptation of history and fiction which is a new approach to literature. It is hoped that this study would help the researchers to touch the text with different lenses.

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