

Fictionalization of History in Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet*

This research project analyses on Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, as a novel that discusses about human life and human history. Bellow, through the character of Sammler an intelligent, thoughtful, and philosophical person, interrogates upon the truth and fixity of history. Sammler also discusses the pre-established legal and formal general principles of human condition such as marriage, separation, death etc. He has wide reading of official history, as he states in the novel, but quiet discontent with it due to its falsity and analyzes the generalizations about history and human conditions. He memorizes and examines various occurrences of his own personal life as well as historical incidents by analyzing himself and history but he fails to capture the realistic evidences. Mr. Sammler is Polish holocaust survivor who has been damaged physically and psychologically. He has lost his vision in one eye and suffers from a sense of emotional and intellectual alienation. With his unbroken eye, he views the world, its people, and their madness. With his blind eye, he internalizes current events, using his historical and philosophical training to analyze. So, he criticized generalizations about history and human conditions, questions such pattern and deconstructs them. On this basis, the research aims to explore generalizations about history and human conditions inside the text.

The purpose of the research is to investigate how historical generalizations become unable to carry fixity and truth behind any occurrences. At the same time, the study's focus is on how a predetermined principle behind diverse human conditions fails to be applied in each individual condition thoroughly. Since antiquity, intellects have created the fixed principle, ideologies, knowledge and truths but such canonical boundaries are being questioned and destroyed in the

course of time. So, this research aims to create radical thought and action to question and break such monolithic and canonical boundaries through the character of Sammler.

Mr. Sammler's Planet questions the existence of the contemporary grand narrative inside the story of Sammler, which enables the hypothesizing that once created generalization about history and human condition. But which are unable to be fixed and to be applied in each and every case due to changeability of time and truth. Various ideological characteristics, incomprehensible nature of human phenomena, impossibility of certainty and changeable nature of memories in the narration of Sammler appear as unreliable. This helps to unravel the truth about history.

The study reflects the logic of historical truth and generalizations of principles about human condition. Sammler, travels over his long course of life to find truth and creates his own history. He memorizes and examines the time and events in his life such world war, his escape from concentration camp, sex, separation, re-meeting, job and sketches his own history but without any proofs. He finds no historical fixity and true general principles behind the human conditions. He finally comes to question and deconstruct the notion of historicity and certain principles behind the phenomena of human life. Such issues in the novel examine the problem in historicity and generalization on human conditions and raise the issue of authoritative general principle about human life. How do the so-called rationalists, historians and authoritative institutions create false history? How are fixed canonical boundaries created by the certain person in the power? Why historical truth cannot be created? How generalizations about history and human conditions fail to speak the truths? Why and how such canonical boundaries are

questioned and deconstructed in the course of time? These are some of the questions, this research raises to solve.

The novel is the story of Sammler who travels long course of his life journey with several ups and downs. Sammler is now living in New York with his daughter. He is a friend of scientist. With his one good eye, he looks through the telescope of history, exploring the cultural landscape of a planet which has just sent a man to the moon yet which is embroiled with social and political chaos and a spiritual emptiness. Having escaped death in a concentration camp during World War II, Sammler is disillusioned, even horrified by the violence around him. The novel presents a dreary, hellish picture of New York of the late 1960s. How his projections of historical past experience come out to be fallible in the course of time. Many critics have given different views about this novel. Donald Cromwell puts forwards his concept about Bellow's discussion of memory in the novel:

In addressing these questions, Bellow's voice is potently enigmatic when objective details are purposely left out. He spares on physical details as if to shy away from the hard facts that memory can't provide. The only physical detail we get about any of Sammler's statement is the way they wear their hair. Dialogue and gossip instead form the basis of what Sammler remembers, which makes nearly every conversation doubly interpreted. As Sammler says later in life, all my 'conclusions' are reversible. (21)

Donald talks about the feeble memory of Sammler in this commentary.

Another critic Daniel Hartman has analyzed the novel from the perspective of the memory. Memory, individual rather than collective, accounts for who we are and what we have become. And early memory is particularly valuable, though it can

be misconstrued. Its influence can persist throughout adult life, though what is cause and what effect may be difficult to judge. In this short but compelling novel Hartman tracks the origin of one particular memory through a long and apparently uneventful life towards an explanation that leaves traces of unease that are difficult to dismiss. In this connection, he further adds:

The facts are quite simple. Three school-friends, of whom the narrator, Sammler, is one, are joined by a fourth, Adrian Finn, who is much cleverer than any of them. Nor can he understand why Sammler's mother should leave him a small legacy and the news that she possesses... Sammler's diary, which was the virtual gallery of incidents of her own life. (52)

What remains in his memory is the discomfort he felt on that weekend, a discomfort he cannot explain even at an advanced age. The clue might lie in the diary, but attempts to get hold of it are unavailing. He is up against an initial misalliance to which others are being added, containing the same characters but no further explanation.

