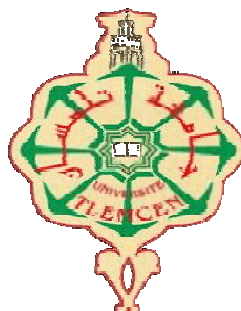


**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria  
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research  
University of Tlemcen**



**Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages  
Department of English**

**The Postmodern Condition:  
Existentialism, Agnosticism, and Englishness in Julian Barnes's Works**

**Thesis submitted in candidacy for the degree of Doctorate in English Literature**

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و لا شيء إلا له منتهى

و لكن غنى النفس كل الغنى

يدلّ على صانع لا يرى

من أشدّ الجهاد جهاد الهوى

لأبي العتاهية

و لا شيء إلا له آفة

و ليس الغنى نشب في يد

و إنّما لفي صنع ظاهر

## ***Dedication***

*To my beloved mother; **Dr D. BENBERNOU**, my loving father; **Dr. A. LARBI**, and my lovely sister; **Dr. Y. LARBI**, without whose support and trustworthiness, I would not have accomplished this research work.*

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*Mostaganem, March 2018*

## Abstract

This research work addresses the commandment of the postmodern condition in relatedness to English postmodern fiction taking Julian. P. Barnes (1946- ); one of contemporary Britain's most brilliant and sophisticated novelists as one of its representatives. The perspectives that this thesis is based upon are matters within the scope of Existentialism, Agnosticism, and Englishness; i.e., the sense of English identity, in such an entangled hyper-modern age. Barnes is one of the quintessential authors in English literature with a postmodernist fictional tendency, and whose works are within a multitude of narrative genres/discourses, distinguished in his 'fine wisdom' displayed in a multitude of narrative modes - which makes of him an articulate 'chameleon of British letters' - with his diligent use of irony, and an elaborate language use of both English and French, he is a writer who always pushes arguments through to their rational conclusions. Indeed, Barnes forms his characters with an existential quest which resorts to a tendency of self-reflexivity through which the characters contemplate certain complicated matters with unresolved conclusions such as, the notion and manacles of time, mortality, and the utility as well as the usability of art in contrast to the hyper-modernist age, other revaluations also target the validity and revision of the authenticity of historical truthfulness, love, the coexistence of religion, and the belief in God in such a neo-Darwinian spirit/time. Yet, the basic and most recurrent theme that characterises Barnes's authorial tendency is the constant quest for an existential meaningfulness with almost a cry out for the belief in religion and God as Matthew Pateman (2002) suggests; that Barnes's novelistic characters are striving for some way of finding meaning in an increasingly depoliticized, secularized, localized, and depthless world. This research relies on the selection of four works of Barnes's; *England, England* (1998), *The Lemon Table* (2004), *Arthur & George* (2005), and *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008), all of which form the pillar of this work for the ability to unite and justify the recurrent themes that the author relentlessly retrieves in relation to postmodern concerns, mostly the loss of a sense of belief in God as well as of any form of spiritual/religious pertinence as a consequence of the advents of modernity which have ushered to what I term; *existential nausea*. These aspects, highly evoked in Barnes's works might lead to their categorization under postmodern existential fiction. This research also endeavours to foster, on the one hand, Barnes's fiction as a reflection of the postmodern *zeitgeist*, and on the other, it mirrors the author's and the postmodern Man's anxieties vis-à-vis the post-Darwinian hyper-modern age.

# Contents

Dedication .....	i
Acknowledgements .....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
Contents .....	iv
<b>General Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism .....</b>	<b>12</b>
1.1. Introduction .....	14
1.2. The Demise of Modernity and the Distrust of the Enlightenment .....	15
1.2.1. Age of Enlightenment – Beginning of Modernization Process.....	15
1.2.2. Disillusionment towards the Enlightenment Optimistic Promises.....	25
1.3. Postmodernism and Postmodern Fiction .....	34
1.4. Existentialism and Modernism .....	43
1.4.1. The Search for the Meaningfulness of Being .....	50
1.4.2. Anxiety and Authenticity .....	53
1.4.2.1. Anxiety .....	53
1.4.2.2. Authenticity .....	56
1.4.3. Absurdity .....	58
1.5. Conclusion .....	60
<b>Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction .....</b>	<b>64</b>
2.1. Introduction .....	66

2.2.	Introducing Julian Barnes .....	68
2.3.	Barnes's Postmodern Existential Fiction .....	72
2.4.	Postmodern Fiction and the Barnesian Literary Style .....	78
2.5.	The Interrelation of Historical Theory and Literary Technicalities in the Postmodern Novel - Barnes's <i>Arthur and George</i> (2005) .....	84
2.6.	Barnes and the Postmodern Historical Representation within Fictional Narrative	86
2.7.	Historiographic Metafiction in Barnes's <i>Arthur &amp; George</i> (2005) .....	89
2.8.	Conclusion .....	102
<b>Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's <i>Nothing to be Frightened of</i> (2008) and <i>The Lemon Table</i> (2004) .....</b>		<b>105</b>
3.1.	Introduction .....	107
3.2.	On Agnosticism .....	108
3.3.	Agnosticism in Barnes's <i>Nothing to be Frightened of</i> (2008) .....	111
3.4.	Existentialism in Barnes's <i>The Lemon Table</i> (2004) .....	132
3.4.1.	The Search for the Meaningfulness and Authenticity of <i>Being</i> in Barnes's <i>The Lemon Table</i> (2004) .....	139
3.4.2.	Absurdity in Barnes's <i>The Lemon Table</i> (2004) .....	146
3.4.3.	The Notion of Death in Barnes's <i>The Lemon Table</i> (2004) .....	149
3.5.	Existentialism and the Problem of Truth and Historiography in Barnes's <i>The Lemon Table</i> (2004) .....	155
3.6.	Conclusion .....	160
<b>Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's <i>England, England</i> (1998) and <i>Arthur &amp; George</i> (2005) .....</b>		<b>164</b>
4.1.	Introduction .....	166

4.2. Eschatology in Barnes's Existential Articulation of the Absence of Spirituality in English Society.....	166
4.3. Englishness and Dehumanization in Barnes's <i>Arthur &amp; George</i> (2005) .....	175
4.4. Englishness and English Racism in Barnes's <i>England, England</i> (1998) and <i>Arthur &amp; George</i> (2005) .....	178
4.5. Conclusion .....	194
<b>General Conclusion</b> .....	196
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	209



# General Introduction

Contemporary Western societies on the general board and the English in particular have witnessed a liberal tendency of a soaring disinterest in the belief in a spiritual/theistic deity, as well as the disconsolation of religion's coexistence with the 'frenetic materialism' from the advents of the previous modern; empirical and rational ideologies. The latter are implied in the strong belief in rationality, scientifically-based truths and knowledge, as well as on the hold on the Darwinian evolutionist theory to the detriment of the creation of the universe. Similarly, the belief in the fact that science is the key to the explanation of the phenomenal world; for control and mastery of it, the tenets of which were built in throughout the Age of Reason and the Age of Enlightenment; seventeenth and eighteenth century respectively, and the criteria of which are rationalism and empiricism, as the only source for a tangible certainty of authenticity and world order, is now brought under reevaluation.

This humble thesis attempts to have a philosophical/ideological approach of literature; the novel in particular, and in this case, the choice is upon Barnes's fiction and how it reflects the postmodern zeitgeist. The endeavour, here, regards the novel as a means, amongst other means, of expression and reportedness upon the socio-historical state.

Barnes uses - in his *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) - Emile Littré's stance upon the complicatedness of the human nature and the extent of which is parallel to the complicatedness of his/her environment. Such a speculative note that denounces the sense of alienation the modern/hypermodern Man experiences, i.e., a sense of estrangement; loss, and constant wonderings upon the meaningfulness of *Being* in such an entangled period. This is found in the nature of the human being who expresses his/her existence in both an empirical, pragmatic sense as well as the need for that spiritual/transcendental unscientific belief in a deity or both of the deity and the Holy Scriptures for another hidden satisfaction

along with the pursuit for the flow of justification when it comes to the destiny of *le court d'être*. Postmodernism expresses this twofold aspect of the self quite plainly. The congruency of the spiritual in conjunction with the palpable state of *Being*, constitutes the impetus of the postmodern contextual literary and ideological concerns, and thereby forms the core tenet for this research work.

The belief in God, the monotheistic religions; the display of which in the world is of serious rigidity, has fostered the primary cause of the World Wars and revolutions (Dawkins, 2006, pp. 279-288). These doubts towards theism and historical past are as much disclosed on the societal spectrum which is reflected in literary narratives accordingly. Mythical versions of the setting of the universe is the claim held by atheism and agnosticism, which in their part neglect and rather pontificate upon the disconsolation of Man's immortality and strong atheism.

Matters of death and dying, religion's credibility; the evidence of which is not disclosed tangibly in our hyper-modern logicism, and the individual loss of a sense of identity; be it of racial, national, or religious pertinance, along with the existential search for meaningfulness of *Being* are matters which appeal to my interest, since life is a voyage of self-discovery on the ground of both personal and social life, a voyage where time and experience forge the self, and throughout such a process, one encounters challenges and what I term; *existential nauseas*.

Such concerns have always been my target of research for the sake of self-knowledge upon how the modern/hypermodern Man could relate both of religious beliefs with contemporary Darwinian tangible world. The modern Man; hyper-modernized, experiencing a hyper-materialistic existence which is more mechanical, leaving no concern for the abstract spiritual, with no religious ground on which he/she could use as a guiding

avenue. To feed my queries, I decided to make of my research - upon the state of contemporary English and British spirit - both an academic purpose but more of a personal quest. My love for history and literature accordingly grew from this point, diverging from the scientific stream of studies to that of languages and civilizations; the British, and now, Julian Barnes, happens to be my favourite British fictional and non-fictional writer.

The themes Barnes approaches appeal to my research's interest, when reading Barnes's, there is this feeling of almost a shared thinking process and concerns with his, the same concerns and yet one could hardly find the words to describe some experiences of and within the self, and Barnes has this ability to transgress the psychological inability to put *existential nauseas* into linguistic symbolism. Concerns such as; existential meaningfulness faced to the hyper-modernist post-Darwinian zeitgeist, the theme of death and ageing, the theme of the essence of love and humane altruism along with what constitutes identity in general and Englishness in particular, all of these form the impetus of this modest research work.

The quest for authenticity and truth of the essence of existence and *Being* are undeniably - as sketched in the above paragraph - matters of Barnes's constant concerns which are blatantly reflected in his narratives, be they fictional or non-fictional. Otherwise explained, his works are suffused with details of his characters wondering upon the working of the universe and its authenticity, facing an endless anxiety in the face of the disconsolations of mortality and the human's impossibility to know more upon the transcendental, religion's truth, the existence of God as well as the issue of human's mortality and the consolation of such a finality. Such observations, accordingly, have triggered the following questions that constitute the core spirit of this thesis;

- 1- What is the history of postmodernism and contemporary Western philosophy?

- 2- Where is the place of God and religion in such a hyper Darwinian/materialistic age? Is modernity the cause for the sense of alienation that contemporary Man experiences along with a clash of thoughts and wonderings upon how it is possible to live without the belief in God?
- 3- Since the postmodern spirit tends to be modernized, hence leaving no space for religious/spiritual beliefs, now how does a Man go from his *world of being* to his *world of becoming* with an existential tendency? And what is/where does existentialism stem from? How is this reflected in contemporary British fiction; Barnes's fiction in particular?
- 4- Are there other criteria that postmodern fiction - here relying on Barnes's fiction as representative of this literary movement - addresses? What are they?

*The Lemon Table* (2004), a volume of eleven short stories which revolve around the context of ageing and thanatophobia, considered almost like a sequel to, or a response to his translation of Alphonse Daudet's *La Doulou* (posthumously published in 1930) into *In the Land of Pain* (2002). In 2005, Barnes published a novel which probes into the life of Arthur Conan Doyle which is thematically multi-dimensional under the title of *Arthur & George*. The novel also infers Conan Doyle's spiritism and wonderings upon the existence of God, and the promised eternal afterlife as one of many other themes which could be withdrawn from this 505-pages fictional narrative. In 2008, Barnes broke his fictional tendency to be more personal with a semi-autobiographical memoir entitled; *Nothing to be Frightened of*, in which he endeavours to disclose the nature and essence of his *thanatophobia*<sup>1</sup>, approaching death from a vast set of existential matters. Otherwise said, the scope here is being construed within the meaningfulness of *Being*, the coexistence of God and religion with Man's mortality as well as the demise of religion's importance

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<sup>1</sup> An irrational fear of death and the ending of existence, be it the human's or the universe's.

within the modern or rather the hyper materialistic postmodern neo-Darwinian age. One other very prominent concern of Barnes is the question of what makes Englishness. Postmodern sociologists in general are concerned with matters of identity with all of its entangled definitions and literature highlights the theme of identity in such a globalized and hyper-miscegenous world. In relatedness to our scope of research, we take Barnes's *England, England* (1998) with *Arthur & George* (2005) as a ground for probing into how Barnes measures the notion of identity in general, and Englishness in particular.

Julian Barnes, seen as a “quintessential humanist of the pre-modern species”, as well as “the voice of one of the most distinguished and refined intellectuals in the literary scene of contemporary Britain” (Oats), is a postmodern writer with regular production of fictional, non-fictional, and essay narratives, journal reviews and memoir-ish account of his spiritual and existential matters that reflect the human anxieties.

Having read the majority, if not all of Barnes's works which entail a content of existential matters as well as identity issues, we have tried to thin them down to Man's belief in a religious schism and transcendental being despite their intrinsic urge for the tangible. We therefore have taken four works of Barnes; *England, England* (1998), *The Lemon Table* (2004), *Arthur & George* (2005), and *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008), all of which best highlights the thematic approaches of this thesis.

*England, England* (1998), a novel which stresses matters of identity and Englishness. *Arthur & George* (2005), a quintessential account of Barnes which uncovers, even denounces the long-held attitude of the English towards the *Other*. On the spectrum of *Existential* quest, a thematic scrutiny of *The Lemon Table* (2004) has been taken accordingly, alongside his non-fictional work *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008). These

works are related to themes of death, religion, and the God-question which form the essence of the majority of Barnes's works.

By choosing these works, three within the fictional genre and the fourth which is a form of a psychological catharsis in a narrative; an account of Barnes's theological and existential issues, this research's basic concern aims at delineating, even grasping the roots of Barnes's - since we consider Barnes as a representative of the postmodern Man and fictional writers among others - and the human's existential scope in relatedness to the postmodern condition; the consequences of which form an insurmountable dilemma that contemporary Man faces.

*Arthur & George*, a title chosen after at least thirty ones that Barnes suggested to his fictional work. He reveals in an interview held by Guignery and Roberts that one of the early titles suggested for the book - that is the most referential and expressive of the themes - was *The Skin of Things*, because it was about the surface of the earth and what was immediately underneath it. Indeed, matters of racism will also be discussed in the according chapter (chapter 4) since it is strikingly inevitable when analyzing the novel. Racism soared in Britain, England majorly, after WWII in the sense that what bothered the English most is the 'race-relations' not of their adjacent island lands; the Scottish, Welsh, or the Irish since their carnation is white. What bothered the English, according to Jeremy Paxman - a social commentator - was the arrival of people with a different-coloured skin.

Barnes celebrates the worldly acclaimed literary figure, Arthur Conan Doyle who helped clear the name of a Birmingham solicitor; George Thompson Edalji, sentenced for a seven-years penal servitude for a crime he did not commit and under no slightest evidence to connect him to the crime with which he was charged. George's wrong conviction came under racial prejudice and segregation from the onset of the case. We will therefore try to

demonstrate that Barnes's scepticism regarding religion and God lies behind his fear of death since "fear of Death replaces fear of God. But fear of God at least allowed for negotiation ... We can't do the same with death. Death can't be talked down, or parlayed into anything; it simply declines to come to the negotiating table" (Barnes, 2008, p. 90). Barnes, accordingly, views religion as a fictional account and the reliability of which could be *parlayed to the negotiating table*. Barnes suggests that the will to believe is often more important than what one actually experiences, a statement which clarifies the human's obedience to a set of abstract dogmas yet conceived of as being *sacred* is actually contingent of one's want and will to believe in them.

The first chapter aims at providing a theoretical account of the postmodern condition along with the roots that fostered such a transitional period from modernity to hyper-modernity along with a rooted insight on Existentialism with its major philosophers. The chapter could be considered as an account on the genesis of postmodernism which is reflected in postmodern fiction and its abounding concern with religion as well as the retrievability of past history - represented or rather fabulated upon in fictional accounts under the spectrum of historiographic metafiction - is more clarified in the second chapter.

The second chapter dwells on postmodern literature, precisely fiction, while choosing Julian Barnes as one of its representatives in the present thesis; the starting section of which consists of a small introductory biographical account of Barnes providing a succinct reference to his literary works alongside the rewards and merits he has received throughout the last decades - up to as recently as the 2011 Man Booker Prize<sup>2</sup> - encompassing a brief account of his personal life. We will move thereafter to providing the major characteristics of postmodern literary technicalities to move onto Barnes's

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<sup>2</sup> Julian Barnes was awarded the 2011 Man Booker Prize for his fictional account entitled; *The Sense of an Ending* (2011) which was cinematographically adapted in 2017 under the same title.



contributory role in representing such a new literary tendency. The chapter also aims at highlighting the Barnesian literary style in correlation with postmodern fiction, stressing Barnes's most recurrent themes of his works along with some common shared technicalities of postmodern fiction amongst contemporary fiction writers, majorly, to state the focused upon technicality which could be ranged under historical representation in fiction and historiographic metafiction in Barnes's works. We will endeavour through this chapter, relying on Barnes's *Arthur & George* (2005), to prove that the postmodern narrative's reliance on the use of historicity that intermingles and converges with fictional imagination is a sub-genre amongst others of postmodern fiction. This overuse of historical research as represented within fictional narratives lies in the retrievability of the past for the sake of not only *revising* the past reported truth, but also for a possibility to reconstitute it for a wider visualization; to give it more dimension and openness for interpretation, i.e., for a multitude of interpretations regarding those minor facts which historical records on their own have not covered/disclosed. Barnes contends in an interview that the human mind cannot exist without the illusion of a full story, then it fabulates and convinces itself that the fabulation is as realistic as what it really is. Then it therefore links the factual with the fictional in a more or less realistic narrative. Otherwise explained, in order to give a coherent account of an event, fact, or figure, one needs to fabulate and pontificate upon it, simply to permit the mind to have access to a much fuller story; more authenticity and therefore more plausibility.

The themes that Barnes deploys in his works are within the philosophy of Existentialism which concerns itself with the exploration of the meaning of life and the extent of its authentication. It, therefore, embodies all matters and problematics of *Being* as well as the existential phenomena. Absurdity, anxiety, authenticity and the problem of truth are all concepts/issues that preoccupied not only the existentialists like; Kierkegaard,

Nietzsche, Heidegger, Camus and Sartre but also many fictional writers of the modern and postmodern tendency. These philosophers conceive of and perceive anxiety as a response to the meaninglessness and emptiness of the universe. *Being* and existence, for them, is indefinite and is regarded as absurd, irrational, and pointless and authenticity, henceforth, is suggested as a solution which is expressed in nonconformity. Such existential matters form the heart of the third chapter which focuses on Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008), and *The Lemon Table* (2004) respectively, providing a succinct introduction on what Agnosticism is to move to characterising and positioning Barnes's mentioned works as being both agnostic and existential. This chapter is also concerned with excavating existential notions from these relied upon fictional and non-fictional works for the sake of positioning of categorizing Barnes's major concerns of his works within the postmodern zeitgeist which proves to be in itself existential. Existential in the sense of a constant quest for the meaningfulness of Man's *Being* faced to the hyper-modern world that the twenty-first century has come to. Again, the aim of this thesis is no more than the positioning of what postmodernism and postmodern literature is with regards to the spirit of postmodernism and the course of evolution of the history of fictional prose writing along with the ascription of Barnes's works to the postmodern existential zeitgeist.

The fourth chapter addresses the notion of Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005). The chapter endeavours to concern itself with theme of identity which is a timely issue and many researchers are struggling to define what makes an identity with all the encompassing traits that help form and define identity. In the case of this research, the identity of Englishness is put a stress upon along with the existential tone of the postmodern perspective of Englishness. The perspective we chose to adopt is that the notion of Englishness is constrained to Barnes's

definition of Englishness along with a cultural commentator; Jeremy Paxman, in an attempt to raise the question of Englishness, the roots of which are found in the far back history of England, related in particular to the invention of the Anglican Church. Whether it is a notion with its own existence or a mere constructed one, the chapter will address the question.

As a concluding note, Barnes has not left any genre exertion of the silent art. He is the author of eleven novels, the most recent one harks back to a year ago; *The Noise of Time* (2016), three collections of short stories, 3 volumes of essays, a memoir, two translations, numerous journalistic reviews and criticism, and three screenplay adaptation drafts - *Growing up in the Gorbals* (1987), *The Private Wound* (1989), and *The Sense of an Ending* (2017). He was recently - on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017 - appointed by the French President to the rank of Officer in the Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur.

# Chapter One

*Postmodernism, the Demise  
of Modernity and  
Existentialism*

## **Contents**

1.1. Introduction

1.2. The Demise of Modernity and the Distrust of the Enlightenment

1.2.1. Age of Enlightenment – Beginning of Modernization Process

1.2.2. Disillusionment towards the Enlightenment Optimistic Promises

1.3. Postmodernism and Postmodern Fiction

1.4. Existentialism and Modernism

1.4.1. The Search for the Meaningfulness of Being

1.4.2. Anxiety and Authenticity

1.4.2.1. Anxiety

1.4.2.2. Authenticity

1.4.3. Absurdity

1.5. Conclusion

# Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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*'This is the postmodern desert inhabited by people who are, in effect, consuming themselves in the form of images and abstractions through which their desires, sense of identity, and memories are replicated and then sold back to them as products'*

McCaffrey

## 1.1. Introduction

Postmodernism is essentially that movement which grew out of a reaction against Modernism, the roots of which find their impetus in the revolutionary age of the Enlightenment. The latter was basically a multidisciplinary revolution which rejected tradition and authority in favor of a reliance solely on rational thinking as well as empirical reasoning. In contradistinction to Modernism, Post-modernism breaks away from the modernist belief that contemporary Man could reach a sustained order and control of the world understanding through the reliance on reason and science. The Modernist positivist heritage of the primacy of human reason leaves room now to non-scientific, human values and the sentimental agency. Mary Klages (2001) pontificates in this regard that:

Modernity is fundamentally about order: about rationality and rationalization, creating order out of chaos. The assumption is that creating more rationality is conducive to creating more order, and that the more ordered a society is, the better it will function (the more rationally it will function). (para. 12)

Postmodernism was coined and used in the 1870s with different connotations, and its usage differed from a field onto the other. It was first used in the Art field by the

# Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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English painter John Watkins Chapman who suggested that: "any art that went beyond impressionism, the revolutionary new art style of the period, would be definable as 'postmodern painting' " (Stuart, 2001, p. viii). At a similar accord, J. A. Cudden postulates that post-modernism is:

A general (and sometimes controversial) term used to refer to changes, developments and tendencies which have taken place (and are taking place) in literature, art, music, architecture, philosophy, etc since the 1940s or 1950s. Post-modernism is different from modernism, even a reaction against it (1999, pp. 689-690).

As an ideology, postmodernism started to emerge right after the Second World War, by the time of the Berlin Wall was erected. It came with the disillusionment to the Modern Enterprise which promised positivism, progress and a general emancipation to the horrors and digression of human values to the detriment of economic, political and geographical enlargement by the colonial rule. The major events that stressed the turning point against modernism are the Holocaust and the Atomic Bombs of the 40's to the 50s.

## **1.2. The Demise of Modernity and the Distrust of the Enlightenment**

### **1.2.1. Age of Enlightenment - Beginning of Modernization Process**

The history of human kind witnessed two major radical changes. The first one was the industrial revolution, a breakthrough in history which is termed the age of Enlightenment through which the spirit of the time started to meet a sense of modernization; the first criterion of which is that of rational and empirical thinking from science into the accommodation of politics to logical reasoning; i.e., an urge for a democratic, or rather an egalitarian system on which people could aspire to a better living.

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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The second criterion witnessed a shift in economy from the agrarian mode to the industrial one. It is a multidisciplinary revolution which sought a break from the traditional absolutism of the past politics on the one hand, and on the other, it also sought progress and advance when it comes science under the belief of grasping the functioning of the world natural phenomena would provide not only a better understanding of it but also a sense of control and order thereafter.

The second grand turn in history is that which followed the more than two centuries modern span, and that is pinned under the term postmodernism. As a term, *Post/Modernism*, as in *pre-modernism*, and the post, according to Lyotard, refers to “something like *conversion*: a new direction after the preceding one” (Cited in Harvey, 1990, p. 72). Accordingly, the *conversion* means the postmodern view upon the carbonized optimism that modernism offered and that reason and science could no more be relied on for solving the problems of existential problems of humankind, on the contrary it brought its own destruction (WWI & WWII) *linear chronology* is replaced with post-historical viewpoint (p. 72).

Postmodernism, as an ideology, however, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* attempts to classify it ideologically as “a complex set of reactions to modern philosophy and its presuppositions, rather than any agreement on substantive doctrines” (Audi, 1995, p. 634), theoretically or philosophically, “it is basically a rejection of foundationalism (existence of structure of knowledge and epistemic justification), essentialism (metaphysical theory that objects have essence and appearance) and objective realism (objects exist independently of our perception and experience) (p. 634). Postmodernism is very ambiguous since it defies classification for it is more as a time-period than an official ideological movement, and yet it is considered as a turn of thinking process, the theorists



## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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of which differ amongst themselves, for some of them conceive of it as a threat and others as the final solution to the problems that the modern enterprise inflicted upon humanity (Dockery, 1995, p. 13).

Postmodernism, addresses an evaluation of the Enlightenment project, measuring this modern enterprise which took place at the disillusionment witnessed by the 1950's; shortly after the Second World War. The optimism of the modern spirit started to dissolve with regards to the enthusiasm that the age of Enlightenment brought forth. An age which sought progress and advance in a form of a multidisciplinary revolution. A revolution which has been paved the way to thanks to the major philosophers who advocated a radical change in the social, economic and scientific platforms for the sake of order and equality amongst the subjects. Some of these ideological precursors; Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, and John Locke,<sup>1</sup> - key major thinkers - all of whom contributed into the transmogrification of the modern, seventeenth-/eighteenth- century spirit. They believed in two elements; that of empiricism; based on the human observation and rational deduction of the natural phenomena for a more controlled mechanistic view of the world. For these radical thinkers, they conceived the world as a predictable functioning machine which could be grasped and better controlled.

This sense of advocated rational reasoning was even sought to be accommodated to the socio-political platforms for they conceived the world and the problems it brings about in a pragmatic and principled way to the extent of offering a new system or program which would safeguard the individual's freedom and social rights. Hobbes and Locke favored the exertion of a new political order which ensure the pursuit of self-interest such as the possibility of an economic self-emancipation as well as, and most importantly freedom

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<sup>1</sup> See Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum* (1620) ; Thomas Hobbes' *The Leviathan* (1651); John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) and *Two Treatises on Government* (1690).

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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through a secured 'social contract'. Locke's wrote: "where is there is no law, there is no freedom" (2007, p. 50). The latter is about a mutual trustworthiness between the subjects/individuals and the state who agree on stipulating the required laws on which they would all live by. They embraced a liberal philosophy with the fervent believed in the supreme value of the state and the law as the institutional basis as well as the only order-making means for the individual exercise of liberalism and a secured freedom.

Francis Bacon on the other hand was preoccupied with thorough empirical observation on the natural phenomena where he calls for a *novum organum* (which forms the title of his essay) a new thinking basis based on logic which emphasized experimentalism and inductive scientific methods in order to reach and gain modern knowledge in contrast to the conventional pre-acquired knowledge of religious beliefs and prejudices which are conceived of as being mythical. It is otherwise explained, an invitation to using one's own deductions taking into account a logic experimental reasoning as Emmanuel Kant's claim that it's more of an intellectual self-liberation through the use of reason and thus constructing one's own deduction, i.e., freedom of the intellect is to rely on the intellect and only the intellect without a previous influence or another's guidance.<sup>2</sup> Bacon believes that induction could discover the most important causes or laws of natural phenomena, and that, through rational, practical knowledge; Man could establish his dominion over the earth and thus relieve his condition.

The new social order, or rather what Hobbes advocated and preached as the 'social contract', inspired by Locke's and Bacon's empirical logicism, was first presented in his *Leviathan* (1651) - which is one of the most influential works on political theory in European history - suggesting the accommodation of politics to the empirical reasoning

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<sup>2</sup> For more on Immanuel Kant's description of the Age of Enlightenment, see his essay entitled; *An Answer to the Question: 'What is the Enlightenment?'* (1784).

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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when it comes to ruling of states, or more precisely, politics. The *Leviathan* consists of a structure of a set of laws which binds the individual freedom simultaneously while providing him the security he needs for a peaceful and egalitarian living. He argues for a possible coexistence and cooperation of both the social and political orders which lead to the foundation for the State. Hobbes argues that the human nature as being evil - hence the naming of the book, *Leviathan*; which is the biblical term for Satan - meaning that the world of becoming of nature is savage which involves individuals struggling amongst themselves for power and the taking of the fellow's advantages. Otherwise said, he perceives society as being a group of selfish individuals that should unite in common agreement in order to serve and ensure the liberalism and maximize their safety while protecting themselves from one another by enforcing the laws of the State.

Hobbes also suggests that the social contract should be between the subjects and the sovereign and that to preserve one's life, everyone is to renounce their natural rights in favor of the sovereign. His notion on sovereignty is a rational exchange based on mutual consent; the subjects sign a contract for they want the security they hope for and authority is therefore created in order to enforce the terms of that social contract as agreed upon previously. The creation of authority by which Hobbes resolved at his time and while a monarchical system veiled upon later led to the formation of what is now called a state.<sup>3</sup>

Hobbes inspired many politicians along the course of history, among them Thatcher who adopted his claim, to paraphrase her in a discourse she gave that there is no such a thing as society, only individuals cooperating for the grand good. The grand good being the

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<sup>3</sup> According to Hobbes, humanity is better off living under the circumscribed freedom of a monarchy rather than the violent anarchy of a completely equal and free life; using this reasoning, Hobbes argued for unquestioning obedience to authority.

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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state's security, be it economic or of other domains. (Cites in an Interview with Thatcher for *Sunday Times*, 1981)

Other thinkers such as Voltaire who advocated Religious Tolerance and Rousseau who was inspired by Hobbes *Leviathan*, who noted on another form of democracy and appeal to a republican system which led to the awareness of the subjects, and the execution of King Charles I which took place at the end of the eighteenth century The first state which put a decisive end to the absolutist monarchical system of the age. France has been celebrated worldwide for this move, especially in England, where the romanticists cherished on such a move.

It was an age where not only the socio-economic platform moved from agrarian mode of economy into an industrial one, but also an age where the practice of the Church and its intervention was put as far away as possible from the ruling of social matters. Religion and any abstract/spiritual exertions as well as any former knowledge of the world were put into evaluation relying on only rational reasoning and empirical thinking whereby a pragmatic approach was better conceived than a pre-acquired set of systems which served a Man who belongs to a remote/previous period of time. A new economic, social, political system serving a new kind of Man at a newly created rational world is how to frame/picture the age (Bronner, 2004, p. 70). An age whose characteristics are parallel to optimism and enthusiasm since it promised a better living; more equality, better economic status, reducing the hardship of life, and yet as any other movement, it takes time; decades if not a whole century to measure its validity and success.

According to Stephen Bronner, both of Locke and Hobbes called for the limitation of the individual's freedom simply for the sake of ensuring the security of one another,

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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hence the creation of a scheme which calls for social and economic order. They believed that:

as soon as authority ceased to defend the fundamental rights of human life, the members of society could break the contract and overthrow the ruling government ... both Hobbes and Locke thought of the state in terms of a utilitarian device which supported law through sanctions and regulated the competition of the market. They both identified the public realm with the State and the private realm with the interplay of particular interests and personal property. (2004, pp. 43-44)

The Age of Enlightenment certainly, as its name suggests, shed the light of truth and reason against the darkness of ignorance, false myths, and superstitions of human thought. It put reason at the centre of human understanding and exhorts, thereby, the individual to use a rational reasoning to operate on the daily matters. The thinkers of the Age argued that reason could be found only by the observational empiricism, through logic and common sense. The function and aim of Reason was to oppose the non-rational thinking that existed all along the previous centuries. Reason was considered the primary source for legitimacy and authority (Cited in Porter, 2001, pp. 2-3).<sup>4</sup> The promotion of democracy with the notion of liberalism were key goals to the Enlightenment's thinkers, Liberalism was; 'the central political theory of the Enlightenment. Its method was the critical deployment of "reason" and its goal was bettering the conditions of social life and expanding "freedom"' (2004, p. 41)

Liberalism, henceforth, started to be enrooted with its central principles that are in accordance to the constant appeal for the equality of rights and popular sovereignty,

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<sup>4</sup> The eighteenth century has been labeled the 'Age of Reason' (for instance, this expression was proudly used by the English intellectual Thomas Paine as title for his essay in 1794).

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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alongside the conception of an economic/market platform as a rational economic mechanism.

The Enlightenment believed in the power of rationalism and gave the power to Man's rational reasoning to triumph on the inevitability of historical progress.<sup>5</sup> They conceived that Man could monitor and control the world, or at least his social environment with the application of reason. They believe that ideology and social/economic exploitation are rooted in social and political ordered institutions bearing in mind that injustice is the product of social action based on irrational forces, superstition, as well as political tyranny.

As much as the Age of Enlightenment alongside the Age of Reason appealed for a renovation in the social spirit and governmental status, the ideologies that the Ages supported were somehow too optimistic and delusional at a certain extent. The Enlightenment came to be negatively criticized by many such as the German sociologists Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer underlying that the Baconian scientific reason with the aim to subject nature to human needs has been transformed into a complete rationalization of reality, into what is also called, hyper-rational momentum.

The principle scientific pillars of the Age of Enlightenment; that is, empiricism and rational reasoning, has led either meaningfully or not to the deconstruction of values and the dehumanization of Man's spirit and humane agency that is proper to the human being. The results from such a scientific process of thinking, has produced nothing but capitalism in western democracies and twentieth century political tragedies (such as the World Wars, atomic bombs, and the Holocaust). Modernity henceforth has carried soiled its own deconstruction by the seeds of hyper-scientific spirit and a relentless quest for the liberal egalitarian state through the relentless quest of instrumental rationality. On the one hand,

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<sup>5</sup> The historical progress and all matters that are under the field of historicism are going to be noted later in the section of historiography and postmodernism in connection to Barnes.

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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the myths and superstitions that veiled over the pre-modern period have been triumphed upon and yet it fell back into a further tragic myth, that of individualism and equality under instrumental reason (Horkheimer & Adorno, trans 1979, p. 10).

Over the last centuries, the over-control and use of positive scientific and technological pursuits and advances in all platforms/fields, the resulting aftermath of such a progressive spirit and mantra led to the destruction of the environment, the extermination of certain categories of human beings for ethnic or religious causes, and the development of war technologies that could end humankind's very existence. Reason henceforth failed to keep the world under its control and guarantee progress; history thus witnessed the exhaustion of the Enlightenment positivistic progressivism and the limits of the scientific rationalism.

Critics of the Enlightenment therefore revise the age in terms of the price of progress, the costs of alienation and reification, as well as the damages brought forth by science and technology to nature and society.

These thinkers nevertheless viewed the Age of Enlightenment from a highly tangible or materialistic spectrum, leaving aside the cultural and humanistic transmogrifications that took place at the detriment to hyper rational progressivism of the Age of Enlightenment. Adorno and Horkheimer's position and critique of the Age of Enlightenment was denounced as being biased and limited by not only Vincenzo Ferrone but also by Stephen Bronner. Ferrone analyses the development of the Enlightenment's historical discourse and suggests that the Age should be regarded as a cultural matter and a historical world that must be rebuilt. For him, Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialektik der Aufklärung* failed to consider the historical Enlightenment with its cultural and chronological context and is rather based on an abstract idea of the Enlightenment.

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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Moreover, the Italian scholar sketches that the nationalisms and those philosophies of history that veiled upon eighteenth and nineteenth century are products of the confident enthusiasm of the Age of Enlightenment, the consequences of which were not only at the detriment of viewing history in its relentless continuity and inevitable progressive status, such an idea as dominated and manipulated by the idea of historical progress of humankind's evolution and which regarded the past in terms of accomplishment. Ferrone goes further on victimizing the proponents of the Enlightenment as being misled by the idea that the age as a historical, social, and political movement has been manipulated and misinterpreted.<sup>6</sup>

Stephen Bronner on the other hand, also criticizes Adorno and Horkheimer's critique or rather imaging of the Age of Enlightenment as being arbitrary and single-sided, he claims that in their essay "a genuine historical analysis is never undertaken" as their role is limited to evaluating the Enlightenment's connection with technological rationality (Bronner, 1994, p. 84).

For both of Ferrone and Bronner, Adorno and Horkheimer is a form of a tangible evaluation of the Enlightenment whereas it was supposed to be taken from a culturally enlightening viewpoint. Instead, their essay emphasized the hyper-rational side of its evolution; science and technology were given priority to the cultural side of the movement. The result was that liberalism and socialism emanated from such a rational movement politically speaking, scientifically speaking, it brought Man to thinking themselves as humanized beasts due to the naturalistic movement that preceded the ideological movement of the twentieth century; called modernism. Technologically speaking, it contributed in the dehumanization of Man that technological advances brought the

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<sup>6</sup> See: Alice Mandricardo: *The End of History in English Historiographic Metafiction*, chapter two, 2008.



# Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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formation of the atomic bomb which was used in the later world wars. The two German sociologists as well as the American political scientist and philosopher contributed much in the distortion of history, mainly from a postmodernist viewpoint. Adorno and Horkheimer denied the possibility of a universal history. They employed an “inverted historicism” to confront various enlightenment versions of the philosophy of history with their teleological assumptions (Bronner, 1994, p. 184).

