CHAPTER 2

ILLUSION OF METANARRATIVES IN BARNES’S FICTION

"I am interested in what you might call the invention of tradition. Getting its history wrong is part of becoming a nation."

(Barnes in an Interview with Denning)

The postmodern concept of truth and history is surely based upon its philosophical view and background. The new idea of truth and history, which emerges in postmodernism, as mentioned in previous chapter, stems from philosophical attitudes of Nietzsche, Lyotard, Hutcheon, Habermas, Heidegger and many others. It is noticeable that while modernism is concerned with its own time and the individual subject, postmodernism shifted its attention from present to the past. Unlike modernism, where history as a subject is marginalized and considered as a sub-genre which occupies low level in novel writing, postmodernism sheds light on the historical novels.

History and Philosophical Hermeneutics are closely related in the sense that metanarratives of any kind need to be interpreted. The credibility of each person's prejudice and pre-judgment leads to the emergence of micronarratives and the vanishing of metanarratives. As Lyotard claims, the unity, which Habermas pursues, is an illusion and forcibly puts an end to plurality and increasing number of contemporary cultures. This discharge is the basis of his theory of grand narrative, or metanarrative. Lyotard introduces a new world of knowledge based on mininarratives which contain no universal truth but together form a body of knowledge, break the predominant effect of monopoly on knowledge and end the generalizing ideology of
grand narrative. To Lyotard, postmodern culture fares itself of the so-called centralizing effect on knowledge and in this way it decreases the importance of the epistemological hierarchy in any political and cultural movements. Lyotard celebrates local and impermanent knowledge and declares, “the grand narrative has lost its credibility” (37). This is a stage where postmodern artist or author surfaces and each presents their own mininarrative in the form of liberating postmodern expression.

The question, whether the truth and knowledge can be obtained by the external science or by the science of the soul, including literature, philosophy and art, is in the core of Philosophical Hermeneutics. Some critics such as Gadamer believe that art, by modifying our way of being, feeling and thinking, presents some kind of truth, and is not merely dream, fiction and imagination (Weberman 48). The work of art, as a world rich in values and meaning, delivers some knowledge of the author's historical epoch as well as asking the readers personal interpretations. Unlike Modernity in which only positivists’ sciences are thought to have access to the truth, in Postmodernity the so-called 'sciences of the soul' are also considered as a part of comprehension of the world and of humanity, since the aesthetical experience, by opening a new horizon of meaning, can be ascribed to the path towards truth.

Julian Barnes, on one hand, attempts to depict the difficulty of accessing the ultimate truth in his fiction, where every new interpretation and a tiny change in perspective leads to enrich or transform the truth, on the other hand, his novels are quite proper sources to investigate how the metanarrative is devaluated in postmodernism. Some totalized concepts such as history, culture, truth, religion and God are problematized in Barnes's fiction, where instead of employing general ideas and attitudes is any statement, mini-narratives are used. To clarify how Barnes
problematizes metanarratives and postmodernism’s new idea of truth and history in his fictions, let us look at the following.

**The Ultimate, Yet Ambiguous Truth**

Barnes portrays humans in different situations wherein they are either searching the truth or encounter one of the aspects of it when they are not yet ready for them. Barnes represents human in postmodern world where metanarratives and beliefs are no longer possible. His fiction depicts human beings when they face the reality of finality of death, (in *Metroland, Staring* and *England*); when the reality of fictionality and relativity of history are revealed to them (in *A History, Parrot, Before She* and *Porcupine*), and finally when the reality of the impact of every perspective and feelings upon truth and memory become significant in their lives (in *Talking, Love* and *The Sense*).

Barnes depicts the paralyzing fear of the finality of death, which stem from a deep discontent with life, and desire for organizing pattern in his novels such as *Metroland, Staring at the Sun* and *England, England*. Death is a Truth that protagonists are obligated to confront with, when the only soothing parapet, religion as a metanarrative, loses its previous value. However, the protagonists in each mentioned novel finds their own particular ways in the end. Specifically, *Staring at the Sun* and *England, England* dramatise the need for religious belief in the age when belief appears not possible any more. Both novels along with *Metroland* demonstrate a world wherein the metaphysical pursuits are abandoned and protagonists either quest for replacement or get along with the loss for being comfortable without it. Religion as a thing belongs to the past, is considered as a fable invented by people
who are too weak to encounter the world as it is and the definitiveness of the truth about death.

Metroland is Julian Barnes's first novel, which was written in eight years based upon the author's own experiences in the course of "coming-of-age" (Moseley 20). The novel is categorized as a metahistorical romance under the guise of a Bildungsroman wherein the fact that "the desire for the Truth that is Out there" is implicitly presented in it (Elias xviii). Metroland is a "witty Bildungsroman" that because of "lacking confidence [of the writer]. . . sat in a drawer for a year at a time and went through a lot of re-writing" (Guignery The Fiction of Julian Barnes 10).

Metroland, like Barnes's subsequent novels such as A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters, contains no continuous chronological narrative but only slight in-text connection between the chapters and an overall thematic connection. Due to the "structural similarity among the three parts", all parts begin with scene-settings, all are titled with ironic phrases such as "The Constructive Loaf" or "Nude, Giant Girls," and what is more all parts end with the recurrent chapter named “Object Relations”. Merritt Moseley, calls the novel a triptych (19). Indeed, the novel in three chapters, each of which corresponds to a specific period in the protagonist's life, presents symbolic “homage to French literature, culture and language” (Guignery The Fiction of Julian Barnes 12).

In this connection, the first Part, entitled "Metroland" (1963), 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), depicting a typically teenage bewilderment with the chaotic complexity of existence. It portrays a sixteen-year-old protagonist, Christopher Lloyd, living with his parents in a suburban of London. This part's
specific concern is on the adventures of Christopher and his friend Toni during that
time of life when “everything seems more open to analogy, to metaphor, than it does
now. [When] there were more meanings, more interpretations, and a greater variety of
available truths. There were more symbols” (13).

Second part, "Paris" (1968), 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 était
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), mirrors the notion of the significance of simplicity and unmediated
vision of the world at the stage of sobriety. This part centers on the life of a twenty-
one year old graduate student in Paris who finds himself enjoying the very bourgeois
things that he had formerly scoffed at as an adolescent.

Third Part, "Metroland II" (1977), in its turn, is introduced 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), underlining
the need for accepting the priorial existence of the Truth, no matter how long we
search for it, or what these searches involve. In the chapter "The Big D" in Metroland,
what surfaces is Christopher's provisional attempts to become involved in obscure
world of sexual knowledge, his parlaying fear of the reality of death which its onset
coincides with his rejection of God. The rejection was provoked by the

[...] neither the boringness of Sundays nor the guilt of wanking.

Within weeks, however, as if to push me, the infrequent but paralyzing
horror of big D invaded my life. I don't claim any originality got the
timing and location of my bouts of fear, . . . but I do claim one touch of particularity. (*Metroland* 53-54)

This is the same problem Gregory and Martha are faced with in *Staring at the Sun* and *England, England* respectively.

All the characters lack faith to suppose death as a path to other life, thus, they involve with a sort of negation and meaninglessness in their lives. Each character, however, finds their own way of treating with this problem and each one comes up with a special solution. Christopher, with the help of Toni, "assuages his fear by conceiving various forms of immortality, such as immorality through one's own offspring, . . . immorality through art, . . . and finally immorality as a 'gruelly bit of essence nimbusing around in a Huxleyan goo'" (Sesto 17-18). Martha attempts to overcome her fear of death by getting closer to religion, while, Gregory finds no other way than facing the reality of death as it is.

The failure of religious pursuit depicted in *Staring at the Sun* underlines the significance of the title of the novel and draws our attention to the skilful choice. The plot of *Staring at the Sun*, Banes' fourth novel, is divided into three parts and covers the duration from 1941 to 2021 in which the characters find out even high tech computer and knowledge could not answer some questions such as the validity of religion and existence of God. Unlike *Flaubert's Parrot* in which the protagonist seems prepared for the possibility of failure, in this novel the impossibility of accessing absolute knowledge by the characters gives the tone of disappointment and pessimism to it. This novel adapts the postmodern theological slang such as fear of death, bravery to believe in God, and giving up research.
To stare at the sun equals the courage to encounter the disappearance of metanarratives or as Hugh Rayment-Pickard quotes from Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*, "the horizon ringed around with myths" (Impossible God: Derrida’s *Theology* 137). The belief in God, which is considered as metanarrative, like other totalizing accounts of ultimate truth, is doomed to failure by postmodernism theoreticians. Metanarratives provide people with an illusion of a pattern and order, which assure a meaning beyond here and now. Religion is thus the answer to people's need for having a meaningful life, what Martha, Gregory and Christopher long for in Barnes's novels. In *Staring at the Sun, England, England*, and *Metroland* religion is also an attempt to hide the dazzling truth about the empty and indifferent universe: “God is the hand we put before our eyes because we cannot stare directly at the sun,” (Moseley 97).