There are an increasing number of critical commentaries, some of which have been referred to in this study that demonstrate the range of Bellow's talent. Particularly on his fictions that move away from the disturbing and disruptive sensationalized themes. Critical evaluations of his later work agree that his fiction has become a discussion point for social and cultural commentary. For example, Peter Childs again comments that Bellow's "opens the novel to a psychological realm in which the sense of crisis was felt focuses on a detailed discussion on the binary of Darwinism and literature in *Mr. Sammler's Planet*" (25). Childs briefly draws parallels between historical accuracy in representations of World War II and the

events Holocaust in the text drawing comparisons to other historical texts and news media clippings. He convincingly shows how Bellow reflects human consciousness of moral being in which we seek to find unity out of randomness, order out of chaos, and to pursue 'truth' in the process. For Childs, the novel should emulate this dynamic moral thought. Different critics have analyzed different aspects of novel. However novel of the critic is alternative to dialects of grand narrative in every aspect. So present researcher is going to research how history is discursive and constructed phenomenon.

The proposed thesis is library based research. It will use a close, discursive argumentative style which will draw on concept of New Historicism along with pre-established legal and formal principles behind any specific human conditions as the novel questions such agenda. Authentic cites, guidance from the lecturers and professors will be supportive tools for research. Michael Foucault's idea of fictitious nature of truth, Greenblatt's cultural poetics and Montrose's textualization of history are applied to make the thesis prove the hypothesis. Different extracts from novel related to the notion of inadequacy of history and principles on human condition will be brought to prove inadequacy of generalization about history and human life. Foucauldian concept of discursive knowledge is used to prove the fictionalization of history in the novel *Mr. Sammler's Planet*.

New historicism, which emerged in the late 1970s, rejects both traditional historicism's marginalization of literature and new criticism's enshrinement of the literary text in a timeless dimension beyond history. For new historical critics, a literary text does not embody the author's intention or illustrate the spirit of the age that produced it, as traditional literary historians asserted. New historicists ask, "How has the event been interpreted? And what do the interpretations tells us about

the interpreters?" (Tyson 288). New historicism is strictly a matter of interpretation, not fact. There is no such thing as a presentation of facts; there is only interpretation. Furthermore, new historicists argue that reliable interpretations are, for a number of reasons, difficult to produce. Any two historians may disagree about what constitutes progress and what does not for these terms are matters of definition. The main concept of new historicism is that new historicists believe in the impossibility of objective analysis. "‘Discourse’ is a social language created by particular cultural conditions at a particular time and place, and it expresses a particular way of understanding human experience" (285). Further Tyson writes "Although the word discourse has roughly the same meaning as the word ideology, and the two terms are often used interchangeably, the word discourse draws attention to the role of language as the vehicle of ideology" (285). New historicism views historical accounts as narratives, as stories, that are inevitably biased according to the point of view, conscious or unconscious, for those who write them. The more unaware historians are of their biases-that is, the more "objective" they think are-the more those biases are able to control their narratives.

Michael Foucault is quite possibly the most influential critic of the last quarter-century. His interest in history is about nonlinearity of history. As Jill LiBihan and Keith Green write, "[Foucault's] enterprise is essentially to historical discourse and to textualized history. Foucault refuses to see history in terms of linearity and development. Rather, he sees it in terms of a kind of power struggle" (117). Power for Foucault is not necessarily a repressive, tyrannical things; it is a generative, productive force. "Power is that which binds together the disparate forces of a society (even though that binding is illusory). No event stems from a single, coherent cause,

but is the product of a vast network of signification, discursive knowledge and 'power'" (117).

Stephen Greenblatt an American writer- founder of the new historicism. Greenblatt first used the term 'new historicism' in his 1982 *Introduction to the power of forms in the English Renaissance*. New historicism is a school of literary theory which first developed in the 1980s, primarily through the work of the critic and Harvard English professor Stephen Greenblatt, and gained widespread influence in the 1990s. "New historicists aim simultaneously to understand the work through its cultural context and to understand intellectual history through literature, which follows the 1950s discipline of history of ideas and refers to itself as a form of 'cultural poetics'" (Tyson 288). He takes history as a text that is interpreted by different cultures to fit the ideological needs of their own power structures, which is a new historical concern. In this context, "new historicism might be defined as the history of stories cultures tell themselves about themselves for Greenblatt. Or, as a corrective to some traditional historical accounts, new historicism might be defined as the history of lies cultures tell themselves" (Tyson 288). Thus, there is no history, in the traditional sense of the term. There are only representations of history for him. In his essay "Towards a Poetics of Culture", Stephen Greenblatt expresses the notion of New Historicism as follows:

Texts of each are inscriptions of history; and that our comprehension, representation, interpretation of the texts of the past always proceeds by a mixture of estrangement and appropriation, as a reciprocal conditioning of the Renaissance text and our text of Renaissance. Such a critical practice constitutes a continuous dialogue between a poetics and a politics of culture.