## 1.2.2. Disillusionment towards the Enlightenment Optimistic Promises

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the optimism once held started to shatter into a more realistic account and evaluation. A system which promised progress and an end of hardship is now nothing but a mere enhancer of poverty on one hand, and on the other another phenomenon came to be grasped is that the dehumanization of Man took place due to the mechanization that the age brought forth. An age which endeavored at economic progress and geographical amplification, things which took place only at the extent of and to detriment of the other values, such as humanization and the respect of the ‘Other’. Here colonialism is implied since it witnessed a major taking of the *Other’s* lands, exploiting their natural resources in a disguised robbery in daylight.

The Age of high reason, accordingly, was disillusioned upon by the nineteenth century, early twentieth century, a period of transition which took place from the industrialized spirit into a hyper modern spirit. A disillusionment which brought forth more hardship than it ever existed before. Some issues appeared due to the process of industrialization, such as child labor, domestic disruption, and colonial imperialism amongst other issues. The Empiricism which paved the way for scientific advance, another theory of the 1860’s - Darwin’s Theory - added up to the extra-dehumanization of man as

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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well as, and more importantly to the fall of religious sustenance. A new stream of ideological conflicts came between the Darwinians and the Creationists.

By the late twentieth century, precisely throughout the 1970s onward, the modern enterprise started to collapse, under the belief that the models of the Enlightenment started to be exhausted, regarding the terrors such as the world wars that the age inflicted upon the world, the tenets of the age such the progressive belief that the world and the phenomenal world could be grasped and controlled through rational thinking and Empirical observation/reasoning constitutes the roots of the desolation of our postmodern condition. Such criteria and the belief in their ability to end the world's crises are now nothing but a mythical imagination/conception that created a new myth of its own production that could not be released from now. A new reactionary movement started to build its impetus from countering the enthusiasm and mythical absolutist beliefs of the world's functioning and pace that belong to the modernist spirit.

Postmodernism is henceforth nothing but a new *zeitgeist* or *l'esprit du siècle* representing a *post-historical* reaction against the uniformity and fundamentalism of modernism. It also emanated to counteract the structural view of human history progress, the basis of which movement is built upon a hyper-sceptical distrust of the past, and anything reported about it as being linear and integrative. Lyotard's definition of anything postmodern in his; *The Postmodern Condition, A Report on Knowledge*, as 'incredulity towards metanarratives' Postmodernism encapsulates thoughts that are disintegrative to the modern structuralism, adopting an after structuralism, or what is known as post-structuralism or otherwise said, deconstructivism, some major thinkers at the head of which, thinkers of such a stream of conductive thoughts are, Baudrillard, Jameson, Lyotard, Habermas, and Derrida to name some. The death of the previous held options of a

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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given structural uniformity. It is viewed as “a remarkable historical and cultural reaction to the “shortcomings” of modernism” (Sancrac, p. 3).

They have blamed the Enlightenment’s assumption that a perfect society could be built on common sense and tolerance, and defined it an illusion. The association of reason with rationalization and with human progress has lost much of its persuasiveness after the experience of the world wars, after Auschwitz and Hiroshima; in the shadow of such historical episodes, critical theory insisted that the cost of progress was too high. As the events of the last century proved, reason has been unsuccessful as purposive or instrumental rationalism and nowadays it is impossible to refer to a rational development or a linear logic of history. Postmodernists are helpless in the face of recent events: humanity seems to be drifting without direction, in a (post-) ideological world. Ferrone wonders how the philosophical debate on the Enlightenment (and modernity) will carry on and how the clash between modern and postmodern intellectuals will end. He also denounces all those thinkers who reject reason and its use without offering serious alternatives. Postmodernism outlines an attitude to the modern enterprise, i.e., the age of Enlightenment; it is a reaction to a technical and rational way of thinking of the world, a reaction to modernity as a form not valid anymore.

Postmodernism is defined, according to Patricia Waugh, as a critique of the Enlightenment, it is ‘a mode of counter-Enlightenment’ (Waugh, 1992, p. 16). For postmodernists, the Enlightenment’s project of pursuing a rational, scientific understanding of the natural and social world, has proved to be an impossible fantasy and even a dangerous one: the world is too complex and too multi-faceted and wide-ranging to be

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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understood through a single totalizing theory, all master narratives, henceforth, have decayed and ceased to be validated.<sup>7</sup>

Postmodernity is the leading resistance to any hegemonic theory, and the belief in a progressive motion of the world, which claims for false coherence and universal applicability. Pivotal to the postmodern understanding of society is the belief that the Enlightenment's totalizing principles, the appeal to positivism and experimentation in science, to rationality promoting explanation and progress, and even to the ability to represent reality, have been fatally undermined. Postmodernism calls into doubt the "ineluctable" progress of reason, which sounds tragically paradoxical after Auschwitz and Hiroshima. It polemically sheds light on the fact that modernity not only failed to grant a level of social and political well-being within social formations, through the application of science and technology, but also made the Holocaust and the atom bomb possible. The project of rationality was extended to the point where it appeared to coincide with its opposite.

In their essay *Dialektik der Aufklärung, Philosophische Fragmente* (1947), which was the most important product of the Frankfurt School, Adorno and Horkheimer explained why it was no longer possible to believe in the idea of progress. They drew attention to the dark side of the Enlightenment, reflecting on the fact that Enlightenment's rationality aided in the creation of a totalitarian society, that rationalism, seized by totalitarian regimes, produced Auschwitz. Totalitarianism regarded total dominion of men as its final purpose; concentration camps have been the place where to experiment total dominion.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The master narratives of modernity have lost their meaning and consistency ; their end is announced by Jean François Lyotard in 1970s.

<sup>8</sup> See: Alice Mandricardo: *The End of History in English Historiographic Metafiction*, chapter two, 2008.

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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Rationalization, bureaucracy and modern technology have been the source of many unexpected evils. Adorno and Horkheimer argued that what is called 'Enlightenment' and was hailed as 'progress' led eventually to the gas chambers (Jewish Genocide). The Enlightenment's use and abuse of reason are central to the postmodern debate: postmodern intellectuals agree with Adorno and Horkheimer's arguments, seeing the Enlightenment's conception of reason as totalitarian. The Enlightenment's reason paved the way to totalitarian regimes of rationalist efficiency serving utterly irrational ends; Adorno was critical towards the Enlightenment's reason as a form of instrumental, rationalist domination of nature. He argued that reason could not grasp the totality of the real, and denounced the violence perpetrated in the name of rationality and rationalization. The Enlightenment's reason was unable to disempower irrationalism, to annihilate superstition and false credence, and its faith in progress was misplaced or misdirected; instead of being conducive to morality, justice and social improvement, reason and rational organization led to a mechanical and utilitarian view of the world. Terror and concentration camps cannot certainly be cited as evidence of progress; progress demonstrated to be dangerous, fake, and unthinkable.

Adorno and Horkheimer thus acknowledged the end of trust in the Enlightenment's reason and progress.<sup>9</sup> The Enlightenment's original aim was to free the world from myths by exploding them through science (a crusade against superstition), and to better the lives of individuals.

The Enlightenment presented itself as the modern scientific spirit, as the philosophy which identifies the avenue to truth with scientific method; through scientific enquiry, man

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<sup>9</sup> Yet, there are historians and critics, such as Peter Gay, who clarifies that the Enlightenment's idea of progress should be interpreted as the possibility of personal liberation and popular empowerment, as the will to know and the fight against prejudice, rather than as the belief in the omnipotence of reason and in its authoritarianism.

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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could solve the mysteries of the universe, find principles, order and truth, and deduce knowledge.

According to Adorno and Horkheimer the Enlightenment's failure consisted in the perversion of the use of human intellect and the production of instrumental rationality. The organization and system of science at some point in history underwent a crisis: scientific commitment failed to keep its ethical promise. Despite the Enlightenment thinkers' attempt to defend the free exercise of subjectivity and support the free pursuit of scientific knowledge, the logic of science reaffirmed illiberal forms of authority and the power of myth.<sup>10</sup>

Progress aimed at liberating human beings from their subjection to nature, making them masters of themselves and nature, freeing them from their fear of the unknown and the irrational. Reason was regarded as an impulse to seek an understanding of the world, looking for progress (a progress of a better understanding). Yet, progress has finally overturned into regression, making men victims of themselves.<sup>11</sup>

The Enlightenment's objective of mastering nature, of setting humanity above nature, inevitably had negative effects for humanity itself. A humanity which could enslave nature could also enslave fellow human beings - what actually happened. On the one hand, the individual has become aware of his power on reality and nature through science and reason; on the other hand, such a power revealed itself first to be a control over other individuals and finally to coincide with the dominion of objects over individuals, giving rise to human *alienation* and the processes of reification and commodification within

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<sup>10</sup> See: Alice Mandricardo: *The End of History in English Historiographic Metafiction*, chapter two, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> In his attempt to salvage the Enlightenment legacy, Stephen Bronner claims that the Enlightenment identified progress with "fostering the will to know and the fight against prejudice, the insistence upon tolerance, the demand for a democratic public sphere, and the accountability of institutions" (Bronner, 2004, p. 29).

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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society. In the end, men become controlled by the economic structure in which they live, slaves of the social strains that they created themselves. Adorno and Horkheimer maintained that in the modern era the conformist and profit-driven “culture industry” subverts the very possibility of reflection or revolution.

In this sense, the Enlightenment has been intrinsically linked to a tendency towards *regression and destruction of freedom as well as order*. Although Enlightenment thinkers conceived human history as the story of progress in the human condition, from immaturity, superstition, and slavery to maturity, reason, and freedom, their hailed and aspired progress did not lead towards civilisation, but back to *barbarism*. The Enlightenment paved the way to the predominance of technology in society; systems and methods of production that converted the world of ends into a world of means. The use of technology entailed the transformation of men into mere tools for the obtainment of precise aims.

It was the rational world of modern civilization that made *the Holocaust* thinkable; cruel irrationality has destroyed the belief in rational human progress achieved through increasing knowledge. History sadly witnessed the Enlightenment’s degenerated effects and products: slavery, wars; nuclear wars, exploitation and death camps.

The point for Adorno and Horkheimer, and for their postmodern followers, is that totalitarianism is a product of the very Enlightenment.<sup>12</sup>

In *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, Walter Benjamin wrote: “there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism” (Walter, trans 2009, p. vii); suggesting that barbarism is a product of civilization means that barbarism is part of human nature; the germs of barbarism existed in Western civilization

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<sup>12</sup> Stephen Bronner argues that, in such a reading of the Enlightenment, the radical democratic and egalitarian aspects of the Enlightenment have been betrayed. “Enlightenment thinkers were not utopian with totalitarian inclinations, but realists who understood the costs of progress” (Bronner, 2004, p. 39)

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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from the beginning. However, Adorno and Horkheimer identified the cause of “modern” barbarism with technological and social progress; the road that began with the Enlightenment ended in Nazi death camps, the West-East war, and Racial, Religious Wars.

Once nature has been dominated and men have learnt to live together respecting each other in a community, the function of reason became to let man be alive in a decent context. Thus, reason assured man not only the possibility to be alive, but also to live properly. This stage has almost come to an end in Western countries, where most people now aim at expanding the occasions and the ways to get satisfaction. This is tantamount to an aestheticization of life: man’s goal is his own pleasure.<sup>13</sup> The same cannot be said for the poor and underdeveloped countries; indeed, there is a huge gap between less-developed countries and advanced countries: they have different situations and perspectives, different needs and reactions. In the third stage that we can call the postmodern era (or Western post-history), reason serves man to gain a steady increase in satisfaction, fulfilling his desires and offering manifold chances for pleasure. Despite the achievement of this third stage, there happens a wondering whether contemporary Western societies are developing towards, or away from, an increase in human well-being.

James Graham Ballard writes: “the balance between fiction and reality has changed significantly in the past decade. Increasingly their roles are reversed. We live in a world of fictions of every kind. [...] We live inside an enormous novel.” (1974, p. 8)<sup>14</sup> Because of the pervasive power of technology and systems of representation, the world becomes increasingly divorced from the real.

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<sup>13</sup> Postmodernism favours an “aestheticization of everyday life”: art and aesthetic become the master paradigm for knowledge, and senseful life (Cf. Featherstone, 1990, p. 41-64).

<sup>14</sup> The novelist argues that the most adequate approach to the world around us lies in the assumption that is complete fiction.



## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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The individual does not have to adapt himself to society but identify with it. Mass culture glorifies the world as it is. The individual is deprived of his freedom to think against the models that society supports and celebrates. Technology has become the main vehicle of reification, the presence of advertising and the media, television in particular, is ubiquitous.

Mass media are both vehicles of information and enjoyment and instruments of manipulation and indoctrination. In contemporary society commercials and propaganda coincide, and human imagination undergoes a process of reification; man is possessed by his own images.<sup>15</sup> In *Television and Postmodernism* (1986), John Wyver argues that: “we live in a mass culture to which we do not simply submit. We take its images, its narratives, its formulations of desire, and measure them against our real experiences of a real world” (Cited in Bertens, 1995, p. 100).

Imagination, which is a function of man’s freedom, is now muffled and blocked. Reality is transformed into images by the bombardments of the media, time gets fragmented into a series of perpetual presents: temporal distinctions between past, present and future cannot be made any longer, and they are replaced by a perpetual present. Postmodernist thinkers focus on the new depthlessness and the consequent weakening of historicity. The intense velocity with which information circulates in the mass media alters human experience of historical events. The present has dissolved in images and history, thereafter, has lost its place and importance.

The postmodern era is *the age of the image and simulation*. History is out of reach; all we have are images in an endless reproduction. Yet, we keep on digging up the past in the hope that it can contribute to our knowledge of the real world. But there is no way to

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<sup>15</sup> Both Jean Baudrillard and David Harvey consider image-manipulation a result of late capitalism.

# Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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construct the meaning of past or future human history; even the pretence to find a meaning must be abandoned.

*Uncertainty*, inescapably, remains the key word in postmodern dialectics, which aims at questioning all that has been given for granted. The idea itself of *postmodernity* belongs to the contemporary unpredictable and uncertain global condition. Postmodernism challenges rationalistic and humanistic underpinnings; yet, despite growing suspicions, it still is in a constant search for truth, or rather *the* truth.

## 1.3. Postmodernism and Postmodern Fiction

Any ideological/philosophical or literary movement tends to be as either a reaction against the one which precedes it or an extension and exaggeration to it. Postmodernism, a tendency which started to emerge by the late twentieth-century, from 1970s, is regarded to be both a transitional period and a self-critical evaluation of not only the transition in itself but mostly of the modernist enterprise of its yesteryears. The latter actually lasted for more than two centuries, harking back to the 'Enlightenment project'. This means that postmodern thinkers tend to have a sceptical attitude to anything that belongs to the past. All of the past knowledge that was held as being *The* truth, absolute fixed narratives came to be reacted upon; displaying a distrust to the past narratives, or as Lyotard chooses to term them; 'metanarratives'.

Postmodernism is essentially that movement which came as a reaction against modernism. The latter was influenced by the Enlightenment project and rejected tradition while it championed reason and science. Post-modernists reject the modernist belief that contemporary Man could reach an understanding of the world through reason and science. Modernity is about order: about rationality and rationalization creating order out of chaos.

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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The assumption is that creating more rationality is conducive to creating more order, and that the more ordered a society is, the better [i.e., the more rationally] ... it will be.

Post-modernism is, much often than not, attributed to the term alienation. That is, Man is always facing a turn down upon the notion of the world and human operation. Accordingly, Man is alienated due to the exile of the world's modern cultures, and the westernization of the societies thus Man feels alienated. Man became dehumanized due to Materialism and capitalistic system, leading him to a state of disillusionment in relation to the ideas and notions of existence. Accordingly, Individualism plays a major role in alienating and dehumanizing Man. It originated from the utilitarian character of the previous time (modern period).

It represents an attitude of transition which tends to be regarded as the rejection or rather the re-evaluation of the past in the western world, i.e. the past which the contemporary man know of through the means of reportedness, narrative reports are now under the stake of revision for the sake of measuring their validity as well as the extent of their trustworthiness.

This sceptical attitude towards the past is what could sum up this transitional period. This scepticism veiled upon most fields, at least the philosophical, literary and artistic. Most apparent this scepticism is when it comes to the literature of the age, a literature of resistance which favours the implementation of historiography within a fictional account. That is to say the fabulation upon factual elements being implemented into a literary/fictional account leading to a multifold/multi-interpretative conclusion, enabling the readers to make up their own finality through the open-finality closures. One could almost think of the literature of the time as being vulgarized and democratized for there is no fixed ending, an allusion to the state of loss and plurality of the time. The aim of

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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postmodernist thinkers is, either consciously or unconsciously, an endeavor of reconstructing history with a sustainable authenticity away from the grand narratives that have overtaken on the world's reportedness of truth.

Postmodern literature is that literature which started to emerge by the end of the Second World War - by the erection of the Berlin Wall - characterised by the disillusionment with regard to the enthusiasm of the previous modern enterprise which failed into securing peace and justice. It reflects the malaise of the chaos that the world witnessed due to the aspired Western domination of the World.

It tends to be ascribed to 'historiographic metafiction'<sup>16</sup>, an expression coined by the Canadian academic Linda Hutcheon referring to the constant concern of postmodern fictional genre of literature in reflecting and revisiting history and mainly; the reportedness of history in an attempt to evaluate its authenticity and validation through fictional accounts. Indeed, if we take examples of the highly praised postmodern author, Barnes whose works<sup>17</sup> revise not only the authenticity of past history but also inquire the validation of anything that belongs to the realm of knowledge, the essence of which belongs to a past period, and has therefore been brought to us through the means of individual reportedness; the prose genre of historiography. For Hutcheon, postmodern literature is ironically contradictory since it relates both the fictitious element with the realistic historiographic genre of reportedness, the meeting point of both represents the poetics of postmodernism.

Postmodern fiction is therefore history-related thematically speaking, in the sense where it takes factual history to implement it with fictional elements of writing, a criterion

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<sup>16</sup> Coined by Linda Hutcheon in; *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, (1988).

<sup>17</sup> The crystal examples of Barnes's works which question the authenticity of knowledge, history, and anything that belongs to the past, are; *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984), *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (1989), *The Porcupine* (1992), *England, England* (1994), and *Arthur & George* (2005).

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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which renders postmodern literature as being a literature of resistance. The latter addresses a genre which encapsulates both history reportedness and fictional creativity, or rather imagination, through the use of unconventional fictional writerly techniques - such as pastiche, intertextuality, temporal disorder, fragmentation, paranoia, and open-ending closures of narratives - which give it a form of experimental literature (Cf: Sim, 2001, pp. 121-133).

Barry Lewis appoints to postmodern literature as “the work of virtually any writer from an ethnic minority [deemed to be postmodern] by virtue of their *hybrid* status in a displaced, *globalized* society” (Cited in Sim, 2001, p. 111). Accordingly, postmodern literature is a literature which is galvanized and almost experimental both technically and thematically, a literature which serves a new atmosphere of disillusionment and disappointment from the outcome of hypermodernity which resulted in bloody wars and fright. Several commentators who contributed in the definition as well as the accurate period which postmodernism started to emerge, such as Barth, De Villo Sloan, and Bradbury with Ruland, all of whom contributed in layering the period.

John Barth (1984) refers to postmodern literature as being a literature of ‘exhausted possibility’ or ‘the literature of exhaustion’ (p. 64) when addressing the definition of postmodern literature in terms of its galvanizing forms in opposition to the modern form, relying on some authors, such as Joyce and Kafka, he claims that “our century is more than two-third done; it is dismaying to see so many of our writers following Dostoevsky, Tolstoy or Balzac, when the question seems to me to be how to succeed not even Joyce and Kafka, but those who *succeeded* Joyce and Kafka and are now in the evenings of their careers” (p. 67). And that “one of the modern things about these two writers is that in an age of ultimacies and “final solutions” - at least *felt* ultimacies, in everything from

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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weaponry to theology, the celebrated dehumanization of society, and the history of the novel - their work in separate ways reflects and deals with ultimacy, both technically and thematically” (p. 67).

Accordingly, when Barth claims the exhaustiveness of postmodern literature he doesn't mean “anything so tired as the subject of physical, moral or intellectual decadence, only the used-upness of certain forms or the felt exhaustion of certain possibilities - by no means necessary a cause for despair” (p. 64). Barth claim that postmodern literature which became exhausted by the 1990 is aligned with De Villo's stance in his essay *The Decline of American Postmodernism* (1987) where he sketches that ‘postmodernism as a literary movement ... is now in its final phase of decadence’ (Cited in Sim, 2011, p. 111). Malcom Bradbury and Richard Ruland also share in their survey *From Puritanism to Postmodernism* (1991) that postmodern literature is that writerly production of the period from 1960s to the 1980s, and that anything that came after 1990s is to be under the category of ‘post-postmodernism’, or as ‘post-pomo’.

To define a contemporary and recent turn in both literature and ideological stream of thinking is not an easy task, it takes time to be grasped and categorized thereafter. As an ideological movement, it is known for its hybrid criteria, pluralism and a culture of the ‘anything goes’. These changes were all reflected in literature and fiction in particular as according to Raymond Federman in his *Self-Reflexive Fiction* (1988) that; postmodern practitioners can be said “to form a unified movement for which a coherent theory could be formulated” (Cited in Sim, 2011, p. 112).

On similar grounds; Aldridge describes postmodern fiction as a fiction where:

... virtually everything and everyone exists in such a radical state of distortion and aberration that there is no way of determining from

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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which conditions in the real world they have been derived or from what standard of sanity they may be said to depart. The conventions of verisimilitude and sanity have been nullified. Characters inhabit a dimension of structureless being in which their behaviour becomes inexplicably arbitrary and unjudgeable because the fiction itself stands as a metaphor of a derangement that is seemingly without provocation and beyond measurement (Aldridge, 1983, p. 65).

A literature which defies the structures of fictional narration on the one hand, and on the other, it tends to self-ascribe itself the authority of knowing more than what the official historiography has acknowledged the generations all along. A literature which revises the past in a condescending or mocking sense which unravels and shatters the authority of history-reportedness, inviting the history readers, and the post-historical<sup>18</sup> Man, into an evaluation of the means that the construction of past history has been elaborated and disseminated, and is then so virtual and uncertain. A literature which merges facticity with fiction is often straddled and torn between literature and paraliterature. A literature which resists both the fictional conventions as well as factual historiographic reportedness, a resistance which not only resists, but defies, quite openly, the fundamental criteria of official history in their assumed function of critical counter-inspection of the past. Otherwise said, historiographic metafiction tends to measure the extent of authenticity and truthfulness of the grand official history, hence the implementation of historical facticity with fictitious elements as referred to as suppositions. Its structure, as well as its underlying themes, reflects a self-conception of a self-ascribed epistemological superiority with regards to its imaginary/fictional element over

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<sup>18</sup> Post-historical period refers to the post World Wars which inflicted the disillusionment about the positive notes which belong to the project of modernity; displaying a distrust of the Enlightenment ideological enterprise.

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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historiography when condemning the latter as being ‘a virtual tantalization’ of civilization’s history.

The famous phrase of W. Benjamin; ‘history is written by the victors’ and here throughout the history of the world’s battles and wars, history is reported by the whites, referring to the Man who beholds power; i.e., the Westerner. Such a position on the reportedness of history is well pondered and taken into consideration by most postmodernist philosophers and thinkers who not only represent the postmodern Man but also do contribute either consciously or unconsciously into shaping and delineating the spirit of postmodernism, and paradoxically enough all of whom share a dystopian view of how the world’s societies are operating. To state some of the grand thinkers ascribed to postmodernism are; Jameson with his *Postmodernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, in which he dreads the end of and replacement of culture by hyper-consumerism due to the post-industrial process that has inflected upon the Western hyper-modernized societies, and that knowledge and culture is now replaced and dominated by mass-media. J. F. Lyotard, on the other hand, another major thinker, on the pontification of what defines postmodernism, argues with his famous note; ‘incredulity towards past narratives’ in his *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, that the end of universal history is here and now taking place. Lyotard shares a similar view with Baudrillard who theorized - in his *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, (1998) - on the simulation of history, i.e., the inability of making sense of what is authentically defined as the ‘Truth’ and what is a mere form of ‘Grand Narrative’ being within the category of framed simulation (representation) of truth. Both of Lyotard and Baudrillard



## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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share a dismantled view of history which opposes the Hegelian position on the possibilities for the existence of a static reported history.<sup>19</sup>

Truth, for Baudrillard, Jameson, and Lyotard represents nothing but a sheer simulation (created representation) of the authentic reality.<sup>20</sup> Roland Barthes sketches that; “... the historian is not so much a collector of facts as a collector and relater of signifiers; that is to say, he organized them with the purpose of establishing positive meaning and filling the vacuum of pure, meaningless series” (Cited in Jenkins, 1997, p. 121). Indeed, history is shaped and reported by collecting facts and transmitting them in a linear ‘imaginary elaborated’ form with a clear layering of beginnings and endings stressing clarity and plainness while providing his ‘historiographic’ narrative, and clarity is hardly a truthful existing trait of authentic reality; history.

The German literary theorist Hans Robert Jauss also invites the assertion of such a multi-faceted version of history and the past through his *Reception Theory* (1984), which inverts the conventional analysis of a text from a single pointed view to a three-dimensional approach between “the author and the work to the text and the reader” (Cited in Holub, 1984, p. xii), a theory which represents a revolutionary approach to contemporary literary criticism (p. 1), reflecting the postmodern galvanizing spirit of postmodernism which denounces the invalidation of the past.

Indeed, Jauss’s theory came as a reaction to the “social, intellectual, and literary developments in West Germany during the late 1960s” (p. xiii) which involves the open-

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<sup>19</sup> Lyotard affirms the end of grand narratives by rejecting Hegel’s Universal History and the acceptance of histories as minor narratives open to revision.

<sup>20</sup> For more literature on the notion of *Grand Narratives* and *Simulation*, confer; Jean-François. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge*, (1979, Eng. trans 1984), and, Jean. Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, (1974, Eng. trans 1998).

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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ending finality of fictional narratives, a theory<sup>21</sup> which opposes the limitations of literary analysis that belongs to the conventional school of formalism. The latter tends to take poetry and literature in general as serving itself only away from the historicity that surrounds its context. The aesthetics of reception; considered as a new/postmodern literary criticism, termed in German as *Rezeptionasthetik*, which appeared fairly after the WWII involves a major contribution of the reader when it comes to synthesizing the fluency and structure of a literary text.<sup>22</sup>

Jauss considers literature as a “dialectical process of production and reception” in that:

... the relationship of work to work must now be brought into this interaction between work and mankind, and the historical coherence of works among themselves must be seen in the interrelations of production and reception. Put another way: literature and art obtain a history that has the character of a process when the succession of works is mediated not only through the producing object but also through the consuming subject – through the interaction of author and public (Jauss, trans 1982, p, 15).

Accordingly, Jauss views literature; and fiction in particular from the perspective of the reader, that is for a text to fully form its comprehension, the reader is inevitably

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<sup>21</sup> The theory stemmed from the postmodern German Constance School of Reception Aesthetics founded by Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser who theorized on the reader-response approach underlying how readers realize the potentials of a text and how readings and analyses change over course of history as well as the individualistic background.

<sup>22</sup> How this new literary criticism which revolves around the construction of a new theory, came against the formalistic approach of literature which tends to negate the historical background and setting of a given text. Opposing the conventional Formalism’s claim that art is there to be consumed solely for its sake, depriving it from any surrounding involvement.

# Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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involved, and the finality of the narrative is therefore individualistic and differs from a contextually comprehension background into another.

The reception theory actually reflects the Barthesian stance on the inconsistency of static mono-narration of history. An invitation of the audience into the formation and the createdness of the narrative is what one could relate to the democratization of literature. The democracy of the age has also been pinned to the literature of the age.

## 1.4. Existentialism and Modernism

The history of philosophy is usually conceived as being represented by two major juxtaposed schools: German idealism and phenomenology/existentialism. The difference of these schools is that there was a break during the nineteenth century which culminated in the rejection of idealism in all of its forms. As a result of this break, there was the introduction of a new kind of philosophy that has to do with human freedom and the individual's sensed experiences (Stewart, 2010, p. 1). The key break started in the transition from Hegel; the last Idealist, to Kierkegaard; the first Existentialist. While Kierkegaard defends the individual's lived experience and human freedom, Hegel, by contrast, highlights the universal and rational need. Moreover, the term *Existentialism* has often been considered to refer to the thought of the Danish theistic existentialist; Søren Kierkegaard and derived from his uses of terms such as 'existence' and 'existential'. The term itself, however, lost its meaning and credibility while many existentialists consider it as being nonsensical.

The term *Existentialism*, nevertheless, consists of a major split between the Christian existentialists and the Atheistic existentialists. For this reason, it is hard to define such a stream of thought or a philosophy because of the negative or critical focus of the foremost existentialist thinkers such as Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel. Jean

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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Paul Sartre defines *Existentialism* as: “a doctrine that makes human life possible and also affirms the every truth and every action that implies an environment and a human subjectivity” (Cited in Law, 2007, p. 20).

As a school, *Existentialism* rejects all forms of traditional morality and abstract ethical systems. Existentialists deny objective views or pre-existing arrangements, they consider human experience as being meaningless. They, therefore, claim that human experience is meaningful only through subjective acts of choice and decision (Cited in Stewart, 2010, p. 166). The ethical questions of existentialists are often seen in literary works such as Dostoevsky’s, Camus’s and Sartre’s in which characters face ethical dilemmas. According to Sartre, a fundamental reproach that is brought against the existentialists is that they put forward the dark side of human life; “others have condemned us for emphasizing what is despicable about humanity, for exposing all that is sordid, suspicious or base, while ignoring beauty and the brighter side of human nature” (Sartre, trans 2007, pp. 17-18).

According to Sartre, the belief that ‘existence precedes essence’ is what Christian existentialists and atheistic existentialists have in common, and subjectivity is their point of departure (Sartre, trans 2007, p. 17). Moreover, the atheistic existentialists claim that Man first exists and is thrown in a world alone to encounter himself, and later to define what he is. Sartre suggests that if God does not exist there is at least one being in whom existence precedes essence, and he states that the first effect of existentialism is to make every man aware of what he is, and to make him solely responsible for his own existence (Sartre, trans 2007, p. 23).

The term *Subjectivism*, accordingly, is the starting point of contemplation for the existentialists, be they Christian or atheists. According to Sartre, *Subjectivism* has two

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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different interpretations. On the one hand, it is the freedom of the individual subject to choose what he is to be. On the other hand, it is man's inability to go beyond human subjectivity and here where the fundamental meaning of existentialism resides (Sartre, trans 2007, p. 24). On a similar stream of thought, if man chooses himself, that is if he were a loser or weak, he can choose not to be in the future. It is the human's subjective choice of acts in fact, unlike the *Naturalists'* view of human nature which stands for: "that is the way we are, there is nothing we can do" (Sartre, 2007, p. 25). As a result, for existentialists it is no longer human nature, nonetheless it is human condition. That is man is no longer an object as for idealists who suppress the truth via considering man outside his moment of self-awareness.

For Kierkegaard, there will, still, always be a gap between approximate historical knowledge of Christ, and philological knowledge of the Bible. Unlike the atheistic existentialists, Kierkegaard suggested that this gap can only be filled by faith (a gap of certainty) and can only be spanned by a free decision of the individual (Stewart, 2010, p. 172).

In *Fear and Trembling* (1843), Kierkegaard illustrates the absurdity of faith in God, that there is no logic between the evidence and discursive arguments that try to demonstrate God's existence, illustrated in a story of Abraham and Isaac where God commends Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, a commend which seen by the existentialists unacceptable. Yet, one would ask; how did Abraham know that was God's commend or an angel's voice? How did Abraham take the chance to sacrifice his son?

Similar to Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky's central theme in his works is that of 'human freedom'. Dostoevsky criticized various forms of communism and utopian socialism that were in vogue in his day (19<sup>th</sup> century). He believes that human existence cannot be lived

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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as something static from the point of view of utilitarianism, as in a utopia. Instead, Man needs to strive to become what he wants to be (Stewart, 2010, p. 175). Dostoevsky believes that moral ethics are the source of morality, and there is a correlation between individual conscience and divine law. That is to say divine morality forms the basis of moral conscience, therefore, humans always have the freedom to listen to their conscientious voice or ignore it (as illustrated in the story of Abraham). Dostoevsky, on another stream, believes that the essential freedom at the center of human existence is not a liberating quality as it is pontificated upon by later thinkers and writers such as Camus. Instead, it is a negative formula, an invitation for nihilism. For instance, the radical nihilistic individualism of the character ‘Kirilov’ in Dostoevsky’s novel; *the Possessed* (1872), who commits suicide in order to become a god and to demonstrate his absolute freedom over religion.

Unlike Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky, Nietzsche did not seek the answers to the basic problems of existence in Christianity but he tried a radical new course. Likewise, a “slave morality” is a term Nietzsche uses over Christian morality, in the sense that humans are slaves to their moral law or divine law. Nietzsche suggested a metaphysical doctrine of the “eternal return” which he regards as a regulative moral principle. According to Nietzsche there is one problem of Christianity which it understands life as a linear progression leading teleological to an eternal existence in heaven. This tends to take away importance and values from ordinary life, which is regarded as a warm up for the real life which only comes later. Instead, he suggests a cyclical view or a repeating cycle where all of our deeds will be repeated for all eternity (Stewart, 2010, p. 179). According to many existentialists, Nietzsche’s second misunderstood doctrine is what he calls the *Overman* or *Superman* (Übermensch). The term *Overman* suggests that in a world after the death of

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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God, the *Overman* is the one who has the strength and sobriety to accept life on its own terms without illusions, and who has the ability to posit his own values in place of traditional divine morals (Stewart, 2010, p. 180).

In his notes, Nietzsche prophesied an age of nihilism which Dostoevsky feared would be a godless world; however, instead of retreating back to traditional Christian position, he offered positive secular solutions with doctrines such as *the eternal return* and the *Overman*. This superman, in his full form must be a being, who not only is aware of his dual decent animal and rational, but who can make balance between them. Through his struggle to achieve the balance, he creates new exciting forms of human existence. As a result, Nietzsche's new course is considered as a sign of nihilism. He suggested a solution in which the death of God could be a chance for the human to create a real being out of himself and by himself, and not from some divine authority.

Similar to Nietzsche, seeking for a solution for the absence or death of God, Camus considers "Absurdity" as a fundamental fact of human existence which poses ethical problems. Albert Camus was one of the leading figures in the French existentialist movement, although he was not a philosopher in the strict sense but a writer who was strongly influenced by western philosophy. Nevertheless, his entire literary career has been characterised as a struggle with the problem of nihilism. In his philosophical essays such as *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942) and *The Rebel* (1951), he examines the ethical issues of nihilism. Likewise, the belief in God has become problematic in a world which is said to be devoid of meaning. According to Camus, the absurdity between our hopes and desires, and the absolute meaninglessness of our existence leave us strangers in the world (Stewart, 2010, p. 184).

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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Camus rejects the idea of finding a solution to the problem of meaninglessness and absurdity through religious means as Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky did. Thus, he believes it is useless to employ human reason to answer God's existence, and considers Him as a source of moral values and meanings. In his *Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus deals with another response to absurdity and nihilism, that is of course, suicide, which he totally rejects. According to Camus, suicide is committed when considered as the logical realization and full comprehension of the meaninglessness and absurdity of the world. Logically speaking, if a human being realizes that his/her existence has no foundation or justification, could he/her continue to live? As a result, Camus tried to resolve this issue and it is shown in his work entitled *Myth of Sisyphus*; where human being revolts against the universe; its absurdity and meaninglessness.

Along with what we have seen so far this helps us understand some interesting existential aspects which Sartre poses; suggesting these concepts; *Anguish*, *Forlornness*, and *Despair*. These aspects or themes are present and prominent in Sartre's literary works.

First, we will try to explain what is meant by *anguish* and some related words as in *choice* and *responsibility*. The existentialists argue that anguish is the thing that Man involves himself with, and certainly not the one which he chooses to be. In other words, Man is responsible for choosing himself and for others as well, and by doing so, he cannot escape the feeling of anxiety. Sartre argues that many people conceal their anxiety because they are fleeing from it and they do not have the courage to face their responsibility. Kierkegaard gave the example of anguish in the story of Abraham: an angel has ordered Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac.

Similarly, Sartre gave the example of a madwoman who had hallucinations, and that someone used to speak to her on the telephone and give her orders. When she was



## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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asked who it is who addresses her, she answered, “He says it is God”. As a result, Sartre intends to say that Abraham was hallucinating because there is no proof to say that God’s voice or that is an angel. In other words, it is about choices and Abraham chose to assume or to believe that was an angel. For Sartre, these voices have to do with choices and anguish, and human being is the one who is going to decide and choose (Gordon, 2004, p. 347). There is no such divine values or laws that could judge that voice or act, it is always for Man to decide and choose if that choice is good or not.

*Forlornness* is a term Heidegger was fond of, which means the awareness of God’s nonexistence and that Man has to face all the consequences of this. In Dostoevsky’s words, “If God did not exist, everything would be possible” (Gordon, 2004, p. 349). As a result Man is forlorn because with the nonexistence of God there is nothing to cling to. Similarly, it is what Sartre calls reformism (French reformism) that is nothing will be changed if God does not exist, though all values exist and inscribed. In other words, God is only a hypothesis and useless though there must be values, ethics and a civilization.

On the contrary, the existentialists find it distressing that God does not exist, because the inexistence of God results the disappearance of values (Gordon, 2004, p. 349). Forlornness and anguish are somehow related to each other and choice is the link between them. For instance, there is someone who is faced with juxtaposed ethics and he is confused which best choice to take. As a result, that person is faced with two different kinds of actions: one, concrete concerning one individual; the other is about a group of people. There is no doubt this person feels that there is a responsibility upon him, though he is forlorn and anxious in the same time.

