‘FABULATION’ OF METANARRATIVES IN JULIAN BARNES’S NOVELS *METROLAND, FLAUBERT’S PARROT, A HISTORY OF THE WORLD IN 10 ½ CHAPTERS,* AND *ENGLAND, ENGLAND*

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ABSTRACT

‘FABULATION’ OF METANARRATIVES IN JULIAN BARNES’S NOVELS *METROLAND, FLAUBERT’S PARROT, A HISTORY OF THE WORLD IN 10 ½ CHAPTERS,* AND *ENGLAND, ENGLAND*

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The present thesis argues that the present era of post-postmodernism experiences a revival of revised metanarratives through ‘fabulation’, the process masterfully depicted in Julian Barnes’s novels *Metroland* (1980), *Flaubert’s Parrot* (1984), *History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (1989) and *England, England* (1998).

The age of postmodernism with its undermining irony, hopelessness, pessimism and the sense of the looming end could not but leave the world in a state of despair, characterised by a propagated rule of the simulacra and the subaltern, hybridism, uncertainty, absence and inconclusiveness. As a result, the world witnessed the appearance of various calls for the re-institution of metanarratives as the only cure to rescue mankind from continuous deferral of signification, which tends to feel secure only with a score of guiding narratives. The same holds true of Julian Barnes’s fiction. While many consider the writer’s works to be typically postmodern, it is far from being so, as alongside the propagation of multiplicity and flexibility of meaning, it

emphasises the existence of the Truth and the necessity to fabulate metanarratives, which are the only guiding poles in human progress through life in post-postmodernism.

Keywords: Post-postmodernism, metanarrative, fabulation, Julian Barnes

ÖZ

JULIAN BARNES'IN *METROLAND, FALUBERT'İN PAPAĞANI, 10 ½ BÖLÜMDE DÜNYA TARİHİ* VE *İNGİLETERE İNGİLETERE'YE KARŞI* ROMANLARINDA ÜST ANLATILARIN 'FABÜLASYONU'

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Mevcut tezin amacı, günümüzdeki post-postmodernizm'in, postmodernizm tarafından bozulmuş yadsınmış, 'fabülasyon' aracılığı ile iyileştirilmiş üst-anlatıların yeniden gözden geçirilmesini tartışmaktır. Julian Barnes'in *Metroland* (1980), *Flaubert'in Papağanı* (1984), *10 ½ Bölümde Dünya Tarihi* (1989) ve *İngiletere İngeletere'ye Karşı* (1998) romanlarında, çok başarılı bir biçimde tasvir edilen bu süreç incelecektir.

Postmodernizm çağı, sarsıcı ironisiyle, umutsuzluğuyla, kötümserliğiyle ve kaçınılmaz sonun geleceğinin neden olduğu hisle, dünya'yı, belirsizliğin neden olduğu önlenemez bir kedere terkediyor. Bir keder ki, ortaya çıkışını, simulakların ve bastırılmış olanın, melezin zaferinin, kesin olmayanın, farklılıkların, yokluğun, sonuçsuzluğun saklı propogandasına borçlu. Dolayısıyla, doğal olan, insanoğlunu bitmez tükenmez anlam boşluğundan kurtarmak için, üst anlatıların yeniden kurumlaşması zorunlu bir takım çağrıları olarak meydana geliyor, ki doğal olanın bu belirişi, ancak ütopik anlatıların başarısının ortaya çıkması ile güven duygusuna vesile olabilir.

Julian Barnes'ın kurgusu da aynı özellikleri barındırıyor. Bir çokları yazarın yapıtlarını postmodernin tipik bir örneği olarak dikkate alırken, aslında böyle olmaktan oldukça uzak, bunun ötesinde yazarın asıl vurgulamak istediği post-postmodernizm aşamasında anlam farklılığının çeşitliliğine rağmen tek bir doğrunun varlığı, üst-anlatıların ve 'fabülasyonun' insanoğlunun yaşam sürecindeki rehberlik rolünün önemidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Post-postmodernizm, üst-anlatı, 'fabülasyon', Julian Barnes

To My Grandparents

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"[…] the technical term is fabulation.
You make up a story to cover the facts
you don't know or can't accept.
You keep a few true facts and spin a new story."
(Barnes, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* 109)

"What cooking is about?" ("Now They Tell Me" 3) - questioned Julian Barnes in one of his prominent articles on the nature of cooking and the trials of the home cook, which form part of the novelist's recent book *The Pedant in the Kitchen*. "Cooking is the transformation of the uncertainty (the recipe) into certainty (the dish) via fuss" (3). This is exactly how one can describe the condition of mankind at what seems to be already the post-postmodern stage of its development, marked by a quasi-Lyotardian-like incredulity and growing scepticism, but this time, towards the extreme subversion, difference, decentrement, flexibility, ambivalence and deferral characteristic of the previous, postmodern epoch of cross-connected references, dread of metanarratives, deconstruction of theories and never-ending search for antidotes to universal meaning.

The age of postmodernism with its undermining irony, hopelessness, pessimism and the sense of the looming end could not but leave the world in a state of despair, characterised by a propagated rule of the simulacra and the subaltern[1], hybridity, uncertainty, absence and anti-theoretical

[1] Subaltern - a term that "suggests a methodological orientation that opens up the study of logics of subordination of minor and underrepresented groups (*Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*).

inconclusiveness. Yet, philosophising of this kind seems to have turned against its own progenitor, as the postmodern discourse, aimed to destroy the very notion of metanarratives, evolved into a full-blown metanarrative itself, with all its major discourses institutionalised and included in totally theoretical dictionaries and encyclopaedias. Hence, as Linda Hutcheon – formerly a sound advocate of postmodern ideas – puts it in *Postmodern Afterthoughts*,

> The postmodern does indeed appear to be a twentieth century phenomenon, that is, a thing of the past. Now fully institutionalised, it has its canonised texts, its anthologies, primers and readers, its dictionaries and its histories. We could even say it has its own publishing houses. A *Postmodernism for Beginners* now exists; teachers' guides proliferate. What we have witnessed in the last ten or fifteen years is not only the institutionalisation of the postmodern, but its transformation into […] a counter-discourse, and even more specifically, perhaps the generic counter-discourse of the last years of the century. (5)

Consequently, with the course of time postmodernism happened to undermine its basic founding principles.

As a consequence, there arose a sharp need for a revision of the slowly deteriorating values of the declining postmodern era, as the celebrated scepticism towards metanarratives, introduced by Jean Francois Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, the heralded death of God, History, Identity, Love, Novel, etc. left mankind with nothing to be alienated from:

> The cause of tragedy has thus disappeared, just as has the possibility of utopia. Quotationality instead of self-expression, simulation, instead of truth, the play with signs instead of the reflection of reality, difference instead of contradiction: such is the post-utopian world, […] fascinated by its own secondariness, its propensity to use everything as a material for the ultimate and infinite game. (Epstein 4)

What is more, postmodernism became so indulged in its own vast terminology, and so gripped with its dislike of metanarratives, as to have "no solid ground for distinguishing among the more or less preferred of the [celebrated] 'mininarratives' for which it provided space" (Hayhoe 426) and which it brought to the fore of consideration.

As a result, one saw the appearance of various calls for the re-institution of metanarratives as 'the' cure necessary to rescue humankind from the danger of infinite signification, which tends to feel secure only with the presence of a score of utopian life-narratives. In this respect, a comment made by Ruth Hayhoe (once a stark defender of the postmodern thought) at the annual meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society held in April 1999 seems logical:

> "I think I've come around to [believe] that we need metanarratives after all to form a coherent moral and epistemological[2] framework. My reason for taking up the retrospective theme of redeeming modernity is to explore the possibility that metanarratives could be a helpful vehicle for reflecting on the self and listening to others

[2] Eepistemological – a term referring to "the branch of philosophy that inquires into the nature and the possibility of knowledge. It deals also with the scope and limits of human knowledge, and with how it is acquired and possessed. It also investigates related notions, such as perception, memory, meaning, proof, evidence, belief and certainty (Mautner 194).

> and are not necessarily 'totalizing' expressions rooted in essentialist philosophy[3]" (424).

Statements of this kind are multiple – many evolving into attempts to construct a new multidimensional theory of post-postmodernism, aiming to analyse various levels and domains of contemporary social reality. For instance, one may come across such novel terms as performatism, redemptionism, trans-utopianism, trans-quotationality, the age of synthesis, the age of faith, the epoch of story-making, and so on - all aimed to elaborate an illuminating theory of the present age. In this respect, in 1995 the landscape architect Tom Turner published a book entitled *City as Landscape: A Post Post-modern View of Design and Planning* promoting a post-postmodern turn in urban planning. Turner criticizes the postmodern position of "anything goes" (9) and suggests that "the built environment professions are witnessing the gradual dawn of a post-postmodernism that seeks to temper reason with faith" (9). To be more precise, Turner argues for the use of "timeless organic and geometrical patterns" (9) in urban planning.

Similarly, in 1999 the Russian-American Slavist Mikhail Epstein issued a book *Russian Postmodernism. New Perspectives on Post-Soviet Culture*, in which he advocated his belief that postmodernist aesthetics will eventually become entirely conventional and provide the foundation for a new, non-ironic kind of poetry, which he describes using the prefix 'trans':

> In considering the names that might possibly be used to designate the new era following 'postmodernism', one finds that the prefix 'trans' stands out in a special way. The last third of the 20th century developed under the sign of 'post', which signalled the demise of such concepts of

[3] Essentialist philosophy – a branch of philosophy propagating that "we can have a direct intellectual intuition into the nature of things, which comes to expression in definitions and constitutes knowledge in the proper sense" (Mautner 199).

> modernity as ‘truth’ and ‘objectivity’, ‘soul’ and subjectivity’, ‘utopia’ and ‘ideality’, ‘primary origin’ and ‘originality’, ‘sincerity’ and ‘sentimentality’. All these concepts are now being reborn in the form of ‘trans-subjectivity’, ‘trans-idealism’, ‘trans-utopianism’, ‘trans-originality’, ‘trans-lyricism’, ‘trans-sentimentality’, etc. (467)

In 2000 the American cultural theorist Eric Gans elaborated the term post-millennialism to refer to the epoch following postmodernism. The scholar treats postmodernism in terms of “victimary thinking” (56), based on a non-negotiable ethical opposition between perpetrators and victims arising out of the experience of Auschwitz and Hiroshima. According to Gans, the politics of postmodernism arises from identifying with the “peripheral victim and disdaining the utopian centre occupied by the perpetrator” (58). Post-millennialism, in its turn, is marked by the denial of victimary thinking and the acquirement of a “non-victimary dialogue” (61) that will “diminish […] the amount of resentment in the world” (61).

A similar line of reasoning may be applied to the work of the German-American Slavist Raoul Eshelman, entitled *Performatism, or the End of Postmodernism*, in which the scholar coins the term ‘performatism’ to be applied to the name of the epoch following postmodernism. According to Eshelman, the aim of performatism is to “bring about a unified [and] aesthetically mediated experience of transcendence” (8) reflected in works of art forcing viewers to identify with plain, mediocre characters or situations and to experience beauty, love, belief and transcendence under particular, synthetic circumstances.

In addition, the radio talk-show host Jesse Thorn elaborated a new movement, which came to be known as ‘New Sincerity’, promoting good feeling in opposition to postmodern irony. As an example of New Sincerity Thorn cites

the famous motorcyclist Evel Knievel, whose stunts bewilder one's mind and cannot be taken ironically.

Hence, though the above attempts to define post-postmodernism may often seem to be diverse, the core of their doctrines remains markedly similar – by adhering to the self-reflexive methods engendered by postmodernism, to strive for the rule of a non-oppressive truth in the face of postmodern ambiguity. As a result, we arrive at a sort of a symbiosis of modernist and postmodernist values. Therefore, the agenda among the scholars of post-postmodernism is the resurrection of metanarratives after their postmodern death, no longer as a social project with claims of transforming the world, but as a new intensity of life experience and a broader horizon for the individual.

Consequently, one might conclude that the modernist age, of "'one way, one truth, […]', is dead and gone. The postmodernist age of 'anything goes' is on the way out. Reason can take us a long way but it has limits. So, let us embrace post-postmodernism" (Turner 8) with its propagation of the Truth and ultimate meaning via self-reflexive processes inherited from postmodernism, allowing one to construct new men-made metanarrives full of down-to-earth meaning against the background of the always there objective truth. At this point, if we come back to the opening quotation belonging to Julian Barnes, post-postmodernism *is* the master *dish* that is prepared according to the uncertain *recipe* of postmodernism through the self-reflexive *fuss*.

As a result, a comment made by Vanessa Guignery – a devout critic of Julian Barnes's fiction – with regards to the nature of the novelist's works becomes comprehensible:

> Most of his [Julian Barnes's] novels and short stories show a proclivity for hybridity, advocating multiplicity and decompartmentalisation, his books blur and challenge the borders that separate existing genres, texts, arts and languages. Such a subversion of generic conventions is combined with an oscillation between the celebration and the lionisation of the literary past, and both strategies manifest themselves as possible modes of replenishment of the cultural legacy ("History in Question(s)" 60).

Therefore, though many may view the novelist's body of works as a typical example of postmodern fiction, it is more than that, as it manifests apparent faith in the existence of Truth, the obtainability of meaning through the fundamental revision of old master narratives, empowering the individual with a certain degree of optimism for the future. Thus, it is Julian Barnes himself who - in the interview with Vanessa Guignery - makes a confession:

> It's no good just lying back and saying "Well, we'll never work it out" and it's no good saying "Of course, we understand history; all we have to do is apply the following theories or the following scientific principles or Marxist ideology, whatever." What we should do eventually is believe that truth is obtainable. History may not be 56 per cent true or 100 per cent true, but the only way to proceed from 55 to 56 is to believe that you can get to a hundred. (Guignery, "History in Question(s)" 65)

Accordingly, Julian Barnes demonstrates a clearly post-postmodern orientation in his fiction, especially in his treatment of metanarratives as the only cure making one's existence truly meaningful. Consequently, as Julian Barnes confesses to Vanessa Guignery, "devoid of the illusion of a full story" (64) the human being embarks on the road of story-telling, creating its own, new version of the world through a distinct set of novel metanarratives:

> [The human mind] fabulates and convinces itself that fabulation is as true and concrete as what it "really" knows. Then it coherently links the real and the totally imagined in a plausible narrative. (64)

Hence, we face a hermeneutical circle – the simultaneous eradication of old coercive universal narratives and an inescapable generation of new, non-obligating ones, providing an altered explanation of the world. Therefore, it is 'fabulation' (to implement the term coined by Julian Barnes in *History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*) or story-making that lies at the heart of the emergence of the new metanarratives of the contemporary epoch.

For this reason, the present thesis argues that the present era of post-postmodernism experiences the revival of modified metanarratives through 'fabulation', the process masterfully presented in Julian Barnes's fiction as indispensable in the ongoing search for truth and a meaningful existence. The thesis will elaborate its own theory of post-postmodernism and fabulation, and examine its key characteristics and major types. What is more, the work will apply the constructed theory of post-postmodern fabulation to a structural and thematic examination of Julian Barnes's four novels *Metroland* (1980), *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984), *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (1989) and *England, England* (1998).

At this stage it seems suitable to cite Julian Barnes again, but this time reflecting on the possible types of cooking methods:

> I tried the New Easy Method a few times, and there was certainly nothing wrong with it that I can remember. But somehow I drifted back to the traditional technique: maybe I associated the dish too indelibly with unremitting effort at the hob-face, and missed the anxiety. A while later, we went to supper with our friend and found him preparing a risotto – stirring away at the old-

> fashioned, unlidded version. “So what about that system where you just pour in all the stock and leave the lid on?” “Oh”, he replied, “I don’t do it like that anymore,” as if surprised that anyone did. (“Now They Tell Me” 1)

In this respect, the idea of devoting the thesis to a profound examination of Julian Barnes’s works came after completing one of the author’s most celebrated books, *Flaubert’s Parrot* (nominated for Booker Prize in 1984). It is a novel which to an unprepared eye may seem to be a biography of Gustave Flaubert. Nevertheless, it is more than that, as it subverts the notion of a traditional biography through reflecting on, as Barnes puts it, “how strong and authentic you can make a narrative when you aren’t having anything invented in it” (“Julian Barnes in Conversation” 259). It also promotes the notions of the elusiveness of the past, ambiguity and unverifiability of fact. What is more, according to Barnes,

> It’s a novel about love: how the love of art compares with the love of a human being, and […] it’s a novel about grief, it’s a novel about a man whose inability to express his grief and his love is transposed into an obsessive desire to recount to the reader everything the narrator [Geoffrey Braithwaite] knows and has found out about Gustave Flaubert, love for whom is a more reliable constant in his life than has been love for [his wife] Ellen. (“Julian Barnes in Conversation” 262)

The novel abounds in instances of fabulation of metanarratives, which are presented through postmodern *fuss*, which, nevertheless, reaffirms the existence of the ultimate truth, the inaccessible nature of which leaves us perplexed and thoughtful. Hence, to paraphrase Barnes, “as a reader of an impressive novel I had a natural human curiosity about who made it” (“Julian Barnes, Etc.” 2), how and why, and what was going to follow. What is more, the transcript of Robert Birnbaum’s interview with the famous novelist

radically changed the angle of this study's perception of Barnes's works - originally no different from the modish postmodern approach:

> Every so often someone writes an article claiming the death of the novel, "Why write novels when you can have this, when you can have that?" And novels go on being written and read, it seems to me, in increasing numbers, and in increasing popularity. I don't see it actually. And I think this very diversity of the – if you're talking about the death of the novel in English – the very diversity of it is all the better for it. (Barnes, "Robert Birnbaum Interviews Julian Barnes" 1)

Therefore, Barnes's overt rejection of the idea of the death of the novel, accompanied by his simultaneous celebration of diversity required for the dynamic development of a uniform genre, served as an impetus to examine the possible post-postmodern orientation of Barnes's fiction in the present thesis.

Hence, the first work to be discussed in the study is *Metroland* (1980) – Barnes's neophyte novel. Though often considered to be a "traditional coming-of-age story" (Guignery, "History in Question(s)" 59), it is more than that, as the work draws a parallel between the process of personal maturity and overall human onto-epistemological[4] development. The novel depicts the course of the 'growing up' of its two main characters - Chris and Toni. In doing so, Barnes draws extensively from the philosophy of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, who attempt to "decentre and liquidate the bourgeois, humanist subject [presented by Chris], [by rejecting] the modernist notion of a unified, rational, and expressive subject, and attempt to make possible the emergence of new types of decentred subjects [presented by Toni], liberated from what they see to be the terror of unity, and free to become dispersed

[4] Onto-epistemological – a term referring to the modes of being (from 'ontology' – "the general theory of being as such" (Mautner 442)) and knowing (from 'epistemology').

and multiple" (Best and Kellner 78). Nevertheless, the conclusion of the novel seems to convey a clearly post-postmodern afterthought, as it is Chris (outspokenly bourgeois and thoroughly 'commodified'), who becomes the true post-postmodern subject; as opposed to the utterly decentred Toni, who gets close to being dissolved in postmodern relativity.

In addition, one may apply Frederic Jameson's work *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) to the treatment of *Metroland*. Thus, Jameson "rejects the uncritical poststructuralist claim that the world is non-representable, to insist that while we may never perfectly or completely comprehend it, we still live in a 'mappable external world' whereby we can gain significant knowledge of social reality" (Best and Kellner 190). Indeed, *Metroland* is saturated with a rich topography of London suburbia – Barnes attacks the reader with names of streets, rivers, stations, and housing blocks.

The significance of the ideas elaborated in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (1989) is hard to overestimate, as it is in this novel that Julian Barnes first introduces the term 'fabulation' – 'the master narrative' of this thesis. The novel consists of ten loosely connected chapters and a "Parenthesis", in which Barnes expresses his private thoughts on the nature of love, truth and history. The work inquires into the "very possibility, nature, and use of historical knowledge" (Wesseling 73). The author investigates the boundaries between fiction and history, pointing at the discursive and narrative dimension of history, and reflects on the possibility of seizing the past through memoirs, archives, letters and artefacts. Barnes questions the interrelation between recorded history and political power, history and religion, pure faith and religious fundamentalism, as well as the representation of history in art. Furthermore, though "access to the original past is deemed impossible, Julian Barnes does not deny the possibility of

valid, authentic historical truth. [The novelist] subverts the notion of objective truth, but then reinstalls it in order to try and make sense of history" (Guignery, "History in Question(s)" 62). Thus, the writer emphasises the importance of post-postmodern fabulated metanarratives for a life of meaning, made possible via one's unyielding belief in the *a priori* existence of the original truth. Hence, to transform Barnes's words, "if [*Flaubert's Parrot*] is an upside down, informal piece of novel-biography, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* is a similar sort of upside down, informal piece of novel-history" ("Julian Barnes in Conversation" 259).

The last novel to be employed in the analysis of newly-fabulated metanarratives is *England, England* (1998). The work centres round Martha Cochrane's life story, commencing in the character's early childhood and coming to an end at the dusk of the heroine's existence. As far as the gist of the novel is concerned,

> The initial idea was to play the private life – the search for truth and authenticity in the private life through a search for love – against the large farcical satirical whatever-you-like-to-call-it public story of fabrication, falsification, replication, and so on, and to run the one through another. (Barnes, "Robert Birnbaum Interviews Julian Barnes" 3)

It is the persona of an arch-capitalist Sir Jack Pitman that is central for the development of the novel, as it is Pitman who is responsible for turning the Isle of Wight into a theme park named 'England, England' – a sort of Baudriallardian-like simulation of the authentic English civilization, which by the end of the novel seems to eradicate the basic reality of England itself.

The novel draws heavily on Baudrillard's work *Simulations and Simulacra*, claiming that "art is dead and reality in the age of mechanical, electronic and

digital reproduction has somehow been absorbed by its own hi-tech self-representations" (Greaney 140). Hence, Barnes's work attempts to answer the question of how one perceives and constructs history in the epoch when the borderline between authenticity and replication has been demolished. Nevertheless, despite the presence of various postmodern elements in the text, the novel makes a particular post-postmodern emphasis on the fact that any society – whether real (Anglia) or simulated (England, England) – will sooner or later fabulate its own set of metanarratives, so as to perceive itself as a unified, coherent and mighty whole, guided by a devout belief in a grand and non-coercive truth.

Thus, the overall choice of novels has been dictated by their overall renown in the literary circles, as well as the discovery of a post-postmodern orientation of Julian Barnes's fiction, followed by the consequent resolution to employ these novels for the construction of an original theory of contemporaneity, presenting the present age of '-posts' as the *age of Fabulation*.

In this respect, rather than pursuing the "authentic chaos from which any work of art tends to be created" (Barnes, "Julian Barnes in Conversation" 266), the structure of the thesis is going to be based on a linear order. Therefore, to quote Julian Barnes once more, it would resemble

> The way dentists build up bridges in your mouth: they have certain pins which they put in certain teeth in certain places, and then, on that, once they've got those in place, they know that they can build a solid structure. Those are five or six of the posts on which the rest of the structure can rest. (Barnes, "Julian Barnes in Conversation" 267)

Hence, with a steadfast adherence to the thesis statement of the whole work, which, on the basis of Julian Barnes's novels, advocates the primality of

fabulation for the construction of meaningful existence, the study opens with a theoretical chapter (chapter two), which is comprised of three subsections and elaborates an original general theory of meaning in the light of human progress through the periods of modernism, postmodernism and post-postmodernism, and drawing on the earlier findings of Leo Tolstoy in *Confession*, Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Will to Power*, Frederic Jameson in *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, and Dennis Ford in *The Search for Meaning*. Thus, the first section of the chapter will analyse the reasons for the eventual deterioration of the modern and, subsequently, postmodern thought in the course of mankind's search for meaning. The second section will introduce the idea of post-postmodernism and arguments claiming the necessity to develop a new, multidimensional and comprehensive theory of the contemporary era. Furthermore, it will examine the on-going philosophical debate on the nature of post-postmodernity, and close with an elaboration of a theory of post-postmodernism and fabulation. The third section, in its turn, will investigate the etymology of the concept 'metanarrative', analyse a never-declining popular need of life-narratives, and disclose a significant change in the essence of metanarratives taking place at the stage of post-postmodernism.

The main body of the thesis will comprise five chapters. For this reason, chapter three will scrutinise the key differences between postmodern and post-postmodern fiction, define the overall orientation of Julian Barnes's works and examine the controversy surrounding the concept of the 'Barnesian novel'. Chapters four, five, six and seven will concentrate on the consecutive structural and thematic analysis of Barnes's *Metroland*, *Flaubert's Parrot*, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* and *England, England* in the light of the theory of post-postmodernism and fabulation.

The conclusion will summarise the chief findings made in the preceding chapters, and weigh them against the thesis statement. The conclusion will pronounce its verdict on whether the current epoch of post-postmodernism, fictionally constructed in Julian Barnes's novels *Metroland* (1980), *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984), *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (1989) and *England, England* (1998), experiences the rebirth of renewed metanarratives through the process of fabulation, based on the belief in the *a priori* existence of the Truth.

CHAPTER 2

THE THEORY OF POST-POSTMODERNISM

2.1 THE QUESTION OF MEANING AND THE CRISIS OF MODERNISM AND POSTMODERNISM

> "The change in codes and the barometrical fall
> in lexical dignity is at least one index of the displacement of
> traditional aesthetics and the transformation
> of the cultural sphere in modern times."
> (Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* 298)

The question "Why?" – we are born with it, brought up with it, we dread it, scorn it, distrust it, but, nevertheless, find ourselves constantly brooding over it. Thus, the moment of innocence vanishes with the first gulp of air penetrating the lungs of a newborn, making his mind twitch with wonder at the initial pain from breathing. Furthermore, the query becomes particularly manifest as soon as we contract a fatal disease or lose a loved one, shaking off the profound 'intoxication' with the familiarized, pre-fabricated and ready to hand answers offered by culture, simplifying, but, nonetheless, smothering our existence. In fact, there is a certain aura of inescapability surrounding the question challenging meaning, no matter what the degree of mistrust, or, on the contrary, blind assurance in holding the key to eternal ontological queries really is. The truth is, as Dennis Ford puts it in the famous work *The Search for Meaning*, "that we cannot take our world for granted, because we find ourselves wondering why there is something rather than nothing, we insist on the answer to the question 'How do people – and, in particular, how do I – invest life with meaning?'" (xxii), thus bringing the stage of intoxication (to

implement the term coined by Ford) with pseudo-meanings to a seeming close. The paths and trails towards the hidden answer are as lengthy as the overall human odyssey in the universe. Therefore, meaning becomes "not only something we once had but have now lost; meaning is also something toward which we are always moving" (Ford xxii).

Consequently, as soon as 'the' question is posed, our life, full of clichés and pre-fabrications, faces the threat of being absorbed by the gulf of meaninglessness, as the whole array of "human forms of instincts" (Ford 8), intoxications, delusions and disguises forged by culture, so as to provide mankind with a score of pseudo-meanings and to conceal the underlying universe in all its grandness, might and miraculousness, is being destroyed. Therefore, as Rudolf Otto sees it in *The Idea of the Holy*, it is

> the terror of the world, the feeling of overwhelming awe, wonder, and fear in the face of creation – the miracle of it, the *mysterium tremendum et fascinosum* of each single thing, of the fact that there are things at all, the feeling of inferiority in the face of the massive transcendence of creation, […] the real creature feeling before the crushing and negating miracle of Being" (49)

that makes us either come back to delusion, shaking off the necessity to seek, or else soberly linger on the brink of meaninglessness in a desperate attempt to answer the question "Why?". This makes us "simultaneously worms and gods" (Maslow 119), as our face may be "godlike in its miraculousness, [in its desire to seek the truth], but lacks the godlike power to know what it means, the godlike strength to have been responsible for its emergence" (Becker 55).

Nevertheless, the stage of intoxication can rarely be returned to once the next stage of 'sobriety' has been achieved, as the impact from the seen, "marks one as irreversibly an 'outsider', alienated and a step removed from social

conventions" (Ford 5). What is more, the exposure to the naked truth devoid of delusions and shielding constructs fostered by culture, including cultural symbols or rituals, often begets emotional disturbance. Thus, "whenever cultural symbols fail, and we are exposed to the truth, our condition is close to madness" (Ford 6). As a result, the former state of intoxicated blindness can never be returned to ever after.

In this respect, the innate failure of the human mind to perceive the ultimate truth, as well as one's refusal to be content with the consequential idea of meaninglessness of existence, makes one seek for deeper truths. Hence, disillusioned with the taken-for-granted and stale truths employed at the stage of intoxication, and disenchanted by the impotence to answer the question "Why?" at the stage of sobriety due to the inborn limitations of human psyche, the mind, nonetheless, longs for "another level of Truth beyond that first level of disillusionment" (Ford 6), for a qualitatively novel system of ideas and powers - but this time being fully aware of its constructed nature. As a consequence, we enter Dennis Ford's stage of 'longing' for revised truths, though still reluctant to admit our weakness and the resulting necessity to rely on something that transcends us, on some systems of beliefs in which we are embedded and which support us. In this connection, it seems suitable to cite Ernest Becker, who in his prominent opus *The Denial of Death* asserted that

> Man [can] strut and boast all he wants, but he really draws his 'courage to be' from a god, a string of sexual contests, a Big Brother, a flag, the proletariat, and the fetish of money and the size of bank balance. […] We enter symbiotic relationships in order to get the security we need, in order to get relief from our anxieties, our aloneness and helplessness; but these relationships also bind us, they enslave us even further because they support the lie we have fashioned. So we strain against them in order to be more free. The irony is that we do this

> straining uncritically, in a struggle within our own armour, as it were. (56)

Hence, Ford's stage of longing may also be named as the stage of 'uncritical straining' against consciously constructed systems and artificial categories of cognition, deliberately forged to protect mankind from the realization of the innate impotence to oppose the Truth *per se*, along with the terror that comes from the realization of the true human condition, and the threat of being engrossed into meaninglessness. Thus, the only truth that becomes available to men is the synthetically constructed truth of metanarratives and categories of thought, instilling mankind with the power to go on and to become a master of one's existence, while the Truth *per se* continuously remains inaccessible.

Nevertheless, though Dennis Ford masterfully expands on and applies the terms 'intoxication', 'sobriety' and 'longing' to the stages of human search for meaning, which allows him to develop a unified theory of meaning, he was not the first to coin these terms. In fact, it was Leo Tolstoy, who provided a metaphorical description of the human epistemological progress through life, based on the moments of intoxication, sobriety and longing in the famous work *Confession* (1882):

> If a fairy had come and offered to fulfil my every wish, I would not have known what to wish for. If in moments of intoxication, I should have not desires but the habits of old desires, in moments of sobriety I knew that it was all a delusion, that I really desired nothing. I did not even want to discover the truth anymore because I had to guess what it was. […] Had I been like a man who lives in a forest from which he knows there is no way out, I might have been able to go on living, but I was like a man lost in the forest who was terrified by the fact that he was lost, like a man who was rushing about, longing to find his way and knowing that every step was leading him to a deeper

> confusion, and yet who could not help rushing about. (26-33)

Tolstoy's work deals with various attempts to unearth answers to the philosophical questions: "What will come out of my life?" and "What is the meaning of life?", without answers to which existence to him was not possible. Yet, Tolstoy was unable to find an acceptable solution to any of these questions, and turned to religion as the only domain containing the key to true answers. As a result, Tolstoy's account remained to be just a masterfully constructed metaphorical description of the human pilgrimage down to the roots of the question "Why?", while the terms coined to define the epistemological quest did not receive any further treatment.

Likewise, it was the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche's discussion of the human need for artifice and falsification in *The Will to Power* (1901) that formed the basis for Ford's third stage of human search for meaning and, hence, was extensively cited by Ford in his work:

> The will to logical truth can be carried through only after a fundamental falsification of all events is assumed. From which it follows that a drive rules here that is capable of employing both means, firstly falsification, then the implementation of its own point of view. […] The inventive logic that invented categories laboured in the service of our needs, namely our need for security, for quick understanding on the basis of signs and sounds, the means of abbreviation: "substance", "subject", "object", "being", "becoming" have nothing to do with metaphysical truths. […] There came a point when one collected them together, raised them to consciousness as a whole – and when one commanded them, i.e., when they had the effect of a command – from then on, they counted as *a priori*, as beyond experience, as irrefutable. And yet perhaps they represent nothing more than the expediency of a certain race and species – their utility alone is their "truth". […] [Therefore], the fictitious world of subject, substance, "reason", etc., is needed - there is in us a

> power to order, simplify, falsify, artificially distinguish. "Truth" is the will to be master over the multiplicity of sensations [that otherwise overpower us]. […] [Furthermore, "truth" is not something there, that might be found or discovered – but something that must be created and that gives a name to a process, or rather to a will to overcome that has in itself no end – introducing truth, as a *processus in infinitum*, as active determining – not a becoming conscious of something that is in itself firm and determined. It is a word for a "will to power". (Nietzsche 512 – 552)

Thus, Nietzsche underlines the constant human need of falsification in order to create the human truth, while the truth *per se* remains constantly inaccessible. In this respect, this thesis proposes to make a correction to the name given by Ford to the third stage of human search for meaning, and to go back to Nietzschean terminology, as more concrete and explicit. Therefore this thesis renames Ford's stage of 'longing' and 'uncritical straining' into the stage of Nietschean 'falsification', or, to be more precise, the stage of 'conscious fabulation'[5] of human truths, be it metanarratives or multiple ontological and epistemological categories. The stage is radically different from the blindness of intoxication, due to its mature recognition of the existent falsification/ invention, coupled with an inescapable conscious addiction to it.

At this point this thesis would like to propose its own theory of meaning, based on Denis Ford's onto-epistemological stages and, yet, broadening the scope of its application. It will advocate the existence of a tight interconnection between the three Fordian stages of the human quest for meaning and the foundations of modernism, postmodernism and post-postmodernism. As a result, it seems suitable to start off with the following scheme, outlining the basic logic of our conjecture:

[5] The formulation elaborated by this thesis.

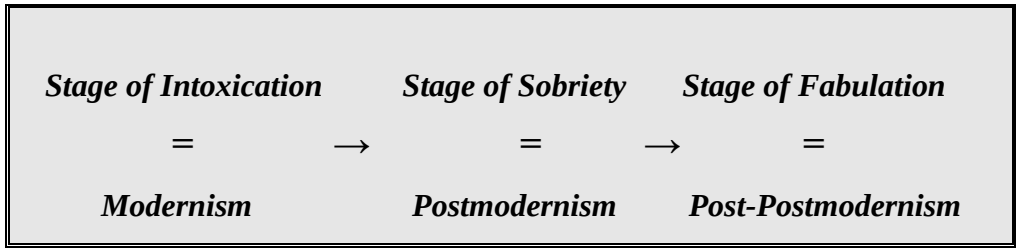

Figure 1: **The Basic Pattern of Human Onto-Epistemological Development**

The above investigation into the metamorphosis of the mind haunted by the question "Why?" makes one suppose that Dennis Ford's treatment of human search for meaning has a very narrow scope of application, and, consequently, needs to be revised. In this respect, the study argues that the reasons bringing to existence the stages of intoxication, sobriety and fabulation may be applied with a similar degree of success to identifying the reasons for the emergence of modernism, postmodernism and post-postmodernism. Thus, the workings of an individual psyche may be transferred onto the *raison d'être* of these three epochs.

Hence, it seems necessary to start with the era of modernism, its rise and subsequent crisis. In this respect, the majority of textbooks depict the epoch as the "era of the bourgeoisie, of the primacy of industrial production, where […] the imperatives of production determined social life" (Kellner 131). Nevertheless, the modernist period was much more than mass intensification of production and capitalist logic; it was an era of mechanical amplification of energies by individuals intoxicated with personal self-sufficiency and intellect, and operating in a given, set and isolated universe. Thus, according

to Charles Olson, commenting on the essence of the modernist Western world in *Human Universe and Other Essays*:

> Western culture closed itself against true experience, against life's authenticity, because of its orientation on (originally Greek) rationalism, with its obsessive and relentless intellectualization of all human experience. (5)

Indeed, modernism was a trend of thought affirming the power of human beings to create, improve, and reshape their environment, "with the aid of scientific knowledge, technology and practical experimentation" (Berman 16), encouraging the re-examination of every aspect of existence, from commerce to philosophy, "with the goal of finding that which was holding back the process, and replacing it with new, progressive and, therefore, better ways of reaching the same end" (16). As a consequence, modernism encompassed the works of thinkers who rebelled against the nineteenth century academic and historicist traditions, "believing the 'traditional' forms of art, architecture, literature, religious faith, social organisation and daily life becoming outdated" (17).

What is more, modernism represented the residual belief in the supremacy of logic and scientific rationalism "that assumes reality as a whole and can be rendered and comprehended, that ideas and concepts are determinate, and that human beings share a level of universal experience with one another" (*Encyclopaedia of Postmodernism* 251). Indeed, the explicit goal of many modernists was to re-create a totalizing and all-inclusive system that addressed the fundamental, universal issues of human experience. As such, "modernism uncritically adopted scientific rationalism, logic, and classical Greek philosophy in an effort to reclaim a transcendental signifier that re-established

a sense of transcendent meaning"[6] (*Encyclopaedia of Postmodernism* 252). Thus, science and scientific rationality came to be seen as the source of logic and stability, while "basic primitive sexual and unconscious drives were taken as the basic emotional substance" (Berman 18)[7]. Hence, an extreme reliance of the epoch on categories of, what Olson calls, "Greek rationalism" (5) is evident, strengthening the thesis's hypothesis of an existent parallel between modernism and the stage of human intoxication with 'protecting' categories of reason, be it 'subject', 'object', 'beginning', 'end', 'finitude', 'infinitude', and others, necessary for safe and uninterrupted progress of the self.

In addition, as Clement Greenberg puts it in "Modern and Postmodern", modernism was

> A wholly autonomous aesthetic, of a radically anti-representational self-reflexivity, [with] each artistic discipline [seeking] to free itself from all extraneous influence. Modernist painting had thus purged itself of narrative – the presentation of biblical, classical, historical, and other such scenes – which belonged to the literary sphere, and had turned to a necessarily self-reflexive exploration of that which could be said to be specific to a painting alone; its formal properties. (64)

Hence, the scholar emphasizes the profound intoxication of the period with the category of the Self, its expansion and improvement in all the spheres, be it production, art, science, etc., with everything beyond its limits considered to be alien and excessive. Indeed, the major focus of modernism was the act of human representation, observation and measurement of reality, presumed

[6] As in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Ezra Pound's *Cantos* and Hugh Doolittle's *Helen in Egypt*.

[7] It was modernism that brought about the emergence of the following, previously unseen and often radical movements and theories: Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Symbolism, the Theory of Relativity, Darwinism, the philosophy of Freud, Jung and Nietzsche, Surrealism, 'Jazz Age', Dadism, Existentialism, Marxism, Abstract Expressionsim, Cubism, Avant-Garde, Fauvism, Primitivism, Vorticism, Futurism, Imagism, and so on.

but not proved to be external to the observer. For instance, "in his 1905 paper on Special Relativity, Einstein did not ask what time *is*: he asked how *we measure* it. He asked what *we mean* by the time of an event" (*Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* 448). Similarly, Cubism, with its endless procession of bottles, shreds of paper, and musical instruments, clearly shifted the focus of attention from the reality *per se* to its human representation:

> Just as Relativity Theory focused attention away from the nature of reality towards the nature of measurement and observation, so Cubism focused attention away from what was being represented towards how it was being represented by humans. (*Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* 448)

In this connection, in *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Frederic Jameson compares modernism to a so-called 'fantasy of a hedgehog', picturing the mind being inebriated with a notion of the Self:

> This pseudo-experience, which must be marked as a fantasy and as a failure to achieve representation (by means of representation), is also a second-degree, reactive effort, an attempt to recuperate what lies beyond the reach of my own senses and life experience and, drawing that back inside, to become, if not self-sufficient, then at least protectively self-contained, like a hedgehog. It seems at the same time to be a relatively aimless and exploratory fantasy as well, as though the subject were afraid of forgetting something but could not imagine the consequences: Will I be punished if I forget all the others busy living simultaneously with me? What benefit could I possibly derive from doing so when it is in any case impossible to do the job right? Nor would the achievement of conscious synchronicity enhance my own immediate situation, since by definition the mind overleaps that toward others personally unknown to me (and therefore, in the detail of their existences, by definition unimaginable). The effort is thus voluntaristic, an assault of the will on what is "by definition" structurally impossible of

> achievement rather than something pragmatic and practical that seeks to augment my information about the here and now. (362)

All in all, though there exist a great multitude of possible characteristics of modernism, collected in various textbooks and encyclopaedias, this study attempts to systematize them in such a manner as to disclose the intoxicated nature of modernism, self-destructive in its self-sufficiency and profound orientation at knowability and explainability of the universe.

