



**T.C.
EGE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü**

**COEXISTENCE OF REALITIES AND TIME
IN JULIAN BARNES'S FICTION**

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

Mekan HUDAYBERENOV

İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı

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ETİK KURALLARA UYGUNLUK BEYANI

Ege Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Müdürlüğüne sunduğum “Coexistence of Realities and Time in Julian Barnes’s Fiction” adlı yüksek lisans tezinin tarafımdan bilimsel, ahlak ve normlara uygun bir şekilde hazırlandığını, tezimde yararlandığım kaynakları bibliyografyada ve dipnotlarda gösterdiğimi onurumla doğrularım.

Mekan Hudayberenov



ÖNSÖZ

Lisans ve yüksek lisans eğitimimde bana vizyon katan ve araştırmamdaki her aşamada bana destek olan değerli tez danışmanım Doç. Dr. Aylin ATİLLA MAT'a, edebiyat teorileri ve eleştiri kuramları dersleriyle edebiyat alanında farklı bakış açıları kazandıran Prof. Dr. Dilek DİRENÇ'e, dil ve edebiyat sevgisini aşılayan Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Mahinur Akşehir'e ve bütün eğitim hayatımda maddi ve manevi desteklerini esirgemeyen aileme içten teşekkürlerimi sunarım.

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ÖZET

İnsanlık tarihi boyunca zaman konusu hep akılları karıştıran bir unsur olmuştur. Eski zamanlardan bu yana, doğadaki değişimlere veya saat uygulamalarına göre zaman ölçümleri yapılarak bazı takvimler oluşturulmuştur. Bu uygulamalarla insan, ‘zamanın’ varlığını kanıtlamaya çalışmış ve zamanı üç bölüme ayırmıştır: Geçmiş, Şimdi ve Gelecek. Rönesans ve daha sonra 20. yüzyılla birlikte ‘zaman’ ve ‘gerçeklik’ kavramları daha da bulanıklaşarak, bilim, tarih, edebiyat gibi alanlarda farklı boyutlarda incelenip farklı şekillerde tanımlanmıştır.

Bu tezde, ilk olarak “zaman” hakkında genel tartışmalara odaklanarak, postmodern edebiyat külliyatındaki “zaman” ve “gerçeklik” kavramları arasındaki ilişki tanımlanmaya çalışılacaktır. Daha sonra, Julian Barnes’ın *Bir Son Duygusu*, *Arthur & George* ve *Zamanın Gürültüsü* adlı romanları, ünlü fizikçi, Albert Einstein’in “İzafiyyet Teorisi” ve Henri Bergson, Roland Barthes, Hayden White ve A. A. Mendilow gibi edebiyat ve felsefe kuramcıları ve eleştirmenlerin ileri sürdükleri, zaman, hafıza, tarih ve gerçeklikle ilgili fikirleri ışığında incelenecektir.

Bu çalışma, eserleriyle, zaman, gerçeklik, tarih ve başka pek çok kavramları sorgulayan, çağdaş İngiliz yazarlarından Julian Barnes’ın eserlerini bu sorunsal bağlamında incelemeye amaçlamaktadır. Barnes’ın *Bir Son Duygusu* romanı, Tony Webster adlı karakterinin parçalanmış anlarıyla bilinen ve bilinmeyen hikâyeleri bir araya getirerek, anlatıcının ‘zaman yolculuğunda’ bize kendisinin de var olduğu gerçek zamandaki hikâyesinin başka gerçeklikler sayesinde nasıl yeniden yapılandırıldığını anlatır. Julian Barnes’ın, *Arthur & George* romanı ise, ünlü İngiliz dedektif roman yazarı Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’ın (1859-1930) farklı yaşam hikâyelerini ve yazar olarak tecrübelerini, ‘gayri resmi tarih’ yazma amacıyla, tarih temsilleri olarak belgeleme ve ‘fabülasyon’ teknikleriyle incelemektedir. 2016 yılında yayınlanan *Zamanın Gürültüsü* romanında Barnes, ünlü Rus besteci Dimitri Şostakoviç’in (1906-1975) hayat hikâyesini anlatır. Barnes, yaşamını zor şartlarda sürdürmüş Şostakoviç’i bize anlaşılmayı

bekleyen ve zamanının tüm suçlamalarından aklanması gereken bir kiři olarak sunar.

Bu tezin amacı Barnes'in bu üç romanında, zaman ve gerçeklik kavramlarıyla ilgili fizik dünyasında yapılan çalışmaların kültürel, politik ve tarihsel filtrelerden geçerek edebiyata nasıl yansıdığını göstermekle birlikte, çağdaş İngiliz romanında zaman ve gerçeklik kavramlarını güncel bir perspektifle tartışmaktır.



ABSTRACT

The subject of time has always been the most complex and intricate entity throughout the human history. Since the ancient times, some calendars have been constructed by measuring time according to changes in nature or time-keeping practices. With these practices, people attempted to prove the existence of 'time' and reasonably, divided time into three parts: Past, Present, and Future. During the Renaissance and later on in the twentieth century, the concepts of 'time' and 'reality' became more blurred, and they were examined in different terms and defined in different ways in the fields of Science, History, and Literature.

This thesis tries to define the relationship between the concepts of "time" and "reality" in relation with the postmodern literature by focusing on general discussions about "time". Furthermore, Julian Barnes' novels, *The Sense of an Ending*, *Arthur & George* and *The Noise of Time*, are examined in the light of ideas and theories of the famous physicist, Albert Einstein, especially his "Theory of Relativity," and of literary and philosophical theorists and critics such as Henri Bergson, Roland Barthes, Hayden White, and A. A. Mendilow, about time, memory, history, reality, and their definitions and depictions.

This study aims to examine the works of Julian Barnes, who is one of the most prolific contemporary British writers, in terms of questions of time, reality, problems of history and historiography, and many other equally significant concepts. Barnes's thrilling novel, *The Sense of an Ending*, brings together known and unknown stories with the fragmented memories of his character named Tony Webster; telling us the narrator's 'time travel' into the past with respect to his life story, in which he also exists, and is another construct of completely different realities. Julian Barnes' novel *Arthur & George*, on the other hand, expounds the prominent British detective novelist, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's (1859-1930) different life stories and experiences

as a writer, through the techniques of documentation and ‘fabulation’ as historical representations in order to present ‘unofficial version of history.’ In his one of the latest novels, *The Noise of Time*, which was published in 2016, Barnes tells the life story of the famous Russian/Soviet composer, Dimitri Shostakovich (1906-1975). Barnes presents Shostakovich as a person who led a difficult life, struggling as an individual waiting to be understood and to be cleared of all the accusations of his time.

The main purpose of this thesis is to explicate how Barnes's studies in the world of physics related to the concepts of time and reality are reflected in literature through cultural, political and historical filters, and to clarify the concepts of time and reality and the relationship between them.

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INTRODUCTION

“Everything has already been done. Every story has been told,
every scene has been shot. It’s our job to do it one better.”

- Stanley Kubrick

Time is the most compellingly astonishing and complex entity since the dawn of human civilization. In fact, the term itself marks beginnings and endings of every aspect of life as it penetrates our understanding the universe and puzzles us for so long unlike any other subject matter. Therefore, defining what time is and its nature became among the most difficult and intricate tasks of humanity as there were millions of philosophers, scientists, cosmologists, theologians, and etc. who attempted to provide reasonable definition for time throughout history. Although time is not concrete or visible, everyone and everything can feel its existence via any change. Thereby, people started to think time in different terms and conditions. Instead of defining what time is or not, people focused on more the nature of time, and eventually, ideas of measuring time through the passage of it on the basis of the observations of changes around us, such as circulations in nature, the sun, the moon, and circumstances that are bound to happen with the passage of time. This enables to divide time into parts (the past, the present, and the future) which helps to make sense of it and understand the world that works according to it.

Naturally, all these processes brought about more and more cunning questions concerning not just time itself but also about the whole universe and its creation. Did the universe have a beginning, and “if so, what happened before then? What is the nature of time? [What does it have to do with the concept of reality and illusion] Will it ever come to an end?”¹ The fact is that we may never figure out answers thoroughly, nevertheless, we do know that there have been thousands of relatively logical speculations and theories regarding

¹ Hawking, Stephen. *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes*. (London: Bantam Books, 1988), 1.

the nature of time and many time-related subjects such as the changes in cosmos, history (which may be a product of time), reality, and etc. Some of them based on divine intervention while others based on artistic, philosophical, and cosmological knowledge and observations. For example, in the Ancient Greece, notably Aristotle speculated on the concept of time as he defined it as “the numberer of things.”² Furthermore, although ecclesiastical teachings were dominant during the Middle Ages, there were some rational and philosophical explanations about the nature of time.

However, notably the most illuminating and the most experimental definitions were put forward during the twentieth century which changed our understanding of time and the world. One of the most universally recognised and iconic theories about time and reality is Albert Einstein’s “Theory of Relativity” which offers revolutionary explanation for the way how time folds and bodies move in any given direction. One of Einstein’s revolutionary statements is that “events can look very different to onlookers in different situations, especially if they are moving relative to one another.”³ In addition to this, Einstein famously states that “time and space are modes by which we think and not conditions in which we live.”⁴ These extraordinary statements have become part of popular consciousness during the twentieth century and later on. Thanks to Einstein, “Theory of Relativity” forced us to change our conceptions and views about time completely, thus, the concept of time and reality became relative and no longer has a sense of common experience.

Considering enormous influences of Albert Einstein on the world of science, philosophy, history, sociology and literature, inevitable advancements were made in science, new philosophical movements, new literal genres, and interdisciplinary approaches emerged

² Aristotle. *The Complete Works of Aristotle: Physics*. (ed. Jonathan Barnes, the revised Oxford translation. Vol 1. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 223b.

³ Einstein, Albert. *Relativity: The Special and the General Theory*. (trans. Robert W. Lawson. New York: Penguin Books, 2006), xi-10-14.

⁴ Einstein, Albert. qtd in Sydney Perkowitz. “Time Examined and Time Experienced.” *Physics World* (July 2018), 1.

in the twentieth century and later on. Time became one of the central concepts of our thinking and in literature as well, specifically in fiction as a prominent critic, Wyndham Lewis expresses that there is new “time-school of fiction”⁵ in modern literature. In fiction, although some definitions about the nature of time eclipsed by sheer volume of interpretations, various writers deal with time in different scales; the whole of process structures the time value of the fiction which in many cases is very complex due to the involvement of various agents such as an author, characters, and readers. As Mac Taggart puts it: [t]here are as many time-series as there are selves who perceive things as in time . . . Strictly speaking, no time can be common to two selves.”⁶ So, each novel has different time-values and time series that make up the structure of it. Moreover, chronological time may not be present in every novel or the complexity of characters may cause differentiation in time within the novel itself. Various authors depicted and treated time in different ways under different genres as there are plenty of time-related areas such as, language, psychology (as well as memory issue), and the most importantly history which are all linked to the concept of reality and its representations.

The second chapter of this thesis puts an emphasis on theories of time values of fiction, specifically of the novel. Notably, with the help of the philosophical, psychological, and literary theories of some prominent figures such as, Henri Bergson, Roland Barthes, Hayden White, and A. A. Mendilow, the chapter intends to give literary analysis of time-related issues in relation with some well-known modern novels, and certainly, the novels of Julian Barnes. Because of the fact that there are distinctive time values of fiction, a variety of terms takes place in order to present more comprehensive explanations related to the nature of time and reality in the novel.

⁵ Lewis, Wyndham. *Time and Western Man*. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927), 24.

⁶ T. M. E. Mac Taggart. *The Nature of Existence*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921), 63, 120.

First of all, there is complex but satisfying term, “fictional time,”⁷ which corresponds to the time of happenings in the novel. It is, in fact, central aspect of the time-value of fiction. It can last for ages or for minutes, that basically depends on an author, but it is ineluctable. Usually, the classical novels cover chronological period of time; often a life-time of the main character(s) or the period of time in which the main events take place. On contrary, in modern and postmodern fiction, fictional time does not fold chronologically and time goes haywire where the readers puzzle on the order of events. Therefore, in those novels, depending on content of fiction, authors tend to use fictional time with time-planes through certain literary techniques such as flash-backs, the stream-of-consciousness, and most notably, the time shift. Apart from modernist writers, some contemporary authors such as Jeanette Winterson and Julian Barnes prefer to utilise certain kinds of flash-back and time-shift techniques that are complimented with occasional stream-of-consciousness. For instance, the opening paragraphs of Barnes’s *The Noise of Time* present a scene where a protagonist is pondering on the past, the present, and the future at the same time. The voices of the past are skittering in the character’s mind while he is waiting and thinking anxiously about the possible present and the future. The author portrays vivid images of the past with the help of flash-back and the stream-of-consciousness.

Moreover, thanks to the advancements in psychology, the terms such as conceptual time and psychological time collide with each other and as in psychology and literature, thus, psychological time took the spotlight. A. A. Mendilow explicates the nature of psychological time and its difference from conceptual time in the second part of the second chapter. The psychological time largely includes the measurement of time by individual values rather involving any common measurement such as an hour, a day or a month. Therefore, folding of time is experienced personally and relatively or at different rate for each individual. Perhaps,

⁷ Mendilow, A. A. *Time and the Novel*. (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), 65.

one of the most satisfying and accurate definitions of psychological time is Percy B. Shelley's famous lines: [t]ime is our consciousness of the succession of ideas in our mind."⁸ Although it may sound illogical, time is also associated with the way how our mind perceives it, so each person perceives it relatively. To return to the maxim, "time and space are modes by which we think and not conditions in which we live."⁹ For instance, one of the main topics of the novel, *The Sense of an Ending* by Julian Barnes is the perfect embodiment of the idea of relative and personalised time and reality(ies). Barnes masterfully demonstrates how relative time could be and is reality when we get to the depths of the main character, Tony Webster. More importantly, he also presents the circumstances where how it affects the character's understanding of the events, of the people, of life.

Although Barnes articulates time and reality related issues perfectly and offer the readers unique experience with such jaw-dropping perspectives, in writing, understanding and making sense of time and reality becomes much more blurred and complicated as there are certain complex rhetoric limitations or the inadequacy of language to convey realistic perception of time. This means that an author deals with not just the time values and time-related problems in writing, but also linguistic obstacles to express or to portray those problems. Since both time and reality are relative themselves, reality that is depicted in prose becomes very much relative, or to put it more accurately, the fragments of reality expressed in a certain artistic style within the limitations and fundamental oddities of time and language. Therefore, the alternative for the author is to merely portray a picture of life as it is in the most possible way with the illusion of completeness and continuity. Furthermore, the last parts of the second chapter of this thesis address the problems of language and reality in relation with time within the framework of some revolutionary theories of Hayden White,

⁸ Shelley, Percy Bysshe. "Notes – VIII." *Queen Mab*. (London: John Brooks, 1829), 193.

⁹ Einstein, Albert. qtd in Sydney Perkowitz. "Time Examined and Time Experienced." *Physics World* (July 2018), 1.

Henri Bergson, A. A. Mendilow. The terms such as “competing narratives” and “durée” are elaborated with references to history and fiction because they have immense contribution in understanding why time and reality are the *things* that often elude any precise definition.

Before moving to the comprehensive analysis of the fiction of Julian Barnes in terms of time and reality, the last part of the second chapter of the thesis offers postmodern notion of history and reality in lights of the New Philosophy, New Criticism and more importantly, New Historicism which prompted the newly emerged perspectives to be taken into consideration while scrutinizing and judging any given text whether it is historical or fictional. The philosophers, critics, writers, and artists such as Michel Foucault, George Iggers, Iain Chambers, Stephen Greenblatt, Roland Barthes, and Julian Barnes began to problematize History’s truth claims and objective meanings while losing the sense of truthfulness and reliability of any Western account of history. As the well-known historian, Alun Munslow once wrote, “[h]istorians are, after all, the authors of the history they compose.”¹⁰ This view regards the works of a writer equal to the works of a historian and recognise a historical text as literary artifact, and vice versa.

Consequently, “the postmodernist writers fictionalize history to imply that it may be a form of fiction in itself. Especially, in historiographic metafiction, history and fiction change roles: history becomes fictional and fiction becomes ‘true’ history,” affirms Aylin Atilla in *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*.¹¹ It is, in fact, this view that pushed Roland Barthes to mark that traditional history can no longer hold the sense of reality and suggest juxtaposing different versions of the past through parallel study and consider the possibilities of different realities accordingly. The fictional semi-autobiographical and semi-historical novels of Julian Barnes are embodiment of these theories as they emphasize the

¹⁰ Munslow, Alun. qtd in Aylin Atilla. “History as Text and Discourse.” *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 49.

¹¹ Atilla, Aylin. Introduction. *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 1.

relativity of much of what we make sense and interpret, especially, the terms like reality(ies) whether historical or fictional, and time.

Therefore, within the framework of the variety of theories that has been elucidated so far, three illuminating novels published in different dates by Julian Patrick Barnes will be analysed in order to proffer new perspectives about understanding the nature of time and its relation with reality and language: *The Sense of an Ending* (2011), *Arthur & George* (2005), and *The Noise of Time* (2016). These three masterpieces demonstrate how the writer articulates historiographic concerns, questions of reality(ies), and problems of time by questioning the fundamental principles of the traditional historiography through the elusiveness of language and demonstrating multiple layers of meanings and realities that coexist in time. The main purpose of choosing these novels by the same author is the fact that they do not just dwell on questions of time and reality(ies) through Barnes's lenses, but also present the evolution of the novelist's writing and how our perceptions of those major terms can also be relative and evolving.

The prominent literary critics, Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs describe Julian Barnes as "the most versatile and idiosyncratic author of astoundingly talented generation of writers, and he is also intensely prolific and at home in many genres."¹² Indeed, Barnes has penned hugely successful works in the contemporary British literature whose contents often seem as artistic creation emerged from real-life events. Additionally, Barnes usually prefers subject matters such as politics, history, arts, death, love, memory, and other compelling themes that are successfully carried out via illuminating journeys. For the recent years, some works of Julian Barnes are labelled as postmodernist. However, many literary critics and literary historians agree on the categorizing Barnes's works as hybrid and experimental as the

¹² Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs. "Julian Barnes and the Wisdom of Uncertainty." *Julian Barnes: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. (Eds. Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 1.

writer's works combine multiple genres, mainly self-scrutinizing (historiographic) metafiction, that challenge both conventional history writing/reading and fiction writing alongside dwelling mainly on themes like time, history, and reality issues. Three magnificent novels of Julian Barnes: *The Sense of an Ending* (2011), *Arthur & George* (2005), and *The Noise of Time* (2016), all share common experimental literary characteristics and themes that offer profound insights and perspectives on time and reality alongside with certain serious historiographic concerns. These insights and perspectives do not just elucidate our understanding of time and reality, but also complicate and deepen it.

The novel, *The Sense of an Ending*, a Man Booker Prize winner in 2011, is one of the most complex and hybrid novels. The motif of the variable past, imperfections of memory, the relationship between personal time, history and individual reality(ies), and echoing consequences are the main focus in *The Sense of an Ending*. Furthermore, some principles of "Theory of Relativity," certain theories about reality and of New Historicism are experimentally and effectively applied in order to explicate subjectivity of time, history, memory, and of course, reality. Although the novel consists of two distinctive parts, they are both narrated by the same narrator and protagonist named Tony Webster. Moreover, both parts are largely about self-described dull person, Tony and another main character named Veronica Ford who is Tony's girlfriend at university and always mysterious to him. Even though their love relationship lasts rather short, the consequences fill up the whole book. Zhang Yanting states that *The Sense of an Ending* "is recognized as a story reflecting on the damage made by individuals' fallible memory. This reflection is achieved through various strategies, such as the narrator's self-contradiction and detection of the truth."¹³ Indeed, Barnes presents unreliable narrator, Tony Wester, and recollections of memory or "a thing of

¹³ Yanting, Zhang. "And the Word Echoes: A Taxonomy of Repetition in *The Sense of an Ending*." *International Journal of English and Literature (IJEL)* (Vol. 7. no. 6. Academic Journals. 2016), 88.

shreds and patches”¹⁴ that he tells or ‘fabulises.’ Throughout the novel, Barnes tries to explain the readers that we cannot take granted Tony’s memory as well as his story in which he aspires to justify his motives through possible corroborations and eventually fails to do so. In fact, Tony ‘edits’ his history in his self-centred narrative just like his edits the reality about the letter that he sends to his friend, Adrian Finn who asks for permission from him to date Veronica. In *The Sense of an Ending*, Barnes explains the motif of fabulation and its resemblance with history writing to problematize traditional history reading. It is interesting enough that he associates it with time and reality(ies), and how they are perceived relatively. All in all, the subject of personal time and history, therefore, reality(ies), historiographic problems are perfectly articulated in *The Sense of an Ending*, and they are explained and clarified in the first part of the third chapter in this thesis.