(24)

So dynamic, temporal model of culture and ideology change the truth of history.

Likewise another critic Louis A. Montrose is an American literary theorist and academic scholar. He takes history as texts and textualization of history. Historicity of texts "suggest the cultural specificity, the social embedment, of all modes of writing-not only the texts that critics study but also the texts in which we study them" (20).

Montrose was an influential early proponent of New Historicism, especially as it applied to study of early modern English literature and culture. He further claims that "textual traces are themselves subject to subsequent textual mediations when they are construed as the "documents" upon which historians ground their own texts, called 'histories'" (20).

The *Mr. Sammler's Planet* is about the elusiveness of identity and the treachery of memory, regret and the hope of redemption. Though its atmosphere is dreamlike, it actually is hyper-realistic, portraying enigmatic precision of a very high order "real" life as each of us actually experiences it. Thus, the novel is the first person account of physically deformed narrator Sammler who lives in New York. He wants to account the historical truth and personal truth as real eyewitness. However all his efforts become completely fails.

New Historicists, greatly influenced by Michel Foucault's concept of discursive analysis of Power relation, gives another strategy of political reading of the texts. The power relations are reflected through discourses, which do not find overt manifestations but implicitly expressed in the text. Sammler, the protagonist of the novel is professor by occupation. Sammler is Jewish intellectual educated in Western philosophy, a one-eyed Holocaust survivor. He claims that he is the future author of the greatest biography ever written of H.G. Wells. Throughout the novel he meditates on the human condition, past, present, and future. He accounts about holocaust and

second Great War. He is an observer and a half-blind prophet in a time of social decay and moon exploration. Sammler, sees the world through the defected eye, his mind, and his heart. He filters the world through his intellect. And yet, the truths he knows are intuitive, and he realizes that value in life is found through making and acknowledging the human connection and living up to the spiritual and moral truths of the "human contract" (43). Finally he himself tells that there is no demarcation between fiction and facts.

Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* depicts the narrative of Sammler in New York. The book chronicles a couple of days in the life of Sammler, as he prepares for the death of his relative and sponsor Elya Gruner, a rich surgeon. A good deal of frantic strategy takes place around Gruner's bedside. His son Wallace, a lifelong burglar, is convinced that his father has hidden cash in the pipes in their New Rochelle home, and tries to find it. Meanwhile Sammler's own daughter, the mentally unbalanced Shula, has stolen unique manuscript about moon exploration from an Indian scientist, Dr. Govinda Lal, and Sammler must see to its return before the police get involved. Yet the strange humor of these stories takes place strictly in the unconsciousness of Sammler himself. Whatever Sammler narrates in the novel seems to be false and discursive only. Neither Wallace get money from his house nor police involved for investigation about manuscript of Dr. Govinda Lal.

The concept of new historicism was developed from the concept of genealogy developed by Friedrich Nietzsche. Later Michael Foucault developed the concept of new historicism questioning the old archeological model of history. Historicists, greatly influenced by Michel Foucault's concept of discursive analysis of Power relation, come to give another strategy of political reading of the texts. The power relations get reflected through discourses which do not find overt manifestations but

implicitly expressed in the text. Foucault further focused upon the intricately structured power relations in a given culture at a given time to demonstrate, how that society controls its member through constructing and defining what appears to be universal. It implies that New Historicists “aspired to a politics of culture” which is covertly manifested in a text because power structure is administered by the state. “The state’s control of its citizenry was internal rather than external. The state subjected its people by creating them as subjects, devising fixed categories under which people could be described and thus controlled” (Foucault, *Discipline* 86). This was the conjunction Foucault evoked as “Power Knowledge” (86). Foucault observes History as the discourse between the social and the aesthetic circular in his text *Discipline and Punish*. He further defines history as:

The final traits of history are its affirmation with knowledge as perspective. Historians take unusual pains to erase the element in their work which reveal their ground in a particular time and place, their preferences in a controversy the unavoidable obstacles of their passion. Nietzsche’s version of historical sense is explicit in its perspective and acknowledge in its system of injustice. (90)

Foucault attempts to discover the system of particular discourse and relate it with the study of power and knowledge. He interprets it as essential historical discourse and textualization of history. He refuses history in terms of linearity and development. Rather he observes history in terms of power struggle. Historical continuity for Foucault is paradoxically discontinuity. Knowledge is not knowledge of self rather it is only perspective.

The very beginning of *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* arouses feeble situation of the protagonist. Sammler’s biography is conflicting with narrator’s. As a Holocaust

survivor, he lays claim to an altogether deeper resonance and dignity: "Mr. Sammler had a symbolic character. He personally, was a symbol. His friends and family had made him a judge and a priest" (12). He gains this symbolic dimension because, like someone in a myth, he came back from the death. However, he is reluctant to claim the authority that seems to belong to him as a survivor. His life seems sorted out, a chain of little victories and failures with no real unresolved past mysteries.