For this reason, it seems logical to start off with the basics – the level of signs, which forms the foundation for any system or paradigm of knowledge. In this respect, it was Jean Baudrillard who provided an illustrious vision of the evolution of the sign:

> The evolution of the sign goes through four discrete stages: (1) it is a reflection of basic reality, (2) it masks and perverts a basic reality, (3) it masks the absence of basic reality, and (4) it bears no relationship to any reality whatever – it is its own pure simulacrum. (*Simulacra and Simulations* 11)

If the sign in the era preceding modernism[8] was still known to reflect basic reality which, just like the brief stage of human innocence, "was linking two persons in an unbreakable reciprocity" (Baudrillard 84); the following epoch of modernism indeed happened to be an exemplification of Baudrillard's

[8] There exists a great number of theories attempting to define the possible starting point of modernism. Yet, the most frequently cited are "Richard Dedekin's division of the real number line in 1872 and Boltzmann's statistical thermodynamics in 1874" (Frascina and Harrison 5). Clement Greenberg claims Immanual Kant to be "the first real Modernist" (2), while "what can be safely called Modernism emerged in the middle of the last century – and rather locally, in France, with Baudlaire in the literature and Manet in painting" (2).

second and partially third stages of the evolution of the sign. Thus, the early modernist[9] sign masks the reality of extreme innovation in all spheres of human existence. The ongoing insistence on novelty, renovation, iconoclasm, change and radical transformation of older forms into a "new aesthetic of wonder-working technologies" (Jameson 304) is concealed by means of the imposed reality of persistent nostalgia and protests against modernization and technological progress, "pastoral visions, Luddite gestures, […], or a new wave of anti-positivist[10], spiritualistic, irrational reactions against triumphant progress and reason" (Jameson 304).

With the onset of high modernism or modernism proper[11] it seems necessary to introduce a correction to Baudrillard's third stage of the development of the sign. Thus, rather than masking the absence of reality proper, it masks the profound distance from reality proper, which remains undiscovered due to intense intoxication with self-sufficiency, grandness and utopian attempt to create a new and unprecedented social order. As a result, the late modernist

[9] "Modernism is the name given to the literary, historic, and philosophical period from roughly 1880s to 1950s, divided into two stages – early and high modernism" (*Encyclopaedia of Postmodernism* 251). According to Lawrence Cahoone, early modernism "was based on vehement protests and rejection of tradition, and advocated the necessity to push aside previous norms entirely, instead of merely revising past knowledge in light of current techniques, by breaking with traditional means of organizing literature, painting and music. [Early modernism] was a minority [avant-garde] taste, represented by 'small modernisms'" (13).

[10] Anti-positivist - a term referring to the branch of philosophy known as 'anti-positivism' propagating "against a 'unity of science' that would ground all meaningful scientific activity on an observational foundation" (Galison 197).

[11] High modernism (1910 to 1945) - a term referring to the period "around the time of the Second World War" (*Encyclopaedia of Postmodernism* 251), when as an aftermath of the Russian Revolution in 1905 and the First World War in 1914 "realism went bankrupt, faced with the fundamentally fantastic nature of trench warfare, which fused the harshly mechanical geometric rationality of technology with the nightmarish irrationality of myth. [As a consequence], the view that mankind was making slow and steady moral progress came to seem ridiculous in the face of the senseless slaughter of the Great War, justifying the previous calls of modernism to reject the traditional modes of thought. [Hence], in the 1920s, modernism came to define the age and by 1940s had won a secure place in the establishment" (Cahoone 14).

era happened to experience the peak of all grandiose social, cultural and economic phenomena, be it imperialism or monopoly, individualism and subject, charismatic leadership or rule of the genius. Indeed, as Frederic Jameson puts it, modernism was a "time of giants and legendary powers no longer available to us, […] organized around the great Work, the Book of the World – secular scripture, sacred text, ultimate ritual mass for an unimaginable social order – [a time of] great demiurges and prophets" (305), be they Hitler or Stalin, Peron or Mussolini, Joyce or Proust, Picasso or Kafka.

Furthermore, modernism was a time of great utopias, when the keen sense of the new fostered various visions of the transformed and integral self in the transfigured world of a new social order. Thus, Hitler assembles *Mein Kampf* and the resulting National Socialism; Stalin works on creating an unprecedented state of communism and communal existence in Russia, while China, Turkey, and numerous other countries on the globe conduct their own modernist campaigns of secularisation and cultural illumination. "'You have to change your life!' Rilke's archaic Greek torso tells him paradigmatically; and D.H Lawrence is filled with intimations of this momentous new sea of change from which new people are sure to emerge" (Jameson 312).

Likewise, it was an epoch when one's existence was represented as a sealed off entity, unable to traverse the isolated worlds of others. Thus, according to Frederic Jameson,

> In Gide and Conrad, in Fernando Pessoa, in Pirandello, in Ford, and to a lesser extent in Henry James, even very obliquely in Proust, what we begin to see is the sense that each consciousness is a closed world, so that a representation of the social totality now must take the impossible form of a coexistence of those sealed subjective worlds and their peculiar interaction, which in reality is a

> passage of ships in the night, a centrifugal movement of lines and planes that can never intersect. (412)

What is more, the high modernist ‘distance from the reality proper’ may be illustrated by the concept of ‘otherness’, characteristic of the epoch, when everything beyond the here and the now, the West and the Canon was discarded, feared and avoided. For instance, the novels of Joseph Conrad, including *Nostromo*, *Heart of Darkness* and *The Nigger of the Narcissus* are saturated with images of ‘the other’, represented by the natives inhabiting Africa, South America and India and depicted as always lower-class characters, lacking identity and voice. The same holds true of E.M. Forster, who in *The Passage to India* displays “English and Indian differences as irreconcilable, thanks largely to English prejudice” (Alexander 316).

At this point, so as to summarise the major characteristics of modernism, it seems necessary to turn to the work of the French sociologist of science and anthropologist Bruno Latour, who in the famous work *We Have Never Been Modern* examines modernity in a modernist and postmodern retrospective. By doing so, the scholar constructs a detailed list of basic features prescribed to the modernist world. This thesis makes use of the abridged version of the list and includes it into the schematic depiction of the epoch presented below:

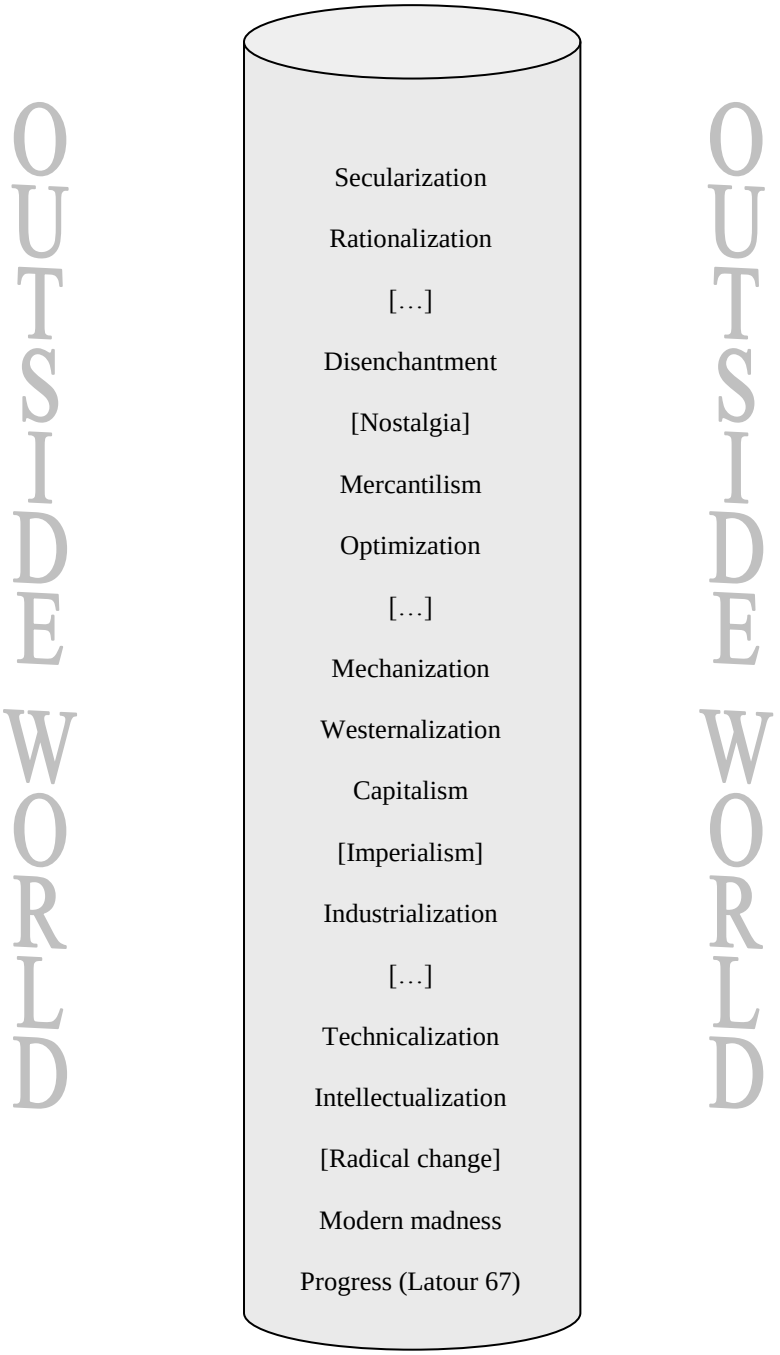

Figure 2: The Schematic Structure of Modernist Worldview

All of the numerous '-ations' mentioned above underline, in fact, the obsession of modernism with one-dimensional processes aimed to defend the Self, so far unable to pose the question "Why?". Accordingly, the mind arms itself with various technological, intellectual, rational and economic tools to guard itself from the yet unrecognised Truth of the outer world. For this reason, the period may, indeed, be described in terms of modern madness, or intoxicated modern egoism.

Despite its seeming outer closedness, the period was, nevertheless, marked by an inner paradox of the "simultaneity of the nonsimultaneous, the synchronicity of the nononsynchroneous, the coexistence of realities from radically different moments of history – handicrafts alongside great cartels, peasant fields with the Krupp factories or the Ford plant in the distance" (Jameson 307), the existence of two societies within one – a high modernist artificial creation and a human world of day-to-day existence. Indeed, the impossibility of reconciliation may be illustrated by comparing Frederic Jameson's claim that the "sense of objective change sweeps the modern, along with a disgust for the survivals of the old, and a feeling that besides being a release and a liberation, the New is also an obligation" (381) to a feeling of nostalgia for the past, which permeates the works of D.H. Lawrence, W.B. Yeats, Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot. Thus, Lawrence's *The Rainbow* depicts alienation of its major heroine Anna Brangwen with her dislike of modern life, containing a satire on literary, social and intellectual modernist élites. Ezra Pound, in his turn, doubted the future of high art in popular democracy in which, to quote Pound in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, "the age demanded/ an image of its accelerated grimace [made] to sell, and sell quickly" (2: 1-2).

For this reason, the illusion of harmony was dismantled during the very life-span of modernism, accounting for its gradually arising crisis. Indeed, as

Jürgen Habermas sees it in *Modernity versus Postmodernity*, "the distance has grown between the culture of experts and that of the larger public. A relation of opposites has come into being; art has become a critical mirror, showing the irreconcilable nature of the aesthetic and the social world" (10).

As a consequence, the self-centred, centrifugal and elitist nature of modernism as such, as well as its intrinsic conflicts could not but let in the air of decadence, with all the great promises of modernism gradually going limp, haunted by an inescapable feeling of a looming disaster. The growing fracture of unified conceptions, the distance between the high and the low, the superior and the plebeian could not but harbour a secret yearning for 'the' meaning behind the crisis of the now, leading to the rise of the question "Why?". Indeed, the state of affairs is best exemplified by St. Thomas Aquinas's everlasting wisdom: "The slenderest knowledge that may be obtained of the highest things is more desirable than the most certain knowledge obtained of lesser things" (75).

As a result, the self-centred self, "the unique form of private property remaining to me – grows pale and dim like Homeric ghosts, or like a piece of real estate whose value has been driven down to a worthless handful of crumpled bills. This now starts to become postmodern" (Jameson 363), soberly rushing on us the full, undisguised, and inaccessible Truth of the universe.

Yet, before the thesis will turn to the analysis of the postmodern epoch, it seems necessary to come back to Baudrillard's vision of the diachronic evolution of the sign and examine its fourth evolutionary stage. The thesis employed the second and the third stages of the paradigm to delineate human progress through the period of early and high modernism. The fourth stage in Baudrillard's classification states that the sign "bears no relationship to any

reality whatever – it is its own pure simulacrum" (11). Nevertheless, the study considers the proposition to be partially faulty and a bit premature for exemplifying the period of postmodernism. Therefore, the thesis is going to leave it aside for the characterisation of a later period of the human search for meaning. As a consequence, the study considers it necessary to edit Baudrillard's view of signal evolution, by making an addition of a stage when 'the sign discloses the inconceivability of basic reality' to characterise the period of sober postmodern exposure to the Truth of creation, the authenticity of which is unshielded by cultural and societal rituals, delusions and constructs. Hence, the first question "Why?" and the immediate shock that comes from the realisation of the impossibility to find 'the' answer, automatically plunges the human race into the mind-boggling world of postmodernism. As a consequence, it seems logical to cite the metaphoric vision of the postmodern condition made by J.G. Ballard in *The Atrocity Exhibition*: "An empty beach with its fused sand. Here clock time is no longer valid. Even an embryo, symbol of secret growth and possibility, is drained and limp. These images are the residue of a remembered moment of time" (61).

Portrayals of this kind are numerous. For instance, Jürgen Habermas in *Modernity versus Postmodernity* considers postmodernism to "do little besides pick through the wreckage resulting from the forced acknowledgement of the dissolution of structured life spheres" (10); while Leonard B. Meyer in *The End of the Renaissance* asserts that

> Man is no longer to be the measure of all things, the centre of the universe. He has been measured and found to be an undistinguished bit of matter different in no essential way from bacteria, stones, and trees. His goals and purposes; his egocentric notions of the past, present, and future; his faith in his power to predict and, through prediction, to control

> his destiny – all these are called into question, considered irrelevant, or deemed trivial. (186)

Frederic Jameson, in his turn, provides the following account of the postmodern era:

> These new and enormous global realities [cyberspace, hyperreality, etc.] are inaccessible to any individual subject or consciousness – not even to Hegel, let alone Cecil Rhodes or Queen Victoria – which is to say that those fundamental realities are somehow ultimately unrepresentable or, to use the Althusserian phrase, are something like an absent clause, one that can never emerge into the presence of perception. (411)

Thus, the sober postmodern resolution to linger on the verge of meaninglessness, caused by the inability of the human, construct ridden mind to perceive the Truth of creation, engulfs one's existence in the torment of Todd Gitlin's

> Pastiche; blankness; a sense of exhaustion; a mixture of levels, forms, styles; a relish for copies and repetition; a knowingness that dissolves commitment into irony; acute self-consciousness about the formal, constructed nature of the work; pleasure in the play of surfaces; [and] rejection of history. (100)

As a result, the postmodern impotence to know and to perceive the truth of creation turns into a manifest fascination with ontology, with modes of being, instead of modes of knowing; with local and fluid meaning, instead of the timeless and universal. Indeed, as Brian McHale views it in *Postmodernist Fiction*,

> Postmodern fiction negotiates the tension between self-reflexivity and representation by abandoning the modernist

> emphasis on epistemology – which leads inevitably towards reflexivity – for an emphasis on ontology. Knowing loses its privileged position to pluriform, polyphonic being. The one world which the modernists sought to know is replaced by a plurality of autonomous worlds that can be described and relations between which we can explore, but that can never be the objects of true knowledge. (121)

Thus, postmodern minds do not so much seek to understand the miracle of creation, as to acknowledge it in all its inaccessibility, contingency and fragmentation. As a result, the world is restored to all of its intrinsic objectness and "ceases to be part of the subjective consciousness" (Bertens 34). Accordingly, the impossibility to know the Truth of being leads one to reflect on the possible modes of being - on the small, rather than big; on the insignificant, rather than transcendent – and the feasible ways of their representation, which brings to the fore the problem of postmodern signification.

A profound realisation of our inability to know the Truth and, as a subsequence, to represent it (which makes it impossible to take for granted the old forms of representation, as they create rather than reflect reality), led to a deep crisis of representation in the postmodern epoch, underlining the impossibility to depict in an unmediated fashion the "*mysterium tremendum et fascinosum*" (Otto 49). As a consequence, one may characterise the era, as a period of deep Lyotardian-like doubt and suspicion towards all human forms of representation, the comprehension of their secondariness, "wire[d] up context" (Jameson 299) and constructedness. The language itself, as an indispensable instrument of human cognition and representation, becomes reduced to a "function of a commentary, that is, of a permanently second degree relationship to sentences that have already been formed, […] that can never go far enough to make primary statements" (Jameson 392-393). For that reason, one comes across such postmodern phenomena as extreme

textualisation or narrativisation of experience, saturated with a "cynical, jaded blank, and blasé attitude" (Goldman and Papson 224), and exhibiting the incapability of the sign to represent the real. Hence, we come across such occurrences as bodies as texts, spaces as texts, psychologies as texts, soberly and acrimoniously enjoying, rather than lamenting their own lack of reference and epistemological emptiness.

The fact brings us closer to the Lyotardian idea of the sublime, which is

> the feeling of something monstrous, formless [or] negative, [like] the idea of death. […] The idea of the sublime is no longer the [Kantian] feeling of pleasure. [Rather it] is a contradictory feeling, because it is a feeling of both pleasure and displeasure together. [The sublime] puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable. (Lyotard 340)

Thus, for Lyotard, the sublime stands for an attempt to represent the unrepresentable - the grandness of reality subsumed by the eternal chaos of postmodern textualisation, by means of a "sensitivity toward *the differend* and the infinite variety of human experience and feeling" (Ashley 68). What is more, the sublime is a neurotic search for new experiences to be shuffled and reshuffled, connected and interconnected in an endless dance of unreferenced signification, to be taken pleasure in, rather than consigned to the inconceivable truth of creation.

Accordingly, the postmodernism's overall inability to represent, followed by the subsequent dispersal of experiences and sensations, fragmentation of standards, orientations and values, cynical meekness, narcissistic yearning to

enjoy and decay of longing for epistemological certainty led to the near substitution of existence by the flurry of incompatible particles and remains of modernist existence. The process may be figuratively depicted by a remarkable comment made by Frederic Jameson in *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*:

> The [postmodern] space that thereby emerges involves the suppression of distance and the relentless saturation of any remaining voids and empty places, to the point where the postmodern body – whether wondering through a postmodern hotel, locked into rock sounds by means of headphones, or undergoing the multiple shocks and bombardments of the Vietnam War – is now exposed to a perceptual barrage of immediacy from which all sheltering layers and intervening mediations have been removed. There are, of course, many other features of this space one would ideally want to comment on – […] – but the disorientation of the saturated space will be the most useful guiding thread in the present context. (412-413)

Ihab Hassan, in the *Dismemberment of Orpheus*, presents a no less illuminating vision of postmodernism with its "random music, concrete poetry, computer verse, electronic dance, guerrilla theatre, deliquescent sculpture, autodestructive media, packaged nature, psychedelic spectacles, blank canvases and plain happenings" (254). A like stance of reasoning was expressed by Jean-Francois Lyotard in *Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, comparing the state of postmodern existence to the "degree zero" (334), due to the evident "lack of reality" (336), continuous repudiation of representation and perpetual maintenance of "optimal dissensus" (Bertens 133):

> The degree zero of contemporary general culture: one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonalds's food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and 'retro' clothes in Hong Kong; knowledge is a

> matter for TV games. It is easy to find a public for eclectic works. By becoming kitsch, art panders to the confusion which reigns in the 'taste' of patrons. Artists, gallery owners, critics, and public wallow together in the 'anything goes,' and the epoch is one of slackening. (334-335)

The postmodern epoch is indeed that of "slackening" (Lyotard 335), when too much, or too little of anything, demise of meaning, exhaustion of aspirations, rule of plurality, rise of ambiguity and blankness, marauding of texts substituting reality for meaning and value, lead to the total dispersion of the Self in a bout of schizophrenic jerks, impulses, anxiety and anomie. Indeed, schizophrenic fragmentation occurs due to the fact that postmodernism presents "instruments, [rather than] answers to enigmas in which we can rest" (James 258), thus answering the procedural how-question instead of the enlightening question "Why?", and keeping the mind in constant tension from the perpetually unsatisfied hunger to perceive the ontological status of reality. What is more, postmodernism exposes the inconfrontable lie of human existence, the impact of which fosters the emergence of all those nomads[12], rhizomes[13] and schizos[14] that Gilles

[12] Nomad – a term elaborated by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, and used to refer to individuals roaming free across space and determining their own social and cultural norms or requirements: "The nomad has a territory; he follows customary paths; he goes from one point to another; he is not ignorant of points. But the question is what in nomad life is a principle and what is only a consequence. To begin with, although the points determine paths, they are strictly subordinated to the paths they determine. [...] A path is always between two points, but the in-between has taken all the consistency and enjoys both an autonomy and a direction of its own. The life of a nomad is the intermezzo" (380).

[13] Rhizome - a term first used by Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* to refer to "deterritorialized lines of desire linking desiring bodies with one another and the field of partial objects" (Kellner 103).

[14] Schizo - a term first used by Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* to refer to individuals with schizophrenia, which "undoes static structures like the unified, unisex subject of Oedipalisation, the rigid symbolic triagulation of the family that reproduces that subject, the apparatus of state, and even the linguistic representation itself" (*Encyclopaedia of Postmodernism* 355).

Deleuze and Felix Guattari talk about in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.

In this respect, to exemplify the emergent crisis, the thesis assembles the most typical characteristics of postmodernism into the diagram presented below, aiming to render the chaotic atmosphere of the period. The diagram is based on generalisations made by Ihab Hassan in *Desire and Dissent in the Postmodern Age*, Robert Ventury in *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, and Frederic Jameson in *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*:

Figure 3: The Chaos of Postmodernism

As a result, the fatigue from the postmodern chaos, alongside with an unmitigated vision of the incomprehensible truth makes people "not surely seated in [their] bodies, [with] no secure base from which to negotiate a defiance of and a denial of the real nature of the world" (Becker 63) finally say: "'It's too much', or 'I can't stand it,' or 'I could die'. Delirium cannot be borne for long. Our organisms are just too weak for any large doses of greatness" (49). Indeed, the human mind is secretly masochistic in its constant craving for repression, when freedom becomes too much for it to bear due to the innate yearning for self-imposed limitations, reminding one of the comforting confinement of a lost womb. This craving results in human riddenness with artificialities, searches for limits, beginnings, ends, systems and paradigms, wilfully constructed to combat the fear of the incomprehensible universe. Thus, any revolution or movement for liberation and emancipation, as a rule, is rapidly superseded by an even more cruel form of dictatorship, whether open or covert. As a result, we have the Napoleonic Empire after the short-lived *liberté, fraternité et equalité* of the French Bourgeois Revolution, the 'iron rule' of Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom, following the deep economic decline of Edward Heath's government, and the movement of centralisation and consolidation in Putin's Russia following Yeltsin's emancipation of Soviet republics. Examples of this kind are numerous, and the releasing 'juissance' of postmodernism, suppressed by an urgent purposeful revival of revised grand epistemological constructs, is no exception[15]. As a consequence, the fact allows one to

[15] In fact, the idea of such 'swings of the pendulum' is not new, being first elaborated by Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) and known as Hegel's 'life-cycle', including thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. Hegel's pendulum theory advocates that "any historical period (thesis) will be superceeded by a radically different one (anti-thesis), to be superceeded again by a higher state of expression and wisdom (synthesis). [Nevertheless], the idea of highness and wisdom is not always guaranteed due to the high propensity of mankind for narcissim, greed, love, sex, jealousy, envy, hate, power, imperialism, etc" (*Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* 254). Hegel's ideas have been adopted and further developed by what became to be known as Neo-Hegelianism, including such important figures as "Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Ludwig Fenerbach, Max, Stirner; the wave of British idealists as Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle; the group of Boston Transcendentalists led by William Torrey Harris;

conclude that man consciously dooms himself to be not free in order to exist, which goes hand in hand with the main idea of Marcia Lee Anderson's poem *Diagnosis*:

> We multiply diseases for delight,
> Invent horrid want, a shameful doubt,
> Luxuriate in license, feed on night,
> Make inward bedlam – and will not come out.
> Why should we? Stripped of subtle complications,
> Who could regard the sun except with fear?
> This is our shelter against contemplation,
> Our only refuge from the plain and clear. (7)

Hence, postmodernism was a transitional period in the human search for meaning, astonishing the mind with its sober vision of the inconceivable Truth, the notion of which gets completely substituted with limitless, chaotic and free-floating signification. This brings one to the verge of schizophrenic madness, with no means to enter the compulsory constructedness of existence, in which we have to be embedded so as to be called human. For that reason, as Dennis Ford puts it, "the postmodernist is a tourist, not a pilgrim; a wayfarer, not a missionary. Having abandoned the search for the truth and the meaning, the point for postmodernism is the journey, not the end" (139).

Consequently, to escape the postmodern trap of relativity, instead of fruitless attempts to represent the world-as-it-is, one seeks to represent the world-as-

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and German thinkers as Wilhelm Winde and Wilhelm Dilthey" (*Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* 254).

it-is-not, wilfully filling it with meaning, and addictively fabulating its novel and revised maxims, concepts and epistemes[16]. Thus, the celebration and cognisant acceptance of the created world-as-it-is-not, with the only truth available being the synthetically constructed truth of human metanarratives, becomes an agenda for the next in line stage of post-postmodernism. In a way this puts a new emphasis on the much criticised, but, nevertheless, eminent Kantian axiom:

> Man can attain certain knowledge of the world, not because he has power to penetrate and grasp the world in itself, but because the world he perceives and understands is a world already saturated with the principles of his own mental organisation. This organisation is what is absolute, not that of the world in itself, which ultimately remains beyond human cognition. (345)

Hence, mankind forsakes the boundless freedom offered by postmodernism in favour of healthy repressions, fresh and optimistically self-imposed limitations, as well as self-constructed life-narratives of post-postmodernism. At this point, as a conclusion, it seems necessary to cite a prominent statement belonging to Ernest Becker:

> Creation is a nightmare spectacular taking place on a planet that has been soaked for hundreds of years in blood of all its creatures. The soberest conclusion that we could make about what has actually been taking place on the planet for about three billion years is that it is being turned into a vast pit of fertiliser. But the sun distracts our attention, always baking the blood dry, making things grow over it, and with its warmth giving the hope that comes with the organism's comfort and expansiveness. '*Questo sol m'arde, e questo m'innamore*,' as Michelangelo put it. (283)

[16] Episteme - a term "borrowed by Michel Foucault from Greek to refer to the ensemble of relations and the laws of transformation uniting all discursive practices at a given period of time" (*Encyclopaedia of Postmodernism* 112).

2.2 THE PROMISE OF POST-POSTMODERNISM

> "[…] life is at the start a chaos in which one is lost.
> The individual suspects this, but he is frightened
> At finding himself face to face with this terrible reality,
> And tries to cover with it a certain of fantasy,
> Where everything is clear."
> (Ortega y Gasset, *Revolt of the Masses* 157)

What is life if not a cruel game of survival placing a tremulous human at the mercy of an entire universe? By breaking the intoxicating one-dimensiality of modernism, the postmodern sobriety exposed mankind to the bare phenomenon of the ultimate truth, disclosed the inconceivability of reasons justifying our existence on the planet, and brought to the fore the impossibility of perceiving the mystery of the universe. Thus, man found himself to be nothing but a helpless gnat and a meagre accident in the surrounding magnificence of life eternally "push[ing] in the direction of its own expansion [and] thrashing in an unknown direction for unknown reasons" (Becker 284).

The postmodern experience has often been compared to the anguish of "a mad dog, trouncing here and there in a dizzied rage, battling with its own absurdity and self-destructive looseness" (Becker 58). The unleashed openness and unrestrictedness of postmodernism demonstrated that "the meaning of this [mad dog] symbolism is that no matter what men pretend, they are only one accidental bite away from utter fallibility" (Becker 59). This underlines an imperative human need for a consciously and artificially constructed plenitude of meaning, instilling the otherwise disintegrating lives with a sense of purpose and rationale. The presence of meaning allows the mind to "feel that [it] controls [its] life and [its] death, that it has a unique and self-fashioned

identity, that [it] is somebody – not just a trembling mishap germinated on a hothouse planet called a 'hall of doom'" (Becker 55). As a consequence, the longing of mankind to escape its innate impotence to oppose the Truth in all its incomprehensibility, and to defend itself against the terror from the realization of the true human condition, prompted the birth of the present era of post-postmodernism. The period celebrates its consciously generated system of reliance on something that transcends us, some paradigm of belief that supports us and instils us with meaning, so as to counter modern self-sufficiency or the danger of postmodern relativity.

In fact, the need for a new theory has been pronounced for decades. Thus, all major critics of the postmodern, be they Linda Hutcheon, Jürgen Habermas, Douglas Kellner or Steven Best, Ernesto Lacleau or Chantal Mauffe, came to the eventual realisation of its pronounced deficiency, restrictiveness and temporariness. Nevertheless, it was Frederic Jameson in *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, who stopped just short of elaborating a system to supersede the chaos of postmodernism, so as to endow the world of broken industrial society with meaning and a sense of purpose. Though, Jameson mainly concentrates on the political-economical side of capitalism in the postmodern era, his formulations may be applied to a much broader social context. The scholar emphasises the overall shallowness and blankness of postmodernism and the unprecedented need for meaning and epistemological profundity. In this respect, Jameson expresses a deep suspicion about the fact that if the claims of modernism, intoxicated by its seeming self-sufficiency, or, as he calls it, "older kinds of political positions" (180), stir nothing but "widespread embarrassment" (180), and postulates of the seemingly liberating postmodernism, or "official politics" (180), are "extraordinarily enfeebled" (180), then there should be "something like an unacknowledged 'party of Utopia'" (180). Jameson describes this 'party of Utopia' as follows:

> An underground party whose numbers are difficult to determine, whose program remains unannounced and perhaps even unformulated, whose existence is unknown to the citizenry at large and to the authorities, but whose members seem to recognise one another by means of secret signals. One even has a feeling that some of the present [icons] may be among its members. (180)

Hence, Jameson had been able to catch the atmosphere of change overtaking the epoch of postmodernism. As a consequence, the scholar put an emphasis on the "tangible decline [of] the newfound pluralisms of late capitalism [together with] absolute formalisms" (Jameson 334) of modernism, making their way for the new system with the "transformation of the natural and social world into a meaningful totality" (334). Nevertheless, despite elaborating a comprehensive analysis of the postmodern epoch, his visions of the upcoming era remained vague and did not evolve into anything more concrete than a mere suspicion. Yet Jameson was right in pointing out the utopian nature of the epoch to come, in its struggle for unity and meaningfulness, defining utopia as a "now generally recognised code word for the systematic transformation of contemporary society" (334). Jameson accentuates the necessity of meaning for humans, coinciding with a line of reasoning expressed by Eric Fromm in *The Sane Society*:

> The animal is content if its psychological needs – its hunger, its thirst and its sexual needs – are satisfied. Inasmuch as man is also animal, these needs are likewise imperative and must be satisfied. But inasmuch as man is human, the satisfaction of these instinctual needs is not sufficient to make him happy; they are not even sufficient to make him sane. (32ff)

As a result, Jameson introduces a Hegelian notion of 'reconciliation' – "the illusion of the possibility of some ultimate reunion between a subject and an object radically sundered or estranged from each other, or even to some new

'synthesis' between them; […] a moment of unity reinvented at the end of time when subject and object are once again 'reconciled'" (Jameson 334-337), and that of 'totalisation' –

> The concept designed to stress the unification inherent in human action; and the way in which what was formerly called negation can also be seen as the forging of a new situation – the unification of a construct, the interrelating of a new idea to the old ones, the active securing of a new perception, whether visual or auditory, its forced conversion into a new form. (Jameson 333)

Without a doubt, Jameson was among the first to underline the impossibility of a fully-fledged meaningful existence without a certain unity between the signifier and the signified. Nonetheless, he was silent about the possible reasons for their preceding lengthy detachment from each other, i.e. the emergence of the first question "Why?"; the ensuing sober realisation of the unperceivable nature of the signified/universe/cosmos, and its innate incompatibility with a human constructed set of signifiers. As a result, Jameson suspects the emergence of a new era of newly reinvented unified constructs, "securing a new perception" (333) of the world and the rebirth of meaning. Nevertheless, this thesis proposes to introduce one key correction to Jameson's line of reasoning - that is the rebirth of meaning following the appearance of a consciously agreed on set of socially constructed totalities.

Indeed, the ensuing epoch of what the thesis calls post-postmodernism appears to be an age of conscious construction and committed adherence to wilfully created totalities, so as to escape the threat of schizophrenic dissolution in the inconceivable grandness of the universe. Niels Bohr once said that "it is wrong […] to think that the task of physics is to find out what nature is. […] Physics concerns what we can say about nature" (qtd. in Ford

119). Hence, post-postmodernism may be rightfully called the epoch of what-we-can-sayness, the time of conscious cultivation and fabulation of new totalities and metanarratives.

One might say that the emerging concept of post-postmodern fabulation is no different from Jean Baudrillard's notion of simulacra. Yet, it is far from being so. As we have seen, Baudrillard claims that at the fourth and, hence, the last stage of the development of the sign "it bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum" (12). Though it indeed bears no relation to any reality due to the impossibility either to comprehend it or represent it with a set logic conceived by a human mindset, the sign is far from being its own pure simulacrum; rather, it happens to be its own pure fabulation, for the reasons to be explained below. The difference between the two is as significant as the gap between complete absence and inconceivable presence. Thus, Baudrillard comments on the essence of simulation, saying that

> To dissimulate is to feign to have what one has. To simulate is to feign what one hasn't. One implies a presence, the other an absence. But the matter is even more complicated, since to simulate is not simply to feign: 'Someone who feigns an illness can simply go to bed and pretend he is ill. Someone who simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms' (Littré). […] The age of simulacra and simulation [implies that] there is no longer any God to recognize as his own, nor any last judgement to separate truth from false, the real from its artificial resurrection, since everything is already dead and risen in advance. (10-13)

Thus, Baudrillard underlines the fact that the age of simulacra is based on a complete vacuum, on a complete extinction and non-existence of Truth and reality as such, on "a liquidation of all referentials" (Baudrillard 10),

fostering, as a result, the generation of hyperrealities[17] from an unending succession of purely simulacral entities. Consequently, one is faced with the eternal "precession" (Baudrillard 10) (or primacy) and eternal recurrence of simulacra – that is the eternal recurrence of underlying absence:

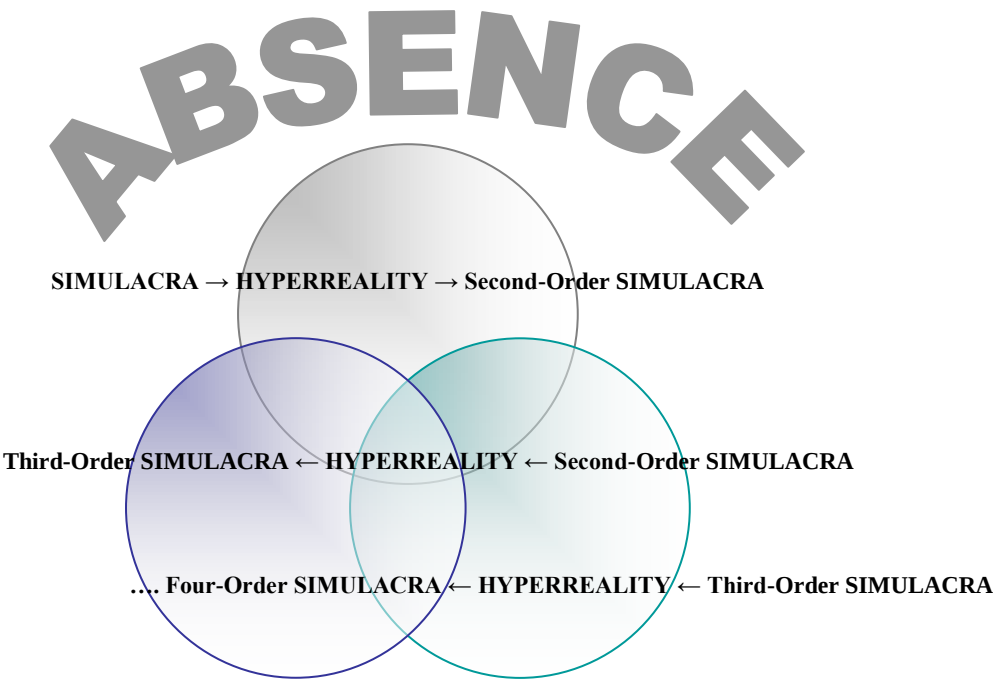

Figure 4: The Vacuous Nature of Simulacra

Hence, to interpret Baudrillard's example with God with the help of the diagram presented above, if God has never existed and all the surviving icons, texts and scriptures are a mere simulacra, then the atmosphere of God

[17] Hyperreality - a postmodern term referring to the reality "presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of [it is] no longer real, but of the order of simulation" (Baudrillard 25).

worship and apprehension of God as such becomes a hyperreality, making God, as a consequence, a pure simulacrum of the second order, and thus "making room only for the orbital recurrence of [based on nothing] models and the simulated generation of difference" (Baudrillard 10). However, such a stance appears to be very deficient due to Baudrillard's obstinate promotion of the concept of primal absence. For this reason, we intend to expand the above example with God to prove that it is incomprehensible presence rather than pure annihilation that instigates men to produce artificial visions of reality.

Thus, if we look at the concept of God as such and put aside all divine images and attributes systematically imposed on us by religion (be it numerous churches, mosques, temples, icons, saints or the concept of Christian Trinity itself), God is nothing more than a complex of disguised human fears, anxieties and phobias about its own helplessness, mixed with desire for the utmost protection and shelter. What is more, God may be the same as the eternal yearning for plenitude of meaning, for the stream of universal energy, which is awe-inspiring in its incomprehensibility. Hence, as men always yearn to comprehend the incomprehensible and fear to be destroyed by the grandness of the life force, God remains as an everlasting presence, rather than Baudrillard's pure simulacrum based on annihilating absence. Furthermore, as 'the' meaning remains unknown and life force unconquered, one cannot talk of Baudrillard's absence of reality; rather one has to acknowledge its perpetual presence beyond human comprehension.

As a result, post-postmodernism envisions the sign as a fabulation, a purposefully revised reunion of the signifier and signified that had been estranged by postmodernism, a wilful construction of truths to counter the otherwise unknowable Truth of creation. Accordingly, as Mikhail Epstein puts it in *The Place of Postmodernism in Postmodernity*,

> If in postmodernism even the language of feelings was subjected to the use of quotation marks, then at present quotation marks have penetrated the word so deeply that each one of them contains secondariness within itself, which is an imperative condition for the freshness of its repetition to be felt against the background of these former usages. Thus, the [post-postmodern] word contains the presumption of guilt and an implicit act of apology – confessing its own non-substitutionability, its singularity, its absoluteness. It represents the movement of meaning in two directions at once: both the application and removal of quotation marks. The same word may sound like “““““I love””””” and I Love!!! (2)

Thus, what we observe here is a post-postmodern celebration of a purposefully generated absoluteness of a sign, of a long awaited reunion of a signifier and signified, constructed by humans in their yearning for the promise of new and revised meanings and truths, fresh in their emphasised secondariness and people-constructed nature. Consequently,

> A language act […] does what it promises. This closed simple whole acquires a potency that can almost only be defined in theological terms. For with it is created a refuge in which all those things are brought together that postmodernism thought definitely dissolved: the *telos*, the author, belief, love, dogma and much, much more. (Eshelman 1)

Therefore, contrary to the notion of Baudrillard’s simulacra - a category of pure destructive nihilism, post-postmodern fabulation turns into a category of constructive optimism, providing men with a tool to produce (in a self-conscious manner) new life-narratives and meanings.

In this respect, one may say that there is a strong resemblance between the notion of fabulation and that of Patricia Waugh’s ‘metafiction’. Nonetheless, the gap between the two is as wide as that between postmodernism and post-

postmodernism themselves. Thus, metafiction refers to being self-conscious about the constructed nature of fictions, which have their own creation as their subject, as well as about all older or familiarised forms of meta-truths, used for the construction of fiction and dominant during the stage of human intoxication. For this reason, metafiction may be considered to be a category of static postmodern scepticism towards all familiar people-produced forms of narrative; while fabulation becomes a category of post-postmodern active self-conscious generation and celebration of novel metanarratives instilling life with a new sense of meaning and purpose. To support the above premise the thesis quotes Frederic Jameson's nascent, but, nonetheless, quite revealing visualization of what an age of fabulation might actually be:

> Fabulation – or if you prefer, mythomania and outright tall tales – is no doubt the symptom of social and historical impotence, of the blocking of possibilities that leaves little option but the imaginary. Yet its very invention and inventiveness endorses a creative freedom with respect to events it cannot control, by the sheer act of multiplying them; agency here steps out of the historical record itself into the process of devising it; and new multiple or alternate strings of events rattle the bars of the national tradition and the history manuals whose very constraints and necessities their parodic form indicts. (369)

Accordingly, fabulation endows men with an effective tool to overcome the sense of inner barrenness and weakness imposed by postmodernism; to create life-narratives on which to project all their individual qualities; to feel at last powerful and secure, finally overflowing with meaning and a sense of purpose. Furthermore, fabulation provides men with a sound way to affirm themselves, by instilling metanarratives with "the self-transcending life process, [which] gives to one's self the larger nourishment it needs" (Becker 157). For this reason, fabulation is a tool to escape the centrifugal cocoon of

modernism and the incapacitating freedom of postmodernism. Ernst Becker once said that "we did not create ourselves, but we are stuck with ourselves" (158), hence men are bound to perpetual fabulation of metanarratives, allowing one to have a life of meaning in a universe never to be fully understood.