Moving on another remarkable novel from the Barnesian literary universe, *Arthur & George* (2005), will give another dimension of all the features present in *The Sense of an Ending*. In fact, considering the case that *Arthur & George* was written before *The Sense of an Ending*, the former reflects the novelist’s earlier writing style and strategies to convey the themes of time, history, and reality. However, Christine Berberich notes that,

Arthur & George forms a deliberate and important turning point within Barnes’s oeuvre as the author moves from the earlier historical metafiction of *Flaubert’s Parrot* and *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* to . . . a ‘new historical novel.’ [The novel] . . . offers something new, an ingenious combination of realism and post-modern historiography . . . fact and fiction converge and intermingle in a way that it makes it difficult, or maybe even irrelevant, for the reader to see the fine dividing line.¹⁵

¹⁴ Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), 105.

¹⁵ Berberich, Christine. qtd. in Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs. “Julian Barnes and the Wisdom of Uncertainty.” *Julian Barnes: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. (Eds.

Indeed, Barnes creates an ‘unofficial history’ with *Arthur & George*, because the book offers both historical information that are considered as true and combines it with possible past by filling up blank pages of the past and puts together patches artistically in order to give the sense of continuity, completeness, and causality, therefore, makes up a whole new world that perfectly makes sense. Arguably in acknowledgement of the fact that Julian Barnes depicts the famous British writer, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and another lesser-known character, the Birmingham solicitor George Edalji, who is falsely convicted of horse mutilation, the setting mostly takes place in the Edwardian England. “From a narratological standpoint, the story comes in the form of alternating narrations swinging like a pendulum between the points of view of two different individuals”¹⁶ till the point where the stories of both characters converge for the sake of clearing George Edalji’s name. In addition to that, Barnes has created an innovative and experimental historiographic fiction with such an intense engagement with problems of understanding our relationship with history and realities, and more importantly how these aspects can be easily be manipulated, fabulised or fabricated in such a way that over time they tend to substitute the actual past. As George the narrator puts it, “[I]t was just a story, George knew, something made up from scraps and coincidences and hypotheses; he knew too that he was innocent; but something about the repetition of the story by an authority in wig and gown made it take on extra plausibility.”¹⁷ After all, it is stories that give shape to our realities, our history, and own reality. As a matter of fact, one of the main themes that is elaborated in this thesis concerning *Arthur & George* is the compellingly important tension between believing and knowing which puts a strong emphasis on the dichotomy between fact and fiction, and between history and ‘his story.’

Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 5.

¹⁶ Roşcan, Alina. “History, Memory and Certainty.” *Rewriting History in the Novels of Julian Barnes*. (Bucureşti: Editura Centrul Tecnic-Editorial al Armatei, 2016), 210.

¹⁷ Barnes, Julian. *Arthur & George*. (London: Vintage Books, 2006), 167.

Similarly, Julian Barnes's one of the latest novels, *The Noise of Time* (2016), also focuses on the blurry line of fact and fiction, history and fabulation, and all are linked to time. Additionally, *The Noise of Time* combine significant number of common features from both *The Sense of an Ending* and *Arthur & George* which are the cornerstones of the Barnesian literary universe: relativity, time, problems of history (especially, the ideological and the discursive dimensions of history), different realities, fabulation, irony, all combined in historiographic metafiction. *The Noise of Time* portrays life story of the prominent twentieth century Soviet composer Dmitri Dmitrievich Shostakovich (1906-1975) and narrates it as a trauma narrative. Even though Julian Barnes pictures Dmitri Shostakovich as a neurotic or hysteric character, he also reminds and subscribes to the fact that under such cruel political yet controversial power during Stalin's rule, the character's psychological condition is humane one. The novel also puts a great emphasis on the individual's struggle and sense of irony for coping with distressing circumstances of the past, the present, and the future.

Moreover, *The Noise of Time* is more than a trauma narrative. It does not just expound the major concepts of postmodernism, such as time, history, reality and their relationships with each other, but also explores a variety of complex and significant features of historiographic metafiction via the unusual narrative style. Additionally, the subject of politics serves as side-lines in the novel since it encapsulates the ideological and discursive dimensions of history and reality. Throughout the novel, Julian Barnes presents us multiple examples of how history and fiction, fact and fabulation, memory and false memory merge in different ways while acknowledging the fading line between them. Thus, yet again, the writer renders the topics of relativity and subjectivity of knowledge in relation with interest in people who live in different times and realities. That is why in both *Arthur & George* and *The Noise of Time*, Barnes provides all the evidence he could find and combine them in a way that allows his readers to make up their own minds.

The major of this thesis is to expound all historiographic concerns, elaborate several theories about time, reality, and their contumacious relationships, and apply them to the critical analysis of these three great contemporary works by Julian Patrick Barnes. As a result, it intends to embody the multi-faceted analysis of historiographic (meta)fiction and make contribution to the academic field of English literature.



CHAPTER 1: Time

1. 1. Time Through Historical Context

We sometimes wish that we could go back in time and undo things what we have done. Is there possibility of going back in time? If so, what are probabilities of the present to become different than we know and how would it affect our sense of reality? These were a few questions that puzzled many early twentieth century thinkers and scientists and stimulated a variety of provocative thoughts in many academic areas. So, what is time? What does it have to do with the concept of reality? Why does it cause so many complexities in terms of understanding the world alongside defining the reality?

To define time maybe has been the most incomprehensible and intricate task since the beginning of the human kind. Thereby, people started to think of time in different terms rather than concrete entity as they associated it all with time-keeping. The term itself seems to be very much ironic because you cannot keep time but rather dividing it into parts which helps to make sense of it and understand the world that works according to it. Since the dawn of human civilization, a variety of philosophers, theologians, scientists, and cosmologists speculated on different thoughts in different areas. These speculations about time brought some mind-bending questions about the universe such as did the universe have a beginning, and “if so, what happened *before* then? What is the nature of time? Will it ever come to an end?”¹⁸ The most interesting thing about these questions is that we may never find out answers thoroughly. As one of the most brilliant minds of the recent years, Stephen Hawking put it “[o]nly time (whatever that may be) will tell”¹⁹ those answers.

However, there have been thousands of speculations about ‘time’ and the beginning of time in order to explain what it actually *is*. Many of them are associated with the universe and its creation. Some of them based on divine intervention, those are religious interpretation

¹⁸ Hawking, Stephen. *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes*. (London: Bantam Books, 1988), 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

while others based on cosmological knowledge and observation. For instance, to several cosmologies and theological explanations of the early times, the universe began at a finite and would exist forever. Another theological argument was put forward by St Augustine as he claims that “the concept of time has no meaning before the beginning of the universe, . . . time was a property of the universe that God created, and that time did not exist before the beginning of the universe.”²⁰ However, this argument triggers more oscillating questions about the creation. However, instead of generating more and more questions about the creation or the beginning of the universe, it would be resourceful to survey several notable theories about time, its nature, and relationship with the concept of reality in historical context.

Aristotle and many other ancient Greek philosophers had focused on the philosophy of time as they tried to define what time actually was, is, will be. In his masterpiece, *Physics*, Aristotle explicates time as “the numberer of things.”²¹ A writer and a philosopher, David Bostock interprets Aristotle’s ideas on time by presenting reasonable explanations. He states that “time appears to be a kind of change or movement, yet this cannot be quite right for two reasons: (i) that any change or movement has a particular location in space, whereas time does not, (ii) that movements are fast and slow while time is not.”²² According to his interpretation of Aristotle’s view on time, “time is a quantity of movement (its duration).”²³ This statement exposes another concept which is duration or in another word, ‘passage’. One may conclude that Bostock interpretation might not be enough to determine what Aristotle actually meant so, in addition to his interpretation, another notable scholar named, Tony

²⁰ St Augustine. qtd. in Stephen Hawking. *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes*. (London: Bantam Books, 1988), 9.

²¹ Aristotle. *The Complete Works of Aristotle: Physics*. (ed. Jonathan Barnes, the revised Oxford translation. Vol 1. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 223b.

²² Bostock, David. Aristotle's Account of Time." (*Phronesis* 25, no. 2 (1980): 148-69. Web. *JSTOR*. November, 2020), 148.

²³ *Ibid.*, 148.

Roark explains Aristotle's view as this "Aristotle defines time as a number of motion with respect to the before and after,"²⁴ by which he intends to denote motion's susceptibility to division into undetached parts of arbitrary length, a property that it possesses both by virtue of its intrinsic nature and also by virtue of the capacities and activities of percipient souls. We can perceive motion with respect to its length and that brings up temporality. That's why he considered 'now' in the centre of time and combined two disparate terms; temporal present and the concept of instant. As a result, the temporal present with respect to past and future, and instant: durationless point, create a sense of definition of time. Aristotle's view of time generated reams of commentary later in the Medieval Ages.

The Medieval Times were the most significant ages in terms crucial developments concerning the concept of 'time'. In 13th Century, one of the most important figures of the era, Thomas Aquinas put forward many arguments about time and its beginning. Later, another great thinker, Duns Scotus's views on time caused an upheaval in the scholarly world during that era. He believed that time would still exist even without motion. For Duns Scotus, time is not just an arbitrary counting of motion, but rather something independent of motion²⁵. He argues that time does not necessarily require movement to exist, we add movement to measure from some particular point of view. Movement implies succession, and it implies foundation, speed, uniformity and these are to measure the succession. Peter Aureol, another great medieval thinker expands and clarifies Duns Scotus' argument on time. Aureol claims that "time, considered in itself, before being measured and reduced in number is a purely successive and continuous quantity. In the same way that dimensions fix the order and establish the continuity between the various parts of any permanent quantity, time is what

²⁴ Roark, Tony. *Aristotle on Time: A Study of the Physics*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 219b1–2.

²⁵ Scotus, Duns. qtd. in Pierre Duhem. "Time." *Medieval Cosmology: Theories of Infinity, Place, Time, Void, and the Plurality of Worlds*. (ed. trans. Roger Ariew. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 298.

fixes an order and establishes a continuity between the parts of any successive quantity or any movement whatever”²⁶. In another words, “time is the succession of movement, time is nothing more than what has come before (*prius*)²⁷ and will come after (*posterius*)²⁸ to which continuity is added.”²⁹ For Peter Aureol, time has no parts and yet he suggests that time is composed of the past, present, and future. He also refers to an instant as neither a time nor a part of time. So, what does time consist of? How do we perceive time? These are the questions that Aureol attempts to answer as well. He concludes that time consists of something that exists outside the mind and of something that does not exist outside the mind. According to Aureol’s view, “[e]very time the mind perceives that there is a changing existence, it perceives time”³⁰. This aspect, of course, recognizes time as something like a continuous quantity that has no limits. Moreover, one of the most prominent figures of the Medieval philosophy and theology, William of Ockham (1287 – 1347) carried on the arguments of both John Duns Scotus and Peter Aureol. He agrees on many occasions with them and tries to combine both of their views on time. His ideas are based on purely intellect rather than theological speculations or assumptions that were common in that era. He argues that “time is the measure of movements whose magnitude is not known to us; in fact, it is by time that we understand the length of a movement, that movement moves longer than another, for we say that the latter moves at greater length when it moves longer time.”³¹ For

²⁶ Aureol, Peter. qtd. in Pierre Duhem. “Time.” *Medieval Cosmology: Theories of Infinity, Place, Time, Void, and the Plurality of Worlds*. (ed. trans. Roger Ariew. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 300.

²⁷ Aristotle. “Jena.” *Metaphysics*. (trans. W. D. Ross, revised by J. Barnes. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 300-304.

²⁸ Ibid., 300-304.

²⁹ Aureol, Peter. qtd. in Pierre Duhem. “Time.” *Medieval Cosmology: Theories of Infinity, Place, Time, Void, and the Plurality of Worlds*. (ed. trans. Roger Ariew. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 300.

³⁰ Ibid., 304.

³¹ William of Ockham. qtd. in qtd in Pierre Duhem. “Time.” *Medieval Cosmology: Theories of Infinity, Place, Time, Void, and the Plurality of Worlds*. (ed. trans. Roger Ariew. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 305.

William of Ockham, time is the measure of temporal things. This statement, of course, reminds us the concept of duration and how we measure duration, thus, explaining the passage of time. It would be fair to conclude that the view of William of Ockham is very much similar with Aristotle's definition of *time*. To return to the maxim, "time is the numberer of things,"³² which can be accepted as a reasonable definition. Additionally, William of Ockham was one of the key figures in the Medieval Era, who gave a thought about what we know as a clock. He asks a significant question: "[w]hat is needed for a movement to serve as the measure of the duration of other movements, in order for it to be time, for it to serve as a clock?"³³ Even though the prominent thinkers of the time offered some elucidations to the question, they were not enough to fully satisfy. William of Ockham himself produced an answer to the question. He suggests that what is needed for a movement to serve as the measure of the duration of other movements is what he called "uniform."³⁴ In order not to confuse it with different sense, he also explains that uniform is movement that contains both continuousness and regularity. Thus, it should not require any human intervention and the idea of mechanics of clock comes out.

In the midst of these arguments and discussions, alongside with the invention of verge escapement, the idea of the first mechanical clock in Europe became more recurring. As the result, the first mechanical clock was invention and soon became more popular. With the strong influence of the Church, time reminders or striking clocks and a variety of clock towers began to occur in every town square in Europe. As clock towers became more popular, a dial on the outside of the tower was added and it would allow the townspeople to read the time whenever they wanted. Although a clock tower and its striking sound were

³² Aristotle. *Physics, The Complete Works of Aristotle*. (ed. Jonathan Barnes, the revised Oxford translation. Vol 1. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 223b.

³³ William of Ockham. qtd. in qtd in Pierre Duhem. "Time." *Medieval Cosmology: Theories of Infinity, Place, Time, Void, and the Plurality of Worlds*. (ed. trans. Roger Ariew. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 309.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 309.

admired for its aesthetics, its actual purpose was to remind people the passage of time. More importantly, sounds of the bells called nearby community to prayer, to work, to wake up, to mark special occasions, and even to sleep. In other words, people's reality was shaped more or less by the sounds of passing time and people led their daily lives accordingly.

During the Renaissance in Europe, the concept of time was emancipated from the perception of entirely Christian understanding and its complexity was brought to daylight to be described in the most accurate and complete manner possible. The Renaissance was the time of massive changes in every area, especially in the field of science. The term, Renaissance, itself reveals explicit assumptions regarding new historical consciousness and changes in mentality during that era. The rediscovery of the Antiquity brought bright new understanding to the relationship between mankind and the surrounding world. Thought about the past, about the perception of past and its relationship with the present became more complex and crucial aspects of philosophy and science. The definition of time was altered, or more precisely redefined through various scales. Mostly philosophers and scientists dealt with the ideas and aspects from the one-time event to the eternity of the hereafter, with a cyclical and a linear conception of time, and their combination, "a divine periodicity and an earthly time of the rhythms of the world, an expectation of a brilliant future in an eschatological perception combined with a deep interest for the past in order to understand the present"³⁵. Some of the arguments were speculations and deductions derived from logical explanations, and some of them were based on scientific observations. A French scholar, Étienne Bourdon states that "[t]he issue of time in the Renaissance is entirely imbedded in a Christian order of the world and can therefore only be thought of both theologically and philosophically."³⁶ He specifically emphasized that the concept of time was no longer

³⁵ Bourdon, Étienne. "Temporalities and History in the Renaissance." (*Journal of Early Modern Studies*, 6 (2017): 39-60. Firenze University Press), 39.

³⁶ Ibid., 40.

explained merely theologically, celestial time or the time of God became no longer valid entirely. Bourdon continues by saying that this era of historical changes was also the time of “the process of the disenchantment of the world when human history stops telling the religious meaning of the world.”³⁷ This does not mean that everything was explained with scientific indications or observations, people still did not abandon their Christian values. It would fair to put it as many would agree that the Renaissance conceptions of time were thought of theologically, philosophically, and in possibly scientific way. Of course, these multiple conceptions of time in the Renaissance are far from the linear and biased reorganization of absolute and physical time, developed later. Nevertheless, we should not reject them too quickly, because they help us to understand the complexity of the question of time and time-related issues.

There are many significant examples of how philosophers, scholars, poets and painters made attempts to project the Renaissance understanding of time in different ways. One of the prominent thinkers of the Renaissance, humanist philosopher, and poet, Petrarch or Francesco Petrarca describes the idea of time in his magnificent literary masterpieces. Although he was influenced by classical culture and medieval Christian philosophy, Petrarch was the key figure in the humanist philosophy and art. His works concentrated on a variety of different conceptions and themes including love, death, eternity, and time “while raising important questions as to the validity of the distinction between medieval and modern.”³⁸ Petrarch’s particular work, *Trionfo del Tempo*,³⁹ is fundamental to our use in order to see the change in the conception of time in the Renaissance. The poem focuses on how the author personifies time while revealing implications about devastating nature of time. At one point,

³⁷ Ibid., 40.

³⁸ Albert Russell Ascoli and Unn Falkeid. “*The Cambridge Companion to Petrarch*. (eds. Albert Russell Ascoli and Unn Falkeid. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), iii.

³⁹ “Triumph of Time.” trans. E. H. Wilkins. *The Triumphs of Petrarch*. (Chicago, 1962), 45.

he says: “How swiftly time before my eyes rushed on after the guiding sun that never rests.”⁴⁰ . . . / Life is brief, /This morning I was a child and now I am old.”⁴¹ Many agree that Petrarch wrote this particular poem when he was old so that he implies the devastating power of time, with the passage of time everything vanishes. Time dissolves all mortal things, both physical and mental. A contemporary scholar, Simona Cohen, suggests that with the collection of *The Triumphs*, Petrarch tries to create his sense of history as well, and *Trionfo del Tempo* concludes his history⁴². This is the theme of this great work and it was very unconventional topic at the time that it led to many visual illustrations of *Trionfo del Tempo* by many great artists of the early Renaissance and later on. A prominent art historian, Erwin Panofsky describes the concept of time in Petrarch as “the mighty relentless destroyer imagined by Petrarch.”⁴³ This personification of the concept of time became pretty evident in the Renaissance literature, art, and philosophy thanks to the contributions of Petrarch. The well-known painting, “The Three Ages of Man” by Titian, the famous monologue, “The Seven Ages of Man,” which is derived from William Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, are such examples of time-related personifications during the Renaissance in Europe. Interestingly, these depictions of time are in way definitions of time where artists and poets associated time with life itself, thus, implying that the only reality is time itself. These are, of course, artistic representations of time in the age of great cultural, economic, and scientific changes. Alongside with artistic and philosophical representations and definitions of the concept of time, there was ongoing search for truth in science world as well.

By the end of the fifteenth century, the control of the Church over science started to disappear in Europe, arguments, theories, and ideas driven by human curiosity relied on

⁴⁰ Ibid., lines 46-47.

⁴¹ Ibid., line 60.

⁴² Cohen, Simona. “The early Renaissance of Time and Changing Concepts of Temporality.” (*Renaissance Studies* 14. 3 (2000): 301-328), 302-304.

⁴³ Panofsky, Erwin. “Father Time.” *Studies in Iconology*. (New York: Icon Editions, 1972), 79.

reasoning, observation, and experiment. It was the age that Nicolaus Copernicus, a Polish scholar and an astronomer, proposed the first modern heliocentric ideas, shifting the centre of the universe from the Earth to the Sun. This ground-breaking theory of the system about our galaxy quickly gained scientific popularity that it overcame many earlier models. He suggests that since the Sun remains stationary, whatever appears as a motion of the Sun is due to the motion of the Earth. This heliocentric theory was, of course, totally against the Church geocentric model and provoked some tensions in some Catholic circles. However, the Copernican system proved itself far more accurate that even was welcomed in the Catholic societies in Rome. With a logical system for the scientific process which Francis Bacon called, “the scientific method,”⁴⁴ Galileo Galilei’s scientific observation shocked the whole world. These theories, observations, and experiments gave birth to the modern science.

In the midst of these ground-breaking discoveries, came what many think as the most important science book of all time, Isaac Newton’s *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*⁴⁵ in 1687. His laws of motion and universal gravity created the basis for classical physics. In order to understand time, we ought to understand the nature of time, its mechanics, and by extension, motion of objects or bodies in time. In that sense, Newton’s *Principia* remains one of the most fundamental work about the laws of physics in which he extended Galileo’s observations and introduced three laws of motion. The First Law explains the idea that when no force acts on an object or a body, it will remain at rest or maintain uniform motion and whenever a force is applied to a body, it will change its state of motion. Newton extends this law by defining the force to any object or a body that also produces acceleration or how fast it moves and knowledge of to which direction the object moves with certain mass. In other words, as Newton himself puts it, [a]n impressed force is an action

⁴⁴ The method was put forward by Francis Bacon in his work, *Novum Organum* (1620).