Sammler fails to capture the reality and lost in the maze-like experiences. He is blind due to misshapen of gun accident. In Greek myth, Tiresias's blindness is the price of his ability to see the future, but Sammler, who has lost only one eye, seems to have gained only partial insight into the cosmos; enough to ask questions, not enough to find answers. This incomplete mysticism is captured in one of the novel's most memorable passages, when Sammler sees some illegible graffiti on a vacant building: "Most scrawls could be ignored. These for some reason caught on with Mr. Sammler as pertinent. Eloquent. Of what? Of future nonbeing... But also of the greatness of eternity which shall lift us from this present shallowness" (45).

Mr. Sammler's Planet is loaded with the Sammler's past activities and his present responses. He looks back and tries to find truth about events which happened in the past not so much to him, but to people with whom he was once connected. He tries to find out what exactly happened and how he was personally involved in it. The novel is concerned almost exclusively with memories. For Sammler, there is no evidence to support or disprove truthfulness of his memories in the first part of the book, apart from his own reflections of their reliability. Throughout the whole novel, Sammler challenges the exactness of memory, either by his own thinking, or through his recollections of discussions among his friends. Sammler spent most of the interwar years as a journalist in London, revolving around with English intellectuals.

In particular, he was good friends with English journalist, however he claims that he was good friend of H.G. Wells however, about this incident there is no objective record.

Sammler's constant questioning of truthfulness of his own memory makes the reader aware of his unreliability. Paradoxically, at the same time, it gives Sammler quality of frankness and honesty. Sammler, of course, is an unreliable character, but his unreliability seems to result from fallibility of memory, not from a twisted personality and intentional lying. Sammler seems to be as honest with the reader just as he is with himself. This appears as the problem, because it is often hard for him to confess himself bad feelings or to recall unpleasant or shameful memories. This tendency can be observed:

Being realized but trying itself to realize, to act. Attempting to make interest. This attempt to make interest was, for Mr. Sammler, one reason for the pursuit of madness. Madness makes interest. Madness is the attempted liberty of people who feel themselves overwhelmed by giant forces of organized control. Seeking the magic of extremes.

Madness is a base form of the religious life. (Bellow 119)

Problem in objective truth is accepted by Sammler himself. Truth is no more than representation. His unreliability is projected everywhere "Mr. Sammler turned to the crowd, staring hard. Wouldn't anyone help? So even now-now, still-one believed in such a things as help. Where people were, help might be" (239). It is difficult to reach nearer to objective truth. One should be satisfied with symbols. Sammler does not interest to give details information about his experiences. He only gives partial evidence through his memory how much he can remember.

Sammler sometimes turns to the reader in search of compassion or try to be emphatic. Indeed, for a man who survived the Holocaust, Sammler seems very little interested in social and political questions. His disengagement is limited to social and political issues but sexually he is a quite different person. His last involvement in sexual activities tells lot about his engagement. Whatever may have been the statement for Sammler about sexual intercourse he is not reliable in his account. His vision towards Gruner, a rich, beautiful and promiscuous young woman whose sexuality is offensively ripe justifies the same fact of his sexual attraction: “In Angela you confronted sensual womanhood without remission. You smelled it, too” (78). That comment on sexual smell is not new for Sammler.

Stephen Greenblatt allows the strategy of speaking with the dead, as an ethnographer and writer speak with the living being while alive, so the reader / critic and New Historicist can speak with the writer through his text, thus placement the new historicist as a second interpreter. Thus a New Historicist tries to read the text of a past author who was present in his own time as an ethnographer. Eagleton in his book *The English Novel: An Introduction*, he remarks that this condition does not allow a New Historicist to be objective in his study of the work composed in remote past: “The New Historicism, while trying to understand history cannot be objective and we can never recover the past without our own present self modifying what used to be considered objective and stable” (574). Likewise, Jackson too speaks with the same canon as he writes:

Nevertheless, as readers of past literature, we are demonstrably decayed because we do not bring to it the experience that it required for its imaginative and intellectual realization in its own time; instead we bring the experience that is required for the realization of literature

in our time, an experience in which only fragments of the earlier experience survive. The consequence is in several respects analogous to the antique statue's loss of limbs. (38)

Just as an old and broken image needs repair to come in its previous condition, similarly the text can be actualized by the reader with his present perception because through this he tries to reconstruct the past with his imaginative faculty, while at the same time maintaining a close links with the present too. The suggestion being that the New Historicists lay emphasis on the necessity of awareness of the critic while analyzing a text because he belongs to present but has to read the text written in the past and has to reconstruct the past with two sorts of historicity, official and unofficial working parallel.