So as to summarise the above arguments about post-postmodernism, the thesis presents the following schematic vision of the epoch:

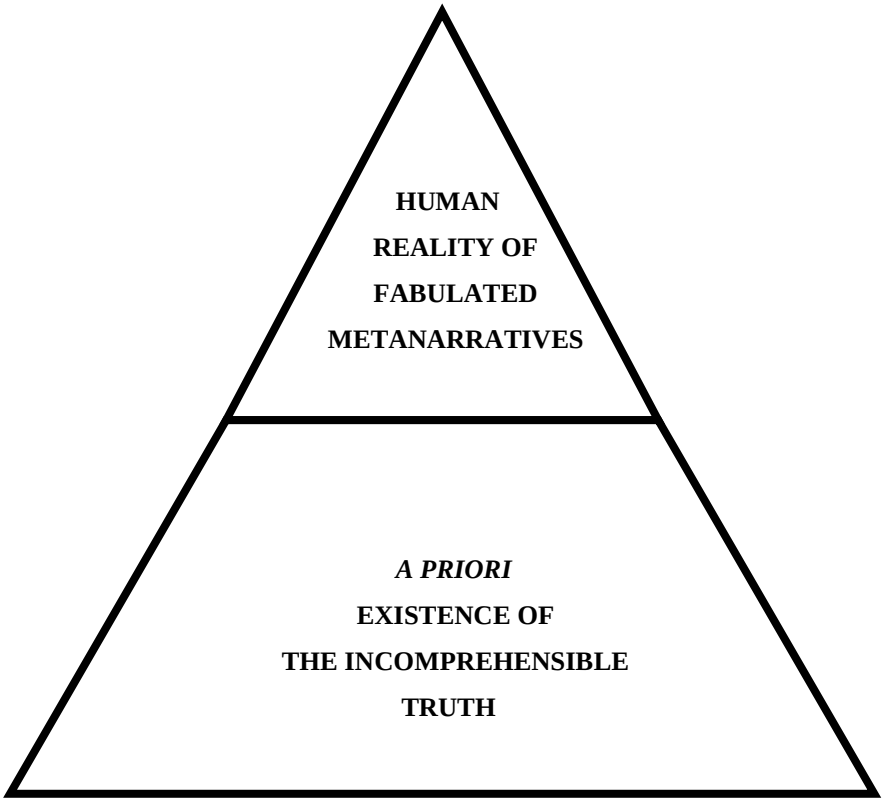

Figure 5: The Essence of Post-Postmodernism

A triangle has been chosen to represent the age of post-postmodernism, so as to emphasize the impossibility of any sort of harmony with the underlying Truth, which is impossible to understand. Instead, it forms a sort of a Marxian-like base for an artificial superstructure of the world of humans, perpetually working against the inconceivable chaos, against the terror of meaninglessness, guided by the need to fabulate life-narratives, enabling them to go on. In addition, the overall shape of the triangle stands for an active, constructive and future-oriented nature of the epoch; wilfully stating, rather than schizophrenically doubting; generating, rather than diffusing, so as to oppose the constant threat of being subsumed by the chaos of creation.

To conclude this section, this thesis presents a reworked version of the general evolution of the sign, so as to display its profound difference from the one initially proposed by Jean Baudrillard in *Simulations and Simulacra*, and to illustrate again the stages of human search for meaning on the basis of the theory of onto-epistemological development elaborated in this work:

Sign: (1) is a reflection of basic reality; (2) masks basic reality; (3) masks the distance from basic reality; (4) discloses the incomprehensibility of basic reality; (5) bears no relation to any reality whatsoever, being fully fabulated by the human mind.

Figure 6: The General Evolution of the Sign

As a consequence, the paradigm provides a useful tool to reflect on the progress of mankind in its quest for meaning from the stage of pre-modernist *innocence*, modernist *intoxication* and postmodern *sobriety* towards the promise of post-postmodern *fabulation*, the essence of which is concisely, but, nevertheless, most accurately depicted in an excerpt from Carlo Levi's work *Of Fear and Freedom*: "[...] men incapable of liberty – who cannot stand the terror of the sacred that manifests itself before their open eyes – must turn to mystery, must [make] [...] the [...] truth" (135).

2.3 POST-POSTMODERN METANARRATVES

> "Abstractions will never do.
> God-terms have to be exemplified […]
> men crave their principles incarnate in
> enactable characters, actual selective mediators between
> themselves and the polytheism of experience."
> (Rieff, "The Impossible Culture:
> Oscar Wilde and the Charisma of an Artist" 41)

It was once said that "the more you fear death and the emptier you are, the more you people your world with omnipotent father-figures, extra-magical helpers" (Searles 638). Though the statement has been devised to exemplify in a Freudian-like manner the malaise of schizophrenic transference, it nonetheless bears a strong and almost outspoken resemblance to the condition of mankind at the onset of post-postmodernism: pastiched and blank, dispersed and ridden with schizophrenia, which is the last possible defence against the terror of the bare Truth.

Despite the psychosomatic crisis of postmodernism, post-postmodernism provides the mind with a tool to instil the otherwise meaningless life with

human meaning and value through a set of newly constructed narratives, affording a "natural fetishization for man's highest [and otherwise unsatisfiable] yearnings and strivings" (Becker 155). As a result, the era of postmodern schizophrenia of "extra-magical helpers" (Searles 638) gives way to the post-postmodern promise of fabulated life-narratives. For this reason, this section is going to be dedicated to the analysis of metanarrative, its etymological roots and epistemological evolution. What is more, it will provide a general typology of life-narratives guiding human existence.

This study begins with the etymological analysis of the word 'metanarrative'. The term is built up of a prefix 'meta-' and a root 'narrative'. The Greek prefix 'meta-', as *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* puts it, appears to have a choice of three general meanings:

1) *after, behind* (as in metaphysics [= that which comes after physics]);
2) *changed in form, altered* (as in metamorphosis);
3) *higher* (used to designate a higher degree of a branch of science (as in *metachemistry* = higher chemistry)). (969)

It becomes necessary to make a slight addition to the third choice of meaning, thus endowing "*higher*" (969) with a connotation of 'general', 'grand', and 'transcendental', as in 'metaphysics'. However, in this case the emphasis is put on the orientation of the discipline at what is beyond scientific knowledge, at what transcends the limits of ordinary knowledge and experience, since, as *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* views it, "it investigates questions science does not address but the answers to which it presupposes" (489).

What is more, according to *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*, one might add a fourth possible meaning, namely that of 'aboutness':

> In twentieth-century philosophy this prefix signifies 'aboutness' and is used to form new terms which signify a discourse, theory or field of inquiry one level above its object, which is also a discourse, theory or field of inquiry. Accordingly, metaethics is the analysis of [ethical] concepts and arguments, metamathematics is the theory of mathematical concepts and proofs. (386)

Though certain dictionaries and encyclopaedias tend to omit this important shade of 'meta-', considering it sufficient to stop at the level of 'higher', as if already connotating the meaning of all-inclusiveness, and thus cancelling out the relevance of 'aboutness'; it seems compulsory to emphasise its particular significance, especially with regards to the findings to be presented later through this section.

'Narrative', in its turn, as *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* states it,

> In its broadest sense, is the means by which a story is told, whether fictional or not, and regardless of medium. Novels, plays, films, historical texts, diaries and newspaper articles focus, in their different ways, on particular events and their temporal and causal relations; they are all narratives in the above sense. Accounts of mathematical, physical, economic or legal principles are not. (654)

In this respect, one should bring to light a crucial distinction between two types of narratives:

1. narratives claiming to be a true representation of reality, or having primary recourse to those regions inaccessible to our reasoning;

2. purely fictional narratives, not prioritising either reality, or incomprehensible by humans truths.

At this point, before this study provides its own reflections on the essence of metanarratives, based on this etymology, it seems necessary to consider the most celebrated definition of the concept first introduced by Jean François Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition*: *A Report on Knowledge*:

> Metanarrative implying a philosophy of history is used to legitimate knowledge. […] For example, the rule of consensus between the sender and the addressee of a statement with truth-value is deemed acceptable if it is cast in terms of a possible unanimity between rational minds: this is the Enlightment narrative, in which the hero of knowledge works toward a good ethico-political end – universal peace. […] the justice is consigned to the grand narrative in the same way as truth. (xxiii)

Thus, Lyotard envisions metanarratives to be a set of stories about our existence that aim to sum it all up in one account, legitimising their attempt to be just and transcendental by the claim to have access to the otherwise unreachable - to the ordinary human - universal truth. What is more, the scholar describes some metanarratives as 'grand narratives', "such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth" (Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* xxxiii). These are the overall accounts of society and its history, as promoted by Christianity, Marxism, Hegelianism, and other theories.

In fact, in *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* Lyotard differentiates between two variants of discourse attempting to legitimise their self-validity – one having recourse to another discourse in the attempt to prove its claim of access to the otherwise incomprehensible reality and, as a result, losing in the

degree of its legitimacy; another assuming the validity of its own unmitigated access to the truth. Nevertheless, as Lyotard indicates later in the work, "whichever of the two solutions [variants of discourse] is adopted, we must recognise that idiom becomes more important than referent or [underlying reality]" (*Differend: Phrases in Dispute* 12ff). Thus, the abovementioned metanarratives conceal the fact of their secondariness, or referentiality to reality, by claiming the idiom to be the reality itself. Consequently, the Enlightenment metanarrative of Society, for instance, presupposes the blind acceptance of the propagated idiomatic narratives that society exists for the good of its members, and that it is divided into two opposing classes, as the only possible reality.

As a result, Lyotard pronounces his severe judgement on the destiny of metanarratives, defining the age of postmodernism as that of "incredulity towards metanarratives, [which] is a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it [incredulity]" (*The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* xxiv). Hence, Lyotard articulates the postmodern death of metanarratives, as instruments of oppression, to be substituted by supposedly liberating language games,

> Clouds of narrative language elements – narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on. Conveyed within each cloud are pragmatic valences specific to its kind. Each of us lives at the intersection of many of these. However, we do not necessarily establish stable language combinations, and the proprieties of the ones we do establish are not necessarily communicable. (*The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* xxiv)

Accordingly, Lyotard welcomes the era of postmodern heterogeneity, proneness to differences, instability, decentredness, disintegration, etc., as 'the' cure for the overall crisis of signification and cognition, which the

scholar envisions as taking place in the totality of pre-postmodern existence. In this respect, with the pronounced death of metanarratives Lyotard welcomes the onset of openness and defenceless contact with the Truth, celebrating its aptitude to "reinforce our ability to tolerate the incommensurable, [through the] inventor's paralogy[18], [rather than the] expert's homology[19]" (*The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* xxiv). Nevertheless, as can be deduced from the earlier findings, such a stance is defective in its very essence, because when men become pure depots of nothingness, ambiguity and dispersed signification they have even less peace and ability for Lyotard's invention, being busy fighting symptoms of schizophrenia, due to the 'too-muchness' of the incommensurable. Thus, as Dennis Ford puts it, "Christian Europe's loss of faith has resulted in the loss of the biological will to live" (197). As a result, post-postmodern life-narratives become the only weapon against postmodern terror arising from the realisation of being nothing but an accident on the incomprehensible visage of creation, instilling men with meaning, based on the knowledge that the original truth *per se* does exist.

In addition, Lyotard's mistake consists in the fact that the scholar fails to recognize the multidimensiality of metanarratives as such, thus, rejecting them as supposedly non-variable, repressive and corroded legitimising concepts. Yet, with the aid of the opening etymological analysis

[18] "In Lyotard's philosophy, the term 'paralogy' means a flood of good ideas that are inspired by conversation. To get these ideas paralogists ofetn share an irrelevant attitude towards well-acceoted theories, breaking then up and recombining them in revolutionary, new ways. The Point of paralogy is to overthrow stultifying traditional frameworks that we have come to take for granted" (Shawver 331).

[19] Homology - a term referring to "a similarity often attributable to common origin" (*Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary*).

of the prefix ‘meta-’ and root ‘narrative’ the study will attempt to prove the opposite – namely, the varied and wide-ranging nature of the concept, able to be both repressive and promising, depending on the historical epoch of its implementation. In this respect, it seems necessary to cross-match the etymological meanings of both ‘meta-’ and ‘narrative’ in the following table:

Table 1: Etymological Analysis of the Term ‘Metanarrative’

METANARRATIVE		
‘META-’	***‘NARRATIVE’***	
	Representation of Reality	**Fictional Narrative**
After, Behind	*After representation of reality*	*After fictional narrative*
Changed	*Changed representation of reality*	*Changed fictional narrative*
Higher, Grand, Transcending	*Higher representation of reality*	*Higher fictional narrative*
About	*About representation of reality*	*About fictional narrative*

It becomes clear that Lyotard’s metanarrative, as a mechanism of oppression and legitimisation, consists mainly of features emerging as a result of the cross-matching of ‘meta-’ and ‘narrative’ in the meaning of ‘*true representation of reality*’. The connotation signifies ‘after or behind representation of reality’ (that is, the idiom assumes the role of the referent)

and, therefore, stands for a ‘changed representation of reality’ - that is, concealing the incomprehensibility of Truth via a set of imposed and intoxicating discourses, which allows it to assume the role of a ‘higher, guiding and transcending’ discourse with the only true claim at representing the Truth.

The disclosed essence of metanarratives, rejected by Lyotard, brings forward their undeniable similitude to the epistemological development of the mind at the stages of pre-modernism and modernism. This allows for the partial retribution of Lyotard’s denunciation of the old metanarratives, unmasking an irreversible crisis of cognition and exhaustion from the unquestionable acceptance of imposed truths. Nevertheless, the retribution may only be partial due to his inability to decipher the score of remaining shades of meaning, providing the concept with a backdrop for a renewed existence in a renewed context.

Respectively, a similar cross-matching of ‘meta-’ with ‘narrative’, but this time in the meaning of ‘fictional narrative’ allows us to construct a new essence for the term ‘metanarrative’, signifying:

a. ‘after or behind fictional narrative’ - that is, consciously constructed (by means of fictional narratives) artificial reality;

b. ‘changed fictional narrative’ – that is, emphasising the reformed nature of emergent discourses, this time in the meaning of accepted human fictions different from the inconceivable outer reality, and opposed to the former substitution of the referent/ reality combination with artificially imposed maxims;

c. ‘higher fictional narrative’ – that is, the only possible human-constructed higher reality men can know;

d. ‘about fictional narrative’ – that is, being self-reflexive of the fictionality and constructedness of both human fictions and an artificially constructed higher reality.

Thus, the emergent post-postmodern metanarrative bears no resemblance to the metanarratives criticised by Lyotard - the only connection being its role of a mechanism guiding and defending men in their day-to-day existence. Hence, to avoid future confusion with the old forms of metanarratives, the thesis proposes to name the phenomena ‘life-narratives’, thus, emphasising their intentionally constructed nature, and their ability to urge men on and provide them with a sense of meaning based on a strong belief in the *a priori* existence of the Truth. Accordingly, the post-postmodern life-narratives are both a tool of regulation, and a mechanism of reflection on the truth of the human condition.

All in all, the changing essence of the concept ‘metanarrative’ at various periods of human onto-epistemological development is reflected in the following scheme:

Table 2: Onto-Epistemological Evolution of the Term 'Metanarrative'

Modernism	**Postmodernism**	**Post-postmodernism**
Old Metanarratives ↓ Repressive, Non-variable, Stale Discourses Claiming to be *the* reality	Incredulity towards *Old* Metanarratives/ Absence of guiding discourses	*New* Life-Narratives ↓ Consciously constructed men-made reality, instilling subjects with hope and vision, as the only possible higher reality humans can know

One must add one more important feature to the essence of post-postmodern metanarratives – that is, their proneness to easy enactability, rather than ungraspable abstraction, to the "human connection" (Becker 157) so well described by Herman Melville's Ahab:

> Close! Stand close to me, Starbuck; let me look into a human eye; it is better than to gaze into sea or sky; better than to gaze upon God. By the green land; by the bright hearthstone! This is the magic glass, man; I see my wife and my child in thine eye. (361)

As a consequence, we have different humanised patterns of goods and evils, gods and devils, loves and hatreds, identities and selves within a general paradigm of Godliness, Identity, History, or Love. Thus, rather than being an empty, simulacral hyperreality, concealing the fact of the supposed outer absence of reality, the post-postmodern metanarratives do not conceal the fact of their undeniable constructedness. On the contrary, they exemplify the otherwise abstract ideas and provide men with meaning, hope and reasons to go on, which are essential to live side by side with the otherwise incomprehensible Truth. Besides, the post-postmodern life-narratives renew our sense of the possibility of *a* meaning in the universe, *the* meaning of which is hardly ever to be understood.

To conclude, the postmodern meaninglessness happened to be that instrument needed to arrive at the present point of renewed resurgence of human spirit; for what is "meaninglessness, which feels like a loss and a fall from natural grace, [if not] the prelude to an eventual gain" (Ford 258).

CHAPTER 3

THE PERPETUAL COMBAT AGAINST POSTMODERN RELATIVISM

> "Postmodernism […] tends to dress old insights in new words.
> Falling apart, or being decentred, is nothing exceptional,
> just particular. Rather, it is more likely that
> a major part of cultural activity [should] relate
> to the forging of life narratives in situations
> where things are most at stake."
> (Wikan, "The Nun's Postmodern Dilemma" 285)

In his renown essay "Past Conditional. What Mother Would Have Wanted" Julian Barnes discusses the nature of human memories and quotes his elder brother, who austerely believes that most of our memories are fundamentally defected: "So much so that, on the Cartesian principle of the rotten apple, none is to be trusted unless it has some external support" (2). Indeed, the theme of the validity of memories, credence of history and ability to seize the past, propped up by the "idea that history or more precisely, historiography, is 'fictional' [(that is, based on intrinsic discursiveness and, hence, limited in nature)]" (Sesto 8-9), and shaped by an ever-present incredulity and a 'ready-to-question' approach, underlies most of the novelist's works, interpreted as clearly postmodern.

Undeniably, Barnes's extensive use of numerous postmodern elements in his fiction allows to categorise Barnes as a postmodern writer. These include profound exploration and almost immediate subversion of "realistic strategies, [and are combined with] essentially self-reflexive writing techniques" (Sesto 1). The result is the overt metafictional colouring of his works presenting "a

novel no different from composing or constructing one's reality" (Waugh 24). The same holds true of Barnes's wide-ranging use of parodic and ironic devices, acute interest in the problems of "'naming' and 'representation', awareness of the fictionality of existence, and distrust of what François Lyotard has referred to as [old] metanarratives" (Sesto 11), leading to the creation of a myriad of hectic and often contradicting truths.

All of these allow one to incorporate the bulk of Julian Barnes's fiction within the framework of the definition of postmodernism devised by A. S. Byatt in *People in Paper Houses*:

> An awareness of the difficulty of *realism* combined with a strong attachment to its values, a formal need to comment on their fictiveness combined with a strong sense that models, literature and *tradition* are ambiguous and emblematic goods combined with a profound nostalgia for, rather than rejection of the great works of the past. (34)

As a consequence, as has been previously stated, the existing literary criticism tends to regard Barnes's works as postmodern. For instance, the postmodern orientation of the novelist's fiction is advocated in the four largest and most comprehensive monographs dedicated to the author, including *Understanding Julian Barnes* by Merritt Moseley, *Julian Barnes* by Matthew Pateman, *Language, History, and Metanarrative in the Fiction of Julian Barnes* by Bruce Sesto and *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* by Vanessa Guignery. The same holds true of other essays and reviews on the subject, including "James B. Scott's deconstructionist analysis and Neil Brooks's poststructuralist reading" (Guignery, "The Fiction of Julian Barnes" 6) of the novels under consideration; Gregory Salyer's and Claudia Kotte's study of works "through a postmodernist perspective" (Guignery, "The Fiction of Julian Barnes" 6); and multiple examinations conducted by Joyce

Carol Oates, Brian Finney, Catherine Bernard, Alan Clinton, Liliane Louvel, Andrzej Gasiorek, and others.

Nevertheless, there is more in the fiction of Julian Barnes than simple postmodern scepticism and proneness to the disclosure of fictionality, as it is the author himself who dismisses his brother's avowal, confessing that "I am more trusting, or self-deluding, however, so shall continue as if all my memories were true" ("Past Conditional. What Mother Would Have Wanted" 2). In fact, the significance of the 'as if' approach is hard to overestimate, as it marks the novelist's separation from the fashionable at present trend of postmodern novel-making and identifies him as part of the newly emerging school of post-postmodern reasoning. Thus, Barnes's personal resolution to envisage human existence 'as if' the objective truth was at all times accessible and 'as if' ultimate meaning was within reach, notwithstanding the inescapable score of truly postmodern complications - be it the need to construct and deconstruct stale notions, defamiliarise sour truths, underline the constructedness of reality, point to its artifice, or interrogate the ontological status of fictional texts – makes the novelist's works justly post-postmodern. The works celebrate the fabulatory energy to believe and to start anew in the world of chaos, going side by side with a never-ending endeavour to perceive the objective truth.

To be sure, Julian Barnes's fiction may be described in Laurence Lerner's words as "striv[ing] for semiosis[20] rather than mimesis" (339), accompanied by a profound emphasis on the paramount importance of the ultimate truth, despite the postmodern attempt to rebuff the notion, for "if perception is not wholly objective, it does not follow that it must be wholly subjective: that

[20] Semiosis - a term referring to "a process in which something functions as a sign to an object" (*Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary*).

would be to ignore the more complex possibility that it results from an interaction between the external world and our method of perceiving" (335). In fact, Lerner's quotation underlines the essence of the transitory epoch in which we live, with its ceaseless balancing between life-forging and life-taking, construction and deconstruction, appearance and disappearance, integration and disintegration. As Czeslaw Milosz sees it in *On Hope*, "it is possible that we are witnessing a kind of race between the lifegiving and the destructive activity of civilization's bacteria, and that an unknown result awaits in the future" (357). Indeed, the harsh postmodern incredulity towards the very essence of life left mankind with nothing to be 'deconstructed' from, greatly 'relativised' and 'debased' of values. Nevertheless, according to Czeslaw Milosz,

> If disintegration is a function of development, and development a function of disintegration, the race between them may very well end in the victory of disintegration. For a long time, but not forever – and here is where hope enters. […] On the contrary, every day one can see signs indicating that now, at the present moment, something new, and on the scale never witnessed before, is being born: humanity as an elementary force conscious of transcending. (362)

Milosz advocates the "search for a reality purified" (361) as a solution to the crisis of mankind, purified either by the "beauty of reality distanced by history" (361), Dostoevskian-like beauty in general, Flaubertian-like art or Barnesian-like love, which "won't change the history of the world, but it will do something much more important: teach us to stand up to history, to ignore its chin-out strut" (Barnes *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, 240). But above and beyond, it is the Barnesian notion of the objective truth, which permeates, precedes and supersedes all of the above mentioned phenomena, and is often treated as the panacea necessary to rescue mankind from the danger of relativity:

> We all know objective truth is not obtainable, that when some event occurs we shall have a multiplicity of subjective truths which we assess and then fabulate into history, into some God-eyed version of what 'really' happened. This God-eyed version is a fake – a charming, impossible fake, like those medieval paintings which show all the stages of Christ's Passion happening simultaneously in different parts of the picture. But while we know this, we must still believe that objective truth is obtainable; or if we can't believe this we must believe that 43 per cent objective truth is better than 41 per cent. We must do so, because if we don't we're lost, we fall into beguiling relativity, we value one liar's version as much as another liar's, we throw up our hands at the puzzle of it all, we admit that the victor has the right not just to the spoils but also to the truth. (Barnes "History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters", 245-246)

Thus, if one can fabulate one's way to the truth of Christ's existence (based on the belief in his *a priori* existence), one may fabulate one's way to the objective truth, no matter how distant and riddled it might be. Furthermore, as Merritt Moseley comments on Barnes's theory of love in *Understanding Julian Barnes*, "if people tell the truth when they are in love, then there is truth to tell" (124). Hence, it is here that one comes across the major difference between postmodern and post-postmodern modes of thinking. The former advocates the necessity to fabulate the uncountable multiplicity of versions of the ultimate truth, eventually rubbing the very notion off the surface of existence with a load of substituting and slowly devaluating 'small' truths, 'whose' truths and 'oppressed' truths. The latter, in its turn, promotes the need to fabulate (in a reflexive manner) one's way to the belief and to the acceptance of the existence of ultimate truth as such, by means of a set of personal life-narratives and personal searches. The point here is not the arrival at ultimate truth as such, but conscious acceptance of its *a priori* existence. Thus, it is possible to come up with the following

two figures showing the distinction between the postmodern and post-postmodern modes of writing:

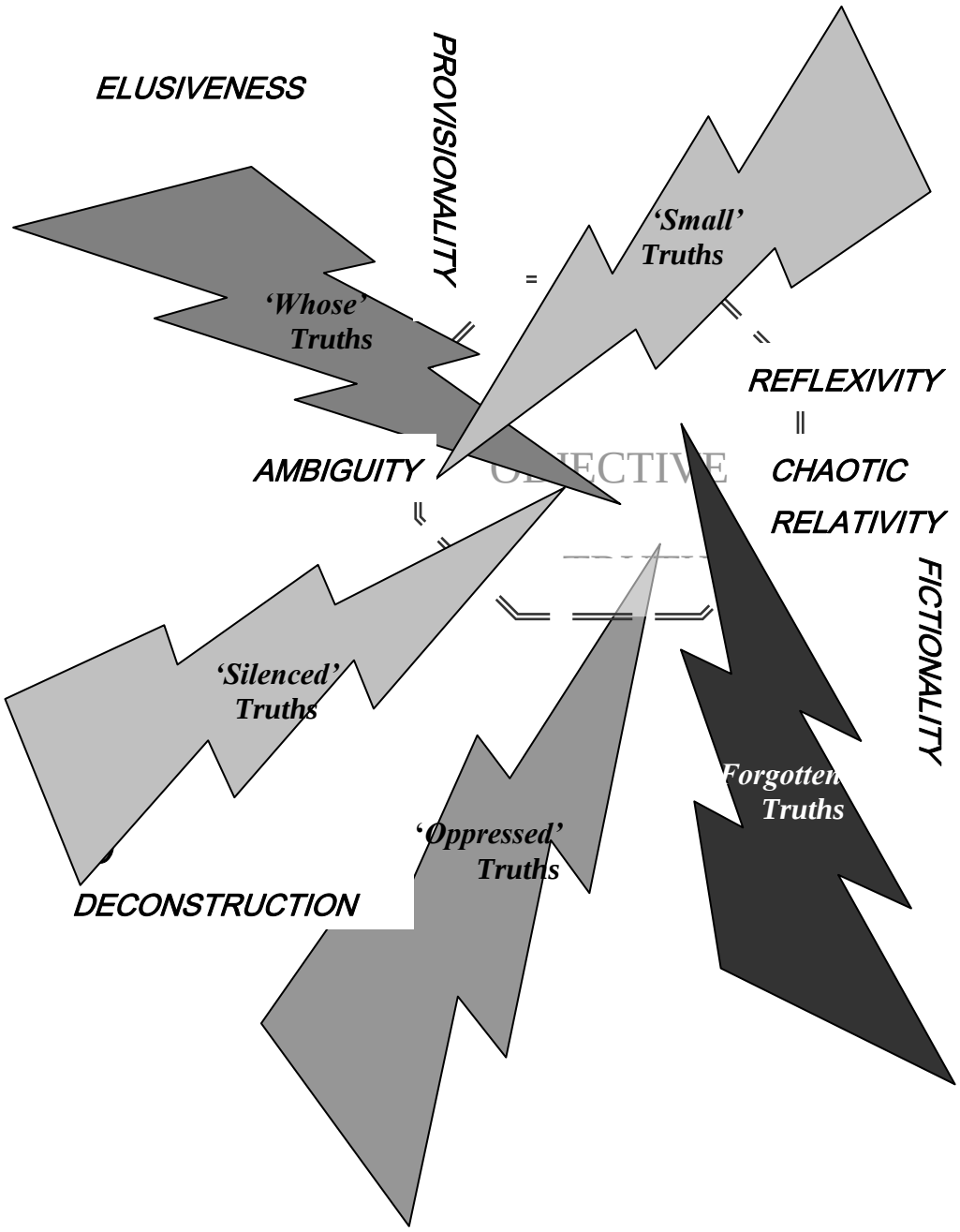

Figure 7: The Essence of Postmodern Writing

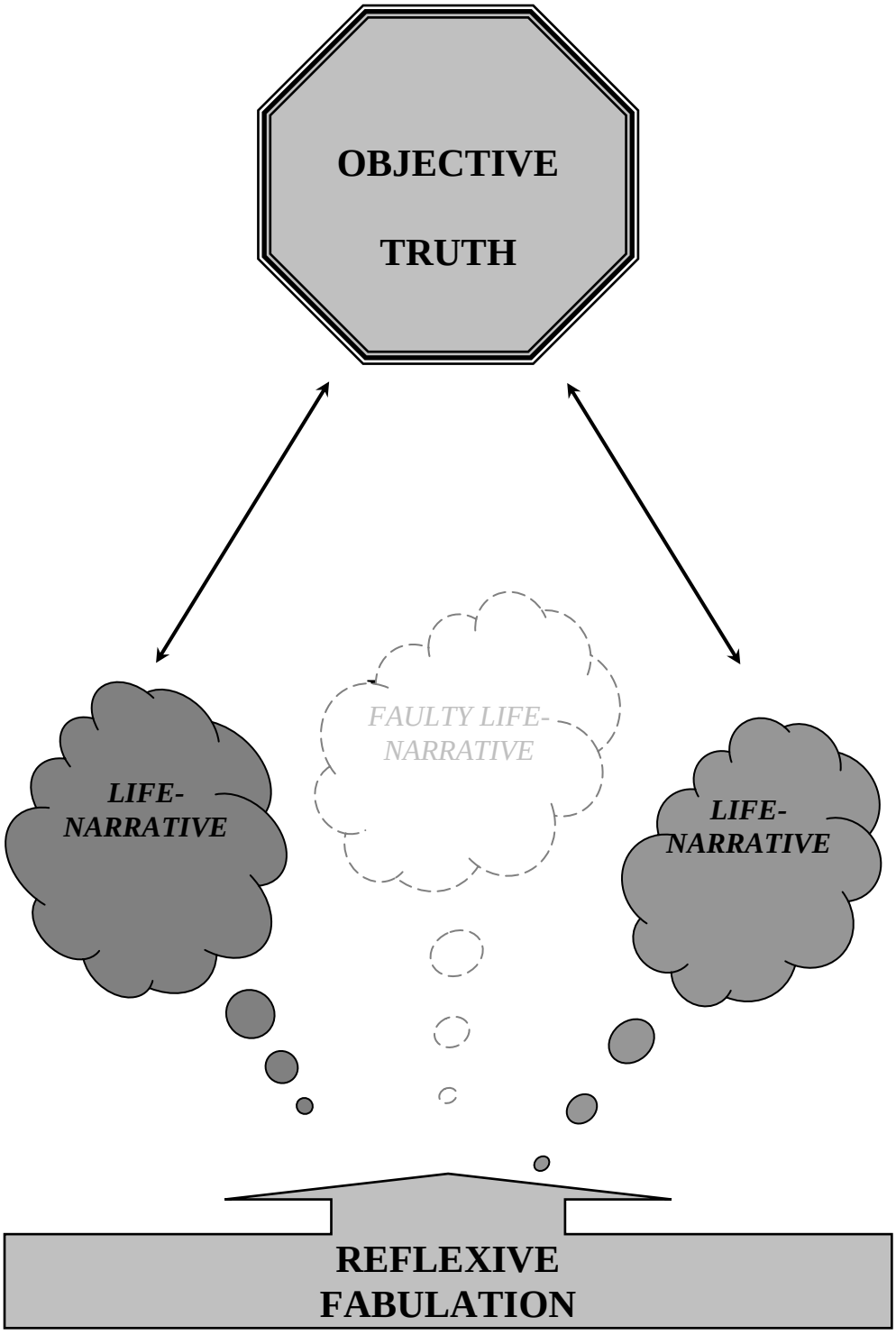

Figure 8: The Essence of Human Reality of Fabulated Metanarratives and Post-Postmodern Fiction

As a consequence, Julian Barnes's novels may be well defined in terms of what Allan Wilde has called postmodern "suspensive irony" [21] (166) conjoined by the redemptive hope of the attainability of ultimate truth through the fabulation of new, life-instilling narratives, so as to combat the danger of postmodern relativity. This introduces Barnes's fiction into the sphere of post-postmodern writing, as the author reflexively "foregrounds the existent confusion and uncertainty of individuals deprived of 'framing certainties'" (Rubinson 164) and makes them probe history, art, or religion for either enlightening or completely confusing answers on the way to discovering or re-discovering the original truth.

Hence, post-postmodernism tends to exercise numerous reflexive methods conceived by postmodernism, so as to depict the artifice of the means employed to fabulate one's way to the ultimate truth,

> Point[ing] to their own mask and invit[ing] the public to examine its design and texture, […] break[ing] with art as enchantment and call[ing] attention to their own factitiousness as textual constructs [through] gaps and holes and seams in the narrative tissue […], shocks of rupture and discontinuity". (Stam 1)

At the same time, the trend reconstructs the notion of ultimate truth, which has been distorted by postmodernism, and celebrates its significance.

As a consequence, as Vanessa Guignery puts it in *The Fiction of Julian Barnes*, the novelist is never "constrained by the heritage of past conventions, but manage[s] on the contrary to create a voice of his own and a form of his own" (49), by means of "rehabilitating truth […] as a goal and a safeguard

[21] Suspensive irony – the term elaborated by Alan Wilde in *Horizons of Assent: Modernism, Postmosdernism, and the Ironic Imagination* to stand for a "more radical vision of multiplicity, randomness, contingency, and even absurdity [...] accepting the world in all its disorder" (166).

against the dangers of 'beguiling relativity'" (68). What is more, the double essence of post-postmodern writing makes many critics mistakenly refer Julian Barnes's fiction to the domain of postmodern writing. For instance, in the prominent article "One Good Story Leads to Another: Julian Barnes's 'A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters'" Gregory Salyer claims that "with this paradox of subverting objective truth and then reinstalling it, Barnes is right back in the thick of postmodernist thought" (228), while Vanessa Guignery claims in a similar fashion that "this stance corresponds to the postmodernist strategy of inscribing and subverting, installing and deconstructing, except that Barnes does it in the reverse way" (*The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 68). Nevertheless, it is the 'reverse part' or the 'endorsement part' that is undoubtedly post-postmodern. Therefore, Mathew Pateman argues that "this position places Barnes in opposition to the philosophers of the postmodern, such as Jean-Francois Lyotard, who deny the very idea of the accessibility of truth" (53). Jackie Buxton, in her turn, states in "Theses on History (In 10 ½ Chapters)" that "Barnes's advocacy of the belief in love and truth provides the theoretical alternative to a plunge into postmodern relativity" (85). As a result, it is simple redemption through happiness and love, together with an unquestionable belief in ultimate truth that become the post-postmodern hallmarks of Julian Barnes's fiction.

Accordingly, at this point it seems necessary to call to attention the incontestably post-postmodern thematic pattern underlying the majority of the novelist's works, portraying either the full progression of main characters from the stage of human intoxication and sobriety to the phase of fabulation (as in *Metroland*), or exploring the theme of the search for the objective truth. The search can be both enlightening and confusing, yet it results in a final apprehension of the indispensability of fabulation for the construction of narratives instilling down-to-earth meaning into day-to-day life (as depicted

in the novels *Flaubert's Parrot*, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* and *England, England* to be discussed by this thesis). Thus, to cite Vanessa Guignery commenting on the thematic contents of Barnes's first novel *Metroland*, "the progression of the epigraphs [in the novel] reflects the evolution of the main protagonists 'from complexity to simplification, from the desire to search to the desire to accept'" ("The Fiction of Julian Barnes" 13). Though Guignery fails to disclose the symbolism of such an evolution, it is quite evident that the evolution represents the course of human progression towards the stage of post-postmodern fabulation, which is marked by the 'desire to accept' the maxim of the original truth, as an aftermath of numerous reflexive searches through a multitude of personally fabulated life-narratives.

It is necessary to provide an additional analysis of the term 'fabulation', as Barnes's treatment of it may seem somewhat confusing to an unprepared reader. Thus, in the interview given to Vanessa Guignery, Julian Barnes confesses that the term has been borrowed from clinical terminology to refer to the fact that "the human mind can't exist without the full story. So it fabulates and it takes what it thinks it knows, and then it makes a convincing link between the two" (Guignery, "History in Question(s)" 64). Furthermore, in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* the novelist defines fabulation in the following way: "We make up a story to cover the facts we don't know or can't accept; we keep a few true facts and spin a new story round them. Our panic and our pain are only eased by soothing fabulation" (242). Yet, in the course of narrative development one might notice that the meaning of the term does not remain stable and acquires a double-like connotation, standing for both:

a. a generic description of how Barnes perceives the writing of official history;

b. a reflexive attempt to make sense of the world in the retrospect of the always there objective truth.

In the first case the term displays a clearly negative connotation, since Barnes describes official history as a collection of somebody else's oppressive fabulations. Hence, fabulation is viewed as a tool of coercion, and a mechanism to impose order upon the society to suit the interests and purposes of those in charge. Thus, as Gregory Salyer puts it, "the bottom line is whose fabulation you choose to believe, which is the same as saying whose history or whose reality you shall believe" (226). In the second case, on the contrary, the term acquires a positive colouring, offering hope and instilling belief in the attainability of ultimate truth, and exhibits a "conciliatory function, implying a need to come to terms with the forces of a destructive, even merciless history" (Rubinson 169).

To illustrate the two connotative sides of the term, one might simply cross-match the phenomenon of the official, accepted, history (where 'accepted' stands for both, acceptance of history and acceptance of oppression), fabulated by the powerful for the purpose of control, with that of Theodore Gericault's painting *The Raft of the Medusa*, analysed by Julian Barnes in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*. The painting offers the fabulation of both hope to be saved and despair to be lost forever, against the background of the objective truth of the eventual survival of the shipwrecked. Here one is free, or to be more exact, one is urged to be creative and to fabulate different versions of the truth, guided by the fact that ultimate truth, nevertheless, exists; while for the painting "the challenge is to hint at the entire story" (Barnes *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, 128). Hence, Julian Barnes further comments on the nature of the painting:

> The incident never took place as depicted; the numbers are inaccurate; the cannibalism is reduced to a literary reference; the Father and Son group has been a thinnest documentary justification, the barrel group none at all. (*A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* 135)

Nevertheless, fabulation provides us with an even richer version of what might have happened, treating as *a priori* the actuality of the *Medusa's* shipwreck. Here lies the major difference with the postmodern approach, which would have blotted out the fact of the *Medusa's* existence as such with a squall of contradicting truths. Thus, the function of any painting in particular, or fabulation in general, is 'to hint' at the full narrative, to gesture at ultimate truth, which helps us "to make sense of the hopelessness of history" (Rubinson 170), and to depict "how hopelessly we signal; how dark the sky; how big the waves. We are all lost at sea, washed between hope and despair, hailing something that may never come to rescue us" (Barnes *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, 137). After all, "fable and fabulation are cathartic as they attenuate the horror, brutality and arbitrariness of the history of the world" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 67) and block out the danger of falling prey to postmodern relativity.

A further practical illustration of the theory can be taken from the sphere of cultural anthropology. Thus, in the article "The Nun's Story: Reflections on an Age-Old, Postmodern Dilemma" Unni Wikan analyses the ways people fabulate life-narratives to retain a grip on themselves in the face of turbulence. Therefore, the scholar questions, "What makes a twice-raped nun hang on? Or how does an old woman keep her reason when government loses its own and plays volleyball with her land?" (280). The answer lies in the fact that the nun forged new life-narratives to replace the ones that had been shattered, to pull her damaged self into unity. Thus, the idea of the indestructible (no

matter what) unity of the self has been accepted as the objective truth, the *a priori* nature of which offered hope and served as a motive for the nun to go on by refilling her life with new meaningful metanarratives: "going on pilgrimages, sponsoring religious ceremonies, taking an orphan under her wings, being charitable to family and strangers, going to the district administration to complain, and even trying to see the King to have him reverse the decision to take her home" (Wikan 284). The pattern of the nun's activities embodies the instances of the second (post-postmodern) connotation of the term 'fabulation', which will be of major importance in the structural and thematic treatment of Barnes's four novels under consideration.

All in all, Julian Barnes's novels are marked by a pronounced heterogeneity of genres, styles and approaches, which accounts for their extensive criticism in contemporary literary circles. Thus, Miranda Seymour in the article "All the World's a Fable" displays a type of a "'but-does-he-write-proper-novels' school of criticism" (35), asserting that as a rule there are not "enough logical connections to justify calling this a novel, rather than a clever collection of linked stories of startlingly mixed quality" (35). Joyce Carol Oates, in her turn, characterises Barnes's fiction as "gathering of prose pieces, some fiction, others rather like essays" (13), while D. J. Taylor claims in "A Newfangled and Funny Romp" that the novelist's works are "not novel[s], according to the staider definitions; [they generally] possess no character who rises above the level of a cipher and no plot worth speaking of" (40). Hence, as Merritt Moseley puts it, Barnes's novels may be marked by either partial or full absence of "normality" (110). Furthermore, Richard Locke, for instance, labels them as "tragi-comic *concordiae discors*" (42), denying the existence of any concordant narrative structure as such. Yet, a careful examination will disclose the fact that rather than functioning as a 'tragi-comic *concordiae discors*', the novels do work as a whole in the manner of an anthology,

triptych, symphony, etc., unified by the harmony of themes and motifs, rather than characters and structural logic.