⁴⁵ *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* by Sir Isaac Newton (translated into English by Andrew Motte. New York: Daniel Adee, 1846.)

exerted upon a body, in order to change its state, either of rest, or of uniform motion in a right line.”⁴⁶ In addition to that, whenever an object or a body moves with constant velocity, there are either no forces present or there are forces acting in opposite directions that cancel out. Newton gave an example of a moving train to explain the complexity of the first law. Imagine a train starts to move in one direction away from the station. In that state, the acceleration is very small that we experience difficulty to perceive it. Usually, it is interesting that it looks like as if the train station is moving in the opposite direction while we seem to be still in the train. Newton claimed that there is no physical way to distinguish between whether we are moving or the station is moving, because there is essentially no total force present to change the state of motion. Once we reach a constant velocity, our minds dismiss the idea that the ground is moving backwards because we think it is impossible, but there is no actual way for us to distinguish whether the train is moving or the ground is moving.⁴⁷ With this idea in mind, scientists like Albert Einstein, Hendrik Lorentz, and Edwin Hubble also made great scientific observations and experiments that changed our world view.

Newton’s Second Law and Third Law are mainly based on what he called, “quantity of motion,”⁴⁸ alongside with velocity and quantity of matter. He describes the quantity of motion as some force “arising from the velocity and quantity of matter conjointly.”⁴⁹ That force produces motion and the time rate of change of the quantity of motion of an object or a body is equal in both magnitude and direction to the force imposed on it. Of course, this law can be applied to objects or bodies that can be perceived by human eyes. Furthermore, Newton’s third law states that “[t]o every action there is always opposed an equal reaction: or, the mutual action of two bodies upon each other are always equal, and directed to contrary

⁴⁶ Newton, Isaac. *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*. (trans. Andrew Motte (1729). Revised by Florian Cajori. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1934), 2.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 12-13.

⁴⁸ Newton, Isaac. *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*. (trans. Andrew Motte. New York: Daniel Adee, 1846), 73.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 73.

part.”⁵⁰ We can find an example from our daily life. For instance, when you put your mobile phone on a table, the mobile phone and the table interact with each other. The mobile phone applies force to the table and at the same time, the table also applies force to the mobile phone. The forces they apply each other are equal in magnitude but opposite in direction; in this case, direction of the mobile phone is determined by the gravitational force. That is why this law is known as the law of action and reaction. Moreover, Newton’s theory also got rid of absolute rest. In this case, the table before you put the phone on it was not in absolute rest and afterwards as well. To sum up, these three laws of Isaac Newton were considered as the cornerstones of the classical physics for centuries. However, by the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, these laws were gradually substituted by the laws of relativity and quantum mechanics that deal with phenomena on different situations and on extremely small scales. Nevertheless, Newton’s laws continue to give an accurate account of nature and objects moving in perceivable time, except for very small bodies such as electrons or for bodies moving close to the speed of light. Therefore, it would be fair to state that the masterpieces of Isaac Newton led to recognize the laws of relativity and quantum mechanics later on and time measurements and time in physics started getting more and more complicated alongside our understanding of time.

With the revolutionary achievements and advancements in the field of science, there was also a variety of new ways of thinking of the concept of time in the field of humanities such as philosophy, literature, and archaeology. During the mid-seventeenth century and eighteenth century, there was the intellectual climate of the new experimental science that has developed from foundations laid by Francis Bacon in the whole Europe. There was also new attitude of mind that included “objective approach to the phenomenal universe in which flowers and fossils, butterflies and antiquities, were all seen to be in need of pragmatic

⁵⁰ Ibid., 83.

investigation, record, and classification.”⁵¹ An English archaeologist and philosopher, William Stukeley had major contribution to the British archaeology during that time. Stukeley was one of the close intellectual friends of Sir Isaac Newton as well, and as many intellectual minds of the era, he was influenced by the story of the falling apple. Moreover, he had passion to look for antiquities and monuments with an objective desire for classification and precise record. His focus was on “reasoned statements of their likely function attempting to set them in chronological relationship” with the present time, thus, understanding the problems of his time.⁵² A professor of Archaeology, S. Piggott states that “he [Stukeley] deliberately set out to make a one-man rescue survey, for which archaeologists have continued to be grateful ever since.”⁵³ One of the main goals of Stukeley was to understand the past in order to find solutions for the problems of the 18th century societies. That’s why his was given a pre-eminent position in the history of British archaeology.

During that time, such historical studies in France were taking on a philosophical aspect, with wide generalizations replacing documentary erudition. The French philosophers had growing enthusiasm for the quest for truth. One of the prominent figures of the French philosophy, René Descartes, who is famous above all for saying “*I think therefore I exist.*”⁵⁴ What makes Descartes stand out is that he was a fierce rationalist who believed in the power of pure reason and logic in order to find reality. With the advent of perspective during the Renaissance, the philosophers started to question the concept of reality and for the first time that the question of time coincided with the question of reality itself. Descartes suggests that we should doubt the reality of many things including the world surrounding us. He

⁵¹ Piggott, S. “William Stukeley: Doctor, Divine, and Antiquary.” (*British Medical Journey*, 3 (1974): 725-727), 726.

⁵² Ibid., 726.

⁵³ Ibid., 726-727.

⁵⁴ Descartes, René. *Discourse on the Method of Correctly Conducting One’s Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences*. (trans. Ian Maclean. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 28.

philosophical approach to reality reached out its climax when he put forward his famous phrase, “I think therefore I am”, with which he attempts to define the reality omitted from disturbing contingencies. He believed that reality is something emancipated from time, and existed “incontrovertibly.”⁵⁵ He gives us example of proving his existence based on logic and reason as he states “certainly that I myself existed, whereas, if I had merely ceased thinking, I would have no reason to believe that I existed, even if everything else I had ever imagined had been true.”⁵⁶ The idea of being real or imaginary depended on thinking or reasoning one’s existence while the things surrounding oneself may not give a sense of reality because we cannot merely rely on our senses. Although, Descartes’ approaches to reality may not be recognized by the scientific circles of his time, and were criticized by the empiricist philosophers later on, he helps us realize that definition of reality is not as shallow as one might initially has presumed, but it is far more complex as the concept of time. Thanks to Petrarch, the Renaissance artists, poets, Isaac Newton, Stukeley, and Descartes, the ways of thinking about time and reality in the fields of physics, philosophy, and literature have changed very radically and gained such importance that they became key topics decades and centuries later as well.

Decades later, philosophical, scientific, and literary arguments have been influenced much by discoveries, explorations in science and technology. The predominant philosophical idea in science became positivism, formulated by French philosopher Auguste Comte who, as Arthur I. Miller says in *Einstein, Picasso*, “advocated progress toward a science cleansed of theology and metaphysics.”⁵⁷ In the 1880s, Ernst Mach discussed this concept by suggesting that “only phenomena reducible to sense perceptions (or laboratory data) could be considered

⁵⁵ Ibid., 29.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 29.

⁵⁷ Miller, Arthur I. *Einstein, Picasso: Space, Time, and the Beauty That Causes Havoc*. (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 23.

physically real.”⁵⁸ However, this idea started to be challenged by Romantic thinkers and with the inventions of technologies in science.

Meanwhile, in philosophy and literature, Romantics like William Wordsworth and William Blake believed the idea of deeper understanding of the past in order to be able to read and solve the problems of their own time. In their literary masterpieces, they express “the need to revivify the past, to incorporate it as an organic part into their world-scheme and scale of values.”⁵⁹ The idea marks the romantic difference for time and reality that is also shaped by time. A British scholar and author, Adam Abraham Mendilow states

The Romantics [...] tended to look on human nature and human development in terms of the organic unity underlying the process of history, the growth of the individual, and the constantly self-adjusting equilibrium that determines the pattern of men in groups. For them, civilisation was an evolving biological unit. The tradition which that civilisation embodied was a contemporary condition of all living existence, always and inevitably part of the Now.⁶⁰

The idea of organic unity reminds us the medieval views about time; that past, present, or future are connected to each other through passage of time. Romantics expanded this idea by explaining that what we call as human reality is also associated with history or more accurately time. The resultant implication is that now or future can only make sense thanks to the existence of past, that is always stubbornly behind the present. As Stephen Hawking once affirmed, “[i]f everything in the universe depends on everything else in a fundamental way, it might be impossible to get close to a full solution by investigating parts of the problem in

⁵⁸ Mach, Ernst. qtd. in Arthur I. Miller. *Einstein, Picasso: Space, Time, and the Beauty That Causes Havoc*. (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 23

⁵⁹ Mendilow, A. A. *Time and the Novel*. (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), 3.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 4-5.

isolation.”⁶¹ Therefore, it would be useful to look at some theories and observations in science that are closely associated with time and reality.

1.2. The Twentieth Century “Time” Obsession:

“The Theory of Relativity” in Terms of “Time,” “Reality,” and Fiction

After the second half of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, there emerged astonishing theories and experiments that changed world-view forever. Until that time, the theories of Aristotle and Newton about time were accepted as common-sense view who both suggested the idea of “absolute time”⁶². For them, time was separate from space, and this theory work well for things that move slowly such as apples and planets. For instance, if two events occur at one point for two people who are in different positions, the passage of time would be same whoever measured it. However, in 1865, a British physicist, James Clerk Maxwell measured very accurate value for the speed of light with the help of the forces of electricity and magnetism and refuted the theories of absolute time. Maxwell suggested different ways of measuring the speed of light waves, especially that are relative to other waves for different observers. In 1905, a clerk in the Swiss patent office, Albert Einstein, with his newly published paper, claimed that Maxwell’s some ideas were unimportant to refute the idea of absolute time and put forward his theory of relativity. However, Newton’s laws of motion and Maxwell’s accurate measurement of speed of light were the fundamental for Einstein’s theories. Newton once claimed that laws of science should be same for all observers, no matter what their speed or position and Maxwell expanded this theory by stating that “all observers should measure the same speed of light, no

⁶¹ Hawking, Stephen. *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes*. (London: Bantam Books, 1988), 13.

⁶² Newton, Isaac. *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*. (trans. Andrew Motte. New York: Daniel Adee, 1846), 78.

matter how fast they are moving.”⁶³ Inspired by his predecessors’ and icons’ theories, Einstein challenged them and introduced “the Theory of Relativity” in which he explained how bodies move in space in accordance with time that became more complicated and slippery than ever.

Einstein’s objective approach to the concepts such as “time,” “space,” and “reality” became popular when he published his four papers in 1905, in which he put forward his revolutionary theories on different subjects all have one common point; relativity. Until that time, the distinction between what is real and what is not became more blurred, time became slippery, and meaning of simultaneous was haywire. Einstein tried to explicate and clarify those concepts with his shocking statements. Perhaps one of his revolutionary statements is that “events can look very different to onlookers in different situations, especially if they are moving relative to one another.”⁶⁴ For instance, one of the initial problems about time in relativity occurs with speed of light. In relativity, all observers must agree on how fast light travels; however, they disagree on the distance and time it has taken. More accurately, the theory of relativity put an end to the idea of absolute time that was affirmed by Newton. To clarify his theory, Einstein gives us the example of lightning that is also associated with the word *simultaneous*.⁶⁵ Suppose two lightning flashes strike the railroad embankment at the same moment at different points. For Einstein, the lightning strokes are simultaneous if their light rays meet at the midpoint on the embankment between two points where they strike. However, from the point of view of a rider on a moving train, who is at midway between the points of impact when lightning strikes, the flashes cannot be simultaneous. The rider will see the flash up ahead slightly before one behind because the train moved him forward to meet its

⁶³ Maxwell, James Clerk. qtd. in Stephen Hawking. *A Brief History of Time*. (London: Bantam Books, 1988), 23.

⁶⁴ Einstein, Albert. *Relativity: The Special and the General Theory*. (trans. Robert W. Lawson. New York: Penguin Books, 2006), xi-10-14.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

approaching rays. What an observer on the embankment considers to be one second is not one second for the person on the train. As a result, “simultaneity becomes only a relative concept, time itself goes haywire.”⁶⁶ Therefore, each observer has his own measure of time and identical clocks carried by different observers would not necessarily agree. To make these complex arguments accurate, Einstein uses a mathematical device called Lorentz transformation which proves that “time runs more slowly for the moving observer.”⁶⁷ He argues that time and position of objects or bodies must be judged by their state of being stationary or moving. Two observers who are moving relative each other will measure different times and positions to exactly the same event. Einstein states that “no particular observer’s measurements are any more correct than any other observer’s, but all the measurements are related. Any observer can work out precisely what time and position any other observer will assign to an event, provided he knows the other observer’s relative velocity.”⁶⁸ The resultant implication is that time, position, or velocity is relative or to be more precise, confined with the key word “with respect to.” As Einstein claims, “[w]e are thus led also to a definition of “time” in physics.”⁶⁹ Needless to say, that Einstein developed his theory of relativity in many ways and put the concepts of time, space, and reality under the spotlight of modern science, humanities, and all other branches of human knowledge.

Furthermore, Einstein put an end to the idea that time is completely separate from and independent of space. He devoted much of his time to understand this view and prove it mathematically. As a result, he concluded that “time and space are modes by which we think and not conditions in which we live.”⁷⁰ What general relativity all about is the way how

⁶⁶ Ibid., xiv, 23-30.

⁶⁷ Ibid., xiv, 23-37.

⁶⁸ Einstein, Albert. qtd. in Stephen Hawking. *A Brief History of Time*. (London: Bantam Books, 1988), 25-26.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 25.

⁷⁰ Einstein, Albert. qtd. in Sydney Perkowitz. “Time Examined and Time Experienced.” *Physics World* (July 2018), 1.

gravity deforms space and time. In order to make it more understandable and precise, he introduces the concept of “space time.”⁷¹ Because he believed that the ultimate purpose of mechanics is to describe us how bodies change their position in space with ‘time’. Of course, that description must be the explanation of reality as well. Moreover, Einstein suggests that gravity alters properties of space and time and these changes or deformations in turn decide the subsequent motion of the objects or bodies in space. However, the argument did not end there, according to the general relativity, there are three dimensions of space and one dimension of time. One of the Einstein’s professors, Hermann Minkowski, who was popular for working on Einstein’s theory of relativity, stated that the “world” is a continuum; because events happen relatively and time is not an independent continuum.⁷² His famous statement about time and space, which also explicates Einstein’s definition of time and space above, is that for Minkowski, “space by itself, and time by itself, are doomed to fade away into mere shadows, and only a kind of union of the two will preserve an independent reality.”⁷³ Einstein had a very exact grasp of Minkowski and developed the theory of relativity in many ways when it comes to time-problem, space, and more importantly their relationship with the concept of reality. In fact, proven that time and position can be relative terms, he proposed that time does not unfold in the same rate for different or same bodies in different spaces. In another words, time passes for everybody but does not always pass at the same rate or speed for people in different situations; well-known example is the difference of passing time in space and on Earth. Thanks to Einstein, the theory of relativity forced us to alter completely

⁷¹ Einstein, Albert. *Relativity: The Special and the General Theory*. (trans. Robert W. Lawson. New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 85.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 52.

⁷³ Minkowski, Hermann. qtd. in Leo Corry. "Hermann Minkowski and the Postulate of Relativity." *Archive for History of Exact Sciences* Vol.51, No.4 (1997)), 292.

our conceptions and views about time, thus, the concept of reality became relative and no longer has a sense of common experience.

Considering enormous influences of Albert Einstein on the world of science, philosophy, history, sociology and literature, inevitable advancements were made in science, new philosophical movements, new literal genres, and interdisciplinary approaches emerged in the twentieth century. For instance, there is a statement about time which appeared both in literature and physics. A well-known American science fiction writer, Ray Cummings described time as “nature’s way to keep everything from happening all at once”⁷⁴ in his novel, *The Girl in the Golden Atom*. The exact statement also appeared in the prominent American theoretical physicist, John Wheeler’s book, *Complexity, Entropy, and the Physics of Information*. Significantly growing interest in time has led to various debates both in science and in literature. Even before the significant number of discussions about time in science during the twentieth century, a prominent French novelist, Jules Verne, who was obsessed with time-problems, had wrote several books about future or in a sense, books about time travel. As we all know, H. G. Wells’ *The Time Machine*, is about reversing time and as a result reversing the reality, undo things that have happened already. These mind-blowing masterpieces have a special place in the world literature and although they are considered as science fiction, twentieth century theories about time demonstrated that things that happen in the books are theoretically possible. For instance, according to the theory of relativity, time slows down for bodies that travel close to the speed of light; and time stops for bodies travelling at speed of light. So theoretically, time *must* go backward for bodies that travel faster than the speed of light. However, it is already proven that normal bodies or objects cannot move faster than the speed of light, so scientifically time travel is not possible ‘yet’ and remains as a dream. Speculating whether reversing time is possible or not is a wrong way

⁷⁴ Cummings, Ray. *The Girl in the Golden Atom*. (London: Mithuen, 1922), Ch. 5.

of thinking even though the interest in inherent in our civilisation. Perhaps that is why scientists, philosophers, and writers focus on different ways of understanding and conceiving time. In physics studies of both relativity and quantum mechanics became a new trend while in modern literature, history and philosophy, Historicism, Postmodernism, and most importantly New-Historicism emerged as the main philosophical and literary theories. The latter fields of studies do not only deal with time and time-related issues within the fields of humanities or social studies, but also project a perfect example of interdisciplinary studies. Influenced by science, history, psychology, and other fields, especially in literature, the new emphasis on the importance of time and reality represented through different kinds of fiction as a critic and writer, Stephen Spender put it, “[m]odern literature is obsessed with problems of time. Writers who differ in everything else share this pre-occupation. The least political, the least philosophical, even those who disclaim any interest in ideas are yet strangely concerned with time.”⁷⁵ Therefore, in fiction new literary genres and conventions appeared which are closely bound up with the aspects of time and time-related problems such as reality, history, and memory. The following chapters will try to explicate the relationships between time and fiction, time and reality, and most importantly the relationship of all three concepts in the lights of new scientific, literal, philosophical and psychological approaches.

⁷⁵ Spender, Stephen. “Books and the War II.” *New Writing* 3 (London, 1941), 14.

CHAPTER 2: Time and the Novel

2. 1. Time Values of Fiction

In the previous chapters the concept of time was explained through different period of human history and to be closely related with reality or realities, since both time and reality are relative terms. It has been emphasized that twentieth century was the time of upheaval concerning our views of time and reality that is deeply affected by time. In science, newly established definitions took root and so did in arts, philosophy, and especially in literature. Time became one of the central concepts of our thinking in literature as well, specifically in fiction as a prominent critic, Wyndham Lewis expresses that there is new “time-school of fiction”⁷⁶ in modern literature. In fiction, the writers deal with time in different scales; the whole of process structures the time value of the fiction which in many cases is very complex due to the involvement of various agents such as an author, characters, and readers. As Mac Taggart puts it: [t]here are as many time-series as there are selves who perceive things as in time . . . Strictly speaking, no time can be common to two selves.”⁷⁷ So, each novel has different time-values and time series that make up the structure of it. Moreover, chronological time may not be present in every novel or the complexity of characters may cause differentiation in time within the novel itself. The slippery nature of time, of course, might cause major confusion and its relation with character structure of the novel ‘must’ be balanced. A British author who is famous for the books about time, A. A. Mendilow argues,

The complex of relationship between the different time-values of the reader, the author and the hero produces a highly involved and delicately balanced structure. The illusion of completeness and continuity, of presence and presentness, and the imaginative shift of the reader from his own chronological present to the fictional past

⁷⁶ Lewis, Wyndham. *Time and Western Man*. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927), 24.

⁷⁷ T. M. E. Mac Taggart. *The Nature of Existence*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921), 63, 120.

in which novels are written, itself translated in reverse to fictive present, depend on the way these values are handled by the novelist and on his ability to maintain a suitable equilibrium between them all.⁷⁸

Mendilow also emphasizes the importance of delivering the different time-values of fiction, that is to say a combination of distinctions between each agent's time value because time of author (writing process), time of (in) fiction, and the reader's time is very much relative due to the fact that our experiences, ideas, and feelings happen at a different and personal rate. Furthermore, he also points out the distinction between the chronological duration of the writing, the chronological duration of the theme of the novel, and the chronological duration of the reading process. To make it easier to comprehend, Mendilow called the chronological duration of the theme of the novel as "fictional time"⁷⁹ which assumably implies neither a writing process nor reading process, but the time of happenings in fiction. It is, in fact, central aspect of the time-value of fiction. It can last for ages or for minutes, that basically depends on an author, but it is ineluctable. Usually, the classical novels cover chronological period of time; often a life-time of the main character(s) or the period of time in which the main events take place. For instance, in the fiction of Charles Dickens, fictional time often covers the journey of the protagonist that takes several years or decades. In addition, fictional time often continues chronologically in certain so called past, which makes it easier to follow the events and make sense of them.