Prosser, a pilot whose story is referred to in the *Staring at the Sun* several times, shares his experience of looking steadily at the sun in the following manner: “You stare through your fingers at the sun, and you notice that the nearer you get to it, the colder you feel. You ought to worry about it but you don’t. You don’t because you’re happy” (Staring 29). The more one gets close to the truth, the more they might feel disappointed, however, the faith in the existence of ultimate truth and its accessibility would bring satisfaction and encourage to keep stepping on the same way. Many years later and after the death of Prosser, Jean understands that carrying on climbing higher and higher to face the inevitable end is the way Prosser chose for his death. Unlike Martha in *England, England* and Christopher in *Metroland*, Gregory and his mother Jean Serjeant search the conclusion that religion, like the sheltering hand, may be an illusion but it does not protect them from the dazzling fact of meaningless life. The last scene of the novel, wherein Jean and Gregory are flying
together, besides having counterpart Prosser's experience of looking at the sun, reveals the fact that facing the truth is painful even for the courageous. Gregory finds himself unable to stare at the sun which makes him burst into tears and shrink away from it, and Jean, novel's symbol of courage, looks at it but without "any sign of greeting" or smile and she “trie[s] very hard not to blink” (195).

*Staring at the Sun* and *England, England* assert the longing for God which may often be at variance with rational mindset. In the face of the truth, of both religion and God as devaluated metanarratives, Martha, Christopher, and Gregory eventuate Barnes's much-quoted phrase "I don't believe in God but I miss Him" (Guignery *Conversations with Julian Barnes* 60). Protagonists' metaphysical yearning is their reaction toward the absence of the stable meaning and the thinness of life rather than a weakness. The search for religious reassurance and certainty, particularly in Gregory's case, is doomed as a desire for knowledge and final meaning. Despite the last scene of *Starting at the Sun*, wherein Gregory refuses to face sun and cries, the novel does not undermine the purposefulness of religious beliefs, but it highlights it as a stage in the journey to a deeper understanding of human condition. The purposefulness of the research regardless of its disappointing conclusion comes to domain in *Staring at the Sun*.

Sixty-year-old Gregory, the protagonist of *Staring at the Sun*, while he had no interest in any religion before, suddenly and in the light of his slowly impending death, is attracted to life's fundamental issues to find purpose of his life. His urge to discover the necessity of religion or "a pattern" is established firmly and deeply in his growing fear of death, insufficiency, or chaos and in the need for the comfort and safety it brings (*Staring* 36). Religion, due to the consolation it offers rather than the
answers it gives, satisfies the protagonists’ need for a coherent narrative that would account for their permanent existence or makes an illusion of order and harmony available for them: “The old story, the first story: Gregory eased himself into it. A comfortable jacket, an armchair fitted to your shape by long use, the wooden handle of an old saw, a jazz tune with all its parts, a footprint in the sand which fits your shoe” (Staring 165). The novel adapts its concept from the following maxim by La Rochefoucauld: “Neither the sun nor death can be stared at steadily” (Guignery The Fiction of Julian Barnes 60). “God,” as Merrit Moseley acknowledges, “is a defence men turn to because they are afraid” (99). Vanessa Guignery, similarly, asserts that the novel as a whole “acknowledges man’s need for God, who keeps fear at bay” (The Fiction of Julian Barnes 60).

*England, England* is written twelve years after *Staring at the Sun* and twenty years after *Metoland* with the same perspective towards the religious yearning. *England, England* is Barnes's ninth novel and his second book which was short listed for The Booker Prize. The critics praised the book for its ambition, humour, and creativity. The novel is an account of life of Martha Cochrane, the protagonist. Besides, the novel highlights Martha's psychological and physical maturation, it also depicts the overall crisis in Britain that eventuates in replacement of the country by the theme-park called "England, England". The project of constructing the theme-park of England is managed by Sir Jack Pitman in the area known as Isle of Wight. As explained before and 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* 105).
The first part of the novel, entitled "England," deals with the protagonist's childhood and adolescence by focusing upon her incredulity towards religion, memory, official history and authority. Martha's affection towards assembling puzzles and growing plants for presenting in Agricultural Show is portrayed in order to be interpreted as an origin of her lack of order, security and wholeness. The second part, entitled "England, England" depicts Martha as an unhappy woman with negative and cynical attitude towards life, in spite of her psychological and sexual maturity. Martha is employed as "an Appointed Cynic" or Special Consultant in Pitman's the Island Project constructing a giant theme-park simulating “England's best known historical buildings, sites and figures” (Barnes England 47; Guignery The Fiction of Julian Barnes 104). Later her love affair with Paul, who is employed as the Idea Catcher, allows her to heal her psychological and social shortcomings such as simplicity, though it is temporary. She gains so much confidence that she manages to occupy Sir Pitman's position as Corporate Employment Officer by expelling him from the board of the company.

The theme-park obtains a great attention among the tourists for it provides easier, time-saving and entertaining access to almost all the famous attractions of old England. However, later, the palace encounters some troubles by its employees and the actors, who are unwilling to play their authentic roles, and replace it with artificial reality of their roles. Meanwhile, Sir Jack Pitman by banishing Martha from the Isle of Wight, awards himself the title of first Baron Pitman of Fortuibus. He put an end to the short time business activities of Martha and Paul, “The Peasants' Revolt of Paul and Martha had proved a forgettable interlude, long written out of history” (England 256). After Sir Jack's death, his silmulacral is added to the theme-park as another popular tourist attraction, “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” (257). Hence, the narrator highlights the fact that “Time, or, more exactly, the dynamics of the Project, had its revenge” on the invincible Pitman (258).

The importance is in the third part of the novel, where Martha's need for belief and religion emerges. The part "Angelia" takes place in a village completely far away from all the problems of the Project. Here, we face elderly Martha who returns “after her decades of wandering” and old England is depicted as a place of severe decline which could "be compared to some backward province of Portugal or Turkey” (England 259; 260). Now the country returns to its pastoral roots in the attempt to start a new beginning by constructing of new founding myths and fabulations. As a consequence, the new fabulations become crucial for fitting a new reality together with a belief in the country. An air of authenticity, simplicity and genuineness, which are so much missed by Martha in her adulthood and simulation phase, fill the village, though the arising of fabulation or “inventions seem so obviously fraudulent” (271). Actually, the fraudulent nature of fabulation hinders constructing an acceptable, authentic, simple and genuine reality.

The country's beginning as any other truth in postmodernism remains in an aura of ambiguity, yet the belief in the possibility of obtaining it exists somewhere out there, guides the country in its development. This chapter shows what would happen to a country if it lost its attainability of genuineness, however, the postmodern chaos of the simularcal England, England, which is depicted in previous chapters of the same novel, is the answer.
Martha Cochrane, the protagonist and a successful businesswoman in charge of the project "England, England", loses her enthusiasm for job, which was once her passion and her life gradually appears to be unreal and incomplete. Like Gregory, she feels she lacks something significant which is not easy to pinpoint; yet her reaction to her unstable position in life is different from Gregory and Christopher. She finds herself in the church though she has no positive reason for that from the beginning: “disappointment, age, a discontent with the thinness of life” (England 221). Martha as well as Gregory have no faith in religion and perceive it as system invented by man to "make [human] feel better about death" (England 221).

Yet Martha has to face the absurdity of her position, which stems from her lack of faith in God. The question, "What am I after?" is raised in her mind when she visits the abandoned church for the second time after confessing her longing for the nonexistent God (England 237). The desire for a cohering pattern, which grants meaning to the world and can be supported by the power beyond it, keeps her visiting the church regularly. “I suppose,” she declares, “life must be more serious if it has a structure, if there is something larger out there than yourself” (237). Compared to Staring at the Sun, the matter whether there is any truth in religion is of the secondary importance in England, England. For Martha, who is in charge of the project and is preoccupied with the idea of a replica or simulacrum every day, a desire and yearning is awakened for the return to the real and for the serious dimension of life that used to be guaranteed by religion:

I’m not in a church because of God. One of the problems is that words, the serious words, have been used up over the centuries by people like those rectors and vicars listed on the wall. The words don’t seem to fit
the thoughts nowadays. But I think there was something enviable about that otherwise unenviable world. Life is more serious, and therefore better, and therefore bearable, if there is some larger context. (238)

Both *Staring at the Sun* and *England, England* portray in words the world wherein the metanarratives of religion and the past disappears. Protagonists suffer from the nostalgia for the soothing sense of order in the world not yet free of metaphysical longings but religion is marginalized as an institution. Philippa Berry in her “Postmodernism and Post-Religion” recalls a quotation of Jacques Derrida about post-religious spirituality of postmodernity: “There is then some spirit. Spirits. And one must reckon with them,” which stresses the need for otherworldliness and transcendence while there is no longer faith in metanarratives of religion (169). Berry in her definition of postmodernity, implicitly exposes the reality mirrored in Barnes’s novels: a yearning beyond the domain of rationality and “imprinted with traces of other, more ambiguous and elusive, modes of spirituality or of . . . post-religious, post-sceptical . . . consciousness” (171). Post-religious consciousness and religious longing are awakened in the characters of both novels, while they are saturated with the fake and unreal world of technology and simulacrum. *England, England* as a whole is the novel in which Barnes explicitly dramatises Baudrillard’s mourning of unreality. It shows the tragic result of the triumph of the hyperreal though people are either unconscious, unaware or under an anaesthetic when most of these events were happening.