The narrative of Sammler shows that how his memories which did not fit into his own perception have altered the incidents of the novel. He is "a man of seventy-plus, and at leisure, wakes and prepares breakfast in his bedroom on Manhattan's West Side" (Bellow 45). It is early in the morning, but Sammler cannot sleep, partly because he is obsessed with the pickpocket he has seen at work on the bus he takes too. He notices that pickpocket as "a powerful Negro in a camel's-hair coat, dressed with extraordinary elegance" (48). He has cornered on that man which is going through an old man's wallet, "still in rapid currents with his heart, like an escaping creature racing away from him" (49). Sammler pulls the cord and gets off the bus, hoping that the pickpocket will not follow. He avoid then suddenly enter into a building and waits for a while, then makes his way to a hamburger joint where he orders a cup of tea. He does not see the pickpocket and thinks pickpocket has eluded him. "By now Sammler's greatest need was for his bed. But he knew something about lying low. He had learned in Poland, in the war, in forests, cellars, passageways,

cemeteries" (50). He fails to recognize and remember who exactly that pick pocket was? Sammler has seen the pickpocket at work several times since the first sighting, but when he tried to report to the police, he fails to report the exact incident. It is Sammler, however, who always found it difficult to unrust that incident of pick pocketing and perceived it as an issue. Sammler also fears that it will also happen to him, who will be "left with a lifetime of bitterness" - that is the reason, why he decided to suppress memories of that incident (50). Sammler's present situation, concerning his present state of mind, it is ironic to see. What he narrates is no more than invented narration. Moreover, Sammler's character falls rather in the category of the "social backdrop", or "cartoonist's doodle" (Webster 12).

Mr. Sammler's Planet is a frame story; a fact that readers know late in the plot. Part one, two, and three describes a fictional realistic universe, which is destroyed in the novel's epilogue where it is revealed that the novel's protagonist is Sammler. In the beginning, he explains how he has manipulated events to fit into his narrative intended to improve the damage of his life. The narrative, thus, entails a historical perspective, because it is self-consciously aware of its own status as fiction and automatically raises questions on the relationship between fiction and reality. The novel questions that what is considered the truth when fiction is presented as reality. Postmodern theory focuses on what history and literature share, rather than what separates them:

They have both been seen to derive their force more from verisimilitude than from any objective truth; they are both identified as linguistic construct, highly conventionalized in their narrative forms, and not at all transparent either in terms of language or structure; and

they appear to be equally intertextual, deploying the texts of the past within their own complex textuality. (Hutcheon 105)

In postmodern theory, history is not considered obsolete, but is rethought as a human construct. In other words, history is a factual representation rather than a fact. It does not deny that the past existed, it only argues that history only will be accessible through text: “We cannot know the past except through its texts: its documents, its evidence, even its eye-witness accounts are texts” (16). Historical facts will only be accessible through a representation; made available in textual form. Linda Hutcheon has coined novels that combine history with a historical perspective as ‘historiographic fiction’, because they implement a self-reflective perspective while claiming to portray historical events and personages. Hutcheon considers these novels not just metafictional, nor historical because they are both metafictionally self-reflexive while speaking about real historical realities (Hutcheon 5).

Mr. Sammler’s Planet is a historical novel because of its setting, which takes place in the past. It begins in 1935 in Poland, then moves on to World War II, and ends in contemporary time. Jie Han and Zhenli Wang argue that the novel is historical because of how “the fates of individuals are intermingled with the verisimilitude of history and society. And history, fact and fiction are knitted into the narrative framework” (136). What makes *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* different from the classic understanding of a historical novel is that Bellow offers more information than the historian. Bellow combines historical facts with fiction, therefore, automatically creating lines between fact and fiction. In this way he creates a new version of the whole by narrating the past in a new manner. As a result of this, Bellow provides a number of possibilities that would have been ignored by the historians, as these are not part of the historical truth. However, Han and Wang argue that these possibilities

are no less real than historical facts: “Those possibilities, whether they are real history of the past or not, are no less real in his fictionalized world” (137). Bellow, especially, blurs the lines between fact and fiction in the scenes where he depicts Sammler’s presentation of Second World War II. Here, he combines the historical event with his storytelling:

He began to speak of the mental atmosphere of England before the Second World War. The Mussolini adventure in East Africa, Spain in 1936. The Great Purges in Russia. Stalinism in France and Britain. Blum, Daladier, the People’s Front, Oswald Mosley. The mood of the English intellectuals. For this he needed no notes, he could easily what people had said and written. (32)

In their article, Han and Wange count that many of Sammler's depictions of war are influenced by his father’s experiences during the Second World War, which makes his methods similar to that of the subjective historians. While the historical facts may not be depicted mimetically, they are still historical facts because “in his fictional world, history becomes fictionalized. The writer’s design of plot and structure reflects his attitude towards history” (137). In that way, *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* becomes a historical novel with a postmodern perspective, because the intention is not to depict real life events mimetically, but to depict a representation, or a revision, rather, of the past in a new context. In the same way he appears as a unreliable to his description about history. He confesses “I? No. never. Believe me-no. It was a benefit for black children, just as I said. You must believe me, I wouldn’t put you into a con, I have too much regard for you, You may know it, or it may matter to you” (88).