Contrariwise, in the twentieth and the twenty first century literature, fictional time does not proceed chronologically and does not include long period of time to deliver the events and message. James Joyce's *Ulysses*, for example, events unfold over one single day and dismiss the idea of classical 'happy ever after' formula. Since the concept of time has gone haywire and such blurred, fictional time also became a complex element. As Mendilow

⁷⁸ Mendilow, A. A. *Time and the Novel*. (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), 63-64.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

suggests that fictional time also includes the “time that is being apprehended, that is the length of time covered by the content of the novel.”⁸⁰ So that depending on the content of the fiction, fictional time is being used with time-planes through certain literary techniques such as using flash-backs, the stream-of-consciousness, and the time-shift. That is what happens in *Ulysses*, where the reader’s imagination is puzzled, though it gives an illusion of continuity to make sense of it. As a writer, it is very hard to create such fictional world, some even would argue that is actually a choice of presenting mental or physical events in the novel. For Mendilow, such writers “deliberately sacrificed speed and the interest caused by movements and change to achieve closer correspondence between the pace of living, more truly, of thinking and feeling, and their depiction of it.”⁸¹ Moreover, there are some writers such as Marcel Proust and Henry James who present “small blocks of time . . . to give an impression of fullness and continuity within the limits of the unit of time chosen.”⁸² In modern and postmodern literature, these writing techniques are very common and since time is slippery, the writers re-defined the fictional time by playing with time itself. Of course, that is their depiction and treatment of time.

Nevertheless, no matter how short, long or chronologically arranged a novel in terms of fictional time, authors often try to position present as central in time, creating a character, (characters) or a narrator who enables to see the events in their eyes at certain times. In other words, they aspire us to experience the novel as certain characters and put us into it. That is why they can spark our thoughts or feelings towards the events in the novel. However, as a reader, s(he) has his own chronological duration of reading whereas the novel has its own fictional time. “The reader of a novel occupies an extended position in time, and within this falls the date of his reading the novel,” states Mendilow in *Time and the Novel*. The

⁸⁰ Ibid., 71.

⁸¹ Ibid., 73.

⁸² Ibid., 73.

chronological duration of reading does not always correspond with the fictional time and the novel often requires great imagination to experience certain reactions. That means the time locus of the reader is different. For instance, a twenty first century reader reads a historical novel where the fictional time takes place in the eighteenth century, reasonably, the reader tries to get into the spirit of the eighteenth century in order to apprehend the events more accurately. Initially it would be hard to transcend certain aspects such as change of perspective or an awkwardness of process due to the ideology gap. More importantly, the reader does not “in all probability bring to bear the same emotional attitude . . . the same predilections and prejudices and fears, upon a story”⁸³ dealing with the eighteenth century. It would be fair to remember the fact that every novel may not be relevant to the events or the readers of another age, or the readers have difficulty to relate themselves with a distant past since the readers have their own “horizons of expectations.”⁸⁴ In addition to that, writers, being themselves men or women of their time and writing for audiences of their time, tend to write in the terms and with the attitudes of their times. This is called as the time locus of the writer. However, further complications occur where we, in many ways, cannot call those novels or poetry as outdated. According to the literary theory, New Criticism, “a literary text as an artifact with an existence of its own, independent of and not necessarily related to its author, its readers, the historical time it depicts, or the historical period in which it was written.”⁸⁵ That means a great fiction *must* transcend time, even those which are called historical novels *must* contain the permanence of universal ideology of humanity, dealing with same conflicts, problems or virtues and at the same time dealing with certain plane of time. Certainly, that determines the differences of writers’ genius, and those who are great

⁸³ Ibid., 87.

⁸⁴ The term was coined by a German critic, Hans Robert Jauss. qtd. in Charles E. Bressler. “Reader-Oriented Criticism.” *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*. (Fifth Edition. Boston: Longman, 2011), 78.

⁸⁵ Bressler, Charles E. “Cultural Poetics or New Historicism.” *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*. (Fifth Edition. Boston: Longman, 2011), 185.

authors had always addressed to all times as well as to their contemporaries. In other words, they appeal every generation, no matter what the context is or fashions of writing. It is not easy to create such taste, such fictional world and it brings the author up against some significant problems of writing technique, narration or texture because there also emerge time-related issues. As Thomas Mann once wrote while speculating time problems concerning writing,

I do not know why this double time-entry account of time intrigues me, and why I am compelled to call attention to it-to both its personal and objective forms, the time in which the narrator moves and that in which his narrative takes place. It is a peculiar intertwining of time's courses, which are ordained moreover to be bound up with yet a third-that is, with the time the reader will one day take for a receptive reading of what is told here, so that he will be dealing with a threefold ordering of time: his own, that of the chronicler, and that of history.⁸⁶

Here Thomas Mann speculates on time-related problems that can occur occasionally and compel artistic conscience of an author. It is very common that an author puts himself or herself into a fiction for simultaneous narration while presenting events as a fictive past or fictive present to order time series. It is matter of type of novels and techniques that authors prefer to deliver their writings with. "Mostly the past tense in which the events are narrated are transposed by the reader into a fictive present, while any expository matter is felt as a past in relation to that present," argues Mendilow. As we mention before, this can be achieved with certain literary devices such as flash-backs, time-shift or stream of consciousness. These devices also enable the reader to feel that so called past as fictional present; meaning that imaginative shift fixates focus on related events or characters' consciousness. Additionally, "[n]ovels which use the device of 'time-shift' to any large degree constantly change their

⁸⁶ Mann, Thomas. *Doctor Faustus* (trans. John E. Woods. New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 267.

locus; each episode is treated as a fictional present, . . . without reference to the temporal position it occupies.”⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the theme or the events progress to the contemporary situation or scene; sometimes that progress creating an illusion of fictional future. For instance, in *Ulysses*, at some point the reader can lose the sense of presentness and even a sense of reality, while speculating on whether things and events are just product of pure imagination of the character or fictional past. Interestingly, there is also a sense of progress toward fictional future, in this case, the end of the day, which implies the fictive present. Eventually, the events in the novel end up in contemporary situation. As a result, due to the constant alterations in fictional time and thanks to imaginative time, time locus of the reader in ‘the novel’ constantly changes as well as the writer’s. So, bearing in mind the complexity of time values of a novel, one would genuinely argue that time-values are ineluctable and central to any fiction.

2. 2. Psychological Time

To make things even more complicated and yet distinctive, understandably plain, it would be noteworthy to explicate the significant terms related to time such as conceptual time and psychological time in fiction. First of all, to clarify what they actually mean, remembering the concept of time-keeping will give us important hints to commence with. In a daily life, a person measures time with a clock or observing the cycles of natural world; sunrise and sunset determines the start of the day and the end. Of course, mechanical clock, on the other hand, are more precise time measurements. Minutes, hours, days or months are commonly called as conceptual time or sometimes called as man-made time. Newton described it as “relative, apparent, and common time [which provides an] external measure of

⁸⁷ Mendilow, A. A. *Time and the Novel*. (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), 95.

duration by means of motion.”⁸⁸ The major reason why Newton called it as external measure is that for him, there was absolute time, and the idea of absolute time was utterly refuted by Einstein theories. Nevertheless, Newton was right calling it relative; in fact, everyone may not necessarily assign the same measurement of time and position. According to the definition of conceptual time by a prominent English mathematician, Karl Pearson, “[c]onceptual time is like a piece of blank paper ruled with lines at equal distances, upon which we may inscribe the sequence of our perceptions.”⁸⁹ He used a wise metaphor with key phrases that genuinely explain what the conceptual time is. Especially, the phrase “the sequence of our perceptions” is more illuminating and explanatory. In fact, life is also described through sequences such as the past, the present, and the future. Therefore, the conceptual time can be apprehended by everyone even though often perceived relatively, and usually shapes our lives.

However, it is sometimes confused with psychological time, though, they are distinctive at several points. The reason why they are confused is that both of them are relative, artificial, and we often feel like we think according to the conceptual time. Contrarywise, “clock time has no meaning for the imagination but is a highly artificial and arbitrary convention evolved for purposes of social expediency in order to regulate and coordinate actions involving more than one person,”⁹⁰ claims A. A. Mendilow. He also adds that “[o]ur sense of the speed or the duration of experience can only be assessed in terms of values and measured by our personal time, by psychological time, though for purposes of comparison we may project it against the fixed points of conceptual time.”⁹¹ Therefore, the psychological time generally includes the measurement of time by individual values rather

⁸⁸ Newton, Isaac. *Principia*. (trans. Andrew Motte. New York: Daniel Adee, 1846), 80-95.

⁸⁹ Pearson, Karl. “Space and Time.” *The Grammar of Science*. (Second Edition. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1900), 189.

⁹⁰ Mendilow, A. A. *Time and the Novel*. (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), 64.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

involving any common measurement such as a day, a month or a year. The passage of time perceived by an individual or personal rate which brings up the concept of inner time that is experienced differently by everyone. For instance, a week has a different time-value for a child and for an old man. "Looking forward, the child's week is a tiny fraction of time, while it constitutes a large slice of the time left to the old man" [... and] looking backward, it is a large part of the child's life and a very small part of the old man's life,"⁹² states Mendilow. This is mainly because the child and the old man experience time at different levels; the child lives her or his week with full of new experiences whereas the old man's time is often consisted of repetitive habits and experiences with certain frequency. In addition to that, "the inner time that is measured by the succession of states of consciousness has a different value as it is lived and as it is remembered."⁹³ Of course, time runs faster for moving bodies depending on the intensity of events, and while we are at some point near the state of stillness or a state of boredom, time passes more slowly, and interestingly that period of time lasts shorter in the memory. As one of the most influential authors in English literature, Henry Fielding points out, "history sometimes seems to stand still, and sometimes to fly."⁹⁴ That entirely depend on the psychological state or consciousness of a person, and the sequence of change whether it is mental or physical. A perfect example of this situation is masterfully portrayed in *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett, where the characters hang around to pass the time in a meaningless way. When the characters give their attention to talking (which requires thinking) even though randomly, the passage of time seems to be faster than it is in the state of waiting. The play presents no hint of the conceptual time and primarily focus on psychological time of the characters while revealing shocking and unpleasant sides of existential crisis. Interestingly, the chaos of irrelevances in their conversations somehow

⁹² Ibid., 118-19.

⁹³ Ibid., 119.

⁹⁴ Fielding, Henry. *The History of Tom Jones*. Book II. Ch. I (New York: The Century Co. 1907.)

demonstrates the flux of life and the way how our consciousness works. As one of the most popular Romantic poets, Percy B. Shelley once composed, “[t]ime is our consciousness of the succession of ideas in our mind.”⁹⁵ This definition seems to be very plausible and accurate, in fact, time is like some kind of succession or acts like a regulator of succession of events. However, when we look at it in a psychological perspective, it does not really fit such definition, because consciousness is full of complications and there is no actual explanation that can demonstrate the way(s) it works. Therefore, the concept of psychological time is slippery, not easy to define, and more importantly, it unfolds in personal rate and has different values. As the prominent twentieth century English poet, W. H. Auden once pointed out,

Clocks cannot tell our time of day...

Because we have no time, because

We have no time until

We know what time we feel.⁹⁶

Thus, all these complex characteristics of psychological time give us insights of how to treat it through different interests. Considering the complex nature of psychological time, it can be elaborated on different levels based on certain characteristics and importance in relation with the author, fiction, and the reader. For instance, introducing psychological tempo in fiction or psychological duration of characters in the novel and psychological duration of the reading will make it much easier to apprehend the big picture and provide different perspectives about psychological time in fiction.

Many literary critics agree on and emphasize the distinction between the chronological tempo and the psychological tempo in the novel. As we elaborated the former

⁹⁵ Shelley, Percy Bysshe. “Notes – VIII.” *Queen Mab*. (London: John Brooks, 1829), 193.

⁹⁶ Auden, W. H. “We’re Late.” *All Poetry.com*. Web. 06 Feb. 2021.

<<https://allpoetry.com/We're-Late>>

as the chronological duration of reading in the previous chapter, it is indeed, closely related with the fictional and the texture of the novel rather than effectiveness or continuity of the fiction that grasp the attention of the reader. On the other hand, psychological tempo of the novel is about progressive continuity of events alongside with catchy and effective contexts that evoke a variety of interests, certain feelings, and reactions in the reader where the reader dives in the novel with all heed. However, “[d]iscontinuity, constant change of temporal sequence and absence of purposiveness reduce the tempo because the reader is helped up so often; where there is no clear line of progressive action, his impulse to thrust forward and anticipate conclusions is frustrated,”⁹⁷ claims the British literary critic and author, Adam Abraham Mendilow. He also expands his explanation by stating that “[s]uspense and hope when satisfied within a reasonable time stimulate the imagination and increase the psychological tempo, [and contrariwise where] suspense and hope unreasonably deferred make the heart sick and reduce [the tempo].”⁹⁸ Therefore, it also coincides with the term of psychological duration of reading, because the speed with which time passes for the reader while (s)he is reading, shows the fact of how far the reader finds the novel interesting. Many modern novelists manipulate the narration in unconventional and puzzling ways which influences the psychological tempo the reader experiences while reading. Perhaps, that is why those novelists are called as the authors of psychological fiction in which “the physical action is subordinated to the mental or emotional activity,”⁹⁹ thus, slows down the tempo. More importantly, those mental or emotional activities are treated densely and the fiction, sometimes, becomes far more incomprehensible. The most famous example is, perhaps, *Finnegan’s Wake* by James Joyce. The novel is considered one of the most puzzling novels of all time and the reader spends much greater length of conceptual time or clock time to cover

⁹⁷ Mendilow, A. A. *Time and the Novel*. (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), 125.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 125-26.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 126.

much shorter fictional time. Joyce attempted to present us the true version of life with all its complexity and confusion, and as a result, he ended up writing fascinatingly unreadable novel by twisting the standard language and using lots of portmanteau words. The reader experiences such confusion that even the plot itself is hard to understand and the novel seems to be not progressing forward at all. To make things even more complicated, the fictional time is so blurred, sometimes there is no direct reference to fictional past or present in the sequence of events. Although the reader feels to be lost in the lines of the novel, it is important to indicate that his or her imagination can progress freely. Only one page can occupy the reader's imagination for hours or for days in clock time, thus, psychological duration of the reader is prolonged with each interest. In that case, the interest is aroused by "the sequence of presentation"¹⁰⁰ rather than the sequence of progressive events. So, the sequence of events progresses mentally or through imagination of the reader, not by clock time. That, of course, generates several time-planes in the reading process in relation with the fiction and does not mean relevant problem, but rather shows effectiveness of the sequence of presentation by the author. Therefore, the relationship between the psychological duration of reading and tempo can be regarded significant factors that defines psychological time in fiction.

Furthermore, in the twentieth century and the twenty first century fiction, the psychological duration of the characters gained vital importance due to the widespread influences of psychoanalysis. Many modernist authors focus on drawing attention onto the minds of their characters while building cause and effect relationships to justify the actions. In addition to that, the form in fiction became so unconventional and not quite important as it was before with new techniques and literary devices such as time-shift (sometimes reflecting memories or recollection of the past) and stream-of-consciousness. The realistically drawn

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 124.

characters both physically and psychologically have begun to appear in the novel and thus, the psychological duration of the characters happens to be the key aspect to make the reader to identify himself or herself with the characters. Hence, the novelists developed “a method for inducing the transfer of [the reader’s] feelings of excitement or suspense as expressed by the relative speed of the character’s sense of duration.”¹⁰¹ Because, the reader can draw many parallels between the fictional character(s) and himself in terms of time as well which makes it easier to establish mental representations and expectations through time. Usually, the authors try to create a fictional present for the characters which moves forward, and sometimes using time-shift or presenting the memories of the characters, they also make references to the fictional past. Obviously, showing the fictional past gives the feeling of current fictive present where the characters dwell. More importantly, it “is the depiction of the way time passes or the way the character[s] feels it passes”¹⁰² where the reader is capable of following the process of characters’ thoughts and the sequence of his or her sense-impressions. As a result, the reader can witness the way the character’s mind works and its pace in time with the help of stream-of-consciousness. One of the earliest examples of such characters can be associated with Laurence Sterne who is considered as a pioneer of modernist and postmodern literary thought. In his most popular novel, *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne “illustrates ‘the eternal scampering of the discourse’ between characters which touches on so many different subjects that it fills their time and makes hours pass in the twinkling of an eye. He is constantly shifting ground, expanding and contracting his temporal horizons. But he never fails to bring his characters and readers back to earth by offering his own comments on the passage of time.”¹⁰³ Sterne’s major interest is to reflect the mental process of the characters by focusing on personal values of time. That is why for Sterne,

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 131.

¹⁰² Ibid., 131.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 133.

psychological time is about the duration that is closely related to human nature and human behaviour. Hence, it enables the reader to identify himself or herself mentally with the character and the way (s)he acts.

Moreover, it is often confusing and hard to follow the varying durational speeds that occupy the character's mind, especially when it is presented us through stream-of-consciousness. In such occasions, the character's mind touches on so many different subjects that busy his or her psychological time, the speed of it is so mind-blowing fast and yet the passage of conceptual time is only 3-5 minutes. At one point in Joyce's *Ulysses*, the main character named Harold Bloom, muses on different aspects of life when he watches the crowded street. This is the way how he thinks:

Trams passed one another, ingoing, outgoing, clanging, clanging. Useless words.

Things go on the same day after day: squads of police marching out, back: trams in, out. Those two loonies mooching about. Dignam carted off. Mina Purefoy swollen belly on a bed groaning to have a child trugged out of her. One born very second somewhere. Other dying every second. Since I fed the birds five minutes. Three hundred kicked the bucket. Other three hundred born, washing the blood off, all are washed in the blood of the lamb, bawling maaaaaa.¹⁰⁴

Here, the character's mind moves forward, backward, and again forward (feeding the birds), then unchangeable Now in time without any chronological logic or proper form of discourse. Yet, it portrays his sequence of ongoing thoughts and feelings in the consciousness realistically with the chaos of irrelevances that happens in all our minds at certain times. The key point is that psychological time does not proceed chronologically or not always logically, so the duration or the passage of time becomes blurred to follow, but that is the way how consciousness works. Joyce actually tries to demonstrate it through fundamental oddities of

¹⁰⁴ Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. (London: The Egoist Press, 1922), 156.

time, language, and their relation with our minds constructing a sense of reality and the world.

Additionally, there are considerable number of well-known authors of the twentieth and the twenty first centuries who deal with time rather obsessively, especially through the term history or the past that is reflected on psychological duration of their characters. Thanks to the unconventional literary theories of famous critics such as Jean-François Lyotard, Robert Young, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, and perhaps, the most influential literary critics about history, Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes, new literary approaches to history appeared in both philosophy and fiction. The authors are too many to count, who deal with history, memory as well as linguistic features of historical representations in fiction. Nevertheless, it would be useful to give examples of such authors who re-shaped or re-constructed our views about time, history or representations of the past, such as Laurence Sterne, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, George Orwell, Scott Fitzgerald, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Graham Swift, and many contemporary writers like Andrea Levy, Julian Barnes, Jeanette Winterson, Margaret Atwood who deal with a variety of different aspects of time, history, and with all complexities of their combination and relationships within fiction. For instance, in Fitzgerald's fiction, *The Great Gatsby*, the psychological duration of the main character portrays a perfect example of the obsession with past, striving for restoring past; therefore, it could be said that the character is somehow psychologically stuck in the past, yet that fictional past goes forward and backward constantly throughout the novel. On the other hand, in the fiction of Jeanette Winterson, the main characters often undergo some sort of both physical and psychological 'journey' at different levels or sometimes at different time-planes. Furthermore, due to the Winterson's masterful use of the time-shifts that occur at some points and blur the chronological events, the psychological duration of characters became more complex than ever with different layers of pastness and, yet the novels usually

end up at fictional present which even alludes the fictional future. The most importantly, the fiction and literary style of Julian Barnes will be elaborated and analysed comprehensively in terms of time, the past, history, memory and their relationship with each other and with reality(ies) in later chapters, after all, it is the fundamental objective of this thesis.

