CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

“The desire to reach conclusions
is a sign of human stupidity”

(Barnes claims to agree with
Flaubert's dictum in McGrath 23)

The aim of postmodernism is contextualization by seeing knowledge as provisional and historically conditioned. Consequently, knowledge is analyzed within its double-context: on the one hand, knowledge is conveyed through language, and therefore it has to be inserted in an enunciative act, where both the producer and the receiver influence the ultimate meaning of the message. On the other hand, knowledge is produced within a certain historical, cultural, and social context, which determines, for instance, what is held to be right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable.

Postmodernist art, in its self-reflectivity also known as metafiction, has thematized "this concept of meaning existing only 'in relation to a significant context': that is, the context of the once suppressed enunciative act as a whole, and that of 'situate' discourse which does not ignore the social, historical or ideological dimensions of understanding" (Hutcheon A Poetics of Postmodernism 82). According to hermeneutics as a postmodern philosophy, knowledge is partial, inevitable, and temporary rather than universal and unchanged over time. The quest for truth is a never-ending pass which most of the postmodern authors as Julian Barnes, have depicted by epistemological uncertainty. They also tend not to become paralyzed by
their very postmodern realization that their own discourses have no absolute claim to any ultimate foundation in “truth”. If we accept that all is provisional and historically conditioned, we will not stop thinking, as some fear; in fact, that acceptance will guarantee that we never stop thinking – and rethinking (Hutcheon A Poetics of Postmodernism 53).

This thesis has analysed most of Barnes's novels, particularly after 1980, with regard to the concept of metannartives in aspects such as truth, history, fiction writing, narration, and memory. The hypothesis claiming the shift from objective to subjective in Barnes writings was tested and seems to be defensible. This thesis employed to analyse Julian Barnes's treatment of the influence of new metanarratives in everyday lives of humans in artistic and figurative way. Undoubtedly, Barnes's novels bear a clear postmodern colouring, their major postmodern characteristics include metafiction, parody, narration, memory and vanishing conventional metanarratives. Barnes's novels, to a various degree, besides employing different genres, be it a biography, criticism, epistolary writing, chronology, bestiary, historiography, utilize techniques including metafictional elements, intersexuality, parody, intrusive narrators, contradiction, and real people. Based on the findings of the thesis, almost all of Barnes's novels hold together by their thematic unity, despite the dissimilarity of their structural order.

The aim of this dissertation has been to establish reasons for exploring Barnes as a postmodernist writer. In an interview, he claimed he wrote his novels out of life rather than theory:

I would say that I have never read any literary theory. . . . To answer your question straightforwardly, in my case there is no continuing
dialogue between writing fiction and literary theory. I’m deliberately unaware of literary theory. Novels come out of life, not out of theories about life or literature, it seems to me . . . I think that when literary theory drives literature, the danger is you get something fundamentally arid as the nouveau roman. (Guignery *Conversation with Julian Barnes* 52)

After examining Barnes's literary works, Mira stout's statement about him as being a chameleon of letters does not appear to be in vain. Barnes's every novel employs a different narrative technique, discourse and genre often innovative in one sense or the other.

Born into a family of French language teachers, Barnes has had the chance to learn about the French culture at a very early age. His family used to spend their holidays driving through different regions of France. His brother Jonathan Barnes, who is a professor of philosophy at the University of La Sorbonne, seems to share Barnes’s love for France. Barnes himself studied philosophy and modern languages (French and Russian) at the university (Guignery 2).

Consequently, most of Barnes characters such as Chris in *Metroland*, Graham and Ann in *Before She Met Me*, Braithwaite in *Flaubert's Parrot*, Jean in *Starting at the Sun*, Gillian and Oliver in *Talking It Over*, cross the channel to live in France for a while or visit it just for vacation. His characters, as a result, enjoy using French phrases in the novels. His love of French culture is greatly manifested in both his journalistic essays: *The Pedant in the Kitchen*, and *Something to Declare*, which are French Essays about French culture and cuisine. Barnes's collection of short stories, *Cross Channel* and his novel, *Flaubert's Parrot*, are marked as Francophile. Being
innovative in both genre and narration on one hand, and various subjects and themes on the other hand, distinguishes Barnes among his contemporaries. As Mira Stout observes:

Barnes’s novels range from the epic to the miniature, and continually experiment with novelistic form. His prose style adapts moodily to the character so that no two novels are alike. His subjects? Better yet, what’s not a subject? Obsessional love, dislocation, death, voyage, endurance, art, religion, Eastern Europe, the manifold of reality – and sandwiches. (New York Times 2)

Barnes's in his interview with Stout confesses that “… [i]n order to write, you have to convince yourself that it’s a new departure not only for you but for the entire history of the novel” (3). Based on aforementioned statements, Stout calls Barnes "a challenge addict" (4). In number of interviews Barnes reveals more about himself. During an interview with Patrick McGrath, he indicates that he admires Gustave Flaubert as he is “a great example of a genius who never wrote the same book twice” (Mosseley 1). Being experimental novelist is Barnes's own conscious choice which distinguishes him from many other novelists of his generation. He looks for new subject and genre after finishing his novel in order to avoid repetition and adding something innovative to the novel as a genre. According to Jay McInerney,

A lot of novelists set up a kind of franchise, and turn out a familiar product. I mean one can speak of a jean Rhys novel, or an Evelyn Waugh, but what I like about Jules’s work is that he’s like an entrepreneur who starts up a new company every time out. He doesn’t cultivate a recognizable voice whose sentences are instantly a
signature; Julian submerges his personality in the work. But he’s always kind of hidden there in the underbrush. He reinvents the wheel… (in Stout 5)

Not all the critics admire Barnes's style as McInerney does, Levenson simply calls him "restless":

Barnes has seen it all, the tub-thumping novelistic traditionalism, the barrel-jumping experimentalism, the cool academism; seen it, seen through it. No convention can warm him, no mission can stir him. Where he sees an enthusiasm, he suspects a folly. . . . He has refused to repeat himself, pressing on to innovation, straining to find new ideas for novels. But that’s just the problem, his problem and ours: the chronic restlessness, the itchy need to wear a new look, to speak a new rhythm, to buy new software to adorn the new software. (42)

Levenson then continues that while Barnes does all these, “he himself remains unpossessed, dispassionate, sane, lucid, and free” (43). Dale Peck argues that Barnes's experimentalism is not convincing. By referring to some experimental authors he says,

[...] from Stein to Pynchon felt that his or her work addressed something of historical consequence. These writers considered their endeavours philosophical rather than merely aesthetic, whereas Barnes, whose musings bear a surface resemblance to certain postmodern conventions, seems motivated by nothing more than boredom, decadence, or hubris. (33)
Despite Barnes's rejection of using theory in his writings, postmodernist critical apparatus can be useful in the analysis of his writing. As mentioned earlier, perhaps owing to the influences of experimental writers, of his own contemporary times, postmodern aspects are unconsciously mirrored in most of his novels. Barnes’s postmodernism is reflected in its interest in the problems of 'naming' and 'representation' which mirrors in his novels such as *Flaubert's Parrot, A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters, The Sense of an Ending*, and *England, England*. Barnes is aware of fictionality and indicates it in *Flaubert's Parrot, A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters, Talking it over, Love etc*, and *Before She Met Me*. And he conducts his revision of traditional modes of historical knowledge through a novel technique known as historiographic metafiction in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters, The Porcupine*, and *Arthur & George*.

Malcom Bradbury, British critic and novelist, in his introduction to *Newwriting* lists some British writers as Julian Barnes as a new generation of British writers "who no longer feel bound to realism, and who freely explore surrealism, fantasy, and metafictional play" (6). Arguably, the word "realism" in Bradbury's definition alludes to narrative and rhetorical conventions which came to dominate British fiction from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century and which, after being deprived of significance and power by the modernist aestheticism of the 1910s and 20s, reappeared in the novels of George Orwell, Christopher Isherwood, and Evelyn Waugh, and then again, nearly a generation later, in the prose fiction of Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, and John Wain.