The theme of being unconscious and unaware is also evident in Barnes’s *Staring at the Sun*, in which Jean comes up with her private list of the seven wonders of life. She becomes fully aware of her being almost unconscious as a fact when most
of these wonders were happening. This leads to unfolding a sad realization that most of the people have very little control over their life. Jean comes to the conclusion, “You do things, and only later do you see why you did them, if ever you do. Most of life is passive, the present a pinprick between an invented past and an imagined future” (Staring 91). Her conclusion mirrors the words of Geoffrey Braithwaite in Flaubert’s Parrot, “we make a decision – or a decision makes us – and we go one way” (76). The protagonists of three novels suffer from an experience of depriving of a reality, which plays active part in their lives. They find themselves trapped in a kind of an unreal state between the invented past and imagined future.

What underscores in Barnes's novels is not straightforwardly endorsing or rejecting the important characteristics of postmodern condition but playing self-consciously with them. However, on the whole, from the way Barnes's novels are introduced and developed, one might conclude that they are deeply rooted in postmodernist thought. Flaubert’s Parrot, Staring at the Sun and A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters reflect the chaos, confusion and crisis of meaning that eventuate the collapse of the old reassuring narratives which made sense of the world. Besides all the similarities between Barnes's fiction and postmodernism, still there are a few fundamental differences in-between. Unlike postmodernism, which celebrates the loss of meaning, Barnes's novels are pervaded with a longing for the no longer available stable meaning.

Postmodernism ignores seeking foundations on which a new system of thought could be built to make the end of grand narrative more endurable for humans. The lack of any firm foundations in the postmodern condition of human was documented in Barnes's novels, which pervade with disappointment, anxiety and
frustration. Most importantly, his novels reflect the need of beginning some sort of pursuit that would affirm one's place in the increasingly relative and ethically hollow universe. Matthew Pateman in his article, “Julian Barnes and the Popularity of Ethics,” places the author of *Flaubert’s Parrot* in opposition to postmodernism, insofar as he attempts to “re-invent legitimating formulae in an effort to arrest our fall into beguiling relativity” (189). Pateman continues that the main concern of Barnes’s fiction is to assess “the potential for an ethical formulation in the light of the breakdown of legitimating narratives” (181).

Although Barnes published *Flaubert’s Parrot* in 1984, his interest in Flaubert goes back to when he first read *Madam Bovary* at the age of fifteen. In an article, "When Flaubert Took Wing" for Guardian, he wrote about the novel:

> I can identify exactly the moment at which the novel began -- even if I didn't recognise it myself at the time. I had first read Madame Bovary at about 15; had done a special paper on Flaubert at university; and felt that at some point I would want to write about him. All I knew was the sort of book I didn't want to write - any kind of biography, for instance, or something in that charmingly illustrated Thames & Hudson series about writers and their worlds... (1)

Barnes came across both stuffed parrots which are individually claimed by two different museums to be the original parrot Flaubert used as a model while writing the short story *Un Cœur Simple*. He got an idea for academic article, however later he thought,

> What if someone -- clearly not me, but someone sufficiently interested in Flaubert, someone whose life might have parallels and points of
bouncing contact with Flaubert's work and perhaps life - were to have the same experience? It could be the opening - or perhaps clinching - moment in a story about life and art, about France and England, about the pursuit of the writer by the reader, and that moment of contact - practical yet mystical - between the two of them. (2)

Thus, he started with the idea of writing an academic article about Flaubert and his mysterious Parrot, but he ended up with a peculiar multi-layered novel that became the linchpin of the discussion among the critics for setting it as the postmodern poetics of fiction in less than a decade.

According to Hermeneutics, interpretations are necessary to understand the text even if pre-judgments and pre-notions are used. As Heidegger asserts in his conceptualization of the hermeneutical circle, there is nothing entirely new to us, we understand everything based upon our pre-knowledge of the world. Thus, to understand other people's world, knowing their language, points of view and intentions is needed. What Philosophical Hermeneutics promotes is the "fusion of horizons", which means leaving one's own temporarily and culturally determined knowledge and join that of others in order to understand them (Massaro 678). However, prejudices were considered as hindrances to a truthful knowledge by positivists and they had to vanish in order to gain an objective view on the world. Philosophical Hermeneutics rejects accessibly of unprejudiced objectivity under any circumstances. Our prejudices are horizons that link us to other horizons including past horizons. Yet, there still is some points of view where prejudices are considered as being useful, since the world is understood through them. For instance, Gadamer suggests eliminating the prejudices, to become aware of cultural identities, and to
distinguish between legitimate and false prejudices in order to grasp that comprehension and knowledge are always historically determined.

No one, even skilful historians, can avoid his or her own prejudices and pre-judgments in writing a piece of history. This is what Barnes hints in his novel *Flaubert's Parrot* in the opening paragraphs of Chapter Three, when Braithwaite asks, “What chance would the craftiest biographer stand against the subject who saw him coming and decided to amuse himself?” (31). *Flaubert's Parrot* starts with Geoffrey Braithwaite's trip to Rouen to visit places associated with Flaubert. Like the author of the novel, Braithwaite also comes across two stuffed parrots in two different museums, which individually claim to be the original parrot used by Flaubert as a model while writing the short story *Un Cœur Simple*. In the rest of the novel, Braithwaite finds it quite interesting to solve this mystery and get to know which one is the real parrot. During his research he finds out that Flaubert returned the parrot to the museum when he finished writing his story. After a good deal of research in different places, Braithwaite discovers that the answer to the mystery is in the museum where he finds a room full of stuffed parrots. At the end of the novel, a Flaubert's scholar in museum adds that finding the real parrot according to the mentioned physical characteristics in the story is not possible, because Flaubert might have changed it while writing the story. The research for the real parrot is only one of the stories of the novel, which appears at the beginning and concludes as an unsolvable mystery in the end.

According to Bartky, "[t]he text . . . reveals itself not as something which possesses a meaning as some object might be thought to possess a property, but as an endless source of possible meanings, a reality whose essence it is to be indefinitely
'self-presenting' or self-disclosing" (601). By devaluating universal truth, every account and interpretation of a single text and incident place its importance to reach the ultimate truth. The differences in our pre-occupations of the world, which are due to linguistic, social, cultural, and historical determinations, makes the interpretation of the text be individual and infinite, rather than being just univocal and dominant. Likewise, Palmer underlines the challenging point that postmodernity arises against modernity as a "movement beyond western forms of reality" (375). Then he states:

A study of Hopi language, or other American Indian languages, brings one into contact not just with a quite different perceptual field and mode of understanding “the world”. It is not just another set of words for (pre-given) Western (read “universal”) “realities.” The study of Indian or Oriental languages makes us vividly aware that the mind-set of “modernity” as we experience it is in part a phenomenon of Western linguistic reality. (Palmer 375)

Echoing the above statement in Flaubert’s Parrot is a chapter named "Chronology", where Barnes presents three contradictory chronologies of Flaubert's life: one is very optimistic chronology, the second is a very pessimistic chronology and the third is based on Flaubert's metaphorical statements taken mostly from his writings and letters. These three chronologies, besides disclosure of the rhetorical aspect of any historical description, reveal that one's perceptions from history and truth are all partial and would be changed if one has the possibility of accessing variety of approaches from other perspectives.

A great deal of the novel presents different types of Flaubert's chronology, his literary career with a specific attention to Madam Bovary and his affair with Louis
Colet. Another dimension is Braithwaite's story including his relationship with his late wife Ellen who betrays him with a number of men and commits suicide. All of the stories are told by an oblique narrative, which is only hinted at and delayed for a long time and finally enunciated towards the end of the novel.

Sesto quotes from Wynne-Davise that the novel “Reflects the structuralist and poststructuralist scepticism about the ability of language to refer to a non-linguistic reality, and the sense that fictionality is an attribute of forms of discourse other than fiction, such as history and the social science” (125). In this novel, the author, instead of following any particular genre, blends different genres such as autobiography, history, criticism, chronology, and fiction to invent a new literary genre (Salgas 17). As Sterne, in answering the question “Is it a novel?” states: “Yes, if you want it to be . . . It is a boiling pot in which the author has mixed genres” (Salgas 17).

While Metroland is considered as Barnes's neophyte novel, Flaubert's Parrot "literally launched [him]" into the career of a novelist (Smith 75). As Ann Hulbert states, it was "a breakthrough – widely reviewed, popular, the book that made him one of Britain’s young novelists to watch" (38). Probably, it is better to call Flaubert's Parrot a "trans-generic prose text", in which a variety of genres, be it bestiary, a chronology, an encyclopaedic entry, a criticism, an epistolary form, a historiography, or a biography were utilized (Scott 57). As David Higdon mentions in his 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 (141).
Similarly, Amy J. Elias, by referring to this aspect of *Flaubert's Parrot*, calls it "Paratactic history" of Flaubert's life, using "juxtaposition, linear disjunction, deperspectivised space" to put 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" (Elias 124; McHale 154).

More than that, by offering a bewildering verity of discourses and genres, Barnes makes it hard for the readers to find any established signified, if there is any. His output to date proves him to be a master of various genres and forms, most notably literary detective novel in *Flaubert's Parrot*, the futurist face in *England, England*, psychotic obsession in his *Before She Met Me*, the political courtroom drama in *The Porcupine*. In *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, each chapter offers multiple and discursive genres: a fable in chapter one, a political thriller in chapter two, courtroom drama in chapter three, science fiction or psychiatric case in chapter four, a historical narrative and art criticism in chapter five, epistolary fiction in chapter eight, an essay on love in the half chapter, and a drama vision in chapter ten. Barnes draws our attention to the difference in meaning regardless of their content through bewildered discursive modes of discourse.