2. 3. Language and the Planes of Reality

Speaking of a sense of reality, Rene Descartes once emphasized the importance of reasoning to determine what is reality or illusion of reality. The idea of a mind that makes its reality out of the material was one of his main arguments that has left lingering effects on later generations. When it comes to novel, many authors try to represent life-like experiences in every possible way whether it is physical or psychological. Before the modernist movement, it was common to present possibly exact representation of life in the novels with a lot of imageries, literary devices, and chronologically ordered timeline. Contrariwise, the modernist literature focuses on more psychological state of existence of a person trying to represent what thinking is actually like. This is perhaps the most challenging problem in literature for both writers and readers that the “relation between experience and the inherent limitations in the medium that tries to convey that experience.”¹⁰⁵ In other words, nothing or no one can be completely described, which brings the problem of language or semantics concerning reality. The well-known author in British literature, Robert Louis Stevenson explains this situation very simply as he wrote, “[t]here are not words enough in all Shakespeare to express merest fraction of a man’s experience in an hour.”¹⁰⁶ In fact, the semantics of language does not make it possible to do so, mainly because of the inadequacy

¹⁰⁵ Mendilow, A. A. *Time and the Novel*. (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), 81.

¹⁰⁶ Stevenson, Robert Louis. qtd. in A. A. Mendilow. *Time and the Novel*. (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), 81.

of language to convey the reality. Mendilow expresses this problem in *Time and the Novel* as follows,

Language cannot convey non-verbal experience; being successive and linear, it cannot express simultaneous experiences; being composed of separate and divisible units, whether of words or groups of words; it cannot reveal the unbroken flow of the process of living. Reality cannot be expressed or conveyed – only the illusion of it.¹⁰⁷

In here, Mendilow refers to the limitations of time and language. In addition, it reminds us the explanation of time by Albert Einstein, more specifically his lighting example. While simultaneity is only a relative concept, the reality that is depicted in fiction becomes very much relative or more accurately, the fragments of reality expressed in a certain pattern within the limitations of language and time. The alternative is merely to portray a picture of life as it is in the most possible way with the illusion of completeness and continuity. The earliest examples of this can be seen in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, where the experiences, feelings, and even thoughts of the main character are attempted to be pictured through verbal expression, creating such a vivid world one would forget that it is merely fictional illusion of reality. Actions and minds of the characters in the novel are partly expressed since there are chronological discontinuity or intervals in terms of time while in reality there aren't, and yet Sterne deserves much of credit for revealing the discrepancy between reality and fictional reality which is relative. Sterne's unconventional techniques and style influenced the twentieth century and twenty first century writers so much, that it would not be possible to say that many of them used and perfected his style and his inclinations towards expressing inward self of a character.

The modernist and postmodernist approaches to reality and its relation with language are unusual and revolutionary in every sense. For modernists and postmodernists, not just a

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 81.

form or methods are not in question, but also discourses and representations became the major challenges of the movement. As it is pointed out that language cannot convey experiences, thoughts, feelings or basically the reality utterly, so one might presume what is presented us in fiction may be dishonest, incomplete and yet plausible crooked stories whether they are historical or totally fictional. However, we must distinguish misrepresentations from multi-representations of reality which sometimes coexist in the same discourse. Yet, it does not mean that we can reach out complete, honest version of reality through (representations) language because “[t]he longing for innocent, unprocessed source that will afford a fresher, truer vision . . . is doomed to frustration.”¹⁰⁸ For instance, historical text or historical fiction cannot represent the truer version of history, but rather present us representations in language through rhetoric, certain methods or discourses to achieve plausibility, continuity, and more importantly more realistic representation. In this sense, traditional representation of reality is closely associated with continuity of history(ies) or stories; sequential progress of events, thoughts, and feelings. At this point, remember how Ray Cummings described time: “Time is nature’s way to keep everything from happening all at once.”¹⁰⁹ Because, traditionally speaking continuity or chronological order of happenings creates a sense of certainty, makes stories verifiable, and presumably more understandable relying on human experiences. One of the most prominent and influential postmodernist critics and historian, Hans Kellner argues that what makes continuity so important is that it became fundamental aspect of narrative and discourse in defining and presenting reality. He suggests that “[w]hat is continuous is not so much reality, or the form in which reality exists (as artifact) in its obvious discontinuity, but the form in which our culture represents

¹⁰⁸ Kellner, Hans. “Language and historical representation.” *The Postmodern History Reader*. (ed. Keith Jenkins. London: Routledge, 1997), 127.

¹⁰⁹ Cummings, Ray. *The Girl in the Golden Atom*. (London: Mithuen, 1922), Ch. 5.

reality.”¹¹⁰ He also states that “[r]hetoric, representation, and reality, however, cannot be separated from one another. To do so is to repress that part of human reality that accounts for our understanding, convictions, and values.”¹¹¹ That means what we know as reality depends on how we represent it through perspectives, more importantly and inevitably through language, through rhetoric. In other words, our ways of making sense of reality must emphasize the *making*. Thus, the reality or ‘realities,’ whether historical or fictional, are inseparably related to time and language with which they are presented to us.

It is often a challenging task for authors to present proper representations of reality, especially when it comes to historical narratives in which historical events are portrayed relatively and close to actual events as much as possible. For the famous historian and literary critic, Hayden White, “[t]here is an inexpungeable relativity in every representation of historical phenomena. The relativity of the representation is a function of the language used to describe and thereby constitute past events as possible objects of explanation and understanding.”¹¹² Hence, each author in a way constitutes his or her version of reality through language, which usually can be relatively described meaningful stories or narratives. Sometimes even what we call as factual statements can be a set of facts transformed into a story. For Nietzsche and Hayden White, we are as humans inherently inclined for interpretations, so naturally those interpretations could be different and variable or as White puts it, “competing narratives”¹¹³ in the forms of plausible stories. “Stories, like factual statements, are linguistic entities and belong to the order of discourse,”¹¹⁴ emphasizes Hayden White. Therefore, the fact that every writer with a different interpretation of reality and a different technique for stylising it into art is bound to the limitations of linguistic features. In

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 129.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 130.

¹¹² White, Hayden. “Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth.” *The Postmodern History Reader*. (ed. Keith Jenkins. London: Routledge, 1997), 392.

¹¹³ Ibid., 393.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 393.

addition to that, other factors mainly time influences our perception of both language and reality in a most dramatic way as we elaborated in the previous chapters. One may even argue that eventual changes in a language can also change our conception of reality and time. Thus, language has a key role in our understanding of facts or fiction, reality, time, and more importantly our understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

2. 4. Fiction, Language, Time and Bergson's *durée*

In the midst of the new developments, world-changing theories, revolutionary ideas in science and literature concerning time, reality, language and their relationships with each other, there emerged certain illuminating theories in the field of philosophy as well which had significant contribution to our understanding of these concepts in real life and in fiction. Philosophical theories of time and reality in relation with language became popular during the first part of the twentieth century mainly because of the theory of relativity that helped us to define what they actually are. Many philosophers and scholars believed that because of the limitations of language, time defies any material interpretation. Mendilow states that,

Yet even if, as others maintain, we do possess within our consciousness some sense or power which allows us directly to perceive the passage of time, this too would help little towards the understanding of its true nature, for objects of our sensory experience are not the same as the product of the sensations we have of them. Our sense data, or our awareness of them, are not necessarily identifiable with the reality that has proved them.¹¹⁵

This statement also refers to the concept of psychological time which does not give a clear explanation about time in general, but it gives important clues to seek out the pieces of the puzzle. Furthermore, as it is stated before, the major philosophical problem occurs when

¹¹⁵ Mendilow, A. A. *Time and the Novel*. (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), 145-146.

we express our thoughts in language about the passage of time, the nature of time or its relation with reality. “For language, consisting as it does of bounded, discrete units cannot satisfactorily represent the unbounded and continuous [meaning time]. And one object of the novelist is precisely to create the illusion of these qualities as they are perceived in thought and sensation,”¹¹⁶ emphasizes Mendilow in *Time and the Novel*. In fact, our mind or our consciousness process everything through language, categorizing logically often by conventions, imposes forms for things which we do not fully understand and more importantly naming makes it easier to give a definition. Time and reality are the *things* that usually elude any concrete or precise definition because of their nature. Yet, millions of philosophers, scientists, writers, poets, and artists try to give a proper definition. It cannot be said they succeed utterly in doing so, but they revealed shocking truths about their nature within the limits of language. The reason why they are within the limits of language is because of the fact that “[o]ur forms of thinking are verbal. Our modes of purpose and feeling, if they are not verbal, can at least only be examined and compared by means of words.”¹¹⁷ Indeed, one would even claim that our mind operates through language. Therefore, the problems about the nature of reality and time are closely connected with language itself and fiction where a writer portrays characters and events has always faced with such fundamental problems concerning language. Mendilow addresses these problems with language in fiction in relation to time and conveying reality as he explains:

[I]f our thinking is atomistic, our experience, in itself and not as we consciously organise it, is a flowing, a constant becoming. In addition to this untranslatable fluidity, or as part of it, our awareness, or consciousness, or thought or feeling, or whatever terms we may choose for the state of reacting knowingly to internal or

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 147.

¹¹⁷ Richards, I. A. *Basic in Teaching East and West*. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd, 1935), 62.

external events, even when it is on the conscious plane, even where it is essentially verbal, and not visual or tactile or motile as it may largely be, does not proceed in a linear or melodic fashion as do words, but in harmonic or contrapuntal fashion on simultaneous, superimposed planes. If this is the way our psychic processes function, why then should not the novelist illustrate it in his characters? ¹¹⁸

This is, indeed, one of the major problems in fiction confronting the writer among the other aspects of language, time, and reality. The possible answer to the question above comes from a French philosopher named Henri Bergson who is well-known for the term, *la durée*, literally translated into English as duration. La durée or duration is actually a philosophical theory mainly about how our consciousness processes time and reality through expression or language. He claims that language does not and cannot reflect reality or time but rather transmutes it into something different. Therefore, for him, time eluded mathematics and science.¹¹⁹ In the first half of the twentieth century, there was a clash between philosophy and science when the theory of relativity provided certain answers to many puzzling questions about the world and the universe. Of course, obviously, “Bergson had a correspondence with physicist Albert Einstein in 1922 and a debate over Einstein's theory of relativity and its implications.” ¹²⁰ As a philosopher, Bergson had metaphysical and philosophical claims rather than scientific whereas as we all know Einstein proposed scientific evidence for the theory of relativity. Bergson was mainly occupied with the question of time, a moment or duration. He suggests that for the individual, time may speed up or slow down, whereas, for science, it would remain the same, so one cannot capture or grasp time because it is not incomplete and mobile. What he refers as time here is *durée*

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 147- 48.

¹¹⁹ Bergson, Henri. *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*. (trans. Mabelle L. Anderson. New York: The Philosophical Library, 1946), 11-16.

¹²⁰ Canales, Jimena. *The Physicist & the Philosopher: Einstein, Bergson, and the debate that changed our understanding of time*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 4.

which is mobile and incomplete and Bergson associates the inner life of a person with duration. As he famously states that “the inner life of man, which is a kind of duration, neither a unity nor a quantitative multiplicity.”¹²¹ To give a clear explanation to what Bergson’s duration actually is, it would be fair to use his own expression. For Bergson, “[d]uration is ineffable and can only be shown indirectly through images that can never reveal a complete picture. It can only be grasped through a simple intuition of the imagination.”¹²² Of course, many other philosophers and literary critics have made attempts to define what Bergson’s *durée* or duration actually is. An English writer, painter, and literary critic, Wyndham Lewis, who is famous for his penetrating critiques of James Joyce, Ezra Pound, and Gertrude Stein as well as Henri Bergson in his book, *Time and Western Man*, describes Bergson’s *durée* as “what occurs when we completely telescope the past into the present, and make our life a fiery point ‘eating’ like an acetylene flame into the future. ‘Duration is *inside us*, not outside. There is nothing but ‘mathematical Time’ outside us. ‘Duration’ is the *succession* of our conscious states, but *all felt at once*.”¹²³ He also adds that duration “is the organization of the past into a moving and changing present, into a incessantly renewed in intensive quantity.”¹²⁴

Hence, the theory of *durée* has immediately introduced a new conception of character in much of modern and postmodern fiction, especially in term of the formation of a personality. There have been major changes in fiction concerning not just plot or structure but also in tempo, inner life of a character and his/her awareness of it. The conventional literary styles became a little bit distanced, re-defined, and re-constructed. As Mendilow suggests, “[t]he fixing of personality by external description, by labels and definitions and lists of

¹²¹ Bergson, Henri. *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*. (trans. Mabelle L. Anderson. New York: The Philosophical Library, 1946), 11-16.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 165-168.

¹²³ Lewis, Wyndham. *Time and Western Man*. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927), 437.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 437.

characteristics has been discarded as false. Instead, personality is seen in the light of its moment-by moment renewal, as the ever-present past, which changes as it increases with moving time-field, pours into and through the formation we call a human being.”¹²⁵ This new personality description also undermines the conventional idea of fixed identities or fixed realities, and emphasizes that identities of the characters and reality are *moving* or *flowing* through each “time-field” or through every plane of time. This, of course, pushes us to think further on why Bergson used the words “incomplete” and “mobile.”

In addition to that, the Bergson’s *durée* has also brought about a new conception of plot and structure. His theory “has suggested the progressive narrowing of the fictional duration [or fictional time] covered by the novel at the same time as the expansion of the psychological duration of the characters. All life in a day, all life in a moment”¹²⁶ became one of the main objectives for writers. Perchance, Joyce’s *Ulysses* is the most famous example of it. Therefore, it can be concluded that the time locus of the theme of the novel has also undergone through a variety of changes. Usually, with the literary device of time-shift, the novels often change their time locus, as a result, every episode is seen as a fictional present. Even if it is written in the past tense, that past is not treated as separate or complete, rather presented as the piece of ever changing or moving present. This may remind us the famous Orwell’s term “reality control” with the help of language in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where the one of the most shocking party slogans is “who controls the present controls the past” because the past has no objective existence, only exists in written records and in human memory.¹²⁷ So the main point is that the past is seen as inseparable part of the present and can carry a possibility of changes depending on shifting situations in the present. Interestingly, Orwell affirms that those changes also closely associated with language itself. This will be

¹²⁵ Mendilow, A. A. *Time and the Novel*. (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), 149-50.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹²⁷ Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. (London: Penguin Books, 1954), 37.

surveyed in the next paragraphs in relation with Bergson's theory that can give useful insights about the nature of reality as well.

The verbal apprehension and communication of reality became central to Bergson's duration which had a significant contribution to some major problems of fiction. Bergson also believed that the words that we use to communicate convey our feelings and experiences insufficiently. Obviously, "each equivalating symbol [meaning words we use] acquires its particular attachment by being associated with the thing symbolised"¹²⁸ but communication of feelings, thoughts or perceptions cannot be maintained completely. For instance, suppose you feel deep love, or compassion or affection (whatever you name it) for someone or for something where you feel hundreds of different elements without any precise outlines or distinguishable characteristics in their original way. As soon as we try to express that feeling in words, we distort its originality which had as Bergson says "indefinable colour and homogeneous nature."¹²⁹ And now we have it "colourless, and ready to accept a name."¹³⁰ The feelings are by their nature, always changing and do not fit to rational explanation. Bergson describes feeling in his famous book, *Time and Free Will* as follows:

The feeling itself is a being which lives and develops and is therefore constantly changing; otherwise how could it gradually lead us to form a resolution? . . . But it lives because the duration in which it develops is a duration whose moments permeate one another, by spreading out time in space, we have caused this feeling to lose its life and its colour. Hence, we are now standing before our own shadow: we believe that we have analysed our feeling, while we have really replaced it by a juxtaposition of lifeless states which can be translated into words, and each of which constitutes the common element, the impersonal residue, of the impressions felt in a given case by

¹²⁸ Mendilow, A. A. *Time and the Novel*. (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), 151.

¹²⁹ Bergson, Henri. *Time and Free Will: An Essay on Immediate Data of Consciousness*. (trans. F. L. Pogson. Edinburgh: The Riverside Press, 1950), 132.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 132.

the whole of society.”¹³¹

As a solution to the problem, a novelist can show the reader the fundamental absurdity of the situation, and can arrange “this shadow” in such way as to make the reader suspect the illogical nature of sensations or feelings and thought in fiction. Hence, the novelists must explore the possibilities of linguistic illusion. Thanks to the theory of *durée*, the modernist and postmodernist writers started

adopting the perceptual view of life in terms of flow . . . They break up and reform the patterns of language with repetitions and elipses, portmanteaux words and new coinages, half-seized allusions, emotive words, evocative images; they stun us, hypnotise us, jolt us out of the grooves of formal logic, and so aim at inducing in us the re-creation by intuition of the queer flux of sensations and perceptions that without pause floods our minds.¹³²

The traditional literary styles and techniques, even the themes began to no longer exist in the novels in which the new romantic attitude to reality and history (or time) as embodied in the theory of flow, *durée* and the relation of language to reality and history have taken place. The modernist and postmodernist writers began giving up the idea of reproducing reality, and started to write in such a style using unconventional literary techniques and linguistic devices to evoke illogical and irrational feel of reality in the readers. As one of the biggest outcomes of such radical changes in fiction, in literature, the novelists made sure the readers must be aware of the fact that it is impossible to capture all-encompassing objective reality, but can access to as many realities as there are people. Even the most common yet abstract reality like time, proved to be relative, individual or subjectively perceived condition that we are all part of.

¹³¹ Ibid., 133.

¹³² Mendilow, A. A. *Time and the Novel*. (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), 153-54.

2. 5. History and the Novel

After the Second World War, with the New Philosophy and New Criticism, any kind of texts and narratives, or any kind of unified views of history and representations of reality were challenged seriously due to the traumatic experiences of the war which pushed the humanity to look back under a variety of concerns. Even after the Second World War, the humanity was under the threat of nuclear destruction of the world given the clash between the USSR and the USA. The historians, philosophers, critics, writers and artists mainly concerned with examining the past to reconstruct the lost social, cultural, and artistic values of humanity while learning a great deal from the recent historical events. In literature as well as in philosophy and history, the scholars started to question underlying motives of texts while exploring why a text is written in the way it is, as much as how and when it is written. In other words, they began to question the nature of a text, its ideological force, its effects on the social framework and mainly historical texts or history, which were considered as the reliable sources of real representations of past events in a coherent and meaningful way, has lost its reliability and coherence. Critical studies tend to approach history as textual artifact just like a literary work, so that history is no longer considered as a coherent list of facts, but rather as seen as the interpretations of fragmented past.

Hence, historians accepted the textuality of history; “that is historicism is self-conscious of only being able to know the past through language.”¹³³ Even though poststructuralism had big influences on the idea of textuality of history and its discourse, it is not the only factor that history became a narrative. Because of these challenges and postmodern notion of history, and the major idea that history is fragmented, subjective interpretation of past events, “[m]icrohistories or alternative histories become the centre of

¹³³ Ellam, Julie. “Changes in Critical Responses and Approaches.” *The Post-War British Literature Handbook*. (Eds. Katherine Cockin and Jago Morrison. London: Continuum, 2010), 132.

interest for history.”¹³⁴ In other words, once were the marginalized narratives took the spotlight which may help re-interpret the past comprehensively through different discourses as they are the only available sources to understand it. As a result, our understanding of history also began to be deconstructed and re-shaped once again and started to be often associated with literary narratives. Nevertheless, it would be unfair to “deny the fact that history is a powerful means by which people define their identity.”¹³⁵ As John Tosh points out that “history is collective memory, the storehouse of experience which people develop a sense of their social identity and their future prospects.”¹³⁶ One of the most prominent contemporary British writers, Julian Barnes also assured with a slightly similar and yet a different statement. “History isn’t the lies of the victors, . . . it is more the memories of the survivors, most of whom are neither victorious nor defeated. . . . History is that certainty produced at the point where the imperfections of memory meet the inadequacies of documentation,” says Barnes in his famous book, *The Sense of an Ending*.¹³⁷ So one’s social identity may sometimes depend on that inadequate documentation where memory might not always fit its assumptions.

Naturally, John Tosh emphasizes the importance of past (what he refers as history) and preserving it in collective memory and in documentation because of its crucial role in constructing one’s social identity as well as national identity. On the other hand, Julian Barnes puts forward a questioning approach to the nature of that documentation or more precisely the documentation or the narrativization of the past events by a historian through

¹³⁴ Atilla, Aylin. Introduction. *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 2.

¹³⁵ Himmelfarb, Gertrude. qtd. in Aylin Atilla. Introduction. *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 2.

¹³⁶ Tosh, John. qtd. in Aylin Atilla. Introduction. *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 2.