In spite of individual variations in technique, one principle consensus among all realist writers is that language is a transparent medium of representation. To these
writers "reality" owes its existence to special capacity of language which is faithfully transcribed in fiction. As David Lodge states, "realism" indicates not only "mimetic representation of experience," but also the "organizations of narrative according to logic of causality and temporal sequence" (*Newwriting* 205). However, according to Lodge, the structuralists and its "descendants" regard realism as "an art of bad faith because it seeks to disguise or deny its own conventionality" (*After Bakhtin* 13). By using an array of metafictional narrative conventions, namely authorial instruction, framing structure, and intertextual parody, Julian Barnes and his contemporaries challenge the realist conventions in order to expose the fictionality of literary representation. This is not to argue that postmodern metafictional texts reject the "real world", rather they differently define and formulate that world by first installing and then abolishing the conventions of literary realism. Even Lodge in his essay *After Bakhtin: Essay on Fiction and Criticism* argues, "it would be false to oppose metafiction to realism; rather metafiction makes explicit the implicit problematic of realism" (19).

The only way which can echo a refractory belief in the precedence of the objective truth is revising metanarratives, which this thesis has attempted. This thesis laid stress on the fact that new metanarratives as depicted in Barnes's novels infuse mankind's day-to-day reasoning, working, and life, in general. The fact that the era of postmodernism had gone long ago and can no longer solve humanity’s present problems, reveals that it has already been devaluated by its own “intrinsic Catch-22” (McHale “Postmodernism, or the Anxiety of Master Narratives” 17).

The quest for truth is the central issue of almost all of Barnes's novels, whether the quest leads to fulfilment or otherwise: a universal truth as in *Staring at the Sun*
and *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*; a national truth as in *The Porcupine* and *England, England*; or a personal truth that might only be influential in an individual's life as in *Metroland, Flaubert's Parrot, Before She Met Me, Arthur & George, Talking It Over, Love, etc* and *The Sense of an Ending*. However, Barnes has demonstrated that this process is rather endless and problematic. Barnes in each one of his novels raises an issue which has the capability to play a role of hindrance in the way to achieve truth. Based on the investigation into Barnes novels, these hindrances can be enlisted as: the personal and religious bias, injustice just, deterioration of memory, and finally the impact of art, narration, and uncertainty over historical data. Thus, it could be argued that in Barnes's novels all the enlisted issues eventuate to what is known in postmodernism as subjective or relative truth. Each one of the aforementioned issue has been elaborated in the main chapters of the thesis.

The curiosity of historiography did not leave Barnes untouched, and historiography appeared predominantly in his *Flaubert's Parrot, Before She Met Me* and *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*. These novels deal with the concepts like historian and novelist; history and literature; and historiography and past. In his modern Othello story *Before She Met Me*, Barnes, not as a central concern of the story but as a background fabric of the linear plot, dramatizes the problematic relationship between a historian and a novelist. This novel can be counted as one of the first signs of Barnes's interest in the field of history which in his later works developed into an absorption. *Flaubert's Parrot* shows his great advancement and later it is even more evident in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* which is considered as the culmination of Barnes's ideas and meditation over history and literature.
The Porcupine, one of Barnes's political novels, shows that there might be some intricate issues like politics that even the court cannot safely elaborate, so that the border between truth and untruth in such matters is hazy. And in Arthur & George, the Edalji case clearly demonstrates that justice is not always just even in tribunal and trials which are considered as privileged places for law. The story implies that laws are not objective; therefore, anyone can interpret and manipulate it based on their bias and interest. The novel shows that the flow of George's trial can find him either guilty or innocent, depending on the way jury is persuaded. Thus, justice appears to be a matter of persuasion, where evidences can be manipulated to influence the jury's opinion. Justice is not always as George believes "a journey from confusion to clarity" but it can be a process wherein an innocent people might be found guilty and vice versa (Barnes 90). "Life is not a detective story" wherein the guilty and innocent are distinguishable, consequently in life one might get only "three quarters of justice, [or] half justice" without knowing who is bad or good in the end (146). The triumph in Arthur & George is neither of truth nor justice, but merely rhetoric, which results in a cohesive and persuasive narration.