According to Sartre neither the Christian doctrine nor the book of ethics can guide that person to choose or to take the right choice. As a result, Sartre claims that a person

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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should choose himself and his future. But the only way to confirm this feeling, one must perform an act which confirms and defines that instinct or feeling of choosing something. In other words, Man is free to choose whatever he/she wants because this is all what it is about for Sartre; “Human Freedom”, “forlornness implies that we ourselves choose our being. Forlornness and anguish go together”. That is, Man is free and must choose and invent himself (Gordon, 2004, pp. 351-352).

As for *Despair*, a term which goes for: “we shall confine ourselves to reckoning only with what depends upon our will, or on the ensemble of probabilities which make our action possible” (Gordon, 2004, p. 353). In other words, it is what we achieve for ourselves is up to us, and we are despair when we realize that we are left with only possibilities and what we do with them is up to us. Thus, unlike what Zola contends, Sartre claims that “there is no reality except in action. Man is nothing else than his plan; he exists only to the extent that he fulfils himself, he is therefore nothing else than the ensemble of his acts, nothing than his life” (Gordon, 2004, p. 355). Consequently, this doctrine is not about “Quietism” which means what people says, “let others do what we cannot do” (Gordon, 2004, p. 355). Nevertheless, it is about ethics of action and involvement.

### 1.4.1. The Search for the Meaningfulness of Being

The meaningfulness of ‘Being’ is one of the most unraveling problematic that perturbs the philosophers, the question of life’s meaning makes most, if not all, the lovers of wisdom fail to get a query-response to such a question. When it comes to validating the meaningfulness of ‘Being’ as a philosophy of life, Existentialism has devoted a large part to the study of its meaning and authenticity thereafter. While asking about its meaning, life could be explained by its essence, purpose and authenticity. It was hardly clear during the

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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previous ages until the emergence of existentialism, which has destabilized the Western thought by a variety of unanswerable existential questions.

The Polish philosopher, Schopenhauer, in his *der Sinn des Leben*, where he attempts to display the problem of the meaning of life, and the questioning about the essence of its meaningful authenticity states that:

Since a Man does not alter, and his moral character remains absolutely the same all through his life; since he must play out the part which he has received, without the least deviation from the character; since neither experience, nor philosophy, nor religion can affect any improvement in him, the question arises: What is the meaning of life at all? (Schopenhauer, 2007, p. 64)

According to Kierkegaard, one's life would be senseful if he believed in the Christian God. That is, he relied on Christian answer for this philosophical question: "what is life?" He describes life with the three stages, but he argues that only the one who realizes the religious stage may get to the meaning of life. Kierkegaard, however, antithetically, states that the meaningfulness of life can also be without faith; "It is possible both to enjoy life and give it meaning and substance outside Christianity, just as the most famous poets and artists, as the most eminent of thinkers, even men of piety, have lived outside Christianity" (Kierkegaard, 2009, p. 246)

On another spectrum, Albert Camus claims that life has no meaning, and is absurd; it is a question of suicide; "there is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide" (Gordon, 2004, p. 445). Suicide, here, is a response to the absurdity which refers to Camus' stance that life and existence is cyclical, and is therefore not worth living, it is devoid of intrinsic meaning, and nothing in this existence could console the being against

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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its meaninglessness. This view is certainly related to his atheistic attitude. According to him, the realization that life and *Being* is absurd cannot be an end, but only a beginning.

Friedrich Nietzsche, a German atheist and existentialist philosopher as well as the founder of Nihilism<sup>23</sup>, suggests that life has no meaning without purpose; the world is nothing but Man's will. On a parallel vision, Nietzsche holds that the meaningfulness of life and the creation and foundation of its essence is one's own task, and the sense of existence is, therefore; "the superman" as he quotes: "I want to teach men the sense of their existence, which is the Superman, the lighting out of the dark cloud-man" (Nietzsche, 1999, p. 8).

Martin Heidegger was also concerned with the issue of life's meaning; his main search and interest was ontological; the study of *being*. He once asked the question: "if what-is is predicated manifold meanings, then what is its leading fundamental meaning? What does being mean?" (Cited in Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

For Heidegger, life can be meaningful only if it is authentic. Authenticity, as another matter of its own, might refer to Heidegger's notion of a genuine human existence. This notion means that to have a meaningful life/*being*, one has to create the meaningfulness which would give a sense to his life. Through his *Dasein*<sup>24</sup>, Heidegger depicts life as being in the world, to being towards death. He suggests that Man has to create his own authentic life based on his choices and purposefulness; "Dasein's authentic potentiality-for-Being, in its existential attestation, has been exhibited, and at the same time existentially interpreted, as resoluteness" (Smith, 2007, p. 136).

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<sup>23</sup> Nihilism comes from the latin word; *nihili*, or nothing. It is the belief that all values are baseless and that nothing could be known or dominated thus it rejects all the authority of the state, church and family.

<sup>24</sup> *Dasein* is a German word which means being there, or presence (German :*da* 'there' ; *sein* 'being'). It is a concept in the existential philosophy of Martin Heidegger

# Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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Jean Paul Sartre declares that life “has no meaning [...] it is up to you to give it a meaning, and value is nothing but the meaning you choose” (Sartre, trans 1998). Accordingly, the meaningfulness of life depends on Man; he is the sole responsible of his life and its sense. In other words, Man is a project that rules a subjective life in lieu of being a moss. He claims that: “Man is the start of a plan which is aware of itself, rather than a patch moss, a piece of garbage, or a cauliflower; nothing exists prior to this plan; there is nothing in heaven; Man will be what he will have planned to be” (Sartre, 1998, p. 9).

The meaningfulness of *Being* was and still is plaguing existential philosophers. Its definition has never been defined with clarity. Moreover, the question of the meaning of life itself is ambiguous. Schopenhauer concludes that life’s meaning is to deny it; Sartre views that it has no meaning and it is absurd; Kierkegaard related its meaning to the the belief in a religious institution; and for Nietzsche, there is no meaning to life but Man’s will to give it or create a meaning to it. This fundamental philosophical question is regarded as a dilemma, a mystery that philosophy failed to unriddle.

## **1.4.2. Anxiety and Authenticity**

### **1.4.2.1. Anxiety**

Philosophers, psychologists, anthropologists, and political theorists have long speculated that human beings are driven to imbue life with meaning in order to cope with the existential anxiety that comes from recognizing human mortality. Following this tradition, contemporary psychologists have attempted to map the relationship between existential questions and human anxiety (McBride, 2011, p. 2).

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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Anxiety is “the very root of what means to be human” (Barlow, 2002, p. 1). Its definition as an existential notion in the realm of philosophy differs from ordinary anxiety that is commonly experienced. According to an Existential philosopher, James Park, existential anxiety happens to have; no intelligible cause.

Existential anxiety refers to a theory that examines the presence of angst and stress. This phenomenon is assuredly related to the existence and the sense of being itself. When an individual wonders about his existence and the meaning of his being, he is experiencing an existential anxiety. It is, therefore, regarded as a main theme that existentialists attempt to explore. Tillich (2000), a theologian, characterises the existential anxiety as “the state in which a being is aware of its possible nonbeing”. May (1983) shares the same attitude sketching that “anxiety is the experience of the threat of imminent nonbeing” (p. 109).

Existential philosophers during the twentieth century, had therefore deemed anxiety as one of the existential anguishes which any individual experiences; this feeling is undoubtedly related to the question of being and its meaningfulness. Existential anxiety refers to a sense of worry, dread or panic that may arise from the contemplation of life’s biggest question, such as who am I? or why am I here?.

There are three modes of anxiety; the *Anxiety of Fate* which leads individuals to live a terror of the fear of death that might develop to a psychological problem termed; *thanatophobia*. The *Anxiety of Emptiness and Meaninglessness*, related to the uncertainties, the truthlessness as well as the trustlessness in the world. The third mode is the *Anxiety of Guilt* which concerns individuals who attempt to attain perfection. The latter is mostly experienced by pious people (Gordon, 2004, p. 459).

Kierkegaard in his *The Concept of Anxiety*, defines anxiety as the *dizziness of freedom*. He also states that “whoever learnt to be anxious in the right way has learnt the

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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ultimate” (Gordon, 2012). Accordingly, Nietzsche advocates anxiety under the argument that anxiety is important for creativity, which might suggest that an anxious Man is essentially creative; and through his creativity he deviates the conformity since creativity destroys the “status quo” (May, 1983, p. 109)

Anguish; Sartre’s equivalent term for anxiety is “evident even when it conceals itself” (Encyclopedia of Phenomenology, 1997, p. 210), it cannot be avoided, and those who act against it are only denying its existence. Nevertheless, Man “cannot escape the feeling of his total and deep responsibility” (Velasquez, 2016, p. 80), the anxiety of an individual is entirely related to his responsibility;

There is no question here of the kind of anguish which would lead to quietism, to inaction. It is a matter of a simple sort of anguish that everybody who has had responsibilities is familiar with. For example, when a military officer takes the responsibility for an attack and sends a certain number of men to death, he chooses to do so, and in the meanwhile he alone makes the choice. Doubtless, orders come from above, but they are too broad; he interprets them, and on this interpretation depend the lives of ten or fourteen or twenty men. In making a decision he cannot help having a certain anguish. All leaders know this anguish [...] We shall see that this kind of anguish, which is a the kind that existentialism, describes, is explained” (Gordon, 2004, pp. 347-348).

Heidegger makes of anxiety as the main queried theme in his *Being and Time*, where he suggests that: “the fundamental mood of anxiety is the most rudimentary form of disclosure that attunes Dasein to its existence, more primordial and revelatory than any

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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other average everyday mood” (Magrini, 2006, p. 78). Accordingly, anxiety remains insurmountable, a significant feeling that enables Man to understand his Dasein. Heidegger, therefore, “does not give a detailed account of the experience of anxiety [but] choosing to focus instead upon its meaning behind it and its significance for Dasein” (Mowat, 2009, p. 21).

### 1.4.2.2. Authenticity

Most of the existentialists have come to term and concluded the problem of absurdity and the meaninglessness of life, thus the notion of authenticity has come forth for scrutiny. The textbook definition of *Authenticity* goes for genuineness and certainty. Such a notion has been given an existential approach as a moral salvation which is suggested to authenticate life and give it a sense.

According to Kierkegaard, authenticity is the reliance of an individual on himself. He also links it to authentic faith. The latter helps Man provide a meaning to his existence suggesting; “one must make an active choice to surrender to something that goes beyond comprehension, a leap of faith into religion” (Holt, 2012, p. 27).

For Sartre, the trouble of meaninglessness leads Man to create his own meaning moving away from “bad faith”. Man has to invent his own comprehensive projects in a try to accomplish them. Sartre thinks that the authentic existence is Man’s task .It is all about choice and decision, and this notion is largely explored in the idea of ‘existence precedes essence’.

Life’s authenticity is Man’s responsibility. Sartre explains that:

To take a more individual matter, if I want to marry, to have children; even this marriage depends solely on my own circumstances or



## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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passion or wish, I am involving all humanity in monogamy and not merely myself. Therefore, I am responsible for myself and for everyone else. I am creating a certain image of Man my one choosing. In choosing myself, I choose Man (Gordon, 2004, p. 346).

Heidegger's position on authenticity is that it has three characteristics; *mineness* which he defines as the individual's possibilities. Man has to recognize that the only way to have an authentic life is through nonconformity towards his community. He suggests that the "myself" should be prioritized over the "they self". In order to reach this, he suggests resoluteness that is about the fearless will or capacity that Man takes to actualize his own possibilities rather than sharing the common conformity in this regard. Another authentic character and the last is called *situation* which is about those experiences when Man finds himself in unfamiliar contexts, and those unprecedented contexts find him out; help him define and explore himself. In the context of *situation*, Man lives an authentic experience that enables him to get a notion about not only his consciousness but also about the meaning of life and its authenticity.

Inauthenticity, as a concept, could be an interchangeable term with conformity. Seven elements of inauthenticity are identified by Heidegger; *Being-among-one-another*; which refers to the integration of an individual with others. *Distantiality* refers to those attempts to be different artificially from others, and *Averageness*, which goes for the impossibility or the disability of being distinctive. There is publicness in which a person is satisfied with, accepts the world with its conformist spectrums. *Disburdening* is one's responsibility on his unique interpretation of the world instead of sharing the public's. *Accommodation* is the response of an individual to other's mores with satisfaction (Holt, 2012, p. 27).

# Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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Both of anxiety and authenticity have been exposed to those who are in search for a meaning of life and its essence. Anxiety is regarded as an existential dilemma. It is related to the senselessness of the existence and also to the matter of mortality. To give it value, meaningfulness and a reasonable essence, existential philosophers introduced the notion of authenticity which depends on one's responsibility and awareness.

## 1.4.3. Absurdity

The rationale of Existentialism that life is meaningless constitutes the beginning of the emergence of a philosophical sub-stream termed Absurdity. The latter proclaims that the existence of Man is unreasonable, futile and senseless. Such an attitude derives from the belief of the non-existence of God.<sup>25</sup> Man comes to existence for none, having no rational objectives and his life is nothing but a tragedy. This mode is one of the reasons of existential anxiety that grizzles Man. This philosophy is summarized and triggered by the French thinker/writer; Albert Camus in his, *The Myth of Sisyphus*.

As a response to the absurdity of *Being/existence*, Camus suggests the suicide solution which asserts the futility of life under the claim that there is no hope to such an absurd tragedy except the definitive exit. *Absurd*, for him, is the "divorce between Man and his life, the actor and his setting" (Camus, 1983, p. 4). Suicide for Camus is a confession to the absurdity of *Being*;

In a sense, and as melodrama, killing yourself amounts to confessing. Let's not go too far in such analogies, however, but rather return to everyday words .It is merely confessing that 'is not worth the

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<sup>25</sup> "God is dead" (German: "Gott ist tot" ; also known as the death of God) is a widely quoted statement by German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. It first appears in Nietzsche's 1882 collection *The Gay Science* also translated as "The science of joy" German: *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*)[1] However, It is most famously associated with Nietzsche's classic work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (German: *Also sprach Zarathustra*), which is most responsible for popularizing the phrase.

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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trouble'. Living, naturally, is never easy. You continue making the gestures commanded by existence for many reasons, the first of which is habit. Dying voluntarily implies that you have recognized, even instinctively, the ridiculous character of that habit, the absence of any profound reason for living, the insane character of that daily agitation, and the uselessness of suffering. (Gordon, 2004, p. 443)

Camus, contradicting his opinion, which is mentioned above, about revolt and absurdity, he states: "revolt gives life meaning" (Camus, 1983, p. 4). Accordingly, life could acquire a sense only when Man rebels against conformity and common values. *Being-among-one-another* is a form of surrender to the absurdity of life, hence the suggestion of revolt which is exemplified as follows:

The absurd Man can only drain every-things to the bitter end, and deplete himself. The absurd is his extreme tension, which he maintains constantly by solidarity efforts for he knows that in that consciousness and in that day-to-day revolt he gives proof of his only truth, which is defiance. (Camus, 1983, p. 139)

Camus here is wondering ironically what the sense of freedom is with regard to the matter of mortality. He assumes that Man is never free as long as he exists, but a mere slave. Thus, it is highly absurd to revolt in such a finite world. Accordingly, death is nothing but an affirmation of life's absurdity. In addition:

Camus maintains in *The Myth of Sisyphus* that the absurd arises because the world fails to meet our demands for meaning. This suggests that the world might satisfy those demands if it were different. But now we can see that this is not the case. There not appear to be any

# Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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conceivable world (containing us) about which unsettled doubts could not arise. Consequently the absurdity of our situation derives not from a collision between our expectations and the world, but from a collision within ourselves. (Nagel, 1991, p. 17)

Hence, existentialists argue that life itself is absurd, has no meaning and is thereafter pointless. To live it without boredom they suggest authenticity as an approach of *Being*. To give it a sense, Man has to break all what constrains him and his will. This is what Camus means in his idea of revolt. As substantiation, he concludes that suicide is a reasonable end to this absurdity.

## 1.5. Conclusion

The roots of the core spirit of modernism find themselves in modernity which is related to the Age of Enlightenment, as measuring its validity or not, a question that postmodern thinkers have taken the responsibility for as explained in the first sections of the chapters.

Now to Postmodern fiction, since it is the main scope of research for this chapter, it is characterised by several features, namely: experimentation in terms of novelistic form, ambiguity of characters (lack of character development), hybrid language and mixture of different cultures. The main aspect of any post-modernist piece of fiction is inevitably meta-fiction. However, Post-modernism is described as being evolved upon a new aesthetics called “contra-realism” which appeared after 1970s, and gained its status in the 1980s. Other apparent aspects of post-modernist fiction are: eclecticism, parody, pastiche, and what is known as magic realism.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> The term used and coined for the first time by the German Franz Roh (1925). He used it to describe the characteristics and tendencies visible in some German paintings (Cuddon, 1999, p. 487-488).

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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Postmodern literature tends to display a sceptical view upon the reliability of what history discloses. One major feature in postmodern literature is historiographic fiction and metafiction, the latter condemning history or more precisely historiography (the reportedness of historicity) for its biased factual reportedness. Consequently, history is being represented and re-narrated through literary narratives. Historical facts; or, factual historiography, being represented through literary narratives is a common style or characteristic of postmodernist fiction. Postmodern writers are interested in the individual's inner voices and thoughts to get hold of their inner truths, rather than the definitive, absolute "Truth". Hence, postmodernists criticize the reliability of modernist narrative tradition for being *Metanarrated*; what Lyotard calls, 'Metanarrative'<sup>27</sup>.

The representation of history in literary narration, and the re-narration of history in a fictional pitch reveal other truths, which are hidden due to the historiographic narration's approach. Postmodernist writers intend to seek the subjective truth via the multitude of interpretations of fictional narratives. On the contrary, this provides a sceptical view with in relation to the modernists' liability on the centralized 'objective' truth. Nevertheless, representation or the retelling of history in a fictional form is conceived as a revision of history. Again, postmodern historiography would be presented as: instead of the traditional modern metanarrative prescriptiveness, postmodern narrative is more disjunctive, inhabited by the stories of those excluded by previous historical accounts, and more 'heteroglossic' awareness of the way that history can be found in a wider range of 'types' of sources.

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<sup>27</sup> A metanarrative "can include any grand, all-encompassing story, classic text, or archetypal account of the historical record. They can also provide a framework upon which an individual's own experiences and thoughts may be ordered. These grand, all-encompassing stories are typically characterised by some form of 'transcendent and universal truth' in addition to an evolutionary tale of human existence (a story with a beginning, middle and an end). The majority of *metarratives* tend to be relatively optimistic in their vision for human kind, some verge on utopia, but different schools of thought offer very differing accounts". See <http://www.wordiq.com/definition/metanarratives>

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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Hence, modernist writers explored new narrative techniques, and postmodern writers on the other hand represent an accumulated disillusionment or dissatisfaction with regard to modernism and thus modernity. The most common feature that postmodernist texts have is their “metafictionality”, that is the author’s self-reflexive interest in the progression of narration itself. Therefore, post-modernism has provided all varieties of social and political commitments in accordance to the solipsistic pleasures of language game/play like in Barnes’ fictional work.

Postmodern fiction, thereafter, reflects the hyper-modern ambiance of the age which is sensitive to rigidity, and is therefore a relentless questioning of the Enlightenment project with regards to its consequences on the world social platform. The postmodern spirit tends to neutralize what modernist enterprise inflicted on the world such as the World Wars, racism, world conflicts of religions or more precisely; fear of the Oriental world, hence the continuing wars in the Middle East, all of these tend to be neutralized with a dose of realism into acceptance of the failure of modernity.

As a conclusive note to the notion of *Existentialism*, it is an ideological wave which appeared during the mid-twentieth century as a reflection or a reaction against the ruins that were backfired by the Second World War in Western societies. This philosophy owes its impetus to the Theory of Evolution which holds a sceptical thought upon God existence. Existentialism, henceforth, comes to examine the existence of Man and its essence through both theistic and atheistic approaches. The adherents of this doctrine, the existentialists, concludes that the universe is meaningless, however, it might be meaningful and this depends on Man, who can give his life a sense by himself, instead of being forlorn to the delusion of an omniscient God.

## Chapter One: Postmodernism, the Demise of Modernity and Existentialism

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As it has been demonstrated in the second part of the chapter, this philosophy has been devoted to explore the meaningfulness of life and authenticate it. It, therefore, embodies all matters and problematics of *Being* as well as the existential phenomena. Absurdity, anxiety, authenticity and the problem of truth are all concepts/issues that preoccupied the existentialists like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Camus and Sartre. These philosophers conceive of and perceive anxiety as a response to the meaninglessness and emptiness of the universe. Being and existence, for them, is indefinite and is regarded as absurd, irrational, and pointless and authenticity, henceforth, is suggested as a solution which is summed up in the state of being nonconformist.

# Chapter Two

*Julian Barnes and  
Postmodern Fiction*



## Contents

- 2.1. Introduction
- 2.2. Introducing Julian Barnes
- 2.3. Barnes's Postmodern Existential Fiction
- 2.4. Postmodern Fiction and the Barnesian Literary Style
- 2.5. The Interrelation of Historical Theory and Literary Technicalities in the Postmodern Novel – Barnes's *Arthur & George* (2005)
- 2.6. Barnes and the Postmodern Historical Representation within Fictional Narrative
- 2.7. Historiographic Metafiction in Barnes's *Arthur & George* (2005)
- 2.8. Conclusion

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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*'There are no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false. A thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false'* Pinter (1958)

### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter opens with an introductory section to Barnes's biographical account and treats the thematic relatedness of his novel; *Arthur & George* (2005) mostly, along with some references to his non-fictional work; *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008), in an attempt to highlight Barnes's idiosyncratic postmodern characteristics along with the notion of Existentialism. The struggle of living without the despair and the loss of a sense of *Being* when confronting and personifying an agnostic; sceptical mindset on the one hand, and on the other hand; the search and pursuit of existential meaningfulness with regard to mortality, or Barnes's first-person narrator's thanatophobic<sup>1</sup> nature.

We will rely on the novel wherein the central characters and narrators express their quest and will try to justify their resort to other forms of *intangibles* to alleviate the pain of loss with regard to the impossibility of finding a clear answer to their existential quest, resorting to the reassurances and comforting means of art, love and religion, alongside the ability to rely and find solace in such *intangibles* to generate meaning - though temporal - to the state of being.

The focus will still be measured by the fact that the existential loss of meaning experienced by Barnes's characters, is simply for as long as *death/mortality* is there. From

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<sup>1</sup> Julian Barnes admits in an interview; sketched in *Conversations with Julian Barnes* (2009) by Roberts & Guignery, whereby he divulges his thanatophobia, expressed through his non-fictional narrative *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008); where he denounces his agnosticism in the first line of the narrative.

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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a sense of loss to an existential reconciliation by means of *Art*, *Love*, and *Religion* as forms of reconciliations faced to the anxiety of the meaninglessness of being. Back to the main reason of that loss, which revolves around for as long as there is *death*, there is that sense of loss, this in coordination with the problem or the enemy of the human being; *Time*, since human beings are, as sketched by Heidegger<sup>2</sup>; “Beings in Time” (Cited in Birx, 2009, p. 642).

Indeed, most of Barnes’s characters are Heideggerian beings in the sense that humans are considered as temporal beings. Human beings are entangled by the manacles of time and conscious of their temporal existence facing the unavoidable mortality. Barnes forms his characters with an existential quest which resorts to a tendency of self-reflexivity through which the characters contemplate certain complicated matters with unresolved conclusions such as, the notion and manacles of time, mortality, death and the utility as well as the usability of art in contrast to the hyper-modernist age, other revaluations also target the validity and revision of the authenticity of history/truth, as well as the coexistence of religion and the belief in God in such a neo-Darwinian spirit/age.

Yet, the basic most recurrent theme which characterises Barnes’s authorial tendency is the constant quest for an existential meaningfulness with almost a cry out for the belief in religion and God as Matthew Pateman suggests that Barnes’s novelistic characters “are striving for some way of finding meaning in an increasingly depoliticized, secularized, localized, and depthless world” (2002, p. 1).

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<sup>2</sup> One of the precursors of the philosophy of Existentialism besides Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein.

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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### 2.2. Introducing Julian Barnes

It is hard to conceive of an individual's biography when their lifespan is still on process; (1946- ). However, succinctly yet richly implemented, his literary career reveals a versatile and an idiosyncratic English writer. Distinguished in his 'fine wisdom' displayed in a multitude of narrative modes - which made of him an articulate 'chameleon of British letters' (Stout, 1992) – with a diligent use of irony, and an elaborate language use of both English and French, he is a writer who “always pushes arguments through to their rational conclusions” (Guignery and Roberts, 2009, p. 116). He is regarded as “one of contemporary Britain's most brilliant and sophisticated novelists” (Edwards, 2017).

Barnes is one of the quintessential authors in English literature of the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century postmodernist tendency, and the works of whom are within a multitude of narrative genres/discourses. Barnes hasn't left any genre exertion of the silent art. He is the author of eleven novels, the most recent one harks back to February, 2018; *The Noise of Time* (2016), three collections of short stories, 3 volumes of essays, a memoir, two translations, numerous journalistic reviews and criticism, and three screenplay adaptation drafts - *Growing up in the Gorbals* (1987), *The Private Wound* (1989), and *The Sense of an Ending* (2017).

A Leicester-born Englishman, Julian Barnes, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1946, the second and youngest child of a French-teaching couple whose influence played a role in shaping his literary minds, themes, and writings, but also their influence helped forge Barnes's Anglo-Francophilian educational background and love of literature. Barnes admits in an interview that the household of his upbringing displayed a respect for the word (Guignery and Roberts, 2009, p. 3). He is the youngest and last child of Albert & Kay Barnes, teachers of

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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French and whose elder brother Jonathan Barnes is - the now - teacher and philosopher of Ancient Philosophy who has taught in Oxford, Vienna, and the Sorbonne.

Barnes spent his childhood in Acton, London, until the age of 10 when his parents moved to Northwood where he attended the City of London School from 1954 to 1964. From 1959, the Barnes family travelled through different regions in France every summer holidays, those moments were, for Barnes, ‘filled with anxiety’ (Barnes, 2008, p. xii) as he recalls his memories from his adolescence and early adulthood - the bulk of which is much disclosed in *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008). At the age of 18, “intellectually ... overdeveloped; socially and emotionally drastically underdeveloped” (Guignery and Roberts, 2009, p. 125), in 1964, he entered Magdalen College, Oxford University, where he studied modern languages, he taught English for a summer at a French Catholic School in Rennes in 1966. After graduation, he worked as lexicographer for the *Oxford English Dictionary Supplement* from 1969 to 1972.

Barnes retrieved College to study for the bar in 1972, qualified as barrister two years later but never practiced. From 1973, he started working as a freelance journalist, a period under which he published a book and restaurant reviews and other pieces of writings; mostly satire, under pen-names. He also published four detective fiction narratives and short stories under the pen name; Dan Kavanagh.

Barnes served within literary journalism as an editor for the *New Review* under Ian Hamilton from 1976, the period in which he published satirical pieces under the name Edward Pygge in the ‘Greek Street’ column of the *New Review* itself. He also served the *New Statesman* as assistant literary editor under Martin Amis (another prominent postmodern novelist) from 1977 to 1981, meanwhile exerted as television critic as well. He

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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was the deputy Literary Editor at the Sunday Times. He's been contributing to *The New Yorker* since 1989.

In 1979, he had married the literary agent Pat Kavanagh who passed away in 2008, a couple of months after which, he published his memoir on death and dying, under the title *Nothing to be frightened of* (2008), which this thesis relies upon partly for the denunciation of Barnes's existential tone merged with postmodern literary tendency.

The first novel of his, *Metroland* (1980), received great acclaim, and won him the Somerset Maugham award. It was adapted into cinematography under Philip Savill, which appeared in 1997. His most acclaimed novel, however, which appealed more readership, is *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984), which best discloses his Francophilia, and portrays a much historically-based-on form in postmodern fiction. It won him the Geoffrey Faber memorial prize and the Prix Médicis in France in 1985 and 1986 respectively.

One year before the publication of *Flaubert's Parrot*, he was chosen by the Book Marketing Council as 'one of the best young British novelists' under 40, siding in the list with his contemporaries; Martin Amis (born in 1949), Pat Barker (born in 1943), Kazuo Ishiguro (born in 1954), Ian McEwan (born in 1949), Salman Rushdie (born in 1947) and Graham Swift (born in 1949) (Guignery, 2006, p. 3), all of whom constitute some of the most prominent contemporary British fictional writers.

*Flaubert's Parrot* was followed by *Starring at the Sun* (1986) which won him the E. M. Forster American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters awards for work of distinction in 1986. In addition to these awards, Julian Barnes received other honours including the Gutenberg Prize in France in 1987, the Premio Grinzane Cavour in Italy in 1988, and in 1992 the Prix Fémina in France for *Talking it Over* (1991), the Shakespeare Prize of the FVS Foundation Hamburg in 1993, and the Austrian State Prize for European

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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Literature in 2004. He was named Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters in France in 1988, promoted to Officer in 1995, and finally to Commander in 2004. On his most recent publications; *The Sense of an Ending* (2011), won him the Man Booker Prize which is the English equivalent of the Nobel Prize in USA.

Besides *Metroland* adaptation into a movie, *Talking it over* (1991) was made into a French movie by Marion Vernoux, called *Love, etc.* (1996), ten years after which publication, Barnes provided a sequel to it under the title *Love, etc* (2001). In 2010, *Arthur & George* (2005), shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, has also been adapted on stage by David Edgar in Birmingham, and made into a three-episode series in 2015.

Barnes's translation includes Volker Kriegel's book *The Truth about Dogs* (1988), and that of Alphonse Daudet's *La Doulou* (posthumously published by Daudet's widow in 1931) under the title *In the Land of Pain* (2002). The latter consists of Daudet's notes on dying while his suffering from syphilis. Barnes 'morbid' fascination with death, the decrepitude of old-age, and the process of dying revealed itself through his beautifully, yet painfully accurate translation of Daudet's notes of the human's physical and psychological decay, such concerns which Barnes has endeavored to clarify and bring responses to in most of his works, be they fictional or non-fictional; as in his memoir; *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008).

Barnes has an up-to-date unpublished book - the title of which is *A Literary Guide to Oxford*, which he started when he was working for the Oxford English Dictionary Supplement.

Barnes devoted his tenth novel, *Arthur & George*, (2005) to a prominent British writer, the creator of *Sherlock Holmes*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, related to a case he had helped solve and clear the name of a victim of justice miscarriage; George Edalji (1877-

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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1953); a Birmingham solicitor, the descent of whom is of a Scottish and Parsee miscegenation. The latter, wrongly convicted to a penal servitude of seven years in 1903, being misjudged as the culprit of horse mutilation.

Barnes's latest fictional works include two collections of short stories *Pulse* (2011) and *The Sense of an Ending* (2011) - wherein he explores matters of love, aloneness, and their antitheses in the first one, along with the concept of memory and its complex selective nature in the second collection. *The Sense of an Ending* (2011), the latter won him the Booker Prize and has been cinematographically adapted in 2017. His most recent work is *The Noise of Time* (2016), a novel which treats the noise of consciousness and its conflicts, and *The Only Story* (2018) which is a coming-of-age fictional work.

### 2.3. Barnes's Postmodern Existential Fiction

Barnes conceives fiction, in an interview, as; "the best way of telling the truth" (Guignery and Roberts, 2009, p. 64). He considers himself as a Europeanized writer. Now, at the age of 72, still is an active author contributing in the Western literary production, his very recent publication, a novel under the title; *The Noise of Time* (2016); tells the story of the Russian composer named; Dmitri Shostakovich. His novels, broadly, display the postmodern narrative techniques, not only this, but also in terms of themes, concerned with the authenticity of history and truth-telling, existential questionings, and thanatophobia in the face of the twenty-first hyper-modern zeitgeist.

It is hard to define a movement which is still under critical analysis, a movement; the definition of which along with its constructedness are still under completion. *Postmodernism*, according to Jameson (1998), "is not something we can settle once and for all and then use with a clear conscience. The concept, if there is one, has to come at the



## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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end, and not at the beginning of our discussions of it” (p. xiii). It is a complicated term, a set of ideas and with a new angled form of reasoning. Nevertheless, *Postmodernism* refers to that movement which emerged as a radical response to and against modernism. Unlike the latter which rejected traditions and authorities to celebrate reason and science; *postmodernism* breaks away from the modernist belief that the contemporary Man could make of the world’s understanding through a reliance on reason and science.

*Postmodernism* is a radical shift, or a stream that holds new tendencies; “it often bills itself as an anti-philosophical, by which it means that it rejects many traditional philosophical alternatives” (Hicks, 2004, p. 6). It is also influenced by the theory of evolution; Darwinism, since the latter destroyed all traditional values and the status of knowledge.

However, what should be said is that both *Existentialism* and *Postmodernism* appeared as a direct consequence of the Second World War. It is, therefore, argued that postmodernism is a variation of existentialism. Hoffman claims that “existentialism, could be argued that it paved the way for postmodernism. A different position could be held maintaining that existentialism was an early form of postmodernism.” (Cited in Hicks, 2004, p. 101), accordingly, many postmodern principles are constituted by the existential tendency. Lesley Virginia Herring (2005) in her thesis; *The Existential and Postmodern Individual* deduces that:

The theories of existentialism and postmodernism seem like very different ideas at first glance. Existentialism is a philosophy of individuals, while postmodernism is theory focused more on society and less on individual existence. In this thesis, I will show that both of these ideas can be merged together to be seen as an individual philosophy [but]

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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through existentialism and postmodernism, we can put the pieces together to see how this is achieved within the individual being (p. iii)

On a parallel ground, Aleksandar Sanrac maintains that:

Postmodern theory of truth is not based only on Nietzsche's nihilism. *Truth* as subjective experience and subjective faith is an established concept in Kierkegaard's philosophy of existence. According to his philosophy, *truth is subjectivity*— emptied of objective and historical certainty. Truth of God or truth of salvation is *highly subjective*, because there are no objective measures for truthfulness (Scripture, Creeds, tradition, or Church authority). Postmodernism has accepted this idea without critical reflection because it has the same presuppositions as existentialism, by maintaining that *truth has no objective certainty*. (p. 9)

And that:

In many ways Existentialism, as a philosophical movement has been eclipsed by two philosophical movements that developed in France after Sartre although Sartre lived long enough to see both these developments: the first movement is referred to as "structuralism" [...] the second movement is often referred to "post-structuralism" or postmodernism, the key figures are Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and Roland Barthes, this movement is influenced largely by a reading of Nietzsche as well as Heidegger. Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism" in which he distanced himself from Sartre can be regarded as a starting point. (p. 1)

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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Accordingly, *Postmodernism*, like *Existentialism*, denies the possibility for the existence of an absolute truth. Both are sceptical upon the possible existence of objective truth. *Postmodernism* would be sketched in this line; X is true according to one's perspective. Truth is, for Jean François Lyotard - a critic and a theorist of postmodernism - subjective par excellence. It, henceforth, rejects the absolute fundamental certainties, and intrinsic reality is therefore rejected, this is what Lyotard declares in his *The Postmodern Condition*<sup>3</sup>.

Since one of the postmodern principles is that notion of truth and the delicacy of its credibility, truth is, henceforth, regarded as being illusionary, erroneous in most cases and not obtainable. The Postmodern mind through the epistemological, sceptical, and empirical thought, views that all what is certain is uncertain. Truth is *relative*; there is no absolute objective truth. Postmodernists regard truth in the sense that it is never available to the human mind, and Barnes shares this view; as a contemporary writer with a postmodern fictional tendency, he has always tackled the question of truth through his fictional and non-fictional works.

As it is mentioned above, Barnes in his novels reveals that there is no ultimate truth; either in historical or religious narrative reportedness. The former has been bluntly retrieved by the author over most of his works, if not all, besides the overuse of irony, a sarcastic outlook, and great scepticism towards the facticity of history.

Historical truth has also been shaken by the postmodern ironical revaluation of its authenticity. According to postmodernist thinkers, history was historiographed with subjectivity; fabricated and exposed to and with the interference of the power-system. This sceptical vision suggests itself with its relation to the history of Christianity as well as to

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<sup>3</sup> For further reading, confer: Lyotard (1979, trans 1984), *The Postmodern Condition, A Report on Knowledge* where he explains the postmodern scepticism upon knowledge.

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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the religious Reformation, even Reformations; which hark back to the sixteenth century. Such turns are considered as religious falsifications, if not re-falsifications. The Biblical texts have been altered/interpreted/changed by the authority of the modern Man neglecting the celestial authority.

The death of history, or the ahistorical position and the distrust of the certainties of the past are regarded as the triggerer for the loss of identity of the British society. The British man - and the English in particular - is currently confused by the concept of identity. Englishness therefore, as an intrinsic sense/notion of such an issue, has been open to debates by contemporary criticism. Englishness is selected by many postmodern authors as a problematic/ambiguous theme that needs to be examined; revised.

Barnes is certainly concerned with this treasure; Englishness in Barnes's works is considered as a reference to evaluate the notion and status of the history Englishness in the present time. His novel *England, England* (1998) is a prototype in which the theme of Englishness is scrutinized in a parodic way. Barnes, in the novel, satirizes the fantasy of the myth of Englishness, and the superiority of the English. Nick Rennison (2004), in his *Contemporary British Novelists* states that:

Barnes's most original book in recent years has been, *England, England*, a satire on ideas of Englishness that [...] everything of value in English history and tradition is today repackaged to suit a tourist industry that has its own view of what constitutes the country's heritage is a commonplace idea. In *England, England* Barnes uses this common place notion as the starting point for a satirical fantasy in which the Isle of Wight is bought by a tycoon and transformed into a theme park dedicated to all the most clichéd images of 'Englishness'. It becomes 'everything

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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you imagined England to be, but more convenient, cleaner, friendlier and more efficient'. Eventually the fake England [...] overtakes the 'real' England, which reverts to an almost pre-industrial state. (p. 26)

Another thematic criterion that Barnes's works tackle is religion. Religion in the Western world and in Britain in particular, has witnessed a marginalized status. The postmodern man, currently, lives a liberal trend of suspicion or a radical denial of the existence of God and all that within the theological ground, "the vast majority of people in Britain do not regularly attend religious services. Many do so only a few times in their lives" (O'Driscoll 121). The postmodern Western man, today, is either agnostic or atheist. Agnosticism and Atheism as new ideologies are influentially shaping the Westerner's mind into undogmatic thought. Such a position and a common reasoning have, thereafter, observantly influenced contemporary fiction.