In fact, one should not be confused by such an attack on the novelist, as it is Julian Barnes himself who names the genre underlying his fiction. Thus, in "Still Parroting on about God", David Saxton provides the following definition of the novel, originally engendered by Julian Barnes - "an extended piece of prose, largely fictional, which is planned and executed as a whole piece" (42). Indeed, Barnes's works are 'extended pieces of prose', though often containing numerous quotations from mainly French literature. They are 'largely fictional', despite multiple inclusions of real historical personae, lists, chronologies, or biographies into their contents, for, as has been discussed before, fictional fabulation forms the basis for the construction of all forms of writing, with the sole exception of strictly scientific forms of numerical calculations and data operations. Therefore, as Merritt Moseley puts it, "books of fact, including histories, are only 'largely nonfictional'" (111).

What is more, all the four novels to be considered in this work are held together either by an overall theme of the human progress from the stage of intoxication to that of post-postmodern fabulation, depicted metaphorically; or by the theme of post-postmodern fabulation as such, with its production of life-narratives based on the belief in the 'always-there' objective truth, instilling life with meaning. What is more, the novels are held together by a number of other, no less important themes, be it reliability of memories and history, ability to know the past, attainability of truth, life versus art, human need of God, or purifying power of love. As a result, all of the above arguments point to the fact that one may justly attribute the term 'novel' to the whole bulk of Barnes's lengthy fictional works, as many scholars, bookstores and the general public have always done.

One may ask what is the dominating genre of Julian Barnes's novels. For this purpose, the most suitable label appears to be Amy J. Elias's notion of 'metahistorical romance', elaborated in *Sublime Desire: History and Post-1960s Fiction*. Such romance manifests what she calls "a desire for the Truth that is Out There" (xviii), while at the same time it "fend[s] off the encounter with that Truth […] since history in the twentieth century (perhaps history in general) has been nothing if not traumatic" (xii). Indeed, all Barnes's novels are organised around the pattern of deconstruction, countless rummages and doubtful investigations into the notion of truth, yet, never denying the fact of its incontestable objective existence somewhere out there. As a result, the notion of ultimate truth gets solidly constructed all over again, bringing forward the post-postmodern colouring of Julian Barnes's works.

CHAPTER 4

HUMAN 'GROWTH' TOWARDS THE STAGE OF FABULATION IN *METROLAND* – A NOVEL OF SERIOUS 'GROWING UP'

"I'd call myself a happy man […]
I wonder why happiness is despised nowadays."
(Barnes, *Metroland* 174)

Metroland (1980), the first novel written by Julian Barnes, may bear the name of a metahistorical romance under the guise of a *Bildungsroman*. This is due to the fact that "a desire for the Truth that is Out There" (Elias xviii) goes hand in hand with the ups and downs of the growing up process of its two major characters, Christopher Lloyd and Tony Barbarowski, who are 16-year old schoolboys, sneering and arrogant, and full of chaotic energy to search for the truth. This, nonetheless, constantly plays its cunning tricks to perplex the adolescents. There exists a wide-spread conformity in critical circles regarding the categorisation of *Metroland* as "a witty *Bildungsroman*" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 8). Accordingly, Merritt Moseley argues in *Understanding Julian Barnes* that "if a novelist is to write a coming-of-age-book, it is probably going to be the first book. Julian Barnes is no exception" (18). Indeed, the downs and falls of Chris's and Toni's maturity greatly mimics the course of Barnes 'coming-of-age' as a novelist. Thus, it took the writer eight years to complete the work, due to the fact that (as Barnes himself confesses to Allan Billen in *Two Aspects of a Writer*) he was "lacking confidence [as a novelist] and [the novel] sat in a drawer for a year at a time and went through a lot of re-writing" (27).

The novel displays no continuous chronological narrative. The book consists of three parts, entitled *Metroland (1963)*, *Paris (1968)* and *Metroland II (1977)*, each of which corresponds to a specific period in Chris's life, containing only slight, if any, in-text connection to the preceding chapter. The overall thematic connection, nevertheless, is more than sound, displaying Chris's evolution from the intoxicated teenage complexity onto the simplified sobriety up to the fabulatory "desire to accept" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 13). In addition, the progression of the epigraphs to each part, taken from the classics of French literature, distinctly emphasises the metamorphosis in question. Indeed, the novel presents symbolic "homage to French literature, culture and language" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 13), being literally saturated with numerous excerpts from the works of French writers, be it Nerval, Gautier, Flaubert, Baudelaire, Verlaine and Rimbaud, Mallarme and Moliére.

In this connection, Part One is brought in by Rimbaud's declaration "*A noir, E blanc, I rouge, U vert, O bleu*" (9) (A is black, E is white, I is red, U is green, O is blue), symbolising a typically teenage bewilderment with the chaotic complexity of existence. Part Two is introduced by an excerpt from Verlaine's letter to Pierre Louÿs: "*Moi qui ai connu Rimbaud, je sais qu'il se foutait pas mal si A etait rouge ou vert. Il le voyait comme ça, mais c'est tout*" (73) (I, who was acquainted with Rimbaud, know that he did not give a damn if A was red or green. He saw it as such, and that was all), introducing the notion of the importance of simplicity and unmediated vision of the world at the stage of sobriety. Part Three, in its turn, is led in by Bishop Butler's statement "Things and actions are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be; why then should we desire to be deceived?" (131), highlighting the necessity to accept the *a priori* existence of the Truth, no matter how long we search for it, or what these searches involve.

All in all, Merritt Moseley calls the novel a triptych, due to the "structural similarity among the three parts" (19). Thus, the chapters comprising them are relatively short; all of them begin with brief scene-settings, leading the reader into the subject matter. All of the sections are titled with "evocative and sometimes ironic phrases such as 'The Constructive Loaf' or 'Nude, Giant Girls'" (Moseley 19). What is more, the three parts end with a recurrent chapter entitled "Object Relations", examining objects that characterise at best protagonist's development at any of the three stages under consideration.

The narrative voice in Part One and Part Three is dominated by the homodiegetic first-person narration of a "precociously verbal protagonist" (Moseley 19), who is Chris. Hence, the person who is speaking in the first person is the person the book is mainly about. Furthermore, the protagonist is self-conscious about being a narrator and sometimes addresses the reader, so to say, 'speaks to us'. In addition, the novel is told retrospectively by the narrator who, at the point of narration, is definitely older and more mature - "a more ordinary man looking back on the youth he once was; a man recounting the ironic way his life has turned out; a man who tells the story of growing up and an essentially happy life" (Moseley 30).

Part Two exhibits a slight difference in the way of narration. Thus, as Merritt Moseley puts it, "it begins with an explanation, couched in the form of a conversation with a disbelieving interlocutor of how [Chris] was in Paris in summer 1968 but somehow missed '*les événements*'" (24). Hence, Christopher becomes both a focalizer and focalized in the course of a generally fiery communication with Tony, who continues to be sardonic about Chris's ventures in particular, and life in general, as well as ironically proud of remaining at the fringe of society through personal involvement in extreme politics and writing underground poetry.

The narrative tone is all in all amiable and full of ironic notes that become even more pronounced with the development of the plot. The ascent in the degree of irony is not accidental, as it, beyond doubt, lays emphasis on the fact that, as Chris puts it, "part of growing up [is] being able to ride irony without being thrown" (Barnes, *Metroland* 135). Besides, the narrative is saturated with instances of intertextuality through multiple citations, allusions, parodies and references. Thus, as Richard Brown argues in the article "Julian Barnes", "*Metroland* owes a great deal to the language and traditions of English poetry, [to the] steady, empirical treatment and suburban stoicism of the poems of Philip Larkin (1922-85)" (68). What is more, as has been previously mentioned, there are uncountable intertextual references to the works of French authors, thus, putting a special emphasis on the fact that the protagonist "is being constructed through literary engagement" (Pateman 183). As a result, the instances of reflexive irony, accompanied by numerous self-conscious cases of intertextuality, not only reveal the teenage need for public displays of over-sophistication and pedantry, but also indicate a clearly post-postmodern orientation of the novel. Thus, the work depicts Chris's personal progress to the realization of the human need of the *a priori* Truth, based on a multitude of reflexive and self-conscious searches, psychological rummages and personal quests.

To get a more profound thematic understanding of the novel, it seems necessary to take a closer look at each of its consecutive parts. Part One depicts Chris and Toni as a couple of 16-year old teenagers, sneering and pedantic, snobbish and unruly, swollen with pride at being the most "civilisé" (Barnes, *Metroland* 15), while only rebelliously "syphilisé" (15), with a pretence at unmatched sophistication and outstanding erudition, fuelled by overflowing sexual energy, and living with their parents in Metroland – a suburb within a commuting distance from London:

> It sounded better than Eastwick, stranger than Middlesex; more like a concept in the mind than a place where you shopped. You lived there because it was an area easy to get out of. […] That was all to please the estate agents. Make it sound cosy. Cosy homes for cosy heroes. Twenty-five minutes from Baker Street and a pension at the end of the line […] made it what it is now, a bourgeois dormitory. (34-38)

All in all, Part One concentrates on Christopher's process of maturity - employing Toni's path into adulthood in a supplementary fashion. Thus, this Part is composed of thirteen short chapters portraying the teenagers' way out of adolescence through a "series of short [self-centred] vignettes" (Moseley 23). Hence, the reader encounters Chris and Toni haunting the National Gallery, attempting to capture (in a manner of ripe voyeurs) glimpses of "pure aesthetic pleasure" (Barnes, *Metroland* 29) streaming from the faces of occasional visitors. As a rule, the two comment on the seen – while their comments, in their turn, exhibit the teenagers' unconscious 'forbidden' need for sexual pleasure sublimated by the 'allowed' oral articulation of someone else's aesthetic pleasure. As a result, the description of the scene bears a strong if indirect resemblance to the portrayal of a sexual act:

> She was gazing up at the picture now like an icon-worshiper. Her eyes hosed it swiftly up and down, then settled, and began to move slowly over its surface. At times, her head would cock sideways and her neck thrust forward; her nostrils appeared to widen, as if scented new correspondences in the painting; her hands moved on her thighs in little flutters. Gradually, her movements quietened down. (12)

What is more, the boys often engage themselves in such activities as "*ecraser l'infame*" (Barnes, *Metroland* 15), or crushing the infamous; "*epater la bourgeoisie*" (18), or outraging the bourgeois; and "trying to look like

flâneurs" (17), or "sophisticated urban idlers or boulevardiers" (Moseley 22). Moreover, in the chapter entitled "The Constructive Loaf", the two take on the habit of "lounging about in a suitably *insouciant* fashion, but keeping an eye open all the time; [thus], you could really catch life on the hip – you could harvest all the *aperçus* of the *flâneur*" (Barnes, *Metroland* 28). The habit, just like the title of the chapter (according to Toni, its inventor), bears the name of the Constructive Loaf, referring to the "insouciant observation of life" (Sesto 15). A similar idle bellicoseness is preserved through the chapter entitled "Rabbit, Human" where the school cry "RooooOOOOOOOOiiiiined" (Barnes, *Metroland* 21) - drawn out "when a chair was knocked over, [or] a foot trodden over" (21), emphasises the perpetual teenage need for ironic cruelty, combined with an everlasting male fear of castration. The same holds true of the chapter called "Mendacity Curves", depicting Chris's vignette against his constantly lying Uncle Arthur, "not for profit, or even for effect, but simply because it gave him thrill" (46). In addition, an analogous rebelliousness may be observed through the chapter entitled "The Big D", demonstrating the boys' outspoken rejection of God, impelled by the "boringness of Sundays, the creeps who took it all seriously at school, Baudelaire and Rimbaud, the pleasure of blasphemy…inability any longer to think of wanking as a sin, and…unwillingness to believe that dead relatives were watching" (53). To crown it all, the chapter "Hard and Low" portrays Chris and Tony reflecting upon their future as "artists-in-residence at a nudist colony" (70), mutinous and carnal, arty and uprooted.

Subsequently, the rebelliousness against "dummos, perfects, masters, parents, brother[s] and sister[s], Third Division (North) football, Moliére, God, the bourgeoisie and normal people…" (Barnes, *Metroland* 37-38) underlines the fact, that alongside with the outspoken desire to act in a destructive fashion, to undermine, to question, and to revolt, the teenagers are stuck in a sort of an

intoxicated limbo, unable to see the world outside their empoisoned selves, ridden with blinding myths of personal grandness, sophistication and superiority. As Merritt Moseley puts it, the two "are inert – there is a sort of rebelliousness against an 'unfocused' 'they': the 'unidentified legislators, moralists, social luminaries and parents of outer suburbia'" (23). What is more, the teenage couple may be described as remaining in a state of constant enchantment - aware of the spell and, yet, perpetually perplexed by the tempting power of the "'sophisticated tough' as represented by Henry de Montherlant and Albert Camus" (Moseley 22), surface bookishness, shallow complexity, *haut culture* and outspoken hypocrisy. According to Bruce Sesto, "one senses that the boys' 'scorn' is always tempered by their awareness that they are playing a role" (15). As Chris puts it, "Our coruscating idealism expressed itself in a public pose of raucous cynicism" (Barnes, *Metroland* 15). As a result of this, all the boys' questions generally fall short of being answered, and at this stage the two continue to linger, in vain, in the intoxicating world of "edgy cynicism and disbelief" (101). They see themselves as "honest for effect" (101), engaged in a "wrenching extraction of truths from the surrounding quartz of hypocrisy and deceit" (101). Therefore, at the end of Part One we see the boys cycling back to Eastwick, full of energy to seek, but, nevertheless, unable fully to do so, engaged with "more discussions, [more] blindfolds, [continuing] with ('Clear water; Hampton Court maze?; shoulders wanting to swing; chirpiness – bit as if you've just had a blood transfusion. Stuttgart CO/ Münchinger') Bach" (70).

Consequently, Part One may be considered to reflect the condition of mankind at the stage of intoxication, populated by self-confident bodies empoisoned by the seeming self-sufficiency of minds operating in a given, set and closed universe of knowability and calculatedness; while the main theme of the section may be that of blinding obsession. Indeed, Chris and

Tony are obsessed by literally everything. The two are fixated on sex, seeing the sexual context factually everywhere, be it the National Gallery with their binocularized voyeuristic observations of human aesthetic ecstasy:

> There had been the anoraked girl hiker, so transfixed by the Crivelli altarpiece that we simply stood on either side of her and noted the subtlest parting of the lips, the faintest tautening of skin across the cheekbones and the brow ('Spot anything on the temple your side?' 'Zero' – so Toni wrote down *Temple twitch*; *LHS only*); (Barnes, *Metroland* 11)

or being over-concerned with the imaginary threat of castration and the adjacent themes of underground rapists, "oonochs, changing rooms, public lavatories, and travelling late on the Underground" (21-22). The boys impatiently await the end of the General Science (Biology) course for the lesson on "REPRODUCTION: PLANT, RABBIT, HUMAN" (23), but, unfortunately, are "told only about rabbits, partly in Latin" (23) with no trace, whatsoever, of any down-to-earth explanations.

The two often wonder about women as sexual objects. As a result, their day-to-day existence is filled with worries about what a woman's body looks like, claims of "'having' a married woman" (Barnes, *Metroland* 24), whores, "palms forested by wanking" (58), dates of girl-friends' periods, clips from *National Geographic Magazine* and copies of *Span*. Yet, it is the bit about marrying virgins that worries the two most. Nonetheless, the problem remains unsolved, bringing forward even more questions: "How do you tell a nympho? How did you tell a virgin? How – hardest of all – did you tell a wife: someone who looked like a nympho but was actually a virgin" (25). Moreover, the teenage couple work out a specially fabricated SST test, assessing the female candidates according to the presence of soul, suffering and tits. In fact, while designed to weigh up girls' female qualities, the test

serves as a literal shield against everything that is female, and discloses even further the couple's deepest intoxication with the idol of the self. The boys display a literal worship of syphilis, which, in their mind, signifies both the stage of sexual and of aesthetic maturity, as it was testified by many classics of French literature. Hence, to be syphilitic coincides in the minds of the teenagers with being a highly civilised and sophisticated individual. As a consequence, the two come forward with the following rhyme:

> *Le Belge est très civilisé;*
> *Il est voleur, il est rusé;*
> *Il est parfois syphilisé;*
> *Il est donc très civilise*. (15)

In fact, French culture and language as such are closely associated for the boys with sex. Thus, Chris and Toni envisage French, just like sex, as "the most important thing in life, the constant to which one could be unfailingly devoted and which could never cease to reward" (Barnes, *Metroland* 22). Indeed, the theme of the obsession with French culture infiltrates Part One. Their obsession alleviates the boys' snobbish rebellion against the mass of their contemporaries alongside the abhorred bourgeoisie, by serving as something to "long for […] different from their normal English milieu" (Moseley 22), as well as satisfying their acute need for surface complexity and superiority. Thus, it is Chris who testifies that

> We were, you may have guessed, mostly doing French. We cared for its language because its sounds were plosive and precise; and we cared for its literature largely for its combativeness. French writers were always fighting one another – writing prescriptive dictionaries, getting arrested, being prosecuted for obscenity, being aggressively Parnassian, scrabbling for seats in the Académie, intriguing for literary prizes, getting exiled. The idea of the sophisticated tough attracted us greatly. […] There didn't seem to be any sophisticated toughs in our English course.

> There certainly were no goalkeepers. […] Blokes like Yeats, though, were other way round: swish but always fugging around with fairies and stuff. (Barnes, *Metroland* 16)

Subsequently, the novel abounds in references to countless artefacts of the French world, be it multiple lexical items and expressions (for instance, *boulevard, flânerie, il vaut mieux gâcher sa jeunesse que n'en rien faire, musique savante de la ville*, and others), writer and painter names (Racine, Moliére, Gautier, Flaubert, Baudelaire, Montherlant, Camus, Sartre, Corneille, Rimbaud, Monet, Seurat), or excerpts from literary works (e.g., quotes from *Dictionnaire des Idées Reçues*, the last poem of *Emaux et Camées*, Camus's *L'Étranger*) – all, once again, pointing to the extreme obsession of the two not only with everything French, but with constant exhibition of outward erudition and scholasticism. Indeed, the theme of the deep obsession with sophistication underpins the novel as a whole. Thus, the dialogue, in which the two reflect on the possible political conspiracy going on in their English literature lessons, is very illustrative of the claim:

> 'Isn't it a bit off, though, that we're reading Osborne at school with old
> Runcaster? I mean, don't you think some sort of institutionalisation might
> be going on?'
> 'What do you mean?'
> 'Well, heading off the revolt of intelligentsia by trying to absorb it into the body politic.'
> 'So?'
> 'So, I just thought, may be the real action's in Complacency.'
> 'Scholasticism,' Tony sneered comfortingly. (Barnes, *Metroland* 41)

Thus, the teenage couple undertake scholasticism, or pretence at extreme cleverness and scholarly erudition, to combat the bourgeois elements of society, but, in fact, to shield themselves from everything beyond the real

level of their perception. As a result, their addiction to extreme intelligence becomes a sort of a pointer at the overall intoxicated state of their minds. They are unable to see the world soberly and are just hanging on there, curtained from the underlying truth by the idol of 'as if' personal grandeur. Indeed, the examples of Chris's and Toni's obsession are multiple. Thus, alongside the squall of francophone artefacts, the text is infiltrated with a multitude of scholarly items, be it historical figures (Duke of Buckingham, Hitler, John Stuart Mill, Sir Edward Watkin, George VI), historical periods (Restoration, Victorian epoch, the First World War), painters and sculptors (Monet, Goya, Dali, Donatello), writers (Yeats, Johnson, Osborne, Zola, Ian Flemming, Shakespeare, Dickens), architectural pieces (Crivelli's altarpiece), paintings (Monet landscapes, *Rouen Cathedral*, Van Dyck's *Portrait of Charles I*), musical pieces (scherzo of Brahms, 'Glinka, R. & Lud. Ov. Reiner/ChiSO/RCA Victrola; 9/12/63.', Bach), place names (Italy, Channel Islands, Harrow, London, St. Paul's, Eastwick, Basingstoke, Middlesex, Watford, Chesham, Amersham, Pinner Hill, Moor Park, Chorleywood), street names (Fleet Street, Harley Street, Quainton Road, Winslow Road, Grandborough Road, Baker Street), names of underground stations (Waterloo, Victoria, Verney Junction, Brill Line, Westcott, Wotton, Wood Siding, Bakerloo Line, Kilburn, Wembley Park), magazines (*Span*, *Spick*, *National Geographic Magazine*, *New SF*, *Asteroids*, *Worlds Beyond*), books (Sir William Orpen's *History of Art*, the Bible, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Fahrenheit 451*) and newspapers (*The Times*, *Sunday Express*, *News of the World*). Hence, all this presents the boys as fixatedly hungry for a glittering outer status, rather than having any deep inner understanding.

What is more, the boys' state of deep intoxication may be illustrated even further via the fact that the two evaluate everything and everyone through the prism of personal identity: the 'I' comes first, the 'rest' follow. Therefore,

Christopher questions the existing blood bond with his parents, brother and sister. As Merritt Moseley puts it, Chris "suspects that the commonplace people represented to him as his family must be some sort of impostors" (20): "Could it be that I was really related to them? And how could I bear not to point out the obvious difference?" (Barnes, *Metroland* 40). Further on Christopher questions his mother once more: "'You sure there isn't a chance I'm illegitimate?' I waved an explicatory hand towards Nigel and Mary" (40). As a consequence, not being able to overcome the idea of personal grandeur, the boys favour envisioning themselves as rootless or uprooted: "Oh, sorry, kid, didn't see you. This is Chris; Chris Baudelaire – he's adopted" (63).

In a similar fashion, Christopher Lloyd cannot come to terms with the prospect of personal destruction as a result of death, "the infrequent but paralysing horror [of which] invaded [his] life" (Barnes, *Metroland* 53).The fear of death came after his loss of religious faith was to some degree compensated by a new faith in art:

> Belief in art was initially an effective simple against the routine ache of Big D. But then someone communicated to me the concept of planet death. You might get used to the idea of personal extinction if you thought the world went on forever, with generations of kids sitting back in amazement as your works chattered through on computer printout, and murmuring a mutated 'Stone me'. But then someone […] pointed out to me […] that the earth was floating inexorably towards a last burn-up, it gave a new look to the robustness of art. LPs syruping; sets of Dickens flaring up at Fahrenheit 451; Donatellos melting like Dali watches. Get out of that one. (55)

Hence, the fear of the inevitable destruction of 'the Ego' in all of its made up grandeur and fabricated superiority allows one to position the boys at the stage of human intoxication. As a result, the only truth being available to them is the truth of "a wholly autonomous aesthetic, of a radically anti-

representational self-reflexivity, [aiming] to free itself from all extraneous influence" (Greenberg 64), which is reminiscent of an image of Jameson's hedgehog.

Part One closes with the chapter entitled "Object Relations", in which (through the symbolism of objects in Chris's room, including a suitcase standing free of labels) Chris is represented as a deeply intoxicated youth with no labels setting him off from the rest of people, who lives a clogged life of cynicism, honesty for effect, half-hypocrisy and half-deceit:

> Objects redolent of all I felt and hoped for; yet objects which I myself had only half-willed, only half-planned. Some I chose, some were chosen for me, some I consented to. Is that so strange? What else are you at that stage but a creature part willing, part consenting, part being chosen? (Barnes, *Metroland* 72)

Nevertheless, Part One does not simply pessimistically portray the intoxicated state of the two teenagers - it foreshadows the onset of the stage of sobriety with its emphasis on the decentrement of the self, deconstructive questioning, incredulity and preference of multiple truths. In this respect, it is Chris who declares that "we realised that independent existence could only be achieved by strict deconditioning. Camus had left everyone else on the grid with his '*Ajourd'hui Maman est morte*. *Ou peut-être hier*' [Mother died today. Or may be yesterday]" (Barnes, *Metroland* 41).

What is more, Part One foretells the inescapability of belief in objective truth, which will not be fully developed until Part Three. Nevertheless, at this stage Chris and Tony admit that the presence of the ultimate truth is imperative for the human race to have a meaningful existence, despite the postmodern urge to decompose, to blend, to dissolve and to intermingle:

> ‘They even fug up the spectrum,’ I told him, almost weary at yet another outrage.
> ‘What the fug do you mean?’
> […]
> ‘We were very sensitive about colours at that time […] they were – you couldn’t deny it – ultimates, purities of extra value to the godless. We didn’t want bureaucrats fugging around with them. They’d already got at
> ‘…the language…’
> ‘…the ethics…’
> ‘…the sense of priorities…’
> but these you could, in the last analysis, ignore. You could go your own staggering way. But if they got at the colours? We couldn’t even count on being ourselves anymore. (Barnes, *Metroland* 14-15)

At this point the teenagers’ need of the Truth has been defined, so as to be developed in full in the chapters to come.

Part Two, *Paris (1968),* as the heading indicates, takes place in Paris during the turbulent student uprisings of 1968. Chris is there doing post-graduate research on British influences on French theatre in the nineteenth century. In fact, as Christopher himself points out: “I’d gone to Paris to do some research for part of a thesis I’d undertaken so that I could get a grant and go to Paris” (Barnes, *Metroland* 83). As a result, he rents an “airy, slightly derelict studio-bedroom with a creaky French floor” (106), regularly visits the Bibliotheque Nationale and attempts to engage in serious academic research. Nevertheless, the fact that “after 1789, the British Styles of Acting had very little Importance and Influence in the Paris Theatre, for the reason that no British actor would have risked his skin while the Revolution was on” (83) influences Chris, who begins to enjoy his newly-found role of a bachelor-Englishman in the middle of Paris and spends less and less time sweating over books and manuscripts. After all, it is Christopher himself who confesses that

> To tell the truth, the only thing I knew about British acting in France when I invented the subject was that Berlioz fell in love with Harriet Smithson in 1827. She, of course, as it turned out, was Irish; but then I was only applying for money for six months in Paris, and the financial authorities weren't an oversophisticated touch. (84)

Thus, at the beginning of Part Two we see Chris still retaining all of his self-imposed teenage sophistication, which starts gradually wearing off with his increasing visits to numerous cafes and the Musée Gustave Moreau, a place "you tend to hear about…on your third visit [to Paris] and get around to going [to] on your fourth" (Barnes, *Metroland* 19). As one can observe, Chris's range of preferences slowly switches over from grandness to mediocrity, from the sole obsession to the lavishness of choice, from being engrossed to being decentred. Yet, genuine change comes into Christopher's life with the beginning of a love affair with a French girl named Annick, who finally succeeds in breaking Chris's intoxicated cocoon of self-centred grandiosity, by introducing him into the world of postmodern sobriety, characterised by an unmitigated and, therefore, painful coexistence with the bare truth, honesty and simplicity; the world full of choices in general and choices of truth in particular; the world of freed under-voices, reopened possibilities and released desires.

According to Merritt Moseley, it is thanks to Annick that Chris discovers that "he pretends to know things he does not know; [for instance,] she elicits from him the admission that a sexual position they tried out at his suggestion, painfully enough, was something he had read about in a book" (25). Yet, the most important alteration is pointed out by Chris himself:

> Until I met Annick I'd always been certain that the edgy cynicism and disbelief in which I dealt, plus a cowed trust in the world of any imaginative writer, were only tools for

> the painful, wrenching extraction of truths from the surrounding quarts of hypocrisy and deceit. The pursuit had always seemed something combative. Now, not exactly in a flash, but over a few weeks, I wondered if it weren't something both higher – above the supposed conflict – and simpler, attainable not through striving but a simple inward glance. (Barnes, *Metroland* 101)

Thus, at this point Christopher reaches the stage, which, according to the boys' teenage plan, allows you to "Make Moral Decisions, Have Relationships, Become Famous and Choose Your Own Clothes" (42). It is here that Chris transgresses the boundary of teenage intoxication and passes into the world of sobriety with its manifest fascination with ontology, with modes of being, instead of modes of knowing; with local and fluid meaning, instead of the timeless and universal.

Towards the end of Part Two Christopher meets Marion (his future wife), Mickey and Dave - a group of young people from England – in a museum. It is at this point that Chris's remnants of pretence at scholasticism get completely demolished with the help of irony. Thus, Christopher "pretends to be French in order to expose and chide what seems to be [the group's] philistinism but in fact is an elaborate game (the one [Dave] who pretends to be baffled by Odilon Redon is doing a thesis on him)" (Moseley 26). In fact, Dave's role is paramount in the process of Chris's becoming sober. Accordingly, the former, being half French, half English, greatly abates Christopher's profound intoxication with everything French and his cynicism towards elements of English culture. Thus, Dave frequently behaves like "a Frenchman with limited English" (Moseley 30), mispronouncing words like: "Eep eep ourah…Tott'en'am 'Ot-spure. Mi-chel Ja-zy. Redon. Oxfor', Bahn-bri, Bur-meeng'am. *Chagez, changez*" (Barnes, *Metroland* 109-10). As a consequence, "the point of the joke is that

the French can be also dazzled by English culture" (Moseley 31), displaying to Chris his former state of intoxication.

At this stage Chris realises that open truth and authenticity can bring much pain and suffering, along with an unparalleled ecstasy from an unmitigated vision of the sublime. Thus, Annick, with all of her honesty and simplicity, as well as her ability to speak straight and to the point, at first puzzles Chris and later leads him to grave, if not astounding revelations: "This amused honesty, when I reflected on it later, was what started my mind off on serious thoughts: those thoughts which chase their own tails" (Barnes, *Metroland* 100). As a consequence, Chris is profoundly shocked after having discovered that one cannot learn how to be honest: "It's not something you learn. Either you say what you mean or you don't. That's all" (101). The statement emphasises the postmodern maxim that one cannot learn how to perceive the objective truth, no matter how near it is, or how hard one tries: "The key to Annick's candour was that there was no key. It was like an atomic bomb: the secret is that there is no secret" (101). Thus, the sight of the bare truth shocks, while the realisation of the impossibility to perceive it shocks even stronger.

What is more, no matter how hard Chris tries to surmount his timidity and to render the objective truth of his friendly relationship with Marion, it gets completely misunderstood by Annick, who perceives it as an act of sexual infidelity:

> 'I thought you mentioned an English girl friend.'
> 'Uh, nnn, yes, I did. Why don't you have any French boy friends?' (Altogether too hostile.)

> ‘Yes, but I don’t usually refer to one of them three times running unless I want to say something particular about him.’
> ‘Well, I suppose all I wanted to say about…about *cette amie anglaise* is that…she’s a friend.’
> ‘You mean you’re sleeping with her.’ Annick stubbed out her cigarette and glared at me.
> ‘NO. Of course not. I sleep with you.’
> ‘So you do. I had noticed it from time to time. But not twenty-four hours a day.’ (Barnes, *Metroland* 121)

The conversation leads to the untimely break up of the couple. This puts an accent on the postmodern dictum of the impossibility either to attain, or to understand the ultimate truth, resulting in its complete substitution for an array of small truths, under-truths and ‘whose’ truths. Accordingly, despite the fact that Chris had come to France to achieve “enriching self-knowledge [and to find] the key to some synthesis between art and life” (128), the young man fails to do so. “As he looks back on the last day in Paris, Christopher not only reassesses the meaning of this relationship but also puzzles over the possibility of ever achieving such a synthesis” (Sesto 20).

Part Two obstinately pursues the notion of the ultimate truth, continuously placing its heroes side by side with its unmitigated presence. Thus, having finished quite traumatically the relationship with Annick, Christopher falls prey to another relationship, this time with Marion, a young English woman, no less honest, direct and fond of bare truth, than Annick was:

> What I’d noticed most about Marion was how direct, how uncomplicated she was. She seemed to exude psychic health; she made me feel slightly dishonest even when I was telling the truth. But then, Annick did the same. Was this a coincidence, or was it how all girls made you feel? And how to find out? (Barnes, *Metroland* 118)

In fact, the ‘coincidence’ points to the fact that one cannot flee the company of the objective truth, no matter how hard one tries and no matter how implacably postmodernism tries to dismantle the notion, thus foreshadowing the post-postmodern maxim celebrating not the arrival at the ultimate truth as such, but the cognisant acceptance of its *a priori* existence.

Part Two traditionally closes with a chapter entitled “Object Relations”, which discloses Chris’s inner essence at the stage of sobriety via a set of objects packed into his suitcase before the departure from Paris:

> Theatre programmes were all there, bundled up chronologically and bound with rubber bands. Look, it all happened, they said, as I riffled through them again. Look at this, and this, and this. See how you reached here, and here. Wasn’t that a bit shitty? And Christ, look at this, now if you don’t feel ashamed about this, I give up on you. You do feel ashamed? That’s the ticket. OK, now you can look at this one – you didn’t do all badly here; genuine sensitivity I’d say, compassion, even wisdom. Instinctive wisdom, perhaps, rather than the long-learnt sort; but not to be despised for all that. (Barnes, *Metroland* 130)

Hence, at the end of Part Two we see Chris fully stuffed in a postmodern fashion with an array of matching, contradicting, coinciding and opposing meanings, ideas and thoughts, decentring his self, deconstructing his previous intoxicated axioms and making his mind float amidst multiple truths and multiple realities, unable to face the bare truth of existence.

Part Three, *Metroland II (1977)*, portrays Christopher (about thirty) as a married man and a father, “quite different from the young man who had delighted in scoffing at the bourgeois lifestyles of his elders” (Sesto 21),

comfortably settled in the heart of Metroland. Chris re-establishes his relationship with previously despised 'bourgeois' classmates, who offer him a no less 'bourgeois' job as an editor in a publishing house, dealing with translations of French classics. The situation is quite ironic in the sense that "the real cognoscenti should be able to read French" (Moseley 29), while Chris surrenders to the "compromise with the mass public" (Moseley 29), producing easy to comprehend translations. What is more, "another ex-classmate – whose present interests include railroad history – agrees to help Christopher with his book on London's railway systems" (Sesto 21) – the type of writing formerly viewed by the teenagers as a sort of a bourgeois chant, aiming to put down the perpetual revolt of the intelligentsia. In addition, Chris's friendship with Toni comes to a visible decline, as the latter gets deeply upset by Christopher's "apparent transformation into a 'bourgeois'" (Sesto 21). In this connection, Toni frequently reminds Christopher of the times when they "still believed that art was to do with something happening, that it wasn't all a water-colour wank" (Barnes, *Metroland* 165).

In fact, though many critics view Christopher's radical transformation in Part Three as an ultimate "surrender to middle-class, middle-aged suburban life" (Moseley 29), with voices of consciousness suppressed and ambitions deadened, the situation is deeper than it seems. One can analyse Chris's alteration in terms of "coming-to-terms" (Moseley 29) with existence, instead of simply "coming-of-age" (Moseley 29) in the role of a newly-fledged bourgeois. Indeed, Christopher comes to terms with the fact that he will never perceive the objective truth (so much strived for in previous parts), yet, he fully acknowledges the fact of its unquestionable existence. Therefore, Chris fills his life with fabulation of multiple life-narratives (mistakenly considered by many critics as instances of surrender to the bourgeois lifestyle) - be it dinners with ex-classmates, publishing translation

of French classics, listening to the sounds of the fridge at night, or observing the feeding bottles safely stored for the next baby in line – aimed at instilling his life with temporary day-to-day meanings and fostering a belief in the possibility of reaching the wonder of objective truth. In fact, Part Three contains multiple instances to exemplify the above claim. Thus, Christopher reflects on his reasons for marrying Marion:

> Because I have said that I love her, and there is no turning back. No cynicism is intended. The orthodoxy runs, that if a marriage is founded on less than perfect truth it will always come to light. I don't believe that. Marriage moves you further away from the examination of truth, not nearer to it. No cynicism is intended there either. (Barnes, *Metroland* 141)

It is quite obvious that Chris does not have any fears about the firmness of their marriage. Christopher fabulates his own way through marriage by means of various life-narratives (for instance, fidelity, sexual pleasure, emotional and mental compatibility). The fabulation is conducted against the background of the ever-present truth of love (as Chris himself declares), which nobody can truly judge in terms of sincerity or insincerity, sufficiency or insufficiency. Thus, one can never fully get a grip on it, yet one is constantly guided by it. Therefore, it is love that plays the function of the objective truth, directing Christopher's existence and instilling it with meaning.

The same holds true of the situation, when prompted by Chris's desire to render the truth of his relationship with a girl he met at Tim Penny's party "trying to get off with [him]" (Barnes, *Metroland* 161), Marion confesses her own infidelity. Christopher's reaction is, nevertheless, surprisingly unflustered:

> Shit. Piss. Fuck. Well, bugger anyway. Well, I suppose that sort of answered my question. […] What was I meant to feel? What did I feel? That is was quite funny really. Also, that it was interesting. Also, that I was half-proud that Marion was still capable of astonishing me. Jealousy, anger, petulance? That would have been a bit out of place. (163)

In this case the life-narrative of infidelity is portrayed against the deeper truth of love – a sort of an untouchable and always there framework, instilling Chris's and Marion's marriage with peace and continuity.

The same line of reasoning may be applied to Christopher's vision of art. Thus, Lloyd accepts art as an untouchable maxim, which, as an objective concept, enlightens people's lives and instils them with meaning. Nevertheless, Part Three portrays Chris as having fully abandoned the previous, intoxicated or soberly deconstructive visions of the concept, celebrating art for art's sake. At this stage, however, Christopher "displays a considerable scepticism toward the 'religion of art' characteristic of moderns such as Joyce, even Barnes's beloved Flaubert" (Moseley 32) and many postmoderns. Hence, to revolt against the empty snobbishness of high art, as practiced by Toni, Chris fills his life with narratives of mainstream culture and suburbia, so as to be able to lead a personally meaningful and down-to-earth existence. Yet, Christopher does not reject the concept of 'the Art' as such, the *a priori* existence of which, he accepts as a maxim.

As David Leon Higdon points in "'Unconfessed Confessions': the Narrators of Graham Swift and Julian Barnes", "Chris, a limited but not untrustworthy narrator, is the last happy man in Barnes's novels" (177). Indeed, in the chapter entitled "Object Relations", finishing off Part Three and the novel as a whole, Christopher makes a confession:

> I'd call myself a happy man; if preachy, then out of a sense of modest excitement, not pride. I wonder why happiness is despised nowadays: dismissively confused with comfort or complacency, judged an enemy of social-even technological – progress. (Barnes, *Metroland* 174)

To be sure, Christopher may be called happy due to his genuine good luck in passing through all three stages of onto-epistemological development – from the stages of deepest intoxication and chaotic sobriety, up to the stage of post-postmodern fabulation, with its unquestionable belief in the objective truth as the only maxim providing mankind with a sense of meaning.

At this point one can see an obvious difference from Toni, still stuck at the stage of sobriety. Thus, Barbarowski is portrayed as a mammoth of scholasticism, cynicism and the deconstructive approach to existence; as an unsuccessful poet-rebel, whose book is never bought; as an enemy of marriage, substituting a box of condoms for love; as a hater of bourgeoisie, leading an empty, relativistic life in "the least fashionable part of the borough of Kensington" (Barnes, *Metroland* 142) and, as a result, becoming an icon of a sophisticated postmodern loser.

In fact, the idea of an imperative belief in 'the Truth' is reinstated twice in the chapter, providing the novel with a definite post-postmodern colouring. Accordingly, Christopher's discussion of the orange light, which is required by his infant daughter Amy to feel peaceful at night, may be taken as a metaphor of an overall human need for ultimate truth – this truth being crucial to fabulate a life full of meaning:

> In the road outside is a sodium lamp whose orange light, filtered through a half-grown fir in the front garden, softly lights up the hall, the kitchen, and Amy's bedroom. She enjoys this civic night-light, and prefers going off to sleep with her curtains drawn back. If she wakes, and there is no

> orange glow pervading her room […] she becomes fretful. (Barnes, *Metroland* 175)

Similarly, at the end of the novel one sees Chris reflecting on the connection between lamp light and moon light:

> I follow a half-factitious line about the nature of the light: how the sodium with its strength and nearness blots out the effect of even the fullest moon; but how the moon goes on nevertheless; and how this is symbolic of…well, of something, no doubt. But I don't pursue this too seriously: there's no point in trying to thrust false significances on to things. (176)

Here, so as to draw a sort of a line at the end of the whole novel, Christopher puts a special emphasis on the fact that at the stage of post-postmodernism any attempt to perceive or to extract 'the Truth' (like the two friends did in Parts One and Two) becomes derisory and simply irrelevant. Instead, one should concentrate on the fabulation of personal life-narratives, or meta-fabulations, making life meaningful within the general pattern of belief in the *a priori* existence of the ultimate truth - impossible to apprehend, yet fundamental as such for the continual fabulation of meaning.