*Flaubert's Parrot* is considered as a novel about truth, which throws doubts on essential issues including the relation between art and reality, the accessibility of truth, the sincerity of love, and the possibility of knowing self. If one considers *Metroland* as a story which recounts the progression of mankind from the sobriety to postmodern fabulation, then *Flaubert's Parrot* is a depiction of the condition of mankind on the stage of fabulation. The stage is clearly noticeable for its constant
fabulation of meaningful personal truth under the shade of existing ultimate truth which directs humans through life. Braithwaite stresses the fact that the readers pursue and put into question the objectivity of the text and the author's identity regardless of their unattainability. The following lines of Braithwaite embody the general thematic pattern of the novel:

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 percent 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?

(Parrot 8)

Subsequently, the novel abounds in "too many contradictions and too many undecidable bite of evidence" that lead to emergence of numerous accounts of Flaubert's life particularly in the chapter 'Chronology' (Moseley 80).

Braithwaite’s quest for finding the original parrot turns into a mere parody of Flaubert's life to fill the gap between the truth and his perception of it. He employs the fictional life of Charles and Emma Bovary or Gustave Flaubert and Louise Colet to find a temporal remedy for the crisis in his life. However, he was not successful in getting out of the crisis and understanding the objective truth about himself, Flaubert, Ellen, and the parrot. Thus, in order to escape the beguiling trap of relativity he
fabulates his own version of Ellen, Flaubert, parrot, and his self. Although the postmodern epochs such as the purposefulness of research or the never-ending process of searching truth is evident in the general structure of the novel, the implicit message of unattainability of truth is mentioned by most of the critics.

*Flaubert's Parrot* gives the readers what they want and then yanking it away, Barnes simply leaves them quite literally, hanging. The other example of the same theme but in different frame is one of Barnes's political novels, *The Porcupine*. For one reason, the novel, *The Porcupine* bares postmodernism's aversion towards the great ideological 'metanarratives' which have dominated human experience for so many centuries. The novel, which exemplifies the emergence of democracy in Eastern Europe and particularly in Russia, reveals that the socialist governments are as ruthless as their predecessors in using their own bureaucratic machinery.

The subject of *The Porcupine* is the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and its main plot revolves around the conflict between the country's former communist leader, Stoyo Petkanov, and the General Prosecutor, Peter Solinsky. Set in an unnamed European county, the novel raises the mood of political distrust which pervades our world. On the surface, according to Solinsky, the novel deals with a working out of the legacy of Josef Stalin. However, the book deeply personifies 20th century's political world where the treachery, paranoia and inhumanity led to the last stage of political man's moral decline to perfidy. Stalin's order to execute his political ally and friend, Sergei Kirov, was the most significant event ushered in this decline. As Solinsky mentions in the novel:

The assassination of Kirov. That was the key date. Stalin's friend and ally, Stalin's comrade. Therefore, as we innocently used to say,
therefore the one person in the world who could not possibly have wished or hoped for it, let alone ordered it, was Stalin himself. For Stalin to have ordered Kirov's death was not just 'out of character', but beyond our understanding of what character might comprise. . . . We have moved to an era when 'character' is a misleading concept. Character has been replaced by ego, and exercise of authority as a reflection of power has been replaced by the psychopathic retention of power by all possible means, and in mockery of all implausibilities.

Stalin had Kirov killed. Welcome to the modern world. (107)

On one hand, the novel portrays, Stoyo Petkanov, the country's former communist leader who is dethroned and is on trial for crimes he committed while in power and on the other hand, the readers see the portrayal of other influential character, Peter Solinsky, who is a member of the forces of brushing away communism over Eastern Europe in order to bring democracy. Solinsky finds himself in the path of a personal transition from being a former law professor under the communist regime to taking a new role as champion of the democratic ideals. His contingent role is partly rooted in the general mood of the country's uncertain situation in moving towards democracy and free-enterprise economy and also originates from the frustration he experiences in his attempt to collect tangible evidence against Petkanov.

As the country is beset with problems of social and economical transition, Slinsky finds himself in the same problem in his inner transition. Robert Stone notes, we witness a man who is "trying to believe in the ideals he professes, unwilling to face his own opportunism" (3). For his motives for repudiating communism, Solinsky
challenges first Petkanov, who accused him of being traitor and later his wife who accused him of being a self-righteous opportunist, however he can only respond with hollow-sounding platitudes. In one scene, for example, Solinsky says,

We gave them freedom and truth. It sounds pompous in his mouth, but it was what he believed, so why not state it? 'Freedom and truth!' replied Petkanov mockingly. 'So these are your higher things! You give the women the freedom to come out of their kitchen and march on your parliament and tell you this truth that there is no fucking sausage in the shops. . . . And you call this progress?' (100)

Later in another scene, Solinsky himself is accused of enjoying many privileges that came with being the son of a high-ranking communist intellectual by Petkanow in the trial. The novel shows that Peter Solinsky was firm in his faith in communist ideology even after his father's expulsion from the party. He "knew that the party was always greater than the individual, and that this applied in his father's case as in anyone else's" (Porcupine 27).

However, the country's political conditions, which become progressively worse, eventuates in erosion of Solinsky's loyalty to the party. Besides, though his answers to his daughter's innocent question about life in their country contented her, they appear to be sceptical and do not satisfy him anymore.

Why were there so many soldiers when there wasn't any war? Why were there so many apricot trees in the countryside but never apricots in the shop? Why is there fog over the city in the summer? . . . The questions weren't dangerous and peter has answered easily enough. Because they are there to protect us. Because we sell them abroad for
hard currency that we need. Because there are many factories working at full capacity. (Porcupine 20-21)

As the trial gets under way, Vera who is watching the trial with her friends, announces that knowing truth about the extent of Petkanov's crime is sufficient for her. But other characters are not content just to disclose the truth, and demand both public humiliation and execution of the former communist leader:

'I hope they hang him,' said Dimiter the day before the trial began.

'Shoot him,' Atanas preferred. . . .

'I hope we learn the truth,' said Vera.

'I hope they just let him talk, said Stefan. 'Just ask him simple questions to which there are simple answers, and then hear him come out with all that shit. (18)

However, the truth in The Porcupine remains in an aura of ambiguity at the end just like in Flaubert's Parrot. Petkanov appears to be a refractory opponent, who was convinced that the new government has already determined his fate by guiding the trial in the specific direction based on their will and by using foolish and petty allegations.

What are these peddling charges? Who cares whether fifteen years ago some struggling actor was permitted to live in two rooms rather than one? If this is all you can find to accuse me of, then I can't have done much wrong in thirty-three years as helmsman of this nation. (60-61)
Petkanov implies that his successors with any political attitude and from any political party deserve blame as much as him. When Solinsky proudly announces that the free newspapers will enjoy under the present organization, Petkanov reminds that the term 'free newspaper' is conditional, since all the newspapers belongs to the same party and same interest (*Porcupine* 42).

Barnes, by arranging the confrontations between these two rival characters, seems to prove Maureen Howard's statement; "Barnes is aware that in staging his Shavian arguments he disarms us, prevents us from offering pat solutions to difficult problems" (139). Petkanov pretend to be lost in a maze of rationalizations and specious counter-arguments to distort the truth and make himself look innocent. However, his strategy was unveiled by his opponent, Solinsky, who was conscious about the fact that the defendant's mind "functions only to recall actions supposedly within the law" (110). Thus he alludes to Petkanov's use of "selective memory" as a defense strategy:

> We have become more than familiar over the many weeks of this criminal case with your defense. Your defense to all charges and accusations. If something illegal was done, then you did not know about it. And if you did know about it, then it was legal. (*Porcupine* 110-111)

When the proceedings begin, the audience, Vera and her friends, are rather sure that the trial will introduce the new era of freedom and truth, however as the trial wears on, the four characters become increasingly disappointed and cynical to the result. Both sides mock the trial, Petkanov mocks the justice and Solinsky mocks the proceedings by accepting falsified evidence from security chief Ganin. To Solinsky
and the four characters the trial is not going as expected, because both find the charges against Petkanov trivial and Petkanov's resourcefulness in refuting them.

Moreover, when Solinsky leaves the courthouse pleased with victory, he feels that "he could take on anything" (115). But he faces his wife blaming him for having "bent the law" in order to convict the former leader (118). Maria calls her husband a "pimp" and characterizes his courtroom show as "vulgar" and "worthy of American television" (117).

Peter, you don't really think that the worst criminal in our nation's history would sign such a useful document which Ganin just happened to discover when the prosecution wasn't having the success he'd hoped? . . . The document is true, even if it is a forgery. Even if it isn't true, it is necessary. Each excuse was weaker, yet also more brutal.