As a postmodern persona, Barnes has a great interest towards matters of religion and God; he was an atheist in his adolescence then turned agnostic at the age of 62. Barnes's spiritual conflict whether there is God or not is regularly displayed in his works, be they fictional or non-fictional. Agnosticism, as a result, is regarded as a predominant motif of his oeuvres. Undogmatically, the author discusses the theological doctrines through which he unveils his scepticism towards them.

In an interview, he once sketched: "as a writer, I would see we made up the Bible as a very good novel which then got corrupted by power systems" (Groes and Childs, 2011, p. 8). Barnes, here, is referring to that interference of Man on the canon and all that is divine, in other terms, he means falsification which the Bible has been exposed to, he added ironically: "it's a wonderful story in the great tradition of Hollywood, a great tragedy with a happy ending. It's not such a good story when you die and don't go to

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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heaven” (Groes and Childs, p. 8), asserting his attitude upon Christianity’s lack of static credibility.

As a self-contradicted author, Barnes sometimes reveals his scepticism towards the metaphysical and contradictingly enough, he demonstrates a radical disbelief based on atheism. The notion is accentuated in his recent memoir; *Nothing to Be Frightened* (2008), which makes of death its major protagonist through which the author discusses the eschatological<sup>4</sup> question, denying the possibility for an afterlife. It is a form of condolence of the self with a constant anxiety, and it clearly uncovers the authors’ self-denounced thanatophobia.

### 2.4. Postmodern Fiction and the Barnesian Literary Style

Barnes’s works are characterised by those writing techniques and themes of postmodern fiction; a diversity of forms and contents which shape the postmodern literary skeleton. Contemporary fiction is known for its defamiliarization, in both form and content. Thus, the readers face some difficulties to reach certain clarity of classification for this tendency despite its intelligibility of its language use.

“One of the few common denominators among the detractors of postmodernism is ahistorical” (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 87); authors, in order to discuss this issue, or display their scepticism upon history in their fictional work, history is represented. This matter has given the emergence of a new genre for novelistic writings; named historiographic metafiction. Julian Barnes has also adopted this genre to demonstrate his position towards history, a criterion which adds up to Barnes’s scepticism; prolonged upon his stance over the sceptical credibility of historical narratives.

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<sup>4</sup> Eschatological: related to eschatology; which is a branch of theology concerned with the final events in the history of the world or of humankind; and the belief concerning death, the end of the world; the ultimate destiny of humankind (Merriam -Webster Dictionary).

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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Historical representation in fictional narratives has henceforth undermined the single-biased status of historiography. The postmodern narrative is characterised by the historical representation; proliferated in the hands of fictional narratives for a multitude of interpretations, a set of 'histories' of a given historical record, event, character ... etc, (Acheson and Ross, 2005, p. 204). This offers a sceptical position with regard to the modernist liability on the centralized 'objective' truth, and the supposedly auto-ascribed certainty of the Western historiographic narrative. Just as Keith Jenkins suggests that our assumptions about history and the form in which modern historiography reported them are being suspected, i.e., 'no longer so readily acceptable' (Jenkins, 1997, p. 6). In similar respects, Robert J. Young defines postmodern historiography as the 'European culture's awareness that it is no longer the unquestioned and dominant centre of the world' (2004, p. 75).

The prospect of history is, henceforth, being 'open' to hybrid visualized reevaluation. The retrieval of history through historical representation within a fictional frame is conceived as a revisionist sort of retelling history. It is also regarded as a means for the occurrence of reconciliation with the past. These aspects of historiographic metafiction are prominent and proper to postmodern fictional narratives.

History - on the concepts of historiography - is not believable; historicity is the sole truth that is not available. Postmodern fictional producers have introduced this issue in their works to discuss, satirise or burlesque its fabulation. Barnes, for instance, has relied on the use of historiographic metafiction in many of his fictional works wherein he displays his position upon the subject of the extent of historiographic authenticity. This thematic pattern, thereupon is, to provide examples, illustrated in his *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984), *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (1989), and *England, England* (1998).

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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In *A History of the World in 10 ½*, for instance, as a novel that stresses an overuse of historiographic metafiction that; “turns towards human history, with all its complications [and] where *Flaubert’s Parrot* attempted to raid the tomb of a single author and thereby come to some conclusive truth” (Dalton, 2008, p. 45). Barnes through this novel provides us with an investigation about the nature of human history, and indeed this novel “attempts the far more difficult task of raiding the tomb of human history and its interpretations” (ibid).

Another technique that characterises postmodern fictional texts is *metafiction*. It is “fiction about fiction: novels and stories that call attention to their fictional status and their compositional procedures” (Lodge, 1992, 206). This literary device is like a self-conscious fiction, a fiction that writes about itself. Metafiction is a contemporary technique that most postmodern authors utilize.

This technicality is used in a frame in which a story consists of other stories which are narrated by the characters. Through such a use, writers display a social vision of real life since metafiction links between fiction and reality; it “draws attention to the fact that life, as well as novels, is constructed through frames, and because of that, it is finally impossible to know where one frame ends and another starts” (Serrano, 2013, p. 9).

David Lodge sketches that metafiction is “a mode that many contemporary writers find particularly appealing, weighed down, as they are, by their awareness of their literary antecedents, oppressed by the fear that whatever they might say has been said before, and condemned to self-consciousness by the climate of modern culture” (Serrano, 2013, p. 9). This means that writers use metafiction for the sake of incorporating their critical point of view in a fictionalized frame.



## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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Since postmodernist fiction is an eclectic tendency, a mixture or an amalgam of brand-new and traditional techniques; another new siding literary device emerged which is commonly named; *intertextuality*. This technique is highly used by postmodernist writers; most of their works are shaped by intertextuality.

Intertextuality is the French linguist's motto (whose name is Julia Kristeva) which refers to that interlink between a text and other texts. It is an operation of quotation; "the mechanism of an incorporating process of previous texts into other texts, it can also include an author's borrowing and transformation of a prior text into his own text" (Serrano, 2014, p. 9). Moreover, it is the very condition of fiction, that all texts are woven from the tissues of other texts, whether authors know it or not (Lodge, 1992, 89-99).

The usage of intertextuality consists of the aim of comparison between texts. Through putting two texts together in a book, readers certainly compare between them and deduce the similarities and differences. It is also the act of coining a conversational dialogue between texts and discussing a theme for instance. Yet, intertextuality often destabilizes the reader's understanding through the disruption of a new intertext. Julian Barnes uses intertextuality in a manner through which he interlinks texts within his own texts to satirize for instance Christianity and dogmas.

*Parody* is another postmodern literary technique/aspect which is defined as "an imitation of a work of art, literature, or music for the purpose of making a playful fun or joke of the original work within a postmodern poetics" (Serrano, 2013, p. 9). Parody, in other words, is to make a travesty of; to imitate the style of someone in an amusing way. Hutcheon defines it; "a perfect postmodern form, in some sense, for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies. It also forces a reconsideration of originality that is compatible with other postmodern interrogations of liberal humanist

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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assumptions.” (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 11) Barnes also adopts this technique in his texts, Vanessa Guignery sees *England, England* (1998) as a novel that can be read ‘as both a reflection on and a parody of Baudrillard’s concept of hyperreality’ (Drag, 2007, p. 19).

Another mode of literary expression that emerged in postmodern literary texts is through the use of pastiche. It is defined by Frederic Jameson as; ‘a kind of parody’. *Pastiche* thus “can be loosely called a blank parody as Frederic Jameson suggests” (Cited in Drag, 2007, p. 19). Pastiche comes from the Italian word *pasticcio* which means an admixture of different ingredients like ‘a farrago’, ‘a hotchpotch’ and ‘jumble’.

Barnes does not rely only on the traditional narrative techniques, but he yokes the traditional modes of writing with the modern ones to create an entangled mode of his own literary characterisation.

Judith Friedrich says that “the Barnesian text works through metaphors even when it avoids metaphor” (Tory and Vesztergom, 2014, p. 149). Barnes’s metaphoric expressions are aesthetically composed. He invokes multiple valued themes via the use of metaphor. Barnes’s themes are audacious and gainsay the norm, thus metaphor is constantly used.

“Having his name at the university as an author famous with his irony [...] the Barnesian text lies rather than in its playful humor, and of course in its irony” (Cited in Drag, 2007, p. 19). Accordingly, Julian Barnes masters the use of witty language to convey insults; his irony is accentuated not merely in the texts but in his choice of the titles he uses for his fictional and non-fictional works. That is to say, Barnes, as an empirical author, would respond over the making of his titles that; history, or authentic history is what is experienced by the individuals, then pure authentic history is, therefore, constrained to

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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personal experiences. The author ironically displays the issue of the historical delegitimation with the notion of historicity and historiography.

Polyphony, which refers to the multiple voices, or a new kind of artistic thinking as Bakhtin<sup>5</sup> argues, “the Barnesian text provides the reader with a polyphony of voices and gives him/her the opportunity to form judgments, whether these are in or out of harmony” (Cited in Drag, 2007, p. 19). This narrative technique is utilized by Julian Barnes. In his accounts, this literary technicality enables him to convey his message through the voice of the constructed character as well as the narrator’s; his voice. For his translation of Daudet’s *La Doulou*, he sketches: “I want the reader to hear Daudet’s voice as clearly as possible in the text, and then hear my voice, helping to explain what his voice is saying” (Groes and Childs, 2011, p. 49).

In some of his works, Barnes uses the idea of the reader in the text. He invites his readers for a conversation, introducing questions to be discussed with the pontificated upon. And indeed, he directs questions to the reader himself. Both of these conventional and mostly unconventional techniques enable Barnes to catch his reader’s attention and his responsibility of his interpretation of the text as it is illustrated in his *Vigilance* when he ended the story with question marks; “It’s all about respect, isn’t it? And if you don’t have it you have to be taught it. The true test, the only test, is whether we’re becoming more civilized or whether we aren’t. Wouldn’t you agree?” (Barnes, 2004, p. 120)

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<sup>5</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin is a Russian philosopher, a literary critic, semiotician, and a scholar who worked on literary theory, ethics, and the philosophy of language.

### 2.5. The Interrelation of Historical Theory and Literary Technicalities in the Postmodern Novel - Barnes's *Arthur & George* (2005)

Historical representation in literary narratives has undermined the single-biased status of historiography. The postmodern narrative is characterised by the historical representation which proliferated in a fictional genre and mode of narration providing a multitude of interpretations, a set of *histories* of a given historical record, event, character ... etc, as Daniel Bedggood notes (Cited in Acheson and Ross, 2005, p. 204). It involves the convergence of factual content within fictional representation resorting to *faction*, the latter offers a sceptical position regarding the modernist liability on the centralized 'objective' truth, and the supposedly auto-ascribed certainty of the 'European'/'Western' historiographic narrative.

Keith Jenkins (1997) suggests that our assumptions about history and the form in which modern historiography reported them are being suspected, i.e., 'no longer so readily acceptable' (p. 6). In similar respects, Robert J. Young (2004) defines postmodern historiography as the 'European culture's awareness that it is no longer the unquestioned and dominant centre of the world' (p. 75).

The prospect of history is, henceforth, being 'open' to hybrid visualized reevaluation. The retrieval of history through historical representation within a fictional form is conceived as a revisionist sort of retelling history. It is also regarded as a means for the occurrence of reconciliation with the past. These aspects of historiographic metafiction are prominent and proper to the postmodern narrative. It is a way to enlighten the real hidden interpretations of history, as being reported to the contemporary individual in a 'narrated' form. The distrust of the past records has soared to the point of segregating any

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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piece of narrative according to the cultural perspectives of the writer; of teller/reporter of such and such (master narratives).

Acheson and Ross (2005) state that Julian Barnes holds on a sceptical attitude in his works which displays a distrust towards ‘metanarratives’ as well as ‘old certainties (p. 7). According to his attenuated belief in the stateliness of religion and God as being of a divine nature is both conceivable and inconceivable owing to one’s cultural perspectives. This hybrid position upon the matter of the transcendental is pretty common and defined as a trait within the postmodern trend.

Again, postmodern historiography would be represented as; instead of the traditional modern “metanarrative prescriptiveness, postmodern narrative is more disjunctive, inhabited by the stories of those excluded by previous historical accounts, and more ‘heteroglossic’ awareness of the way that history can be found in a wider range of ‘types’ of sources” (Acheson and Ross, 2005, p. 7). Respectively, Frederick Jameson (1997) also claims that the narrated history of the previous modern “old certainties, aims and ideals ... are now insecure and debatable” (p. 267).

Since historiography is biased upon the European’s norm of authentic truth, it is inevitably constructed upon a mono-cultural perspective. A distrust of the truthfulness of knowledge is what Frederick Jameson defines as *Postmodernity*. Such is what postmodern critics are concerned with; the contingency of facts as related to an ‘openness’ to their interpretative meanings. History, is then, a set of facts interrelated to other ‘histories’ which are conceived in a coherent narrative however the understanding remains dependant, single-biased and constructed. The modern narrative does take the major historical occurrences leaving aside the particular, to present them in a form which gives a sense of linear, completed narrative; and the credibility of which is rounded.

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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Acheson and Ross (2005) assert that postmodern historiography presents “the discourse of history as ‘opened up’: that is, no longer singular or subservient to a particular cultural perspective” (p. 204).

Lyotard defines anything postmodern as ‘incredulity towards metanarrative’ (Cited in Harvey, 1990, p. 45). He articulates his view of the traditional modernist discourse as relying on the *general* approach; supposedly objective discourse as being ‘legitimated’, i.e., only according to or based upon a previous reference. His sceptical position or rather distrust of the modernist or traditional ‘metanarratives’, or ‘grand narratives’ discourse led by the reliability on, or the recourse to former ‘legitimated’ grounds.

The postmodern attitude to modern narratives is, as being regarded as rounded and shaped, and is thereafter no longer taken for the alleged reported truthfulness, but rather open for revision.

Barnes’s concern with history resides in the *referentiality* to the condition of Christianity as history in itself. He devotes his search of the origins and nature of Man’s history in his/her religion; here the condition of Christianity taken as a form of history.

### **2.6. Barnes and the Postmodern Historical Representation within Fictional Narratives**

Since postmodern fiction addresses a sceptical view upon the reliability of what history discloses, Julian Barnes, like many of his contemporaries, shares the constant display of concerns towards ‘troubled histories’ (Acheson and Ross, 2005, p. 203). The focus is upon the analysis or the evaluation of historiographic narration, which is claimed to be biased and construal of general facts. Historians bring forward narrations of actual scientific facts, events, etc, through witnessed reportedness or experiences. However no

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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matter how authentic it endeavors to be, it remains grand-narratives, and thereby construes its focus upon the grand, general historicity while neglecting the particular cases.

Hence, history is being represented through linguistic fictional symbolism and re-narrated through literary narratives. The historical representation through fictional narration or style, is of a common thematic concern of postmodernist fiction writers. The cause or rather what these writers aim at is disclosing the particularities to provide an openness of historical interpretation, an illumination of the understanding of history, i.e., facts, event, crises, revolutions ... etc. Dimitrina Kondeva<sup>6</sup> notes that Barnes is interested in the individual's 'inner voices' (Cited in Groes and Childs, 2011, p. 16), the use of which is to fetch for their inner authentic truths, rather than the ultimate 'Truth', hence castigating the credibility of the modernist narrative tradition of what Lyotard calls, as being 'metanarrative' (Norris, 1990, p.7) and his definition of postmodernism is that of 'incredulity to metanarrative' (Harvey, 1990, 45)<sup>7</sup>.

In an interview, Barnes suggests that this literary tendency of fictional narratives; "based on a true historical event is certainly one current literary trend at the moment. But it's not especially new ... this is partly a question of filling a vacuum" (Guignery and Roberts, 2009, pp. 72-73). Barnes also makes of this tendency as an explanation of moulding history within fictional accounts, as in to: "approach the general through the particular" (Guignery and Roberts, 2009, p. 165), otherwise explained, getting a coherent plausibility of the past history through the approach of the particular and rather unmentioned or relegated facts. Because the reality-based account of the past is viewed as

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<sup>6</sup> A Bulgarian translator of Barnes's work and a contributor to the writing and exchanges of Barnes for *The Porcupine*.

<sup>7</sup> This is how Jean François Lyotard defines postmodernism in his 1979 book entitled; *La Condition Postmoderne*.

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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being misreported, misinterpreted and brought to focus on the agreed upon; the general, whereas the realistic account lies behind the mentioned, i.e., the minor facts.

Literary narration of history reveals much research undertaken by the writers, and the re-telling of history in a fictional frame and tone reveals other truths, truths hidden due to the historiographic narration's approach of the general on the demise of and to the detriment of the particular. Hence, the concern with the past is displayed through its retrieval as a means to uncover hidden perceptions upon the interpretation of remote past historical records; Man's access to which is via 'narrated' reportedness/narration.

Barnes's writings are considered to "reveal the constant remaking of the past to fit into concerns of the present as problematic" (Acheson and Ross, 2005, p. 204). This statement leads to the assumption that the retrieval of history, for Barnes, plays a *revisionist* role of sacred history, his reply is that the possibility to conclude such as being true is almost impossible, since 'narrated' reportedness will still be partial truth. Truth, thereafter, is subjective and self-reflexive.

This appeals to the sceptical approach of the nature and origins of knowledge, is our accessibility to knowledge - our knowledge of the past- remains of a mythically-created 'narrated' source, or is it reliable through the sustainability via scientific empirical evidence? The nature or lack of proved sustainability of knowledge is what postmodern thinkers and writers, here, Julian Barnes, are most concerned with. And indeed, Barnes's fictional works are: "all searching for ways of knowing the world, each other; they all have characters who are striving for some way of finding meaning in an increasingly depoliticized, secularized, localized, and depthless world' (Pateman, 2002, p. 2).



## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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### 2.7. Historiographic Metafiction in Barnes's *Arthur & George* (2005)

Barnes fictional process/structure of writing *Arthur & George* (2005) is based upon an enormous amount of research concerning not only the case of Great Wyrley Outrage, but also readings upon Arthur Conan Doyle's fictional works, as biographies, and the bit of the available personal account about George, even though scarce in amount. Barnes states in the author's note: "apart from Jean's letter to Arthur, all letters quoted, whether signed or anonymous, are authentic; as are quotations from newspapers, government reports, proceedings in Parliament, and the writing of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle" (Barnes, 2005, p. 505).

Barnes's statement of his intertextual inclusion or incorporation of public and private material into the novel is important for his readers merely so that he accentuates the authenticity of his novel, however the use of intertexts; "only form the red thread in his *fictional* account of the chronology of events" (Frey, 2008, p. 12).

The novel is not a historical narrative, but a genre on its own under the pinning of *Historiographic Metafiction*. Barnes's constant concern with 'troubled histories' (Acheson and Ross, 2005, p. 203), has led his 'artistic license' (Guignery, 2006, p. 130) to converge or mingle a literary fictional creativity within and into a realistic/authentic facticity. Hence the categorization of this novelistic writing as; "a work that is on the borderline between fact and fiction, concerned primarily with a real event [...] but using imagined details to increase readability and verisimilitude" (Hawthorn, 1997, p. 64).

The genre as the novel is ascribed to is that of '*faction*' (Frey, 2008, p. 1), which consists of merging fiction and facts to illuminate the real truth of the Edalji case, the

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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authentic hidden urges and the mystery of the case's unknown culprit - to our days and age - which brought the justice miscarriage of George Edalji, the Edinburgh man of law.

Barnes mentions in the author's note the incorporation of intertextual references which he refers to by giving the whole titles of the major works which helped him construct the chronological order of the story's events. This in turn makes his novel trustworthy in terms of authenticity and realistic report. He relies upon the contextual themes of Arthur's writings to try to get a close understanding of how the inner self and mind of the characters, protagonists mainly.

The authentication of his novel owes to the research he conducted upon Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of *Sherlock Holmes*, hence Barnes refers to Arthur Conan Doyle's fictional works as well as his autobiographical account; *Memories and Adventures* (1924)<sup>8</sup> which contains Arthur's involvement into the Edalji's case, and other Doyle's works such as; *The Doings of Raffles Haw* (Barnes, 2005, p. 60), *Micah Clarke* (Barnes, 2005, p. 75), or *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (Barnes, 2005, p. 119, 164, 256).

The synopsis (at the back cover of the novel) proves Barnes dissatisfaction of more factual references and intertexts he relied upon for presenting factual relevance of the case, a feature proper to historicity. Instead, he assuaged the surface historicity of the case by providing an insight of both a psychological as well as a social account surrounding the case.

Barnes makes use of distinctive discursive devices whereby he could penetrate the inner consciousness as well as the sentimental state of his characters, the latter are presented with a historical authentic account which gives the novel a factual dimension, yet

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<sup>8</sup> See Barnes, 2005, pp. 470-472.

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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the novel is also given a fictional dimension for the creative fictionalized commentary/interpretative version of its facticity.

It is this multi-perspective account of the characters that helped Barnes create a psychological and conscious unfolding of the case, but most particularly so that it serves him to play the role of a heterodiegetic third-person of the omniscient/know-all narrator to give a full and detailed account of the case. Hence, Barnes could recount the inner worlds and psyches of Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji. This is apparent in the way he explains what they think, for example: Arthur's conscious realization about the anxiety he conveys with regard to his status is being revealed by the psycho-narrative analysis; Arthur feels:

[...] a hypocrite [...] a fraud. In some ways he has always felt a fraud, and the more famous he has become, the more fraudulent he has felt. He is lauded as a great Man of the age, but though he takes an active part in the world, his heart feels out of kilter with it. (Barnes, 2005, p. 284)

It is here, as already stated, where Barnes's fictionalization occurs while providing a contradicting, yet simultaneously balancing opinionated truths. The latter is exemplified by the multi-personification of Arthur's character when he transmogrifies when he meets his enamoured lover; Jean, Arthur; "a man of honour" (Barnes, 2005, p. 310), endorsing rationalization and yet aligning with 'spiritism' as the latter juxtaposes the 'right rational mind'.

The *polyphony* of presenting a twofold identification of Arthur's undeniably revolves around the indeterminacy of Arthur's true character. At a parallel dimension, the reader is also given a plurality and a multiplicity of character-identification/description or

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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rather personalities included by Barnes in the form of either newspaper clippings from the Birmingham *Daily Gazette's* authentic articles in the context of the prosecution against George<sup>9</sup>, as well as two other articles from the same newspaper line about George's character in that "the accused man, as his name implies, is of Eastern origin" (Barnes, 2005, pp. 153-154) with a swarthy face, with its full, dark eyes, prominent mouth, and small round chin. His appearance is essentially Oriental in its solidity, no sign of emotion escaping him beyond a faint smile as the extraordinary story of the prosecution unfolded." (Barnes, 2005, p. 157)

George's aged Hindu father and his mother were in court, and followed the proceedings with "pathetic interest" (Barnes, 2005, p. 157). These racist/segregationist notes of 'swarthy face, [with an] Oriental [descent and attributed-appearance] in its stolidity' despite his being English by birth, education and civism, displaying 'no sign of emotion' alongside the positive witness account of him, majorly his father's and uncle's,<sup>10</sup> do not help part a single objective verity of his personality, a "dilemma [which] reminds us that our self-images are constructed not only from the stories that we tell ourselves about who we are but also from the stories that others tell about us" (Holmes, 2009, p. 66), and inconspicuously, this notion refers to the actual anxiety that the postmodern individual in their human essence faces about their own identity. Indeed, on the sociolinguistic sphere, it is assumed that Man is subject to display many selves, hence the inconceivability of a regular unified image/personality of an individual.

Barnes, giving opposing opinions upon a single character or fact as George's guilt yet innocence, unquestionably sets the reader to ponder the notion of truth and fictional/created assumptions being constructed and defined as truth are very finely

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<sup>9</sup> See: page 153-154, 205 of the novel.

<sup>10</sup> See: page 43, 57 of the novel.

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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parallel, hence the reader's difficulty to set the narrative as a factual and a historical account, or a fictional creation.

The same stream of thought applies for George's consciousness. The example of his imprisonment years wherein Barnes reveals George's inner thoughts and emotional state, something which contradicts and reverses his principles impinged by his father's teaching; as well as his self-constituted perception of what Law entails and is there for. The case deconstructed George's faith and conviction in Law's unbiased righteousness, a discipline which he veneers and represent as a lawyer. A discipline which he used to believe in as being 'a journey from confusion to clarity' (Barnes, 2005, p. 90), now, reconsidering this possibility of truth query and clarification as a complexity of righteousness as being unreachable, the world of reality and fiction collides to form an unresolved phenomenon, leading the reader to make up their own conclusive finality of the story-telling, or rather, of the telling/reportedness of *stories*.

Barnes tries to invoke a seemingly insight into George's consciousness and inner mind, emphasizing his conflictual emotions and almost disillusionment about the true nature - corrupted nature - of Law, and the supposedly nature of *right* overarching *wrong*.

Accordingly, the psycho-narration<sup>11</sup> of George's character, while in prison, is very disclosed through these extrapolated lines:

Part of him wanted to stay in his cell, painting nose-bags and reading the works of Sir Walter Scott, catching colds when his hair was cut in the freezing court yard, and hearing the old joke about bed-bugs

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<sup>11</sup> Psycho-narration is when the author endeavors to fit within the psychology of his characters, paving the way for the possibility of an impression of a more credible and fuller story. It is also a means by which the author mingles the imaginative, or the fictional with the factual/reality-based, i.e., the credible and historical, simply for more authenticity and reliability of the narrative.

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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again. He wanted this because he knew it was likely to be his fate, and the best way to be resigned to your fate was to want it. The other part of him, which wanted to be free tomorrow, which wanted to embrace his mother and sister, which wanted public acknowledgement of the great injustice done to him – this was the part he could not give full reign to, since it could end by causing him the most pain. (Barnes, 2005, p. 213)

Barnes's free indirect discourse along with the use of psycho-narration leads him either consciously or unconsciously to be racist in his description correlating the psycho-narration to fit the contextual/thematic element of the Edwardian class-bound and segregationist judgmental tone, and unconsciously fitting the typical Englishman of the time. The use of factual intertexts within a fictionalized aspect/dimension through psycho-narration entails polyphony, which ushers to mislead the reader and critics in comprehending and getting a unified version of both the story and the characters.

Intertextual references from newspaper clippings, witness accounts, quotes and allusions to letters, are simply utilised for the authentication of his fictional narrative; to provide a faithful reproduction of the Edalji case. Facticity, however, is withdrawn from the narrative in terms of historical evidence and the psycho-narration in terms of fictionalization which to the ambiguity of what and where truth lies in the narrative, and by implication in reality. Apart from that, polyphony entailed through the beholder's acclaimed truths; Arthur's investigative truth of George's innocence, and the Staffordshire police alongside the Quarter Sessions Court, unquestionably implies authenticity of all truths. Arthur's conviction of George's innocence opposed to the above-mentioned board of prosecution's conviction of George's guilt happen to be *constructed/biased* truths, claims, and convictions related to the linearity and process of investigation of each part.

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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This leads to the implicit metaphorical as well as the metafictional dimension of the story, it is that of the impossibility of retrieving truth on an objective ground.

The impossible and even inconceivable absolute truth is what Barnes refers to. If we regard the psycho-narration which Barnes utilises for the alleviation and fictionalization of his real life characters, however the intertexts imply metafiction, especially the way Barnes fictionalizes a fictitious story, or rather the essence of the case's constructed ending truth; the final verdict; and the guilt displayed by the Staffordshire police whose immediate judgment of George, and working for the justification of their constructed presupposed targeted assumptions.

In conclusion; the fictionalization of the characters lies in the use of the third-person free indirect speech, as well as the psycho-narration devices which give Barnes's literary talent an overlapping dimension of a continual and constant knowability about the mystery of Great Wyrley case. The latter which consists of a number of menacing obscene religious and racist hate mail of the period 1892-1896<sup>12</sup> recurring again in 1903 with mutilating the parish animals<sup>13</sup>

The mutilations' culprit - which is most likely fictitious - has not been disclosed up to nowadays; George at the end of the narrative, reveals in an article written to the *Daily Gazette*. Right from the beginning George is claimed to 'lack imagination' (Barnes, 2005, p. 4) and imagination being socially 'a term of dispraise' and those with 'too much imagination' and creativity are simply 'tellers of tall stories' and 'fibbers' and that imagination and creativity are the property of 'liar(s) through and through'.<sup>14</sup> This implies that Barnes, from the beginning of the narrative, sets his readers upon the constructedness

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<sup>12</sup> See: page 47, 48, 56, 63 of the novel.

<sup>13</sup> See: page 113-115 of the novel.

<sup>14</sup> See : page 4-5 of the novel.

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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of *tall stories*; narratives. The paragraph continues: “George himself is never urged to speak the truth: this would imply that he needs encouragement. It is simpler than this: he is expected to tell the truth because at the Vicarage no alternative exists.” (Barnes, 2005, p. 5)

If we look closely at the words Barnes juxtaposes; ‘imagination’, ‘tellers of tall stories and fibbers’, ‘expected to tell the truth’ ...etc, these notes allude to the Vicarage, which is a symbol of divine absolutism and righteousness - it is the truth in its essence, and religiosity is the authentic truthful path of a convenient survival. Barnes sets his readers to expect doubts, pondering the authenticity of religion, and sets all breachers - in all their relatedness to either atheism, (agnosticism here in my rationale) as tellers of lies, and vainly claiming their truths which essentially constitute the absolute reversion of religion’s truthfulness. Either you abide by the religious truths, dogmas, or you are a liar, a liar to oneself since imagination figuratively implies philosophizing upon religion.

Arthur’s articles upon the Edalji ’s case were released in two forms in the *Daily Telegraph* on the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> of January 1907<sup>15</sup> wherein he describes George as: “very shy and nervous [...] [and] a most distinguished student” (Barnes, 2005, p. 416), a statement that makes George’s disillusionment upon the true person he is; makes him “feel like several overlapping people at the same time: a victim seeking redress; a solicitor facing the highest tribunal in the country; and a character in a novel” (Barnes, 2005, p. 416).

During and after the Second World War, the 1940s, national self-awareness reached its high peak. The social mood and motion, the Western world, and the English, faced the advent of the gloom inflicted by the wars, “realized that the economic base of the country,

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<sup>15</sup> See: page. 395-396, 415-417 of the novel.



## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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compromised by WWI and shattered by WWII. He knew that a country so shaken could not continue to assert its authority over a quarter of mankind.” (Rogers, 2004, p. 57)

Accordingly, a note here by Barnes’s use of this vivid and real incident; a higher power mistake of the Home Office vis-à-vis a commoner (George) leads to the consideration of ‘how history repeats itself’. Here, the incident regarded as a mere reproduction of past history into the present aims at shaking the audience to reveal the nature of historical reportedness outspokenly, yet in an entertaining and creative form (fictional narrative), that these notions existed in the past, and still do exist. They are proper to the capitalist consumerism which prevails and characterises the 21<sup>st</sup> century status quo. Still, this uncovers the reality of Man’s nature which helps sustain the corrupted history. A reconciliation that helps the reader reconcile both evil and goodness of the homo sapiens’s nature.

Now, the reason why Barnes’s works are complicated is due to the fact that Barnes takes the universe of a more psychological creation and presence, rather than of a mere physical existence. He undertakes his works, as a try in and an endeavor of delineating the working of the psychic and *spiritist* behind the presented and unexplored rigidity of life, as a way to comprehend the actual existence of Man and our knowledge of the world’s functioning.

The influence of the abstract world upon Barnes’s enthusiastic research and detective work leads him to consider his characters; here both of Arthur and George, as vehicles for a greater purpose. Indeed, Barnes is not interested in the creator or the exploits of *Sherlock Holmes* of Arthur, or, George’s publication of the Railway Law, for the ‘Man in the Train’, instead, he is more fascinated by the figures, persons and the way they

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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manhandle their lives as being brought in the historical front owing to the fame they came to either way.

For those familiar with Barnes's works, they must have noticed the disquisitional process of elaborating the themes of every fictional narrative of his. *Arthur & George* (2005) is delightfully laid in a very complex exposition of settings and mode of narration; factual, as well as fictional elements. The way he creates the seemingly confusing, misleading, and incongruent thematic elements is based upon the reconciliation of two grounds: the factual or practical; the realistically existent; with the fictional.

In an interview, Vanessa Guignery, in *Julian Barnes in Conversation* (2002), states her question to Barnes upon *Flaubert Parrot's* as being described complicated and confusing. Barnes with his strong wit and ironic tone responded: 'I think I only confuse the academic reader'. And his brother the philosopher of Ancient Philosophy with, 'a very logical mind' as Julian maintains, sent him a letter from Paris where he lives, sketching: "I enjoyed your novel very much, except of course I did not know *what was true and what was not*" (Guignery and Roberts, 2009, pp. 101-114).

From this question, we could draw exactly the same concluding position upon *Arthur & George* (2005), since Barnes endeavors to make these important individuals in the history of humanistic emancipation away from the puritanical Victorian ground. This goes through a detailed circumstantial exposition of their lives. The journey throughout their breeding process and maturity towards adulthood; faced the ulterior and conflicting version of existential reality.

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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Assumingly, the narrative form resembles very much a *bildungsroman*<sup>16</sup> (Cuddon, 1999, pp. 81-82), layering the ensuing phases of his protagonists' lives but as related to the case. Barnes relies here on analepsis and prolepsis - time shift device, or temporal disorder, so characteristic of postmodern fiction - through the use of past tense for Arthur, and present tense for George, whose miscarried prosecution and thereafter conviction becomes the heart of the novel's story as it moves.

Another matter in the exposition of confusing positions concerning the trial and its justification by Arthur to exonerate George's guilt, and on another account, Arthur's compelling position of his profession to his wife Touie and on the side having an affair with Jean who it is to be his second wife after Touie dies, and Arthur's position about existential matters; spiritism, death, all of which leads to pondering the nature of absolute truths. Barnes holds through this narrative the controversial version of truth legitimacy, i.e., the authenticity of factual reports.

Furthermore, the contradictory elements witnessed in Arthur's behaviour and conceptions mostly lead the reader to assume that Barnes is undertaking a psychological analysis or delineation of how the human mind works and live throughout the dilemmas that life offers. An example is strikingly drawn throughout most of the second chapter where he denotes the scrutinized moral conceptions of Arthur upon love, the issue of *identity* with regards to *Englishness* (chivalry, morality and national duty) are drawn in most of the first of the four parts of the novel, and spiritism in most of the second part). Noting that the third and fourth parts essentially concentrate on the detective mission led by Arthur for George's exoneration.

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<sup>16</sup> 'Formation Novel', a term more or less synonymous with *Erziehungsroman* ; literally an 'upbringing' or 'maturation' novel.

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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Barnes fictionalized bits of the narrative are included to collide with the factual, reality-based facts of the historical incident<sup>17</sup>, yet the author seems and does speak for his own version of the mystery of the famous case, yet made infamous conveniently by the British media, simply to keep the authority of Englishness at its high value. However, the novel impinges “a light on the complexities and intractability of racism, ‘the strain’ of the British Empire” (Dicker, 2011).<sup>18</sup>

What makes one think they exist? A problematic of identity and existence alongside with moral, or as Barnes puts it, Arthur’s spiritist values. Pondering the existence of God through a conversation that Arthur had with his rigidly pious sister; Connie, makes the reader realize a bottled anxiety clung onto Arthur’s existential epistemology.

The conversation addresses a problematic of: to what extent could one; with a rational/logical mind believe in the existence of a later life? (see Barnes, 2005, 267-274). The answer of this verbalized existential issue, yet with disquisitional existentialist answer led Barnes to set on a journey of spiritism or spiritual platform as viewed by Arthur, and implicitly by Man on a general extent.

The way Arthur pontificated upon the definition of spirituality -God and whether there is a later life once death takes place- are merely pictured as a stringent mental chaos of Man since it is assumed that a sane mind would take the dogmas and absorb them without any beyond questionings. Yet, what Barnes tries to demonstrate implicitly is, that the doubts are constantly there, like an *epistemological existential right*. Arthur takes her stance, or position as being typical of an archetypal English character who portrays the

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<sup>17</sup> George Edalji’s case, being convicted under created unrealistic and biased evidence against him. The foremost character of the Board of Prosecution which contributed in the unjust incarceration of George, is Captain Anson, the chief of Great Wyrley Constabulary. The Edalji’s case, even though its minor retrievability, or contributory role in the history of England, it contributed to the establishment of the Court of Criminal Appeal in 1907, which stands for a means to correct other miscarriages of justice.

<sup>18</sup> On the long-held and perished prestige of Englishness.

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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Anglican, and even the puritan Church as he repeats her answer accordingly: "... wait until you cross the bridge" (Barnes, 2005, pp. 268-269).

What the author addresses here, through Arthur, is the coexistence of both spiritism with mortality. Mortality which galvanizes Man's spirit with regards to searching a sense of meaningful continuity of his *being*. Mortality to Man, the belief that God exists or not, and the striking fear of death eventually leads Man to a sort of constantly existent struggle which the human being undertakes throughout their lifespan. The only difference is assumed to be found within the one who swallow his anxiety; or fear of death and marches his life blindfolded, yet with peace of mind assumed as being ignored for Arthur here, have the courage to work out the questioning and fully experiences the existential problematic of the mind.

Barnes' exposition of existential notions of a complex epistemological nature; and his narrative versions of self-questioning and wandering upon the matter which happens to be the personal impetus of his almost sequel to the novel in terms of this particular theme of facts and morals in *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008).

What makes Barnes so distinct is his seemingly scattered, hybrid, non linear multi-opinionated stances upon matters of the tangible world, the earthly matters combined with what is beyond the observed. He brings both personal concerns of the spirit, and brain-endeavoring to lay out the inexplicable of the metaphysical status into a blunt, clear-edged description proper to every human being. The latter as obscured and intrigued by the insanity of his/her mind as circumstanced with life.