The historical aspect that is added to the narrative in *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* creates a parallel between the storyline of Bellow’s novel and the construction of his

novel. In the construction of his novel, Bellow implements historical facts (particularly his aspect of World War II) in order to underline the history of World War II and Holocaust. Additionally, the historical aspect is added in the metafictional frame, because Bellow is using Sammler to make the reader aware of the choices he has made in the process of rewriting his own historical past. Sammler's presentation of World War II will never be factual and will always be a reconstruction of a factual event from the perspective of the present. "I don't know what happened in Mexico. The details don't matter. I only note the peculiarity that it is possible to be gay, amorous, intimate with holiday acquaintance" (254). The constructed nature of the depiction of World War II, therefore, serves as a parallel to Sammler's plot construction. Sammler can never factually represent his own historical past, but will again be a particular construction seeking to achieve a particular effect his relationship between history as an objective, external set of events and individual experience as subjective and fallible is an interesting tension. The historical novel use both the individual experience of the character with the historical context in order to create a multidimensional narrative as Hamilton explains "The historical novelist is required to give not just the bare bones of history, but something richer, more complete. In a way you want him to put the flesh back on the skeleton that is history" (12). The individual experience is the breathing flesh whilst the history is the sturdy skeleton and both novelists bring this metaphor alive in their novels.

Foucault considers history in the model of discursive knowledge. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, he rejects the traditional historians' tendency to read straightforward narratives of progress in the historical record: "For many years now," he writes,

Historians have preferred to turn their attention to long periods, as if, beneath the shifts and changes of political events, they were trying to reveal the stable, almost indestructible system of checks and balances, the irreversible processes, the constant readjustments, the underlying tendencies that gather force, and are then suddenly reversed after centuries of continuity, the movements of accumulation and slow saturation, the great silent, motionless bases that traditional history has covered with a thick layer of events. (3)

Foucault, by contrast, argues that one should seek to reconstitute not large "periods" or "centuries" but "phenomena of rupture, of discontinuity" (4). The problem, he argues, "is no longer one of tradition, of tracing a line, but one of division, of limits" (5). Instead of presenting a monolithic version of a given period, Foucault argues that we must reveal how any given period reveals "several pasts, several forms of connection, several hierarchies of importance, several networks of determination, several teleologies, for one and the same science, as its present undergoes change: thus historical descriptions are necessarily ordered by the present state of knowledge, they increase with every transformation and never cease, in turn, to break with themselves" (5). Foucault adopts the term "archaeology" to designate his historical method and he articulates what he means by that term by specifying how his method differs from both traditional history and the traditional history of ideas.

In *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, Sammler uses narrative in order to interpret the history, as an external set of events, he recreates history by using his story. Throughout the novel, the third person narration gives the readers a false sense of reassurance where at the end of the novel, it is exposed that it is in fact Sammler's perspective. Barnes argues "How are we, as readers, to believe in the validity of the innermost

thoughts and motivations of these characters when, as it turns out, they are told from the perspective of someone who has a clear interest in how we judge the story" (29). The distinct narrative perspective gives the reader a chance to experience history in different perspective based on the characters individual experience. However Sammler believed that unlike objective sense of history, his told stories was "under no obligation to the truth, he had promised no-one a chronicle" (280). He is not clearly present the link between histories and stories and it appears that neither he is telling the truths but they both work together in order to create meaning. History is created because someone has to give their account what has happened, how else one would know about the suffering of soldiers in World War II or the French Revolution and it is the person's individual experience is that account is from. The account of a German in the Holocaust and a Jew would be distinctly different but it is in literature that "the only place [Sammler] could be free" (280) to create what he wishes, whatever he wanted, it was a place he could reshape history. However, he discovers that "in later years, he regretted not being more factual, not providing himself with a store of raw material. I would have been useful to know what happened, what it looked like; who was there, what was said" (Bellow 280). His memory, his individual experience of historical incident does not compare to the objective and factual idea of history, it is that "raw material" (280).