(Porcupine 119)

The ambiguity in The Porcupine might be rooted in Barnes's own distrust of ideological block theories such as Capitalism, Communism, and Democracy. Sesto in his Language, History, and Metanarrative in the Fiction of Julian Barnes, quoted Robert Stone and follow it with his argument:

'the work of Julian Barnes has often thrived on various levels of irony, on the reduction and dissection of illusion.' For the average people of Barnes's fictional East European country, genuine democratic reform is merely a mirage; to them the only things which have changed are the names of the various government bureaucracies. (Sesto 123)
History, Novel: Reality, Fictionality

Julian Barnes's fifth novel *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* exemplifies several of major tendencies of postmodernist historical fiction. Fourteen stories in no chronological sequence, among which several of them have no real historical basis whatsoever. The author follows the postmodern mode of narration in each chapter.

Frank Kermode categorized *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* as fictions "whose ends are consonant with origins, and in concord, however unexpected, with their precedents," and fictions which "satisfy our needs" by giving significance to our lives, seeing that we live our whole lifetime in the midst of things (Kermode *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory* 5; 7). Likewise, McGrath acknowledges that this fiction lives up to Barnes's own dictum that "art is the stuff you finally understand, and life, perhaps, is the stuff you finally can't understand" (24).

As pointed out by the scholars and reviewers, the novel begins by retelling the biblical story through the woodworm's point of view and closes with a story set in future. Other chapters follow no chronological order in any sense. Second chapter tells the story of a hijacked boat by modern Arab terrorists who insist upon retelling history from their perspective to provide more clarification. Chapter three describes sixteenth century court records of a case related to woodworms in the diocese of Besançon. Fourth chapter depicts the mildly futuristic and fantastical journey of a woman, who has a mental disorder, escaping by sea from West’s nuclear threat. Fifth chapter is divided into two sections, one recounting the 1916’s shipwreck of French frigate, the Medusa, and another analyzing the painting of the same event by
Géricault, "The Raft of the Medusa", three years later. Sixth chapter portrays the religious expedition of an Irish woman to Mountain Ararat in search of the remains of Noah's Ark's in 1840. Seventh chapter consists of three simple stories, one concerning a survivor from the Titanic, another comparing Jonah and the 1891's sailor, both swallowed by a whale, and the last story dealing with the Jewish passengers who escaped from Nazi Germany in 1939 aboard the St. Louis. Chapter eight mirrors the life of a modern film actor who is acting in a film based on the event which has happened about a hundred years ago in the Venezuelan jungle. Next is the half chapter entitled "Parentheses," known as an essay on love. Chapter nine is another pilgrimage to Mountain Ararat in 1977 by an astronaut for the same reason as in the chapter six. The last chapter deals with the incidents which happen to a person in the other life.

* A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters * points out the existence of overarching signified throughout the novel. Barnes makes the readers find the relationships between the signifiers dispersed among the various episodes and perceive the narrative's importance. It is noticeable how Barnes as a pseudo-historian echoes the way traditional historians, who according to Barthes, organize their material in the shape of "lists that are to a certain extent closed, and therefore accessible to comprehension: in a word, they can form collections, whose units end up by repeating themselves, in combinations that are obviously subject to variation" (12). Barthes further improves his concept of the historical collection: "In the case of less well defined collections the units of content may nonetheless receive a strong structuring which derives not from the lexicon, but from the personal thematic of the author" (13).
Barnes's book opens and closes with statements by which he deliberately attempts to confuse the distinction between waking and dreaming states: "I dreamt that I woke up. It's the oldest dream of all, and I've just had it" (448). A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters is rather the same in complexity, ambition, disruption and contradiction as 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). The possible thematic similarity between these two novels recalls Barnes's own confession: “I was going to write Geoffrey Braithwaite’s Guide to the Bible. Which would be the entire Bible, restricted for handy modern use, with the boring bits cut out, written by an agnostic, sceptic rationalist” (Stuart 15). Although the mentioned book was never written, a subversive pseudo-religious account of the history of the world emerged out of that idea.

The only difference that certainly identifies this book with the rest of Barnes's novels is its fragmented episodes that recall what Lévi-Strauss has called bricolage. A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters represents the multiplicity of characters, of narrative voices, and of events. As a result critics such as Robert Nixon asserts that “Barnes has come up with a confident collection of short stories somewhat bewildered by its packaging as a novel,” while Merle Rubin acknowledges in “From Nebulae to Noah’s Ark” that the work is “less than a novel than a connection of linked stories and essays” (55; 13). Most of the critics “referred to the book as a collection of tales, stories or short stories” for its fragmented episodes and were “daunted by the lack of a single plot, the disruption of chronology and the absence of narrative cohesion,” (Guignery The Fiction of Julian Barnes 61), but Barnes insists on classifying it as a novel according to his definition of novel: “A long piece of writing with something wrong in it” (an interview with Melvyn Bragg The South Bank Show). Barnes in
another interview and to the same question replied: "Well, it was conceived as a whole and executed as a whole. Things in it thicken and deepen" (Cook 12). However, in his interview with David Sexton, Barnes notes that *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* is a novel since it is “an extended piece of prose, largely fictional, which is planned and executed as whole piece” (Moseley 10). Later in the same year Barnes announced that he does not take notice to the criticism of *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*:

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 a 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. (Mosseley 12)

About *Flaubert's Parrot*, which Barnes keeps calling a novel, he confesses to Amanda Smith in the interview:

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)

Barnes confronted the same question; whether his works are novel or not, in many interviews. Most challenging questions are raised about Flaubert's Parrot and A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters. Furthermore, 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).

Julian Barnes’s A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters is a fictional account of history of the world, which is rather similar to David Mitchell's Cloud Atlas. Though the degree of fictionality varies from one text to another, both novels have similarities such as they contain sections set in the distant future and consist mainly of human world, although other living creatures are not neglected. A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters is also compared to Sir Walter Raleigh's The History of the World for both begin with a story of Genesis. However, unlike Raleigh, Barnes abandons describing a providential interpretation of history. The other difference between these two works emanates from the aim of the authors. While Barnes's A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters runs to some 300 pages and apparently avoids any pretense of continuity or comprehensiveness, Raleigh's The History of the World was a monumental attempt to achieve the history of the world beginning with the Creation.
In his *The Discourse of History*, Barthes views historical discourse as "in its essence a form of ideological elaboration, or to put it more precisely, an imaginary elaboration" (16). Barthes asserts that "[the] historian is not so much a collection of facts as a collector and relater of signifiers; that is to say, he organizes them with the purpose of establishing positive meaning and filling the vacuum of pure, meaningless series" (*The Discourse of History* 16). Barnes, by adapting similar view of history in his book, would appear to agree with Barthes's objection to what he calls "the fallacy of representation", attached to traditional historical discourse (*The Discourse of History* 16). In *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, Barnes states: "We make up a story to cover the facts we don't know or can’t accept; we keep a few facts and spin a new story round them" (388).

Since frames are constructing a point of view by which the readers could interpret a given situation in a particular manner, Julian Barnes in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* borrows incidents from the frame of history and religion to form his novel. In the first chapter "The Stowaway", Barnes combines the religious and historical frames by implying the churchy special significations with didactic or moral teachings for man, and also by retelling the story refers to the Great Deluge.

When the worm in “The Stowaway” expresses Noah's Ark's incidents in a completely defamiliarized way, it opens the gate of fictional artist to the readers. The worm questions the reality of the account of Noah's Ark everyone could find in any religious source, simultaneously the validity of its account is undermined in the view of the readers. Braithwaite too in *Flaubert's Parrot* utilizes Flaubert's biography to give a sense to his own life and story. These are no biographies or life stories but mythical and legendary metafiction. Together with techniques such as
defamiliarization, which modifies the perception of the objects towards a clear artistic aim by means of laying bare the author's technique, the study of historiography also provides with a useful argument to analyze narrative discourse.

Literary and historiographic texts are viewed as forms of writing and not mutually exclusive in terms of their qualities of imagination and fact. "The Stowaway" obtains its historiography from the historical frame the author uses and its metafictionality from satirical narration of the biblical story of the Great Deluge, while the reader comprehends its fictional aspects due to its different perspective from a woodworm. "The Stowaway" becomes a hypertext for its using of biblical text as the major source of historical signification or hypotext (Allen 107-108). The story is governed by double-coded discourse, which as Hutcheon says, urges the readers to think and rethink of traditional history as only a way of viewing. Barnes deconstructs the Genesis by distancing from it and constructs a new story to empower and strengthen his concept of what history is. Elements such as background, characters, situation and topic are quite similar with only slight differences in both hypotext (biblical text) and hypertext (the story), yet the original story is given a turn. Barnes's hypertext is built on differences, particularly of narration.

The past and parodic narration's authority in hypotext is challenged in the hypertext. "The Stowaway" gets a woodworm, the most insignificant species on the earth, as a narrator to satirize the Genesis. The woodworm is given the same level of authority as the Bible's narrator. Barnes gives the authority to the mordant cynic narrator to depict the voyage from a perspective as distant as possible from didactic narrative of the Bible. Yet, Barnes uses parody as a frame-breaking technique to
change the religious frame of the Bible to fictional account by constructing a new story.