Compounding this, Barnes owes this ingenuity to a rich verbal source, whereby he uses artful accumulation of compelling details in most of his works, and the handled ones here, as if he seeks divulgence, the bottling out of a frustrated spirit of the postmodernist as

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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well as the modernist Man, and yet seems (according to the reader- baffled by the working of the ostensible existential process into either obnoxious of merely innocuous moulding of the inner self, the human characteristics.

### 2.8. Conclusion

Thanks to Barnes' cuttingly distinct verbal ability which makes of him a 'creative writer', breathlessly confectioning the way his story is presented to his audience. Indeed, he is a poetry-like prose read, with a unique voice which plays different roles as well as ideological/psychological positions. He closely examines the situations his characters are drawn into. He considers his characters as patients submitted to a psychological evaluation; for a *mise au point*.

The attribute of a string capacity of wordy expressionism in fact renders the 'unsaid' difficult to work out linguistically, quite outspokenly easy to express. The uncovering process of 'the feared', the, much often than not, avoided non-uttered side of existence. The latter alludes to an existence of conflicts and denial; a disguise of the motives of one's driving motions into existing. Does one exist out of personal, humane, or religious completion? Or are these just concepts which we cling onto to give a sense to our existence? Does Man take these beliefs as the pillars under the spectrum of reasonable and innate *raison d'être*? Does Man blind himself intentionally under unconscious interpretations of his flesh and spiritual wills? These questions Barnes strives to disclose through the real, early 19<sup>th</sup> century case of G. Edalji. The author undertakes history within fictional forms.

What is interesting is the highlighting of the stoical historical account within an artful reciting. As if Barnes tries to give more interpretation to history, crucial non debated,

## Chapter Two: Julian Barnes and Postmodern Fiction

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realistic, and real-life events. A hint of, an allusion to disbelief, openness towards multi-interpretation in accordance to Man's hermeneutic judgment. This allows events, and hence the general history, to be multi-faceted in its interpretation, to give forth other compounding perspective forms to history. This may also implicitly accuse the objectivity of historicism in the layering of events as they are, a kind of falsification and may be regarded as either reasonable actions or merely crude barbarian and racist deeds.

As it follows, the author constructs his fictional production with a revolutionary form of literary technicality. First the cut characters description of the ongoing throughout their lives, and peculiarly at their fifties whereby the crucial plot is to begin when, Sir Arthur gets involved with George Edalji's case to prove him innocent and get his back his rights as a citizen ad a solicitor; a representative of Law.

A solicitor prosecuted and convicted to 7 years of penal servitude, but incarcerated for three years out of no reason, without pardon or any sort of indemnification.

The other striking fictional point is that Barnes use of distinctive details, settings, names of real characters in real places - which he more often utilizes throughout his whole works as in *England, England* (1998), and many others, makes of him the know-everything character, as gets into the skin and psyche of his characters.

Barnes transverses the roots of psychoanalytical caliber through the technique of self- spiritual- and psychic- related quest. The interior monologue and even the direct dialogue presented by both the character himself and the omniscient speaker are to trigger the essence of realities. The latter trans-passing the physical of palpable, focusing on the abstract and the virtual aspects of mysticism and of *Being*. The existence of such dogmas in the world are doubted here, the origins of which are implicitly undergone throughout the sceptical attitude of Arthur and the requirement for some linear and rational reasoning.

# Chapter Three

*Agnosticism and Existentialism in  
Barnes's Nothing to be Frightened  
of (2008) and The Lemon Table  
(2004)*



## Contents

3.1. Introduction

3.2. On Agnosticism

3.3. Agnosticism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008)

3.4. Existentialism in Barnes's *The Lemon Table* (2004)

3.4.1. The Search for the Meaningfulness and Authenticity of *Being* in Barnes's *The Lemon Table* (2004)

3.4.2. Absurdity in Barnes's *The Lemon Table* (2004)

3.4.3. The Notion of Death in Barnes's *The Lemon Table* (2004)

3.5. Existentialism and the Problem of Truth and Historiography in Barnes's *The Lemon Table* (2004)

3.6. Conclusion

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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*'Fear of Death replaces fear of God. But Fear of God at least allowed for negotiation ... We can't do the same with death. Death can't be talked down, or parlayed into anything; it simply declines to come to the negotiation table'*

Julian Barnes (2008)

### 3.1. Introduction

Julian Barnes's literary textual contexts in general are all impregnated within the theme of skepticism with regard to matters of *Being*, existence, and another form of skepticism; or rather, religious skepticism targeted within the belief or the disbelief in the existence of a deity that presides over the universe along with the problem of truth and its reportedness; history. As a self-categorized author, Barnes writes in his *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008); "I don't believe in God, but I miss him" (p.1). Not only this abrupt confession in his non-fictional autobiographical account happens to give the reader an insight about his personal viewpoint upon the belief in God but it does, accordingly, shape the way he forms and depicts his characters; as frustrated, confused, wondering upon the essence of the universe and experiencing a morbid anxiety due to the inescapable condition of mortality alongside the impossibility of believing in an afterlife.

The existence of God in accordance with Barnes's thematic novelistic approach is not certain, not enclosed, he bluntly expresses his radical disbelief; his agnostic and existential position in his fiction, something which is to be clarified and explained in this chapter.

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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### 3.2. On Agnosticism

Agnosticism is often interchanged with atheism. There are several misconceptions about it. It is conceived of as a philosophy or simply an isolated position on the existence of God. Its definition rather contentious as some agnostics continue to think that agnosticism represents a kind of 'third way' between atheism and theism. It was originally conceived by Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895) who first used the term<sup>1</sup> to describe agnostics:

They were quite sure that they had attained a certain "gnosis" - had more or less successfully solved the problem of existence; while I was quite sure I had not, and had a pretty strong conviction that the problem was insoluble. (Cited in Carroll, 1994)

Etymologically speaking Agnosticism goes for (ancient Greek (a-), meaning 'without, and (gnosis), meaning 'knowledge', a term which was first coined by Thomas Henry Huxley in a speech at a meeting of the Metaphysical Society in 1869 "to describe his philosophy, which rejects all claims of spiritual or mystical knowledge" (Dixon, 2008, p. 63). Huxley uses the term broadly to describe a position distinguished from both theism and atheism, not as a creed but rather as a method of skeptical, evidence-based inquiry (Huxley, 1992, p. 183). In a correspondence, he writes:

I neither affirm nor deny the immortality of man. I see no reason for believing it, but, on the other hand, I have no means of disproving it. I have no *a priori* objections to the doctrine. No man who has to deal daily and hourly with nature can trouble himself about *a priori* difficulties.

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<sup>1</sup> In *Agnosticism and Christianity* (1989), Huxley coined the term 'agnosticism' to describe a position distinguished from both theism and atheism (p. 183).

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's Nothing to be Frightened of (2008) and The Lemon Table (2004)

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Give me such evidence as would justify me in believing in anything else, and I will believe that. Why should I not? It is not half so wonderful as the conservation of force or the indestructibility of matter. (Huxley, 1997, p. 357)

Its roots and existence hark back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century Age of Enlightenment which favours an empirical based experimentation over the mythical and spiritual knowledge of the world that the human being relied on. David Hume, a Scottish Enlightenment philosopher and Huxley's favorite thinker calling him "the Prince of Agnostics" (Rudolf, p. 111), contends that any knowledge of the world we have is open for skepticism, opening a relativistic view upon the universe's matters except for an experimentally-based experience where certainty could be obtained by definition.

Basically, the Age of Enlightenment, which is clearly discussed in the first chapter, paved the way for the possibility of such an ideological stream of thought to have a solid history. The skeptical empiricism of David Hume, the antinomies of Emmanuel Kant, and the existential philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard suggested the leaving aside of such an ideology simply for the results of assailing the possibility or the impossibility of the existence of God is not within reach. (Rowe, 1998). Kierkegaard writes in his *Philosophical Fragments*:

Let us call this unknown something: God. It is nothing more than a name we assign to it. The idea of demonstrating that this unknown something (God) exists, could scarcely suggest itself to Reason. For if God does not exist it would of course be impossible to prove it; and if he does exist it would be folly to attempt it [...] But if when I speak of

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's Nothing to be Frightened of (2008) and The Lemon Table (2004)

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proving God's existence I mean that I propose to prove that the Unknown, which exists, is God, then I express myself unfortunately. For in that case I do not prove anything, least of all an existence, but merely develop the content of a conception. (Cited in Rudolf, 1938, p. 117)

Further on, the emancipation of such a view upon the universe and a deity forged itself and could easily be associated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century hyper-evolutionist Darwinism which relies on, and puts forward experimental based proofs for the possibility of judging the being of something.

Nevertheless, Huxley viewed Agnosticism more as an attitude and an intellectual principle rather than a position or a set of beliefs, holding somehow an empirical perception upon religious beliefs which have no tangible grounds, tangible in the sense that an idea or a belief could not be proven experimentally. Another major proponent and precursor of Agnosticism alongside Huxley comes W. K. Clifford who justifies the Agnostic attitude by the harmful consequences that result, either directly or indirectly, from holding beliefs that could not be proven tangibly, with no evidence prior to their existence.

It is basically a skeptical challenge to the notion that any religious conclusion can really be 'known' in the first place. That agnostics hold that human knowledge is limited to the natural world, that the mind is incapable of knowledge of the supernatural. Understood this way, an agnostic could also be a theist or an atheist. The former is called a *fedeist*, on who believes in God purely on faith. The latter is sometimes accused by theists of having *faith in the non-existence of God*, but the accusation is absurd and the expression meaningless. The agnostic atheist simply finds no compelling reason to believe in God. In

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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the British tradition, agnosticism has often been seen as 'reasonable' or tenable and has played (and still does play) an important role in the philosophy of religion.

### 3.3. Agnosticism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008)

Barnes idiosyncratic themes are constrained within the spectrum of the knowability of the authentic truth - be it religious or historical - behind the institutional religions, the existence of God, and mostly the matter of old-age, death and dying. In Barnes's eschatology, there exist two deaths. The first death is "the death of youth, which often takes place unnoticed" and is "the harder death, [and] what we habitually refer to as 'death', is no more than the death of old age" (Barnes, 2008, p. 42).

*Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008), a non-fictional and memoir type/form of narrative is a meditative account upon the disconsolation of mortality, and the title of which echoes Arthur Conan Doyle's first memory as child when he walked into a room finding a "waxen thing" describing his grandmother's corpse so that "to impress upon the child that death was nothing to be feared" (Barnes, 2005, p. 3). Death, referred to as 'Big D' also was used in his convincingly autobiographical debut novel *Metroland* (1981)<sup>2</sup> Death constitutes the main pursuit of the book in which Barnes uncovers some of his biography and his relation to not only death, but also to the pursuit of what really constitutes truth and the making or faking it by virtue of memory. *Nothing To Be Frightened Of* (2005) is "a book about books, anecdotes, and thoughts about final things, as well as Barnes own experiences of mortality" (Groes and Childs, 2011, p. 104).

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<sup>2</sup> Christopher Lloyds, the first person narrator of *Metroland* (1980), reporting his experiences - growing up in the suburbs of London, referred to the 'Big D' which came to be retrieved again in *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008), and constitutes the main subject/ theme of the non-fictional narrative.

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's Nothing to be Frightened of (2008) and The Lemon Table (2004)

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The 'nothing' of the title itself is very reminiscent, actually vividly evocative –for those familiar with Barnes' works - of the first pages of the previous publication, though fictional narrative, *Arthur & George* (2005) when Arthur Conan Doyle stumbled on a scene which was to constitute his first memory, “a white waxen thing” (Barnes, 2005, p. 3) his grandmother's corpse while walking into a room, which he interpret as “a desire to impress upon the child the horror of death; or more optimistically, to show him that death was nothing to be feared. That 'nothing' of the title is according to Renard, “the word that is most true, most exact, most filled with meaning” (Barnes, 2008 p. 100, 164). It is the void, the ending, the nothingness which Barnes frightfully fears and makes of it the driving pulse of this catharsis form of revelatory narrative. Nothingness, for Barnes, is a sense-provider of irrelevance to life's meaningfulness. It is denoting his melancholic yearnings for a full understanding of life meaningfulness with regard to *religion*, specifically *death* and the extent at which one does believe in our “Risen Lord” (Barnes, 2008, p. 53).

Barnes does retrieve this notion of death fearing in accordance to the existential dilemma of Man even fictionally, as in *Arthur & George* (2005).

Indeed, the human extinction is what appeals to Barnes. He discloses death as a finality, an extinction and an ending to the human existence and that the meaningfulness of one's existence is difficult to be grasped if there is finality at the end of this existence. Death for Barnes is a relevant bitterness which strikes Man paralyzed to make a sense of his *being when* there is an ending. Barnes's *thanatophobia*<sup>3</sup>, or the frightful fear of death is relentlessly disclosed in most of his books, be they fictional or non-fictional, and it is mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis, with Arthur's conversation with his sister,

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<sup>3</sup> An irrational and excessive fear of death and the ending of existence, be it the human's or the universe's.

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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Connie, about what he thinks and make of it, and the possible reconciliation for it as being unanswered, Arthur notes to his sister:

Many people - most people - are terrified of death, Connie. They're not like you in that respect. But they're like you in that they have English attitudes. Wait and see, cross that bridge when they come to it. But why should that reduce the fear? Why should uncertainty not increase it? And what is the point of life unless you know what happens afterwards? How can you make sense of the beginning if you don't know what the ending is? (Barnes, 2005, p. 180)

Terrestrial eternity is a wish of all human beings, and the complaining self about it is of no remedy. "Fuck off and die"<sup>4</sup> Barnes assumes of life. The finite *nothingness* after death is the major theme of the narrative as mentioned previously. Nothingness, as of the title suggests, is the most frightening of all, a word according to Jules Renard that is "most true, most exact, most filled with meaning" (Barnes, 2008, p. 100, 164).

"I don't believe in God, but I miss him" (Barnes, 2008, p. 1); is how Barnes opens his narrative. Quite daring and preposterous for a religious one to read such a statement, even 'soppy', how his elder brother, Jonathan<sup>5</sup>, responds to it. Barnes delineates his sense of *Missing God* as an attitude people hold when they approach their ending, a response for their fear of death and the unknown afterlife which he claims requires some will - or a sudden religious interest and piety - to believe in. Throughout the narrative, the author not only provides some speculations which might have formed the nature of his fear of death as well as his sense of missing the Lord. This comes in a sort of a way to find comfort

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<sup>4</sup> Noted four times in the narrative; twice on page 88, once on page 226, and page 249.

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Barnes, a Philosopher of Ancient Philosophy, taught at the Sorbonne, Vienna and Oxford. He now lives in France.



## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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somewhere against the hauntedness of his extinction. Barnes escapes his *timor mortis*<sup>6</sup> (Barnes, 2008, p. 98), a 'replacement for' or rather an endeavor to find some reconsolidation against the disconsolation of the nature of it, Barnes writes:

Fear of death replaces fear of God. But fear of God ... at least allowed for negotiations ... We can't do the same with death. Death can't be talked down, or parlayed into anything ... It is impervious to insult, complaint or condescension. (Barnes, 2008, p. 70)

In an interview, Barnes states that: "I fear death and I believe there is nothing after it, but does this necessarily make it courageous of me not to believe in God? I just think he doesn't exist and that's it." (Guignery and Roberts, 2009, p. 164)

Religion is, for Barnes, not an option which helps alleviate his thanatophobia. "I had no faith to lose" Barnes notes that given his family's "background of attenuated belief combined with brisk irreligion" (Barnes, 2008, p. 12). He had "nothing to rebel against ... I had nothing to lose" (Guignery and Roberts, 2009, p. 164), he states further in the same interview that; he grew up in a liberal household, with an atheist mother who was conservative politically, and an agnostic yet liberal/conservative father. They were not overtly tolerant just avoiding the "mumbo jumbo" that the Church offered. "I was never baptized, never sent to Sunday School. I have never been to a normal church service in my life ... I am constantly going into churches, but for architectural reasons; and more widely, to get a sense of what Englishness once was" (Barnes, 2008, p. 25).

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<sup>6</sup> Barnes writes; *timor mortis*, of Latin origin, which is equivalent to fear of death.

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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Barnes being inoculated to the scope of *death* and *mortality*-related matters give way to other matters which delineate Barnes's fear of - as the title suggests - *Nothing*, or more accurately, *Fear of Nothingness*.

Tracing the reasons behind his disconsolation with Death awareness played on the continual span of his life, how he reacts and perceives things of his experiences, smoothes the way to retrieve the other subjects; the latter being rather consolations.

Old age is considered as a moment of decrepitude, loss of lucidity, loss of memory accompanied with delirium, mental agony, physical deterioration; the aging process. Yet this is inevitable, the post - mortal and termination condition. What Barnes alludes to and deduces of this post - mortal and terminating condition is the regret which entails of this loss of the self, an extreme agony of a kind, regrets and self-pity while being aware of their withering stage. His father's skeptic contemplation at physiotherapy is, as being an 'absurd' mode of hopelessly hopeful recovery; 'delusional' - similar to his mother's "decline of the hypothetical recovery" since "it wouldn't make a difference to his condition". His old long-used physical agents will reach their exasperated cease-functioning. The sense of despair is the most pitied and apprehended for Barnes, and that is approached to his mother's "way of dealing with [his] father's condition was to stress her own inconvenience and sufferings". She apprehends her coming-of-dependency moment. Her refute of old age and its eventual, entailing condition is completely human, a way of not conceiving the sufferings which await her.

Similarly, Barnes parallels, though indirectly, this approach of his mother's and the human's post-termination anxiety to John Miller's which is compared to Freud's "own inconceivability of his own extinction"; "Life Vs Death becomes Old Age Vs Death"

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's Nothing to be Frightened of (2008) and The Lemon Table (2004)

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(Barnes, 2008, p. 143). Barnes refers to Montaigne's, just as old age becomes a sort of a pre-death condition, "what makes you think the thing you have at the moment is life?" (Barnes, 2008, p. 41). Caesar tells his former legionary in agony. Approaching death is similar to all individuals, Barnes' father answering his wife's almost mean question if he remembered who she was: "I think you're my wife", or telling Julian at his departure from home: "next time, bring ... bring ... then he stuck ... Bring ... bring ..." His expression was now one of furious frustration at his own brain. Barnes provides other similar examples of old age decrepitude, Emmanuel Chabrier not recognizing his own music, or Ravel's joining the applaud -at a musical party - addressed to him, thinking the applaud was to his Italian friend sitting next to him. Or, as occurred to Chabrier, Ravel exclaiming, at one of his composed music at the record studio, "that was really very good. Remind me of." His condition, well, ageing is 'inoperable'. Another illustration is Daudet's forgetfulness of his fame. But isn't "this ... poignant enough to forget what we were?" (Barnes, 2008, p. 155), the answer of which is - according to my ordinary and humble opinion - that it is senseless to bring upon such matters, these matters should not be divulged for the simple reason behind their disclosures.

The human condition, dilemma, is already enough despairing and *poignant*, least of all when being heard, read about, or we might find, or rather we surely find, some relief in approaching what we frightfully fear since we don't need to remind ourselves of our inevitable mortality, we are being reminded of, 'mortality [rather] or more truthfully ... reminding me of itself [and which is deduced from that this remindedness of itself might be viewed as] a useful and necessary prod" (Barnes, 2008, p. 139).

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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Nevertheless, Barnes's position on old age is that there is no such a thing as a consolation to enclose it. Indeed, there is none.

In fact, this contemplation of oblivion comes to no matter. Barnes seems to be saying that it doesn't matter if we are pre-cynical of our mortal enclosure, what matters, is that there is death of the human, just as there is an ending of a book, or a novel. Hence, Barnes suggests that if there was no ending, it would be lacking something, "the pinch of salt which intensifies the flavor" (Barnes, 2008, p. 89) of life, just as the judgment of an open-ending book is viewed as lacking "compactness towards the end." Barnes describes death as 'the spell of Darkness', 'Mortal termination', the ending of one's self. He states the death of several of his progenitors, his "life's true companions", the anxiety they endure approaching their death or right at the moment of it. And every now and then, gives an account of his parents 'breathing decrepitude', their last moments from their initial strokes. His father's death, in 1992, 'was his death', but his mother's in 1997, 'was their death'<sup>7</sup>.

For the author, religion in England has drained over the last centuries, though continually. He contends that the Christian religion has lasted because it is; "a beautiful lie ... a tragedy with a happy ending" (Barnes, 2008, p. 73).

The state of Barnes's irreligiousness isn't seldom proper or only experienced by his family's weak belief in a divine being, but the majority of the English, Barnes reports:

My family vestigial to nonexistent sense of religion over successive generations is typical of what has happened to religion in Britain, at least in terms of the indigenous British Anglicans ... I live in a

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<sup>7</sup> In fact, Barnes claims to have inherited his father's genetic replica, in being a sentimentalist despite the fact that he despised his gentle yet indifferent servitude or obedience to his ruling wife.

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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country where members of the official religion of the state, Anglicanism, produce fewer people going to church every Sunday than Catholics whom Anglicans have been for centuries. And there are few practicing Anglicans than Muslims now in this country. So I'm obviously talking about the traditional white English - also English rather than Scottish or Irish - remnant or whatever we call ourselves, we're a majority - majority remnant [...] the way that religion has seeped away in our family can be used as an example (Guignery and Roberts, 2009, pp. 165-166).

The meaningfulness of life for Barnes, resides somewhere where religion is drained away. He tries to fetch again for some comfort within the sublime beauty of art. The secular modernists tend to consider religion as a constraint to progress and empirical science, and whenever the need for some divinity takes place, then, art is proclaimed; art here appeals itself as a replacement for the reconciliation against fear. A tendency which replaces religion's martyr and rigidity by the flexibility of art which:

We tend to believe that [it] tells us the truth - that's to say, in a relativist universe, more truth than anything else - and that in turns this truth can save us - up to a point - that's to say, enlightens us, move us, elevate us, even heal us - though only in this world. (Barnes, 2008, p. 101)

Here appears the temporal eternity/immortality which art offers when Man does escape his mortality or extinction to find comfort in art. Religion offers eternal immortality though it is less sustained, only through scriptures, the credibility of which is doubted. Art,

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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however, is there, one could experience it; it is sustainable/tangible. Hence the gravitation towards art, due to religious escapism, is more likely, more appealing.

For him, art could be a consoling mode, a solace, for those skeptical of religion, which does entail the promised immortality longed for by Man. Art, or '*the sublime beauty*' (Barnes, 2008, p. 99) - as referred to by Beyle or Stendhal - and religion happen to be oxymoronic parallels, the nature and aims of each are quite similar. That's to say - as according to Professor S of Cambridge whose note Barnes uses in his memoir - art is: "essentially religious because the artist aims at immortality by avoiding 'the banal democracy of death' " (Barnes, 2008, p. 76).

If religion offers eternal immortality in the afterlife, so does art as well offer existential immortality; the former being eternal, the latter temporary immortality. The musical Biographer Beyle, Barnes refers to, contemplating the Church of Santa Croce quotes that the impact of art upon the human spirit, "the tide of emotion that overwhelmed me flowed so deep that it was scarce to be distinguished from religious awe" (Barnes, 2008, p. 72). Art does offer strong illusions of immortality, when being "absorbed in the contemplations of *sublime beauty*"; the human entity, therefore, attains 'the supreme degree of sensibility where the *divine intimations* of art merge with the impassioned sensuality of emotion" (Barnes, 2008, p. 74).

Religion, he contends, "[gives] human life a sense of context, and therefore seriousness" (Barnes, 2008, p. 57); it is metaphorically considered as *a rehearsal* for the human's immortality of the promised afterlife. As for art, it does provide a sense of immortality, yet only an oxymoronic sort of *temporary* immortality. This notion of artistic reconciliation, which could be viewed as "a psychological replacement for religion"

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's Nothing to be Frightened of (2008) and The Lemon Table (2004)

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(Barnes, 2008, p. 75), death and the void, echoes Barnes's first novel; *Metroland* (1980), the protagonist of which, Christopher Lloyd, discusses the matter referring to it as the 'the Big D', nothing that: "I wouldn't mind Dying at all, I thought, as long as I didn't end up dead at the end of it" (Barnes, 1980, p. 101). The latter does not stand for the real Death, only a metaphor of contemplating at a piece of art which gives him a temporary sense of immortality. This autobiographical novel of Barnes proves the long ago and the still-recurrent escapism - or "the humorous resignation advocated by Somerset Maugham" (Barnes, 2008, p. 94), a resignation which provides him comfort within the mode of art.

Hence Barnes avoids *the Religion*, Christianity in his case, and does find solace in the 'sublime beauty' of art and literature. The contentment that art brings is much relevant to religion's. He does claim that he has 'the religion of art' instead of the mere 'love of art'. The religion of art is more profound, he finds more comfort by the escapism it displays from the shallow yet authenticity of reality to a truthful representation of it. The religion of art he means is "the dedicated practice, not the snobbish worship, of art" (Barnes, 2008, p. 76), hence he dedicates himself to the practice, love, religion, and prophecy of art. However, Barnes contradicts himself or rather is contradicted by what the modern critic, Professor S of Cambridge argues: "art is essentially religions because the artist aims at immortality by avoiding the banal democracy of death" (Barnes, 2008, p. 76). This proves that Barnes's probability to be religious is very likely since his fear lies within the human's extinction. This recalls the Wittgenstein scholar's suggestion, which Barnes refers to; "while the philosopher was not 'a religious person', there was in him in some sense *the possibility* of religion' (Barnes, 2008, p. 76).

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's Nothing to be Frightened of (2008) and The Lemon Table (2004)

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For Barnes, Man's immortality makes existence resemble "a rehearsal" in the face of the promised heaven of the afterlife, if there is one. For Barnes, "if life *is* viewed as a rehearsal, or a preparation or an anteroom, or whichever metaphor we choose, but at any rate as something contingent, something dependent on a greater reality elsewhere, then it becomes at the same time less valuable and more serious" (Barnes, 2008, p. 59).

Having been awakened by what Barnes's friend, Charles du Bos names; *le réveil mortel* (Barnes, 2008, p. 23), the author translates it as "the wake-up call to mortality" (Barnes, 2008, p. 23) and makes of it the protagonist of his divulging, catharsis - form narrative. Barnes does not go on writing the psychotherapy of an intermittent haunting mortal awareness, his thanatophobia, but simply tries to finally write what he long ago, in his 40's began to, and the first line of which was "let's get this death thing straight" (Barnes, 2008, p. 190). He maintains later that this memoir-ish account of his *thanatophobia* being revealed, is a mere 'research for your book', addressing the reader who in turn tries to dwell on the matter of complexities that the universe offers. Throughout the memoir, if we are not taken into death speculations and meditations of some of Barnes's progenitors and his as well, the author does provide the process of death of (for example); Jules Renard, Montaigne, Daudet, Somerset Maugham, George Sand and George Braque, Sibelius, Ravel and many others.

Barnes also refers to Jules Renard's notes; "perhaps the fact that God is incomprehensible is the strongest argument for his existence" (Barnes, 2008, p. 52). Or; "I don't know if God exist. But it would be better for his reputation if He didn't" (Barnes, 2008, p. 46). Barnes, on the other hand states that since:



## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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Christian morality still loosely governs Britain ... my sense of morality is influenced by Christian teaching (or, more exactly, pre-Christian tribal behaviour codified by the religion); and the God I don't believe in yet miss Him is naturally the Christian God of Western Europe and non-fundamentalist America [...] I miss the God that inspired Italian painting and French stained glass, German music and English chapter houses, and those tumbledown heaps of stone on Celtic headlands which were once symbolic beacons in the darkness and the storm. (Barnes, 2008, pp. 117-118)

One could conjure up here that he is trying to unmask religion (at least the one he knows of and discusses, Christianity) as merely another sort of art, referential, or a codified schism which offers clarification, and Man-created. He further claims that "some see art as a psychological replacement for religion [since] art is essentially religious because the artist aims at immortality by avoiding "the banal democracy of death [and that] art and religion will always shadow one another through the abstract nouns they both invoke: truth, seriousness, imagination, sympathy, morality, transcendence" (Barnes, 2008, pp. 76-77).

The God he misses is the God of Art, despite some contingent misunderstanding in these quotes, both Gods are inferred here, but the God he prefers over the other is the God of Art. That is his inspiration for truth; *Art*. Reading the Bible as literature is 'boring', 'not beautiful' for him, since 'the more beautiful [the texts is], the more true'. Beauty is ascribed to truth, and vice versa. The Bible is tyrannical, reductive of the human's free

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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will. Hence the English, whose appeal for freedom, leaves no room for any scripture of philosophy which demise their liberty and freedom.

Some may regard art as “a psychological replacement for religion” (Barnes, 2008, p. 101). Take the example of Flaubert who claims that “the religion of art” is stronger than the mere “love of art”. However this claim is rebuked by the modern critic of Cambridge he refers to, Professor S, who argues that art and religion do coexist on the same strand, since religion promises resurrection, i.e., the eternal afterlife forthcoming death, just as art which in itself is essentially “religious because the artist aims at immortality by avoiding “the banal democracy of death” (Barnes, 2008, p. 76).

For his part, Barnes borrows Zola's note on the death of Daudet, George Sand and George Braque as being “*une belle mort*”. However Barnes, skeptical upon this note, takes it for an optimistic exaggeration, since no such a thing actually exists, death is comparable to the smell of “the stink of decomposition” (Barnes, 2008, p. 96). In his tone, who would want that? What's beautiful about it? The finite extinction of the human being, the physical dependence, and probably old age is similar to delirium, agony, and dependency, is what Barnes frightfully fears. Besides, Julian Barnes, being a rational, yet a sentimental person, could no more bear the exasperation of extreme rationality such as his brother's reflections. Hence, he's looking for an answer elsewhere, the answer to his incurable fear, or what he calls; “the tumor [which] is staying the same size” (Guignery and Roberts, 2009, p. 162), within the long-ago, long-forged, ancestral neglected agenda: religion and God. Barnes' position can be explained for he was an atheist in his 20s and an agnostic in his 50s and 60s; “because [he has] not acquired more knowledge in the meantime: just more awareness of ignorance” (Barnes, 2008, p. 22).

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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Barnes' belief in an afterlife is as being impossible, irrelevant to knowledge, doesn't go in accordance with the fact that he finds meaning to life. And the suggestion that religion could bring a sense of context to life is preposterous, since it is applied to "those credulous knee-benders" (Barnes, 2008, p. 22) but for those "like us", avidly secularized, "we enjoy things which Dawkins lists as making life worth living" (Barnes, 2008, p. 94). However, he insists at a given point that he "suffers from rational (yes *RATIONAL*) fear" (Barnes, 2008, p. 65).

On the other hand, we can see that Montaigne's "religion's surest foundation is the contempt for life" or Larkin's definition of death, rather accurately; "not to be here, / Not to be anywhere, / And soon, nothing more terrible, nothing more true ... Beneath it all desire of oblivion runs", a statement which is referred to by Montaigne's English equivalent, Browne, as "for a pagan there might be some motives to be in love with life, but for a Christian to be amazed at [i.e., terrified of] death" (Barnes, 2008, p. 60).

These poles, of both religious individuals, whose beliefs reside in their will/chosen obedience to believe in a religion and a God who provide the incessant promise of an afterlife heaven, are targeted. However since this lies upon the lack of evidence, modern Man keeps being reluctant upon believing or not. This is where Dear of Death stems from, because there might be some, even a hint or slight, belief in God, that if there surely and certainly was an afterlife - which, for the moment being, we are not given/offered enough evidence for its plausibility - then one surely believes in this "mumbo jumbo ramblings" (Barnes, 2008, p. 5, 52).

However, Barnes deduction of the creation, or more or less the prolonged longevity of religion over the centuries not because of its credibility, or of its entailing behavioural

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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enlightening faculties on our concrete, tangible world, but “because it was a means of social control, because it was the only story in town, and because if you didn’t believe it - or disbelieved it too vociferously - you might have a quickly truncated life” (Barnes, 2008, p. 53). He continues, “it lasted also because it is a beautiful lie, because the characters the plot, the *coups de theater*, the overarching struggle between Good and Evil, made up a great novel” (Barnes, 2008, p. 53). This will to believe depends on one’s rationale, Man’s decidedness to either go blindly on the sacred, or the hold on a skeptical attitude since “there is What We Know (or think we know) To Be The Case, there is What We Believe To Be The Case (on the assurance of others whom we trust), and then there is How We Behave (Barnes, 2008, p. 117). Barnes judges Religion as being passed on through the generations by those ‘knee benders’ who for him, lack rationality, but also because they might have needed the belief in a divine creationist, which recalls the Pascalian bet deduction; “Go on, believe! It does no harm” (Barnes, 2008, p. 21), this belief comes, probably in moments of despair or crises for which Man can’t bring relief to. Hence, the need for another power to cling onto becomes a necessity. The need for some form, or appeal of hope in the face of life’s cruelty and realities ‘can [as Barnes refers to a Wittgenstein scholar] educate one to a belief in God” (Barnes, 2008, p. 22).

In fact, Barnes construes his sense of missing God, the religious sense of missing God, and His scripture “because it was a supreme fiction, and it is normal to feel bereft on closing a great novel” (Barnes, 2008, p. 57). Religion and the notion of God for Barnes are subjects far from the family agenda. Missing the ‘Risen Lord’, Barnes sketches “is focused for me by missing the underlying sense of purpose and belief when confronted with religious art. It is one of the haunting *hypotheticals* for the non-believer: what would it be like “if it were true” (Barnes, 2008, p. 52).

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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For Barnes, religion and art could be used interchangeably with the theoretical yet improvable real and the extra provable real respectively, the 'not beautiful' and 'the fictional'; the beautiful, the unidentified. The ending of life is melancholic if it is viewed as the ending towards - as Larkin puts it - 'Nothingness'. Again this helps assert the use of the 'Nothing' in the title which refers to the Existential/worldly void after one's termination. The British propagandized atheism, claiming that if there ever was a God or a Deity after death, "I would go up to to him and I would say, "You didn't give us enough evidence" (Barnes, 2008, p. 213) for the belief in You. This goes with Barnes surprising interjection at a young boy asking why Jesus was chosen to be the son of God, and not another ordinary Man from our century. Barnes replied quite 'uncivilly': "because He's *God*, for Christ's sake ... The point is, that if you're a Christian, it did" (Barnes, 2008, p. 77).

Barnes's belief lies in both a rational and slightly spiritual, no wonder since he claims himself to be an agnostic, i.e., he is in between, he believes despite the lack of evidence for "the great escapologist ... [who always] will make a tactical retreat, as He has been doing for the last 150 or so years" (Barnes, 2008, p. 68) as well as he gravitates towards the God of art, and that of science as well.

The author does rebuke the Bible for its functioning nature, he discloses the state and contents of religious scriptures to fictional representation; "when asked what the Novel Does, I tend to answer, 'it tells beautiful, shapely lies which enclose hard, exact truth'" (Guignery and Roberts, 2009, p. 78). His account and verbalism could be taken for morbid absurdity. The Holy scriptures do not apply to a supposedly harmless institution named religion. For him it is a beautiful book;

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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As a writer, I would see we made up the Bible as a very good novel which then got corrupted by power systems. It's a wonderful story in the great tradition of Hollywood, a great tragedy with a happy ending. It's not such a good story when you die and don't go to heaven. (Groes & Childs, 2011, p. 18)

In trying to trace his fear of death, he speculates and supposes that it might be congenital or simply that he is "frightened by the idea of not existing anymore for eternity" (Guignery and Roberts, 2009, p. 161), from "not wanting and liking "the idea of being dead" (Guignery and Roberts, 2009, p. 161). Beneath his relentless productions of fiction, and meditations upon abstract matters, majorly death and mortality, hence he produces fiction, he might survive longer than his physical body is capable of.

In taking scrap notes upon matters of mortality and death over the long time of his life - since his mid-20s - he tried to perceive some clarification, or seeking relief by understanding this 'phenomenon' of human extinction. He quotes the difference between his 'God-bearing' alongside death-fearing to that of his death-fearless self of his brother. Accounting that Julian Barnes is in no way a believer in God. He exclaims at a note written on the painting of the earliest dance of death, hanged in the Cimetière des Innocents in Paris, it says: "Oh créature innocente qui desire vie éternelle" (Barnes, 2008, p. 65). By this, Barnes alludes to the fact that Man's disbelief in religion or the power of the supernatural agent is innocent, less credible. Irrational, as his brother notes on his contentment with the way things are, that death is inevitable. For Jonathan Barnes, "it's the most irrational thing ... how can reason not reasonably detest the end of reason." (Barnes, 2008, p. 64)

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's Nothing to be Frightened of (2008) and The Lemon Table (2004)

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On the other hand, by referring to strong rational and atheistic figures with not 'a least flicker' of the belief in the transcendental; Richard Dawkins, as well as Beyle/Stendhal, Montaigne and Flaubert ... etc, we are confronted to contradictory, opposing positions.

Barnes claims that "fear of death replaces fear God", the great escapologist (Barnes, 2008, 68), here referring to god, hence his self-supposed escapism from religion despite his fear of death is still intrinsic. He claims he is *an aesthete* and by that he professes the God of art, and the modern God in "God doesn't believe in our God". The artistic resort he found in his literary and philosophical productions and consumption respectively. The universe is a mere cosmic convergence/symbiosis of earthly texture resulting in what is planet earth now, and religion is man-made, created and the reason for religion's interminable longevity, according to J. Barnes, "isn't because everyone believed it, because it was imposed by ruler and priesthood, because it was a means of social control, because it was the only story in town ..." this is the concluding thinking result of the human being, the modern human being. He also relate the fact of missing God to a sort of a national appeal or duty; "Missing God is for me rather like being English" (Barnes, 2008, p. 77). He holds a skeptical upon religion, the createdness of the scriptures by Man, and the prophets stories as well as those continual doctrines as lacking evidence, scientific plausibility. Just as the delusional belief in miracles, as Dr Max alluding to the fallacy of the existence or creation of a 'prime moment' (Guignery and Roberts, 2009, p. 34), Barnes position is that:

The great religions make one up always. They always make up a particular moment [of authentic purity and beginning] when it all began, whereas we know that, for instance, Christ was just one of any number of

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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similar prophets around at the time and he just happened to get lucky historically, to be taken up. (Guignery and Roberts, 2009, p. 61)

Indeed, Barnes writes that “Religion no more makes people better than it makes them behave worse” (Barnes, 2008, pp. 120-121). On the other hand Dawkins refers to the Nobel Prize-winning American physicist, Steven Weinberg who says that; “religion is an insult to human dignity. With or without it, you’d have good people doing good things and evil people doing evil things. But for good people to do evil things, it takes religion.” Another reference to Blaise Pascal’s similar to Weinburg’s is that: “Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction” (Dawkins, 2006, p. 249). Another aspect to religion’s impact on mankind is that; “wars, and feuds between religious groups or sects, are seldom actually about theological disagreements” (Dawkins, 2006, p. 259).