CHAPTER 5

LIFE AS PARROTRY AND FABULATION OF TRUTHS IN *FLAUBERT'S PARROT*

"We perceive what we know as reality
through a particular system of references
which in effect preconstitute the meaning of the world,
and thus, the world itself."
(Marshall, *Teaching the Postmodern: Fiction and Theory* 68)

If *Metroland* (1963) is generally considered to be a neophyte novel, leading Julian Barnes into the career of a novelist, *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984), in its turn, is commonly viewed as a major step forward in the career of the writer. According to Ann Hulbert, it was "a breakthrough – widely reviewed, popular, the book that made him one of Britain's young novelists to watch" (37). What is more, *Flaubert's Parrot* is the novel that won Julian Barnes the 1986 Prix Médicis – "a French award never before given to an Englishman" (Moseley 6), and, as Barnes himself acknowledges, "the book that literally launched [him]" (Smith 74). Indeed, the novel brought the author immense success, accompanied by a no less immense amount of controversial criticism, starting with its publication. Of major concern among its critics was the question of whether the novel could be labelled a novel at all, due to its untraditional narrative technique and the scope of genres and styles employed. Nevertheless (for the reasons analysed in Chapter 3), Julian Barnes continues to call his work a novel, confessing to Amanda Smith in the interview entitled *Julian Barnes* that

> I don't take too much notice of the "but-does-he write-proper novels?" school of criticism, which I get a bit,

> especially in England…I feel closer to the continental idea – which used to be the English idea as well – that the novel is a very broad and generous enclosing form. I would argue for greater inclusivity rather than any exclusivity. The novel always starts with life, always has to start with life rather than an intellectual grid which you then impose on things. But at the same time, formally and structurally, I don't see why it shouldn't be inventive and playful and break what supposed rules there are. (20)

Furthermore, Julian Barnes ends the whole of the existing debate on the subject by declaring to Mark Lawson in *A Short History of Julian Barnes* that "My line now is I'm a novelist and if I say it's a novel, it is…And it's not terribly interesting to me, casting people out of the realm of fiction. Okay, let's throw out Rabelais, Diderot and Kundera… (36)".

Indeed, *Flaubert's Parrot* may be called a "trans-generic prose text" (Scott 58), employing a variety of genres, be it a bestiary, a chronology, an encyclopaedic entry, an epistolary form, or a biography, inscribed within a general framework of what Amy J. Elias calls "paratactic history" (123) of Gustave Flaubert's life, utilizing "juxtaposition, linear disjunction, deperspectivised space" (123) to force different temporal planes into "textual proximity with each other but without producing any synthesis between them, while simultaneous history precipitates different historical items onto a single plane of reality, collapsing them together" (McHale 155). To be sure, the paratactic nature of the novel consists in the fact that although multiple narrative entries do not bear any discernible relation to each other, making structural synthesis as such literally impossible, the novel still may be called a history, united by an overall, non-oppressive thematic harmony. Therefore, the work exposes its clearly post-postmodern colouring. Thus, *Flaubert's Parrot* utilizes tools,

which expose the text's structural artifice and widen the ontological gap between fiction and reality, within a general and indispensable pattern of thematic coherence. This pattern is based on the theme of being lost in the jungle of parroted truths and small life-narratives, unable to make a synthesis of their meanings. Yet, one is unwilling to give up, being inspired by a belief in the existence of the Truth that makes one's life truly meaningful.

As a result, the novel employs a deconstructive diversity of non-narrative kinds of prose discourse, or, as Bruce Sesto puts it, "an encyclopaedic collection of disparate fragments, relics, anecdotal bric-a-brac which resist coherent integration" (43), to defamiliarize the reader from the 'standard' enchantment of reality, to depict its artifice and to catch the reader "between the poles of true and not true" (Scott 64). Hence, as David Higdon argues in "'Unconfessed Narrations': The Narrators of Graham Swift and Julian Barnes",

> *Flaubert's Parrot* deftly deconstructs itself into various types of competing documents: the chronology, biography, autobiography, bestiary, philosophical dialogue, critical essay, manifesto, "train-spotter's guide," appendix, dictionary, "pure story" and even examination paper. (180)

As a consequence, the customary non-narrative models of representation and conveying meaning (be it manifesto or bestiary, etc.) get distorted, exposing reality as a fictional construct.

What is more, the novel abounds in devices which undermine the conventional structure of texts and fictional writing as such. Thus, in *Language, History and Metanarrative in the Fiction of Julian Barnes* Bruce Sesto names metafiction as the most efficient "self-destruct mechanism"

(37), "setting in opposition those linguistic and narrative elements which 'construct' illusions of reality, in the manner of classic 19th century realist fiction, and those which 'deconstruct' them" (38). Metafiction, as a literary device, is based on a diversity of techniques, among which Sesto lists intertextuality, literary criticism, metaleptical intrusions, intrusive author/narrator, use of 'real people' in the text and parody.

Indeed, *Flaubert's Parrot* abounds in instances of intertextuality. These include multiple quotes from and references to the works of Gustave Flaubert, including journals and letters, *Madame Bovary, Bouvard et Pécuchet, L'Education Sentimentale, Un Cœur Simple, Salammbô, La Tentation de Saint Antoine, Trois Contes, Le Candidat, Dictionnaire des Idées Reçues, Hérodias*. In addition, there are references to the identities or works of other writers, such as Sartre's *L'Idiot de la Famille*, Zola's and Maupassant's *Les Soirées de Medan*, Turgenev's *Literary Reminiscences*, Louise Colet, George Sand, Zola, François Coppée, Theodore de Banville, Henry James, Baudelaire, Goncourts, Renan, Gautier, Sainte-Beuve, Lamartine, Hugo, Voltaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Dumas, Marigny, La Fontaine, Du Camp, Camus, Huxley, Shaw, Dickens, Wells, Orwell, Hardy, Housman, Auden, Spender, Irishwood, Woolf, Wilde, Pushkin, Nabokov, Yevtushenko, Coleridge, Yeats, Browning, Tennyson, and Golding. The intertextual examples of this kind put a special emphasis on the fictiveness of the novel under consideration, depict it as no different from the mentioned fictive works of art and display it as a combination of multiple figural and narrative structures, celebrating the fictiveness of the text, rather than preserving the illusion of reality.

What is more, the novel comprises various instances of literary criticism, such as Dr. Enid Strakie's criticism of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*; Sartre's

criticism of the omniscient narrator, and Geoffrey Braithwaite's (the main character's) own criticism of novels with multiple endings, or

> Traditional Happy Ending; Traditional Unhappy Ending; Traditional Half-and-Half Ending; Deus ex Machina; Modernist Arbitrary Ending; End of the World Ending; Cliffhanger Ending; Dream Ending; Opaque Ending; Surrealist Ending; and so on. (Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot* 89)

Thus, Braithwaite advocates the necessity of having just one finale, so as to add up to the realistic character of the work. Having two endings, in his mind, "is never real, because the reader is obliged to consume both endings, […] the novel with two endings doesn't reproduce this reality: it merely takes us down two diverging paths" (89). Nevertheless, despite such a resolute propagation of the realistic approach to novel-making, one can trace elements of deep irony or profound incredulity underlying the statement, as the end that Braithwaite chooses for his own narration of the search for Flaubert's parrot is no different from the 'opaque' or 'arbitrary' ending. Consequently, there is an exposition of the artifice of reality assembled in fiction.

In addition, Braithwaite's commentary on the nature of literary texts, as well as his subsequent remarks on the possible types of narrators, may be considered as examples of metaleptical intrusions made by an intrusive narrator:

> When a contemporary writer hesitates, claims uncertainty, misunderstands, plays games and falls into error, does the reader in fact conclude that reality is being more authentically rendered?...As for the hesitating narrator – look I'm afraid you've run into one right now. It must be because I'm English. You'd guessed that, at least – that I'm English? I…I…Look at that seagull up there. I hadn't

> spotted him before. Slipstreaming away, waiting for bits of gristle from the sandwiches. (Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot* 90)

Here, once again, the effect is completely reversed. Though pretending to speak with the firmness of an omniscient and, what is more, an intrusive narrator, Braithwaite starts hesitating, becoming unable to deliver the utterance. As a consequence, Geoffrey's intrusion into the text, as well as all the comments on the narrative structure of the novel serve to expose the fictitiousness of the concept of narrator in general, and that of the omniscient realistic narrator in particular, as well as to emphasise "the text's artifice, by making the reader aware of the conflicting ontological levels involved in fictional representation" (Sesto 39).

Besides, alongside with instances of literary criticism as such, *Flaubert's Parrot* contains examples of Braithwaite's criticism of literary criticism, thus illustrating Barnes's "combative polemicism" (Sesto 41) and skill of parody. The power of deconstructive parody may be illustrated through Braithwaite's attacks on Dr. Enid Starkie, reflecting on Emma Bovary's eyes:

> Flaubert does not build up his characters, as did Balzac, through objective, external description; in fact, so careless is he of their outward appearance that on one occasion he gives Emma brown eyes (14); on another deep black eyes (15); and on another blue eyes (16). (74)

Accordingly, Geoffrey's attack on Dr. Strakie's insular criticism of Flaubert, conducted strictly within the borders of personally set academic goals, serves as a parody of "the kind of pedantic narrow-mindedness and inaccuracy which plagues much modern 'institutionalised' literary criticism" (Sesto 41). As a result, one may view Flaubert's freedom in depicting the colour of Emma Bovary's eyes as an example of original literary creativity, rather than slapdash inaccuracy.

The same line of reasoning may be applied to Braithwaite's criticism of Christopher Ricks, parodying "critics who treat fiction as documentary fiction" (Lee 2):

> I'll remember instead another lecture I once attended…It was given by a professor from Cambridge, Christopher Ricks, and it was a very shiny performance. His head was shiny, his black shoes were shiny; and his lecture was very shiny indeed. Its theme was *Mistakes in Literature and Whether They Matter*. Yevtushenko, for example, apparently made a howler in one of his poems about the American nightingale. Pushkin was quite wrong about the sort of military dress worn at balls. John Wain was wrong about the Hiroshima pilot. Nabokov was wrong – rather surprising this - about the phonetics of the name Lolita. (Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot* 76)

Indeed, the above quotation serves as a good example of Braithwaite's parody of documentary criticism. The tool has further effects too, parodying the persona of the 'realist' Braithwaite-character and his everlasting obsession with facts and documents against the persona of the 'digressive' Braithwaite-narrator, "undermining the very realism he places such stock in as 'character'" (Sesto 42).

Bruce Sesto differentiates the use of 'real people' and 'real places' as one more influential metafictional tool to be found in the novel. As it has been mentioned earlier, the work is filled with names of places, famous personalities, writers, poets, Flaubert's acquaintances, and relatives. These are all used "to widen [once again] the 'ontological' gap between fiction and reality" (Sesto 40), as well as to emphasise the impossibility of perceiving the Truth.

To continue with the same line of reasoning, in *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature* David Lodge enumerates the following metafictional tools to be found in *Flaubert's Parrot*:

- Randomness of structure, particularly the passage from one chapter to another;
- Exercises in contradiction – [the existence] of three different chronologies of Flaubert's life in chapter 2, or the presence of "Louise Colet's Version";
- Permutation or alternate narrative lines - in chapter called "Flaubert's Apocrypha" , which is about the books Flaubert meant to write but did not, the lives he meant to live but did not;
- Excess – [in chapter called] "Flaubert's Bestiary", which catalogues all references to animals in the author's biography, letters, or works;
- Short circuit – any of a group of possible effects that confuse or eliminate the distinction between the text and the world, between fiction and life. (229-39)

As a subsequence, all items in Lodge's list underline the deep reflexive and metafictional nature of the novel under consideration, aimed to subvert and to deconstruct the illusion of a coherent and apprehensible reality, so as to highlight its purely constructed and fictional nature, fabulated against the background of the belief in the original truth, central to the continuation of a meaningful existence. Thus, the metafictional colouring of *Flaubert's Parrot* portrays life as parrotry, with all human efforts and actions being mimicry of the truth. Nevertheless, despite the obvious deconstructive narrative pattern of the novel, subverting the maxims of ontology and epistemology, *Flaubert's Parrot* succeeds (in a post-postmodern fashion) in constructing anew the revised image of the Truth, always present, yet unattainable.

As far as the formal structure of the novel is concerned, despite the seeming lack of chronology and synchronicity between its fifteen consecutive

chapters, *Flaubert's Parrot* may be organised around four main stories. First comes the story of Flaubert, whom, in the interview with Patrick McGrath, Julian Barnes claims to be

> The writer whose words I would most carefully tend to weigh, who I think has spoken the most truth about writing. And it's odd to have a foreign genius for whom you feel a direct love…He's obviously a tricky bastard in some ways, but I find when I'm reading his letters I just want to go and make him a cup of hot chocolate, light his cigarette. (22)

The story of Flaubert is supported by a supplementary story of Flaubert's affair with Louise Colet, the novelist's life-long lover and friend. Then comes the account of Madame Bovary and her infidelity to her husband, to be superseded by the story of Geoffrey Braithwaite's relationship with his late wife Ellen. The fourth story, and the most wide-ranging, is the account of the search for Flaubert's parrot, forming the structural framework for the whole novel. All of the stories, with an exception of the fourth, operate as echoes or foils of each other. Thus, Braithwaite, as a narrator, "uses the character Braithwaite's telling of Flaubert's story [and interpreting that of Madame Bovary] as Braithwaite's way of telling his own story" (Moseley 73). Hence, Geoffrey's personal life-story and that of Emma Bovary get projected onto Flaubert and his relationship with Louise Colet.

All in all, the novel is told by Geoffrey Braithwaite, a homodiegetic, first-person narrator, who has "decided views on many matters" (Moseley 72) and who is, at the same time, an important character in the novel. As Merritt Moseley points out, "every such narrator is in some sense 'unreliable': the communication of truth is always affected by the character, the needs and psychology of the person communicating it, and eventually the medium becomes the subject of the reader's interest" (73). Hence, it is Geoffrey Braithwaite himself, who confesses:

> Three stories contend within me. One about Flaubert, one about Ellen, one about myself. My own is the simplest of the three…My wife's is more complicated, and more urgent; yet I resist that too…Books are not life, how much we might prefer it if they were. Ellen's is a true story; perhaps it's even the reason why I'm telling you Flaubert's story instead. (Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot* 85-86)

All in all, Geoffrey Braithwaite is a retired doctor, married with children, yet recently widowed, and moved by an incessant obsession with the persona of Gustave Flaubert, which results in his research trip to France and a no less enlightening expedition into the depths of his soul. Geoffrey Braithwaite generally falls under the category of a hesitant narrator, being "more candid [and secretive] about his needs" (Moseley 73) and more willing to render life-stories, or, to be more precise, life-tragedies of other personae. The fact becomes clearly manifest when the turn comes to tell his own story, alongside with the story of his wife and his family, which get finally told in a very oblique and reticent fashion in the chapter entitled "Pure Story". As a consequence, David Leon Higdon tends to label Braithwaite's narrative as

> A most oblique and reluctant confession by a man who blames his hesitation on his typically reticent English nature, on his own embarrassment, and finally on his fear of unmasking himself as a cuckold, especially after he has earned the reader's respect by way of his erudition, his sincere love of Flaubert and his skilful amateur sleuthing. (181)

As a result, Higdon proposes to call Braithwaite "the reluctant narrator, who is reliable in strict terms, indeed often quite learned and perceptive, but who has seen, experienced or caused something so traumatic that he must approach the telling of it through indirections" (174).

Yet, from time to time, Geoffrey recaptures the full grip of the narration, turning into "a dictator of fiction" (Moseley 76) or, as it has been previously pointed out, into an intrusive narrator, propagating his own code of novel-making, which bans:

> Novels about incest […] novels set in abattoirs […] novels set in Oxford or Cambridge […] novels set in South America […] novels in which carnal connection takes place between a human being and an animal […] novels in which carnal connection takes place between man and woman in the shower […] novels about small, hitherto forgotten wars in distant parts of the British Empire […] novels in which the narrator, or any of the characters, is defined simply by an initial letter […] novels which are really about other novels. (Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot* 98-99)

Though formally attempting to impose his 'own' and original point of view regarding the revised thematic scope of novels, Braithwaite, in fact, draws attention to the sheer artifice of the personally related story (making it no different from the novel about incest, for instance), and partly deconstructs its thematic scope.

In addition, a separate emphasis should be put on the fact that one shouldn't mix the persona of Braithwaite as a character with that of Braithwaite as a narrator. The two play completely opposite functions in the course of the narration. Thus, Braithwaite-the-character "affirms realism's faith in the veracity of facts" (Lee 3), while Braithwaite-the-narrator deconstructs the very realism he worships so much as a character.

By and large, the novel possesses a broken narrative pattern, which, according to Bruce Sesto,

> Reflects the writer's belief that an 'author' is no longer in a position to impose his or her own moral vision on the

> world and that the contemporary novel can no longer be regarded as a representation of reality, but as a kind of reality, albeit a fictional one, in its own right". (34)

The fact once again underlines the double nature of the post-postmodern writing, depending heavily upon self-reflexive methods, made meaningful only by an overall belief in the existence of the ultimate truth. As a consequence, the narrative technique of the novel differs greatly from the postmodern *modus operandi*, adulating self-reflexivity for its own sake, which becomes, as a result, a-no-end self-reflexivity.

At this stage it seems necessary to pass onto the discussion of the thematic scope of the novel. *Flaubert's Parrot* is first and foremost the novel about truth, its attainability and its proper perception. What is more, it is the book questioning the sincerity of love, the relation between reality and art, the possibility to know the self, to represent the past and to render linguistically the multitude of human feelings, thoughts and inspirations. Barnes tackles these questions through the symbolism of Flaubert's parrot, used by Flaubert when writing *Un Cœur Simple*; a score of identical stuffed parrots discovered by Braithwaite on his investigation trip to France; scenes and artefacts from Flaubert's life and works, influencing Braithwaite's course of query; and, of course, the persona of Gustave Flaubert himself, attempting to address a similar scope of problems in the vastness of his literary oeuvres.

If *Metroland* depicted the progression of mankind from the stages of intoxication and sobriety to that of post-postmodern fabulation, depicted through the symbolism of Chris's and Toni's process of growing up; *Flaubert's parrot*, in its turn, concentrates on the condition of mankind at the stage of fabulation. The phase is marked by the constant fabulation of meaningful personal truths based on the conviction that the Truth is always present in all its unperceivable grandness, and, therefore, exists to guide the

human flock through the mystery of existence. The general thematic pattern of the novel is metaphorically reflected in the following statement belonging to Geoffrey Braithwaite:

> I begin with the statue, because that's where I began the whole project. Why does the writing make us chase the writer? Why can't we leave well alone? Why aren't the books enough? Flaubert wanted them to be: few writers believed more in the objectivity of the written text and the insignificance of the writer's personality; yet still we disobediently pursue. The image, the face, the signature; the 93 per cent copper statue and the Nadar photograph; the scrap of clothing and the lock of hair. What makes us randy for relics? Don't we believe the words enough? Do we think the leaving of a life contain some ancillary truth? (Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot* 12)

Thus, Braithwaite makes a special emphasis on the fact that we disobediently pursue and question the objectivity of the written text and the significance of the writer's identity, despite their obvious unattainability. As a subsequence, what we come across is pure parrotry, mimicry, imitation of the real, too many versions of the truth, "too many contradictions and too many undecidable bits of evidence" (Moseley 81). As a result, the text of the novel abounds in numerous chronologies of Flaubert's life - official, deconstructive, personal, and so on, in which the identity of one and the same person gets changed to the point beyond recognition. The 'official' chronology portrays Flaubert to be proud of the success brought by the publication of *Madame Bovary*:

> In 1846, doubting his ability ever to write anything worth publishing, Gustave had announced, 'If I do make an appearance, one day, it will be in full armour.' Now his breastplate dazzles and his lance is everywhere. (Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot* 25)

The ‘deconstructive’ chronology presents a completely opposite picture of the event, exhibiting the novelist telling his friend Du Camp that “if ever he had a stroke of good luck on the Bourse he would buy up ‘at any cost’ all copies of Madame Bovary in circulation: ‘I should throw them into the fire, and never hear of them again” (Barnes, *Flaubert’s Parrot* 29-30). The same occasion is depicted in a radically different fashion in the ‘personal’ type of chronology – a sort of a mirror of Flaubert’s soul, in which we find the novelist confessing that

> You had hoped to find in me a fire which scorched and blazed and illuminated everything; which shed a cheerful light, dried out damp wainscoting, made the air healthier and rekindled life. Alas! I’m only a poor nightlight, whose red wick splutters in a lake of bad oil full of water and bits of dust. (34)

The same line of reasoning may be applied to the chapter entitled “Flaubert’s Bestiary”, where the essence of the writer’s soul is displayed through a myriad of images and a mass of animalistic similes, with no hint, whatsoever, at the possible pick of the most representative ones. Accordingly, in various periods Flaubert may be found described as a lion, a tiger, a boa constrictor, a bear, a polar bear, an ox, a sphinx, an elephant, a whale, “an oyster in its shell, a snail in its shell, a hedgehog rolling up to protect itself” (Barnes, *Flaubert’s Parrot* 50), a lizard, a cow, a donkey, a porpoise, a mule, a rhino, a mole, a wild buffalo, a lamb, a magpie and a calf. The choice of animal imagery is so diverse that the notion of Flaubert’s Self may be sooner described in terms of a cacophony, than symphony; without any trace of synthetic unity or coherence.

What is more, Flaubert’s identity is dispersed even further in the chapter entitled “The Train-spotter’s Guide to Flaubert”, in which the progression of the enumerated paragraphs depicting the gradual spread of railways in the

area round Paris and Croisset is utilized to refer to various stages in Flaubert's relationship with Louise Colet. As a result, the neurotic and volatile nature of the life-long affair, characterised by periods of passion and "prolonged erotic oscillation" (Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot* 110), superseded by recurring phases of estrangement and avoidance from Flaubert's side, gets symbolically dispersed in the slowly vanishing smoke from the locomotive engine – "the smoke of the railway engine stretching out in a horizontal line, like a gigantic ostrich feather whose tip kept blowing away" (113). In fact, Flaubert tended to associate the invention of trains with the of the idea of Progress itself, so much worshiped and talked about in the course of the nineteenth century, and, yet, so much shown contempt for by the prominent writer. Hence, there is a great deal of irony in the fact that Braithwaite finishes off the chapter on trains-spotting by making a fully loaded train pass through the site of Flaubert's house, at present appropriated by a giant paper factory (itself an undoubtable symbol of technological progress), which figuratively clears off all the remnants of the writer's ideals and the major pinnacles of Flaubert's complex and deeply troubled self:

> The swaddled goods train was drawn up about two hundred yards away, ready to make its run past Flaubert's pavilion. It would doubtless hoot derisively as it drew level; perhaps it was carrying poisons, enema pumps and cream tarts, or supplies for chemists and mathematicians. I didn't want to see the event (irony can be heavy-handed as well as ruthless). I climbed into my car and drove off. (114)

Similarly, the chapter entitled "Flaubert's Apocrypha" circuitously deconstructs the significance of Flaubert's literary heritage, concentrating, instead, on the more far-reaching (to Braithwaite's mind) importance of works never written, brilliantly envisioned, but never accomplished:

> But it's also what they didn't build. It's the houses they dreamed and sketched. It's the burlesque boulevards of the imagination; it's that untaken, sauntering path between toupeed cottages; it's the *trompe-l'oeil* cul-de-sac which bluffs you into the belief that you're entering some smart avenue. (115)

Hence, a singular preference is given to emptiness and blankness, to bareness and void which seem grand in their primality, and deconstructive in their downbeating bluff.

What is more, the novel contains numerous accounts and multiple narrations of 'the Truth' about Flaubert's life. Accordingly, Geoffrey Braithwaite's story of Flaubert's relationship with Madame Colet is undermined in a decisively parrottish fashion by Louise's own account of the affair, depicted in the chapter entitled "Louise Colet's Version". Here the writer is portrayed as a humble provincial, unknown, deeply vain, and seemingly honoured by Louise, who accepts him as her lover. Thus, the latter makes the following confession, scandalous in its originality:

> I was beautiful, I was…renowned. I conquered first Aix, then Paris. I had won the Académie's poetry prize twice. […] Victor Hugo called me *sister*; Béranger called me *Muse*. […] I was the candle; he was the moth. The mistress of Socrates deigned to cast her smile on this unknown poet. *I* was *his* catch; he wasn't mine. (115)

The evident divergence from the 'accepted' truth about Louise Colet's role in Flaubert's life once again underlines the notion that it is mere parrotry and imitation of the real that is available to the human race, forced, as a consequence, to fabulate its own route towards a life full of meaning.

In the section named "Examination Chapter" Flaubert's views on life and literary criticism are presented via a score of exam questions to be answered,

based on the collection of facts grouped into two sections, each of which is subsequently subdivided into various parts. This is the section in which the process of Flaubert's decentrement reaches its apex. The reader is bombarded by the blasts of philosophical, biographical, economic, geographical, logical, medical, psychological, psychoanalytical, philatelic, phonetic, theatrical, historical and astrological facts, all adding up to a sort of a learned masquerade of reality, a dissonant lampoon of the truth about Flaubert's inner self.

The propagation of multiple truths is further developed in the chapter called "Braithwaite's Dictionary of Accepted Ideas" – a direct subversion and a forthright mimicry of the maxims underlying Flaubert's prominent work *Dictionnaire des Idées Reçues*. The chapter provides an alphabetical listing of excerpts defamiliarizing either the accepted images of Flaubert's friends, or the score of notions influencing the writer's mature existence. For instance, the Orient is described as "the crucible in which *Madame Bovary* was fired. Flaubert left Europe a Romantic, and returned from the Orient a realist. cf. Kuchuk Hanem" (Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot* 156), referring to Flaubert's contraction of syphilis as something, "without which no one could claim genius" (158).

All in all, Braithwaite's "Life of Flaubert", just like the search for original parrots, turns into a mere parody and a parrottish caricature of life, exposing a profound gap between the underlying reality (distant and unperceivable) and our chaotic human perception of it. Furthermore, the quest discloses "the 'ontological' distinction between the 'real' lives of Braithwaite and his wife on the one hand and the 'fictional' lives of Charles and Emma Bovary [or Gustave Flaubert and Louise Colet] on the other" (Sesto 51), which Geoffrey utilizes extensively in order to find a temporal remedy for the crisis of the self. Subsequently, unable to perceive the objective truth about himself, Flaubert

and his wife's suicide, Braithwaite fabulates his own Flaubert, his own Ellen and his own self, so as to avoid the beguiling trap of relativity. After all, isn't it typical of the human mind to invent missing narratives and fabulate guiding life-meanings when threatened by chaos and turmoil? Hence, the never-ending search for objectivity, propped up by the self-conscious construction of meaning-generating narratives, based on the acceptance of the fact that the Truth does exist somewhere, make up the leitmotif of the post-postmodern epoch. Indeed, "Braithwaite's devotion to Flaubert: his 'work,' his research, his collecting and sorting of information are perhaps meant to provide an anodyne 'objectivity', […] at least to keep him busy" (Moseley 79), and to provide him with a guiding narrative or a group of narratives, enabling him to go on in the chaotic world.

The fact that the novel propagates the unattainability of truth often confuses both the reader and the critic, making them consign it to the domain of postmodern writing. Nevertheless, as John Bayley underlines in *The Order of Battle at Trafalgar and Other Essays*,

> Since we cannot know everything about the past [it does not mean that] we cannot know anything; its actual effect – and its success – is to suggest something different: that the fact confirms the idea of truth instead of dissipating it, that the difficulty of finding out how things were does not disprove those things but authenticates them. (12)

Hence, the post-postmodern maxim, emphasising the indispensable presence of the Truth, is installed, enabling one to commence the stage of fabulation. Yet, as Merritt Moseley points out, "the past fifteen or twenty years in the English-language novel have seen the doctrine that 'we cannot know anything' about the past [become] very modish" (87). For this reason, in the best traditions of postmodernism, the doctrine has been propagating 'the impossibility of knowing' for its own sake, giving rise to the rule of relativity

and incredulity. As a result, most of the novels appearing on the literary scene have been evaluated according to their adherence to the fashionable line of reasoning.

Yet the thematic scope of Barnes's fiction is, nonetheless, very different. In this connection, Merritt Moseley poses a question: "Is it possible to conclude that Barnes consciously intended to imply a fashionable scepticism but (accidentally?) produced a different effect?" (87). To be able to provide an answer to the query, one may consider the following assumptions about postmodernism made by James B. Scott in "Parrot as Paradigms: Infinite Deferral of Meaning in 'Flaubert's Parrot'":

> Reality and truth are the illusions produced when systems of discourse (especially artistic discourse) impinge on human consciousness. In practice, this has led postmodern novelists to strive to undermine hermeneutic responses to art by foregrounding the discourse that informs their artefact, thereby implying that not only is the final "meaning" of a work of art forever unknowable, but also any orthodox truth is actually a discourse-generated fluke. (57)

Accordingly, to comply with the above postmodern axiom, Geoffrey Braithwaite is sceptical about the likelihood of finding the 'true' parrot. Nevertheless, this does not make him believe that there was no parrot at all. Similarly, Geoffrey "disclaims the ability to explain his wife's life but never the reality of it" (Moseley 88). Hence, the major theme of the novel becomes deeper than it seems, leaving the existing mass of postmodern stipulations far behind. For this reason, the post-postmodern orientation of the novel manifests itself in the fact that the work accentuates the undoubtable presence of the objective truth, no matter how difficult to discern and complicated it might be. The fact that Braithwaite does attempt to correct the mistakes about the past made by Flaubert and Dr. Enid Starkie, once again emphasises the point. As a

result, Braithwaite concludes: “Books are where things are explained to you; life is where things aren’t” (Barnes, *Flaubert’s Parrot* 168). Indeed, life does not explain things, it simply poses confusing questions. If one believes that one can eventually solve them, one gets a stimulus to fabulate narratives, possibly leading to the needed enlightenment. Hence, it is the desire to believe, accompanied by the desire to fabulate that forms the foundation of the post-postmodern epoch. Geoffrey Braithwaite, therefore, is no exception to the post-postmodern paradigm. Though unable to find the truth about Flaubert’s life, Flaubert’s parrot or his wife’s suicide, Braithwaite does not doubt the fact of their existence, which makes him travel to France, collect bits of evidence and haunt places where Flaubert lived, or might have lived. In his search for the Truth Geoffrey fabulates multiple truths instilling his otherwise pointless, wrecked and chaotic life with a sense of purpose. Is this not why, at the end of the novel, he flees the room of dusty Amazonian parrots, “quizzical, sharp-eyed, dandruff-ridden [and] a little cranky” (Barnes, *Flaubert’s Parrot* 190)? Is this not what post-postmodernism is after all about?

CHAPTER 6

BARNES'S 'THEORY OF THE WORLD' IN *A HISTORY OF THE WORLD IN 10 ½ CHAPTERS*

"Love and truth, yes that's the prime connection."
(Barnes, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* 243)

Julian Barnes's sixth novel *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (1989) is no less complex, ambitious, disruptive and contradictory than *Flaubert's Parrot*, comprising a set of stories "ranging over centuries and involving different characters in each chapter" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 61). In fact, one may point to a possible thematic similarity between *A History* and *Flaubert's Parrot*. Thus, according to Julian Barnes's confession, "I was going to write *Geoffrey Braithwaite's Guide to the Bible*. Which would be the entire Bible, restructed for handy modern use, with the boring bits cut out, written by an agnostic, sceptic rationalist" (Stuart 15). That book was never written, it was transmuted instead into a subversive pseudo-religious account of the history of the world. What is more, many critics were stunned by the novel's even more pronounced lack of coherence and outspoken structural independence of many chapters, some of which were published separately in the *New Yorker*. As a result, academia, "daunted by the lack of a single plot, the disruption of chronology and the absence of narrative cohesion, referred to the book as a collection of tales, stories or short stories" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 61). In this connection, D. J. Taylor proclaims that *A History* was "not a novel, according to the staider definitions" (40). What is more, Robert Nixon claims that "Barnes has come up with a confident collection of short stories

somewhat bewildered by its packaging as a novel" (55); while Merle Rubin claims in "From Nebulae to Noah's Ark" that the work is "less than a novel than a connection of linked stories and essays" (13). Robert Adams, in his turn, declares that it "is neither the novel it is presented as being nor the breezy pop-history of the world the title suggests" (7).

Indeed, all the strands of the existing criticism arise from the fact that the novel lacks traces of a single plot and narrative cohesion, possessing a disruptive chronology. Furthermore, it is Julian Barnes himself who may be blamed for the rise of all the present polemics. Thus, in the interview with Michael Ignatieff, translated on BBC2 in 1994, Barnes was recorded wondering "how long can I stretch the narrative line like a piece of elastic without it breaking?". What is more, in the interview with Alexander Stuart published in *Los Angeles Times Book Review* Julian Barnes admitted that "I'm very interested in form and in seeing what happens when you bend traditional narrative and fracture it, stretching it to the point at which you hope the chewing gum doesn't snap" (15). Indeed, the novel consists of a multiplicity of "stylistic registers, and mixes contradictory versions, narrative voices and focalisations as each chapter proposes new narrators and points of view on history and stories" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 62). In addition, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* consists of a mixture of quite dissimilar genres, be it "the fable, the bestiary, the epistolary form, the essay, travel writing, legal proceedings, art analysis and [what Barnes calls] 'love prose'" (Guignery 62).

Yet, despite such a fierce critical outcry, the novel contains multiple tokens pointing to the symphony of themes holding the novel together and providing unity for the literary piece, notwithstanding its structural lack of order. Hence, one may name "the recurrence of sea voyages, catastrophes, woodworms, analogies between characters, echoes, plot links" (Guignery,

The Fiction of Julian Barnes 63) and repeated phrases (like 'stinko-paralytico', to refer to an alcoholic drink to be found both in "The Dream" and "Upstream!") among the techniques weaving the seemingly disparate chapters into a concordant novelistic net. Besides, as Brian Finney sees it in "A Worm's Eye View of History: Julian Barnes's 'A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters'", "certain patterns of human interaction reappear over the expanse of history" (62). As a result, we come across numerous instances of sea crossings and cruises, canoeing, mountaineering and going up the hill, occurrences of danger and escape, geographical explorations, court trials, references to paintings, God and love, allusions to Noah and the first/last person on earth.

The existence of a thematic symphony of this kind justifies Barnes's declaration in the defence of the novelistic character of his work, included in the interview with Bruce Cook: "It was conceived as a whole and executed as a whole. Things in it thicken and deepen" (L10). Indeed, the polymorphous outer structure of the novel, making use of self-reflexivity, defamiliarisation, hybridity and decentredness, propped up by the unity of minor themes, all serving as a variation on the theme of history as a voyage, history as a catastrophe, or history as a Biblical Flood, are held together by a deeper and grander thematic pattern. Thus, the search for the Truth in the world of commotion, which can be shaded off by the idol of the Self at the stage of intoxication, dismissed as nonsense at the stage of sobriety, or sturdily believed in at the stage of post-postmodern fabulation, becomes the leitmotif of the novel, guiding the narrative development of each of its consecutive parts.

All in all, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* may truly be called a "tragicomic novel" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 61). Thus, even the title contains traces of profound irony. The indefinite article at the head

of the title, subverts all possible claims that this history is 'the right' one, cutting off the reader's intention to take this narration seriously. Similarly, the inclusion of the subversive half chapter into the title adds one more hint at the possible deconstructive contents of the novel, turning this history into a story, rather than a single grand account of the history of the world. According to Richard Locke,

> Comic grandiosity is apparent from its aggressive title. A history, not fiction; divided with confident precision into chapters, though we note the humorous, if whimsical precision of "10 ½". The title suggests a book that will flaunt genres, categories of communication, numbers that don't neatly conform to our devotion to the order of ten. This self-advertising title is a boast that mocks itself by calling attention to its literary and cognitive form. (42)

The novel is told retrospectively, making extensive use of the technique of montage. Hence, "the fourteen stories which comprise A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters are not arranged in any kind of chronological sequence, even though such 'tampering' might seem, initially, at odds with a text whose title promises 'A History of the World'" (Sesto 53). The novel takes on the form of what Julian Barnes calls the gospel, drawing on the style and imagery of theological writing. Besides, *A History* possesses "no main character, no unitary voice, no tight progression in the narrative, no single or even double plot" (Moseley 113). Instead, the reader is faced with a loosely knit chronological succession, beginning with the chapter dealing with the most distant historical event (the Biblical Flood) and ending with the most strived for, in the religious sense, occasion (one's life in Heaven).

It could be revealing to examine in order of appearance the narrative pattern of each of the fourteen chapters, so as to get a deeper understanding of the

novel as a whole. The chapter entitled "The Stowaway" contains a subversive version of the Biblical account of the Flood and Noah's role in it, told from the point of view of a woodworm illicitly getting on board of the Ark and, as a consequence, never included in the record of 'clean' and 'pure' animals pardoned by God. Hence, the chapter is told retrospectively by a traditional first-person homodiegetic narrator, who employs "a reader-friendly, eager to persuade rhetoric" (Moseley 113). "The Visitors" narrates the story of Franklin Hughes - "a distinguished guest lecturer [on board] of the *Santa Euphemia*" (Barnes, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* 33), which gets high jacked by a group of Palestinian terrorists. The section is told by a third-person heterodiegetic narrator, who reports the events via the mind of Franklin Hughes. The chapter named "The Wars of Religion" is told in a mock-heroic style, and claims to be "the transcript of a trial" (Moseley 114) between the residents of Mamirolle "in the diocese of Besançon" (Barnes, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* 62) and the colony of woodworms – "those diabolic *bestioles* which crawl through the smallest hole even as David found the chink in Goliath's armour" (63), infesting the Bishop's throne in the church of Saint-Michel to such an extent that at the weight of the Bishop it breaks apart, sending the Bishop "into the darkness of imbecility" (64).

"The Survivor" is mainly told by Kath Ferris – a first-person narrator, who manages to survive (or persuade herself of survival) the aftermath of a nuclear disaster by sailing off the shores of Australia on board of a raft with Paul and Linda - a couple of cats. The chapter is presented via a score of "Kath's reports [introducing the effect of] presentness [and] writing to the moment" (Moseley 114). In addition, Kath's account is rendered through an "alternation of first and third person narrative voices" (Sesto 70). Thus, the first-person narration renders the story unfolding inside the dreaming mind of the main character, presenting the actual, inner and personal contents of

the dream. The third-person narration, in its turn, serves as a type of an antique chorus, providing "the outer scaffolding of a story, chiefly by 'externalising' the main character's perceptions and mental states" (Sesto 70). As a subsequence, the alteration of narrative voices serves to "achieve an extraordinary juxtaposition of dream and reality and exposes the different 'ontological' levels of fictional elements (the Chinese-box structuring of a dream within a dream within a dream)" (Sesto 70).

The chapter named "Shipwreck" is told by, what Merritt Moseley calls, "the voice of nonfiction" (114) or by a knowledgeable speaker. The section is divided into two parts, each of which examines a separate topic. Thus, Part I concentrates on the fate of a French frigate, the *Medusa*, resulting in its shipwreck and multiple deaths of passengers. Part I employs the dryness and categorical assertiveness of a documentary text. Part II, in its turn, contains a learned discussion of Gericault's painting "Scene of Shipwreck" inspired by the tragic fate of the *Medusa.* The sub-section makes an extensive use of the narrative technique known as 'bifocalisation', according to which

> The narrator decides to let the reader decide for himself […] rather than impose a fixed and stable interpretation on the painting. [Thus,] bifocalisation underlines the vanity of trying to enforce a monologic discourse that would reveal a supposedly totalising truth. (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 66)

According to Vanessa Guignery, the narrator employed in the section may be labelled as 'schizophrenic', due to the fact that

> Interpretation is presented as multiple and unstable, [moving] from one perspective to another, and this is epitomized by the coexistence of two eyes, the ignorant eye of the uninitiated reader, and the informed eye

> reflecting the ideal reader". (*The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 65)

A similar line of reasoning may be applied to the chapter bearing the name "Three Simple Stories" told by a nonfictious voice of a learned speaker, with an exception of the first story, rendered by the first-person homodiegetic narrator – "a normal eighteen-year old [boy]; shuttered, self-conscious, untravelled and sneering; violently educated, socially crass, emotionally blurting" (Barnes, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* 171), telling the reader the story of Lawrence Beeseley's parrottish survival of the *Titanic* disaster. The second narrative recounts a subversive version or "a fishy story [of Jonah]" (175) delivered by God from the ghastly gut of a whale; as well as that of the miraculously saved James Bartley, "a thirty-five-year-old sailor on the *Star of the East*, swallowed by a sperm whale off the Falkland Islands" (179). The third story in line capitalises on the tragedy of the liner *St Louis* carrying 937 Jews off the shore of Germany in hope of finding refuge in Havana. "Perhaps their escape from Germany felt as miraculous as that of Jonah from the whale" (182), yet, it ended in a shameful denial of refuge by the majority of 'civilized' countries.

The chapters entitled "The Mountain" and "Project Ararat" are told in a "social-realistic style with an omniscient narrator" (Moseley 114). "The Mountain" narrates the story of Amanda Ferguson conducting a sort of a redemptive pilgrimage to Mt. Ararat together with her life-long friend Miss Logan, in an attempt to rescue, what she believes to be, the damned soul of her late and disbelieving father. "Project Ararat", in its turn, renders the story of Spike Tiggler, a former military pilot and astronaut, "a flier, a man of science, an engineer" (Barnes, *History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* 252), embarking on a quest of the mythical Noah's Ark, which he believes still exists somewhere on the mysterious slopes of Mt. Ararat.