During the 19th century, four major theorists of historiography, Droysen, Nietzsche, Hegel and Croce, envisioned interpretation as an inseparable part of historiography. Each one of the theorists attempts to present a classification of its type, yet all agree to place historiography among the literary arts (White 54). A *History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* problematizes conventional historiography both by replacing monophony with polyphony and by challenging the basic patterns, which are used in any writing of history. Similarly, Hayden White in the Preface to *Metahistory* (1973), in which he attempts to establish the unavoidable poetic nature of the historical work, clarifies historical works are not merely contained of data; on the contrary, of the theoretical concepts which underlie those data and of narrative structure for their presentation. For the reason that form influences the overall meaning of a content and is not a neutral, the historical work becomes "a verbal structure, in the form of a narrative prose discourse with the aim of explaining what the past were by representing it" (White 3). The narrative structure of any historical work implies that fictive elements are main part of them, no matter how objective the historian tires to be. The same issue is raised by Realism in fiction, which asserts that fiction is another type of writing history. Such questions as what Barnes raised in *Flaubert's Parrot*, "How do we seize the past? Can we ever do so?" put into question the credibility of history as a scientific discipline (*Parrot* 77). Nowadays, unlike 19th century, History is challenged by "fictive character of historical reconstruction" and "unambiguous answers" of the past is no more satisfying to the readers (White 1). It is considered that a certain amount of fiction is in historiography as well as a certain amount of history in novels.
It seems that Barnes deliberately blurs the distinction between imaginary and historical materials to challenge the credibility of historical knowledge in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, in *Flaubert's Parrot*, and in *The Sense of an Ending*. In the same spirit, Guignery proclaims:

> The confusion between invention and reality fails to grant credibility and verisimilitude to the fictional world, in contrast to what happens in traditional historical novels. Instead, it throws doubts on the validity of historical facts and raises the question of whether we can ever know the past, a typically postmodernist stance. *(The Fiction of Julian Barnes 67)*

The fictional part of every historiography draws attention of novelists like Barnes. Barnes in his novels, particularly *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, depicts the difference in the result when the fictional part of the history is changed. Barnes "keep(s) a few facts and spin(s) a new story round them" as one of the characters, Kathleen, does in the chapter named "The Survivors" (*A History 272*). Barnes himself confirms the fact that any historiography has fictional parts:

> Either you only write the history for which there is evidence, or, if you try to write more than that, if you try to write a more complete history, then you have to fictionalise or imagine. And so, to that extent, history, if it attempts to be more than a description of documents, a description of artifacts, has to be a sort of literary genre *(Guignery The Fiction of Julian Barnes 53)*.

Barnes in both his novels, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* and *Flaubert's Parrot*, adopts an ironic approach to history as a genre. As Cook notes,
Barnes's *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* "deals with one of the questions that obsessed Braithwaite in that book [*Flaubert's Parrot*]. And that is: How do we seize the past?" (77). The chapter "Parentheses" is the only unnumbered chapter and the only didactic section with a mildly professional voice, who identifies himself as Julian Barnes, and "write(s) the truth" without any explicit hint of humor or irony and with the same function as "The Preface" in other novels about history, that is, presenting his own idea about history (Guignery *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* 64). In addition to the topic of love, the implied author's view of history coincides with those of Linda Hutcheon and Hayden White in considering a relationship between fiction and historiography. The views correspond with Hutcheon's declaration in her *A Poetics of Postmodernism* that historical events are never directly experienced. This is what Barnes states in chapter "Parenthesis":

> History isn’t what happened. History is just what historians tell us. There was a pattern, a plan, a movement, expansion, the march of democracy; it is a tapestry, a flow of events, a complex narrative, connected, explicable. One good story leads to another . . . .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. . . . Our panic and our pain are only eased by soothing fabulation; we call it history (*A History* 388).

Hutcheon explains that the only way to know historical events is through what she refers to as discursive 'traces' in the various forms of textual documentation. Explaining historiographic metafiction, she points out that this genre "demands of the
reader not only the recognition of textualized traces of the literary and historical past but also the awareness of what has been done-through irony-to close traces” (A Poetics of Postmodernism 127). And she continues, "The reader is forced to acknowledge not only the inevitable textuality of our knowledge of the past, but also both the value and the limitation of the inescapably discursive form of what knowledge" (A Poetics of Postmodernism 127). In the same way, Barnes in Flaubert's Parrot, through the protagonist of the novel Geoffrey Braithwaite, indicates the documentary aspect of history with doubtful view towards its helpfulness: "We know more we discover extra documents, we use infrared light to pierce erasures in the correspondence, and we are free of contemporary prejudice; so we understand better. Is that it? I wonder” (Parrot 86).

Braithwaite hints towards human fallibility of perceiving and passing the truth. He self-consciously points at the unnecessary facts in life and adds that not all information would help to find the truth, but he aims to tell the most useful and significant ones. However, he confesses that mistakes are inevitable:

Because I don’t believe any of them. They aren’t lying indeed, they’re all trying to be utterly sincere but they aren’t telling the truth. . . . Well, you know I’ve got brown eyes; make of that what you will. Six foot one; grey hair; good health. But what matters about me? Only what I know, what I believe, what I can tell you. Nothing much about my character matters. No, that’s not true. I’m honest, I’d better tell you that. I’m aiming to tell the truth; though mistakes are, I suppose, inevitable. And if I make them, at least I’m in good company. (Parrot 82; 84)
One more important point that repeatedly draws our attention in the novel is that not all truth and reality could be found from historical documentation. He gives examples from his own life to make it more comprehensible for the readers: "What happens to the truth is not recorded (55)"; “What would the photos of my twenty-fifth wedding anniversary have revealed? Certainly not the truth; so perhaps it’s as well they were never taken” (89).

In *The Sense of an Ending*, the teacher raises the question, “What is History?” (17). The answer given by one of the students is a quotation from a French philosopher Partick Lagragne and implies the same point: “History is that certainty produced at the point where the imperfections of memory meet the inadequacies of documentation” (*The Sense* 17).

Tony Webster, the protagonist, views everyday events that happen to him and his friends through the lens of his own historical view. This kind of attitude that views life as a personal history, makes interesting whatever might appear unimportant at first glance. Tony is that character who spends the entire time taking his friend Adrian’s approach to personal history. As mentioned earlier, in the last section of history classes, in which Old Joe Hunt poses the question ‘What is History?’ to the class, Adrian answers, "History is that certainty produced at the point where the imperfections of memory meet the inadequacies of documentation" (*The Sense* 18). His answer can be supposed as an abstract, One-size-fits-all answer that arguably represents the thesis of the entire novel. Adrian completes his answer by adding a concrete example of the recent suicide of their classmate Robson: "It’s a historical event, sir, if a minor one. But recent. So it ought to easily be understood as history”
The whole novel spins on the exploration of the divide between major and minor historical events or between what counts as history and what does not.

The importance of “direct evidence” and “Robson’s testimony” in the future when someone is to write Robson's biography or history turns out to be a significant debate between Adrian and Old Hunt (The Sense 19-20). Hunt speaks in opposition to Adrian and says that Robson “may well have kept a diary, or written letters, made phone calls whose contents are remembered” (20). This becomes the exact conflict that Tony will deal with later as the novel unfolds. In Flaubert’s Parrot the idea of biography and history based upon documents, letters and works is compared to a fishing net that might capture some and miss some other (Parrot 38). Decades later, cause by lacking testimony, Tony in order to fulfill the missing parts of his memory has to go with documentation and memories has left behind by Adrian. However, Tony knows that in Adrian’s documentations also some facts might be missed. This reminds Braithwaite’s comparison of net with historical documentation in Flaubert's Parrot and also Tony's retelling of classroom discussion regarding how history is performed. In his adult life, Tony notes:

I’ve followed all the official history that’s happened in my own lifetime—the fall of Communism, Mrs. Thatcher, 9/11, global warming—with the normal mixture of fear, anxiety, and cautious optimism. But I’ve never felt the same about it—I’ve never quite trusted it—as I do the events in Greece and Rome, or the British Empire, or the Russian Revolution. Perhaps I just feel safer with the history that’s been more or less agreed upon. Or perhaps it’s that same
paradox again: history that happens underneath our noses ought to be the clearest, and yet it’s the most deliquescent. (*The Sense* 66)

For Tony both the 'real literature' and 'official history' are believable, since the first addresses themes of substantial philosophical weight and the second is the most commonly referred event known even by casual news followers. The statement recalls the line of meaning, again from *Flaubert's Parrot*, “Or is it just that the past seems to contain more local colour than the present?” (15). Obviously, Barnes is referring to the vanishing of general ideas of history, religion and culture as metanarratives in postmodern era, where personal attitudes replace those of general.

In *A History of the World In 10 ½ Chapters*, after underlying the importance of Barnes's positioning of the half chapter in neither at the very beginning, nor at the end, but after eight to present his theorization of history, Pateman states:

When, therefore, the novel provides its theory of history as “fabulation”, there is a twofold sense of recognition. First the reader is aware that this is what the novel has been doing and so proves the theory; and, secondly, he or she will have been aware that this is what he or she, as a reader, has been recognizing, and so again the theory is proven. (43)

The heterogeneous and fragmented structure of history together with the multiplicity of perspectives is presented in the stories of *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*. It is necessary to distinguish the past and history.

According to Mandricardo history "is an ambiguous term, because it both refers to what happened in the past, and to the narration of such past. Basically,
history is a discourse about the world, an interpretation of the past which aims at finding a meaning of the world" (11). The past is mostly considered as a term, which gives a sense to present, while history is connected to both public and personal identity. People need to narrate their life to give meaning to their existence. Every narration follows something like plot that is methodically arranged from the past up to the present in a way that the purpose it serves becomes more significant than its postulated causes.