In Talking it over and Love etc, apart from the evidences, what plays the significant role is witnesses' testimony, which also plays an important role in Arthur & George:

Later, at the deal table in the basement of Shire Hall, George felt exhausted and dispirited. ‘Mr Meek, I fear my parents were not good witnesses.’ It is rather the case that the best people are not necessarily the best witnesses. The more scrupulous they are, the more honest, the more they dwell on each world of the question and doubt themselves
out of modesty. . . . It’s a question of belief. What we believe, why we believe it. From a purely legal point of view, the best witnesses are those whom the jury believes most. (A&G 193)

Yet, unlike *Arthur & George* where some of the witnesses deliberately lie to the court because their knowledge is always fragmented, partial and unavoidably biased, in *Talking It Over*, the three main narrators unintentionally lie because of their partial and fragmented information. What is underlined throughout both *Talking It Over* and *Love, etc* is the three different testimonies of a same event which make the task of distinguishing between truth and untruth difficult.

One scene in *Arthur & George*, about George's blue serge coat, delicately indicates the influential role of language in manipulating or distorting reality. While the coat is found dry by George's family, Sergeant Parson and Inspector Campbell feel it is damp. Later in testimony Campbell explains that they find the wet coat at vicar's house. The word 'dry' in testimony would prove George's innocence, but the word 'damp', though is not as strong as the word 'wet', can prove that he was on the field during the rainy night of the maiming. Another scene in the novel is Dr. Butter’s description of the hair found on the coat as 'similar' to pony's belly, but it emerges as 'identical' in both witnesses' accounts and in the journals. Journalism proves it could be as unreliable as fiction is, since both are fabulatory constructions. A few facts are kept and a new imaginary story covers the blanks around them by narrative. Since Julian Barnes has also worked as a journalist, he has often compared the writing of fiction with the writing of journalism:

I think I tell less truth when I write journalism than when I write fiction. I practice both those media, and I enjoy both, but, to put it
crudely, when you are writing journalism your task is to simplify the world and render it comprehensible in one reading; whereas when you are writing fiction your task is to reflect the fullest complications of the world, to say things that are not as straightforward as might be understood from reading my journalism and to produce something that you hope will reveal further layers of truth on a second reading (in Guppy 65).

However, the crucial role of newspaper is undeniable in the formation of public opinion; according to Arthur Conan Doyle they influence "the last tribunal of all, a tribunal which never errs" (A&G 397). This is the power Arthur Conan Doyle utilities very well, particularly after the Committee Report appears, while defining George as "innocent yet guilty" (442). The public, the media, the press and the legal profession question the Committee's verdict and along with Conan Doyle support George's innocence. "Would these verdicts in time come to outweigh the official one?" (A&G 442). Undoubtedly Barnes himself in his writing returns to all those verdicts in time, but what the story implies ultimately is, ‘truth’ seems to be what most of the people hold to be true. Maybe the woodworm in A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters was right:

That is nearly the end of my revelations. They are intended – you must understand me – in a spirit of friendship. If you think I am being contentious, it is because your species – I hope you don’t mind my saying this – is so hopelessly dogmatic. You believe what you want to believe, and you go on believing it. But then, of course, you all have Noah’s genes. No doubt this also accounts for the fact that you are
Testimony as a linguistic and narrative construct, which attempts to describe what really happened, also emerges in Barnes's *Flaubert's Parrot* and *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*.

In *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* language is considered as the only medium through which we can access the past; however, it is not a lucid or innocent medium since it is able to manipulate and distort truth. In the chapter "The Wars of Religion", the linguistic pedantry of the attorney distracts the court's attention from the absurdity of the matter and truth. This linguistic issue comes to fore in *Flaubert's Parrot* when Braithwaite attempts to write a more accurate account of Flaubert's life and he finds himself confused amongst many different accounts. Just as the reader does in *Talking It Over*, Braithwaite in *Flaubert's Parrot* encounters various accounts each interpreted differently, thus gaining distant meanings. What doctors say about Kathleen's mental illness in one of the chapters in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*: "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 round them", appears to be true in everyone's mind (272). Barnes asserts that fiction compared to any other media represents more truth; however, people believe that fiction is a fabulatory construction, where a few facts are inserted in a narrative and the rest is filled with imagination.