¹³⁷ Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), 56-59.

textuality and rhetoric. More importantly, narrativizations can be incomplete or incorrect and often serve for certain purposes such as political and moral. George Iggers claims that,

History has been written for very different purposes and in very different ways, so that the borderline between history and myth, history and poetry, history and ideology has often been a fluid one. Moreover, the days when historians could confidently write that “history is a science, no less and no more” are long lost.¹³⁸

Here, Iggers clearly emphasizes the fact that we have no access to reality or the facts that happened in the past but only their representations and interpretations by various historians and authors. Therefore, the work of historian no longer gives us the feelings of credibility, at least no more than a writer’s work. As Aylin Atilla puts it, [w]hen historiography is placed on the same plane as fiction, then the historian and the writer raise the same questions about the nature of reality and its representations and both genres deal with the disclosures that transcend the local, contingent, time-bound stories and display the loss of faith in their ability to represent reality.”¹³⁹ She also draws attention to the subjectivity of those representations or stories as she adds that “[i]nvariably, moral, ethic, or political messages are included, and this gives shape to the events narrated [or represented]. In that case, regarding the question of objectivity, history’s neutral voice no longer exists because discourse inevitably designates the utterance with the intention of influencing the other.”¹⁴⁰ Besides, we must acknowledge the fact that the past (as the nature of time) is irreversible, can only exist in texts (historical, scientific, literal) and human memory, so naturally when a historian as well as a writer make attempts to revive the past, the inevitable intervention of subjective perspectives or ideology combined with inadequacy of language raises the major

¹³⁸ Iggers, George. qtd. in Aylin Atilla. Introduction. *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 3.

¹³⁹ Atilla, Aylin. Introduction. *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 4.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 7-8.

challenge and gives the impression of unreliability. This is, in fact, what postmodern accounts of reality, literature, and history propose where the problems of representations (including history) in relations with language and ideology factors as well as time, require certain serious re-consideration of our understandings of them.

Furthermore, thanks to the theories of Michel Foucault, the new theories of historiography, and deconstruction, the sense of the loss of European or Eurocentric history and culture as History and Culture, the loss of their unchallenged place at the centre of the world brought some series of problems about our understanding of history as whole which eventually led to the dissolution of Eurocentric history and gave the spotlight to postmodern notion of history. As a result, Western account of history began continually being re-viewed, re-presented, and re-written. So as Iain Chambers describes the outcome of this process, “the resulting narrative can only be historical *and* fragmentary, structured *and* open, continuous *and* interrupted. For historiography involves both the re-membling and the re-covering of the past: its temporary coherence simultaneously invokes disclosure and disguise.”¹⁴¹ Disclosure is, of course, the common feature of both historical and literary text, this only pushes us one more step to reconsider and recognise a historical text as literary artifact. In addition to that, postmodern accounts of history and language have no intention to see a distinction between fact and fiction, between history and his/her story, between reality and representations/interpretations. In fact, when it comes to the relationship between fiction and history, “the postmodernist writers fictionalize history to imply that it may be a form of fiction in itself. Especially, in historiographic metafiction, history and fiction change roles: history becomes fictional and fiction becomes ‘true’ history,” affirms Aylin Atilla in

¹⁴¹ Chambers, Iain. “Migrancy, Culture, Identity.” *The Postmodern History Reader*. (ed. Keith Jenkins. London: Routledge, 1997), 81.

Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90).¹⁴² Therefore, the projection of past as the form of history or historical text can be referred to the situation that “[w]e are left discussing the event of the gesture, the sign, the signature [of historian or writer], simulation, language” with coherent narrative.¹⁴³ As Croce puts it, “[w]here there is no narrative, there is no history.”¹⁴⁴ These new and rather provocative theories are neither a defence of history nor a refutation but a re-definition, re-interpretation of history, and particularly significant approaches to the past. More importantly, these new kinds of history are now on the agenda.

It would be more comprehensive not to leave out the other major features of historical textuality and rhetoric. With the advent of modern and postmodern notions of history including The New Philosophy and historiographical metafiction etc., history is now divided into fragmentations, different versions of history or past emerged, so naturally the different versions of understanding of time and reality as well. They can be significantly variable in different planes of time and place. Foucault claims that conceptions of history are not just dependent on people but rather on language as well. Language, “which not only represents the world of things but also constitutes the modes of the relationships among things.”¹⁴⁵ Another historian, philosopher, and critic, F. R. Ankersmit asserts that one particular literary device, ‘irony’ has special role in representations of history and reality. He suggests that irony is “the trope that is the natural ally of historical reality itself.”¹⁴⁶ Foucault also agreed on this thought and a well-known postmodern critic, Linda Hutcheon adds ‘parody’ as well in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*. She states that,

¹⁴² Atilla, Aylin. Introduction. *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 1.

¹⁴³ Chambers, Iain. “Migrancy, Culture, Identity.” *The Postmodern History Reader*. (ed. Keith Jenkins. London: Routledge, 1997), 81.

¹⁴⁴ Croce, Benedetto. qtd. in Aylin Atilla. “Narrative as a Mode of Representation.” *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 23.

¹⁴⁵ Foucault, Michel. qtd. in Aylin Atilla. Introduction. *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 9-10.

¹⁴⁶ Ankersmit, F. R. qtd. in Aylin Atilla. Introduction. *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 10.

In a very playful manner, parody sets up a dialogical relation between the writer and the reader creating both identification and distancing. It offers an alternative perspective on the present allowing the writer to speak with a disclosure both inside and outside the dominant context. Hence, it gives voice to those who are marginalised by a dominant ideology.¹⁴⁷

Hence, both irony and parody play crucial roles in reconstructing the past in fiction with all its fragmentations or representations and showing us the glimpse of the fact that history is, after all, human construct. Similar tendencies, including all new theories of history, can be identified with the characteristics of a literary criticism called New Historicism, which emerged in 1980s and have similar challenges with postmodern notion of history, time, fiction and reality. In the following paragraphs, the major defining features of the theory of New Historicism in relation with time and reality or representations of it will be elucidated in a wider sense.

2. 5. 1. New Historicism and Roland Barthes

For centuries, in the Western thought “History” was considered as the true and verifiable story of human experience, the guarantor of reality, of the meaning of human society and values. However, after the two world wars, humanity has lost the sense of truthfulness, reliability of any Westerns account of history. The textuality of history as well as the historicity of texts became one of the major interests in the fields of history, literature, philosophy, psychology as well as anthropology. With the development of the method which implies the *parallel* reading of literary and non-literary texts brought the idea of what Louis

¹⁴⁷Hutcheon, Linda. qtd. in Aylin Atilla. Introduction. *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 10.

Montrose called “equal weighting.”¹⁴⁸ As the prominent American critic, Stephen Greenbalt states, the idea of equal weighting “involves an intensified willingness to read *all* of textual traces of the past with the attention traditionally conferred only on literary texts.”¹⁴⁹ It implies an approach which does not privilege any texts whether historical or literary in relation with past. Stephen Greenbalt coined a term regarding this critical approach: ‘new historicism’ in his ground-breaking book, *Renaissance Self- Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare*. His initial objective was to juxtapose the texts which often contain different or opposing perspectives on certain subject matter, thus, drawing the attention to multiple (often subjective) interpretations of the same historical events. So, the marginalized, Others’ histories or alternative histories become a centre of interest which understandably indicates the loss of sense of absoluteness of ‘History’. Furthermore, the earlier approaches have made a rather hierarchical separation between a historical and literary text. However, New Historicism claims that literary texts as well as historical ones are not subordinated and implies a parallel study of recorded and represented history. We must remember that “historical events . . . are irrecoverably lost,”¹⁵⁰ so all we got are represented, recorded, edited past and memories (which are destined to fade by time, to be forgotten or selectively perceived). Therefore, the main focus of New Historicism is to juxtapose those different versions of the past through parallel study and consider the possibilities of different realities accordingly.

¹⁴⁸ Montrose, Louis. qtd. in Peter Barry. “New historicism and cultural materialism.” *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. (Third edition. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 166.

¹⁴⁹ Greenbalt, Stephen. qtd. in Peter Barry. “New historicism and cultural materialism.” *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. (Third edition. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 166.

¹⁵⁰ Barry, Peter. “New Historicism and Cultural Materialism.” *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. (Third edition. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 168.

Moreover, New Historicists implicitly uses the philosophy of post-structuralism and deconstruction, therefore, accepting

Derrida's view that there is nothing outside the text, in the special sense that everything about the past is only available to us in textualised form: it is 'thrice-processed,' first through the ideology, or outlook, or discursive practices of its own time, then through those of ours, and finally through the distorting web of language itself. Whatever is represented in a text is thereby remade.¹⁵¹

This, of course, emphasizes the important intervention of the theories of narrative and discourse, especially by Derrida. As long as there is 'textual' record (which we refer as history) there is a discourse and there another remaking or "another permutation of the past." Hence, the aim is no longer to present the past as it was, "but to present a new reality by re-situating it."¹⁵² Similarly, a tiny little oblivion or selective perception in the memory can cause such re-situating and existence of new realities about the past. In this sense, a historian's product is no different than our memory about the past, which sometimes can be selective, misrepresented, fragmented or seldomly disrupted versions of reality. As Munslow once wrote, "[h]istorians are, after all, the authors of the history they compose."¹⁵³

Additionally, a famous contemporary historicist, literary critic, Hans Kellner brought his own definition and contributions about the theory of New Historicism which have great deal to comprehend the characteristics of it in a wider sense. He also often associated with the term "*get the story crooked!*" as there is the book called *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked (Rhetoric of the Human Sciences)* by him that focuses on mainly historical representation and unconventional methods of reading history. For Kellner, "[g]etting the story crooked . . . is a way of *reading*. It means looking at the

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 169.

¹⁵² Ibid., 169.

¹⁵³ Munslow, Alun. qtd. in Aylin Atilla. "History as Text and Discourse." *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 49.

historical text in such a way as to make more apparent the problems and decisions that shape its strategies, however, hidden or disguised they may be. It is a way of looking honestly at the *other* sources of history, found not in archives or computer databases, but in discourse and rhetoric.”¹⁵⁴ In a way, this is what New Historicism aims to achieve through parallel readings and new linguistic methods that underlines the vanishing distinction between historical and literary texts. Another important contribution of Kellner is that he put forward the idea of discontinuous history and sequential plausibility which gives a sense of reality about the past. He strongly believes that historical sources are obviously not continuous, nor is conscious human experience of time continuous. In one of the previous paragraphs, it is stated that traditional representation of reality is closely associated with continuity of history (ies) or stories; sequential progress of events, thoughts, and feelings. However, in Kellner’s view, it is all about *making* sense of reality when it comes to historical representation because regardless of the relentless efforts of “narrative to make things continuous,” no narrative whether historical, scientific or literary can be utterly continuous. Therefore, a history is inevitable “a discontinuous thing in a world of discontinuous things” and yet continuity still remains one of the central intuitive certainties that we have about history.¹⁵⁵ More importantly, now we can come to conclusion that both historical and literary texts carry equally weighed features about the past, about the reality that we get from representations. Making meaningful, continuous, in some cases reliable interpretations of the past, of reality may depend on our perception.

During the mid-eighties, radical views were introduced by certain poststructuralists such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Roland Barthes. This paragraph will mainly focus on the theories of Roland Barthes whose contributions and influences to postmodernist

¹⁵⁴ Kellner, Hans. “Language and historical representation.” *The Postmodern History Reader*. (ed. Keith Jenkins. London: Routledge, 1997), 128.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 128-29.

literature have been immense, especially on historiographic metafiction. Roland Barthes, along with other critics, argues that “the efforts to make sense of ‘reality’ depend on linguistic structures, rather than direct accesses to reality.”¹⁵⁶ In that sense, history as well as a novel are linguistic constructs. To be more apparent, Barthes wrote that “[t]he historian is not so much a collector of facts as a collector and relater of signifiers; that is to say, he organizes them with the purpose of establishing positive meaning and filling the vacuum of pure, meaningless series.”¹⁵⁷ He also adds that “[f]rom the moment that language is involved (and when is it not involved?), the fact can only be defined in a tautological fashion.”¹⁵⁸ Here he apparently implies that a fact or truth has only linguistic existence as a term in discourse. This, of course takes attention from truth and points out the importance of discourse, narration or making meaningful series of stories. In postmodernism, historical fiction became more like partially fictional history and historiographic metafiction has taken place which contains the main features of both New Historicism and postmodernism. In other words, marginalized and possible versions of the past emerged as alternative sources of history, more importantly they coexist in the same time plane; traditional history can no longer hold the proof of reality alone. In fact, as Barthes puts it [h]istorical narration is dying because the sign of History from now on is longer the real, but the intelligible.”¹⁵⁹ Hence, an objective truth cannot be possible, not because historical discourse does not follow the real but because of the fact that history is more like a product of language. To sum up, it would be wise to quote one of the most prominent British historians, Edward Hallett Carr, as he puts it: “facts

¹⁵⁶ Barthes, Roland. qtd. in Aylin Atilla. “Historiographic Metafiction in the 1980s Britain.” *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 85.

¹⁵⁷ Barthes, Roland. “The Discourse of History.” *The Postmodern History Reader*. (ed. Keith Jenkins. London: Routledge, 1997), 121.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 121.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 123.

are like fish on the fish monger's slab, which are collected by the historian to be cooked and served in whatever style appeals to him.”¹⁶⁰

Regarding the terms, theories, methods that this study has covered so far about time, history, reality or realities, and their relationship with each other, the next chapter will evaluate the contemporary British writer, Julian Barnes's three novels: *The Sense of an Ending*, *Arthur & George*, and *The Noise of Time*. The central emphasis will be on coexistence of the characters' different histories and how they re-situate the past to reach out different realities. The main stories in the novels contain some kind of quests from present to past and from past to present to explore, to uncover the alternative histories that have lingering effects on the characters.

¹⁶⁰ Carr, E. H. *What is History?* (2nd edition. Ed. R. W. Davies. London: Penguin Books, 1987), 9.

CHAPTER 3: Re-defining Reality in Postmodern Literature and Julian Barnes

3. 1. Time and Representations of Reality(ies) in Julian Barnes

Having an inspirational journey through history and surveying some cogent theories about time, reality, and their representations in the various centuries which illuminated our understanding of them, show a path to re-evaluate and re-value those terms regarding the contemporary writings in English literature. Although a variety of theories including the theory of relativity, postmodernism, the New Historicism by different finest intellectual and artistic minds propose mind-blowing and convincing claims, even evidences regarding the definitions of time and reality, most importantly their relationships, they often tend to evade clear categorizations and definitions. As Aylin Atilla puts it in her remarkable critical book: “[o]bjectivity, relativism, truth [, time] and reality are problematic and elusive concepts whose definitions are interconnected and even contradictory.”¹⁶¹ Perhaps, the words such as interconnectedness, intertextuality, contradictory and generic hybridity would be appropriate terms to refer the contemporary fiction. Bearing these all in mind, it is time to move on one of the finest writers in contemporary fiction, Julian Barnes, and evaluate his three masterpieces in terms of time (including history) and reality which is after all the main objective of this thesis.

Julian Patrick Barnes is one of the best contemporary English writers, a sharp critic, and reviewer who made significant amount of contribution to shaping British high postmodernism in the 1980s. Well-known literary critics, Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs describe Julian Barnes as “the most versatile and idiosyncratic author of astoundingly talented generation of writers, and he is also intensely prolific and at home in many

¹⁶¹ Atilla, Aylin. “Problems of Truth and Reality, Objectivity and Relativism in Historiography.” *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 21.

genres.”¹⁶² Barnes is famous for his ground-breaking books and some intriguing detective writings as well as reviews and critical essays. Pinning Barnes under postmodernism may not be the most appropriate decision but his works often portrays postmodern problems of history, self, reality, relationship between life and art, life and author, more importantly the problem of time. After the publication of *Flaubert’s Parrot*, literary critics has labelled Barnes as a central figure of British high postmodernism of 1980s, because the novel contains multiple layers of meanings on different topics and “created an unhappy yet persistent conflation of Barnes with postmodernism, which for various reasons is a reductive commonplace.”¹⁶³ Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs emphasize that “Barnes’s works gave a clear sense of the ideas that are key to the period’s intellectual history in self-scrutinizing metafiction that challenges established readings of the past and conventional social categories, and, perhaps most importantly, exhibit an interest in intellectual significance and subversive potential of generic hybridity and serious play.”¹⁶⁴ In fact, Barnes’s scepticism regarding any truth claims indicates his postmodernist attitude. Nevertheless, we cannot reject the fact that Barnes is someone more than just a postmodernist writer and many critics as well as literary historians try to resituate Barnes’s *oeuvre* beyond the limits of postmodern trickery by placing his writings in various traditions and new critical contexts. “Vanessa Guignery also resists the temptation to file Barnes away under postmodernism [...] as she traces the evolution of Barnes’s profound and long-standing engagement with French literary traditions, particularly writers of the nineteenth century,”¹⁶⁵ say Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs. After the perusal of Barnes’s extraordinary and exciting novels up to the last ones, *The Noise of Time* (2016) and *The Man in the Red Coat* (2019), it is clear to see a fascinating

¹⁶² Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs. “Julian Barnes and the Wisdom of Uncertainty.” *Julian Barnes: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. (Eds. Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 1.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

trajectory that traces the changing tastes and interest of the evolving writer. His strong curiosity and unending focus on problems of history (the past, memory), time, representations of reality(ies) as well as on multiple layers of meanings are the main things that set Barnes apart from other contemporary British writers. In his ground-breaking and fascinating novels such as *Arthur & George* (2005), *The Sense of an Ending* (2011), and *The Noise of Time* (2016), Barnes engaged in distinctive and rather experimental approaches towards history or the past, reality and their representations as well as time itself that illuminate our understanding of them and Barnes, while also complicating and deepening them.

Time for Barnes is very curious thing to engage. Barnes's "abiding concern with testing the boundaries of the novel form, turning its bagginess into an opportunity for exploration, ignoring generic definitions and espousing the mongrelisation of fiction that issues in newness"¹⁶⁶ has always been apparent in his writings, and so does the concern with the problems of time in relation with reality with unconventional approaches. His almost obsession like interest in time, especially the past, does not just include the preservation of past world and realities including minor historical events in archives. As it has been said regarding the postmodernist notion of history and its representation that history comes into existence when it is represented in a narrative. However, to a certain extent, Barnes's novels usually require readers to critically assess all narrative and take nothing for granted because no matter how we try, the past is irrecoverable, time is elusive, relative, and often deludes us. In *Flaubert's Parrot*, Barnes introduces his major questions about the time; about history as he repeatedly asks "How do we seize the past? Can we ever do so?"¹⁶⁷ In fact, these questions also trigger and illuminate the problematic relationship between time and reality or its representations. Barnes explains this problem of the past with his tiny story in the novel as he tells:

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 10.

¹⁶⁷ Barnes, Julian. *Flaubert's Parrot*. (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1985), 14.

When I was a medical student some pranksters at an end-of-term dance released into the hall a piglet which had been smeared with grease. It squirmed between legs, Evaded capture, squealed a lot. People fell over trying to grasp it, and were made to look ridiculous in the process. The past [in matter of fact, time] often seems to behave like that piglet.¹⁶⁸

Although Barnes's clear answer to the questions is no, he proposes rather different definitions and ways of understanding the relationships between history or time and reality, and their representations in his later writings. For instance, in *Arthur & George*, he reveals his changing attitude towards time and history by combining three different tenses as he wrote, "[George] gazes through his succession of lenses, out into the air and beyond.

What does he see?

What did he see?

What will he see?"¹⁶⁹

This combination of three tenses or three parts of time which as Christine Berberich suggests "are symptomatic of uncertainty regarding not only the Edalji case, but historical events in general. As readers, finding out about the case over a hundred years later, we can never know the entire truth; we can only assume, conject and hypothesize."¹⁷⁰ Even though Barnes's view on time does not necessarily reinforce a drive to locate a ground of being outside time, it does suggest relativity of time and reality when we acknowledge uncertainty and unseizable nature of the past, and luckily, fiction offers the possibility to create such complex and deep atmosphere.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 14.

¹⁶⁹ Barnes, Julian. *Arthur & George*. (London: Vintage Books, 2006), 501.

¹⁷⁰ Berberich, Christine. "'All Letters Quoted Are Authentic': The Past After Postmodern Fabulation in Julian Barnes's *Arthur & George*." *Julian Barnes: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. (Eds. Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 128.