Discursive nature of truth can be further explored through Sammler's character. Sammler is characterized as an old man, who cannot separate the fictive world from real life, so how he can interpret the real evidences of his past experience. It is just his intention to show the fictitious nature. In other words, he has decided to represent himself this way because it will give a particular effect. Nicol Finney characterizes Sammler as a man who lets art shape his life just as much as he shapes

that life into his art: “His observation of life around him is conditioned by the fictive world that holds his in its grip” (78). He is unexpected to find that the lecture is taking place in a large hall and not a small seminar room. He stands before them and began to speak of the mental atmosphere of England before the Second World War:

World War I fell in love with England. Most of that nonsense had been knocked out of him. He had reconsidered the whole question of Anglophilia, thinking skeptically about Salvador de Madariaga, Mario Praz, Andre Maurois and colonel Bramble. He knew the phenomenon. Still, confronted by the elegant brute in the bus he had seen picking a purse-the purse still hung open-he adopted an English tone. (Bellow 3)

Sammler perceives both the dream and reality in the same line. Sammler’s life is shaped around the books he reads then only he understands the world through familiar narratives. In the library, his first reaction is to understand the scene from a point of view he is already familiar with:

Though they were immobile, her immediate was that she had interrupted an attack, hand-to-hand fight. The scene was so entirely a realization of the worst fears that she sensed that her over-anxious imagination had projected the figures onto the packed spines of books. This illusion, or hope of one, was dispelled as his eyes adjusted to the gloom. (Bellow 28)

The misinterpretations of events that make her notice Sammler looking “so huge and wild” (Bellow 123) and Sammler previous mention of her as “a maniac” (Bellow 119) are indications that “Sammler is shaped by a melodramatic imagination that originates in the books he has read” (Finney 79). Sammler sketches on literature in all shapes of his life, which makes him, enable to untangle his life from the things he reads in his

books. Literature is intervened in every decision he makes and everything he perceives, causing him to misinterpret partial events.

The reader, however, does not have enough information to determine whether to believe Sammler and whether to stand on his side or not. For instance, Sammler did not explain how and why exactly he came to New York. There is a basic paradox in the way Bellow makes use of Sammler's voice. Even as Sammler denies the moral authority of the survivor, the logic of the novel depends on that very authority to sustain its deep criticisms of American society. Bellow elides the contradiction somewhat by forming Sammler a very untypical Polish Jew. We get information that he spent most of the interwar years as a journalist in London, palling around with English intellectuals and the Bloomsbury set. In particular, he claims that he was good friends with H.G. Wells, "who acts in several ways the novel's imaginative foil" (Bellow 173).

Indeed, for a man who survived the Holocaust, Sammler appears very little interested in social and political questions. The disaster he sees unfolding around him is spiritual, moral, and above all Sammler's view of his past is challenged only by his own thoughts about unreliability of memory. He does not have any other sources of information of his past than only his memories - no tangible records, and with people who could remember the same events as him he is either no longer in contact, or they are dead. So he does not able to find out much about his past anymore. Yet, with the strange inheritance, new questions arise. He does not have knowledge about holocaust nor about world war. He does not know anything about the situational context in which it was written, he does not know what prefaces and what follows. Yet he tries for its interpretation, especially of the last, unfinished sentence. At the point Sammler starts to think, whether his settling for a content, peaceable life was a good option.

“Yes indeed if Sammler had seen more clearly, acted more decisively, held to truer moral values, settled less easily for a passive peaceableness which he first called happiness and later contentment. If Sammler hadn’t been fearful, hadn’t counted on the approval of others for his own self-approval” (Barnes 88 – 89). As Sammler searches for tangible evidence of his past, his old feelings start to reappear and with them, long buried repressed memories. “Just when you think, everything is a matter of decrease, of subtraction and division, your brain, your memory may surprise you. As if it’s saying: Don’t imagine you can rely on some comforting process of gradual decline – life’s much more complicated than that” (Barnes 112). When his old feelings for his past renew, the old memories connected with it come up. All these memories are strongly connected with emotions, which he forgot thanks to his “instinct for self preservation” (Barnes 112).

Again, apart from political reading of the text, New Historicists also suggest that since literary text represents numerous voices and is discursive in nature is an innovative process of reading. But a ultimate methodology to be adopted and that best method is of dismantling the text which is the prominent feature of deconstruction.

This verifies the fact that after dismantling the texts has multiplicity of meaning. “On the one hand, therefore, historicism is suspicious of the stories the past tells about itself; on the other hand, it is equally suspicious of its own partisanship. It offers up both its past and its present for ideological scrutiny” (Hamilton, Introduction 3). This is because “the textuality of the text leads to its textuality is closer to deconstructive method of studying the text through its ‘polysemy’ and expanding traces” (Finney 223). Since text is the product of society and embodies it and hence contains multiple meanings as Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of ‘dialogic’ nature of text overlaps with this. Roger Webster says that language for Bakhtin has the potentiality

of multiplicity because language “for Bakhtin is not in any sense fixed and stable but always in a state of flux; meaning is never singular and uncontested but rather plural and contested” (40). According to Bakhtin language is dialogic and the text displays ‘many voiced’ and ‘heteroglossia.’