Newspapers as one of the sources historian used in their writings of history, looks so crucial. However, it is proven that they do not necessarily report the absolute truth. As a result, the history which depends upon such unstable evidence can be
partial and lack the exactness and accuracy of details. The concepts such as truth, history, memory, testimony and narration are concatenated in a way that instability in one of them leads to uncertainty of the others. Ultimate truth, seems to be diminished to the level what most people hold to be true. It is impossible to access sheer truth because as Barnes states in *Arthur & George*: "knowledge never stay[s] still, and today’s certainties might become tomorrow’s superstitions" or in *Flaubert’s Parrot*: "What happened to the truth is not recorded." (53; 60). As Dr. Max defines in *England, England*, historiography is fabricated copies of historical reality:

> What, my dear Jeff, do you think History is? Some lucid, polyocular transcript of reality? Tut, tut, of the midtotut. The historical record late thirteenth century is no clear stream into which we might thrillingly plunge. As for the myth formidably male-kitty, it remains dominated. History, to put it bluntly, is a hunk. (152)

Since authentic records and past accounts are lacking in all aspects of the past and are always influenced by the bias and present preferences, the accessibility of the true past in order to reconstruct it, as the committee in the novel *England, England* decides to, becomes farfetched. Even the individual attempts to hold true in recalling their own past and memory, ends up with a realization they are unable to reconstruct what they thought and hoped for. This is experienced by Martha in *England, England* and also by Tony in *The Sense of an Ending*. Barnes once again lays emphasis on the similarity between the way of constructing a national or individual history and that of constructing fictional world in a novel.

> Probably, language and narrative techniques are mediums that help us to access more interpretations and consequently the truth, and hence they are significant.
By an assessment of Barnes's novels, one can observe that Barnes in his novels demonstrates how he has benefitted from the traditional narrative techniques and what he has added to it. Narrative techniques in Barnes's novels have been manipulated for many reasons such as underlying a reality, diminishing the distance between characters and the reader for the sake of art. How Barnes, at times, follows the conventions and how he skilfully breaks them in order to fulfil his artistic manoeuvres and save truth has been already elaborated.

Higdon calls Braithwaite a "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, masks and substitutions" (174). Braithwaite is telling three stories but what he truly wants to speak about, but cannot because of embarrassment, is his wife's story. The embarrassment, however is linked to his Englishness by Braithwaite himself, it actually stems from the narrative situation. The narrative of the novel demonstrates that the protagonist is telling the entire story to a narratee, which breaks the limits of third-person omniscient narrator and saves the novel from having a very flat narration. Therefore, the distance between the reader and the protagonist is thinned as he openly mediates. Other studies might see the whole novel as written in the traditional confession mode, wherein a character in order to stress himself out retells a straightforward story, without considering the narratee or the reader. Thus, there is no embarrassment or reluctance because Braithwaite would not have been bounded to defend himself or Flaubert. As a result, the narrative situation in Flaubert's Parrot can be considered under both deductions: either as being written in the traditional confessional mode or as being written in a postmodern mode which saves it from being an ordinary novel.
Yet, compared to Braithwaite, the narrators of Barnes's other novels such as *Talking It Over*, *Love, etc*, and *The Sense of an Ending*, are more traditional. However, the protagonist-narrators or homodiegetic narrators are unreliable to different degrees. The three narrators in *Talking It Over* and *Love, etc* in an interpolated mode of narration and from the same level of hierarchy, takes turn in telling their stories, while each one ends up with "my words against everybody else's" (75). Basically the narrators lie and revive the Russian proverb "lie like an eye-witness" for two reasons: to protect themselves and to raise sympathy in the narratee. Besides these two novels, in *The Sense of an Ending* there is no reliable fist-person or an omniscient narrator to put things into perspective; it is difficult to draw conclusions about the incidents.

The narratee as one of the narrative features remains an obscure concept until Gerald Prince discussed it in "Introduction to the Study of Narratee". Prince in his article categories narrative transactions into two elements: diegetic elements which consists of implied author, implied reader, narrator and narratee and non-diegetic elements that consists of author and the reader. Depending upon the role the author grants the narratee, it could play a crucial role in the novel. The narratees in Barnes’s novels are mostly considered as readers as both are active and too close. Yet the presence of the narratee on one hand like an obstacle helps to distort the truth, and on the other hand like another character discloses others' truth to the readers. The narratee in *Flaubert's Parrot*, like detectives in *Arthur & George* who question George for more elaboration, raises questions to the narrator for more clarification. The narratee without any presence and voice appears only in the answers of the narrators. The narratee sometimes creates a distance between the reader and the narrators but occasionally enables the reader to understand the main manipulator in
the affairs of the narrators. Similar to the Victorian obtrusive narrator, the narratee partly helps to clear the confusion in the narratives of the narrators.