In *Arthur & George* (2005), Arthur refers to religion as being a compound or a worldly metaphor for “obedience and poverty” makes Barnes determined to prove religion’s fallibility.

Another aspect/attitude which denounces the lack of credibility of the Holy scriptures is that the gospels were written about 6 centuries after Jesus’ time (Dawkins, 2006, p. 73). Dawkins states of the writing of the gospels that:

All were then copied and recopied [...] by fallible scribblers who, in any case, had their own religious agendas. A good example of the colouring by religious agendas in the whole heart-warming legend of Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem ... When the gospels were written, many years after Jesus’ death, nobody knew where he was born. But an Old



## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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Testament prophecy (Micah 5/2) had led Jews to expect that the long-awaited Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. In the light of this prophecy, John's gospel specifically remarks that his followers were surprised that he was not born in Bethlehem. (Dawkins, 2006, p. 93)

Therefore, this lack of religious confidence is originated in the way the English have been regarding religion for the last five hundred years; King Henry VIII played a massive role in reforming the English church and later Queen Elizabeth I followed on her father's breakthrough. In fact, the nature and essence of religion in playing a role in the societal and individualistic platforms is of very weak nature, according to Barnes.

This is partly the way the English treat or include religion in their lives (insisting on the regional differences, since the Scottish, and Irish are of fervent religious practice compared to the English). The fact that they "were born on an island rather than living on a continental landmass", the English and British have always considered themselves as being unique, then as regarding the measurement of their religiousness; they "come from a country where Protestant reformation had put the Church firmly in its place. [Hence] they had inherited a deep belief in individual liberty (Paxman, 1998, p. viii).

The British as being under the Anglican Church, whereby the Prime Minister has complete right to appoint senior clerics and the Church's agents. Furthermore, the official status of the Church of England, sits in the House of the Lords, the relatedness (the state/parliament with the Church of England) is close. This relatedness, however, is "not that it represents some profound spirituality in the people, but that it suits mutually convenient purposes for state and Church" (Paxman, 1998, p. 100). The paradoxical presence of the bishop in the House of the Lords takes place unless there exist to some

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's Nothing to be Frightened of (2008) and The Lemon Table (2004)

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extent an interchangeable correlation of contributory effect of the Parliament into the Church. The bishop or rather the English view of a possibility for the coexistence of 'Religion of Politics' under mutual compliance. The English state is both secular and religious. Both coexist within the same spectrum. The inclusion or omitting of some articles of faith is not literal but only another way of interpreting them. The levitation of religious rigidity takes place according to the modern societal status quo. They are people who "had put the Church in its 'firm' place". One could take the evolution of the Bible from the Old Testament (tyrant) to the New Testament.

But this New Testament being differently interpreted according to whom? Based on what? Human beings, then this is a reason why the rational individual does cease to believe in the idea of religion as coming from a divine transcendental origin, instead, it is, or at least its interpretation, is Man-made, created to fuse dogmas, or 'social control' as Barnes puts it. It could even be regarded as a new spectrum of competitiveness.

'The finest spirit of England' lays in its disclosure or apartedness from the Church, and the Vicars being proud of not taking extreme positions leading their Churches according to the Throne and Parliament decisiveness/ruling entity. Indeed, they do castigate it as strength, a thing which harks back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century period of Elizabeth I. (Cf: Eliot, 1970, p. 14)

In 1997, on a lecture on the 1400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the mission of St Augustine to Canterbury was held and wherein Dr Robert Runcie claims that: "there are other churches in Christendom that take pride in their lack of ambiguity - in doctrine or leadership, or in monolithic interpretation of the Gospel. Anglicanism, by contrast, is a synthesis, and a synthesis necessarily unites thesis and antithesis" (Cited in Paxman, 1998, p. 98).

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's Nothing to be Frightened of (2008) and The Lemon Table (2004)

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Barnes's position concerning religion is that of a schismatic institution reinforced into a given culture, forming its identity, for the mere sake of either 'educating', or 'social control' basis that sways away from anarchy. The example of the Cycladic Marble figurines (Barnes, 2008, p. 71) he refers to, built between 3000-2000 BC; the driving spirit of which is being discarded as an official religion. However, in their times, they were preached, believed in, and the beholders of which - the Aegeans of the early Bronze period - would have preferred them to be buried, not exposed for artistic museum, probably to say, there was such a professing or religion, the emulation of which has long withered away. This leads Barnes to the position of; "I wonder when Christianity joins the list of dead religions" (Barnes, 2008, p. 55), such 'mumbo jumbo' (Barnes, 2008, p. 5) representations of an old time, serving the settings and spirit of a given time, the Bronze Age.

### 3.4. Existentialism in Barnes's *The Lemon Table* (2004)

*The Lemon Table*, a third volume of Barnes's, published in 2004, consists of eleven short stories. The collection is produced masterly reproving the author's talent. It comes as a literary work of different plots revolving around a single existential theme: matters of *ageing* and *death*. These short stories are told with a postmodern literary tone and technicality; a tendency that Barnes favours, the challenge of;

the short piece that captures a mood, an impression or an aspect of a subject within a fairly loosely defined frame, [*The Lemon Table* is] a continuation of this, in an almost ostentatiously brilliant demonstration of the width, variety and endless inventiveness of his story-telling. (Heyns, 2004)

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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In *The Guardian* Frank Kermode states that the collection is “quite funny but not at all cheerful. This is a book about old age and disappointment, among other things [...] *The Lemon Table* leaves one in no doubt as to Barnes's virtuosity” (Kermode, 2004). The collection is created in order to discuss the theme of ageing and the inevitable unpleasant process of ageing. On the same spectrum, Caroline Moore in *The Telegraph* claims that:

In *The Lemon Table*, Julian Barnes presents us with a range of tales about the bitterness of old age, admirably unsweetened by saccharine sentimentality. A depressing theme, you might think; but these stories, though bleak, are exhilaratingly crisp, crystallized by Barnes's intelligence. (2004)

On a different ground, Stephanie Merritt, in *The Observer*, claims that:

love and sex [in the collection] are to be preserved reverently in memory by the old but are seen as a foolish indulgence if pursued into the present ... Stylistically, Barnes has always been a nonconformist; his novels smudge the boundaries between fiction, dramatic monologue, epistle, criticism and essay and this collection of stories manages the same in miniature.” (2004)

Barnes presents the thematic relatedness of the collection stories with the notion of Existence. The struggle of living without the despair and the loss of a sense of being when confronting and personifying an agnostic, sceptical mindset on one hand, and on the other hand, the search and pursuit of existential meaningfulness with regard to mortality, and the thanatophobic nature of the characters. Barnes suggests through his characters that death is a natural phenomenon and yet it is feared and thought of as absurd. As a means of facing

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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and warding off their thanatophobia, they use resorts of their own createdness to find refuge in different forms of 'intangibles' to alleviate the pain of loss with regard to the impossibility of finding a clear answer to their existential quest, resorting to the reassurance and comforting means of art, love, and religion, along with the ability to rely on such intangibles to generate meaning, though temporal to the state of being.

The collection comprises eleven short stories which, again, interrelate. The first story; *A Short History of Hairdressing*, comes as a prologue to the collection. It tells a story of a man called Gregory who explores life through hairdressing habits all along the three stages of his life from childhood, adolescence to adulthood. Throughout his childhood he is afraid of barbers; his one phobic concern was religion besides barbers; the day where he has his hair cut. He learns, nevertheless, to overcome his fright, acquiring the pace of brevity in his youth. The story suggests that when he got married, love; helped him stop "being afraid of barbers and religion" (Barnes, 2004, p. 19). Throughout these conflictual periods, Gregory constitutes his own perspectives toward life.

The second story - *The Story of Mats Israelson* - is about a tour-guide man in a Swedish town; Anders Boden, who falls in love with his neighbour's wife. He is married but not satisfied with his wife due to her sarcastic nature. He learns how to deal with her taunts through the use of 'wet responses' that are full of delusions. He consequently responds to her questions, such as: "you like everybody" by saying "no my love that is not true", his responses remain uninvolved with a slight hint of resentment. Anders lives his life with muffled sentiments that he failed to tell because of his confusion that is around Mats of Israelson. He dies leaving his frustrated life that he did not know how to live.

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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In *The Things You Know*, two old ladies; Janice and Merrill, who are dining companions with regular monthly encountering where they reminisce upon their dead husbands. In the process of reminiscence, the ladies retrieve the good memories, or qualities of their husbands, leaving the unpleasant, or even, the scandalous ones. However, both of them are acknowledged and aware of the other's disreputable secrets and none of them could untangle them resorting to living an illusionary life with their self-deceptions due to their exaggerated love for their husbands.

A retired soldier, in the fourth story entitled; *Hygiene*, named Jackson who served as a vet during the Second World War, the story is about the trip he undergoes to London for his annual regimental dinner. At the same time he plans to meet his mistress Babs whom he has been visiting over the last twenty years, she reminds Jackson his youth and that flowering days of love and sex. His life is stable, satisfying but boring. Although he is married, he wishes to see Babs, whose real name is Nora, that Jackson himself does not know, unfortunately, he later learns that "Babs was Nora and Nora was dead" (Barnes, 2004, p. 81). He comes back to his small town with a tragic disappointment.

An ageing Russian author, Ivan Turgenev, and the protagonist of the short story; *The Revival*, who falls in love with a young actress who plays Verochka; appeared in one of his plays, *A Month in the Country*, that he wrote 30 years earlier. Ivan ascribes the actress to; a revival, a means which has given life to one of his characters and, thereafter, to his self. But this love affair, as of all stories of the collection, does not succeed. The author concludes that after the age of thirty, one has to accept that life is a matter of 'renunciation' and love is just an act of imagination.

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's Nothing to be Frightened of (2008) and The Lemon Table (2004)

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*Vigilance*, a story of an ageing man who is an *aficionado* of classical music and cannot be tolerant with those concertgoers who make noise; sneezing, coughing and any sort of misbehavior which he considers as disrespectful to not only the concert attendants, but mostly to the music, depriving him to fully enjoy the music. For him to deduce the level of noise, he tries different means such as: spotlights that come on the noise-maker's face, the electric shock through wired seats. For him it is all about respect and each one has to behave in a mannerly civilized way. Even though the story is about a serious matter, Barnes makes use of his habitual idiosyncratic humorous, ironic tone.

In *Bark*, Jean-Etienne Delacour is a dying man who has lost all forms of *raison d'être* but is yet, strongly passionate and wedded to life. After the death of his wife he starts to look after himself in an attempt to maintain the longevity of his lifespan, creating a new approach to life; that is the dream to having an immortal life, he, henceforth, does all what could enable him to reach eternity; he later realizes that it is impossible and whatever he tries, death is a certain fate and could never be put at bay.

*Knowing French* can be regarded as an epistolary short story which is a compilation of a series of letters written to the author Julian Barnes from an old lady Sylvia Winstanley who is at the age of 81. She lives in a hospice. The lady speaks French that the author adores as she says: "you will be glad to know that I am bilingual" (Barnes, 2004, p. 139). Sylvia writes some words or codes-words which belong to the French language in all of her letters as an essay to attract the author and motivate him to respond to her conversely. Sylvia, however, is interested in Barnes's works and his attitudes upon various matters. She speaks also about life and her suffering as an old woman; as a Pilcher House habitant.

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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She asks him about the nature of coincidence that he denies its existence and she defends it. Then she dies, learning her death from the warden of the Pilcher House.

*Appetite* is about a woman named Vivian whose husband suffers from Alzheimer. Vivian reads recipes to him to refresh his memory and also to reach him. However, her husband's dementia prolongs and accentuates over the days. Sometimes she succeeds in her task but often it's no purpose, irretrievable alluding to the irretrievability of youth and the certainty of death. He interrupts her reading with some erratic and unexpected words which are all around sex. Vivian cannot approach him; she has no connection with him. She fails to have a communication that she believes to have.

*The Fruit Cage* is a story-told / narrated by a man in his middle age called, Chris. He recounts the story of his old parents, and their relation that is broken due to his father's affair with Elsie. Chris does not accept his father's abandonment to his mother. In his attempt to save his parents' marriage, he approaches Elsie, although his father thinks of the matter as being personal. Elsie as an excuse she says: "you don't leave what you still want" (Barnes, 2004, p. 192). Chris has discovered that old age is not the passivity, but those old people experience a state of revival and a desire of reliving a new life instead of the acceptability the fate of death.

*The silence* is the epilogue of *The Lemon Table*. It is also a story about Sibelius in his old age, a famous composer with seven symphonies. He is asked by many about his eighty one's that he delayed its release and never completed. Sibelius prefers to dine alone or goes to restaurants to join 'The Lemon Table' to discuss the matter of mortality as he says: "here, it is permissible - indeed, obligatory to talk about death" (Barnes, 2004, p. 206).



## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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Ultimately, postmodernism as a movement or a set of ideas has been typically applied in contemporary fiction. Julian Barnes, as a postmodern man as well as a postmodern fictional writer, encapsulates all those problematic/ideologies of the movement in his works which are dense with a sceptical position upon the nature of truth on the general board, and history in particular, also concerned with agnosticism as well as atheism toward the religious institutions. All these ideologies come as valued themes in the content of his narratives. In short, Barnes provides his readers through his fictional works a vivid picture about this contemporary time. As already stated, Barnes's works play a role of self-projection of his personal character alongside the deep truthfulness of his elaborate cultural and societal zeitgeist. Barnes's works also characterize the postmodernist fictional narrative which highlights the problematic of the past's reportedness under the form of historiographic metafiction. Pastiche, intertextuality, parody and irony, all of which form essential pillars of his narratives, be they fictional or non-fictional, leading to a style proper to his called; the Barnesian style. Accordingly, *The Lemon Table* comes to be "the clean acidic accuracy of Barnes's" (Moore, 2004). The collection is edited eclectically consisting of eleven stories sharing the same recurrent Barnesian themes; as is stated in his most recent collection; *The Sense of an Ending* (2011); *Eros and Thanatos*; that is; birth, copulation, and death.

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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### 3.4.1. The Search for the Meaningfulness and Authenticity of *Being* in Barnes's *The Lemon Table* (2004)

Existential matters are always present in Barnes's works. In *A Short history of Hairdressing*, the author metaphorically, or, with a symbolic use introduces life over hairdressing. The protagonist's life is narrated through three stages in the barbershop. Life and its structures are not changed from place to place; it is the same, anywhere and all over the world. That is how and what Barnes would respond in the first passage of the story, describing the barbershop as he states: "as if the phrase 'short back and sides, with a little bit off the top' might mean something different in this new suburb. He'd doubted it. Everything else seemed the same." (Barnes, 2004, p. 1)

He goes further;

Those were the bits that made you wince every time. But there was also something creepier about the place. He suspected it was rude. Things you didn't know about, or weren't meant to know about, usually turned out to be rude ... The previous place just had an old bit of painted wood with colors twirling round it. The one here worked by electricity and moved in whirly circles all the time. That was ruder [...] this was the great truth about life which he'd only just discovered. (Barnes, 2004, p. 6)

Gregory in his first visit to the barber's, explores the 'rude' dirty establishment. 'Rude' is repeated more than thrice, as if the author wants to clarify to the reader about his attitude toward life. Moreover, the description of the barber's place, then comparing it to

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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life is a strong motif for there is a hidden theme Barnes endeavors to discuss; the What defines *Being* and existing.

On the same accordance, for the possibility to live an authentic life, Heidegger suggests *Resoluteness*. Gregory, thus, holds a nonconformist attitude to outface the commonality about religious taboos via the abnegation of the existence of God as the narrator sketches: "He was only brave enough to deny God when among fellow skeptics" (Barnes, 2004, p. 16). In addition, Barnes is an author whose writings revolve around religious skepticism; agnosticism. Being an agnostic, which means ignoring whether there is a God or not, happens to be one of the reasons of human despair and anxiety, as Kierkegaard states that: "Every human existence that is not conscious of itself as a spirit or conscious of itself before God as a spirit, every human existence that does not rest God transparently in God, but vaguely rests ... in the dark about his self" (Gordon, 2004, p. 77).

Gregory denounces his existential anxiety by choosing his own decision that is not influenced by the common beliefs such as religion as well as the barber that refers to life as to those small triumphs of maturity along with the sum of some constraints, anxieties due to social apprehensions that could still be handled. Through this position the character can reach the authenticity of life as it is explained in Heidegger's characteristics of authenticity exactly in the concept of *Mineness*.

Over the story the author addresses the theme of sex as one of life's matters. "He was afraid of sex. That was the truth. He didn't really know any more what it was for" (Barnes, 2004, p. 21). Sex as we all know is for pleasure or for the reproduction. Although Gregory has been married for 28 years, with two daughters, he wonders about the purpose of sex. This notion is certainly related to the meaning of life that is not caught to the

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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existentialists. Life, according to the existentialists, is for zilch; nothing is meaningful and because sex is one of its themes is also not explicit.

As Camus says; “revolt gives life its value” (Gordon, 2004, p. 480), Gregory decides to “revolt against the tyranny of the bloody mirror. He had always assented meekly, whether he recognized the back of his head or not”. It is an inauthentic sort of life which refers to one of the characteristics of inauthenticity called *publicness*. Gregory now reaches an authentic life by supervening an existential plan, he was asked by the barber to show him the back of his hair cut, he responded; “no, I don’t want to see the back”, an allusion to not wanting to understand more about the reality of *being*.

According to Gordon Marino, “the existentialists had one thing right. To live is to abide within the chilly coordinates of constant choice, choices about what to value, about how to live our lives, about ethics” (Cited in Hong Chen, 2012, p. 25). And the story is about how to endure the meaninglessness of life. Although it is depicted as improper and not realistic, through the experiences of the protagonist, Julian Barnes suggests a solution based on the philosophy of Existentialism.

Sylvia Winstanley, in her letters to Julian Barnes, discusses various matters of life, asking him, and the letters re-answers her. His letters are not typed, but we can guess through her interactions that life is not plausible according to Sylvia, as she writes: “Even at an age when I might have been susceptible to such an implausible view of life, I preferred Darwinian’s Vegetable Mould and Earthworms” (Barnes, 2004, p. 139). According to Sylvia, life is not discernible. Then, this attitude is very existential. Philosophers are always confused with the sense of existence.

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's Nothing to be Frightened of (2008) and The Lemon Table (2004)

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With the disbelief in God, in a deity, Man cannot recognize the essence of being; actually he cannot undergo the process of this life. Barnes does not believe in this structure of belief, thus the lady correspondences the author in an attempt to convince him about the existence of coincidence. She speaks about the intentional coincidence and glimpse to it as an ecosystem. Again as an assertion of her opinion upon the mystery of life, Sylvia confesses her confusion at the end of the letter, as she states: "I had to write to you as nobody else would understand the oddity of synchronicity." (Barnes, 2004, p. 141)

In another letter, as to those existentialists, Sylvia discusses the subject of death and tries to explain its essence concluding with some reasons of dying, she explores "impending decrepitude and senility; waste of money - using up inheritance - keeping together brain-dead in incontinent bag of old bones; decreased interest in The News, famine, wars ... etc" (Barnes, 2004, p. 151), these reasons are inevitably joined to a materialistic stance which is interchangeable with the notion of *Dehumanization*; meaning the lack of ethics and spiritual beliefs. Such a concept characterizes most of postmodernist literature which is concerned with the advent of modernity. The lady's response was: "the main reasons for not dying: have never done what others expect, so why start now; possible distress caused to others (but if so, inevitable at any time); still only B at Lie Brewery; who would infuriate Sgt-Major if not me?" (Barnes, 2004, p. 107)

That is, the reason of not dying or the reason to live is when you do not do what others expect. Even so, astutely Barnes alludes to the inconsistency of life's meaningfulness as being unobtainable. In one of her letters, the last, Sylvia asks the author "what is life?" (Barnes, 2004, p. 157) Barnes re-corresponds with her and at this stage, he learns from the warden of the hospice that "Miss Winstanley passed on two months ago"

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's Nothing to be Frightened of (2008) and The Lemon Table (2004)

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(2004, p. 157). Barnes has a strong belief in the meaninglessness of life since he repeatedly suggests that Man cannot get the definition of life with an existential attitude, life has no sense.

Whereas in *Appetite*, Vivian's husband argues that life; "is just a premature reaction to death" (Barnes, 2004, p. 169). In accordance to this quote, the notion of *being* is actually no more than *being-towards* death. The definition of life is related to the certainty of death or as Heidegger states: "death is an eminent possibility of Dasein [and] we must, in the first instance, make it clear in a preliminary sketch how existence, facticity, and falling prey Of Dasein are revealed in the phenomenon of death" (Gordon, 2004, pp. 315-316).

In *The Fruit Cage*, for Chris's mother, life is explained being partaken into three stages that are: *making will* which refers to Sartre's position about the will or the plan, then *planning for old age* and naturally *facing death*.

Again, Chris's father, on the other hand, does not fit the attitude of his wife. Indeed still struggling with life, making a new decision that his wife lives as well as Elsie, his mistress, seeking for occasions to live his last days passionately, and retrieving sex which, for him is the last drive at the age of 81. Nevertheless, he is correcting that fallacy about ageing as it is the age of tranquility as Chris thinks:

Because one wants; needs, to see old age as a time of serenity? I now think this is one of the greatest conspiracies of youth. Not just of youth, but of middle age too, of every single year until that moment when we admit to being old ourselves. (Barnes, 2004, p. 190)

Barnes once confessed that he does not believe in God; "I don't believe in God but I miss him" (Barnes, 2008, p. 01). Yet, and again, with the *don't believe* in God and in the

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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afterlife, as this goes, reflects in his works influencing the creation of his characters; always in a constant struggle to reach an authentic life by creating a purpose, something to cling upon for survival. In *The Lemon Table*, the protagonists, despite the fact that they are in age; approaching death, they still struggle, making new plans, or, re-attempting to correct the mistakes of the past concerning the wrong decisions they had adopted. Here, Barnes sounds as if to pontificate upon ageing; or as retrieved and referred to in his short novel; *The Sense of an Ending* (2011) by *Eros and Thanatos*; “it seemed like a good idea, going backwards through your life rather than forwards” (Barnes, 2004, p. 170).

Love is another familiar theme to Barnes's readers. Accordingly, *The Lemon Table* could be said that it is a work that fits this subject. Love in this case is an approach of living a way or a source for authenticity, meaningfulness and rationality of life. Indeed, it is the reason of being, therefore, characters would be seeking and trying to live it in order to give their lives a sense. However, what strikes most in these characters is that they never experience love successfully; love does not work, actually it is identified as a source of frustration. On *the Revival* Barnes explains:

Like most of his life's writing, the play was concerned with love. And as in his life, so in his writing: love did not work. Love might or might not provoke kindness, gratify vanity and clear the skin, but it did not lead to happiness; there was always inequality of feeling or intention present. (Barnes, 2004, p. 87)

But Barnes, with his self-contradictory position, analyses love with the impossibility of its success as a reason of being, he continues: “Such was love's nature. Of

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's Nothing to be Frightened of (2008) and The Lemon Table (2004)

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course, it 'worked' in the sense that caused life's profoundest emotion." (Barnes, 2004, p. 87)

Moreover, *The Story of Mats Israelson*, Anders Boden's love to his pharmacist's wife; Lindwall is portrayed as an illusion. Both are enamoured but they lack bravery to confess. Lindwall lives her life thinking of him. She believes that "he was the Man" (Barnes, 2004, p. 41). Her husband was the wrong man though. But, there always is an encountering of self-deception; both lovers do not live a satisfactory life due to the unsatisfactory feeling. Barnes, herein, as if he wants to claim that Man; in the face of the certainty of death should construct an authenticity which could be realized when Man acts with bravery, with an awareness of choosing his approach of living. Such a stream of thought inevitably owes much to the philosophy of Existentialism.

Again, "love is hope and belief where we previously lacked it, and in that way it is enticing. However grandiose the sentiment makes sense, love is individual, Barnes has said, even when it is universal; and it can therefore be a guide" (Dalton, 2008, p. 72). Accordingly, love is essential because it gives Man a sense to his being.

"Each of us must find his own reason" that is the answer of Charles, the son of Delacour, of the story *Bark* when his wife asks him "what is the reason for living if it is only to outlive others" (Barnes, 2004, p. 151). This dialogue; if it refers to an attitude, it certainly is representing the existential opinion of Jean Paul Sartre who states that "Man is nothing else than his plan; he exists only to the extent that he fulfills himself; he is therefore nothing else than the ensemble of his acts, nothing else than his life" (Gordon, 2004, p. 355).



## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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### 3.4.2. Absurdity in Barnes's *The Lemon Table* (2004)

Since life is meaningless, the existence of Man would be depicted as absurd and irrational. Barnes, through his personages, he exemplifies the absurdity of this world with the characteristics of absurd fiction/literature. The latter is the genre where writers focus on the character's experiences in the face of the cyclical motion of life. Barnes's characters are created to face the misery, anguish/anxiety and loneliness in this existence. They are isolated, alienated and frustrated and also not able to find or realize their intrinsic purpose in life. It seems that Barnes, through this description, endeavors to give us a clear idea about his view upon existence.

The absurdity of the characters of *The Story Of Mats Israelson*, their communication seems impossible, mainly, between Anders Boden and his wife. He averts conversing with her. Their communication lacks the accessibility. Mrs. Borden's discussions are always sarcastic as if mocking the reality which happens to be absurd and contradictory. Whereas the husband's responses and reflections are about allusions as Barnes narrates. Anders had learnt to deal with his wife's sarcasm by means of pedantry, by answering her questions as if they meant no more than the words they contained. This tends to annoy her, but for him it was a necessary process of self-protection.

They seem an agreeable couple" he said, matter-of fact.

‘You like everybody‘

‘No my love, I do not think that is true.’ He means, for instance,

that at the present moment he did not like her. (Barnes, 2004, p. 27)

Anders does not merely lack communication with his wife, but he also lacks the communicative competence. For example, he loses the chance of declaring his love to

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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Lindwall due to miscommunication. Instead of confessing, he goes to tell her a historical story of Mats Israelson. Moreover, what and how and when to say, is a sore point for Anders. Language does not serve him, in fact it worsens things. It contradicts what he wants to say as in the hospital when she; Lindwall, visits him after twenty-three years, responding to his request. Instead of admitting his feelings towards her, he misses again: “he wants to say that he loved her, that he had always loved her, that he thought of her most - no, all of the time” (Barnes, 2004, p. 35). This is a form of anxiety, shall we call it linguistic anxiety? Then yes, when language does not serve you anymore, does not depict exactly how and what you feel and wish to convey.

The problem is, therefore, related to language; love is divulged by and through it. Therefore, one has to be aware in choosing words, as Barnes claims, “we must be precise with love, its language and its gestures” (Barnes, 2004, p. 35).

In *Appetite*, Vivian and her husband are described as being alienated. Their relation is not tight; there is a big distance which displayed and demonstrated in their speech as Vivian reminisces:

He had been retired for ten years now, and we've had separate beds for the last seven. Which was more his choice than mine. He said I kicked out in my sleep, and that when he woke up he liked to listen to the World Service. I suppose I did not mind too much, because by this time we were only companionable. (Barnes, 2004, p. 164)

Vivian, thereafter, attempts to be closer to her husband, she takes his illness as an opportunity to communicate with him, and she fails since the husband's response to her readings is irrelevant, erratic and nonsequential. This matter is revealed when she tries to

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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refresh his memory by trying to make him recall some places, his responses were so unannounced as he says; 'Suck my cock' (Barnes, 2004, p. 168). Avowedly, Vivian enjoys these erratic words. She feels happy as she senses herself desirable with a privilege to recreate a different relation and better than the preceding failed relationship.

In the Theatre of the Absurd, playwrights usually apply language skillfully and adequately. In order to achieve the sense of absurdity, they often use multiple artistic techniques to describe characters, including their behaviour, language and the plot of the theatre. Barnes eventually, through the language of his characters, provides us with an idea about the difficulty of communication between individuals. There is a huge gap, or even a void that proves the loneliness of Man in this meaningless world and language happens to prove that.

Moreover, old age as an age of debility, despair, hopelessness, and *renunciation*, here, comes to be as a main theme of the collection to affirm the absurdity of this existence. At this age, Barnes may allude to the fact that Man is not aware of the inevitable absurdity of the world unless he sees the futility of his being that is demonstrated by the loss of the self, the loss of memory and the impossibility of moving backward; adjusting, recreating decisions/wills. Nevertheless, Barnes's position on old age is that there is no such a thing as a consolation to enclose it. And indeed, there is none; "reflecting on our minuteness and brevity appears to be intimately connected with the sense that life is meaningless; but it is not clear what the connection is" (Nagel, 2012, p. 717). This notion is illustrated in the story of *Vigilance*, when Andrew the concertgoer, in his ageing process becomes hypersensitive and impatient of noise that is made by people who cough and talk in the concert, disturbing the fluency of his listening pleasure. This matter is related to the

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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loss of the sense of being, or it is when one finds his existence is profitless. It might be viewed as an expression of the internal anxiety that one endures, when he finds no reason to live.

Ageing, then, is the time of fatuousness; the period in which Man recognizes the absurdity of this life or acts fatuously. Barnes, then, divulges his conclusion about the absurdity of life through his ageing characters.

### 3.4.3. The Notion of Death in Barnes's *The Lemon Table* (2004)

The theme of death and the human's finality veil upon Barnes's works; a constant supreme concern of his. It permeates most of his major works. Matters of death and dying are fictionalized in the majority of his works as a manifestation of his fright of the inevitable existential fate; that of mortality. He is, therefore, regarded as a thanatophobe. *The Lemon Table* is an illustration in which Julian Barnes divulges his dissatisfactions with the certainty of death alongside his sceptical theism as well as his skeptical position with Man's mortality (the disbelief in eschatology).

In Barnes's eschatology there are two deaths: the death of youth and the death of old age (Groes and Childs, 2011, p. 104). In *The Lemon Table* all characters are disconsolate aged individuals who are dying or awaiting their death obsessively after the death of their youth. In this collection, death is the core theme of all narratives which; "Barnes puts [them in a form of] a taboo topic ... frankly laying bare all his cares and concerns about this unavoidable certainty among all the uncertainties that are called life" (Wenquan, 2015, p. 87).

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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Ageing means approaching death, or more correctly *being unto death*<sup>8</sup>. In accordance to this, Julian Barnes constructs old characters as they fit within the subject matter. Being old for Barnes means being able to assess whether life is authentic or absurd.

Barnes's works are "reflections on living with intimations of death and with the thoughts of those who write about the afterlife, immortality, and oblivion" (Wenquan, 2015, p. 103). *The Lemon Table* henceforth suggests an existential structure for an authentic being by exposing characters that hold a sense of regret for past lives, and as a result, they find solace in their outcries against the existential condition, through nonconformity (Gregory and Sylvia best exemplify this outcry). Barnes's works in general induce the readers to be conscious about their existence and its finality; help them embrace the facticity of death and the "authentic being toward death" (Gordon, 2004, p. 328).

According to the existentialists, death is the main source of anxiety which is parallel to Barnes's thanatophobia; such conditions are perceptibly present in *The Lemon Table* through the protagonists. That is the author can't help but picture his inner voices through his characters since the relatedness as well as the influence between the literary producer and his/her product is inevitable.

In *Bark* Julian Barnes accentuates the omnipresence of death and the unsuspected mortality. For instance Delacour, with all his attempts to outlive his ability, he ends up failing to such a commitment. He defies death with dieting, he arranges an ordered and implemented regimen to prolong his biological condition. Thereupon, "while others at their life-shortening concoctions, he would expatiate upon general threats to health and the lamentable impediments to human immortality" (Barnes, 2004, p. 129)

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<sup>8</sup> A Heideggerian phrase parallel to 'Being towards Death'.

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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Again, Barnes's thanatophobia is high-pitched through his fictional productions. His passion or the not being able to accept 'the no longer being-in the world' is illustrated by his thinking or desire for immortality.

The characters struggle with the notion of mortality, and find the belief in an afterlife impossible. In this respect, the textbook definition of immortality is that it is "the indefinite continuation of a person's existence, even after death" or, to give it another succinct definition; immortality "implies a never-ending existence", which is possible only with the belief in an afterlife. In *The Fruit Cage* Chris's mother engages the Four Last Things of modern life which includes the "not being able to believe in an afterlife" (Barnes, 2004, p. 185). Barnes, thus, can be viewed as not a death-fearing due to the disbelief in an afterlife, but he is, rather, veraciously afraid of *the nothingness*. He is frightened of the threat of death in "the absence of a system ensuring afterlife" (Wenquan, 2015, p. 88).

Immortality is wondered upon by any human being, notably those who do not believe in the eternity that is ensured with an after death. Therefore, death is considered as a threat to nothingness. The idea of being none, *néant* or nil, seems to petrify Man and leads him to think of the absurdity of this existence and the mystery of being as well as the purpose of it.

The meaninglessness of this world is demonstrated by the sense of *being* that lacks the assurance of eternity. Thus, as a resolution of such a dilemma, Man thinks better of mortality and desires to experience immortality through other means, such as art, or, if we take the example of Chris when he asks his father why he prefers billiards to snooker, he replies; "Billiards doesn't have to end. A game of billiards could last forever, even if you

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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are losing all the time. I don't like things to end" (Barnes, 2004, pp. 182-183). Billiards is, somehow, a metaphor for an eternal game and life since it has no ending, enabling the player to have more chances to succeed. For this matter, Barnes, metaphorically, addresses the benefit of immortality that yields individuals to a sense of security and an opportunity to overmaster the barriers of time, realizing the life one could live without the obstruction of time; finitude.

Mortality, for Barnes and his characters, is not escapable, and "the certainty of death - a fate which human reason cannot accept as reasonable" (Camus 1983, p. 1) happens to be a familiar phenomenon which could not be transcended, i.e., it is the unconscionable axiom and whatever one tries against it, fails as Delacour in the end deduces that; "we make the laws but the bees swarm anyway, the rabbit seeks a different warren, the pigeon flies to another's dovecote" (Barnes, 2004, p. 136), an illustration of the laws of nature and its axiomatic laws.

Death; therefore "happens to us for no other reason than because the universe happens to us" (Barnes, 2004, p. 110) arguing that; "life is just a premature reaction to death" (p. 110), in this statement, he flaunts an ironic outlook on life that is nothing but the mere being towards death.

*The Lemon Table* is concluded by *The Silence* story, where the octogenarian; Sibelius, a famous composer has orchestrated seven symphonies. The plot of this story is around the new symphony that Sibelius could not finish. Being familiar with the Barnesian literature enables us to hold the hidden meaning introduced through a symbolic style that Barnes always adopts in his writings. Thus, Barnes uses the subject of silence referring to death and the music actually symbolizes life. This notion is evidenced by the metaphorical

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's Nothing to be Frightened of (2008) and The Lemon Table (2004)

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expression that is “she understands that music must come from silence. Come from it and return to it” (Barnes, 2004, p. 206). The line; ‘music must come from silence’ must refer to the *not-yet being* to *being*, whereas the second clause pertains to what Heidegger claims in; “let the term dying stand for the way of being in which Da-sein is towards death” (Gordon, 2004, p. 313).

As a confused author by the sense of being Barnes makes his character reply, reflecting on a French critic Mahler’s comment on symphonies composition in his claim that; “the essence of a symphony is form; it is the severity of style and the profound logic that creates the inner connection between motifs” (Barnes, 2004, p. 205). Accordingly, Barnes would suggest that the essence of existence has to be created, constituted, or, in short, it is a *form* which is composed by a disciplined approach which accords with logic as well as matters of life that are illustrated by the word *motifs*.

“The logic of music leads eventually to silence” (2004, p. 205), a statement which emphasizes the idea of the certainty of death, and like every existential thinker, philosopher, and writer, regards death as the sole certain matter that the human being is conscious about in comparison with other existential uncertainties. Factually, Barnes in this work makes the theme of death as a compulsive matter that Man has to engage for the possible wish of alleviating its pain;

I GO OUT by myself to dine alone and reflect upon mortality.  
Or I go to the Kämp, the Societetshuset, the König to discuss the subject  
with others. The strange business of Man lebt nur einmal. I join the  
lemon table at the Kämp. Here it is permissible - indeed, obligatory - to



## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's Nothing to be Frightened of (2008) and The Lemon Table (2004)

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talk about death. It is most companionable. A. does not approve. (Barnes, 2004, p. 206)

Furthermore, the title itself which contains the fruit *Lemon*; which symbolically and thoroughly refers to death; which Barnes clarifies in *The Silence*, narrating “among the Chinese, the lemon is the symbol of death” (Barnes, 2004, p. 206). Devoting a volume of an eleven short stories, the major theme of which revolves around mortality, is an aspect or a denunciation of his own *thanatophobia*.

Death is not a voluntary experience; part of the human condition which imposes itself; “I don't choose silence. Silence chooses me” Sibelius states (Barnes, 2004, p. 212). And although it is undesirable, death is also perceived as an escape from the hardship of life. Sibelius, therefore, acts as a welcome, stating twice; in page 205, and 211: “Cheer up! Death is around the corners”.