Similarly Barnes differentiates between the past and history in his novels, particularly in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, and hints towards the point that past does not construct history but history constructs the past. In *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, Barnes comes up with a rather new history that is contrary to what has been conveyed to human beings in the course of time. What draws the attention of the readers is not Barnes's skill of combining frames of history and religion, but it is his challenging of the conventional ideas of history. The temporality of the knowledge of the past is also one of the issues to which Barnes repeatedly draws the attention of the readers. He describes this feature of knowledge of the past and truth in general in *Flaubert's Parrot*:

The past is a distant, receding coastline, and we are in a same boat. Along the stern rail there is a line of telescopes; each brings the shore into focus at a given distance. If the boat is becalmed, one of the telescopes will be in continual use; it will see to tell the whole, the unchanging truth. But this is an illusion; and as the boat sets off again, we return to our normal activity: scurrying from one telescope to another, seeing the sharpness fade in one, waiting for the blur to clear
To clarify, what Barnes means by history is what we are told by those who saw it through temporary perspectives. He narrates the history from unlikely perspective to expose the existence of other narrative angles. Barnes's ironic view towards history differs strictly from other historical books such as Sir Walter Raleigh's chronological history of the world that is written in five books. Barnes's manner in writing this account of history is more close to what Hutcheon calls 'historiographic metafiction'.

Yet, if the history is "just what historians tell us," then the cynical patterns of historical narrative structure is also invented by historians to support their personal and subjective interpretation of the past (A History 388). That is to say, historians, based upon what they want to prove, employ the artificial part of any historical pattern in a certain way to create the different or sometimes opposite accounts of a single historical event. Anthony Webster, the protagonist of The Sense of an Ending, confesses that history depends on where we place the comma, and how we define the subject and the object in a sentence. “After we broke up, she slept with me” flips easily into: “After she slept with me, I broke up with her” (The Sense 44). This statement is in the contrary to conventional wisdom in which 'meaning' is an intrinsic component of historical events, and is not something established by historians through utilizing figurative language such as metonymy, metaphor, and irony.

For Barnes “The history that happens under our noses ought to be the clearest, and yet it is the most deliquescent” (The Sense 60), easy to melt or dissolve, in other words, unstable, not firm, neither solid nor clear. Barnes envisions history as a "pattern, a plan, a movement, expansion, the march of democracy; it is tapestry, a
flow of events, a complex narrative" in which "One good story leads to another . . . all
the time it's connections, progress, meaning, this led to this, this happened because of
this". He believes that "the readers of history" and "sufferers from history scan the
pattern for hopeful conclusions, for the way ahead” (A History 388).

So connections turn to be "deceitful" and dates appear as "bullies," to expose
that chronological order merely implies some sort of casual and logical relation and to
make believe that there exist further connections and meanings hidden behind the
reiteration of certain occurrence (A History 181; 262). Barnes rewrites his own
perception of Marx's elaboration of Hegel: "Does history repeat itself, the first time as
tragedy, the second time as farce? No, that’s too grand, too considered a process.
History just burps, and we taste again the raw-onion sandwich it swallowed centuries
ago” (A History 387).

As Braithwaite wonders in Flaubert's Parrot, "Does the world progress? Or
does it merely shuttle back and forth like a ferry?" It implies the illusionary aspect of
historical progression (Parrot 91). Yet, the cyclical pattern seems inadequate to shape
the irretrievable past, an image of a greased piglet in Flaubert's Parrot:

When I was a medical student some pranksters at an end-of-term dance
released into the hall a piglet, which had been smeared with grease. It
squirmed between legs, evaded capture, squealed a lot. People fell over
trying to grasp it, and were made to look ridiculous in the process. The
past often seems to behave like that piglet. (10)

Or raw onion sandwich in The Sense of an Ending: “History is a raw onion
sandwich”. Why? "It just repeats itself, it burps. We’ve seen it again and again. Same
old story, same old oscillation between tyranny and rebellion, war and peace,
prosperity and impoverishment” (*The Sense* 16). History, the past and biography form a net that Barnes views as "a collection of holes" which in an inexplicit way indicate the limited, partial and temporary part of history wherein any new information may change the meaning of the whole narration (*Parrot* 31). There is another insightful point in *Flaubert's Parrot*:

> We read, we learn, we ask, we remember, we are humble; and then a casual detail shifts everything . . . . We can study files for decades, but every so often we are tempted to throw up our hands and declare that history is merely another literary genre: the past is autobiographical fiction pretending to be a parliamentary report (77-78).

However, the possibility of knowing the past and its existence is not denied by the subjectivity of any historical account; the total and objective knowledge of the past is inaccessible. The aim of challenging the conventional historiography for postmodernists and Barnes is not shifting the guilt from guilty faction to the innocent one, but it is to expose how difficult it is to separate the clean from the unclean. The importance of presenting ultimate truth destroys every difference and makes attaining absolute knowledge about past events difficult. New postmodern models of knowledge such as Lyotard’s Metanarrative celebrate the diversity of every voice as a means of other manifestation of dialogical truth. Likewise, Hutcheon mentions multiplicity and polyphony as the only solution and claims that "may be less satisfying than a resolved dialectic, but it may be the only non totalizing response possible" (*A Poetics of Postmodernism* 101).

*A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* emerges from manmade catastrophes which sometimes look as divinely planned, the meaning of history equals the meaning
of art: "[it] is freeing, enlarging, explaining" (A History 296). Barnes, in Flaubert's Parrot, explicitly states the only difference between a novel and life:

Books say: she did this because. Life says: she did this. Books are where things are explained to you; life is where things aren’t. I’m not surprised some people prefer books. Books make sense of life. The only problem is that the lives they make sense of are other people’s lives, never your own. (Parrot 147)

To Barnes only fictional fabulation can give a sense and explanation to the chaotic material of the past in biography and historiography. The meaning is inserted into meaningless happenings by narration. The soothing and consoling sense behind the meaning and explanation of catastrophes in A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters is significant. According to Pateman,

What is brutal, frightening, and degrading about the history of the world is not the stories that link events together (this is “soothing” fabulation), but the events themselves, those moments in time, moments in space, where human ignorance, stupidity, violence, and hate are laid bare. (44)

A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters, as Pateman suggests, is not composed of "absolute historical narrative" but of "fragmentary ones", which despite presenting links, relations and reiterative elements, are "kaleidoscopic, seemingly unconnected - a collection of disparate events and times" (44-45). In Flaubert's Parrot in the chapter entitled "Snap" the ideas of concurrence and coincidence are challenged. Barnes plants the seed of doubt in the readers by implicitly posing a question whether coincidences really exist or the historical analysers see them as they
want to see in order to fit best with their prefiguration of what really happened. In the same way, Hayden White acknowledged, "[the] historian prefigures the historical field to which he will apply the theoretical concepts that he'll use to explain what 'really' happened" (x). As a result, relations and links are unconsciously used according to what historians want to explain. The necessity of connections in their illusionary order is to give a meaning to the chaotic structure of the past, even by the most fragmentary ones like *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*. The fact is that the ordering structures such as a beginning, middle, and an end are illusionary in nature because they do not exist in the past. Events in the past simply happened and the meaning and order of the events are inserted into them by the narrative. Barnes in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, follows biblical narrative as a stable frame, which stars from Genesis and ends with the afterlife (Pateman 44).

Although the middle chapters do not follow any chronological or spatial order, the stories are related by repeating the same motifs, exactly like history, which is constructed by the past events. Some possible ways to encounter and write about history has been advanced by Julian Barnes. Themes like love, religion, and art emerge in the course of the novel and the author explicitly describes each option's limitation that might be earmarked as a position against history because they seem to be 'outside' history in the chapter "Parentheses" (Pateman 47). By religion, for instance, what the author really means is just Western religion and just Christianity, which "has become either wimpishly workaday, or terminally crazy, or merely businesslike – confusing spirituality with charitable donations" (*A History* 390). Such aspects give cultural and specific determination to the novel and vanish the universal quality of it.
In the same manner, art remains inadequate to mirror historical catastrophes. Although art by means of representation helps to perceive and explain, it "isn't accessible to all, or where accessible isn't always inspiring or welcome" (A History 390). Barnes in the first pages of Flaubert's Parrot implicitly mentions the subjective, individual, and temporary features of art by exemplifying the decay in statue of Flaubert. Likewise, A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters, is aware of the "failure of art to provide a defence against history" for its structure is in a "permanent state of collapse" (Pateman 49).

Love, the last of Barnes's options, is liable to failure though believing in it seems necessary. It is viewed as "beautiful and moving without the force to persuade" by Merritt Moseley (122). Love is not more than a parenthesis in the history of the world, yet it is "an excrescence" which perhaps "is essential because it is unnecessary" (A History 383). Love is not necessary to survive but it is an artificial concept that makes life and history more bearable. The world according to Barnes is "ridiculous" and "becomes brutally self-important" without love (A History 386). Love has not the power to "change the history of the world. . . . but will do something much more important: teach us to stand up to history" (A History 376-7).