The next chapter in line, “Upstream!”, is told by a first-person homodiegetic narrator via a set of written correspondence, accounting for the overall epistolary nature of the section. According to Merritt Moseley, the epistolary character of the chapter “has the same quality as Kath’s reports in “The Survivor”: presentness [and] writing to the moment” (114). “Upstream!” tells the story of Charlie – a British soap opera star - and his unlucky trip to the depth of the Amazon, so as to shoot a movie about two Catholic priests, arriving in South America with the aim of converting the locals to the light of Christianity. What is more, the chapter circuitously capitalises on the fate of Charlie’s affair with a woman named Linda, ending up in a complete disaster.

“Parenthesis” is the famous half chapter that gave rise to much controversy and, at the same time, introduced the irony in the title of the work. The section consists of a treatise on love, told by Julian Barnes himself, addressing the reader directly. “Parenthesis” presents love, as the only possible antidote to the brutality of the history of the world: “Love won’t change the history of the world, but it will do something much more important: teach us to stand up to history, to ignore its chin-out strut” (Barnes, *History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* 240).

The novel closes with a chapter entitled “The Dream”, told in the past tense by a first-person narrator, “not very different in some ways from what is known as Julian Barnes” (Moseley 114). Indeed, the narrator employs similar philosophical views and similar narrating techniques as those employed in “Parenthesis”. “The Dream” renders the story of a man, who “dreamt that [he] woke up” (Barnes, *History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* 283) in Heaven. The Heaven that he is introduced into turns out to be radically different from the image systematically imposed on us by religion,

with all human wishes endlessly fulfilled, carnality satisfied and all forms of lust instantly provided for. In consequence, all hellish forms of sins transmute into a set of heavenly enjoyments, blurring the borders between the two radically different ontological coordinates.

Despite such a varying, dissimilar and often contradictory structural colouring of the work, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* may be still called a novel, held together by the symphonic unity of recurrent themes and the concordant blend of major and minor motifs, providing an organic framework for the whole literary piece. The fact echoes the famous statement made by Julian Barnes in *A History*: "Everything is connected, even the parts we don't like, especially the parts we don't like" (84). Hence, at this stage it seems logical to take a profound look at the themes and supporting motifs, organizing the novel into a solid and indivisible whole.

Without a doubt, the novel is organized around the major theme of the Flood Myth which became reality and to this day 'Is' the sole paradigm of the human construction of history. Indeed, mankind still differentiates between the 'clean' and the 'unclean', still produces Noah-like "oppressive role-model[s]" (Barnes, *History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* 21) with tyrannical "gopher wood sta[ves]" (21), sending "a number of species to their deaths by asking them to go aloft in terrible weather when they weren't properly equipped to do so" (20), still constructs apartheidal Arks in the utopian struggle for salvation, and still infests the world with an army of ever-hungry and industrious woodworms, battling for everyday survival and in the futile attempt to undermine the rule of the immortal "puffed-up patriarch[s]" (12), intoxicated with an illusion of personal grandeur: "Six hundred years should have produced some flexibility of mind, some ability to see both sides of the question. Not a bit of it" (21). Hence, as one may deduce from the above conjecture, and, partially, from Merritt Moseley's

speculation on the subject in *Understanding Julian Barnes*, the major theme of the Biblical Flood is supported by a number of minor motifs:

History as a catastrophe. Julian Barnes presents the course of all human history as an endless procession of catastrophes and disasters. Indeed, Chapter 1 deals with a subject of an exterminating Biblical Flood. Chapter 2 tackles the question of terrorism and religious extremism, jeopardising the well-being of mankind. Chapter 3 dwells upon the subject of religious wars upon Lucifer's *bestioles*. Chapter 4 examines the aftermath of a nuclear disaster, sending Kath Ferris into the sea of commotion in hope of finding salvation. Chapter 5 deals with a tragic shipwreck of the *Medusa* and the extent to which tragedy may be rendered by art (i.e., Gericault's "Scene of Shipwreck"). Chapter 6 analyses the subject of religious fanaticism and the ease of sacrificing one's life to pay tribute to religious convictions. Chapter 7 examines the ways to survive a disaster (for instance, Beeseley and the *Titanic*, Jews and the liner *St Louis*, Jonah and the whale). Through a tragic echo-like death of an actor in the Amazon, Chapter 8 hints at the Marxian maxim that history and all of its adjacent disasters and catastrophes repeat themselves first time as tragedy, the second time as farce. The maxim is revised by the wisdom of Barnesian dictum: "History just burps, and we taste again that raw-onion sandwich it swallowed centuries ago" (241). Chapter 9 investigates into the ways Noah's life and Noah's death may affect people's existence centuries and centuries beyond. Chapter 10 dwells upon the subject of life after death and the tragedy of being immortal. The half chapter, or "Parenthesis", presents love as the only remedy to oppose the bulldozing power of history. After all, "the world is only advanced by…killing people" (50).

History as a progress of tyrants. The novel makes a profound emphasis on the fact that "history isn't what happened" (242); on the contrary, history is what happened to the chosen few. Hence, first one comes across Noah's God and Noah – "bad-tempered, smelly, unreliable, envious and cowardly, [who] had his little theories, and didn't want anyone else's" (8-16); then come along "kings and archbishops with some offstage divine tinkering" (242); afterwards one has Columbus and men of his sort, who "in fourteen hundred and ninety two […] sailed the ocean blue" (83). The lot is followed by "men in dark-grey suits and stripped ties up there in the north […] taking certain strategic precautions" (89) and the Arabic "Black Thunder group [that] does not turn the other cheek [and] carr[ies] out its intended [military] threat" (56).

History as an artifice. The novel incessantly emphasises the constructedness of history. Thus, the woodworm in "The Stowaway" asserts that

> Your species have its much repeated version, which still charms even sceptics; while the animals have a compendium of sentimental myths. They were chosen, they endured, they survived: it's normal for them to gloss over the awkward episodes, to have convenient lapses of memory. But I am not constrained in that way. I was never chosen. […] I escaped and I have flourished. I am a little apart from the rest of animal society. […] My account you can trust. (4)

In fact, the last statement is very ironic in the sense that by underlining the seeming trustworthiness of the account, the woodworm reaches an opposite and subversive effect, no doubt, intended from the start – drawing attention of the reader to a no less constructed, subjective and, what is more, biased (representing the voice of the unwanted few) version of the event. Hence, even the claimed authenticity becomes nothing else but a pure construct. The same idea is rendered at the closing point of the chapter entitled "The Wars of Religion", where the manuscript containing the description of the legal

case against woodworms gets devoured by woodworms themselves, leaving no trace of "*the closing words of the juge d'Église*" and, consequently, that of the manuscript. "The Survivor" continues with the like line of reasoning, portraying official history as intentionally constructed to serve the need of the few. Thus, Kath Ferris suggests

> In fourteen hundred and ninety two
> Columbus sailed the ocean blue
> And then what? They always make it sound so simple. Names, dates, achievements. I hate dates. Dates are bullies, dates are know-alls. (98)

"The Shipwreck" puts a special stress on the idea that there exists a profound difference between history *per se* and history rendered by art: "The painting has slipped history's anchor. This is no longer 'Scene of Shipwreck', let alone 'The Raft of the *Medusa*'. We don't just imagine the miseries on that fatal machine; we don't just become the sufferers. They become us" (137). Indeed, aiming to reconstruct the construct of history, art becomes a sort of a second-order construct, generating a refurbished myth of events accepted to be historically correct, resulting in its eventual transmutation into a renewed view of history and historical events. The idea of history as a construct is developed in "Parenthesis", in which the narrator declares that

> History isn't what happened. History is just what historians tell us. […] And we cling to history as a series of salon pictures, conversation pieces whose participants we can easily reimagine back into life, when all the time it's more like a multi-media collage, with paint applied by decorator's roller rather than camel-hair brush. (242).

Salvation and damnation by water. The novel subverts the traditional Biblical image of water as a holy, purifying and, therefore, absolving substance, used for baptism and expurgation of evil. As a result, the animals

in “The Stowaway” both survive and perish as a result of the Flood. The terrorists land on board of an ocean liner the *Santa Euphemia*. As an outcome, many of its passengers get shot, while the remaining lot are saved by an anti-terrorist military division arriving, once again, by water. For Kath Ferris water plays a dubious role, due to the impossibility to decide on the ‘truth’ of her situation. Thus, the narrative devices employed in “The Survivor” blur the border line between fabulation and reality. Therefore, water either saves the woman, bringing her to an uninhabited island together with a couple of cats, or, on the contrary, leads her back to the place of patriarchal domination, nuclear pollution and tyrannical rule of governments. It is water that leads to the imminent shipwreck of the *Medusa* in “The Shipwreck”, followed by the tragic death of its crew, as well as the miraculous survival of the lucky and the fittest few. What is more, water leads to the world-wide shame of the *St Louis*, the destruction of the *Titanic* in “Three Simple Stories”, as well as Jonah’s and James Batley’s near-death in the gut of the whale. At the same time, it is water again that leads to the deliverance of the Jews, Beeseley, Jonah and Batley from the threat of eternal perdition. In “Upstream!” the trip to the Amazon results in Matt’s untimely death on board a raft; while in “The Mountain” Amanda Ferguson’s ‘fall’ and injury were inhibited by a slab of a slippery stone.

Life as a voyage. The novel in general and every chapter in particular, Barnes’s history of the world and the concept of human life are either based on, or presented via the symbol of continuous movement (both progressive and regressive). Thus, the novel, life and history progress from the days of the Flood to the contemporaneity of space discovery and carbon-dating tests. In addition, all the characters of the novel may be seen as incessantly on the move. The woodworm penetrates the Ark and survives the Flood, the travellers travel to Crete on board of the *Santa Euphemia*, Kath Ferris attempts to escape the nuclear war on board a sailboat, the *Medusa* takes its

crew to their last and tragic trip, "the *St Louis* and the *Titanic* in 'Three Simple Stories'" (Moseley 117) submit their passengers to the hands of fate, while the progress of "the Amazonian raft in 'Upstream!'" (Moseley 117) results in the premature death of an actor. Both Amanda Ferguson and Spike Tiggler accomplish a trip 'up the mountain', while the narrator of "The Dream" conducts a voyage through various stages of Heaven and Hell.

The Ark. The novel is literally overrun with references to the mythical vessel, which take the form of either direct allusions or metaphorical suggestions. Accordingly, the main subject of "The Stowaway" is the subversion of the official story of the Ark, Noah's God and Noah. "Shipwreck" makes a hasty discussion of the fact "why there have been so few paintings of the ark" (Moseley 115). In "The Dream" the narrator claims to have met Noah in Heaven and tells the reader that they "ate more creatures than had ever sailed on Noah's Ark" (305). In "Upstream!" the narrator writes to his girl-friend that he wants to have a child and he would "make a playpen for him and buy him one of those big wooden Arks with all the animals" (206); while "Parenthesis" makes a claim that "trusting virgins were told that love was the promised land, an ark to escape the Flood. It may be the ark, but one skippered by some crazy greybeard who beats you round the head with his gopher-wood stave" (229). In this connection, Merritt Moseley provides a list of the possible metaphorical arks in the novel:

> "The Survivor", who in a small sailboat has escaped what she believes is nuclear disaster, is accompanied by two cats, one male and one female: but "She didn't imagine some good-looking fellow turning up after a couple of weeks in a dinghy with two dogs on board; then a girl with two chickens, and a bloke with two pigs, and so on" (92). Stowaways: the woodworms and the deathwatch beetles are stowaways on the ark; this becomes an important legal argument in "The Wars of

> Religion": in "The Visitors" the Palestinian terrorists are also stowaways. (116)

There is no accident in the like 'infestation' of the novel with images of the Ark. In fact, the Ark serves as a symbol of the objective truth - always there, but never attainable, never apprehensible, and yet, indispensable for the construction of fabulations instilling life with meaning.

Separation of the clean from the unclean. In fact, the separation of people into the clean and the unclean, the native and the alien, the good and the evil, the ordinary and the different, "the normal and the abnormal, the sacred and the profane" (Moseley 118) is the primal myth underlying the overall pattern of human ontological and epistemological thought. "Perhaps the distinction between fiction and nonfiction is akin to the separation of clean and unclean, and perhaps it is just as difficult to ascertain" (Moseley 118). Hence, "The Stowaway" contains multiple references to the subject of 'cleanliness' and 'uncleanliness": Noah separates the animals into the clean (inedible) and the unclean (edible), while Noah is considered to be terribly unclean by the animals – "an ugly old thing, both graceless in movement and indifferent to personal hygiene" (17). In "The Visitors" the terrorists divide the passengers once again according to the clean/unclean pattern:

> When they reached the dining-room their passports were examined by a fifth Arab. Tricia was sent for the far end, where the British had been put in one corner and the Americans in another. In the middle of the room were the French, the Italians, two Spaniards and the Canadians. Nearest the door were the Japanese, the Swedes, and Franklin, the solitary Irishman. One of the last couples to be brought in were the Zimmermanns, a pair of stout, well-dressed Americans. […] As the couple passed Franklin's table on their way to the American quarter, Zimmermann muttered lightly, 'Separating the clean from the unclean.' (44)

In the “Three Simple Stories”, the officers of the *St Louis* carrying the Jews to the shores of Havana are faced with a similar question: “How would you choose the 250 who would be allowed off the Ark? Who would separate the clean from the unclean?” (184). The same line of reasoning may be applied to the chapter entitled “Upstream!” where the Europeans consider the indigenous tribesmen to be terribly ‘unclean’ and “riddled with diseases” (200). The theme of separation dominates the section named “Shipwreck”, focusing on “the separation of the officers from the enlisted men, who were briskly abandoned” (Moseley 118). Likewise, the loss of the *Titanic* was accompanied by a strict separation of passengers – “women and children were to be spared, men to die by drowning, though some men allegedly survived in women’s clothing” (Moseley 118). What is more, there exists no separation into the clean and the unclean, the sinner and the saints in “The Dream”. Hence, all of the dead find themselves in Heaven, even Hitler and the similar lot.

Everlasting battle of woodworms. Woodworms, deathwatch beetles, *xestobium rufo-villosum* or crafty *bestioles* succeed in swarming the Ark in “The Stowaway”, the Bishop’s throne and the archive in “The Wars of Religion”, the room of the dying Colonel Ferguson in “The Mountain” and Barnes’s essay on love in “Parenthesis”, due to his discussion of the similarity between the tapping produced by beetles and the nature of human sexual act. Moreover, woodworms infest the jungle in “Upstream!”, posing “a threat to the letters sent out [by Charlie]” (Moseley 115). As a consequence, woodworms serve as a symbol of all the diverse, minor, silenced, unrepresented, oppressed and uncounted voices struggling for their day to day existence and battling to subvert the existing systems of control imposed by the powerful to suppress the arising voices of protest.

As can be deduced from the above discussion, the novel draws heavily from the imagery and symbolic contents of the Biblical Flood Myth - the primary myth responsible for the evolution of the world into what it is today.

Nevertheless, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* is, first and foremost, a novel about fabulation, its general importance for the overall historical progress of mankind and the existent differences among its various types. Thus, every chapter of the novel concentrates on a peculiar type of fabulation, influencing the universal pattern of human onto-epistemological development.

Before this thesis starts with the analysis of the novel according to the theory of post-postmodern fabulation, it will construct a paradigm of the types of fabulation to be found in the work. Hence, one may come across three major types of the phenomenon:

1. Fabulation practiced to oppress/ control/ govern, as practiced by the 'founders' of the official history "bulldoz[ing] [everything] into rubble" (Barnes, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* 240);

2. Relativistic fabulation for the sake of fabulation, eradicating the notion of the Truth as such and substituting for it a multitude of fabulated mini-truths.

3. Life-fostering fabulation of personal life-narratives based on the belief in and the desire to achieve the objective truth, as opposed to the slavish submission to someone else's tyrannical fabulation.

In this connection, Kath's story in "The Survivor" provides an illustration of the multi-dimensiality of the term. Thus, unwilling to submit to the 'official' fabulation of truth about the nuclear disaster and her own whereabouts, imposed by "men in grey suits and striped ties […] men like Greg in thongs and T-shirts staying out late in bars trying to pick up girls […] [and the men of her dreams] always very polite, even gentle" (89-100), Kath fabulates her own version of the events (fully aware of the fact that the Truth does exist somewhere out there), which endows her with a strong feeling of hope to start a new beginning in the surrounding sea of chaos. In fact, Julian Barnes strongly encourages the reader to believe in the power of love and the supremacy of the objective truth, for "if we don't, then we merely surrender to the history of the world and someone else's truth" (246). Hence, the author seems to prioritise the post-postmodern fabulation of one's own life-inspiring narratives, supporting the idea of the Truth over the postmodern dictum decrying big words and high aspirations. For this reason, Kath Ferris denounces the postmodern-like fabulation, or fabulation for the sake of fabulation, diffusing the notion of the Truth into a myriad of unrelated, senseless and chaotic narratives: "We've got to look at things how they are; we can't rely on [pure] fabulation any more. It's the only way we survive" (111). Thus, 'looking at things how they are', or accepting the everlasting presence of the single Truth, becomes the leitmotif of the post-postmodern epoch. Hence, it is the life-fostering fabulation that is the key element of the stage of fabulation, else known as post-postmodernism.

The fabulation presented in "The Stowaway", aimed at subverting the official version of the Flood myth, as well as underlining the possibility of the existence of other 'credible' narratives of the event is very indicative of the postmodern or dismantling type of fabulation:

> I escaped […]; and I have flourished. I am a little set apart from the rest of animal society, which still has its nostalgic reunions. […] When I recall the Voyage, I feel no sense of obligation; gratitude puts no smear of Vaseline on the lens. My account you can trust. (4).

Thus, in this case the fabulation represents the voice of the underrepresented in the multitude of other possible voices and takes apart the likelihood of the existence of any unified and objective truth.

The same line of reasoning may be applied to the chapter entitled "The Wars of Religion", in which the author clashes together two versions of the same event – the trial of hellish *bestioles* guilty of putting in danger the life of the Bishop of Besançon, as presented through the script of the trial containing both the accusations of the *pétition des habitants* and the counterclaims of the *plaidoyer des habitants*. Thus, the official fabulation of events is weighed against the fabulated version provided by the silent and the repressed, while no effort is being made to construct an unbiased version of the happenings. As a result, the notion of the Truth as such is found unwanted and, therefore, dispersed in the endless crossfire on the subject. No wonder that the manuscript itself gets eaten by woodworms, leaving no trace of the Truth about the verdict pronounced:

> *Here the manuscript in the Archives Municipales de Besançon breaks off, without giving details of the annual penance or remembrance imposed by the court. It appears from the condition of the parchment that in the course of the last four and a half centuries it has been attacked, perhaps on more than one occasion, by some species of termite, which has devoured the closing words of the juge d'Église.* (80)

In "Shipwreck", Gericault fabulates his own version of the course of tragic events on board the *Medusa*, resulting in the birth of the "Scene of

Shipwreck". The painter surrounds himself with artefacts aimed to guide him towards the Truth about the wreck:

> It begins with truth to life. […] He compiled a dossier of the case. He sought out the carpenter from the *Medusa*, who had survived, and got him to build a scale model of his original machine. On it he positioned wax models to represent the survivors. Around him in his studio he placed his own painting of severed heads and dissected limbs, to infiltrate the air of mortality. Recognizable portraits of Savigny, Corréard and the carpenter are included in the final picture. (126)

Yet the painting that emerges, following weeks of meticulous work, remains very distant from the underlying truth of the tragedy. Thus, the narrator provides the reader with a list of things Gericault did not paint:

> The *Medusa* striking the reef; the moment when the tow-ropes were cast off and the raft abandoned; the mutinies in the night; the necessary cannibalism; the self-protective mass murder; the arrival of the butterfly, the actual moment of rescue" (126-7).

Indeed, as has been mentioned earlier, the Truth is almost impossible to perceive (though always near), which ignites the need to fabulate a substituting narrative, instilling meaning into the otherwise chaotic existence. Henceforth, the "Scene of Shipwreck" entered the memory of the observers of the 1819 Salon as the only available truth about the tragedy, while the big Truth still lingered somewhere out there. As a consequence, the narrator makes the following declaration: "The painting which survives is the one that outlives its story. Religion decays, the icon remains; a narrative is forgotten, yet its representation still magnetizes (the ignorant eye triumphs – how galling for the informed eye)" (133). Indeed, it is the representation and

the icon (or else, fabulation) that becomes the only means to build one's existence on and to instil it with credible meaning.

In "The Visitors" Franklin Hughes is forced to fabulate the 'his-story' of the Palestinian conflict, which serves as a sort of an oral re-confirmation of the terrorist's self-pronounced righteousness. The fact that most of Hughes's life has been spent in self-deception about his personal learnedness – "he had started as a mouthpiece for other people's views, a young man in a corduroy suit with an affable and unthreatening way of explaining culture" (34) – underlines the fact of Franklin's unreliability as a 'renderer of Truth' and the relativistic nature of his fabulation. Hence, Hughes's vision of the conflict becomes a version out of many, eventually run over by the official doctrines of Western governments, re-imposed with the arrival of the American Special Forces. As a result, the notion of the Truth gets dismantled in the never-ending clash of opposing fabulations: "Neither the leader nor the second-in-command survived, so there remained no witness to corroborate Franklin Hughes's story of the bargain he struck with the Arabs" (58).

There exists a striking similarity between the types of fabulation generated by Amanda Fergusson in "The Mountain" and Spike Tiggler in "Project Ararat". Both of the characters can be seen as lost in the disarray of personal thoughts, fears and insecurities. Thus, Amanda – a firmly resolved spinster, refusing her father's proposal "to go off and to get married to that lieutenant whose name he could never recall" (144) – dedicates the whole of her existence to serving both her earthly and heavenly fathers, and continuously engages herself in "reading some piece of religious mumbo-jumbo" (143). This constant involvement in religious reading is aimed to aggravate Colonel Fergusson's stark denial of God, his belief in the power of science, "the world's ability to progress, in man's ascent, in the defeat of superstition" (143). At the same time, the seeming obsession with "Parson Noah's latest

pamphlet[s]" (143) tends to function as a shield, safeguarding Amanda from the full-blown attack of rationalism undertaken by her father. Henceforth, the death of the Colonel - to the very end denying the existence of any "divine plan" (147) and explaining the constant ticking heard above the head of his bed as the sign of love making of *xestobium rufo-villosum* – perplexes Amanda's soul, making her deeply worried about her father's "ontological status" (147).

Yet, the emptiness caused by the Colonel's death, accompanied by the tumult instigated by his constant celebration of contingency, "chaos, hazard and malice" (148), never shakes Amanda's belief in the existence of God *per se*, or the grand truth as such. Hence, the heroine elaborates a new paradigm of behaviour, as well as fabulates novel life-narratives, providing her altered life with a sense of new meaning and purpose. As a consequence, Miss Fergusson embarks on a trip to Mt Ararat (the place of the universal 'beginning') to seek salvation for her blasphemous father's soul. It is on the slopes of the mountain that Amanda breaks her leg and makes a sort of a figurative "fall". Yet, the "fall" becomes the heroine's 'beginning' (echoing the beginning of life after Noah's landing on the top of the mountain), leading to the fabulation of one more meaning-instilling narrative regarding the whereabouts of Noah's grave. As a result, the heroine's strong belief in the existence of the Truth, supported by the multitude of personally fabulated life-narratives, allows her to die peacefully on the slopes of the Ararat, sheltered by the light of the moon, which had once caressed the body of Noah himself. The chapter closes with Miss Logan's reflection on Miss Fergusson's words, pronounced before their trip up the mountain:

> Miss Fergusson had maintained, when they first stood before the haloed mountain, that there were two explanations of everything, that each required the exercise

> of faith, and that we had been given free will in order that we might choose between them. (168)

Indeed, a profound post-postmodern faith in the existence of the Truth is needed to deal with a multitude of narratives, fabulated according to the principle of free will, allowing one to access the realm of life-inspiring meaning and guiding purpose.

The same line of reasoning may be applied to Spike Tiggler in "Project Ararat" – a young man deeply decentred among bits of science, religion, technology and carnality. The change arrives during his flight to the moon as a member of the crew for Project Apollo. The idea of the *a priori* existence of the Truth is rendered to him while playing football on the surface of the moon by the voice heard through the earphones in his helmet, ordering him to "Find Noah's Ark" (256). Spike gets shaken to such an extent that he accepts Noah and Noah's Ark as an unquestionable maxim, becoming his grand Truth for the life thereafter. The existence of such a maxim allows him to fabulate numerous narratives, infusing his life with ultimate meaning. As a result, Tiggler decides to accomplish a trip up Mt Ararat in the quest of the Ark. After its relative failure (the bones found on the slopes of the mountain "were approximately one hundred and fifty years old, plus or minus twenty years […] the vertebra was almost certainly that of a woman" (280) Spike fabulates more narratives allowing him to embark on the second trip up the Mountain and to "launch the second Project Ararat" (280). The paragraph rounding up the chapter is very symbolic in a sense since the image of a marker light guiding the ship through a sea-mist serves as an icon of the post-postmodern truth, allowing one to construct a road map of meaningful narratives, which plays a resuscitational function in the surrounding tumult of existence:

> A sea-mist shifts listlessly across the black water as the seven o'clock ferry makes its way from Cape Hatteras to Ocracoke Island. The searchlight charges at the water ahead. Every night the vessel has to find its way again, as if for the first time. Marker lights, white and green and red, guide the boat on its nervous course. You come out on deck, shrugging against the cold, and look upward; but this time the mist has shut off the stars, and it's impossible to tell whether or not there is meant to be a moon. (280)

The story of Jonah and James Bartley in "Three Simple Stories", as well as the chapter entitled "Upstream!" analyse the concept of fabulation from a different perspective. Thus, if all of the previous chapters focused on the importance of the belief in the ultimate truth, fostering the rise of meaning-instilling fabulations, "Three Simple Stories" and "Upstream!" describe how fabulation may become reality. In this respect, the omniscient narrator tells the mythical story of Jonah, punished by God for his refusal to go to preach against Nineveh. The punishment that Jonah receives is godly indeed – the wretch gets swallowed by a giant whale, in whose stomach he spends quite a time until his final penitence to God and devout resolution to comply with all of God's commands. The story is simply a myth, yet the myth that makes credible the story of James Bartley – "a thirty-five-year-old sailor on the *Star of the East*, […] swallowed by a sperm whale off the Falkland Islands" (179) – for millions of those who have accepted as true the myth of Jonah. Hence, the story makes a profound emphasis on the fact that fabulation serves as 'the tool' required for the construction of reality out of the underlying chaos, originating in the impossibility to perceive the fleeing essence of the Truth. Consequently, the following Barnesian rhetoric expressed in this novel becomes of paramount importance:

> Not that myth refers us back to some original event which has been fancifully transcribed as it passed through the collective memory; but that it refers us forward to something that will happen, that must happen. (181)

A concordant line of reasoning may be applied to "Upstream!", in which the myth of two Jesuit priests (Father Firmin and Father Antonio), arriving at the Amazon a couple of centuries ago to convert heathens into Christianity, becomes reality. Thus, the attempt of a modern film producer to re-enact the event with the aid of the local tribe, in whose memory the distant historical act must have entered in the form of a primal myth, results in the real death of Matt (playing the role of Father Antonio) at the hands of Indians, busy to conform to the wisdom of the 'founding' narrative of their tribe. The Indians refuse to take the re-enactment of the story for what it really is – a fabulation of reality. Instead they envision it as reality itself: "They actually think that when Matt and I are dressed up as Jesuits we actually are Jesuits! They think we've gone away and these two blokes in black dresses have turned up! Father Firmin is just as real a person for them as Charlie, though I'm glad to say that they like Charlie more" (203). Furthermore, towards the end of the chapter Charlie provides an illustrative interpretation of the tragic accident, which underlines the existence of a strong bond between fabulation and the construction of reality as such:

> It seems to me that the Indians – our Indians – knew what had happened to Father Firmin and Father Antonio all those years ago. It's the sort of thing that gets handed down as the women are pounding the manioc root or whatever. Those Jesuits were probably quite big in the Indian's history. Think of that story getting down the generations, each time they handed it on it became more colourful and exaggerated. And then we came along, another lot of white men who've also got two chaps in long black skirts with them, who also want to be poled up the river to the Orinoco. Sure, there are differences […] but basically it's the same thing, and we even tell them it's going to end in the same way with the raft capsizing. (218)

Hence, the existing fabulation about the past serves as a basis for the construction of the present-day reality, proving the tribe with a sense of meaning.

In "The Dream" the narrator 'comes back' to the treatment of fabulation against the background of ultimate truth. The chapter is built on a fantasy of waking up in Heaven, in which Heaven serves as a symbol of the Truth. Hence, 'waking up in Heaven' is equalled to being able to have a grip at the ultimate truth. For this reason, having found himself in Heaven, the narrator cannot believe his luck, as Heaven turns out to be "a continuation of life […] But…better, needless to say. Sex, golf, shopping, dinner, meeting famous people and not feeling bad, [and Hell] just the necessary propaganda" (). Nevertheless, the fact of being admitted to Heaven bears no semblance to the fact of the total understanding of its nature. As a consequence, the truth about the reasons for or the purpose of the narrator's arrival there never get fully disclosed:

> Give anyone enough time and they'll get somewhere with their thoughts and start asking a few of the bigger questions. For instance, who actually ran this place, and why had I seen so little of them? I'd assumed there might be a sort of an entrance examination, or perhaps continual assessment. […] They let me bunk off every day and improve golf. Was I allowed to take everything for granted? Did they expect something from me? (296)

What is more, willing to have his life assessed, as it should have happened in the 'real' heaven, the narrator applies for evaluation to "a nice old gent […] a bit like my dad – no, more like an uncle […] sort of friendly eyes, looked you straight in the face; and you could tell he stood no nonsense" (294). Yet, the only answer he can get is the brief "You're OK" (294) without any explanatory remarks. Thus, the essence of Heaven or the essence of the

Truth perpetually escapes the narrator, despite the fact of his actual residence in Heaven, or his actual cohabitation with the Truth. The fact underlines the idea of the impossibility to perceive the Truth, no matter how hard one tries and how immense are the efforts applied. Yet, the final conversation between the narrator and his advisor Margaret is of paramount importance as it discloses the post-postmodern nature of the novel by putting a particular stress on the human need of Heaven and 'the Truth' for the construction of meaningful day-to-day existence:

> 'So what's it all for? Why do we have Heaven? Why do we have Heaven? Why do we have these dreams of Heaven?' She didn't seem willing to answer, perhaps she was being professional; but I pressed her. 'Go on, give me some ideas.'
> 'Perhaps because you need them,' she suggested. 'Because you can't get by without the dream. It's nothing to be ashamed of. It seems quite normal to me. Though I suppose if you knew about Heaven beforehand, you might not ask for it.' (309)

In the half chapter entitled "Parenthesis" Julian Barnes makes an important definition of the overall fabulatory nature of history. Thus, Barnes suggests:

> The history of the world? Just voices echoing in the dark; images that burn for a few centuries and then fade; stories, old stories that sometimes seem to overlap; strange links, impertinent connections. We think we know who we are, though we don't quite know why we're here, or how long we shall be forced to stay. […] Our panic and our pain are only eased by soothing fabulation; we call it history. (242)

Indeed, unable to perceive the phenomenon of the Truth, the human mind fabulates its own life-narratives, its own metanarratives, its own history. Hence, fabulation serves as the only tool to instil one's life with significance and a sense of purpose.

Besides, it is in “Parenthesis” that Julian Barnes proposes his ‘theory of the world’, which forms the backdrop for the thematic orientation of his fiction. The theory propagates the necessity to believe in love and the objective truth as the only panacea against the nullifying danger of postmodern relativism and the intoxicated oppression of the mighty few: “But when love fails we must still go on believing in it […] as we must believe in free will and objective truth […]. If we don’t, then we merely surrender to the history of the world and someone else’s truth” (246).

To conclude, though Carol Oates labels Julian Barnes as a “quint-essential humanist, of the pre-post-modernist species” (13), it is far from being so. In *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* Barnes elaborates a clearly post-postmodern vision of human onto-epistemological development, with its profound emphasis on the fabulatory nature of historical existence, based on turning self-constructed myths into the only available and fully-comprehensible reality drawn against the background of the belief in the *a priori* existence of the original truth.

CHAPTER 7

THE TRAP OF SIMULACRA VERSUS THE HOPE OF FABULATION IN *ENGLAND, ENGLAND*

> "You have to build up those myths of liberation,
> myths of fighting the oppressor, myths of bravery.
> Often they have a certain percentage of truth in them,
> so they're easy myths to build up.
> But then being a nation as well as becoming a nation
> also depends on the continuation of those myths."
> (Barnes in Guignery, "History in Question(s)" 69)

Barnes's ninth novel *England, England* was published in 1998 and almost immediately was shortlisted for the Booker Prize for its ambition, humour and creativity. The novel tells the story of Martha Cochrane's psychological and physical maturity through the lens of the overall crisis in Britain, resulting in the eventual substitution of the country by the simulacral theme park called 'England, England', constructed by a media tycoon Sir Jack Pitman on the personally acquired Isle of Wight. According to Vanessa Guignery, "in its structure, the novel echoes *Metroland* in that it is divided into three parts in chronological order" (*The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 104). Indeed, the first part of the novel, entitled "England" focuses on Martha's childhood and adolescence, her incredulity towards religion, official history, memory and authority. It displays the heroine's affection towards assembling puzzles and growing plants for the Agricultural Show, keeping close to heart the book of lists published by the District Agricultural and Horticultural Society to substitute for the lack of order, security and 'wholeness' in her life.

The second part "England, England" portrays Martha as a psychologically mature, sexually experienced, but, nevertheless, unhappy woman with a bitter and cynical approach to life, which leads to her employment in the media empire of Sir Jack Pitman as "an Appointed Cynic" (Barnes, *England, England* 46) or Special Consultant in the Island Project attempting to construct a giant theme park simulating "England's best known historical buildings, sites and figures" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 104). Martha manages to expel Sir Jack Pitman from the board of the company and secures the position of CEO for herself. She starts a love affair with Paul, the Ideas Catcher, which allows her to get a temporary grasp at authenticity and simplicity that she lacks so much in her life. The theme park is of great success among tourists, who find it easier, more time-saving and entertaining to have a simultaneous view of all the famous attractions of 'old England' crammed into one place. Yet, the place starts to be troubled by daily mutinies caused by its employees, not willing to be taken for what they really are. The actors discharge their authentic reality, substituting for it the artificially-simulacral reality of their roles. In the meantime, Sir Jack Pitman accomplishes a *coup d'état*, banishing Martha from the Isle of Wight and awards himself the title of the first Baron Pitman of Fortuibus, putting a fat full stop to the interim rule of Martha and Paul: "The Peasants' Revolt of Paul and Martha had proved a forgettable interlude, long written out of history" (Barnes, *England, England* 256). Some years later Sir Jack Pitman dies and the Project introduces into the theme park one more popular tourist attraction - a simulacral Sir Jack Pitman, "who, with a little coaching and research, was as good as new. Sir Jack – the old one – would have approved of the fact that his successor had played many leading Shakespearian roles" (258). Hence, the narrator puts a special emphasis on the fact that "Time, or, more exactly, the dynamics of the Project, had its revenge" (258) on the invincible Pitman.

The third part entitled "Anglia" takes place in a small village in Wessex, Anglia, whereto elderly Martha returns "after her decades of wandering" (Barnes, *England, England* 258). Old England is portrayed as a place of severe decline and obvious deterioration – "to be compared to some backward province of Portugal or Turkey" (259), returning to its pastoral roots in the attempt to start a new beginning. In the village of Martha's residence everyone is engaged in the construction of new founding myths and fabulations (like the village Fête), as the 'old ones' have been stolen to fit the purposes of the Island Project. Hence, new fabulations become crucial for the assembly of a new reality, and are based on a strong belief in the country's ultimate rebirth. The village is filled with an air of authenticity, simplicity and genuineness, so much missed by Martha during her adult years, even though the arising fabulations or "inventions seem so obviously fraudulent" (270). In fact, the fraudulent nature of fabulation becomes irrelevant due to its sole orientation at a life-giving construction of a new reality, unanimously accepted as authentic, simple and genuine. Thus, it is the case of public agreement about the authenticity of the moment that cancels off the fact of its original fakeness. In addition, the mythical moment of the primal start is always stored in the collective memory as genuine and true – only thus one can painlessly construct the only possible reality for one's country. The chapter accentuates the post-postmodern fact that it is impossible to know the full truth about the country's beginnings, yet the mere belief in the possibility of that truth, in its existence somewhere out there, guides the country in its development and in it construction of steering life-narratives. Once the country loses its belief in the attainability of true genuineness, its destiny becomes no different from the postmodern chaos of the simulacral England, England.

All in all, the novel belongs to the genre of the fantastic, as it "is set in the near future and presents a fantasy" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 104) of

1. a media empire, led by an egoistic and over-ambitious tycoon named Sir Jack Pitman. Pitman acquires the Isle of Wight for the needs of the Island Project and turns it into a simulacral theme park England, England, nearly destroying the very notion of 'genuine' England itself;

2. a nearly-destroyed pastoral society located in Old England, attempting to restore the country to its former or, to be more precise, newly-constructed glory.

The extensive use of ironic devices in the depiction of both the Project and its participants serves as a necessary tool to make the reader hesitate, so as to distinguish the domain of fantasy from that of reality.

Likewise, Julian Barnes's "mastery of satire, irony and parody" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 105) accounts for the fact that the novel has been often called a "satirical comedy" (Parrinder 228), "a corrosive critique of what may be thought to be England" (Pateman 78) and "a cartoonish romp whose real concern is seriousness" (Marr 15). In this respect, in the interview with Rudolf Freiburg and Jan Schnitker entitled "Do You Consider Yourself a Postmodern Author?" Barnes considers *England, England* to be a "semi-farce, [due to being] farcical rather than satirical" (60).

In addition, the author refers the novel to the genre of the "political novel" (Freiburg and Schnitker 61) due to its profound criticism of British, as well

as European public and economic affairs. What is more, in a short article by Steven Pole entitled "Why Don't We Make It All Up?" Julian Barnes said that *England, England* is "an idea of England novel" (10), providing a meticulous analysis of the key elements that make England what it really is. Similarly, in the interview with Vanessa Guignery the author considered the novel to be "a letter to my own country at the turn of the millennia" ("History in Question(s) 70) due to its figurative, but nonetheless, extensive commentary on the nature of present-day domestic problems in Britain, possible ways of their solution or potential consequences arising from the inability to solve them.

The novel is told by a third-person omniscient narrator, providing an inside out analysis of the events and characters under consideration, be it Martha Cochrane, Paul Harrison, Sir Jack Pitman, Dr Max, or Mark Polo. What is more, the novel is told retrospectively by, what Matthew Pateman calls, "a woman looking back at her life" (74). Besides, despite its ambitious thematic colouring, the structural frame of the novel remains to be surprisingly 'normal' if compared to the multi-voiced symphony of *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* and *Flaubert's Parrot*. This serves as an additional proof of Guignery's claim that the novel "echoes *Metroland*" (*The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 104) - Barnes's first novel assembled 'to the standard'. The 'normal' structure of the novel is sometimes disrupted by the introduction of a score of defamiliarising lists, including The District Agricultural and Horticultural Society's Schedule of Prizes, the Fifty Quintessences of Englishness and the Brief History of Sexuality in the case of Martha Cochrane and Paul Harrison.

The description of the thematic contents of the novel has been provided by Julian Barnes himself, who claims the work to be about "the idea of England,

authenticity, the search for truth, the invention of tradition, and the way in which we forget our own history" (Marr 15). In addition, the novel tackles the questions of human memory, its elusiveness and vagueness. What is more, *England, England* is about fabulation - fabulation of history and tradition in general, and one's life in particular. The work makes a profound distinction between the concept of simulacra, utilizing the weaknesses of human memory to achieve its purely entertaining and profit-oriented purposes, and that of fabulation, aimed at selfless construction of life-instilling narratives.

The theme of the elusiveness of memory receives treatment from the very first pages of the novel. The work opens with the following question: "'What is your first memory?' someone would ask. And she would reply, 'I don't remember'" (Barnes, *England, England* 3). The dialogue sets the tone for the whole narrative, putting a special stress on the overall weakness of human memory. The theme is aggravated by Martha's confession, depicting memory as a volatile whirl of incessantly evolving and richly embellished flashbacks, attempting to be creative about the past, rather then mirror it with laser-like precision:

> It wasn't a solid, seizable thing, which time, in its plodding, humorous way, might decorate down the years with fanciful detail – a gauzy swirl of mist, a thundercloud, a coronet – but could never expunge. A memory was by definition not a thing, it was…a memory. A memory now of a memory a bit earlier of a memory before that of a memory way back then. (3)

Indeed, Martha's awareness of "the inevitable transformation, distortion and gradual disappearance of original facts" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 105), makes her consider collective and individual memory as "an element of propaganda, of sales and marketing" (Barnes, *England, England*

7), incessantly transforming the image of the past according to the needs of those interested in the transformation. As a result, Martha (both as a little girl and a mature woman) deeply distrusts the secondariness and constructedness of memory, emphasising that

> If a memory wasn't a thing but a memory of a memory of a memory, mirrors set in parallel, then what the brain told you now about what it claimed had happened then would be coloured by what had happened in between. It was like a country remembering its history: the past was never just the past, it was what made the present able to live with itself. The same went for individuals, though the process obviously wasn't straightforward. (6)

For this reason, the reader observes the little girl Martha continuously engaged in assembling her Counties of England jigsaw puzzle as a substitute for the impossibility to assemble her own childish memories and to come up with a memory of a 'first memory': "Yes, that was it, her first memory, her first artfully, innocently arranged lie" (4). Furthermore, to counter the extreme volatility of memory young Miss Cochrane never parts with a hard-copy of the District Agricultural and Horticultural Society's Schedule of Prizes published for the annual Agricultural Show, always keeping close to heart the predictability and solidity of its lists, terms and conditions:

> And she kept the book of lists for many decades, knowing its most strange poetry by heart. […] Just a couple of dozen pages in a red paper cover, but to her much more; a picture book, though it contained only words; an almanac; an apothecary's herbal; a magic kit; a prompt-book of memory. (8)

However, the fact that Martha is never able to complete the puzzle, as her Father "took Nottinghamshire with [him] when [he] left" (26) their home

forever, underscores the established myth of the wholeness of memory, by exhibiting its defectiveness.