At the end of the novel Sammler finds a notebook left by his daughter Shula. We come learn more about the particular incident of his life through the note. For a time after Sammler returned from Israel with Shula, they lived together. However, she notices about his nerves "his claim for indemnity from the Bonn government was based upon damage to his nervous system as well as his eye" (Bellow 256). Shula agreed that he should move, and "told everyone that her father's lifework, his memoir of H.G. Wells" (Bellow 256). Yet “once all the questions are answered, the reader is left in the same state that Sammler is in the book’s final pages—floored at life’s essential mysteries, and frustrated that they cannot be relived” (Hartman 12). Sammler’s searching for answers about his past incidence caused reappearance of his repressed emotions and memories: it induced Sammler to revise his past actions and his way of thinking. “The terms which, in his inmost heart, each man knows. As I know mine. As all know. For that is the truth of it—that we all know, God that we know, that we know, we know, we know” (260). It removed Sammler’s protective shield of self-deception and brought a strong feelings of unrest and unreliability.

The theme of History in the novel discussed occurs on two levels – on the level of the narration and on the level of the plotline. In the narration the theme of memory is implemented by the unreliable narrator Sammler who tells story depending largely or exclusively on his subjective recollections of the past. Bellow essentially creates a plot with the intension of presenting how narratives are constructed by plot structures. He does this by creating a main character like Sammler, who is an ‘author’

himself. Sammler's story is autobiographical, however, with his manipulations of events we learn that he has actually created a plot structure, which has the purpose of achieving particular effects. Additionally, these evidents that he lets the plot actually produce events that never happened, again, emphasizing the constructed nature of his narrative. The different idea of control in the story serves to understand how all narratives are plot structures, which has the purpose of creating particular effects. Bellow has, for example, chosen to let Sammler end up with vascular madness, which lets him have an ethical proportion to his narrative. Readers are confronted with the intention that what seemed like a realistic storyline is not at all realistic, because we never know whether Sammler have forgotten certain events.

Memory in the plot is covered by the interrelation with other themes and by the importance of the theme for the story. As Sammler searches for tangible evidence of his past, his old feelings start to reappear and with them, long buried repressed memories. "Just when you think, everything is a matter of decrease, of subtraction and division, your brain; your memory may surprise you. As if it's saying: Don't imagine you can rely on some comforting process of gradual decline – life's much more complicated than that" (Bellow 112). When his old feelings for holocaust, the old memories related with it come up. All these memories are strongly connected with emotions, which he forgot due to "instinct for self preservation" (112). Therefore, suddenly he remembers Shula's dancing in a room and the feeling of intimacy between them, although earlier he said Shula never danced. He remembers the intimate moments of their life:

Oh! My dear girl, in spite of my years, I am a man of the modern age. You do not find David and Jonathan, Ronald and Oliver bosom buddies in these days. The man's company was very pleasant. He

seemed also to enjoy conversation with me. As for his views, he was just a mass of intelligent views. He expressed as many as he could, and at all times. Everything he said I found eventually in written form. He was like Voltaire, a graphomaniac. (Bellow 23)

At the end of the novel, Sammler finds out the reality that why Shula leaves him a notebook. We learn more about the circumstances of Sammler's blindness and mental insanity. Yet "once all the questions are answered, the reader is left in the same state that Sammler is in the book's final pages—floored at life's essential mysteries, and frustrated that they cannot be relived" (Bellow 76). Sammler's searching for answers about his past caused reappearance of his repressed emotions and memories: it provoked Sammler to revise his past actions and his way of thinking.

In *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, Mr. Sammler projects his life experience in a way of historical account. Mr. Sammler presents a dreary, hellish picture of New York of the late 1960's. Surrounded by muggers, pickpockets, and an assortment of hollow intellectuals, Sammler is convinced that the world has gone mad, that the human race has deteriorated into barbarism. However, he withdraws his own narration in the course of novel. He even claims that he is not sure about the incidents of WWII and holocaust. As a narrator, he tries to be honest, but he himself is aware of the unreliability of his memories and admits that he has no evidence to ground his story. It proves from his own confession that he does not know what happened in Mexico. He is unable to recall the past incident. For him, the details do not matter. He is concerned with the individual events so as to make his experience colorful. It is a clue for the readers about his unreliability. For the reader, the clues of Sammler's unreliability are his unwillingness to recall unpleasant memories or his search for the reader's compassion while recalling controversial matter. Being a holocaust survivor,

he has not provided accurate evidence for the readers to believe. His mysterious past actions appears on the scene. Sammler is induced to revise his notion of past. His feelings and memories from the past, which he deliberately forgot, reappears. In the last point of the novel he points at the incomprehensibility of truth. Thus; this novel, through the character of Sammler, explores the concept of New Historicism that truth is discursive in nature; it is just constructed. The recent of historical events involves memory and interpretation that resulting the inevitability of subjectivity and lack of stable truth.