The other narrative technique which is remarkable in Barnes's novels is the concept of the unreliable narrator and the narration. The problem of memory is the main thing in Barnes's novels, particularly in *The Sense of an Ending* and *Arthur & George*. This matter encouraged the study to investigate more on the concept of memory in Barnes's novels even beyond its influence upon the narrative technique. The concept of memory was investigated in the novel *Arthur & George*, in which a factual hundred-year old case of criminal and judicial injustice known as Wyrley case is dramatized by Barnes. The concept of memory in *Arthur & George* fluctuates between collective and individual form, while we witness only the individual form of memory in *The Sense of an Ending*, *Flaubert's Parrot*, *Talking It Over* and *Love*, etc.

The various aspects of human memory, particularly its deficiency and unreliability is underlined in almost all Barnes’s novels which mainly or partly deal with memory. Most of the characters in those novels are manifested in effort to revise and rework their memories and their relevant recent histories in order to overcome their past traumas and to attain harmonization with their past. For instance, Tony in *The Sense of an Ending* roots his history and memories to come to some reconciliation with the discrepancy between what he considered as truth and what truly happened. However, the reworked personal life history does not necessarily lead to Tony’s complete healing, but it helps him to re-adjust his self-imagine and to come to terms with his life.

It is obvious that *The Sense of an Ending* fits into Barnes’s general aesthetic, but in order to get the idea one might need to refer to his earlier works such as
Flaubert's Parrot. Flaubert's Parrot might cause the reader to recall Tony, particularly where Braithwaite asks the same questions that engaged Tony's mind about endpoint and processes. Braithwaite's realization that “I am now older than Flaubert ever was,” makes him wonder:

Is it ever the right time to die? . . . Is it better not to have the dreams, the work, and then the desolation of uncompleted work? Perhaps . . . we should prefer the consolation of nonfulfillment . . . the pleasure of anticipation, and then, years later, not the memory of deeds but the memory of past anticipations? Wouldn’t that keep it all cleaner and less painful? (17)

The similarities between the two protagonists, Braithwaite and Tony, can also be discovered in their work on a project where it is the fight against the fragmentation and unknowability of the past and in their problems related to proof and certainty. Braithwaite's words when he fascinatingly talks about the role of historian and biographer in dealing with authors' possessions, what is already left behind by them, recalls Tony's desire for backing up his memories to access his 'ancillary truth':

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 leavings of a life contain some ancillary truth?” (Parrot 8).

Indeed, Tony cares about the 'leavings of the life', but his problem is that he prefers a sort of leavings that contains text such as letters and notes.
George in *Arthur & George* insists on revising the Wyrley case in hope of compromising history. Considering that Barnes is not always faithful to history and at times he compromises historical facts to his artistic license, his writings leave the readers in a state of uncertainty about the reliability of his sources. Barnes’s novels are neither historical novels nor pure fiction as he mixes a lot of accurate biographical data with his artistic skills. Probably this is exactly what Barnes is trying to convey about the past: neither historic nor artistic interpretation is convincing. *The Sense of an Ending* represents the gradual retrieval of personal and long lost memories of the protagonist. The reader encounters self-reflective autobiographical elements in the novel which stems from cognitive and memory distortion. The concept of history in the novel is dramatized as an individual's life history and in a personal manner. The main issue is the quality of individual memory and its reflect on one's personal guilt and responsibility.

All in all, based on the investigation into the structure and techniques used in the selected novels of Barnes, it could be argued that the concept of memory has shifted from being more objective to being more subjective. This idea is drawn from literary analysis and is supported by statistical data extracted from the novels' corpora. The idea shows that overall increase in the occurrence of expressions belongs to the lexical subfield of memory in contrast to history.