Similarly, the overall precariousness of memory is symbolically reflected via Martha's unruly behaviour in her strict history lessons, in which

> Miss Mason, hen-plump and as old as several centuries, would lead them in worship like a charismatic priestess, keeping time, guiding the gospellers
> *55 BC (clap clap) Roman Invasion*
> *1066 (clap clap) Battle of Hastings*
> *1215 (clap clap) Magna Carta*
> *1512 (clap clap) Henry the Eighth (clap clap)*
> *Defender of Faith (clap clap)*
> She'd liked that last one: the rhyme made it easier to remember. Eighteen fifty *fower* (clap clap) Crimean *Wower* (clap clap) – they always said it like that, no matter how many times Miss Mason corrected them. (Barnes, *England, England* 11-2)

Hence, it is the form, the organization, the outer pattern of history, rather than its authentic contents that form the basis for the human memory to rely on.

Yet, despite the evident scepticism towards the credence of memory, justified by numerous attempts to subvert its rule, the heroine never fully discards the fact of its *a priori* existence, instigated by her belief in the indisputable existence of the Truth as such:

> Because even if recognised all this, grasped the impurity and corruption of the memory system, you still, part of you, believed in that innocent, authentic thing – yes, thing – you called a memory. (Barnes, *England, England* 7)

The same line of reasoning may be applied to Martha's reflection on her teenage argument with a Spanish girl Christina on the truth about the persona of Francis Drake:

> Christina had said in the moment of friendly teasing, 'Francis Drake was a pirate,' she [Martha] had said No he wasn't, because she knew he was an English hero and a Sir and an Admiral and therefore a Gentleman. […] Later she looked up Drake in a British encyclopaedia, and while the word 'pirate' never appeared, the words 'privateer' and 'plunder' frequently did, and she could quite see that one person's plundering privateer might be another person's pirate, but even so Sir Francis Drake remained for her an English hero, untainted by this knowledge. (7)

Thus, Martha's vision of the situation may be labelled as post-postmodern, as the heroine first deconstructs the myth about the firmness of human memory, consciously displaying its irregularity and fallibility, and then reconstructs it anew, emphasising the fact of the impossibility of meaningful existence without a belief in the perpetual presence of such categories as memory, past and truth. It is for this reason that in the second part of the novel Martha can be frequently seen at the site of an abandoned church – a former site of faith, devotion and purity of expression, looking for simplicity, authenticity and the Truth, which are desperately missing in the simulacral theme park. It is on the premises of the church that Miss Cochrane makes an important confession to Dr Max regarding the overriding importance of the belief in the Truth for a life of purpose: "Life is more serious, and therefore better, and therefore bearable, if there is some larger context" (Barnes, *England, England* 243). Thus, the phrases "some larger context" (243) and "the original image" (245) restate the necessity of the objective truth, providing every one with meaning:

> The seriousness lay in celebrating the original image: getting back there, seeing it, feeling it. […] Part of you might suspect that the magical event never occurred, or at least not as it was now supposed to have done. But you must also celebrate the image and the moment, even if it had never happened. That was where the little seriousness of life lay. (245)

The fact that Martha comes up with such a conclusion in a ruined church is very symbolic in a sense that it stands for the victory of the post-postmodern faith over the relativistic chaos of postmodernism.

A similar logic stands behind Miss Cochrane's relationship with Paul Harrison, who temporarily allows her to be herself in the world where the very notion of 'self' is being simulated: "She thought (now) that she had thought (then) that here was someone who wouldn't seek to impose himself on her (well true), who would let her be herself" (Barnes, *England, England* 210) and pursue "truth, simplicity, love, kindness, companionship, fun, and good sex" (138) that she lacked in the simulacrum of her existence. Hence, as Penelope Dening sees it in "Inventing England", the affair between Martha and Paul may be treated as a "search for some sort of inner truth about love and life" (15) or "an antidote to the hyperreal world of the project" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 112).

A comparable line of reasoning may be applied to the character of Sir Jack Pitman, who is deeply afraid of being misrepresented by history, which people like him tend to 'alter' to suit their needs. As a consequence, the tycoon attempts to solidify in stone the only acceptable (to his mind) memory of his persona. Hence, the only object 'to be worshiped' in the Quote Room of the Pitman House is a spotlit slab with the following words "chiselled in Times Roman" (Barnes, *England, England* 30): "JACK PITMAN is a big man in every sense of the word. Big in ambition, big in

appetite, big in generosity. He is a man whom it takes a leap of the imagination fully to come to terms with […]" (30).

Just like Martha, Sir Jack is aware of the importance of the belief in ultimate truth, which may be illustrated by his extreme fondness of the authenticity of walking and rambling: "Sir Jack liked to speak in praise of simple pleasures – and did so annually as Honorary President of the Ramblers' Association" (Barnes, *England, England* 42). Yet, he is too quick to detect a low profit return of such a belief, preferring to capitalise instead on the mammoth profits to be extracted from the frailty of human memory. Hence, "the malleability of history and the unreliability of collective and individual memory are what enable [Sir Jack] to rewrite, simplify and caricature national history [for capitalistic purposes] so as to meet the expectations of tourists" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 106). Thus, the tycoon makes his employees construct a list of the Fifty Quintessences of Englishness – a collection of stereotypes based on popular and widely-accepted misrepresentations of Englishness and ignorant conceptions about English history - to serve as a founding document for the simulacral theme park England, England on the Isle of Wight – "one of the first places in Great Britain to be perverted by becoming a tourist destination" (Lanchester A5). Hence, "in the artificial England, England, all unflattering traits of Englishness are discarded, and all the major historical figures and episodes are caricatured and simplified, to be adapted to a contemporary and family audience" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 109).

Consequently, what one observes is a gradual erosion of the authentic collective memory and its 'welcomed' substitution by a set of simplified and embellished replicas to fit the taste of an ordinary visitor; or, as Martha names it "the repositioning of myths for modern times" (Barnes, *England, England* 148). For instance, the executive board of the theme park

repositions the myth of Nell Gwynn – Charles II's young mistress and "a Protestant whore [eager] for 'three-in-bed' sex" (94). The board turns her into a contemporized and socially accepted character with "her essence, like her juice […] concentrated, and she remained a version of what she had once been, or at least what Visitors […] expected her to have been" (186). The same destiny awaits the Robin Hood myth, rewritten to suit the feminist and homosexual tourists:

> It was a primal myth, repositioned after considerable debate. Band personnel had been realigned with great sensitivity; offensive elements in the scenario – old-fashioned attitudes to wildlife, over-consumption of red meat – had been expunged or attenuated. (221-2)

Even though the managerial crew believe that "they had learned how to deal with history, how to sling it carelessly on your back and stride out across the downland with the breeze in your face" (203), the scale of the simulation and rewriting becomes so extensive that even the progenitor of the Island Project – Sir Jack Pitman falls under its knife. First, the memory of his authentic self is replaced by a simulated identity of the first Baron Pitman of Fortuibus and then completely dispersed in a simulacral "logic of marketing flam[ing] like a message on Belshazzar's wall: Sir Jack must live again" (258), following his funeral on "black-plumed horses" (258). Thus, the true memory of Sir Pitman evaporates, being replaced by a more visitor-friendly time-saving and popular version, attracting tourists and 'making money'.

As a consequence, the rule of "elusive memories, lack of knowledge, and highly distorted patriotic views of history" (Nünning 66), not limited by any adherence to a guiding principle, thrusts one's existence into the danger of postmodern relativity. As it has been demonstrated, the propagation of false truths opens the way for opportunistic forces to exercise their control over

one's true needs, which gives way to the rise of the simulacra, based on "the [nostalgic] desire to replicate [the past], the same symptoms, signs or images of the real, thus blurring the distinction between the authentic and the copy" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 108) and aiming to wipe out the notion of authenticity as such - as it happens in the case of Old England.

At this stage it seems necessary to make an addition to the definition of simulacra, which had been provided in the theoretical part of this work. One may identify simulacra as an imposed from above, profit-oriented and capitalist invention, which serves as a modernized superfluous substitute for the underlying authenticity. A simulacrum employs the fallible human knowledge and memories to falsify them even deeper, so as to extract commercial profit and to destroy all the traces of the primary truth.

What is more, a simulacrum is devoid of any authentic and aesthetic value, and its users are conscious of it. For instance, one buys a reproduction of a painting for money-, effort- and time-saving purposes. Yet, one is fully aware of it being simply a cheap, valueless replica, which can be easily recycled and disposed of. Hence, one does not experience any tremor of excitement, awe or trepidation, which is experienced at the close contact with the original. Thus, a simulacrum becomes a means of convenience, employing 'the fame' of the original for shallow populist satisfaction. Likewise, the function of simulacra is consumer entertainment, which closes the eyes of its participants on the concentrated, idealised, extensively abridged, polished and glittered-up nature of the offered experience. What is more, the simulacrum is usually now-based, "adjusted to the tastes of the present" (Nünning 65), which accounts for its being a temporary attraction and a fleeting substitute. In addition, the simulacrum may be characterised by the one-sidedness of traits on offer. Thus, just as in the case of the theme park, "many contemporary versions of Englishness […] overwhelmingly

locate 'true' Englishness in the past" (Nünning 65). As a result, the simulacrum becomes a caricature, "simplified and adapted to a contemporary and family audience" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 109), utilising the traits that may be sellable to the ordinary present-day buyer.

Nevertheless, the most perilous characteristic of the phenomenon is its capacity to blind the user with its surface glitter and make him/her accept the replica as the only reality on offer. As a subsequence, simulacral practices devaluate the worth of the original (presenting it as outdated and too much "burdened by yesterday" (Barnes, *England, England* 108)) to such an extent that its existence comes to an end. Hence, it is the destruction of the original truth that becomes the primary aim of simulacra.

In *England, England* the simulacral experience gets imposed on the inhabitants of England by Sir Jack Pitman's Island Project, invented by Pitman as a mechanism of tremendous money-making and personal ego worship. To be sure, the theme park becomes Sir Jack's idolatric "Ninth Symphony" (Barnes, *England, England* 45), as he is selfishly unwilling to agree for less: "It was surely the case that if Beethoven had died after completing only eight, the world would still have recognised him as a mighty figure. But the Ninth, the Ninth!" (45). Besides, the true capitalist nature of the simulacral Project is reflected in the following tirade belonging to Sir Jack, emphasising the power of money in the replica-making process:

> What is real? This is sometimes how I put the question to myself. Are *you* real, for instance – you and you? […] You are real to yourselves, of course, but that is not how these things are judged at the highest level. My answer would be No. […] I could have you replaced with substitutes, with…simulacra, more quickly than I could sell my beloved

> Brancusi. Is money real? It is, in a sense more real than you. (32)

The like logic is expressed in Martha's description of the basic mechanism, which keeps the Island afloat: "What's happening on the Island is a recognition that man is a market-driven animal, that he swims in the market like a fish in the sea" (188). Thus, Miss Cochrane puts a special stress on the purely economic orientation of simulacra.

The shallowness of the Project may be illustrated by the fact that the Fifty Quintessences of Englishness - the Bible of the theme park - are themselves forged out of multiple generalisations, so as to "make the experience palatable for worldwide tourists" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 108). Hence, the reader faces such a "bungaloid dystopia" (Barnes, *England, England* 76) as "Manchester United and snobbery, Union Jack and God Save the Queen, shopping and marmalade, homosexuality and Winston Churchill" (86-7). The constructed artifice of the theme park is emphasised by the fact that the managerial crew is constantly engaged in the act of "draw[ing] and redraw[ing of] the logo, in styles from pre-Raphaelite hyper-realism to a few expressionist wrist-flicks" (124).

What is more, the Project capitalises on human ignorance to achieve its far from humane goals, by means of making numerous additions, adornments and explanations of the gaps in personal and collective memory:

> Well, the point of *our* history – and I stress the our – will be to make our guests, those buying what is for the moment referred to as Quality Leisure, *feel better*. […] The point is that most people don't want what you and your colleagues think of as history – the sort you get in books – because they don't know how to deal with it. […] So we don't threaten people. We don't insult their ignorance. We deal in

> what they already understand. Perhaps we add a little more. But nothing unwelcomely major. (73-4)

In addition, as Peter Childs sees it in "Julian Barnes: 'A Mixture of Genres'", the Island Project crew assembles "a [purely] populist past for consumer entertainment" (75), in which the mixture of 'consumer' and 'entertainment' stands for ignorant non-stop amusement offered for a weighty sum of money. Indeed, all the facilities of the park have a double purpose – ultimate entertainment combined with ultimate expenditure:

> Top dollar and long yen were to be lured by the tinkling *tastevins* of master sommeliers; oenophiles would be flattered by guided visits to cellars deep in the chalk cliffs ('once the hidey-hole for smugglers' booty, now the resting-place for classic vintages') before being suckered with a quadruple mark-up. (Barnes, *England, England* 94)

The same line of reasoning may be applied to the Heavens-to-Betsy Bunjee Experience, 'forged' from a story of a woman walking along the coast with a basket of eggs and blown off the cliff by a gust of wind. The lady lands miraculously on a thin stretch of land by the sea, delivered there unharmed by her umbrella and skirts acting as a parachute. The Marketing utilises the tale to build a tourist attraction of rich return, known as the Island Breakfast Experience, allowing visitors to

> Descend to the beach with a clip-on Betsy Basket. The he or she would be led by a mob-capped waitress to Betsy's All-Day Breakfast Bar, where the eggs would be taken from the Basket and fried, boiled, scrambled, or poached, according to choice, before the jumper's very eyes. With the bill would come an engraved Certificate of Descent stamped with Sir Jack's signature and the date. (126)

Thus, the activity complies with the official politics of the Project, promoting "Quality Leisure, top dollar, long yen, market expectation,

England and sex" (96). The logo of Sir Pitman's empire, in its turn, based on "the *here*, the *now* and the *magic*" (125), emphasises the one-sidedness of the offered simulacral experience, tailored to suit the appetite of a modern, standardised and conformist visitor. Hence, the oversimplification of this kind accounts for the overall cartoonish nature of the Island Project, with all of its attractions being caricatures of the original, enabling the tourist

> to visit Stonehenge and Anne Hathaway's Cottage in the same morning, take in a 'ploughman's lunch' atop the White Cliffs of Dover, before passing a leisurely afternoon at the Harrods emporium inside the Tower of London (Beefeaters push your shopping trolley for you!). (183)

The success of the theme park results in the eventual destruction of the boundaries between the authentic and the simulacral, leading to the gradual disappearance of the underlying reality and, hence, to the realisation of the central goal of any simulacral activity – complete eradication of authenticity and truth. As a consequence, the victory of the simulacra accounts for "the impossibility to distinguish myth from reality in relation to the Royal Family" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 112) and a score of actors (be it Dr Johnson, Nell Gwynn, the King, or Robin Hood band), willing to be treated solely as characters they were paid to become. This is reflected in Julian Barnes statement made in *Letters from London*:

> You do not exist: you are what others decide what you are, you are only what you seem to be. And therefore you depend on your existential reality on the whole mythmaking, knee-bending, lie-telling business of promotion and packaging. (157)

As a consequence, the image of 'true' England gets dispersed in the overall anxiety to partake in the "added authenticity" (Barnes, *England, England* 203) of England, England, making "Old England […] cut its own throat and

[…] lie in the gutter beneath a spectral gas-light, function[ing] as a dissuasive example to others" (259). As a result, the world is left with a memory of authenticity, depth and meaning, which are replaced by the market creativity of the Island Project:

> There was no government – only a disenfranchised Governor – and therefore no elections and no politicians. There were no lawyers except Pitco lawyers. There were no economists except Pitco economists. There was no history except Pitco history. Who could have guessed, back there in Pitman House (I), as they stared at the map laid out on the Battle Table, what they could stumble into creating: a locus of uncluttered supply and demand, somewhere to gladden Adam Smith. Wealth was created in a peaceable kingdom: what more could anyone want, be they philosopher or citizen? (297)

In this connection, this study cites the words of Guy Debord, who in *The Society and Spectacle* stated that "all that was once directly lived has become mere representation. […] Once there was only the world, directly lived. Now there is the representation – […] the re-presentation - of the world" (54-5). Indeed, the role of 'presentation' becomes so weak (as in Old England) that the world of 're-presentation' (as in England, England) is given primacy over the real, which slowly transmutes into a useless and fossilized mass.

All in all, Julian Barnes devotes nearly three fourth of the novel to the treatment of simulacra. Yet, its notion is continuously undermined by numerous hints at the means of reclaiming the genuine experience of the real. According to James J. Miracky, Barnes tends to "satirise both the world of hyperreality and that of critical theory" (165), being its sole progenitor. Indeed, the character of the French academic presenting a lecture on the victory of simulacra over the world of the real to the Project's Co-ordinating

Committee, based on the theory of simulacrum generated by Jean Baudrillard, serves as a means to parody "the abstract doctrines of French intellectuals" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 111) together with the fashionable terminology invented by the postmodern school of thought. In this respect, Matthew Pateman defines the employed literary technique as "a reasonable pastiche of a sort of postmodern theory" (79).

It is in part three of the novel entitled "Anglia" that Julian Barnes introduces the concept of fabulation, as an instrument necessary for Old England "dispossessed of all its historical characteristics and most of its population" (Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 108) to start anew. Indeed, as Barnes himself mentions in the interview with Vanessa Guignery, the concluding chapter is "about the question to what extent a country can begin again, and what that beginning again means" ("History in Question(s)" 71).

In fact, the chapter, focusing on "a pre-industrial, agricultural, pre-technology England" (Guignery, "History in Question(s)" 72) has been interpreted variously by various critics. Yet, the majority of them treat the process of 'starting anew' no different from the concept of simulacra, ignoring the marks pointing to the presence of a qualitatively novel process. For instance, James J. Miracky argues that "the reconstructed, preindustrial Anglia [serves] as an equally artificial alternative to 'England, England'" (169). What is more, some scholars, like Valentine Cunningham, tend to consider Anglia as "some sort of genuine old England" (14). Yet, the stance is equally faulty as there is very little 'genuineness' left on the island attempting to reinvent itself, being devoid of its essential features, once making it 'good old England'. For this reason, this thesis will analyse the procedure of 'reality-making' in 'real' Anglia, which, contrary to the established critical opinion, displays all the key traits of post-postmodern

fabulation. As has been mentioned in the theoretical part of the work, the essence of fabulation is radically different from that of simulacra. The dissimilarity becomes particularly manifest in Barnes's treatment of 'Old England'.

Thus, in the case of Anglia fabulation may be defined as a folk-oriented, faith-demanding and hope-instilling creative force required for the construction of reality, future and meaning for a country devoid of any reasons to exist. Opposite to simulacra the process of fabulation does not bear any relation to capital-accumulating motifs - the key force behind the assembly of profit-oriented theme parks. On the contrary, the post-postmodern fabulation is purely altruistic, aimed at the construction of narratives for the common good of the folk. Fabulation enables men to have enlightened existence instilled with value and deep meaning, and strengthened by an overall belief in the *a priori* existence of the Truth and authenticity. Here, one may observe the major difference with the politics of simulacra, aimed at the total annihilation of genuine reality and Truth. What is more, one should underline the multifacedness of the phenomenon, if compared to the one-sided caricaturist essence of simulacra. Indeed, fabulation does not have anything in common with simplifying, abridging and condensing processes used to achieve selfish and purely capitalistic goals. On the contrary, fabulation is aimed at the construction of a paradigm of new myths and narratives, which will construct the only reality men can know. In addition, fabulation is never imposed from above, but brought forward by the folk.

Besides, fabulation never exploits human ignorance and the fallibility of human memory. On the contrary, the phenomenon allows one to produce new intelligence and new memory, based on rudimentary echoes of the past.

As a consequence, the post-postmodern fabulation serves as a basis for the construction of a new reality, and is needed to oppose the danger of postmodern simulacra. To summarise the major differences and similarities between the concepts of simulacra and fabulation, the thesis provides the following comparative table:

Table 3: Postmodern Simulacra versus Post-Postmodern Fabulation

SIMULACRA	FABULATION
Constructed	Constructed
Imposed	Commonly agreed on
Capitalist	Folk
Market- and Profit-oriented	Selfless
Exploitative	Future-oriented
Chaotic	Hope-instilling
Falsifying	Orderly
One-sided	Infused with deep meaning
Simplified	Multifaceted
Embellished	Coarse
Exploiting existing memory	Constructing new memory
Blinding	Enlightening
Now-based	Permanent
Populist	Fostering will to go on
Caricaturist	Life-affirming
Entertaining	Narrative/Reality-assembling
Negating	Oriented at the Truth
Destructive	Constructive

Respectively, the third part of the novel treats Anglia "as a potential site of [fabulation,] renewal or 'realisation' of England's traditions" (Miracky 169), as opposed to the chaotic simulacra of England, England presented in the second part. The opening pages of the chapter portray the decadence of the 'old' English civilization. Thus, the reader encounters Jez Harris, eager to forget his former identity of "Jack Oshinsky, junior legal expert with an American electronics firm" (Barnes, *England, England* 250), ferociously cutting down "the couch-grass and rosebay willow-herb, the cornflowers and the straggling vetch [which make it impossible] to read the incised names of the [deceased villagers]" (249). Yet, as the narrator points out, the grass would grow again, making it once more impossible to read the 'authentic' English names on gravestones. What is more, the churchyard – once a place of worship and dedication – is presented as "a place of informality and collapse, of time's softer damage" (249). This emphasises the common neglect and impossibility of return to old truths, be it God, religion or history. In a similar fashion, Martha's memory is described as "random […] with all sorts of litter from the past [blowing] about" (250).

As a consequence, instead of exploiting the frail remnants of the old civilization in a simulacral fashion, the village makes use of fabulation, discarding as unnecessary the fossils from the past and inventing meaningful narratives of its own. This may be illustrated by Martha's dialogue with Harris:

> 'I think there's a redstart still sitting,' said Martha. […] Mind you don't disturb her.'
> 'Will do, Miss Cochrane.' Jez Harris yanked at loose strand of hair over his forehead, with possible satiric intent. 'They say redstarts bring luck to them as don't disturb their nests,'
> 'Do they, Mr Harris?' Martha's expression was disbelieving.

> ‘They do in this village, Miss Cochrane,’ replied Harris firmly, as if her recent arrival gave her no right to question history. (250)

The same holds true of Harris’s passion for playing “the yokel whenever some anthropologist, travel writer, or linguistic theoretician would turn up inadequately disguised as a tourist” (251). Harris fabulates local legends and makes scholars regret that they “couldn’t take out notebook or recorder” (251), as it happens in the case when the blacksmith fabulates the story of Edna Halley. Though Jez admits that “them’s you meet all claim they never knew old Edna, but she’d wash’em at birth and wash’em after death, and in between…’ (252), the effect on the listener becomes quite opposite, making him/her firmly believe in the authenticity of the heard.

From time to time Mr Mullin, the schoolmaster, expresses open opposition to Harris’s fabulatory activity, as in the case when he explodes: “Don’t get carried away with all the guff you give them. If you want some local legends I’ve got lots of books I can lend you. Folk collections, that sort of thing” (252). Yet, Jez is shrewd enough to perceive the outdatedness of such an approach and, therefore, replies: “I’ve tried ‘em on that stuff and it don’t go down so well. They prefer Jez’s stories, that’s the truth. You and Miss Cochrane can read your books by candlelight together” (252). Thus, the conversation underlines the fact that people would never be willing to accept history made totally ‘unhistorical’ by simulacra. In addition, one should emphasize the deepest symbolism included in Jez Harris’s choice of occupation – the former American becomes a blacksmith, or a metal forger, which coincides with his popular role of a myth/reality-maker.

What is more, the villagers decide to invent the tradition of the village Fête from scratch, rather than rely on Martha’s still ‘hard’ copy of the District

Agricultural and Horticultural Society's Schedule of Rules, which "seemed like a potsherd from an immensely complicated and self-evidently decadent civilisation" (255). This underlines the essence of fabulation, which promotes the construction of new, meaningful and hope-instilling stories, only slightly echoing narrations of the past.

Hence, the mechanism of fabulation becomes securely set: Jez Harris, just like other inhabitants of the village, slowly fabulate a set of primal narratives instilling meaning and order into their day-to-day existence, based on the continuous belief in the *a priori* existence of the Truth. As a result, the invented stories or founding myths of the village gradually turn into reality, which marks the beginning of the age of Fabulation. It is for this reason that in the conversation with Miss Cochrane Mr Mullin finally agrees that the stories fabulated by Jez comprise the only possible authenticity available to men:

> 'They wouldn't be *his* stories, would they?'
> 'No, they'd be *our* stories. They'd be…true.' He sounded unconvinced himself. 'Well, may be not true, but at least recorded.' Martha merely looked at him. 'Anyway, you see my point.' (253-4)

The acceptance of fabulation as the guiding principle of the epoch introduces numerous changes into the life of Anglia:

> The pilots had seen what they wanted to see: quaintness, diminution, failure. Quieter changes evaded them. Over the years the seasons had returned to Anglia, and become pristine. Crops were once again the product of local land, not of airfreight. […] Weather, long since diminished to a mere determinant of personal mood, became central again: something external, operating its system of rewards and punishments, mainly the latter. […] Rivers flooded, sea-

> walls burst, and sheep were found in treetops when the waters subsided. (264)

Thus, what numerous critics consider as indicators of "utopic [or] retrotopic" (Parrinder 230) existence, in fact, emphasises the power of fabulation to instil life with new meanings and new hopes, generating the will to exist, as compared to the daily commotion observed in the simulacral theme park. What is more, Jez – "the city-bred mid-American with a joke accent" (Barnes, *England, England* 270) - becomes one of the most honoured inhabitants of the village. The fact underlines the deepest human respect for narratives which provide them with a sense of purpose and reasons to exist.

Towards the end of the novel Martha makes a figurative hint at the differences between the simulacral and fabulatory logic:

> She took the bridle path to Gibbet Hill and sat on a bench looking down at the village. Had there really been a gibbet up here? Had corpses swung while rooks pecked out their eyeballs? Or was that in turn the fanciful, touristy notion of some Gothic vicar a couple of centuries back? Briefly, she imagined Gibbet Hill as an Island feature. Clockwork rooks? A bunjee jump from the gallows to know what it felt like, followed by a drink with a Hooded Hangman? Something like that. (274)

Accordingly, if simulacra take advantage of the dubious moments of human history to develop them into a profit-making enterprise, destroying the multitude of human feelings, hopes and aspirations; the logic behind fabulation works in a radically different manner. A narrative arising out of fabulation is rooted in the search for meaning and the Truth. It does not pillage the past for sensational stories of 'Gibbet Hills', 'Hooded Hangmen' and 'Gothic vicars'.

To conclude, ‘project Anglia’ becomes a good example of how a country deprived of its history, identity and means to exist may be revived again. This revival is accomplished through fabulation of new life-narratives and meanings, and is based on the belief in the *a priori* existence of ultimate truth – in “the nearly eternal Sirius [guiding] the entirely local” (Barnes, *England, England* 270). In the interview with Vanessa Guignery Julian Barnes has been recorded saying that “there’s no such thing as a clean state, you always start with little bits of remembered and rediscovered stuff” (“History in Question(s)” 72). Indeed, it is really so. Yet, the post-postmodern fabulation gives a secondary role to the ‘rediscovered stuff’, promoting instead the construction of qualitatively new narratives allowing mankind to forget the danger of postmodern relativity.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

> 'It is likely that a major part of cultural activity
> relates to the forging of life narratives in
> situations where things are most at stake.
> But we need to be more humble and composite
> in the methods we use, paying less attention to self making
> in close encounters, and more to the active engagement
> of that person with the world."
> (Wikan, "The Nun's Postmodern Dilemma" 285)

It was once noted by Gregory J. Rubinson that the fiction of Julian Barnes "is urging caution and awareness of the limitations of the narrative means through which we acquire knowledge rather than implying that there is no reliable knowledge to be had" (174). Indeed, as was illustrated in the present thesis, Julian Barnes's novels *Metroland*, *Flaubert's Parrot*, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, and *England*, *England* advocate the pressing necessity of the belief in the objective truth, love and authenticity to avoid the danger of postmodern relativity, engendered by the preceding epoch. Thus, these four novels promote, in their own figurative way, the famous Barnesian wisdom: "History may not be 56 percent true or 100 per cent true, but the only way to proceed from 55 to 56 is to believe that you can get to a hundred" (Guignery, "History in Question(s)" 65). Hence, the present thesis analysed the significance of the concept of fabulation – a post-postmodern tool crucial for the creation of revised metanarratives as the only tool to uphold an unyielding belief in the primacy of the objective truth. The thesis emphasised the fact that new metanarratives, or life-narratives, serve as the only means to provide mankind with working, down-to-earth and

comprehensible meanings, infusing day-to-day existence with reason, optimism and a sense of purpose.

Above and beyond, the thesis analysed the reasons behind the crisis of 'the now' and offered answers to the question why twentieth- and twenty first-century existence had become so gloomy and apocalyptic. The work insisted on the fact that the era of postmodernism had gone long ago and can no longer offer solutions for the problems of today and tomorrow, having been demolished by its own "intrinsic Catch-22" (McHale, "Postmodernism, or the Anxiety of Master Narratives" 17). Thus, as Frederic Jameson put it in "Regarding Postmodernism",

> The means of postmodernism had been used against postmodernism itself to undo postmodernism homoeopathically: [which is the same as] to work at dissolving the pastiche by using all the instruments of pastiche itself, to reconquer some genuine historical sense by using the instruments of […] substitutes for history. (59)

This accounted for the urgent need to elaborate a new and progressive vision of contemporaneity.

As a consequence, this thesis developed a theory of post-postmodernism, proposed to be called the age of Fabulation. The tenets of post-postmodernism were treated as the only means available to mankind to overcome the crisis of postmodernism, and to generate new hopes for the future. Hence, post-postmodernism was presented as the theory to be dominant in the scholarly circles in the near future, for, as Kenan Malik stated in the interview translated on BBC4 in 2002, it is extremely "important that people feel passionately about the world they live in, and if that means that there are a little bit more extremes, then it's a price [they'd]

be willing to pay" for the world endowed with a gift of the 'always there' original truth. Hence, the age of Fabulation was depicted as an age of deep faith and devout belief in the perpetual presence of the Truth, allowing one to fill one's life with narratives, instilling it with a sense of purpose. As a consequence, post-postmodernism was presented as the only mechanism to guide "those who place their hands on their hearts and are willing to assert 'I believe'" (Turner 6) towards a meaningful future. The world has already seen the crisis of reason and incredulity towards the workings of reason. "Faith, [in its turn,] always was the strongest competitor of reason" (Turner 6). Hence, post-postmodernism was presented here as the only panacea to be available to humans in the future "to temper reason with faith" (Turner 6) in the Truth and to revive hope amidst the ruins of postmodern relativity.

In addition, the thesis provided a detailed discussion of Dennis Ford's stages of the human search for meaning, which were utilised to elaborate a paradigm of human onto-epistemological development by equalising modernism to the stage of human intoxication, based on self-centredness and refusal to accept the existence of any truth greater than the truth of a sealed-off and egocentric self; postmodernism to the stage of sobriety, based on unmediated cohabitation with the Truth in all its grandness, accompanied by a shock from the inability either to comprehend or represent it; post-postmodernism to the stage of fabulation, based on the continuous construction of life-narratives, deeply rooted in the belief in the *a priori* existence of the ultimate truth, which allows one to lead a meaningful and purpose-oriented existence. In its treatment of modernism, postmodernism and post-postmodernism the thesis relied heavily on the renowned work of Frederic Jameson *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*.

Furthermore, the thesis drew a profound distinction between the famous postmodern notion of simulacrum, engendered by Jean Baudrillard, and the

new post-postmodern phenomenon of fabulation. The work underlined the destructive, capitalist and populist nature of simulacra, which exploits the fallibility of human memory for profit-based purposes. Besides, the thesis emphasised the proclivity of simulacra to generate hyperrealities from purely simulacral entities. The concept of fabulation was presented as a selfless, folk-oriented, meaning-constructing and life-propagating entity, based on a profound belief in the unquestionable existence of the Truth.

Additionally, the work differentiated between the notion of metafiction and that of fabulation, with the former being a category of static postmodern scepticism towards artificially-produced forms of narratives, and the latter - the category of post-postmodern active self-conscious generation and celebration of fresh and meaningful life-narratives. What is more, the thesis devised its own paradigm of the evolution of the Sign in the light of the newly elaborated theory of human onto-epistemological development, by revising and redressing the premise, initially proposed by Jean Baudrillard in *Simulacra and Simulations*.

Furthermore, the present work provided an etymological analysis of the word 'metanarrative', disclosing the roots of the discrepancy between the postmodern and post-postmodern versions of the phenomenon. Besides, to avoid confusion with the modernist and postmodern forms of metanarratives, the thesis proposed the term 'life-narratives' to be applied to the post-postmodern phenomena. In addition, the study provided an examination of its key distinguishing characteristics.

The theoretical premises of this thesis were employed to analyse Julian Barnes's novels *Metroland*, *Flaubert's Parrot*, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* and *England, England* and his treatment of the age of Fabulation.

Barnes's works bear a clear post-postmodern colouring. For this reason, the thesis focused on the major characteristics setting apart postmodern and post-postmodern writing. What is more, this study provided a general structural and thematic framework for post-postmodern literary works. The thesis emphasised the double nature of post-postmodern writing, making use of reflexive and deconstructive structural techniques reminiscent of postmodernism in the overall affirmative thematic paradigm reconstructing the notion of the Truth. In addition, the thesis examined the concept of the 'Barnesian novel', which is based on the extreme mixture of genres and the extensive use of paratactic techniques.

To exemplify the theory of fabulation together with the general theory of human onto-epistemological development, as well as to illustrate the concept of post-postmodern writing, the thesis provided an examination of the four novels written by Julian Barnes, being *Metroland*, *Flaubert's Parrot*, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* and *England, England*. All four novels (to a lesser or greater degree) use different genres, be it a bestiary, biography, chronology, epistolary writing, etc., alongside with reflexive techniques, be it the use of metafictional elements, intertextuality, contradiction, parody, metaleptical constructions, intrusive narrators, 'real people', excerpts from literary criticism, or encyclopaedic quotes, for the construction of their structural framework. Nevertheless, according to the findings of the thesis, despite the lack of structural order, the novels are held together by their thematic unity. Thus, the combination of all minor themes and motifs serves to support the development of the main idea – the prominence of the objective truth and fabulation of life-narratives in one's day-to-day struggle for existence. The novel *Metroland* presents a slight variation of the theme, depicting the ups and downs of the overall human progress from the stage of Fordian 'intoxication' and 'sobriety' to that of post-postmodern fabulation.

All in all, the post-postmodern colouring of the novels is rendered by numerous clandestine signs of hope and optimism regarding the promise of the age of Fabulation. As a consequence, *Metroland* ends with a talk of a future enlargement of Chris's family – "a feeding-bottle, stored high on a dresser, predicts a second baby" (Barnes 176), while Geoffrey Braithwaite is full of action and dreams of future exploits in *Flaubert's Parrot*. *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* possesses multiple tokens of hope, such as woodworms, full of energy and resolution to survive the world's perpetual struggle with "Noah on the Ark" (Barnes 30); a butterfly flying by the raft of the *Medusa* – "a white butterfly, of a species common in France, appeared over their heads fluttering, and settled upon the sail" (Barnes 121); or a "miraculous halo" (Barnes 164) encircling the Great Ararat in the magic of rising vapour. The closing chapter of *England, England*, in its turn, portrays Martha observing a rabbit, "not a badger but a rabbit, fearless and quietly confident of its territory" (Barnes 275) populating the country where "hares multiplied; deer and boar were released into the woods from game farms; the urban fox returned to a healthier diet of bloodied, pulsing flesh" (Barnes 262). Thus, all the four novels celebrate the ultimate revival of meaning in an epoch of ultimate Fabulation.

To conclude, almost a decade ago Julian Barnes made a confession to Kate Kellaway about the nature of writing: "Writing is a ferocious activity within a closed formal structure with rules […] but I like breaking rules" (7). Indeed, Barnes has a talent for breaking the rules of postmodern writing, as the novels that he produces incessantly tell us that post-postmodern fictionality is of crucial importance in a society where comprehensible standards of truth at last need to be defined.

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ÖZET

Kendi dibini kazması ironisi, umutsuzluğu, kötümserliği ve ufukta görünen sonu ile postmodernizm çağı; dünyayı kopyaların ve aşağılığın baskınlığı, melezlerin şöhreti, belirsizlik, yokluk ve anti-teorik sonuçsuzluk tarafından karakterize edilmiş umutsuzluk içinde bıraktı. Gerçi bu çeşit bir felsefe yapmak kendi atasına karşı geliş gibi gözükse de, postmodern söylem üst-anlatıların temel kavramlarını yok etmeyi hedefledikçe, kurumsallaşmış ve tamamen teorik sözlüklerde, ansiklopedilerde yer almış ana söylemleriyle, kendisi büyük bir üst-anlatılaya dönüşmüştür. Bundan dolayı, kişi, *Yeni Başlayanlar için Postmodernizm* veya öğretmenlerin postmodernizm rehberleri gibi yayınlarla karşılaşabilir. Öyle söylenebilir ki, son on veya on beş yılda sadece kişi postmodernin kurumsallaşmasına şahit olmadı, dahası karşı söyleme dönüşümü, daha spesifik bir şekilde söylersek, belki de yüzyılın son yıllılarının karşı söylemine şahit oldu.

Bu nedenle, inişe geçen postmodern çağın yavaş yavaş bozulan değerlerinin düzeltilmesi için ciddi bir ihtiyaç doğdu; tıpkı, Tanrının, Tarihin, Kimliğin, Sevginin ve Romanın ölümü, ve Jean Francois Lyotard tarafından *Postmodern Durum: Bilgi Üzerine Bir Rapor*'da sonulan üst-anlatılara karşı kuşkuculuk, insanları büyük bir boşlukta bıraktı. Trajedinin sebebi işte bu nedenle yok oldu, tabi ütopyanın ihtimali de. Sonuçta, kişi kendini ifade yerine alıntıcılıkla, gerçek yerine benzetimle, gerçeğin yansıması yerine işaretli oyunla, çelişki yerine farklılıkla yan yana bırakıldı. Kendi ikincilliği tarafından büyülenen, her şeyi, sonsuz oyun için kullanmak eğilimi olan post-ütopyacı dünya da böyledir. Dahası, postmodernizm zemin sağlayan, ve ön düşünmeyi getiren meşhur 'küçük anlatılarında' çokluk, azlık ayrımında sağlam temele sahip olmayınca, kendi dipsiz terminolojisinde çok fazla

boynu eğik oldu ‘büyük-anlatı’ kuşkuculuğla çok fazla sıkıştı.

Sonuç olarak, dünya, insanlığı sadece özcülük felsefesinde yer almış özetleyen ifadeler değil de; tutarlı, ahlaki ve kendini yansıtıp diğerlerini dinleyen, bir epistemoloji çerçevesini oluşturmada yardımcı araçlar olan ütopik yaşam anlatılarının sebebinin varlığıyla güvende hissetmeye meyilli, anlamın devamlı ertelemesinden kurtaracak gerekli şifa olarak, üst-anlatıların tekrar kurumsallaşması için çeşitli çağrıların ortaya çıkışını gördü.

Nitekim, üst-anlatıların postmodern ölümlerinden sonraki dirilişi, yeni, müteakip devrin yükselişi için temel olarak hizmet etti; ki bu da post-postmodernizm olarak bilindi. Bir devrin, ‘devir’ olmasının zorluğu üzerine ortak kanı, o devrin hala erken dönemlerinde olmasıdır. Ama post-postmodernizmi tanımlamak için yapılan girişimlerin genel olumlu içeriği, nesnel gerçeğe inanış, inanç ve üst-anlatıların ışık tutan gücü, güven, diyalog, performans veya postmodern kuşkuyu, ironiyi ve belirsizliği aşmaya çalışan samimiyet tarafından oluşmaktadır.