Eventually, Julian Barnes in *The Lemon Table* presents again the theme of death through the sub-theme of ageing. Matters of life; such as love; ageing, truth, history and the question of *being*, are all present in this collection as existential issues that Man experiences with the certainty of mortality. Indeed, Julian Barnes, in this work, displays the phenomenon of death as an existential dilemma, a human's concern, and the main factor of existential anxiety. The belief in an afterlife, the end of the world concerning eschatology and tautology are introduced in *The Lemon*. Truth is uncertain and subjective for Barnes. History, then, is not recorded objectively, it is destroyed and falsified either intentionally or not by narrations. These notions are demonstrated by *The Lemon Table's* characters who are depicted as anxious, frustrated, depressed, enraged and confused by the inconclusive sense of their being that is not understood due to the ‘Big D’.

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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### 3.5. Existentialism and the Problem of Truth and Historiography in Barnes's *The Lemon Table* (2004)

Julian Barnes, as a postmodern writer, is certainly influenced by the existential principles. Truth, therefore, is not absolute and authentic for Barnes. The nature and authenticity of truth is constantly searched in his works demonstrating his changeless attitude upon it. Peter Childs remarks that Barnes's fiction "displays a self reflexive postmodern scepticism regarding any truth claims" (p. 3). Hence, *The Lemon Table*, like his other works, also contains the theme of the quest for authentic truth. Barnes, in this collection, could introduce a multiform of existential and epistemological themes as a try to investigate them, and the quest for truth comes as a sub-theme that Barnes uses as a metaphor for the inevitable ambiguity of existence.

Truth is unsaid and hidden in *The Things You Know*, which is apparent in the nature of Janice's and Merrill's conversations. Merrill says things which never happened to her husband. She pretends his popularity as she states "He was very popular, they all told me". She defends him to Janice as a famous militant. But "Janice knew that Tom had been drafted" (Barnes, 2004, p. 58), and that "what they said in the campus. What she'd seen with her own eyes." (p. 58) Merrill continues:

I always made an effort before I went to the hospital. I said to myself, Merrill, no matter how darned sorry you feel for yourself, you make sure he sees you looking like something worth living for. I even bought new clothes; he'd say, "Honey, I have not seen that before, have I?" and give his smile. (Barnes, 2004, p. 46)

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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However, that was not the truth since “Janice nodded, imagining the scene differently: the campus groper on his deathbed, seeing his wife spend money on new clothes to please successor” (Barnes, 2004, p. 60).

Janice, on the other hands, and like Merrill, could not tell the truth about her husband who was merely a “little limey fag in administration” as Merrill would confide. But “not that she would ever actually tell Janice. Far too delicate. She’d just crumble to bits.” (Barnes, 2004, p. 61)

Yet, both Janice and Merrill tell untruth stories about their husbands. Although each one knows the truth about her friend’s husband, but “declines to disabuse a friend’s shining memories out of a misplaced sense of superiority” (Childs, 2011, p. 106). The ladies could or do not wish to divulge the truth about their dead husbands, moreover, both act that they do not know anything. For Merrill, knowing this gave her “a sense of superiority” (Barnes, 2004, p. 61), whereas Janice “would protect her from what she knew about that awful husband of hers.” (Barnes, 2004, p. 63)

Here, Barnes is trying to give us a glimpse about the nature of truth, or he provides us with a simple example about the actual story of truth. Truth is not reported, and it is shaped; muffled, and the worst is that the untruth or rather the fabulated truth is more tolerated and accepted. Truth is subjective or it is narrated subjectively according to *The Things You Know*. The characters recount their reminiscence but with no objectivity, nevertheless, they receive the lies of each other with no objections for subjective reasons. This idea is closely related to the existentialists’ position on truth and its subjectivity as it has been tackled earlier. Moreover, the story completely reflects and fits Nietzsche’s attitude. For him “there is no such thing as *the* truth, objective and independent of

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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ourselves; each person is entitled to their own truth, discoverable only from their particular perspective, but [he] warns against the attempt to impose this truth onto others” (Carlisle, 2003, p. 3).

The things you know, and the things I know are what Merrill says to Janice as a conclusion referring to the equation/ principle of what is true for you, might be untrue for me. Then, the title itself is *The Things You Know*, the “*The*”, a definite article, used as a function to indicate nouns that are already mentioned or experienced (*déjà vu*), is used by the author to introduce the proposition of *Empiricism* that he adopts. *Empiricism*; a theory of knowledge, the ground of which is based on experimental experiences. Absolute truth; knowledge, has to be factual and *the* truth is hardly obtainable. The point here, with the impossibility of truth’s availability, is one of those matters which render the essence of Man’s existence lack clarity, instead, resulting into ambiguity.

The sceptical vision of Barnes upon the legitimation and certainty of truth has also shaped a doubtful vision towards the facticity of history. His works are, therefore, always constructed in a form to demonstrate this problematic.

Accordingly, Barnes’s writings are considered to “reveal the constant remaking of the past to fit into concerns of the present as problematic” (Acheson and Ross, 2005, p. 204). This leads to the assumption that the retrieval of history for Barnes plays a *revisionist* role of sacred (absolute) history, his position is that the possibility to conclude ‘such’ as being true is almost impossible, since it remains a knowledge which has been brought to us through ‘narrated’ reportedness which is partial truth. Truth, thereafter, is subjective and self-reflexive.

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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*The Lemon Table*, holds this issue as a main theme in *The Story of Mats Israelson* through which Barnes provides us with his ironical outlook towards history and its fabulation. The story tells another story; a fictionalization of the metafictional technique in which the protagonist tells a real, historical story about Mats Israelson. But “he told it in the wrong order” (Barnes, 2004, p. 31). Here, as if Barnes is giving us an idea about the nature of history reportedness as well as the way it is recorded and narrated to the generations.

Lindwall “did not even seem to realize that it was true”, revealing her sceptical position upon history. Her sound is certainly used, with the technique of polyphony, to represent the author’s view. Barnes’ vision on the facticity of history is the same as Nietzsche’s one;

Every great human being exerts a retroactive force: for his sake all of history is placed in the balance again, and a thousand secrets of the past crawl out of their hiding places-into *his* sunshine. There is no way of telling what may yet become part of history. Perhaps the past is still essentially undiscovered! So many retroactive forces are still needed! (Bambach, 2005, p. 290)

This notion is highlighted by the response of Lindwall as she states: “I have little imagination. I am only interested in what really happens. Legends seem to me [...] silly” (Barnes, 2004, p. 31). Lindwall words ‘history legend’, which means a story from the past that is believed by many people but cannot be proven to be true. This notion is closely befitting Kierkegaard’s view in his argument; “nothing historical can become infinitely certain” (Kierkegaard, 2009, p. 69). Hence, Julian Barnes regards/conceives of history as

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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being fabulated truth, or fictionalized truth as well as fictionalized historiography, instead of factual history. In his *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* Barnes suggests that history isn't progressive and:

[...] is just what historians tell us. 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 (Barnes, 2009, p.  
242)

In addition, both titles; *A Short History of Hairdressing* and *The Story of Mats Israelson* are chosen as *antitheses* to present a whimsical, ironical tone that Julian Barnes relentlessly used in his previous works to criticize and mock the naive belief in history, and also to make the reader aware of its *fabulistic* essence/nature. *A Short History of Hairdressing*; a title which suggests expecting the content of the story to be nonfictional, more or less realistic and it is authored as a portrayal of the hairdressing. However, in the process of reading, one will recognize that he is dealing with a fictional work entitled metaphorically; telling the story of an ordinary man. Nevertheless, history, in the story, is not mentioned but those potential readers could realize what the author alludes to.

The fictionalized history is evident in the second story's title *The Story of Mats Israelson*. Mats Israelson is a real story which is to be categorized as a historical one; Barnes prefers to class it as a story in lieu of history. Here, as if he would accentuate his common attitude about history and its uncertainty. Moreover, choosing the word *story* is intentional in the sense where Barnes indentifies history almost as a tale; fictional rather than factual.

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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### 3.6. Conclusion

As a strong atheist in his mid-twenties, and an agnostic in his fifties and sixties, Barnes claims this divergence did not come “because I’ve acquired more knowledge in the meantime: just more awareness of ignorance” (Barnes, 2008, p. 32). His position is that he doesn’t believe in God but he misses him, and “if God exists or Not, no one could tell. If God created the universe that would be plausible to believe” (Guignery and Roberts, 2009, p. 135) he adds.

Barnes eschatology comprises 2 deaths/extinctions, the death of old age, and the death of youth; “the death of youth, which often takes place unnoticed, is the harder death.” (Barnes, 2008, p. 42), Barnes is quoting Montaigne who in turn quotes Cicero, and the latter, referring to Socrates. The narrative is overloaded with polyphonic statements, yet of contradicting and dual positions, hence the impossibility to take a single-sided conclusion, or even deduction. Besides, what unilateral position to hold upon matters of religion, God, Death, individuality, life’s meaningfulness ... etc? Somerset Maugham says; “the great tragedy in life is not that men perish, but that they cease to love” (Barnes, 2008, p. 107). Real life is the youth life, once old age strikes one; they begin to conceive their own termination, i.e., their departure into *Nothingness*. And this terminal pessimistic view is due to dependency, bitterness in life, agony, deterioration ... loss of enthusiasm for life, when “lucidity gone, speech gone ... memory gone”, when death anxiety or in the opposite direction, having a calm attitude that; “it’s time to let it go”, to let the self go.

Barnes states “the religion of art” somehow alludes to the replacement of the ‘tyrant’ man-made religious institutions. What he professes is the love of art, the consumption and production of art instead of religion, the officially acclaimed religion.

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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“God doesn't believe in our God” (Barnes, 2008, p. 46), be Him the God of art or the God of the hyper-modern materialism and self-fulfillment.

Barnes's agnosticism is not only declared by himself in various interviews but it shadows most of his works, and *his* agnosticism is more of a sceptical and researching position of the essence of all institutions and even existential matters such as mundane questionings about the nature of love as well as the reason behind Man's and his need for the consumption of Art. The latter is conceived as his and Man's resort; used as a means which could denude his will of a belief in Art which he contends that it is a means to the transcendental on its own; a means for the belief in God.

Julian Barnes and his literary textual contexts in general are all impregnated within the existentialist rationale. His work is categorized within the postmodern literary tendency, he is a postmodern fictional author both thematically and stylistically; adopting the postmodern literary techniques, or, rather, technicalities; such as metafiction, pastiche, intertextuality, parody, and symbolism. As a self-categorized writer, with his Barnesian Style; a master prose stylist illustrated by the use of polyphony, metaphor, irony and the reception theory as well - which involves the reader's intervention to make up the finality of the narrative - all these techniques are idiosyncratic traits of Barnes's fictional creativity.

Julian Barnes is known by his common, regular and well-worn themes. The problem of truth comes to be as a hallmark of the author's texts. History and its nature is also introduced in Barnes's writings by an ironic tone demonstrating its fabulation and inauthenticity. Love, ageing, religion/God and death are undeniably matters of Barnes's constant concerns which are blatantly retrieved in most of his fictional narratives.



## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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Again, the existence of God in accordance with Barnes's thematic novelistic approach is not certain, his belief in God existence is not enclosed, bluntly expresses his radical disbelief or atheistic point of view in his fiction.

Other themes such as; the problem of truth and history, are also displayed within the collection of *The Lemon Table*, the characters of this collection are depicted as frustrated, confused, wondering upon the essence of this universe and experiencing a morbid anxiety due to the inescapable condition of mortality alongside the impossibility of believing in an afterlife.

At a parallel accordance, Julian Barnes is verily an existentialist through the themes he retrieves relentlessly in most of his works. In this collection, in particular; *Vigilance* and *The Story of Mats Israelson*, Barnes reveals that the universe is absurd and meaningless. He also provides us, in *A Short History of Mate Israelson*, with one of the conditions of authentic life; demonstrated by 'revolt', which is suggested by Sartre, and non-conformity (mineness) that is suggested by Heidegger in his characteristics of authenticity. Barnes, here, is suggesting a means to create a sense to one's life and to authenticate it. Actually, Barnes constantly chooses ageing individuals as characters of his stories to evaluate life from a wise experienced spectrum.

In *The Lemon Table*, Barnes succeeds to protrude the absurdity of existence. He reveals its futility and irrationality/absurdity by the characters that happen to be isolated, experiencing lack of communication, alienated, depressed and mostly anxious upon death which is just "around the corner" (Barnes, 2004, p. 211). The word *Lemon* could be argued to be a metaphor for a log, a register of different plots about different people in different contexts (time and place) facing one fate that is death that proves the absurdity of the

## Chapter Three: Agnosticism and Existentialism in Barnes's *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) and *The Lemon Table* (2004)

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universe, sharing the same attitude of Albert Camus who views death as an affirmation of life's absurdity.

The aim of this research through this chapter was also to evidence the problem of truth and history, as one of Barnes's concerns, as related to the philosophy of Existentialism. History and its facticity as investigated in *The Lemon Table*, demonstrated in *The Story of Mats Israelson* as being fictional and legendary; fabricated. Truth, for Barnes is, thereafter, assessed by the author as being *subjective*; as Kierkegaard views, *propositional* as to Heidegger's opinion, and *perspective* as to Nietzsche's stance upon the nature and authenticity of truth.

# Chapter Four

*Englishness and Existentialism in  
Julian Barnes's England, England  
(1998) and Arthur & George  
(2005)*

## Contents

4.1. Introduction

4.2. Eschatology in Barnes's Existential Articulation of the Absence of Spirituality in English Society

4.3. Englishness and Dehumanization in Barnes's *Arthur & George* (2005)

4.4. Englishness and English Racism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

4.5. Conclusion

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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*'It's never far from wherever you are*

*And when you go it never leaves you*

*You sit alone and thoughts of home*

*Come and stand around your chair'*

Garrison Keilor

### **4.1. Introduction**

Matters of identity happen to be of a recurrent theme in postmodern fiction which reflects the zeitgeist of postmodern philosophy. The latter tends to display a sceptical view upon all past knowledge regarded as the knowledge which is, now, being rejected and the truthfulness alongside the authenticity of which is being evaluated. The present paper addresses the notion as well as the constructedness of Englishness in Julian Barnes's fictional work; *Arthur & George* (2005) and *England, England* (1998), whereby Barnes treats Englishness as either an invented/constructed notion or an identity of its own existence.

### **4.2. Eschatology in Barnes's Existential Articulation of the Absence of Spirituality in English Society**

*Arthur & George* (2005), a tragic historical novel depicting the Victorian characters Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji, whose hetero-polar background and nature designate a common ethical urge for the sake of righteousness as well as social, moral, and

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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peculiarly human(e) justice. Hence the omniscient tone of the author in the narrative reveals a sort of melancholic venture which reflects or call for the reader's empathy.

The venture is powerfully abounding in the skeptic attitude of the author, the narrator towards the trial of George Edalji as well as relating complex matters of existence such as the legitimacy of moral righteousness, historical reports, and on the broad spectrum; what Jean François Lyotard ascribes to as; incredulity toward metanarrative.

The most important themes of the novel address the validity or the authority of the existence of spiritism throughout indirect thematic questionings in the free indirect discourse, as the author ponders notions of *death*, *identity*, honour, love and *religion*; matters upon which we are to legitimize the truthfulness of past narratives. How could we assert the viability of absolute truths of dogmas? Death is juxtaposed with life right from the first lines of the novel, as Arthur faces the image and the memory of a *waxen body* which is to have a strong impact on his own life. This pictorial description implies Arthur's constant quest for whether there exists a survival after death or not, as well as the sacred book of religion. The realm of religion leads George to ponder the existence of God as well as other abstract metaphysical matters. This memory is to shape his vision of his future life matters.

The author, through the fictionalization of his realistic characters permits himself to infer his own religious and thanatophobic anxieties, fears which he reveals later in his memoir; *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008), i.e., nothing to fear; death, as the doubts he displays upon the legitimacy of absolute dogmas and sacred narratives arouse. Barnes views our relation to the world and its history, rather Man's relation with history as being *narrated*, in that;

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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Fiction, in its own mode of narration, is a historical record reflecting the changes in ideological concerns of the time of its production. [...] These authors' use of referentiality and a greater diversity in considering what 'history' can present in both historical material and historicized narratives, is combined to produce complementary effects of inclusiveness without conclusiveness, [hence the representation of history in literature] constitutes an opening up of possibilities for finding meanings from fictive pasts, yet one that resists desire for stability in those meanings. (Acheson & Ross, 2015, p. 214)

The conclusiveness of coherent account of historical past is different now; it is "plural, self-aware of its constructed status, and reliant on a large range of mediums of recording." (Acheson & Ross, 2015, p. 214)

Barnes, nevertheless, conveys a conglomerate of many themes, infinite actually of the hidden philosophies behind the nature of the legitimacy of the truth and the plausibility of historical records, the relationship between the received or preconceived data and unquestionable dogmas and their acquisition in the human mind vis-à-vis the attitude of Man toward them. Thus with regard to the 'spiritism' of Arthur's, so beautifully and fictionally elaborated by the author, contours the existence of Man and his existential struggle, yet hidden condition of Man as faced with the issues and questionings of *mortality*. Barnes relies on the analysis of the blind digestive cognitive conditioning of such religious rules and states of the aftermath of the human existence.

Arthur, as a scientifically avid proponent from his middle years until his graduation as a GP, seems to have leant to a more spiritual and philosophical interest. This is

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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reminiscent of the first line describing the first image and memory of his grandmother's "white waxen thing" (Barnes, 2005, p. 03), an image which stresses the importance of a first memory which eventually shapes matters of the memory, the authenticity of live and human relationships as in motherhood and the constant varied changes of the inevitable alterations in a Man's life, maturity, and death as related to religious or rather existential matters, spiritual doubts.

The first line of the novel describes Arthur as a baby, witnessing a presence of his grandmother's corpse, an allusion to the beginning and ending of one's life, birth and death. The birth and early consciousness of Arthur as a little boy with his first conscious memory of his grandmother's 'waxen corpse', forms the first and last obsession which foregrounds his memory. Arthur's moves from being a boy with a talent of imagination which he imbibed at his mother's knee throughout the stories she recounted him, stories of heroic ancestors and medieval Chivalry which shape the greatness of Englishness. The latter also made Arthur ponder this illusive conventional admission of Englishness as being a set-apart civilization, which shape Barnes's thematic concerns.

Retrieving to the matter of 'spiritism' as tackled by *death*, his obsession - throughout Barnes's words and own creative and actual issues he endeavors to solve- came to exist not only from the first phase of his childhood, meaning the first conscious memory, vision, and instinctive innocent urge to learn and see as he stumbled upon the 'waxen corpse' while walking on into a room, but also has been reinforced with the experiences he faced in his life. These existential issues, such as the matter of death, identity or national, as well as the authenticity of human nature (love and ethical relationships, the blood



## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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between relatives and so on, Barnes assumes, well the postmodern reader assumes that they shape the human psyche and version of existence/existing at broad.

Arthur's second incident which sets him question this matter of death and existence in the aftermath, is stressed while Arthur's realization of his wife's; Touie, inevitable death, when being consumed by tuberculosis. This matter of death is seen in his conversation with his mother, who thinks her son is slipping away from the Catholic Church that she and her daughter; Connie, profess. This consumption, illness which attacks his wife; 'the accursed microbe which was intending to consume her vitals' (Barnes, 2005, p. 95) make Arthur become aware of the vanity or the time-bound existence of Man.

Here appears another theme; that of Arthur's guilt for being incapable to cure her, making him feel useless and guilty. Guilty of his professional inability to cure her since he is a doctor, but also because; "he has loved her as best a man can, given that he did not love her" (Barnes, 2005, p. 278). Yet, Arthur had a mistress, his love of whom is even more real and actual. This guilt/innocence dichotomy is parallel to George's innocence/guilt position in his trial.

The guilt also alludes to the innocent yet guilty position of George, as guilty facing the prosecution board of Royden Sharp against him, and George being helpless to get out of it.

The slow death of Louisa Hawkins, Arthur's wife, being referred to inconspicuously or directly, seems to shape most of the second chapter of the novel, a fact which is the basis for Arthur's ulterior rationale of his reasoning throughout his life, the professional as well as the personal.

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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Characters, mainly Arthur, share a strong religious and theological dimension, as stated by Frank Kermode in what he calls 'end-determined fictions' (Kermode, 1967, p. 6). These narratives are in fact defined by the search for a meaningful resolution at the ending. Indeed, as related to theology and spirituality as concerned here in particular, George attends a spiritual memorial for Sir Arthur despite his skeptical attitude upon the obscure insignificance of an existing afterlife. The latter statement is what Arthur endeavors to prove by Arthur's philosophy of spiritism. It is that of one's identity is never to meet an ending, it exists 'physically' in the brief light of seeing called life, but will 'spiritually' encounter two polarized sets of existence of darkness in both the physical and spiritual lives. George reflects that:

When you stood in Hyde Park on a warm summer's afternoon among thousands of other human beings, few of whom were probably thinking about being dead, it was less easy to believe that this intense and complex thing called life was merely some chance happening on an obscure planet, a brief moment of light between two eternities of darkness. At such a moment it was possible to feel that all this vitality must continue somehow, somewhere. (Barnes, 2005, p. 477)

Writing such a historical narrative within a fictional frame, emphatically going on the question of spiritualism as related to a skeptical agnostic position regarding religion, "Barnes represents Doyle as a restless soul given to the same kind of melancholy as his literary alter ego." (Groes & Childs, 2011, p. 8)

Indeed, when reading the novel, the reader feels the resonance of Barnes's inner voiced anxieties, so retrieved in many of his either fictional or non-fictional narrative. Any

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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piece of writing -particularly the fictional genre - is inevitable for the writer not to voice his inner thoughts, conceptions, and here, what he's most frightened of, his anxieties, just as his most pleasurable dreams, yet through a character which portrays these aspects of yours. This is the power of fiction, you could be very realistic, autobiographical, but implicitly, your voice and person disguised through another owner of yourself, the characters which you make of them puppets of your own speech. This is what postmodern fiction and Barnes in particular do. Intertextual references are abounding. Here, Barnes' self-reflexive voice and inevitable voiced concern with the spiritual resonance of his, through Arthur is inevitable.

Penetrating any narrative, looking through the metaphorical version and interpretation of the themes alongside the details that the author stresses on, are unquestionably of his creation and concern, yet hidden unvoiced perceptions, thoughts, fears, as is the case here; Barnes' anxiety upon the sacred legitimacy of the matter of religion and spirituality which are blatant and constant.

Barnes portrays himself through Arthur's voice concerning the problematic, or rather unsolved mysteriousness of bringing forth proof to the world of spirituality and religion. The way Barnes puts forward his fears is through questioning the authenticity of his Roman Catholic upbringing throughout his schooling years, and later at an adulthood phase whereby this skeptical attitude is exposed in oppugning matters of existentialism<sup>1</sup>. The latter is highly pitched and related to the abstract spiritual beliefs, which are ignited by the authenticity and truthfulness of love, and the investigative hypothesis that Arthur formed the stratagem of which he is to trace its legitimacy.

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<sup>1</sup> J. A. Cuddon defines it as follows: "Philosophically speaking, it now applies to a vision of the condition and existence of Man, his place and function in the world, and his relationship, or lack of one, with God ..." See his *Dictionary of Literary Theory*, 1999, pp. 294-295.

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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This interrelatedness of spiritual theme conjures up not only of religion, existentialist issues of Man such as mortality, and how man does conceive his death, but also how George's wrong conviction would contribute in illustrating of shedding light upon the reality of existence and the uncontrolled power of a supernatural existence which forms and guides one's life. He goes on framing Arthur's death as a celebration of a prominent British proponent of spiritualism as well as, implicitly, that of agnosticism when George attends the Albert Spiritual Memorial for Arthur who died on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1930. This celebration is paradoxical since the creator of Sherlock Holmes passed away, but leaving a trace of the mortal but everlasting existence of an individual, in the form of their spirit. George had a close vision upon Memorial;

[...] he swept slowly up the Memorial, above the levels at which art and science and industry held sway, above the sealed figure of the pensive Consort, up to a higher realm. The burred knob was hard to control, and sometimes there was a mass of unfocused foliage filling the lens, but eventually he emerged at the plain vision of a chunky Christian cross. (Barnes, 2005, p. 339)

The medium directing the memorial states that Arthur's present, his spirit. Out of confusion, George resorts to his binoculars again to get to some proved explanation by observation, expecting to *see* Arthur, but a lady sitting behind him notes that he will "only see him with the eyes of faith" (Barnes, 2005, p. 355). It is here where George relates the legitimacy of truthfulness to his case, whose hypothesis Arthur assumed out of intuition (humanized property intuition).

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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Arthur not only believed and perceived George's innocence, but he knew it. He trusted and had faith in his inner voice, and worked for it to prove it under rational scientific analysis experience related to the abstract and the non tangible, uncontrolled power of faith, and belief, which render the impossible possible by construction only. The hybrid strategy also resides in the connectedness or merging rather of two literary sub-genres, the novel; the fictional, with the realistic biography, the authentic. Objective and imaginative structure do collide to form Barnes's unique yet experimental strategy of writing fiction.

Arthur's emulation for every form of English rooted object and being belongs to the historical setting of England, and Great Britain at large. Still, the different characters of George and Arthur may hint at the different sorts of Englishmen; hence the discrepancy of the protagonists' personification lies within their polarized viewpoints upon one's existence and discipline to shape their path throughout life.

Arthur; of an Irish descent, Scottish by birth, became English due to the instruction of into the faith of Rome by the Dutch Jesuits<sup>2</sup> Arthur's struggle with his identification to a non-conformist sort of moralist figure has led to the construction of his own beliefs, or to relate it to the non-fictional narrative - *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) - Arthur constructed his own "Idea of God" (Barnes, 2005, p. 45) and religion. As far as accepted virtues are concerned, he views himself as a 'spiritist', or spiritual. Indeed this led him to ponder over the institutionalized dogmas of what religion is in general, away from the religious indoctrination which his sister, Connie, portrays. This fact of spiritual thought makes of *Arthur & George* turn into a sort of a philosophical quest for truth and peculiarly

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<sup>2</sup> See Barnes, *Arthur & George*, 2005, p. 31.

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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Doyle's own confessions upon the Creator, and therefore God's role of moulding and guiding Man's circumstantial lives.

### 4.3. Englishness and Dehumanization in Barnes's *Arthur & George* (2005)

Barnes provides us with his position on history and religion through the portrayal of *Arthur Conan Doyle* and *George Edalji* as the prominent protagonists of his 505-pages novel; *Arthur & George*, whereby he implicitly shares his personal viewpoint in the attitude he holds through his characters (via heteroglossia), but within fictional technicalities. His critique of some social or cultural aspects of contemporary Britain is quite often revealed in the implicit discourse about inhumanity. The latter is formulated and rather expressed in different ways. It is also interchangeably used with the term *Dehumanization*<sup>3</sup>.

Dehumanization; here, will be measured by the non-sympathetic behaviour between individuals, i.e., human beings of all carnations; including color, social stratum and racial descent/socio-cultural belonging. Racism is one particular aspect of inhumanity, a term whose existence designates the juxtaposition of the twofold good/evil intrinsic nature of Man. Hence, the currently treated subject of the postmodern condition of Man highlights the inclusive inhuman modes that are inflicted in Western societies; societies which constantly view and experience the advents of the utilitarian condition of modernity.

The modern period characterized by the belief in progress of human history on the basis of empirical reasoning/rationalism. A period known for its optimism and absolutism

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<sup>3</sup> In the sense of losing values that Man instinctively possesses and embodies through his conduct *vis-à-vis* his fellows. A form of cruelty of harsh treatment of others.

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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in terms of evolutionary sciences which happen to be a by-pass into a skeptical period of doubts concerning the virtual yet sacred knowledge; that of religion and the transcendental in particular, alongside the evaluation of authentic truth in itself at broad.

Not only Man came to reverse the modern values/criteria, but he/she also happens to face a disillusionment, the roots of which hark back to a long track record found in the evolution of the previous times. The disillusionment is majorly that from the age of Enlightenment which promised modernity and progress, and yet was destructive; WWI & WWII. Man became mechanical, and the new wave of postmodernism thereafter has led man to reconsider his position with regards to the progressive spirit that modernity engendered.

Modernity or the absolute trust in rational thinking and empirical reasoning resulted in the alienation of Man and it has spoilt his/her symbiosis with the natural world. In fact, post-modernity simply accelerated the pace toward deeper alienation and estrangement.

Elitism, which is a sort of an abrupt opprobrium within the realm of values, is the affinity word for inhumanity and therefore dehumanization. The latter is in the sense that the belief in hyper-science has mechanized and therefore *dehumanized* the human being. Barnes displays the notion of Dehumanization quite repeatedly in his *Arthur & George*, through a multitude of both verbal and behavioural forms such as racism toward the 'Other'.

Racism - in accordance to the story telling - takes place implicitly right from the first pages of the novel, when the author depicts the second prominent character; *George Ernest Thompson Edalji*, as having witnessed moments of racist - by which I ascribe here

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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to 'inhuman' - treatment from the outside environment as opposed to his inside space wherein he was a dutiful child to his parents.

There is the Vicarage, the church, the building where Mother teaches Sunday school, the garden, the cat, the hens, the stretch of grass they cross between the Vicarage and the church, and the churchyard. This is George's world, and he knows it well. (Barnes, 2005, p. 8)

Barnes does infer notions of *George's* indoctrination into the personification of Englishness with all of its regards. *George* - of a Parsee and English miscegenation - does belong to the Church of England, which some claim that: "In developing a sense of national identity ... There is a case saying that the invention of the Church of England was the invention of England" (Paxman, 1998, p. 97).

*George* regards himself an Englishman, except that he is 'not the right sort' (Barnes, 2005, p. 12). His response, or rather reflection, in the narrative that at this particular moment, *George*; "feels as if he is being slowly banished from the way, the truth and the life." (Barnes, 2005, p. 5); banished from his indoctrinated beliefs of the Church of England, and thereafter, banished from his self-ascribed English identity.

The matter of racism is very striking throughout the novel; the setting of which is Edwardian England which fervently believed in the homogeneity of England. *George*, a Birmingham solicitor, was convicted for maiming horses and cattle under no "slight evidence to connect him to the crime with which he was charged" (Barnes, 2005, p. 195), "the police had no evidence against him" (Barnes, 2005, p. 149).



## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and Arthur & George (2005)

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### 4.4. Englishness and English Racism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

Right from WWII, racism soared to be of a constant problematic question and phenomenon in Great Britain, majorly England, and the Western world at broad. The English, a homogeneous blood, started to encounter a different 'breed' while the invention of the British Empire and its amplification spread worldwide. Racism, thereafter, was viewed as an attenuation of the homogeneity of the English; 'the Breed' (Paxman, 1998, p. 176).

To illustrate the English fear, or rather their dislike of their coexistence with the 'Other' historically, Jeremy Paxman; a twenty-first century social and historical commentator, refers to the 1963 Arthur Bryant's message to the *Illustrated London News's* readers that: "an influx ... of men and women of alien race, accentuated by strongly marked differences of pigmentation and mould of feature, as well as habits and beliefs' would be very undesirable" (Paxman, 1998, p. 71).

Jeremy Paxman holds that the notion of the ideal Englishman and -woman is of a mythical creation, he therefore merely strengthens the distrust of the concept of Englishness ironically: "Oh, the Breed, how we miss them. Fearless and philistine, they were the embodiment of the ruling class ... What the Breed represented was a certain ideal" (Paxman, 1998, p. 177) of the self-propelled best race of all species. The ideal Englishmen; "were all driven men, with great ambitions, for themselves and for the Empire self-control extended much beyond the mortification of the flesh" (Paxman, 1998, p. 181).

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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Indeed, what Barnes endeavors to deliver with the retrieval of the long-ago historical fact alongside these prominent figures of quite an assertive social status is to warn his readers of the unequal, segregationist treatment of the white English towards the non-white English citizen however their contributory role within the working process of the English social and economic apparatus. "At the time of *Arthur and George*, Englishness seemed much more about being inclusive or seeming to be inclusive" (Guignery & Roberts, 2009, p. 142), Barnes explains/contends in an interview, to be English was an a priori to the conformism of the country's culture and religion.

Not only that, Barnes smoothly or quite direly diverges his readers into making a link to our times' injustice towards the 'Other'. The racial prejudice is still living up to our supposedly postmodern open-mindedness. The notion of homogeneity is emulated by Barnes, since he does think that:

Governments nowadays are being less powerful in following suit of the other European nations which they abide by the transnational market ... [they] are more willing to do what transnational companies want them to do. They are setting the agenda, and the ideal agenda for them is a vast community of consumers, all of whom want the same thing. So that is clearly, it seems to me, the enemy of individuality amongst nations. (Guignery & Roberts, 2009, p. 143)

Barnes uses a scrutinized form of literary techniques that permit him to divulge very distinct ideological perspectives, the roots of which hark back to the previous-centuries British historical as well as social and economic status. One could easily deduce

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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from the bulk of his work that he fitted the spectrum of the literary fictional frame although he is a writer of multidisciplinary contextualized themes.

Barnes concerns himself with the visualized/witnessed inhumanity or the slight-hearted selves of the postmodern societies; a sort of a constant issue which claims itself quite vividly in the historical detective telling of *Arthur & George*. Another criterion among the coming ones is Barnes's use of the stream of consciousness (or the interior monologue), as well as the author playing both the character in himself (Barnes' fictionalization of George's personal way of responding), and the outside viewer (or the 'psychoanalyst') at the same time, simply to help place himself within his characters for a detailed and uncovered detective truth telling. The author, here, tells the uttered reality, putting himself in the 'skin' of the 'judge' or the interlocutor (the social/second part view) but also the third part representing the counterpart; the interpreter (the viewer).

The hard structural elaboration of this fictional narrative, Barnes owes much to the documentation and research he did only, as Berberish states it; "an attempt to re-create an authentic Edwardian 'feel' to the world of his two protagonists" (Groes & Childs, 2011, p. 153). Barnes asserts this in the following lines:

I wanted them to be real people so I had to get inside their heads to start off with. I suppose my way of getting into that period and evoking that period for readers today is to do it through the way the characters think and the way that they talk and through the language of the prose rather than amassing a great amount of historical detail. There are occasional references to clothes and furniture, but not really very many. That seems to me a very ponderous way to write a historical novel.

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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You can do a lot more using just words that give you the period.

(Guignery & Roberts, 2009, p. 135)

Arthur's obsessive identity issue, and probably more like existential decency lays in the civility that one maintains throughout the control they make upon their behaviour. Arthur's secret affair with Jean Leckie, that was once hidden, came to play a big role in his personal and satisfactory emotional fullness, to the point where he had the duty to apprise his family. The latter is first of all his life tenet; his mother and sisters and even his mother-in-law; Mrs. Hawkins about her. Yet Arthur's humanity and self-consciousness about his fragile wife leads him to face a psychological conflict and a sense of being in the following lines: "Arthur gives assurance to everyone that Touie 'will be shielded at all cost from knowledge, pain, and dishonor. That is my first principle. It will remain so'" (Barnes, 2005, p. 246). Barnes puts a stress upon Arthur's hindering his wife from knowing about him betraying her with another woman. As he once loved her, or he thought he loved her just as much as he loved himself.

The control which displays masks of identities is construed to the individual will and determination to be ascribed to a humane existence, humane not only to his self, but also to his other surrounding beloved ones. The "sense of duty", according to Barnes, is of crucial importance to fulfill a decent and an accomplished-like abstract self-identity and reality. This lies within the scope of selfishness, since he is being dutiful, loveable, and framed faithful to his wife only to make him content with his image and self-conception. Otherwise explained, it is his consciousness, humane values, and social status which prevents from bluntly exposing his hidden free self as it is. Goodness as opposed to evil are

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and Arthur & George (2005)

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the striking points of monitoring one's psyche which displays itself in the behaviour of an individual.

What Arthur does here, through Barnes' symbolic verbosity, tone, and exposition, is try to make a compromise or a reconciliation of both of the opposite forces fabricating an interloping (combining) fusion of two inevitable elements which form the existential reality and urges of Man, the hidden conflictual crisis in the deep-down-self of a human being.

Arthur's interminable love to his mother, unconditional certainty, is quite unsurprising in the history of a human being, but how he refers to her as the basic pillar of his vital 'iron-sided triangle' (Barnes, 2005, p. 267) is due to, as Lawrence puts it:

... there is established between me and her a direct, powerful circuit of vital magnetism, call it what you will, but a direct flow of dynamic *vital* interchange and intercourse. I will not call this vital flow a *force*, because it depends on the incomprehensible initiative and control of the individual soul or self. Force is that which is directed only from some universal will or law. Life is *always* individual, and therefore never controlled by one law, on God. (Lawrence, 1971, p. 131)

Lawrence, does indeed, give a straightforward explanation of this innate love which starts with the connection with a mother as being vital for at least a psychological stable living continuity. It is not explained; beyond the incomprehensible, neither is it a force driven by the politics of the whole natural world upon an individual. It is individualistic

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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and should stem from the 'soul-pulse' and is rather accountable of his mother's guidance in clearing his path in existence.

His constant questionings upon matters of religiosity, and abstract spiritual 'spiritism' as he would prefer to term it, is consulted by his pious mother, and would consider these moral uncertainties and doubts as blasphemies:

Arthur confides everything to the Mam: his deepest fears, his greatest elations, and all the intermediate tribulations and joys of the material world. What he never allude to is his deepening interest in spiritualism, or spiritism as he prefers it. The Mam, having left Catholic Church of Edinburgh behind, behind, has become by a sheer process of attendance, a member of the Church of England. Three of her children have now been married at St Oswald's: Arthur himself, Ida and Dodo. She is instinctively opposed to the psychic world, which for her represents anarchy and mumbo-jumbo. She holds that people can only come to any understanding of their lives if society makes clear its truths to them; further, that its religious truths must be expressed through an established institution, be it catholic or Anglican. And then there is the family to consider. Arthur is a knight of the realm, he has lunched and dined with the king; he is a public figure – she repeats back to him his boast that he is second only to Kipling in his influence on the healthy, sporting young men of the country. What if it came out that he was involved in séances and suchlike? (Barnes, 2005, p. 266)

His mother plays a tolerant role with regards to her son's spiritism despite her

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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convictions, she contends that; “perhaps proof is impossible anyway. Perhaps the best we can manage is thinking and believing. Perhaps we only truly know in the hereafter.” (Barnes, 2005, p. 264)

Arthur's questionings about religion hark back to his childhood where he debated the principles in the school yard with his schoolmates. This alludes to the uncertainty of Arthur's sceptical position concerning the acknowledgment of the surrounding beliefs with rational and reasonable logic. Arthur's treatment of these principles is construed within the concept of agnosticism. For him, the factitiousness that these religious rules with the existence of the creator, God, is so present that he could not reject them, but merely needed a tangible reason and explanation to them.