Barnes uses the life of Flaubert on the surface of his novel, and the core the narrative lies in the narrator's digression, who deals with his own story, fears and obsession. *Flaubert's Parrot* has many disconnected narratives which belong to a variety of prose genres, however all are linked together in the person of the narrator. This way of narrative allows the reader to acquaint the French writer, Flaubert, from
different perspectives and also with different truths about him. Likewise in other novels such as *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, the absence of objective history is implied. The impossibility of presenting a homogeneous biography of Flaubert or any other person is demonstrated in the novel. As mentioned in second chapter, Braithwaite uses the idea of a net to explain the search for biographical data and in general the search for truth. Barnes underlines the fragmentary and incomplete aspects of what we find and show us that search is inseparable from the sense of losing something.

In most of his fiction Barnes utilizes multiple narrators; however, it is not a new device. Even when any one of the characters makes a lengthy statement as in *Talking It Over*, building a particular discourse for each character is possible as well. Yet what is innovative in Barnes's novels is that the author, without interference of any third-person narrator, lets the characters speak. Unlike Victorian novels where third-person narrators authenticated one of the narrations, Barnes's novels with no intrusive narrator construct polyphony and consequently confuse the reader in authenticating the real voices. Though Barnes utilizes almost the same narrative technique and narrative situations in most of his recent novels, his novels are never the same, and have not produced the same effect. As a novelist, Barnes succeeds to employ innovative use of narrators, specifically the first-person narrators.

Gregory J. Rubinson once noted that Julian Barnes's fiction “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). Barnes's novels *Metroland, Staring at the Sun, Arthur & George, Flaubert's Parrot, A History of the world in 10 ½ Chapters, The Sense of an Ending*, and
England, England lay the emphasis on the necessity of belief in love and objective truth in order to avoid postmodern relativity, engendered by the preceding epoch. These literary works in their own fashion mirror Barnes's own famous words: “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).

Indeed, Barnes breaks the rules of conventional writing to tell us that post-postmodern fictionality is remarkably significant in a society where comprehensible standards of truth at last need to be defined. Almost a decade ago Julian Barnes made a confession in an interview with 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).

The combination of all the minor and major themes and motifs in Barnes's novels are served to support the development of a few main ideas: the importance of believing in the objective truth and the place of fabulation in one's everyday life struggles. Metroland and somehow Staring at the Sun dramatize the ups and downs of the overall human progress from the stage of pleasure seeking to that of postmodern fabulation. All the characters, who are portrayed in Barnes's fiction, whether in persuasion of truth or not, dramatize human situation in a postmodern world. There are those who from time to time are disappointed in finding truth, those whose life stories end up with doubts and uncertainty, and those who still continue, for they believe as Barnes does, that with or without result, the search itself is valuable.

Knowledge, and therefore all those related concepts such as truth and history, appears to be just a matter of belief. As Gillian states in Talking It Over, “One bit of
information and people are immediately off into their theories” (*Talking* 60). People decide to believe in a certain interpretation of reality, and their mind considers that belief as knowledge and later as truth. The reason why one prefers Du Camp's version to Louis Colet's in *Flaubert's Parrot*, or woodworm's account to the Bible's in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Characters*, is still unknown and is only a matter of choice. But what is notable is the influence of the act of faith in escaping scepticism and nihilism. As Barnes says, "perhaps proof is impossible anyway. Perhaps the best we can manage is thinking and believing" (*A&G* 264). If obtaining the objective and absolute truth is not possible, at least the belief in its possibility is possible.

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 Godeyed version of what “really” happened. But while we know this, we must still believe that objective truth is obtainable; or we must believe that it is 99 per cent 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 are 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 (*Parrot* 245-246).

In postmodernism the conventional belief in existence of truth, which is mostly provided by the power and authority, is replaced with a plurality of interpretations, of versions and consequently of truth. Probably the lack of choice in the past eventuated its certainty, and since very few interpretations had the possibility
to convert to a master-narrative they gave sense and order to the world in people's belief. Such master-narratives are no longer possible in postmodernism, since the fragmentary nature of subjectivities and truths are unmasked. As this postmodern characteristic is echoed in Barnes's novels, it is a matter choice to believe in any interpretation as a truer version. Moreover, on the other hand, this polyphony and plurality does not lead to nihilism, but as it happens to most of Barnes's characters, we feel we know more, as there are more possible explanations to make a sense of the world.
Works Cited