Bundan dolayı; kişi, ‘performatizm’, ‘redempsionizm’, ‘trans-ütopyanizm’, ‘trans-aktarım’, ‘sentez çağı’, ‘inanç çağı’, ‘hikayeciliğin devri’ gibi, yeni terimleri gördü, ve bu terimler yeni bir devrin teorisinin oluşmasına ışık tutuyor. Böylece, postmodernin Linda Hutcheon, Jürgen Habermas, Douglas Kellner tarafından veya Steven Best, Ernesto Lacleau veya Chantal Mauffe tarafından yapılmış olsun, bütün temel kritikleri, sözü edilen yetersizliğin, kısıtlayıcılığın ve geçiciliğin nihai gerçekleştirilmesine varır. Bununla beraber, *Postmodernizm, veya, Geç Kapitalizm’in Mantığı*’nda, Frederic Jameson postmodern kaosun yerine geçecek bir sistem üzerinde durmamak için gereken herşeyi, anlamı ve amacı olan endüstriyel toplumun ihlal edilmesine olanak sağlayacak şekilde yapar. Jameson, postmodern çağda,

esas olarak kapitalizmin politik ve ekonomik yanına konsantire olmasına rağmen, yaptığı düzenlemeler veya formülasyonlar belki de, daha geniş bir sosyal bağlama uygulanabilir. Düşünür, postmodernizmin bir uçtan bir uca süregiden yüzeyselliği ve boşluğuna, ve ayrıca anlam ve epistemolojik kusursuzluğuna karşı duyulan eşi benzeri görülmemiş bir ihtiyaca vurgu yapar. Bu bağlamda, Jameson modernizmin sözde kendi kendine yeterliliği karşısındaki iddiasına, yaygın bir utanç duygusundan başka hiç birşey uyandırmamasına, postmodernizmin görünüşte özgürlüğe kavuşturma vaadine, veya olağanüstü bir şekilde zayıflatılmış kurumsal politikalarına ve bu yüzden kabul edilmesi gereken kaynağı belirtilmemiş bir 'Ütopya topluluğuna' olan ihtiyaca karşı derin bir kuşku ifade eder.

Bu sayede, Jameson, postmodernizm devrini, yetişip geçen ve belli belirsiz meydana gelen değişimi yakalamaya haizdi. Bununla beraber, düşünür modernizmin, doğal ve sosyal dünyayı anlamlı bir bütüne dönüştürmeye uğraşan mutlak şekilciliğiyle beraber giden, yeni keşfedilmiş geç kapitalizm çokluğunun, elle tutulur bir gerileme içinde olduğuna dair özel bir vurgu yapar. Bütün bunlara rağmen, yani postmodern dönemin kapsamlı bir analizinin verilmesine karşın, düşünürün meydana gelmek üzere olan çağ üzerine olan görüşleri muğlak kaldı ve sadece kuşkudan daha elle tutulur bir şeyden daha fazlasına doğru bir evrim geçirmemektedir. Fakat, Jameson, gelecek olan çağın, birliğe ve anlamlılığa doğru giden çabasını ve ütopik doğasını belirtmekte haklıydı. Jameson ütopyayı şimdi genellikle - anlamın gerekliliğinin insanlar için önemini vurgulayarak - çağdaş toplumun sistematik bir transoformasyonu için olan bir kod kelime olarak kabul eder .

Dahası, 1995'te peyzaj mimarı Tom Turner *City* şehir planlamasında post-postmodern düşünce tarzı yönelime ön ayak olmak için *Görünüm: Dizayn ve Planlamada bir Post Post-modern Görüş* isminde bir kitap yayınladı. Turner, postmodern bir durum olan "her şey mübah" anlayışını eleştirir ve inşa

edilmiş çevrenin uğraşı aşamalı olarak ortaya çıkan, inançlı aklın keyfini araştıran post-postmodernizmi öne sürer.

Benzer şekilde, 1999'da Rus-Amerikan slavist Mikhail Epstein *Rus Postmodernizm. Post-Soviet Kültür Üzerine Yeni Görüşler* isminde bir kitap piyasaya sürdü; bu kitapta postmodernist estetiğin eninde sonunda tamamen alışılagelmiş olacağını ve yeni, ironik olmayan, 'trans' ön ekini kullanarak tasvir ettiği, şiir tarzını tedarik edeceği üzerine olan inancını savunur. Nitekim, yirminci yüzyılın son çeyreği 'post' imzası altında oluşturuldu, bu da modernitenin 'hakikat', 'nesnellik', 'ruh ve öznellik', 'ütopya', 'ilk köken', ve 'orjinallik' gibi kavramlarından feragat edildiğini bildirir. Bütün bu kavramlar şimdi 'trans-öznellik', 'trans-ideallizm', 'trans-ütopyanizm', trans-orjinallik', 'trans-lirizm', 'trans-duyarlılık' formunda yeniden doğar.

2000 yılında Amerikan kültür teoristi Eric Gans postmodernizmi takip eden çağı 'post-millennializm' terimi ile ortaya attı. Bu teorist postmodernizmi 'kurbanların düşüncesi' ile eşitliyor. 'Kurbanların düşüncesi' Auschwitz ve Hiroshima deneyimlerinden sonra suçu işleyenlerle kurbanlar arasında pazarlıksız etik muhalefet üzerine kuruludur. Gans'a göre postmodernizmin politikasını ortaya çıkaran insanların kendilerini kenardaki kurbanla özdeş saymaları ve suçu işleyenin ütopik merkezini küçümsemeleridir. Post-millennialism, kendi yönelimi içinde, kurbanların düşüncesini inkar eder ve kurban olmayan diyalogu alır. Bu kurban olmayan diyaloğun dünyadaki kırgınlığı azaltacağını savunur.

Benzer bir görüşde Alman-Amerikan Slavist Raoul Eshelman'ın çalışması olan *Performatism, veya Postmodernismin sonu'* nda görülür. Bu kitabında Eshelman, 'performatizm' terimini postmodernizmden sonraki çağı nitelend irmek için ortaya çıkarır. Eshelman'a göre performatizmin amacı tek ve estetik üstün olma deneyimini tasarlamaktır ki bu da sanatla yansımış

oluyor. Bu sanat izleyicileri basit ve vasat karakterle teşhis eder ve aşk, güzellik, inanç, üstün olma deneyimini özel ve yapay durumlarda yaşamaya zorlar.

Dahası, radyo talk show sunucusu Jesse Thorn yeni oluşumu ayrıntılandırır. Bu oluşumun adını 'Yeni Dürüstlük' olarak nitelendirir ve postmdern ironiye karşı iyi hissetmeyi savunur. 'Yeni Dürüstlük'ün örneği olarak Thorn, ünlü motorsiklet pilotu Evel Knievel'dan bahseder çünkü Knievel'ın marifetleri kişiyi şaşırtır ve ironiyle anlamayı engeller.

Bu yaklaşımlar sıklıkla çeşitli görünmesine rağmen, dünyayı dönüştürme iddiaları olan sosyal projeler değil de; yaşam deneyiminin yeni yoğunluğu olarak doktrinlerin özü fark edilecek kadar benzer kaldı – örneğin, postmodernizmin neden olduğu self-refleksif metotlara sarılmak, yeni kişisel üst-anlatıların devamlı inşası aracılığıyla nesnel gerçekliğin gasp etmeyen kuralı için çabalamak gibi.

Böylece, postmodernizmden miras kalan self-refleksif işlemler sayesinde nesnel doğru ve anlamlı varoluşun yayılmasıyla post-postmodernizm, yavaş yavaş ama gerçekçi bir şekilde kritik teoride, felsefede, edebiyat, sanat ve kültürde ana motif olurken; modernist çağın 'tek yol, tek doğru' görüşünün ölüp gittiği; postmodernist çağın 'her şey olabilir' görüşünün modasının geçmek üzere olduğu aşikardır.

Bu bağlamda, postmodern self-refleksif edebi tekniklerle romanlar, nesnel doğruda inancın acil gerekliliğini desteklemesiyle beraber, Julian Barnes'ın romanlarında içeren kurgusu açıkça post-postmodernizm yönelimi sergilemektedir. Tabii ki, Julian Barnes'ın romanları ve kısa hikayeleri melezlik, ve çeşitliliği savunuculuk için yatkınlık göstermektedir, kitapları var olan türleri, yazıları, sanat ve lisanları ayıran sınırları belirsizleştirmekte

ve zorlamaktadır. Bu nedenle kişi yazarın çalışmalarını postmodernizmin tipik bir örneği olarak görebilir. Romanlarının çoğu nesnel doğruda inancın acil gerekliliğini, sevgiyi, önce gelen postmodern devrin neden olduğu göreliliğin çevreleyen karmaşasında su üstünde tutan güvenirliğini savundukça; ve doğrunun varlığında açık inancı, eski usta anlatıların temel düzelimi aracılığıyla anlamın elde edilebilirliğini, gelecek için kişiye belli derecede iyimserlik yetkisini içerdikçe, onun kitapları daha da fazlasını ifade etmektedir. Bununla birlikte nesnel doğrunun elde edilmez olduğunu hepimiz bilmemize rağmen, en yavan parçasını en az algılamak için tek yol, kişinin tamamen güçlü bir inanca sahip olmasını düşünen de Julian Barnes'ın ta kendisidir.

Ayrıca, Barnes'ın yapıtlarının karakteri, yazarın üstanlatıların görünüşünde, kişinin varlığını gerçekten anlamlı yapan ve nesnel gerçeğin asallığında kaçınılmaz inancı destekleyen tek gereç olan şifaymış gibi sergilenir. Yazarın çalışmalarının çoğu, büyük bir hikayenin yoksunluğundan dolayı insanoğlu fabülasyonun ve yeni üst-anlatıların yardımıyla zihinde dünyanın yeni bir versyonunu oluşturmaya başlar. Böylece, insan zihni fabülasyonu gerçekleştirir ve fabülasyonun evrensel doğruya nihai varışta, inanca ilham veren tek gereç olan, 'gerçekten' ne kadar bildiğinin doğru ve gerçek olduğuna kendini inandırır. Bundan dolayı, bu durum, kişiye gün be gün varlığını, mantıkla, iyimserlikle ve amaç hissiyatıyla aşılayan, işleyen, anlaşılır ve gerçekçi anlamları sağlamakmış gibi hizmet eden, modern devrin üst-anlatılarının yüreğinde yatan fabülasyonun - ki ilk olarak Julian Barnes tarafından *10 ½ Bölümde Dünya Tarihi*'de kullanılmıştır - ta kendisidir.

Böylece, Barnes'ın kişisel niyeti insan varoluşunu, gerçek postmodern karmaşanın kaçınılmaz sebeplerine rağmen - bayat kavramları inşa etme veya yıkma olsun, doğruda yabancılaşma olsun, gerçekliğin kemikleşmişliğin

altını çizmek olsun, hileye işaret etmek olsun, veya kurgusal yazıların ontolojik durumunu sorgulamak olsun – nesnel doğruya tüm zamanlarda erişebilirmiş gibi ve evrensel anlama ulaşabilirmiş gibi öngörmesi, nesnel doğruyu algılamak için hiç bitmeyen çaba ile yan yana giden karmaşanın dünyasında yeniden başlamak ve inanmak için fabülasyon enerjinin eş zamanlı şöhreti sayesinde yazarın çalışmaları postpostmodern olmaktadır.

Bu sebepten, bu tez, fethedilmiş olasına rağmen, post-postmodernizmin şimdiki çağı, doğrunun ve anlamlı varoluşun süregelen arayışında paha biçilemez olarak Julian Barnes'ın kurgusunda ustaca tarif edilimiş süreç olan, kurguculuk ile gelişen üstanlatıların dirilişini tecrübe ettiğini tartışır. Bu bağlamda, tez post-postmoderizm ve fabülasyon orijinal teorilerinin ayrıntılarına iner, anahtar karakteristiklerini ve ana tiplerini inceler. Dahası, bu çalışma post-postmodern kurguculuğun oluşturulmuş teorisini Julian Barnes'ın dört meşhur kitabının - *Metroland* (1980), *Flaubert'in Papağanı* (1984), *10 ½ Bölümde Dünya Tarihi* (1989), ve *İngiltere İngiltere'ye Karşı*'yı (1998) - yapısal ve tematik incelemesine uygular.

Çalışma, girişten (Bölüm 1'dan) sonra, üç alt bölümden oluşan teorik bir üniteyle (Bölüm 2'le) açılmaktadır; premodernizm, modernizm, postmodernizm, post-postmodernizm periyotları boyunca insanın gelişiminin ışığında, anlamın genel orijinal teorisinin ayrıntısına inmekte; *Güç İstenci*'nde Friedrich Nietzsche, *İtiraflarım*'da Lev Tolstoy, *Ölümün Reddi*'nde Ernest Becker, *Postmodernizm, veya, Geç Kapitalizm'in Mantığı*'nda Frederic Jameson ve *Anlam Araştırması*'nda Dennis Ford'un önceki bulgularını irdelemektedir. Bu tez modernizmi, postmodernizmi Ford'un 'insanın zehirlenmesi' ve 'ağırbaşlığı' periotlarına bağlıyor. Bu çalışma post-postmodernizmi tezin ortaya attığı 'fabülasyon' perioduyla biraraya getiriyor. Böylece, birinci alt bölüm, premodern, modern ve sırasıyla insanoğlunun anlam arayışında postmodern düşüncenin nihai bozulmasının

sebeplerini analiz etmektedir. İkinci alt bölüm, postpostmodern fikrini ve şimdiki çağın yeni, çok boyutlu ve anlaşılır bir teorinin geliştirilmesinin gerekliliğini destekleyen tartışmaları tanımlamaktadır. Dahası, post-postmodernizmin doğası üzerine süregelen; incelemekte ve fabülasyon ve post-postmoderizmin orijinal teorileri ayrıntılarıyla incelenmektedir. Üçüncü alt bölüm, üst-anlatı kavramının etimolojisini araştırmaktadır, yaşam-anlatılarının asla inişe geçmeyen popüler ihtiyacını analiz etmekte, post-postmodernizm sahnesinde yer alan üst-anlatıların esasındaki önemli dönüşümle açığa vurmaktadır.

Tezin ana gövdesi beş bölümden oluşmaktadır. Üçüncü bölüm, postmodern ve post-postmodern kurgu arasındaki ana farklılıkları dikkatle incelemekte, Julian Barnes'ın çalışmalarındaki tüm yönelimi tanımlamakta, ve 'Barnes tarzı roman anlayışını' çevreleyen çekişmeyi incelemektedir. Dördüncü, beşinci, altıncı, ve yedinci bölümler, post-postmodernizm ve fabülasyon ışığında Barnes'ın *Metroland, Flaubert'in Papağanı, 10 ½ Bölümde Dünya Tarihi*, ve *İngiltere İngiltere'ye Karşı* kitaplarının ardışık yapısal ve tematik analizi üzerine yoğunlaşmaktadır.

Çalışmanın sonuç bölümü önceki bölümlerde yapılan başlıca saptamaları özetler ve bunları tez önermesi ve tezde ayrıntılarıyla incelenen post-postmodernite teorisiyle karşılaştırır. Dolayısıyla sonuç bölümü, Julian Barnes'ın romanlarında kurgusal olarak oluşturulmuş post-postmodernizmin günümüzde, Gerçek'in *a priori* varlığına ilişkin kuvvetli inanca dayanarak, 'fabülasyon' işlemiyle yenilenen üst-anlatıların yeniden doğuşuna mı tanık olduğuna ilişkin kanısını dile getirir.

Daha somut konuşmak gerekirse, tez 'şimdi'nin yaşadığı krizin arkasında yatan nedenleri analiz etmekte ve yirminci ve yirmi birinci yüzyıllarda

varoluşun neden bu kadar kasvetli, kaotik ve mahşeri andıran bir hale geldiği sorusuna kapsamlı cevaplar vermektedir. Çalışma postmodernizm çağının çok önce sona erdiği ve kendi 'özgün Madde-22'si tarafından yok edilmiş bir halde – yani postmodernizmin araçları postmodernism sürecini doğal olarak tersine döndürmek için postmodernizmin kendisine karşı kullanılmıştır – bu da bugünün ve yarının sorunlarına çözüm getiremeyeceği gerçeği üzerinde ısrarla durduğunu gösterir. Bu gerçek alışılmamış ve yenilikçi bir çağdaşlık görüşünün oluşturulmasına olan acil ihtiyacı vurgulamaktadır.

Post-postmodernizmin öğretileri, karşılıklı yokedici gerçekler kargaşasıyla dünyayı saran postmodernizm krizinin üstesinden gelebilmek, yeni gelecek, yeni umutlar doğurmak için insanoğlunun elindeki tek araç olarak görünür. Bu nedenle fabülasyon çağı, kişinin yaşamını gündelik işlerine anlam ve amaç yükleyen anlatılarla doldurmasını sağlayan, Gerçek'in ebedi varlığına olan derin iman ve yürekten inanç çağı olarak betimlenir. Bunun sonucunda post-postmodernizm, ellerini yüreklerine götürerek anlamlı bir geleceğe 'İnanıyorum' demeye istekli olanlara yol gösterecek tek mekanizma olarak sunulmaktadır. Dünya mantığın ve mantık yürütmeye olan şüpheci yaklaşımın düştüğü en derin krizi zaten yaşamıştır. İman yada inanç, sırası geldiğinde, her zaman için mantığın en güçlü rakibi olmuştur. Dolayısıyla post-postmodernizm, Gerçek'e olan imanla mantığı yumuşatmak ve postmodernizmin bıraktığı enkazın arasından umudu yeniden yeşertmek için gelecekte insanlığın elindeki tek ilaç olarak sunulmaktadır.

Tez postmodern ve post-postmodern düşünme biçimlerinin arasındaki en önemli iki fark olarak, ilkinin nihai gerçeğin versiyonlarının sayılamaz çokluğunun fabüleolması, giderek kavramın tam da kendisinin başkasıyla değiştirilen ve yavaşça değer kaybeden 'küçük' gerçekler, 'kimin' gerçekleri ve 'baskı altındaki' gerçeklerin taşınamaz yüküyle beraber varoluşun yüzeyinden sıyrılması gerekliliğini savunmasının altında yattığını öne sürer.

İkincisi ise, sıra kendisine geldiğinde, kişinin imana ve nihai gerçeğin varlığını kabule giden yolunun kişisel bir yaşam-anlatıları kümesi ve kişisel arayışlar aracılığıyla (refleksif bir tavırla) fabüle edilmesi gerekliliğini savunur. Buradaki nokta böyle bir nihai gerçeğe varış değil, onun *a priori* varlığını bilinçli bir şekilde kabul ediştir.

Bunun dışında tez, Friedrich Nietzsche ve Lev Tolstoy'un anlam teorileri ile Dennis Ford'un insanın anlam arayışı evrelerinin detaylı bir tartışmasını sunar. Bu tartışma ile tez, premoderniteyi insanın masumiyeti evresiyle; modernizmi, benmerkezcilik ve mühürlenmiş egosantrik bir ben gerçeğinden daha yüce herhangi başka bir gerçeğin varlığını reddetmesi olarak insanın zehirlenmesi evresiyle; postmodernizmi, Gerçek'le, onu kavramak ya da açıklamaktan aciz bir şekilde, aracısız olarak beraber yaşamaya dayanan ağırbaşlılık evresiyle; post-postmodernizmi, sürekli bir yaşam-anlatıları inşasına dayanan, kişiye anlamlı ve amaca yönelik bir varoluş imkanı sağlayan, nihai gerçeğin *a priori* varlığına olan inanca dayanan fabülasyon evresiyle eşitleyerek, insanın onto-epistemolojik gelişiminin orijinal bir paradigmasını oluşturur. Modernizm, postmodernizm ve post-postmodernizmi ele alırken tez genellikle Frederic Jameson'ın ünlü *Postmodernism ya da Geç Kapitalizmin Kültürel Mantığı* eserlerine dayanır.

Ayrıca tez, Jean Baudrillard'ın *Simülakralar ve Simülasyon* adlı eserinde ortaya attığı ünlü postmodern kavram simülakra ile yeni bir post-postmodern kavram olan fabülasyonu kesin olarak birbirinden ayırır. Çalışma simülakranın insan belleğinin kar odaklı amaçlardaki yanılma eğiliminden faydalanan yıkıcı, kapitalist ve popülist doğasının altını çizer. Bunun yanında tez, simülakrların tamamen simülakral olan varlıkların anlamsızlığından hipergerçekler yaratmaya olan eğilimini vurgular. Fabülasyon kavramı, Gerçek'in sorgulanamayan varlığına olan derin inanca dayanan özgeci, yerel odaklı, anlam-yapıcı ve yaşam-çoğaltıcı bir varlık olarak sunulur.

Buna ek olarak çalışma metakurgu ve fabülasyon kavramlarını birbirinden ayırır. Metakurgu, yapay olarak üretilen anlatı formlarına olan sabit postmodern şüpheciliğe ait bir kategori, fabülasyon ise, taze ve anlamlı yaşam-anlatılarının post-postmodern aktif bilinçli üretimi ve vurgulaması kategorisidir. Tez, yeni kurulan insanın onto-epistemolojik gelişimi teorisi ışığında, İşaret'in evrimine ilişkin ilk olarak Jean Baudrillard'ın *Simülakralarve Simülasyon'da* öne sürdüğü eski paradigmayı gözden geçirip düzelterek kendi paradigmasını oluşturur.

Ayrıca bu çalışma 'üst-anlatı' kelimesinin parça parça etimolojik analizini yaparak, fenomenin postmodern ve post-postmodern versiyonları arasındaki ünlü çelişkinin kökenlerini açığa çıkarır. Böylece, gelişmekte olan post-postmodern üst-anlatı Lyotard tarafından keskin bir biçimde eleştirilen üst-anlatılarla hiçbir benzerlik taşımaz. Ararlarındaki tek bağlantı insanoğlunun bu dünyadan faydalanmasında yol gösterici ve koruyucu bir rol üstlenmeleridir. Bu nedenle, üst-anlatıların eski biçimleriyle karıştırılmasını engellemek için tez bu fenomeni 'yaşam-anlatısı' olarak adlandırmayı önerir; böylece, istemli biçimde oluşturulmuş olmasına, insanı harekete geçiren, Gerçek'in *a priori* varlığına olan güçlü inanca dayanarak insana bir anlam duygusu veren doğasına vurgu yapar. Post-postmodern üst-anlatıların özüne ilişkin önemli bir özellik daha belirtmek gerekir ki o da, bunların kavranması zor bir soyutluktan ziyade kolay kabullenilebilir ve insana daha yakın olmalarıdır. Buna göre post-postmodern bir yaşam-anlatısı hem bir düzenleme aracı, hem de insan yaşamının altında yatan gerçeği yansıtma mekanizmasıdır. Post-postmodern anlatılar yadsınamayacak olan yapaylıklarını gizlemezler. Tam tersine, aksi halde soyut kalacak kavramları örneklendirerek insana aksi takdirde kavranamaz olan Gerçek ile birlikte yaşamak için gerekli olan anlamı, umudu ve devam etmek için nedeni sağlarlar. Ayrıca, post-postmodern yaşam-anlatıları evrenin bir anlamı olması

olasılığına ilişkin hissimizi, bu anlamın anlaşılması pek mümkün olmasa da, kuvvetlendirirler.

İncelikle işlenmiş teorik önermelere pratik uygulama alanı bulabilmek için, tez bu durumu, okuma, yaratma ve bir yazınsal sanat eseri üzerine yorum yapma süreçlerinde kuşanmak üzere rahat bir kamuflaj sunan postmodern düşünce okulundan ciddi olarak etkilenen çağdaş İngiliz kurgu edebiyatı çerçevesinde analiz eder. Aynı şey, Julian Barnes'in romanlarının, onları inatla moda olan akımla ilişkilendiren birçok okuyucusu ve eleştirmeni için de geçerlidir. Fakat, yazarın eserinin tematik ve yapısal yönelimi moda olan eğilimle taban tabana zıttır ve açık bir post-postmodern rengi taşımaktadır. Bu nedenle, tez iki yazım okulunu birbirinden ayıran ana özelliklere odaklanmıştır. Dahası, post-postmodern yazınsal eserlerin yapısal ve tematik doğasının baştan sona bir analizini sunar.

Tez, postmodernizm tarafından tasarlanan refleksif ve yapıbozumcu yapısal teknikleri kullanarak, yazınsal eserlerin anlatı dokusundaki boşluk ve delikler aracılığıyla imgeselliklerine dikkat çekmek suretiyle yapay doğasına işaret ederek, baştan başa tüm post-postmodern tematik bağlamda postmodernizm tarafından yıkılan nihai gerçek kavramını yeniden kurarak ve onun önemini vurgulayarak, post-postmodern yazımın ikili doğasının altını çizer. Bu bağlamda, Julian Barnes'in romanları ya ana karakterlerin insanın zehirlenmesi ve ağırbaşlılığı evresinden fabülasyon evresine kadar olan bütün gelişimini (örnek, *Metroland*), ya da hem aydınlatıcı hem de kafa karıştırıcı olabilen, fakat yine de gerçekçi anlamı günlük hayata yavaş yavaş işleyen anlatıların oluşturulması için fabülasyonun zorunluluğunun nihai olarak kavranmasıyla sonuçlanan objektif gerçeğin kaçınılmaz arayışı konusunu inceler (örnek, *Flaubert'in Papağanı, 10 ½ Bölümde Dünya Tarihi,* ve *İngiltere İngiltere'ye Karşı*).

Buna ek olarak tez, kullanılan üslupların belirgin heterojenliği, faydalanılan stiller ve kullanılan yaklaşımlar ile dikkat çeken ve dolayısıyla, onları birbirine bağlanmış şaşılacak derecede karışık kalitedeki hikayelerin akıllı bir derlemesinden ziyade roman diye adlandırmayı haklı çıkaracak mantıksal bağların belirgin eksikliği nedeniyle suçlanan Julian Barnes romanlarının kapsamlı bir kritiğini inceler. Bu nedenle tez; üslupların ekstrem kombinasyonlarına ve parataktik tekniklerin yoğun biçimde kullanımına dayanan 'Barnes tarzı roman anlayışı' kavramını analiz eder.

Post-postmodern yazım fenomenini örneklemek ve fabülasyon teorisini insanın onto-epistemolojik gelişimi teorisi ile birlikte betimlemek için tez, Julian Barnes tarafından yazılmış dört romanın ayrıntılı incelemesini sunar. Bu dört romanda, yazar her şeyi yerli yerine oturtan kesinliklerden yoksun bireylerin mevcut şaşkınlıklarına ve karasızlıklarına refleksif bir şekilde dikkat çeker ve asıl gerçeği keşfetme veya yeniden keşfetme yolunda aydınlatıcı ya da tam tersi tamamen kafa karıştırıcı cevaplar bulmak için onlara tarihi, sanatı, veya dini irdelettirir.

Metroland, sıklıkla geleneksel bir rüştüne varış öyküsü olarak ele alınmasına rağmen, bundan daha fazlasıdır çünkü roman, kişisel olgunluk süreci ve kapsayıcı insan onto-epistemolojik gelişimi arasında bir paralellik çizer. Roman iki ana karakteri olan Chris ve Toni'nin 'büyüme' yönünü resmeder. Bu resmedişle eser, mest oluş ve ayılış aşamalarından nihai Hakikati koruma çabası içinde olan postmodern fabülasyon aşamasına kadar olan insanlık gelişiminin yönünü gösterir.

Barnes'ın romanında daha fazla olan şey - ki o, bunu büyük ölçüde Foucault, Deleuze ve Guattari'nin felsefelerinden çıkarmaktadır - Chris tarafından temsil edilen burjuva özneyi merkezden uzaklaştırmak ve eritmek; modernizmin kavramı olan birlik haline getirilmiş, rasyonel ve anlamlı özneyi reddetmek suretiyle Toni tarafından temsil edilen ve de birliğin

teröründe gördüklerinden bağımsızlaştırılmış, dağılmış ve çoklu olmakta özgür olan yeni merkezden uzaklaştırılmış öznelerin ortaya çıkışını mümkün kılmaktır. Ancak, romanın sonucu açık bir post-postmodern düşünceyi ifade ediyor gibi görünür. Çünkü postmodern akıntılarda neredeyse dağılmış olan Toni'nin nihai merkezden uzaklaştırılmışlığına karşın post-postmodern özne olan Chris'tir.

Romanda daha fazla olan şey, romanın sonunda Christopher'in özel bir vurguda bulunduğu post-postmodernizim aşamasında 'Hakikati' algılamaya ya da çıkarmaya yönelik herhangi bir çabanın çok önemsiz ve basitçe ilgisiz olduğunu ifade eden olgudur. Bunun yerine, bir kişi kişisel yaşam-anlatılarının fabülasyonu, ya da nihai Hakikatin *a priori* varlığına daima-orada olan inancın genel modeli içinde hayatı anlamlı kılan meta-fabülasyonlar üzerine yoğunlaşmalıdır – söz konusu nihai Hakikat, kavranılması imkânsız ancak yine de anlamın daimi fabülasyonu için temel olan şeydir.

Bu tez Julian Barnes'in 1984 yılında Booker Prize'a aday gösterilen ünlü kitabı *Flaubert'in Papağan*'ıyla devam etmektedir. Bu roman, eğitimsiz gözler için basit bir Gustav Flaubert biyografisi gibi görülebilir. Ancak roman, bundan daha fazlasıdır; çünkü geleneksel biyografi kavramını yıkar. Bunu da anlatının içinde herhangi bir şey keşfetmiyorken ve bunun yanı sıra geçmişin ele geçirilemezliğini, olgunun muğlâklığını ve doğrulanamazlığını desteklerken, nasıl güçlü ve otantik bir anlatı yapılabileceği üzerine düşünme aracılığıyla yapar. Daha fazla olan bunun aşk hakkında bir roman olmasıdır: sanat aşkının nasıl insan aşkıyla kıyaslanacağını gösteren bir romanıdır ve bunun ötesinde elem hakkında bir romanıdır; elemini ve aşkını ifade etme yetersizliği olan bir adamın takıntılı bir arzuya geçişini okura hikâye eder. Anlatanın (Geoffrey Braithwaite) Gustave Flaubert hakkında bildiği ve

bulmuş olduğu her şey, onun için hayatındaki aşkın eşine duymuş olduğu aşktan daha güvenilir ve sürekli olduğudur.

Hepsinin ötesinde, *Flaubert'in Papağanı* Hakikat hakkında bir romandır; o, hakikatin ulaşılabilirliliği ve uygun algısı hakkındadır. Dahası, bu kitap gerçeklik ve sanat arasındaki ilişkiyi; kendi'ni bilmenin, geçmişi temsil etmenin ve insan hislerinin, düşüncelerinin ve esinlerinin dilsel çokluğunu ifade etmenin olanaklılığını sorgulayan bir kitaptır. Barnes, bu sorularla Flaubert'in papağanının sembolizmi aracılığıyla uğraşır. Söz konusu sembolizm Flaubert tarafından *Saf Bir Kalp'*i yazarken kullanılır. Bu hikâyede Braithwaite, Fransa'ya araştırma gezisi sırasında bir çift doldurulmuş özdeş papağan keşfeder; Flaubert'in yaşamından ve eserlerinden sahneler ve yapay dokular Braithwaite'nin sorgulama yönünü etkiler, elbette Gustave Flubert'in karakterinin kendisi de engin yazınsal çalışmalarında problemlerin benzer bir alanıyla ilgilenmeye çabalar.

Eğer *Metroland* insanlığın mest oluş ve ayılış aşamalarından postmodern fabülasyon aşamasına olan gelişimini Chris ve Toni'nin büyüme süreçlerini sembolize etme yoluyla resmediyorsa; *Flaubert'in Papağanı* kendi adına sadece insanlığın fabülasyon aşamasındaki durumu üzerinde yoğunlaşmaktadır. Safha, anlamlı kişisel hakikatlerin sürekli fabülasyonu tarafından imlenmiştir. Söz konusu kişisel hakikatler, Hakikat'in algılanamayan ihtişamında daima hazır bulunduğu ve bu nedenle de onun, yalnızca var oluşun gizemi boyunca insana rehberlik etmek için var olduğu kanaatine dayanırlar. Bu bağlamda okur, Geoffrey Braithwaite'i 'hakiki' papağanı bulma olasılığı konusunda kuşkucu bulabilir. Ancak, bu kuşku onu hiç papağan olmadığı inancına götürmez. Benzer şekilde Geoffrey, karısının yaşamını açıklama yeteneği olduğunu inkâr eder fakat bu yaşamın gerçekliğini asla inkâr etmez. Böylece, romanın post-postmodern yönelimi kendisini nesnel hakikatin şüphe götürmez hazır bulunuşuna vurguda

bulunan olguda açımlar, bunu resmetmenin ne kadar güç olabileceğinin ya da bunun ne kadar karmaşık olabileceğinin bir önemi yoktur. Bundan dolayı inanmak bir arzudur, bu arzuya post-postmodern çağın temelini biçimlendiren fabülasyon arzusu eşlik eder. Dolayısıyla Geoffrey Braithwaite, post-postmodern paradigmaya bir istisna değildir. Flaubert'in yaşamı, onun papağanı ya da karısının intiharı konusunda hakikatte ulaşmak elinden gelmemesine rağmen Braithwaite bu hakikatin varlığının olgusallığından şüpheye düşmez ki; bu da Braithwaite'ın Fransa'ya seyahat etmesine, küçük kanıtlar toplamasına ve de Flaubert'in yaşamış olduğu ya da yaşamış olabileceği yerleri sık sık ziyaret etmesine neden olur. Hakikati arayışında Geoffrey, onun başka türlü manasız, harap olmuş ve bir amaç hissi olan kaotik yaşamına işleyen çoklu hakikatleri fabüle eder. Bu nedenle de romanın sonunda tozlu Amazon papağanlarıyla dolu bir odayı terk eder, daha fazla kişisel anlatıyı ve dolayısıyla da, daima orada olan nihai hakikat tarafından yönlendirilen daha fazla kişisel anlamı fabüle etmeye hazırdır.

10 ½ Bölümde Dünya Tarihi'nde irdelenen fikirlerin önemini görmezden gelmek zordur, çünkü, Jullian Barnes bu romanda 'fabülasyon' – yani tezin temel anlatısını sunar. Roman birbirlerine çok da sıkı bağlı olmayan on bölümden ve Barnes'in içinde aşkın doğası, hakikat ve tarih hakkındaki kişisel düşüncelerini ifade ettiği bir Parantezden meydana gelir. Eser, tam olasılığı, doğayı ve tarihsel bilgilin kullanımını sorgular. Yazar kurgu ile tarih arasındaki sınırları araştırır; tarihin dolambaçlı ve anlatı boyutuna işaret eder ve de geçmişi hafızalar, arşivler, mektuplar ve yapay kurgularla ele geçirme olasılığı üzerine düşünür. Barnes kayıtlı tarih ve politik güç, tarih ve din, saf inanç ve kökten dincilik arasındaki karşılıklı ilişki ve bunların yanı sıra, tarihin sanatta temsilini sorar. Ayrıca, orijinal geçmişe erişmenin imkânsız addedilmesine rağmen, Jullian Barnes geçerli, otantik tarihsel hakikatin olanaklılığını inkâr etmez. Yazar nesnel hakikat kavramını

yıkar ancak daha sonra onu denemek ve tarihi anlaşılır kılmak için yeniden kurar. Böylelikle *10 ½ Bölümde Dünya Tarihi*'nde Barnes, insan onto-epistemolojik gelişiminin açıkça bir post-postmodern vizyonunu, bu vizyonun tarihsel var oluşun fabülatori doğasının derin vurgusuyla irdeler. Bu tarihsel var oluşun fabülatori doğası kendini kuran efsanenin sadece mevcut ve bütünüyle-kavranılabilir gerçekliğe dönüşmesine dayanır. Bu, orijinal hakikatin *a priori* var oluşuna olan inancın arka planına karşı çizilen bir gerçeklik.

Yeni-fabüle olmuş üst-anlatılarla ilgilenen son roman *İngiltere İngiltere'ye Karşı'*dır. Eser, Martha Cochrane'nin yaşam öyküsü etrafına yoğunlaşmaktadır; karakterin erken çocukluk dönemiyle başlar ve kahramanın ihtiyar bir kadın oluşuyla sona ulaşır. Romanın ana fikri ele alındığında *İngiltere İngiltere'ye Karşı*, kahramanın hakikat ve otantizm arayışıdır ve kahraman bunu kendi özel hayatında oldukça gülünç, hicivli, uydurmanın genel öyküsü, yanlışlama ve yankıya karşı olan aşk arayışı aracılığıyla gerçekleştirir. Romanda daha fazla olan kurnaz-kapitalist karakter Sir Pitman'dır. Bu karakter romanın gelişimi için merkezidir çünkü Wight adacığının 'İngiltere, İngiltere' adındaki tema parkına dönüşmesinden sorumlu olan kişi Sir Jack Pitman'dır – romanın sonunda İngiltere'nin temel gerçekliğini kökünden söküp atar görünen otatantik İngiliz uygarlığını bir tür Baudriallardvari bir taklittir.

Roman yüksek bir derecede, sanatın öldüğünün iddia edilmesi ve gerçekliğin mekanik, elektronik ve dijital üretme çağında kendi yüksek teknoloji ürünü belirtileriyle beraber şöyle yada böyle anlaşılmış olmasıyla Baudrillard'ın *Simülakralar ve Simülasyön* kitabıyla hemfikirdir. Bu şekilde, Barnes'in çalışmaları, şu soruyu cevaplamaya teşebbüs eder; nasıl oluyorda birisi hakikat ve imitasyon arasındaki sınır tahrip edilmişken, tarihi, tarihsel bir dönemde yapılandırır? Bununla beraber, metinde çeşitli postmodern öğeler

bulunmasına rağmen, roman, özellikle, gerçek (Anglia) veya sahte (İngiltere, İngiltere) olsun, her toplum unsurunun er yada geç kendi üst-anlatı dizisini fabüle edeceği üzerine vurgu yapar, ki böylece, kendini büyük ve zorlayıcı olmayan samimi bir inanç rehberliğinde, birleşik, uyumlu, kudretli bir büyüklük olarak olarak algıyabilir. Bunun için, bazıları, *İngiltere İngiltere'ye Karşı*'nın fabülasyon hakkında en başta olduğunu öne sürebilir. Dahası, roman açikça simulakra kavramı ve insan hafızasından sadece eğlendirici ve kar odaklı amçalara ulaşılması açısından yararlanılması arasında ayrım yapar; ki bu fabülasyon, kişiliksiz, hayat boyu yavaş yavaş damıtılan, insanoğlunun göreceli postmodern kaosu unutmasına izin veren, anlam yapıları oluşturmayı amaçlar.

Bütün bu dört roman, kendi yapısal iskeletini oluştumak için meta-kurgusal öğeler, metinler aracılık, karşıtlık, parodi, metaleptik yapılanmalar, yada araya giren hikayeler, 'gerçek insanlar', edebiyat eleştirilerinden alınan seçme parçalar, ansiklopedik bilgiler gibi refleksif tekniklerle beraber giden ortaçağda yazılan ve hayvanlara ait hikâyeleri içine alan bir kitap olsun, biyografi, kronoloji, mektup aracılığıyla yürütülen veya herhangi tarz bir kitap olsun başka başka tarzları kullanır. Yine de, tezin bulgularına göre, dışsal yapısal düzensizliğe rağmen, romanlar içsel tematik uyum konusunda tutarlıdırlar. Böylece, bütün yardımcı temaların ve motiflerin kombinasyonu ana fikrin gelişmesini destekler, yani, nesnel gerçekliğin ve yaşam-anlatılarının fabülasyonunun, birinin varoluş için her günkü çabasının önemi. *Metroland* romanı, insanoğlunun gelişimi içindeki yükseliş ve alçalışları, mest olmak ve ağırbaşlılıktan fabülasyona doğru, adım adım betimleyerek, bu temanın belli belirsiz çeşitliliğini sunar.

Neticede, post-postmodernizm'in romanlara renk kattığı gerçeği umudun ve iyimserliğin bir çok gizli saklı işaretinde, fabülasyon çağının teminatını da

göze alarak vurgulanmıştır. Sonuçta, *Flaubert'in Papağan'*ında geleceğin rüyaları ortaya çıkarken ve Geoffrey Braithwaite tamamen hareketliyken, *Metroland,* Chris'in ailesinin gelecekteki genişlemiş halinin konuşmasıya sona erer. *10 ½ Bölümde Dünya Tarihi*'nde dünyanın daimi karmaşasını Nuh'un Gemisi ile çözmeye çalışan enerjiye sahip tahtakuruları olan - bir kelebek Medusa'nın salıyla beraber uçar – veya büyük Ağrı'yı yükselen sisin gizemi altında harikulade bir hale ile kuşatan bir çok umut belirtisine sahip. *İngiltere İngiltere'ye Karşı*'ya gelecek olursak, son bölümde Martha'nın korkusuz, kendi topraklarında oldukça kendine güvenli ve yavaş yavaş bütünlüğü dirilten bir ülkeyi oluşturan tavşanı gözlemlemesi betimlenir. Böylece, bütün bu dört roman, nihai Fabülasyon çağında, anlamın nihai uyanışını ilan eder.

Sonuç olarak, postmodern'in anlamsızlığı, insan ruhunun şu andaki post-postmodernizm zemininde oluşan yenilenmiş dirilişine ulaşmak için gerekli olan bir araça dönüştü; çünkü anlamsız olan, eğer er geç gelecek olan bir başarıya başlamak değilse, zerafetini kaybetmiş olarak kendini hissettiriyor. Julian Barnes'ın romanları, kendi tarzında, post-postmodernizm teorisinin parlak bir örneklemesini yapar. Romancının postmodern yazının kırılma noktalarına nüfuz eden bir becerisi vardır, ayrıca sürekli olarak ürettiği romanlarında post-postmodern kurgunun toplumda hayati önemde olan, ama en nihayetinde tanımlanması gereken gerçeğin anlaşılır standardlarını söylediğini belirtir.