Besides all the postmodern philosophical and theological achievements, one significant issue threatens human condition all the time and that is relativism. Weberman presents the solution by which "interpretive pluralism" and "anti-objectivism" are possible to exist while avoiding relativism. He distinguishes between "intrinsic properties" and "relational or extrinsic properties" of a given object. Weberman's 'Intrinsic properties' are fixed that an object or event has "in virtue of the way that thing itself, and nothing else, is", while 'relational properties' are ever-
changing and refers to "those properties of an object or event that depend wholly or partly on something other than that thing" (Weberman 54). Weberman divides 'relational properties' into two categories; one is 'delayed relational properties' which acquires as time passes, and another is 'cultural relational properties' that changes during cross-cultural or interpersonal understanding. As a result, the role of subject in the formation of object becomes crucial and significant. By considering the circumstances from which an interpretation has arisen, historical cultural context that determines the interpreter's pre-judgments, the assessment of the legitimacy of every interpretation becomes possible. Thus, the term 'contextualism' used by Weberman to bridge the gap "between objectivism and relativism" in Gadamer's notion (63):

Though we may be unable to reconstruct these properties in a manner uninfluenced by our own historicity, we can at least endeavour to approximate such a reconstruction. The fixed intrinsic properties constitute one central source for rational constraints on validity in interpretation . . . . Although relational properties make for multiple interpretations, both intrinsic and relational properties constrain the possible range of such multiplicity and account for the indispensability of the ideals of a certain impartiality and fidelity to the act of interpretation, hermeneutically understood (Weberman 64).

The crucial point about Lyotard's analysis of metanarratives is that it turns into crisis in postmodernism. A general disbelief is raised against metanarratives along with Lyotard's suspicion. Wittgenstein is one of the philosophers who declared that truth becomes a matter of rhetoric and performativity in language games. Therefore, the significant question here is "Where, after the metanarratives, can legitimacy
reside?” (Lyotard xxv). Lyotard notes that in the postmodern condition the way knowledge performs and the way knowledge enables a person to perform, directly influences its legitimation. Later at the end of his book, Lyotard gives particular emphasis to the manipulation of industry upon research, leading it to be legitimated by ‘performativity’.

Although, most of postmodern concepts closely bound up with nihilism, this cultural phenomenon can ultimately be considered positive. Since the objective knowledge of the world, the past, and ourselves is unacceptable, it helps to raise the awareness. Postmodern world is full of limitations and polyphonic voices due to partial and subjective truth, which is only confusing. The monological and authoritative Truth is replaced with many versions of the truth that according to postmodernism are each equally worthy of listening. Unlike Nihilism, which insists upon nothing, postmodernism can be known; postmodern pluralism makes possible the accurate choice of what to believe in by knowing more. Postmodernism highlights the significance of tolerance as the fundamental pre-requisite for a plurality of truth.

Barnes believes that every honest pursuit of truth, even if it fails us, cost of investigating it allows us to see through the illusory and move one step toward the truth. Although the concept of Staring at the Sun and its implying message of pursuing truth is not new to Barnes's novels, another example would be the Flaubertian idea of "gazing into the black pit" in the analogue of Flaubert's Parrot. In the last chapter of the Flaubert's Parrot, Geoffrey Braithwaite dismisses the theory that Flaubert committed suicide and quotes the words of French master as proof of the preposterousness of such an idea, "People like us must have the religion of despair. By dint of saying 'That is so! That is so!' and of gazing into the black pit at one’s feet,
one remains calm” (217). Jean Serjeant in *Staring at the Sun*, is adapted to Flaubert’s existentialist position in the sense that one can succeed in achieving peace and calmness only if one can deprive oneself of the power of illusion. Elsewhere in the novel *Flaubert's Parrot*, Braithwaite notices the lesson he was taught by Flaubert; “gaze upon the truth and not blink from its consequences,” which seems to be closely similar to the concept of *Staring at the Sun* (157). Flaubert teaches you to gaze upon the truth and not blink from its consequences; he teaches you, with Montaigne, to sleep on the pillow of doubt; he teaches you to dissect out the constituent parts of reality, and to observe that Nature is always a mixture of genres; he teaches you the most exact use of language; he teaches you not to approach a book in search of moral or social pills — literature is not a pharmacopoeia; he teaches the pre-eminence of Truth, Beauty, Feeling and Style.

Barnes suggests avoiding what he calls "beguiling relativity" (*A History* 391) in order to be rescued from postmodern relativism and nihilism. "A multiplicity of subjective truth that we fabulate into history" might be farfetched in attaining the objective truth, but still the belief in the existence of the ultimate truth is necessary (*A History* 392). In order to be simply able to endure the world as a collection of catastrophes one requires to avoid nihilism, believe in love as a source of humanity and believe in the possibility of obtaining objective truth.

Barnes's fictional world, for its redemptive hope of the accessibility of ultimate truth, will be well defined in the framework of Allen Wilde's explanation of postmodernism as "susceptive irony" (166). Barnes, through fabulation and new forms of narration, combats the danger of postmodern relativity. This aspect of Barnes's fiction introduces him as a postmodern writer who reflexively "foregrounds
the existent confusion and uncertainty of individuals deprived of ‘framing certainties’” (Rubinson 164). Such uncertainties in the fiction provide an opportunity to probe history, art, and religion in order to find enlightenment or discover and re-discover the ultimate truth. Hence, fabulation as one way to the final truth,

Point[s] to their own mask and invite[s] the public to examine its design and texture, . . . break[s] with art as enchantment and call[s] 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).

The terms post-modern and postmodern create confusion. One might come across the major difference between these two modes of thinking. Postmodern thinking argues for the necessity of fabulation to expose the multiplicity of versions of the original truth. Post-modern thinking promotes fabulation as a need to believe that the ultimate truth exists by means of personal life-narratives and personal searches. Consequently, post-modernism views the sign as a fabulation and purposefully probes the relationship between signifier and signified, once established by postmodernism. What is evident here is that post-modernism celebrates the absoluteness of a sign, constructed by humans in their intense longing for the existence of new meaning and truth. Thus,

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)

Due to the double sense of post-modern writing, many critics mistake to categorize Julian Barnes's novels as postmodern. Gregory Salyer in his outstanding article, “One Good Story Leads to Another: Julian Barnes's A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters”, puts Julian Barnes's fiction in the domain of postmodernism for "[their] paradox of subverting objective truth and then reinstalling it" (228), while critics such as Vanessa Guignery, believe 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). Notwithstanding, the 'reverse part' or the 'endorsement part' is certainly post-modern. Thus, as Mathew Pateman asserts "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). And according to Jackie Buxton, “Barnes’s advocacy of the belief in love and truth provides the theoretical alternative to a plunge into postmodern relativity” (85). Consequently, the post-modern hallmarks of Julian Barnes's fiction are unquestionable belief in ultimate truth along with the redemption through love and happiness.

Moreover, as in Metroland and Before She Met Me, many of Barnes's novels are based upon the postmodern thematic pattern, depicting either progression of the main character to the stage of postmodern fabulation, or the theme of pursuing the objective truth. The search can be both enlightening and confusing, yet it leads to a final apprehension of the indispensability of fabulation for the construction of
narratives gradually establishing down-to-earth meaning into day-to-day life as in *Flaubert's Parrot, A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* and *England, England*.

After *Flaubert's Parrot* and *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, Barnes wrote other novels such as *Talking It Over, Love, etc*, and *The Porcupine* with completely different themes and setting. The themes of the novels varied from historical metafiction in *Flaubert's Parrot* and *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* to a love triangle in *Talking It Over* and its sequence *Love, etc*, or the trial of a post-communist dictator in *The Porcupine*. Yet, it appears that the author ceased to dwell on the themes that were dealt with previously in *Flaubert's Parrot, A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters, Arthur & George* and after that in *The Sense of an Ending*. Berberich argues:

Whereas Barnes’s early playful and experimental engagement with historical metafiction contributed to shaping high postmodernism, at the beginning of the twenty-first century the author again proves a significant influence on the transformation of our conception of the relationship between the past and the present (117)

Thus, in Barnes's novels, unlike postmodernism, the notion of absolute or final meaning is not dead, but it keeps being questioned. Human interpretation of reality and life as in philosophy of hermeneutics is the central theme of most of Barnes's novels. The relativity of perspective is also greatly explored in his novels. His novels attempt to find some sort of truth. The separation between reality and fiction disappears in his novels. In the novel *Talking It Over* for instance, each character gives their account of the same event, but from different perspective. In each account, new aspects of reality are revealed to the readers. Not that the protagonists attempt to
lie or hide something from the readers, but it is the human fallibility in receiving and passing the reality which is central to the novels. Human fallibility results in trying to find the truth in reality and ending up with fiction. Barnes plays with notions of truth, history, and belief.

Unlike in his two experimental novels *Flaubert's Parrot* and *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, Barnes avoids explicitly utilizing metafictional reflections in *Arthur & George* and *The Sense of an Ending*. Instead, he employs more conventional form for his new reconstruction of the past events. Based upon the necessity of the plot, Barnes in a subtle and sublimated way deals with the theme of possibility of attaining the past. In *Arthur & George*, the parallel biographies of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji are depicted and maximum stress is put on their crossed paths. And in *The Sense of an Ending*, he reconstructs an autobiography in two parts; first part is an account based on the protagonist's memory and feeling, while the second part is a retelling of the same story by revealing some documents which put into question the accuracy of the first part.
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