Furthermore, a prominent literary critic, Peter Childs quotes that “Barnes has said that with each novel he aims to write not just fiction that seems fresh to him but fiction which reinvents the novel itself. This is the element of fabulation that comes through the novels he has written under his own name, characterised by inventiveness, and a scepticism towards concepts like truth, history, and reality.”¹⁷¹ Advent of popularity with *Flaubert’s Parrot* has positioned Barnes among the best British writers of 1980s and later on. *Flaubert’s Parrot* and his later works such as *Talking It Over*, *Arthur & George* are formally different in many respects, and this clearly shows his experimentation with genre, form and style, blurring distinctions between fact and fiction, between history and fiction writing.

Moreover, we cannot reject Barnes’s considerable skill at adapting his voice to different genres and settings. Through mixing different genres and settings Barnes does not just demonstrate the distinctions between genres and forms, he also veer into many kinds of experimentation with modes of representation or narrative while he is “deeply concerned with how belief, conviction, and desire can shape an understanding of future, past, and present reality.”¹⁷² Additionally, Barnes’s understanding of fiction often connects with his characteristic approach to history (as the part of time), reality, and their relations and representations. In *Flaubert’s Parrot*, Barnes describes history as “merely another literary genre: the past is autobiographical fiction pretending to be a parliamentary report.”¹⁷³ Later in the same decade, he refers to history as a “soothing fabulation”¹⁷⁴ in *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*. According to Peter Childs comment, by calling history as a “soothing fabulation,” Barnes underlines “the processes of construction and reconstruction in shaping

¹⁷¹ Childs, Peter. “Introduction: Pleasure in form.” *Contemporary British Novelists: Julian Barnes*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 9.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁷³ Barnes, Julian. *Flaubert’s Parrot*. (London: Picador, 2002), 101.

¹⁷⁴ Barnes, Julian. *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*. (London: Picador, 1990), 242.

the past, whether individual or collective.”¹⁷⁵ Moreover, Barnes expands his thought in interview as he calls “[h]istory, that controlling narrative of the literate, was spun from the lies of the victors (plus the false excuses of the defeated); the selective memory of survivors; the skewed emphasis of the powerful.”¹⁷⁶ In one of his latest books, *The Sense of an Ending*, Barnes assured that “[h]istory isn’t the lies of the victors, . . . it is more the memories of the survivors, most of whom are neither victorious nor defeated. . . . History is that certainty produced at the point where the imperfections of memory meet the inadequacies of documentation.”¹⁷⁷ Although these statements seem to be different in some respects, they share the common characteristics of Barnes’s changing attitude and definitions to history, reality, and more importantly, the concept of time in general and memory.

It is clear to detect Barnes’s rather new terms to describe history and reality: ‘fabulation,’ ‘memory,’ and ‘documentation.’ Barnes describes fabulation this way: “convincing ourselves of a coherence between things that are largely true and things that are wholly imagined.”¹⁷⁸ In fact, if we evaluate Barnes’s opinions further, we can arrive at more comprehensive conclusion about fabulation which is, for Barnes, closely connected with human consciousness and its conception of reality. He states that “the human mind can’t exist without the illusion of a full story. So, it fabulises and convinces itself that the fabulation is as true and concrete as what it ‘really’ knows. Then it coherently links the real and the totally imagined in a plausible narrative.”¹⁷⁹ This view point apparently emphasizes the re-construction of the past, re-writing of history, as an outcome re-shaping reality(ies) through

¹⁷⁵ Childs, Peter. “Introduction: Pleasure in Form.” *Contemporary British Novelists: Julian Barnes*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 6.

¹⁷⁶ Barnes, Julian. “You ask the questions.” *The Independent*. (Wednesday Review, 16 January 2002), 8.

¹⁷⁷ Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), 56-59.

¹⁷⁸ Barnes, Julian. qtd. in Vanessa Guignery. “‘History in question(s)’: an interview with Julian Barnes.” *Conversations with Julian Barnes* (Eds. Vanessa Guignery and Ryan Roberts. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 63.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

narrative, through fiction and of course, the mechanisms of retrospection, recollection, and memory whether it is true or false. As for the latter, a writer ought to portray a challenging approach.

3. 1. 1. Memory

Many would agree that the meaning which the historian or the writer attributes to events of the past is influenced by his/her own present and a completely objective interpretation cannot be possible outcome. Therefore, “history is not a value neutral description, but rather, essentially, an interchange between the past and the ineradicable presentness of a consciousness because the past and the present coexist and inform one another,”¹⁸⁰ says Alina Roșcan in *Rewriting History in the Novels of Julian Barnes*. Julian Barnes’s interest in memory started with his influences of modernist European philosophers alongside with Descartes and the major reason is that after the two World Wars, people have lost a vision of future as well as trust in the past. Pierre Nora also explains this upsurge in memory with two major reasons:

Firstly, we no longer have a vision of our future and therefore, feel a duty to resolutely and indiscriminately remember any trace of what we are at present or might become in the future. This lack of vision results from the shattering of the unity of historical time with its traditional straightforward linearity which binds the present and the future to the past. The dissolution of the teleology of history is accompanied by our fear of losing any indicative trace of ourselves. As a result, we all resort to stockpiling information in as varied formats as possible. The second reason why memory enjoys unprecedented stature derives from the democratization of history. It

¹⁸⁰ Roșcan, Alina. “History in the Postmodern Paradigm.” *Rewriting History in the Novels of Julian Barnes*. (București: Editura Centrul Tehnic-Editorial al Armatei, 2016), 41.

refers to minority groups for whom the past must be rehabilitated and thus, their identity reaffirmed.¹⁸¹

Obviously, these social changes are reflected in the writings of many post war novelists including Barnes, because memory has, indeed, significant role in interpreting the past as well as the present and the future. Besides, memories have their critical function of establishing realities and seeking explanations. A French philosopher, Paul Ricoeur, who is also the author of the famous books, *Time and Narrative* and *Memory, History, Forgetting*, suggests that memory is rather than historical inquiry as more fundamental to the understanding of the human condition.¹⁸² For him, memory is like “a maverick while history tries to discipline it with its standards concerning what and how something should be remembered. In other words, history is memory cultivated, disciplined and steered by some extra historical criterion which rules what can and ought to be legitimately remembered and certainly what should be forgotten.”¹⁸³ This statement strongly emphasizes how history can be selective while memory is complex entity and at the same time raw version of history. However, memory in many respects can also be selective, suppressed, and sometimes false or more precisely, ‘imaginative.’ This is how Julian Barnes sees and depicts memory in his masterpieces. His depiction of memory is closely associated with the idea of alternative modes of writing, specifically ‘generic fabulation.’ Peter Childs argues that “[i]f the past is alive for us in the present because we remember it, Barnes’s fiction would suggest that it is not necessarily the past that we remember. Recollections fashion a current sense of identity and arguably vice versa, but for Barnes the most important aspect to memory is that it is

¹⁸¹ Nora, Pierre. “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire.” (Trans. Marc Roudebush. *Representations* 26. 1989. *JSTOR*. Web. 28 May 2021), 8-10.

¹⁸² Ricoeur, Paul. qtd. in Abdelmajid Hannoum. “Paul Ricoeur On Memory.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 22. 6 (2005): 123-137. (*ResearchGate*. Web. 30 May 2021), 127-128.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 128-129.

imaginative.”¹⁸⁴ Because as we understand so far, the versions and details that inhabit memories are mutable, selective, and changeable. That’s why this factor cannot be underestimated in terms of understanding Barnes. In addition to that, memory can reveal certain characteristics of time, specifically, what we called above as ‘imaginative time.’ For instance, Barnes’s early novel, *Talking It Over*, revolves around the issue of false memory or imaginative past while latest works, *England, England*, *Cross Channel*, *Arthur & George*, *Flaubert’s Parrot*, *The Sense of an Ending*, and *The Noise of Time* draw attention to the workings and mechanisms of retrospection, recollection, and remembrance, and how they unquestioningly shape our past, present, and future realities. Moreover, in his memoir, *Nothing to Be Frightened of*, the loss of memory is associated with the loss of identity and personal annihilation, but Peter Childs argues that “Barnes is as interested in the creative as in the defective aspects to remembering, which link to the imaginative aspects of making fiction.”¹⁸⁵ Therefore, it can be said that for Barnes, memory is a reflection of the past which governs our inward and outward lives within or without the boundaries of now. These aspects of the fiction of Barnes will be analysed and evaluated more comprehensively with more specific examples through discussions of his three outstanding novels, *Arthur & George*, *The Sense of an Ending*, and *The Noise of Time* in next paragraphs after the part of History Writing and Fiction Writing.

3. 1. 2. History Writing and Fiction Writing

Since the postmodern notion of history constitutes that a historian does not have full or direct access to the past as (s)he deals with partial, fragmentary texts, history writing is also seen as problematic. In fact, many believe that history writing and writing

¹⁸⁴ Childs, Peter. “Introduction: Pleasure in Form.” *Contemporary British Novelists: Julian Barnes*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 6.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 6.

historiographical fiction are equally challenging and, in many respects, share common features. Dominick LaCapra draws attention to the rhetorical dimension of history writing as he suggests that “historical documents should be seen ... as ‘texts that supplement or rework “reality” and not as mere sources that divulge facts about “reality.””¹⁸⁶ The prominent postmodernist critic, Linda Hutcheon expands this view as she puts that “[d]ocuments of the past do not constitute some transparent means to a past event, but rather ‘the transformed trace’ of the respective past.”¹⁸⁷ She also claims that “[t]o write of the past as either historian or as novelist would seem equally a matter of constructing and *reconstructing*¹⁸⁸ since they both intend to make sense, make meaning of the past. With the revolutionary theories of Hutcheon, Foucault, Derrida, and many other prominent thinkers, history turns out to be only disparity as there cannot be uncovered an original unity of things and meanings. Especially, Hutcheon’s term ‘historiographic metafiction’ focuses on creating an illusion of past reality as narrators and characters constantly confuse factual with fictional, and that process happen to be make-believe activity. Writers often tend to present characters, events, and places which readers know have existed and, therefore, see them as real. However, the intention of writer is to render them problematic, thereby, question the representations of the past in history by constructing hybrid (factual and fictional) worlds. In other words, writers actually do not discard history but combine history and fiction seamlessly by “rejecting the transcendent, timeless meaning [history] has been assigned until now.”¹⁸⁹

As one of such writers, Julian Barnes also problematizes history and its truth claims as well as combining history with fiction. In one of the interviews with Barnes, Rudolf

¹⁸⁶ LaCapra, Dominick. *History and Criticism*. (London: Cornell University Press, 1985), 11.

¹⁸⁷ Hutcheon, Linda. qtd. in Alina Roșcan. “History in the Postmodern Paradigm.” *Rewriting History in the Novels of Julian Barnes*. (București: Editura Centrul Tecnic-Editorial al Armatei, 2016), 39.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁸⁹ Roșcan, Alina. “History in the Postmodern Paradigm.” *Rewriting History in the Novels of Julian Barnes*. (București: Editura Centrul Tecnic-Editorial al Armatei, 2016), 50.

Freiburg asks Barnes if the readers suggest changing the fate or actions of certain historical figures in his books and Barnes replies with pleasant satisfaction: “I sometimes get disagreements from readers because they don’t think something would have happened or they think a character would have behaved in a different way. I like that, because it means that the book has created its own reality in the readers’ mind.”¹⁹⁰ Indeed, novels have the ability to create its own reality about past events, present, future events and offer them in the most plausible way. As a critic, Ryan Roberts¹⁹¹ points out, “[f]iction offers the possibility to create symbols, metaphors, and multiple layers of meaning not easily represented in journalism or that too often disregarded in real life.” In the matter of fact, Roberts refers to Barnes’s understanding of fiction writing. Barnes writing style, as it was mentioned before, is more like fabulising; so, the past is “foregrounded as a construct incorporated into fresh narratives which give it life and meaning anew.”¹⁹² In other words, with the idea of fabulation, Barnes often mixes forms to create unique versions of the past, of reality. Through narratives, he presents us history in such a hybrid way, it is often confusing whether the novels are fictional or historical. Some even would agree that Barnes’s works ‘reinvent’ history through narrative. Peter Childs concludes that,

Barnes’s works are formidably intertextual, citing novels, poems, art works, musical compositions, performances, and other cultural artefacts, yet Barnes dislikes his novels being pigeon holed as literary fiction and there is a strong sense of modern life

¹⁹⁰ Barnes, Julian. ““Novels Come out of Life, Not out of Theories”: An Interview with Julian Barnes.” *Conversations with Julian Barnes* (Eds. Vanessa Guignery and Ryan Roberts. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 32.

¹⁹¹ Roberts, Ryan. qtd. in Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs. “Julian Barnes and the Wisdom of Uncertainty.” *Julian Barnes: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. (Eds. Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 2.

¹⁹² Roşcan, Alina. “History in the Postmodern Paradigm.” *Rewriting History in the Novels of Julian Barnes*. (Bucureşti: Editura Centrul Tecnic-Editorial al Armatei, 2016), 50.

and formal sophistication in his work, but it is also true the reappears more historical than contemporary cultural reference.¹⁹³

Here Childs emphasizes that Barnes's fiction are 'more historical' and also underlines the fact that it is very hybrid and usually focuses on historical subject matter. The most apparent examples are his memoirs and interestingly served biographies including Flaubert's, Arthur Conan Doyle's. In one of his interviews, Barnes has explained fiction writing's importance as a crucial lead to understanding the past and the present. A history reader wants to be told the whole story, wants to understand all motivations, wants to know exactly what happened but history usually does not present the whole things, nor books. However, they "coherently link the real" events which mainly make sense even though it is partially "imagined in a plausible narrative."¹⁹⁴ In short, for Barnes, books make sense of life. That's why they are often more appealingly convincing than historical documents. As for a historian, in almost all of his novels Barnes "proposes that in order to make sense of history, the historian [just like a writer] should create a sense of continuity by combining the bits in a narrative with causality."¹⁹⁵ Besides, Barnes himself also positions himself not just as a writer but also as a critic of history by questioning the fundamental principles of the traditional historiography through the elusiveness of language and demonstrating multiple layers of meanings and realities in time. All these historiographic concerns, questions of reality(ies), and problems of time are articulated in Julian Barnes's three major novels, *The Sense of an Ending*, *Arthur & George*, and *The Noise of Time*, as this thesis attempts to show.

¹⁹³ Childs, Peter. "Introduction: Pleasure in Form." *Contemporary British Novelists: Julian Barnes*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 11.

¹⁹⁴ Barnes, Julian. qtd. in Vanessa Guignery. "'History in question(s)': an interview with Julian Barnes." *Conversations with Julian Barnes* (Eds. Vanessa Guignery and Ryan Roberts. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 55.

¹⁹⁵ Atilla, Aylin. "Fictional Auto/bio/graphies: Julian Barnes's *Flaubert's Parrot* and Penelope Lively's *Moon Tiger*." *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 160.

3. 2. Searching for Meanings and Realities in Time: Lingering Uncertainties and Different Realities in *The Sense of an Ending*

To start with a remarkably interesting quote will be refreshing re-start. In the opening scene of a contemporary movie called *Now You See Me*, it says, “[c]ome in close, closer. Because the more you think you see, the easier it’ll be to fool you. Because what is seeing? You’re looking but you’re really doing is filtering, interpreting, searching for meaning.”¹⁹⁶ Interestingly, this is how we perceive things around us, how we make sense of life, including the past, present, and future. This is how the main character and the narrator in *The Sense of an Ending*, Tony Webster’s story starts. With seemingly unusual and mysterious event in which Veronica's mother bequeathing Tony five hundred pounds after many years, his quest for meaning, for truth begins all of a sudden. In fact, this incident can be described as quicksand for Tony as the more he struggles to reach a closure, the more he gets into it.

The Sense of an Ending is the novel that mainly involves three complex characters: Tony Webster, the narrator and the protagonist, and a retiree in his sixties who ‘egologically’ narrates certain episodes of his life related to other main characters, his ex-girlfriend, Veronica Ford and the remarkable friend Adrian Finn whose suicide makes an unseeingly enormous impact on both Tony and Veronica. Initially Tony seems to be just a dull, ‘peaceful’ man, but as the novel proceeds he appears to be self-described, unreliable narrator who fabulises his life story and hurts others without even noticing. Yet, the mysterious suicide of Adrian Finn penetrates his memory, and after a lot of years, the act of Veronica’s mother bequeathing Tony five hundred pounds makes a quite shocking effect and arises curiosity in him. Later Julian Barnes wrote about the novel as follows:

¹⁹⁶ *Now You See Me* (Directed by Louis Leterrier, performances by Jesse Eisenberg, Mark Ruffalo, Michael Caine, Isla Fisher, Mélanie Laurent, Morgan Freeman, Dave Franco, Woody Harrelson, K/O Paper Products and Summit Entertainment, 2013), 00:34-00:53.

When I finish a novel, I usually forget its origins, processes and pains: they are no use to me now. I know that early on, I wrote down the name of a friend I'd been close to at school and then lost touch with; only to discover, when I was around 50, that he had killed himself a quarter of a century previously. It was not the death itself but that long, eerie unknowingness that played into a central strand of the novel. I also knew that I wanted the novel to be at the same time meditative and a psychological drama. Two modes, just as it would have two speeds: in the first section, the pace, or anti-pace, of memory, while the longer second section would move in "real" time.¹⁹⁷

This clearly shows how complex the novel is and how the topics of time and memory play the greatest parts in the book.

First of all, we must acknowledge the fact that Barnes's 'take nothing for granted' attitude is intermingled with the narration in different layers in *The Sense of an Ending*. When the novelist first introduced the main characters of the book, he specifically emphasizes that they "were essentially taking the piss, except when [they] were serious."¹⁹⁸ In addition to that, it is the backbone of Tony Webster's narrative or 'his story.' The more importantly, this attitude is flawlessly integrated with serious subject matters such as love and death, and controversial theories which evaluate the novel thoroughly. In fact, those theories do not just deal with historiographic concerns about reality or realities, but also with the problematic aspects about documentation of the past, imperfections of memory, personalizing time thereby personalizing reality or truth, including its impressions, the search for meaning, and the most importantly they are all linked to time which in Tony's expression, "holds us and molds us."¹⁹⁹ Almost everything in the novel is associated with time in one way or another

¹⁹⁷ Barnes, Julian. "Julian Barnes on *The Sense of an Ending*: 'I learned to do more by saying less'" *The Guardian*. June 2021. International Edition. Web. 07 December 2021.

¹⁹⁸ Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), 7.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

and often collaborated with the idea of “corroboration.” The word “corroboration” itself appeared so many times in the book that it almost becomes the obsession of Tony, central to his story. One might even argue that it is his central motive throughout the novel, but complimented by time. However, the novel is more complex than that and with so vivid experiences.

To start with one of the most significant and revealing utterance of the narrator in Julian Barnes’s *The Sense of an Ending* will be more convenient in many ways as he states, “We live in time, it bounds us and defines us, and time is supposed to measure history, isn’t it? But if we can’t understand time, can’t grasp its mysteries of pace and progress, what chance do we have with history – even our own small, personal, largely undocumented piece of it?”²⁰⁰ Although, for many, the whole novel seems to revolve around this quote, it is significantly small piece of iceberg. This paragraph will firstly evaluate the novel’s historiographic concerns about reality or realities, including with the problematic aspects about documentation of the past, imperfections of memory, personalizing time thereby personalizing reality or truth, including its impressions. Albert Einstein states that “events can look very different to onlookers in different situations, especially if they are moving relative to one another.”²⁰¹ In *The Sense of an Ending*, Tony’s experiences or his story can only be true with respect to Veronica’s since the novel mainly about them and their mutual experiences, and apparently Tony comes up as an unreliable narrator. The first words of the book begin with “I remember...” implying that “what you end up remembering isn’t always the same as what you have witnessed.”²⁰² It is worthy to note that he does not just warn us about false memories, but also foreshadows the act of fabulation for corroboration while his attempts to resurrect the past end up in contradiction and total frustration.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 60.

²⁰¹ Einstein, Albert. *Relativity: The Special and the General Theory*. (trans. Robert W. Lawson. New York: Penguin Books, 2006), xi-10-14.

²⁰² Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), 3.

Additionally, Barnes also problematizes general history through the character, Adrian Finn, whose theories later Tony also applies into his personal history. As it is mentioned beforehand, the prominent critic, George Iggers clearly emphasizes that fact that we have no access to reality or the facts that happened in the past but only their representations and interpretations by various historians and authors²⁰³, and in this case, the interpretations of the past by both Tony and Veronica can only be the truer version. As Adrian Finn describes, “[h]istory is that certainty produced at the point where the imperfections of memory meet the inadequacies of documentation.”²⁰⁴ Barnes masterfully explains us how history is unreliable and so is memory of the past, but rather both must produce certainty, make sense equally. In other words, documentation and memory have to agree to the same past events in order to create certainty. That is one of the main reasons why Tony is so obsessed with corroboration from others such as his friends, Veronica, and even Margaret.