This great concern of Arthur's in the world of spiritism, or precisely the existence of God - a fair God - to his created individual within a fair society, happens to be triggered substantially right from the “consuming evil” for the disease which attacked his wife *Touie* into a ‘state of delirium’ and thereafter to her extinction, death. He found himself helpless vis-à-vis that power above the ‘force’ upholding the will of his life and his surroundings.

This superpower which claims to be a fair and humanistic existence went even beyond belief when his life crossed the one of *George Edalji* who was inhumanely treated by the world power, or God-like presence, the government; the Home Secretary and the Home Office. Justice as it is put: “The vicar described his son's treatment, by both the police and the Home Office, as *most shocking and heartless*. As for the conduct and conclusions of the Home Secretary and its committee: *This may be diplomacy, statecraft, but it is not what they would have done if he had been a son of an English squire or an English nobleman*” (Barnes, 2005, pp. 436-437).

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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In fact, Barnes expresses - as the predominant themes shaping the novel - the problematic of the notion of *Englishness* and what it entails; from themes of memory and identity, both personal and national (Barnes, 2005, p. 156). He seems to be involved in a debate with a new interest or rather a new issue that portrays the present day social ambiance. Hence, the novel echoes the contemporary present day national consciousness (and thereafter, supranational by extrapolation) of issues of low crime and high spirituality. The latter supposedly fit the ideal Englishman's sense of honour and sense of duty which appeals itself in *Arthur's* commitment to his wife, yet having a secret sexual intercourse with *Miss Jean Leckie*.

Opposing his spiritual beliefs, as an agnostic, he ignores all traditional Christian tenets and values. Yet, he displays some form of guilt toward his wife whom he believes is innocent. He was cheating on her with his paramour; *Jean* for some ten long years while his wife, *Touie*, was being consumed.

Similarly, on the ground of self-blame and guilt, *George* also feels guilty when facing the police conviction, identity and nationality as well as race, and the big theme constantly recurring in Barnes's novels and narratives at broad (detective stories under pseudonyms and short stories), the problematic of wanting to know the authentic truth; questioning and doubting notions of what we think, what we know, and what we believe, these epistemological concerns have always constituted the core concerns of the his narratives. Matthew Pateman asserts this position in that: "Barnes's novels are all searching for ways of knowing the world, each other; they all have characters who are striving for ways of finding meaning in an increasingly depoliticized, secularized, localized, and depth-less world" (Pateman, 2002, p. 2).



## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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Throughout this narrative of an Edwardian feel, Barnes makes the reader - either thematically or contextually - encounter a problematic of racial prejudice and “national identity that resonates with the contemporary assumptions about belonging and naturalization” (Groes & Childs, 2011, p. 158). This is striking in the way Barnes constructs these prominent characters in a somehow self-ascribed idealized identity, if we take the following example:

Irish by ancestry, Scottish by Birth, instructed in the faith of Rome by the Dutch Jesuits, Arthur became English. English history inspired him; English freedom made him proud; English cricket made him patriotic. And the greatest epoch in English history - with many to choose from - was the fourteenth century: a time when the English archer commanded the field, and when both the French and the Scottish kings were held prisoner in London ... For Arthur the roots of Englishness lay in the long-gone, long-remembered, long-invented world of chivalry. There was no knight more faithful than Sir Kaye, none so brave and amorous as Sir Lancelot, none so virtuous as Sir Galahad ... and of course there was no braver or more noble king than Arthur? (Barnes, 2005, p. 31)

*Arthur*, here, expresses his Scottish and Irish origins, but he considers himself a true Englishman since he conforms to the rules and boundaries and does personify the criteria of what being English entails. We now know what Barnes alludes to as to what Englishness really means historically. In other words, the author demystifies it by unmasking the myth of Englishness as being more of a socio-cultural construct rather than

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and Arthur & George (2005)

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ethnic. Englishness, as a notion, appears to have been constructed and is attainable by a given set of perspective virtues. The tone of the story-telling however confers a sort of coming mistrust and disillusionment at the end of the story.

*Arthur* is English at heart, and the sort of exaggerated idealization of “English Freedom” always refers to a disappointing and a counterclaim effect - as the story unfolds - of the earlier beliefs. Among other aspects of *Arthur*'s disillusionment of the fervently averred Englishness in its whole is the contribution of his involvement in the investigation of the miscarriage of Edalji which made him aware of the English; the reality of the worldly-acclaimed portrayal of freedom and righteousness, the beholders of rationality, emancipation, and a strong sense of duty.

Yet, this conscious identity realization “clearly and irrevocably weakened his belief in the English Justice system” (Groes & Childs, 2011, p. 157) *George*'s pride in his Englishness, on the other hand, is instilled by the repetitive instructions of his Parsee father throughout his childhood's early learning:

George, where do you live?

The Vicarage, Great Wyrley.

And where is that?

Staffordshire, father, is the beating heart of the Empire, father.

And where is that?

The centre of England.

And what is England, George?

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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England is the beating heart of the Empire, father.

Good, and what is the blood that flows through the arteries and veins of the Empire to reach even its farthest shore?

The Church of England.

Good, George. (Barnes, 2005, p. 23)

Here, *George* was propelled into a typical indoctrination into Englishness, as is mentioned to be a mythical notion of a secure English identity by the use of “mantra” which is tangentially reminiscent of the character of *England, England* (1998), wherein *Martha Cochrane* culturally-indoctrinates the children of the class through chanting the landmarks of the history of Great Britain;

55BC (clap clap) Roman Invasion

1066 (clap clap) Battle of Hastings

1215 (clap clap) Magna Carta

1512 (clap clap) Henry the Eight (clap clap)

Defender of Faith (clap clap) ...

1940 (clap clap) Battle of Britain

1973 (clap clap) Treaty of Rome. (Barnes, 1998, p. 11)

Accordingly, Barnes “clearly points out nationality’s artificiality, it’s often ascribed to be a laborious acquisition and its early imprint on impressionable children” (Groes & Childs, 2011, p. 157).

In the same respects, Barnes contends that this national identity acquisition is

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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immersed within both of *Arthur* and *George* unconsciously, despite their unrelated bloodlines to the English 'Breed'. Barnes implicitly drives the reader to be aware of a sense of the "memory of a lost England" (Groes & Childs, 2011, p. 11).

*George*'s witty visualization and ulterior thoughts/minds indirectly render blatant, wondering at a map of England staring at the Empire's 'bloodiness', giving him "the pulse of blood in his ears" (Barnes, 2005, pp. 23-24). This pulse alludes to a confused state of mind, what England is, her greatness, lies in the English self-ascribed superiority, and the exaggerated national celebration of England's historical victories, the latter, being radiated from "a certain element of myth-making ... but their durability tell us something about the way the British see themselves. The common thread is sacrifice in an against-the-odds adventure ... The impression if always of a small, nobly embattled people" (Paxman, 1998, p. 88)

The Edwardian era is characterized by the conflictual social as well as the psychological state of individuals, being torn between preaching the dominant absolutism of religion, or the evolutionist rational absolutism of logicism, leading to a sceptic attitude toward religion. The predominance of science induced the debasement of the spiritual/religious importance in shaping the individuals' minds and lives.

... in order to express Edwardian anxieties that change, in particular, the mythical notion of a secure English identity as yet unscathed by two world wars ... Whereas many twentieth-century novels depict the Edwardian era as some kind of Indian summer of English supremacy and unchallenged greatness, Barnes depicts, in particular, Edwardian Englishness as an unstable concept, one that is not

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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necessarily, as common myth would have it, innate and inimitable, but on the contrary, on that is laboriously studied and painstakingly applied - a façade, rather than a nation's pride. (Groes & Childs, 2011, p. 156)

For Barnes, when it comes to national identity, he shares the same position with J. Paxman on the myth-making of English identity. He happens to be unable to give a clear succinct definition of what makes an Englishman. He contends, in an interview, that it is a process through which:

We create something from fragments and bits of memory, national memory, and we stick it together with a very rough glue and then once it's been there for a certain time, like a year, we think this is real, this is authentic, and then we celebrate it. Its fabrication all over again – convincing ourselves of coherence between things that are largely true and things that are wholly imagined. (Guignery & Roberts, 2009, p. 63)

However what makes of this urge; the implementation of “the idea of England” and the definition of Englishness regarded as a reductive sense of a nation; “the thinning down of the national culture of each country’ is indeed the price we’re paying for a “much greater homogenization and internationalization” (Guignery & Roberts, 2009, p. 142) of the world.

Hence, Englishness, for Barnes, is only a *mythical* exertion and created notion upon the unchallenged greatness of the English historical supremacy, and a greatness being emulated and voiced in numerous narratives of 20<sup>th</sup>-century literature. An example is the

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and Arthur & George (2005)

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English consideration of *otherness* as being of a lesser civilizational and even physical stratum and nature. In an interview, Barnes was asked to define the essence of the nature of being English, his response was that:

One of the things about the British, the English particularly, is that they're not very good about what it means to be English ... [but typically generally an Englishman of woman] You think that you are the norm and that everyone else is a variant form of what it is the norm. The Welsh and the Irish and Scots have always had the English to define themselves against, whereas the English don't really know who to define themselves against. (Guignery & Childs, 2009, p. 142)

Englishness - which the reader perceives while reading the novel - is the Englishness of Barnes, through his wordy description of the characters and ironically enough, very elaborate and reminiscent of an English, typical *blue blood's* self-ascribed superior genes. It is here where the old Edwardian displayed superiority of the English toward the 'Other' is brought to a blatant similitude with the 21<sup>st</sup>-century, postmodern Englishman. This suggests the long-forged inevitability of the self-applied superiority of the Englishness over *otherness*. The former, as being ascribed to *the* civilization throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, seems to entangle a sceptical view regarding its authenticity in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century/ early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

An example of a critical study by Jeremy Paxman; *The English: A Portrait of a People* (1998), in which he notes the viewpoint of a visitor - around the late 1400's and early 1500's - that; "the English are great lovers of themselves" and an Englishman takes it a pity that nice-looking foreigners were not English, implying they were lesser human

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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beings (Paxman, 1998, p. 35). Another illustration of Paxman quoting the visitors, here, the Dutch merchant; Emmanuel van Meteren's position on the English; "the people are bold, courageous, ardent and cruel in war, but very inconstant, rash, vainglorious, light and deceiving, and very suspicious, especially of foreigners, whom they despise" (Paxman, 1998, p. 35).

Other contributory influences and aspects in the setting apart of the English as a unique race alongside their self-appointed superiority are majorly due to the isolation of their geographical setting; "they were born on an island rather than living on a continental landmass" (Paxman, 1998, p. viii), and that, "geography matters, it makes people who they are" (Paxman, 1998, p. 3). Another aspect which is a major incident in the history of Great Britain is that the English "came from a country where protestant reformation has put the Church firmly in its place. They [therefore] inherited a deep belief in individual liberty." (Paxman, 1998, p. 3)

At a same historical accordance, the powerful armada of Elizabeth I, the first in the world which defeated the most powerful nation, Spain, at the time, such an occurrence has earned the English a sense of pride and strength, alongside other victories during the Second World War which asserted the English sense of duty toward their land. Whether these victories are being reported in a delusional exaggeration or not, England has perished in a sense of pride and honour, which are their most possessed prizes.

Nevertheless, the most important factor for the English superior contentment owes to the role of the Protestant Church of Henry VIII's demand for reformation, putting Protestantism ahead of Catholicism. "In a sense, England is hardly a Protestant country at all. As every schoolboy knows, its national church was invented so that Henry VIII could

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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get a divorce” (Paxman, 1998, p. 98).

The English also owe their strong pride of their national identity much to the invention of Anglicanism since; “the invention of the Church of England *was* the invention of England” (Paxman, 1998, p. 97), even though the English “were not in any meaningful sense religious, the Church of England being a political invention which had elevated being ‘a good chap’ to something akin to canonization” (Paxman, 1998, p. 6).

They had what they call a self-created doctrine conceived under the omission of the tyranny of the Roman Catholic Church, with a book replacing the Bible which was the most valuable referential book in the land after the Bible; that of John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* (1563), the aim of which was to strengthen the English confidence in alleviating their reluctance over the withering away of Catholicism. It describes how the Protestants were persecuted and executed during Queen Mary’s attempt to turn England back to Rome. The book has, indeed, considerably, contributed in rendering England anti-clerical, and that’s how the English like their Church to be.

Barnes’s abounding tangible illustration of the Edwardian era permits him to give an overall idea about the exact feel and tone for its creation. The social, human, ideological, and religious ambiance of the whole era is what Barnes tends to superpose over the detailed aspects of it. This helps his reader have a view over the broad characteristics of the period covering the social and ideological mood which shaped not only the period at the historical level, but also the attributes that propelled and constrained the protagonists throughout their lives.

The importance of the conflicts and the dilemmas as experienced through *Arthur’s*



## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005)

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doubts of any religious essence, casts some scepticism upon the authenticity of what constitutes a human being in terms of both existential and national identity related to the long forged Englishness. The idealization of the latter throughout centuries, encompassing honour, sense of duty as displayed in *Arthur's* behaviour and character; striking and conflictual criteria representing the Edwardian mood. This demeans the properties of Edwardian England, in the sense where within that period, whereby a realistic stance came to strike the English, as they happen to have lost the constructedness of what makes their 'greatness' on the civilizational spectrum.

Barnes also puts forward Doyle's chivalric mannerism toward women, despite his contradicting sexual oppressive expressionism. The latter is reflected in an interview again, with Stuart Jeffries (2005), which Barnes assumingly relates this English typicality vis-à-vis sex to; "a tradition of English emotional reticence which can easily fall away into inexpensive oppressiveness and frigidity" (Guignery and Roberts, 2009, p. 132).

An attitude presumed proper to the English as known throughout the centuries, their representation in books, movies, even though Barnes seems to mourn that period, alluding to a sort of 'there used to be an England so idiosyncratically distinguished, unique and different, with its characteristics so proper to 'her', it's no more that England nowadays, it's been commercialized and 'universalized' (Guignery and Roberts, 2009, p. 143).

### **4. 5. Conclusion**

Revealing as it were the inner functioning of this period, yet a general scene of the typical Edwardian society is stressed upon, Barnes not only posters the ideal Englishness

## Chapter Four: Englishness and Existentialism in Barnes's *England, England* (1998) and Arthur & George (2005)

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but he also gives a historical transition of what and how old England was and how it has been, and is becoming. Barnes even alludes to the imperceptible and inevitable existence of these conflictual matters, the psychological and social in particular, to have a long-rooted essence which implicitly clamor the visibility of these traits as being attributes of the English societal “uniqueness”.

Assumingly, Englishness happens to be of a ‘mythical’ constructedness, reinforced by the historical background of England. Secondly, the theme of identity as - fictionally speaking of the novel - has an actual post-war social dimension, rather crisis, alluding to the mass immigration alongside the psychological, existential (substantial), and social conflictual issues of belonging of the citizens of foreign descent, and therefore to what extent could naturalization’s role be decisive of one’s cultural and national categorization.

Hence, Englishness, for Barnes, is only a ‘mythical’ exertion and notion upon the unchallenged greatness of the *English Supremacy* on the historical ground, and a greatness being emulated and voiced in numerous narratives of twentieth-century English fiction. An example is the English consideration of otherness as being of a lesser civilizational background.

# General Conclusion

As a concluding phase, Julian Barnes and his literary textual contexts in general are all impregnated within the existentialist rationale. His work is categorized within the postmodern literary tendency, he is a postmodern fictional author both thematically and stylistically; adopting the postmodern literary techniques, or, rather, technicalities; such as, to name some of them; metafiction, pastiche, intertextuality, and parody. As a self-categorized writer, with his own writerly style; the Barnesian, a master prose stylist illustrated by the use of polyphony, metaphor, irony, all of these features are idiosyncratic traits of Barnes's fictional creativity. He is known by his common, regular and well-worn themes. The problem of truth comes to be as a hallmark of the author's texts; history; and its nature, is also pontificated upon in Barnes's writings with an ironic tone demonstrating its fabulation and inauthenticity. Love, ageing, religion/God, and death are also undeniable matters of his constant concerns which are not only blatantly retrieved in most of his fictional and non-fictional narratives but they also form the impetus of their core.

The selected works here - *England, England* (1998), *The Lemon Table* (2004), and *Arthur & George* (2005) along with the non-fictional work; *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) - delve on the question of the extent of the authenticity of knowledge, history, and anything that belongs to the past besides the inevitable and the most striking theme; that of searching for a meaningfulness to existence/*Being*. Hence, the treated and retrieved matters of old age, mortality, religion, and God are undeniably of Barnes's constant concerns which are incessantly reflected in his narratives, be they fictional or non-fictional; and the characters of which are suffused with details of wonderings upon the working of the universe and its authenticity, facing an endless anxiety in the face of the disconsolations of mortality and the human's impossibility to know more upon the transcendental, religion's truth, the existence of God as well as the issue of human's mortality and the human existential consolation with such a finality.

The thematic as well as the metaphorical implications of these selected works here also infer a reflection of what the advents of modernity have brought about; and that is, what I term; *entangled humanism* which could easily be related to Barnes's existential concerns; presented in a dual position, the first one; as a separate crisis on its own, and on the other; he presents these anxieties that Man faces as a consequence to what modernity resulted in, i.e., the process of mechanization that inflicted the dehumanization of Man.

When it comes to postmodernism and postmodern fiction; the postmodern spirit/zeitgeist is concerned with the retrievability of religion's and history's plausibility by referring to past historical accounts as being re-narrated; shaped within fictional forms, this aspect of historical representation through literary narratives aims at disclosing the reliability of their truth, and the knowability of the truth is what shapes Barnes and the postmodern concern in general.

The retrieval of the past historical *reported* narratives, through which Barnes aims at not only retrieving the supposedly reliable and true accounts, but also as a means for *reconstituting* it, and that by opening a vast multiple interpretative perspectives, for him, as I did try - all along this research work - to demonstrate that truth is biased and it therefore is relative to one's logical/synthetic as well as skeptical and dimensional measures.

The latter as the basis for defining what is true and what is not. Hence, by measuring the relative perspectives of past accounts, Barnes tends to give ways, through his narratives, to his readers to discuss the matter of truth's/religion's credibility, whether it is a truthful version of life's meaningfulness or simply a created institution by Man for the sake of social order.

Barnes evaluation of reported knowledge/truth lies within the historical as well as - if not mostly - religious grounds. For him, religion is the first historical account of human's

history, he regards it as fiction just as he regards - through Arthur in *Arthur & George* (2005) - the priest as the story-teller he no longer believed in. The Edwardian era is known or characterized by the conflictual social as well as psychological state of the advent of the Victorian age inflicted upon the English, being torn between preaching the dominant absolutism of religion, or, the evolutionist/empirical rationalism of the industrialized modern period; such incongruent grounds and yet chronologically simultaneous led to the sceptic attitude towards objective absolutism, be it the religion of scientific absolutism - since the advents of the latter built its impetus in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Age of Reason and Age of Enlightenment respectively and the predominance of which harks back to the early twentieth century - such an empirical belief in *the tangible* induced the debasement of the spiritual and religion's importance in shaping the individual's mind.

Yet, Barnes's very idiosyncratic attitude to the past; history, resides, or rather, is concerned with the authenticity and its level of faithfulness to its reported facticity since we know of *history* through *reportedness*. The latter implies the role of language playfulness to *transmit* and *transmute* such and such for more credibility and trustworthiness and therefore a profound, accurate visualization and interpretation of *history* is given priority in the postmodern fictional and historiographic accounts. For Barnes, historical representation within a fictional genre proves to be more revealing of authentic truth than historiography itself. Barnes conceives fiction, in an interview held by Guignery and Roberts, as is the best way of telling the truth; it is a process of producing grand, beautiful, well-ordered lies that tell more truth than any assemblage of facts. Fiction, accordingly, tells new truths about - society or the way in which emotional lives are led and such truths could not be revealed through the different forms of historiography; certainly not from official records or government documents, journalism or television. Fiction, therefore, gives more of an openness of interpretation and understanding to history

than what historiography, on its own, does and could not disclose. Besides, history is the mere retelling or reportedness of the way things take place; it could be missing some facts, or omitting them for the sake of reporting a contained and well shaped account; with the formation of a linear evolution/progress of *stories* for a sense of completion. For Barnes, fiction; the novel in particular, has “no substitute ... that can handle psychological complexity and inwardness and reflection in the way the novel can” (Guignery & Roberts, 2009, pp. 64-65). And indeed, it we take the example of Schopenhauer who learnt more psychology from reading Dostoevsky’s fiction than from all the books he had read on the subject of psychology itself. A personal example which I provide, with my humble position, is that I learnt about the inevitable human’s conundrums, sensitivity, anxieties and the psychological turmoil through reading Byron, Woolf, Lawrence, Conrad, Schlink, and Barnes eventually; the latter whom I consider the most impregnated with the best way of telling truths about the human existential *realities* in the most sophisticated linguistic expression.

Nevertheless, Barnes’s textual representation fits within the historiographic metafictional genre of narration which is postmodernist per say, bringing the reconsideration of the difference between historical and literary narratives since both of the historiographic and fictional forms are discourses that came to be merged mostly by postmodern fictional writers. Accordingly, Julian Barnes’s works profuse a historical figure or setting into fitting the fictional discourse, interrelating the realistic discourse to the fictional; i.e., the imagined, his works profuse, according to Acheson & Ross (2005), ‘a fascination with troubled histories’, a tendency also shared by his contemporary fellow; Graham Swift and Bernhard Schlink. Barnes’s *Flaubert’s Parrot* (1984), which reawakens the French author Gustave Flaubert, Sibelius also reawakened in *The Lemon Table* (2004), Arthur Conan Doyle in *Arthur & George* (2005), Henry VIII in *The Sense of an Ending*

(2011), and the latest fictionalized life account of the Russian music composer, Shostakovich in *The Noise of Time* (2015), all of these are examples of Barnes's fictional representation of past history.

Barnes names his literary style, a style which unites/converges completely different discourses as fabulation, the features of which serve the human mind that cannot exist without the illusion of a full story, so it fabulates and it convinces itself that the fabulation is as true and concrete as what it *really* knows; and yet the *fitting* and accommodation of factual history into literary representation as being a postmodern fictional criterion, among others, is irrelevant for Barnes. He is a postmodern fictional producer because he produces fiction; and the basis of which is conceived from past/historical characterization shaped/constructed with the building of a fictional edifice around it for more *truths*.

Again, to clarify Barnes's textual representation viewed as being 'fascinated with troubled history' happens in the way his texts represent not only the influence of literary theory on historical representation but also of historical theory on literature. The postmodern condition vis-à-vis the role of history in searching meaning for the functioning of the actual world seems debatable and uncertain. Theorists - such as Fukuyama in his *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) - views today's interest in the viability of historical records as characteristic of the *end of history*. Accordingly, history's significance has changed since the questioning of the legitimacy of truth-telling; of historiography, happens to be doubted upon and viewed with skepticism. Historical records therefore turned into being reported upon within fictional literary representation. History turned to a form of *histories* simply for fictional narratives happen to be *heteroglossic*, in the sense that fiction in itself, according to the Russian linguist, Mikhael Bakhtin in his *Discourse in the Novel* (1973), is inclusive of different types of speeches, voices of protagonists,



narrators, and also the author himself which culminates in the multiple opinionated voices, here both of the historical *facticity* and its *interpretations*.

*Arthur & George* (2005), as Barnes's most concerned novel with the problem of historiography, is first and foremost Barnes's recreation of a historical figure; Arthur Conan Doyle, in the literary, scientific, and most importantly the detective spectrums with his world-acclaimed detective narrative of his own creation; *Sherlock Holmes*. Julian Barnes brings forth the historical incident of a hundred years ago, reconstructs a long-forgotten yet unquestionably controversial truth of the Edalji's case of the mysterious outrages of Great Wyrley. Reawakening the historical incident in the history of England which contributed in the establishment of the Court of Criminal Appeal in 1907, highlighting the racist prejudices of late Victorian, beginning of Edwardian setting. Barnes implicitly denounces the Victorian perished age both empirically and ideologically and yet abounding with racial prejudices. Through his analytical assessment and visualization of the segregationist treatment of the Victorian English; and the English in general, towards the 'Other' - here George of Parsee descent - he implicitly attacks the Victorian principles, standards and the so called great period which witnessed the consistent ideological and economic enthusiasm of the Age of Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution respectively.

Barnes's reawakening process of an era which harks back to a century ago, emphasizing the creator of *Sherlock Holmes's* textual contribution for the exoneration George - alludes to the assumption that what Barnes does is not much for the recreation of the historical incident, but rather for the celebration and appeal for the readmission of the long-forgotten detective novel as if he's the literary proponent and portrayal of Arthur Conan Doyle. This postmodern, rather post-war, literary tendency, historical representation within literary narratives, sets Barnes's uniqueness through the revival of the detective and

historical narrative. Barnes also seeks answers to his query of the past by reconstituting it, making it experienced anew for a possibility to penetrate it again, to reevaluate it for some meaningfulness with regard to the present historical manacles of interpretations. Natasha Walter (2009) claims that there are loose ends, uncertainties and unproven accusations, which allow us to reflect on the difference between the knowability of detective fiction and the unknowability of real life, which Barnes intelligently draws out for our edification, truth is thereafter biased par excellence.

The convergence of postmodern historiographic theory with postmodern literary narrative permits Julian Barnes to give his fiction; here *England, England* (1998), *The Lemon Table* (2004), and *Arthur & George* (2005), a multiplicity of views, in that the concern is put upon the constructedness of history as a discourse or text; for a sceptical position, paving the way, thereafter, for multiple perspectives of historical subjects and relevance. This matter is illustrated in, as an example, *Arthur & George* (2005), when Arthur Conan Doyle takes in his novelistic investigative creativity of his detective narratives to clear George's guilt. This is even mentioned by George himself, a solicitor himself in his criticism of Arthur's investigative skills for being unrealistically fictitious; based upon fictional creativity, yet convincing investigative artistic/fictional material based upon the constructedness and structure of the investigation of *Sherlock Holmes's* detective fiction. The latter's structure - that puts forward a detective investigation aims at reconsidering claims and pre-supposed allegations - be they of guilt or innocence.

Barnes's clarification/argumentation upon the authenticity of claims and preconceived truths is stressed upon when he works out, or rather, starts conceiving a justified process on route for its construction to prove the legitimacy of George's innocence. This faithful truth based upon the linearity and coherence of fictional claims, is perceived as a *fallacy* in its authenticity and yet the most revealing of authentic *truths*.

To the theme of Englishness which is best portrayed through the skin of George Edalji, the second protagonist of *Arthur & George* (2005) along with the creation of an England - a simulation - at the Isle of Wight in *England, England* (1998). The first pages of *Arthur & George* (2005) echo some reality-based witnessed experience of Arthur Conan Doyle stumbling in “a white waxen thing” (Barnes, 2005, p. 3) which was his grandmother’s corpse, for a desire “to impress upon the child the horror of death; or, more optimistically, to show him that death was nothing to be feared” (p. 3) and at a parallel ground, George Edalji’s childhood is retrieved with another form of luring him to a social and existential horror where he encounters racist reflections from his schoolmates that he is “not the right sort” (p. 37). Back to drawing a parallel line between the novel which retrieves a historical occurrence of a hundred years ago, and which itself echoes nowadays *social estrangement*.

And indeed, both of *England, England* (1998) and *Arthur & George* (2005) are dense with themes differently exposed upon the mistreatment of the non-English by the English as Barnes puts it in an interview (2009) - racist facts which took place in the past and are still present, that is to say, the novel didn’t need drawing a parallel or mentioning that it alludes to today’s reality. Matters of identity and what constitutes and differentiates a given nation apart from the other are also explored in the novel.

In fact, identity for Barnes is being demystified here since it is fabricated by the ideology of a given state of nation. For him, national identity is an ideological construct like traditions ... etc; it is made for the people so that they do believe in it and thereby, help them cement the social and political order. Hence, these *indoctrinated* individuals think it; national identity, real, authentic, and they therefore celebrate it. From here, one could conclude that Barnes holds the idea of identity that it is created by its own nation. Put differently, he assumes that the identity of a nation is constructed under *mythical*

grounds which belong and hark back to the received, *narrated* past, and the notion of identity is decidedly mere *fabulation* and self-proclaimed celebration.

On the theme of existentialism and the matter of death, Barnes's eschatology comprises two deaths/extinctions, the death of old age, and the death of youth; Barnes uses Montaigne's stance that the death of youth, which often takes place unnoticed, is the hardest death. The non-fictional narrative; *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008), is overloaded with polyphonic statements and yet, of contradicting and dual positions, hence the impossibility to take a single-sided conclusion, or even a deduction. Besides, what unilateral position to hold upon matters of religion, God, death, individuality, life's meaningfulness ... etc, while the human being is constrained within the manacles of existential finitude? For Barnes, real life is the youth life, once old age strikes one; they begin to conceive their own termination, i.e., their departure into *Nothingness*. And this terminal pessimistic view is due to physical dependency followed by bitter anxiety, agony, deterioration ... and indeed, the loss of enthusiasm for life takes place when lucidity gone, speech gone, memory gone, when death anxiety embraces the natural law of existential order.

On the matter of Agnosticism, Barnes's agnosticism is not only declared by himself in various interviews but it shadows most of his works, and *his* agnosticism is more of a sceptical and researching position of the essence of all institutions and even existential matters such as mundane questionings about the nature of love as well as the reason behind Man's need for a 'something' to cling upon; resorting to religion or other means of religious replacement such as, for his part; the consumption of Art, or more authentically to his verbalism; *the religion of art*, which he considers as a resort, used as a means which could denude his will of a belief in Art which he contends that it is a means to the transcendental on its own; a means for the belief in God. Barnes's *religion of art* implicitly

alludes to the replacement of the 'tyrant' man-made religious institutions, what he professes, instead, is the love of art, the consumption and production of art instead of religion. In his words, "God doesn't believe in our God" (p. 46), be Him the God of art or the God of the hyper-modern materialism and self-fulfillment.

Other themes such as; the problem of truth and history, are also displayed within the collection of *The Lemon Table* (2004), the characters of this collection are depicted as frustrated, confused, wondering upon the essence of this universe and experiencing a morbid anxiety due to the inescapable condition of mortality alongside the impossibility of believing in an afterlife.

At a parallel accordance, Julian Barnes exposes his very existential and sceptical views in this collection, in particular; *Vigilance* and *The Story of Mats Israelson* revealing his Camusian position upon the universe; cyclical, absurd, and meaningless. He also provides us, in *A Short History of Mate Israelson*, with one of the conditions of authentic life; demonstrated by *revolt*, which is suggested by Sartre, and non-conformity; *mineness*, that is suggested by Heidegger in his characterisation of authenticity. Barnes suggests a means to create a sense to one's life and to authenticate it hence his fictional production is upon his choice of constructing ageing characters with a certain ability to provide an evaluation of what *Being* is from a wise/experienced spectrum.

Barnes succeeds - in this collection - to protrude the absurdity of existence. He reveals its futility and irrationality/absurdity by the characters that happen to be isolated, experiencing lack of communication, alienated, depressed and mostly anxious upon death; which is "just around the corner" (2004, p. 211). The word *Lemon* could be argued to be a metaphor for a log, a register of different plots about different people in different contexts/settings (time and place) facing one fate that is death which happens to prove the

absurdity of the universe, sharing the same attitude of Albert Camus who condenses *Being* to a vicious cyclical circle, hence its absurdity.

On the matter of existentialism, Barnes's works are known to be highly irreligious, secular, liberal; ethical though and humanist. They rejoice on the matter of the *God Question* as well as the meaningfulness of the human's existence. Barnes seems to be reconciled with the possibility of the existence of God in his *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008), through which he exposes his regrets about the decline of orthodox spirituality due to the modern materialistic empirical tendency.

For him, Man came to drive religion for the democratic/overall good; religion is, thereafter, conceived as a created institution, politicized as a democratic consensus; bound and irrelevant to the modern age. Barnes closes his non-fictional memoir-ish account with the death of Ravel, cutting it with a silence, leaving it unanswered, such an open ending is actually a tendency very familiar to Barnes readers; witness here, in this research work, the case of *Arthur & George's* open ending narrative. Barnes, hereby, leaves his readers to almost conclude, that Man is living in infinite constraints in the face of his ability to know more of the transcendental. It is Man's prerogative, however incapable of disclosing the truth, to typify a constant urge for knowing the truth in its tangible essence, and yet, Julian Barnes, or, the Christian sceptic in general is to disguise his contentment with living in a state of doubts, or rather what Keats names as; *negative capability*.

It is this heritage of paradox that is particularly strong in Barnes' productions; challenging ideologies with the novel as a form of intellectual inquiry and not as a moral position, and *death*, can simply *not be negotiated*.

As a concluding note on the third and last theme of the thesis; the matter of Englishness, the self-ascribed superiority of the English resides within the history of the

Church of England as well as the history of the British Empire. Henry VIII who first contributed to the politicization of the Church by the parliament alteration which helped the English gain confidence over their individualism, i.e., the power of the Lords and the King led to the separation and alleviation of the Church's and religion's influence in afflicting the societal. This change ushered to the belief in the self as capable of ruling the world on its own rather than relying on religion for its success. Another explanation of the English ascription to superiority - to which Jeremy Paxman, an English journalist and social commentator, refers to - is the British Empire as related to the Church of England, which provided a mantra sort for the indisputability of a God-ordained duty to invade and colonize the *Other*.

Englishness, for Barnes - as he fits within this national identity perspective - is, nevertheless, a valued notion which comprises pride, as any other citizen is proud of his/her national identity. However, he does apprehend the draining away of it just as religion's importance did over the last centuries; and such consummation is due to governmental institutions being influenced by the trade market and globalization that they aim at internationalizing and transnationalising the world's societies into single modeled ones. Even though Barnes declares that Englishness is a *mythical* notion; built upon patriarchal constructedness, he still, implicitly, veneers and endorses the notion of Englishness.

And even though this assumption could be viewed as self-deluding or mythical, a delusion merely created for the relief of consciousness, Cecile Rhodes, a prime minister of Cape of Good Hope (now Cape Town), asserted in an Oxford Lecture in around 1870, that; "we are to be the best people in the world, with the highest ideals of decency, and justice, and liberty, and peace." The English, assumedly, held and still hold on the belief that other races are mere aspirant Englishmen and Englishwomen.

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This research work addresses the commandment of the postmodern condition in relatedness to English postmodern fiction taking Julian Barnes; a postmodern contemporary fiction writer, as one of its representatives. The perspectives that this thesis is based upon are matters of Existentialism, Agnosticism and Englishness; i.e., the sense of English identity, in such an entangled hyper-modern age; postmodernism. I rely on the selection of four works of Barnes's; *England, England* (1998), *The Lemon Table* (2004), *Arthur & George* (2005), and *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008), all of which form a pillar of this research for the ability to unite and justify the recurrent themes that the author relentlessly retrieves in relation to the postmodern concerns, mostly the loss of a sense of belief in God as well as of any form of spiritual/religious pertinance as a consequence of the advents of modernity which have ushered to what I term; *existential nausea*. These aspects, highly evoked in Barnes's works might lead to their categorization under the postmodern existential fiction. This work also endeavours to foster, on the one hand, Barnes's fiction as a reflection of the postmodern *zeitgeist* in general, and on the other, it mirrors the author's and the postmodern Man's anxieties vis-à-vis the post-Darwinian evolutionist age.

**Key words:** Postmodernism, Postmodern Fiction, Julian Barnes, Existentialism, Agnosticism, Englishness, Historiographic Metafiction,

Ce travail de recherche vise à commander la condition postmoderne dont l'historicité réside dans les avènements de la modernité en relation avec la littérature postmoderne, en plus particulier, le Roman contemporain, comme une réflexion de cette condition aussi *entangled*, en prenant Julian Barnes, un romancier Anglais contemporain qui, selon mon humble opinion, est un représentatif de l'Homme postmoderne ainsi que le romancier postmoderne, et dont les travaux sélectionnés ici; que cette thèse se base sur, devraient être catalogués dans la rubrique du roman postmoderne existentiel tout en évoquant l'autre problématique de l'identité ; l'Anglicisation dans cette recherche, que Barnes insiste sur. Les travaux comprennent trois romans; *England, England* (1998), *La Table Citron* (2004), *Arthur et George* (2005), et une narrative non littéraire; *Rien à Craindre* (2008), que Barnes nous la présente sous une forme de catharsis. Le choix de la corrélation de ces quatre travaux forme l'objet et le cœur de cette thèse afin de pouvoir justifier la condition existentielle du postmodernisme en la reliant, ainsi, dont la manière dont elle est reflétée dans le roman postmoderne, en particulier le roman Barnesien.

**Mots clés :** Postmodernisme, Roman Postmoderne, Julian Barnes, Existentialisme, Agnosticisme, Anglicisation, Metafiction Historiographique.

يعتمد هذا العمل البحثي على روايات جوليان بارنز (1946 - )، روائي إنجليزي معاصر، التي تعتبر تحت فلسفة الأدب المعاصر الحديث، إذ أن هذا المنهج الذي أعتمد عليه في هذا البحث يتمركز تحت ظل تيار الوجودية و اللأدرية. و يهدف هذا البحث أيضا إلى محاولة تصنيف أعمال جوليان بارنز تحت أدب الحديث المعاصر الوجودي، كونه معقد للدراسة من منظور فلسفي و إيديولوجي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الفكر ما بعد الحداثة ، الرواية في الأدب المعاصر ، الوجودية و اللأدرية في روايات جوليان بارنز.