Moreover, the history teacher, Old Joe Hunt, also emphasizes that “historians need to treat participant’s own explanation of events with a certain scepticism”²⁰⁵ referring to memory and ‘mental states.’ Besides corroboration of others, Tony also tries to provide proof of the events. For instance, when he got letters from Veronica or from her mother, Mrs. Ford, he describes his regret with a statement saying “I wish I’d kept that letter, because it would have been proof, corroboration.”²⁰⁶ Later he also expresses his determination to get Adrian’s diary by providing his main reason as he says, “The diary was evidence; it might be – corroboration. It might disrupt the banal reiterations of memory. It might jumpstart something – though I had no idea what.”²⁰⁷ He constantly expresses this aspiration and regret until he begins writing emails because he needs documentation, written evidence which may support

²⁰³ Iggers, George. qtd. in Aylin Atilla. Introduction. *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 3.

²⁰⁴ Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), 17.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 18.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 39.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 77.

his version of the history about himself, about Adrian, about Veronica, about Mrs. Ford and their relationships. In other words, he aspires to justify his story. In relativity, Einstein describes that “no particular observer’s measurements are any more correct than any other observer’s, but all the measurements are related and relative.”²⁰⁸ Similarly, in this situation Veronica’s account of the past and reality where she provides certain documentation and relatively truer version of the events that make sense to Tony as well while Tony’s account of the past and reality provided with reasonable evidence (in this case no evidence) should be equally correct. However, Tony’s account of the past completely based on his memories that he himself describes as mere subjective. At one point, Tony clearly confesses, “Again, I must stress that this is my reading now of what happened then. Or rather, my memory now of my reading then of what was happening at the time.”²⁰⁹ For the historian, Paul Ricoeur, “history is memory cultivated, disciplined and steered by some extra historical criterion which rules what can and ought to be legitimately remembered and certainly what should be forgotten.”²¹⁰ Well, in Tony’s case, with his elusive conversation (his elusive narration to the readers as well) and his “certain instinct for self-preservation,” he legitimately forgets or as he puts it, “put Veronica [and things] out of mind, out of my history.”²¹¹ It is ‘philosophically evident’ that Tony’s version of the past reality merely based on memory is much more selective than every other character in the book and this is one of the main issues in the novel that Barnes wants us to re-consider.

²⁰⁸ Einstein, Albert. qtd. in Stephen Hawking. *A Brief History of Time*. (London: Bantam Books, 1988), 25-26.

²⁰⁹ Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), 41.

²¹⁰ Ricoeur, Paul. qtd. in Abdelmajid Hannoum. “Paul Ricoeur On Memory.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 22. 6 (2005): 123-137. (ResearchGate. Web. 30 May 2021), 128-129.

²¹¹ Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), 64.

At another point, Ricoeur also states that “to remember something is at the same time to remember oneself because memory is fundamentally reflexive and *egological*.”²¹² As Tony spins the tale of his life, he understands that memory is inherently limited and selective where his information about the past comes in short fragments. As the novel progresses towards devastating revelations about his letter to Adrian and Veronica and its connection to Adrian’s suicide, Tony admittedly, with certain amount of remorse, articulates this:

How often do we tell our own life story? How often do we adjust, embellish, make sly cuts? And the longer life goes on, the fewer are those around to challenge our account, to remind us that our life is not our life, merely the story we have told about our life. Told to others, but – mainly – to ourselves.²¹³

Even the hyphens or punctuation at the end of the statement clearly indicates Tony’s struggle to admit his self-deception, his deepest remorse while realizing his own fabulation about his own life and totally different reality which violates the validity and credibility of his own reality of the past. In addition to that, he also reveals his deepest thoughts just before he got answer from Veronica as he says, “It strikes me that this may be one of the differences between youth and age: when we are young, we invent different futures for ourselves; when we are old, we invent different pasts for others.”²¹⁴ In another words, what we call as reality is relative thing just as time. Alina Roşcan suggests that “[t]hroughout the book, Tony frequently re-evaluates his words. He lives on the assumption that memories are often false and therefore, they cannot be trusted without independent verification.”²¹⁵ As it is mentioned in the previous paragraphs, this is why Tony seeks for corroboration and documents such as letters etc. constantly. But why does he seek or why does he struggle to

²¹² Ricoeur, Paul. *Memory, History, Forgetting*. (trans. Kathleen McLaughlin & David Pellauer. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 4.

²¹³ Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), 95.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 80.

²¹⁵ Roşcan, Alina. *Rewriting History in the Novels of Julian Barnes*. (Bucureşti: Editura Centrul Tehnic-Editorial al Armatei, 2016), 239.

resurrect the past and try to stir other realities different from his own? Since the memory is in search of recalling and purposeful as well as imaginative (imaginative journey through time), its one purpose for Tony is to find meanings, to make sense of events starting with the mysterious act of Mrs. Ford leaving Tony some money in her will. Some would argue its inherent desire of human for meaning, for reality, for truth. As for Tony, he is like a tailor trying to gather up “shreds and patches” to re-invent his past life.

Furthermore, as we mentioned before with certain emphasis, everything is one way or another linked to time. From the aspects of historiographic concerns about reality or realities, including with the problematic aspects about documentation of the past, imperfections of memory, personalizing time and personalizing reality in the novel are time-related issues. As Tony initially assures “[w]e live in time – it holds us and moulds us.”²¹⁶ Perhaps, time is essential backbone of the narration as well as the subject matter. Since it is one of the postmodern styles of self-narrative story; narrative is mainly associated with memory, “using one’s memory, narrative is constructed, and, as narrative progresses, identity is built.”²¹⁷ Throughout the novel, the narrator constantly reminds the readers about the passage of time, how things were back ‘then,’ how things changed and how things are ‘now.’ In fact, initially Tony considers himself as a survivor in time although he admits that time deforms memories. At one point, he utters this speech:

But time . . . how time first grounds us and then confounds us. We thought we were being mature when we were only being safe. We imagined we were being responsible but were only being cowardly. What we called realism turned out to be a way of

²¹⁶ Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), 3.

²¹⁷ Piqueras, Maricel Oro. “Memory Revisited in Julian Barnes’s *The Sense of an Ending*.” *Coolabah*13(Barcelona: Univeristat de Barcelona, 2014. 87-95), 89.

avoiding things rather than facing them. Time.... give us enough time and our best - supported decisions will seem wobbly, our certainties whimsical.²¹⁸

Indeed, the whole story may be about “something ... happens to the memory over,” but it is way complex. For years Tony believed himself to be a believer in time’s revenge and even inserts it in his letter to Adrian, but he realizes its irony by the end of the novel. In fact, his memory issues and historiographic concerns about reality of the past are the way how time punished him in forty years. Although he personalizes time (by wearing his watch with the face on the inside of the wrist), he cannot justify it. It becomes evident when Veronica ask why he wears his watch that way. The most revelation comes by the end of the novel when Tony ponders on subjective and objective time, and its relativity, he thinks as follows:

The time-deniers say: forty’s nothing, at fifty you’re in your prime, sixty’s the new forty, and so on. I know this much: that there is objective time, but also subjective time, the kind you wear on the inside of your wrist, next to where the pulse lies. And this personal time, which is true time, is measured in your relationship to memory. So when this strange thing happened – when these new memories suddenly came upon me – it was as if, for that moment, time had been placed in reverse. As if, for that moment, the river ran upstream.²¹⁹

At first the passage seems to imply the differences of conceptual time and psychological time which were explained comprehensively in the second chapter of the thesis. However, the effects of the past through memory, past sensations and their relationship with the present intertwined with time and, in that sense the whole process reminds us of Henri Bergson’s *durée*. Wyndham Lewis describes *durée* as “what occurs when we completely telescope the past into the present, and make our life a fiery point ‘eating’ like an acetylene flame into the future. ‘Duration is *inside us*, not outside. There is

²¹⁸ Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), 93.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 122.

nothing but ‘mathematical Time’ outside us. ‘Duration’ is the *succession* of our conscious states, but *all felt at once*.”²²⁰ He also adds that duration “is the organization of the past into a moving and changing present, into a incessantly renewed in intensive quantity.” The phrase “*all felt at once*” is almost synonymous to the Tony’s words, “it was as if, for that moment, time had been placed in reverse,” because time seems to unfold backwards while pointing out the illusion of the unity of the past and present at the same time. Actually, they are the impressions of the past for Tony that gives a sense of living the past moments once again and that is why it would be fair to acknowledge that although we associate memory (of Tony) with the past, the past of memory is always about the present of the rememberer. Therefore, if Tony ‘the past’ is not there, then Tony ‘the present’ is not able to tell us his story.

Furthermore, Daniel L. Schacter describes memory in his book, *The Seven Sins of Memory*, as intrinsic to human beings but volatile at the same time, and emphasizes its strong bond with feelings and emotions including consequences ‘after’ events. Schacter suggests that “[s]ometimes we forget the past and at other times we distort it; some disturbing memories haunt us for years. Yet we also rely on memory to perform an astonishing variety of tasks in our everyday lives. [However, m]emory plays such a pervasive role in our daily lives that we often take it for granted until an incident of forgetting or distortion demands our attention”²²¹ such as the mysterious inheritance from Veronica’s mother. Indeed, memory is pervasive or central to Tony’s narration as he revisits the memory of his relationship with Veronica and Adrian, he starts to comprehend that time as well as a superposition of feelings he had felt at the time, especially the feelings of dissatisfaction and hidden resentment, had seasoned his remembrance of what happened in that specific time of his life. Throughout the novel, Barnes tries to demonstrate the readers that we cannot take granted Tony’s memory as

²²⁰ Lewis, Wyndham. *Time and Western Man*. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927), 437.

²²¹ Schacter, Daniel L. *The Seven Sins of Memory*. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 1.

well as his story in which the character aspires to justify his motives through various corroborations and eventually fails to do so. Therefore, it is fair to claim that Tony's memory is not entirely of things that actually happened, but the memory of how he felt at the time. Schacter also asserts that our memories are influenced by our feelings, beliefs and the knowledge acquired after experiencing a specific event. As he expresses, "[w]e extract key elements from our experiences and store them. We then recreate or reconstruct our experiences rather than retrieve copies of them [...]. In other words, we bias our memories of the past by attributing to them emotions or knowledge we obtained after the event."²²² Indeed, when Tony narrates, the readers can sense the elusiveness of his tone and narration as he is being selective about what to tell and *edits* his history in his self-centred narrative. At one point in *The Sense of an Ending*, Tony even acknowledges that there is uncertainty in him about the things that took place at the time as he says, "I was so ill at ease that I spent the entire weekend constipated: this is my principal factual memory. The rest consists of impressions and half-memories which may therefore be self-serving [...]."²²³ In this sense, he combines and supports almost all the aspects of Schacter's and Paul Ricoeur's theories, and from a more comprehensive perspective he also agrees with Einstein's theory as time being relative and the knowledge about it as well.

Moreover, as Tony proceeds telling the specific episode of his life time (we must also mind the part which he prefers to omit), he brings about several significant questions which are associated with the quality and the function of memory. However, the main point is related to memory is how it is unreliable and to what extent memory is constructed through the remembered emotions, feelings that invade Tony over the time and twist the memories into 'fabulation'. Therefore, the remembered memories of the events alter actual events over time through different aspects; partially through ageing process and partially through "a

²²² Ibid., 9.

²²³ Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), 27-28.

certain instinct for self-preservation.” In other words, the impressions or feelings of the past do not agree upon the events that actually took place in the past. In the beginning of the second part of the book, Tony ponders on the nature of time, how remembered emotions twist our memory of the events, and admits how irrecoverable the past is as he states,

What you fail to do is look ahead, and then imagine yourself back from the future point. Learning the new emotions that time brings. Discovering, for example, that as the witnesses to your life diminish, there is less corroboration, and therefore less certainty, as to what you are or have been. Even if you have assiduously kept records – in words, sound, pictures – you may find that what you have attended to the wrong kind of record-keeping.²²⁴

That is why it is very contradictory thing about time; the present does not always reconcile with the past and it naturally leads to what Barnes calls as “fabulation.” In the novel, mostly through his instinct for self-preservation, Tony fabulised a perfectly reasonable, at least ‘peaceable’, story which constructed his both present and past reality until the point when he realizes that his personal reality coexisted with actual one, or mutually agreed, documented reality of Veronica till now while personal time of Tony catches up with conceptual time as he gets old. Perhaps, it is one of the reasons that the novel ends with the sentence, “There is great unrest.”²²⁵ However, at the same time, from a more comprehensive perspective, Barnes reveals the fact that how individuals challenge, expand, and personify ‘the grand concepts’ such as time and reality that are traditionally seen as immovable, unalterable truth.

Here we go back to the previous question that why Tony tries to resurrect the past and tells his story and, how it is related to the narration of the novel. For some critics, the answer(s) to this question also clarifies the relationship between the Tony’s past and his

²²⁴ Ibid., 59.

²²⁵ Ibid., 150.

present which certainly explains the role of self-narrative in the novel as well. Gerben J. Westerhoff claims that self-narratives are used “to create unity and purpose in the manifold experiences occurring across the course of one’s life and thereby to find meaning in life,”²²⁶ in Tony’s situation after retirement. As a ‘peaceable’ man, Tony is contented with both his present life and with his past life up until the moment in which the small inheritance from Veronica’s mother forces him to review his life narrative to reach out the meaning, to rediscover the crucial details of his past. As the investigation proceeds, Tony realizes that he invented different pasts not just for others but also for himself which makes the story so compelling. In one of his famous revelations, he avows how he is left with freedom into fabulation. “And only recently I’d been going on about how the witness to our lives decrease, and with them our essential corroboration,” says Tony with certain implication of how he is victim of time. With this thought in mind, through his personal narration, through certain revelations, new meanings or realities and feeling of remorse, Tony undergoes a process of identity change, or some even would call it as a healing process. The authors of the book, *Narrative and Identity: Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture*, Jens Brockmeier and Donal Carbaugh describe the process of how we construct our lives as well as create them through narration and, as we do so, we mould our identity as not just individuals but also as cultural beings.²²⁷ In his “carefully-woven self-narrative,”²²⁸ everything about his relationship with Veronica and Adrian seem ordinary and almost insignificant one until the point where he is forced to revisit his memory and realizes witnesses of that specific part of his past are decreasing, therefore, there is less corroboration and certainty. After the shocking fragments

²²⁶ Westerhoff, Gerben J. “Identity Construction in the Third Age: The Role of Self-Narratives.” *Narratives of Life: Mediating Age*. (Eds. Hartung, Heike and Roberta Maierhofer. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2009), 56.

²²⁷ Brockmeier, Jens and Donal Carbaugh. *Narrative and Identity: Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture*. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2001), 1-2.

²²⁸ Piqueras, Maricel Oro. “Memory Revisited in Julian Barnes’s *The Sense of an Ending*.” *Coolabah*13 (Barcelona: Univeristat de Barcelona, 2014. 87-95), 91.

of his past are revealed, Tony is left alone reconstructing his memories as well as his identity as he states, “[b]ut what if, even at a late stage, your emotions relating to those long-ago events and people change? That ugly letter of mine provoked remorse in me.”²²⁹ This rhetorical question shows that he is now aware of fact that his feelings are completely different, and interestingly the story of those specific events will be changed in his memory as well. In other words, it is as if the present changes the past and the future in this exemplary book whereas we often assume that the past shapes the present. Thus, the interrelatedness of the past, the present, and the future stroke us perceptively as Tony puts it: “All I can say is that it happened, and that it astonished me.”²³⁰

Furthermore, Barnes’s quest for meaning and (often elusive) reality theme, combined with the theme of the unreliability of memory and relativity of time as well as knowledge, complimented by serious subject matters such as love, death and remorse, are skilfully articulated through postmodern narrative style in *The Sense of an Ending*. In terms of narrative style, this paragraph will mainly focus on one literary device – repetition, and its contribution to the general aspects of novel, especially time, realities, and finding meanings. In his book on Julian Barnes, Peter Childs emphasizes that “Irony comedy and false memory are two poles around which Julian Barnes’s work revolves.”²³¹ Although this statement was used for Barnes’s previous works, it also refers to *The Sense of an Ending*. Through the repetition of the sentence, “I’m a great believer in time’s revenge” which occurs at several points throughout the book, the readers can easily understand the great irony of it. In terms of meaning, repetition is re-visiting, mentioning or doing something again. Interestingly, whenever Tony repeats something he often finds out something that is left out or neglected,

²²⁹ Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), 120.

²³⁰ Ibid., 120.

²³¹ Childs, Peter. “Julian Barnes and the Wisdom of Uncertainty.” *Julian Barnes: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. (Eds. Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 3.

discovering new realities and meanings which previously seemed insignificant for him. This, of course, triggers the idea of alternative realities or other realities apart from one self's and for Tony, repeating or revisiting the past (going back in time) is repeating time differently. In fact, almost the whole novel consists of reoccurrence of events or re-visiting the past from different point of view in order to make sense of things that take place in the past and in the present. In addition to these, Tony often repeats things and statements over and over again as if he also wants to convince the readers, expecting some confirmation or corroboration while being elusive at the same time as if psychologically avoiding to face certain realities regarding his relationship with Veronica and does not quite know why. However, in terms of writer and reader relationship and the reader and the novel relationship, repetition serves a major purpose. As Zhang Yanting puts it, "[t]he repetition forces readers to examine the story back and forth, creating an echoing effect within the narration. From the writer's perspective, this is not unintentional move. 'Repetition' itself, with its recollection and reoccurrence, can remind readers of the notion of 'memory.'²³² Thus, readers' re-examining the story can help them comprehend Tony's mindset and be aware of the fact that he is also cheating on the readers.

Additionally, repetition plays a major role in accumulation of pieces of memories and impressions in the protagonist's narration. In the first passage of the book, Tony gives a summary of scenes that are relevant for the story. However, they do not have any meanings on their own and by reviewing them comprehensively Tony and the readers can make sense of those scenes. Actually, the series of repetitive scenes and statements lead the readers into the subconscious of the protagonist and that's why the readers feel for Tony and often feel as same as him. More importantly, they generate 'relatively' different meanings and realities

²³² Yanting, Zhang. "And the Word echoes: A Taxonomy of Repetitions in *The Sense of an Ending*." *International Journal of English and Literature (IJEL)* Vol. 7 (6) (*Academic Journals*. Web. 2016), 88.

which re-writes Tony's history. For instance, many things that the narrator remembers are not the same when he articulates them again. Tony remembers Veronica as "bitch" (addresses her in his letter), manipulative, "bore," snobbish and has "inability to imagine anyone else's feelings or emotional life."²³³ What are more are that Tony believed she treated him unfairly, did not give goodnight kiss when he visited her family, and had sexual intercourse 'after' they broke up. However, the older Tony starts to recall things differently through repetitions and reveal vital contradictions and personal realities that are deliberately organized to defame Veronica in order to emancipate himself from any responsibility or remorse, or any kind of strong feelings. In other words, what Tony did was a mere fabulation to remain 'rest' and 'peaceable.' Through the repetitions and act of searching for meaning, the ultimate irony strikes that persuades Tony to articulate these sentences at the end of the novel: "There is accumulation. There is responsibility. And beyond these, there is unrest. There is great unrest."²³⁴ These words occur at different situations in the book but do not seem to be relevant or significant for the protagonist and the readers. However, they serve a purpose to indicate Tony's reconciliation with his past, with himself, and to represent the relativity of things that happen to all of us.

By the end of the novel, Barnes portrays another significant and defining ironic situation about time. It is often believed that when people grow old, they tend to shift the story into a way they prefer or turn it into 'their' story, so that they can earn some comfort and reputation from the unchangeable past. Ironically, in Tony's case, it is kind of contrary; yes, he does fabulize self-centred story for himself, yet things turn into the other way around that as the narration progresses, Tony's past changes in a significant manner, and it also *changes* Tony at the present to reach the closure. At the end, the reader concludes that the subjectivity of Tony's memory (personalised reality) and his psychological barrier prevents

²³³ Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), 95-97.

²³⁴ Ibid., 150.

him to see the sheer truth that his dear friend Adrian has relationship with Veronica's mother because of his advice and has a mentally impaired son whom Veronica looks after at the present. The reader ends up presuming that the mentally impaired son might be a significant reason for Adrian's suicide. In addition to that, in the novel many associates memory with narrative, but it also closely related to time, which has crucial influence on almost everything. As it is mentioned beforehand, the whole story revolves around going back in time, looking from the present into the past and imagining possible outcomes in the future. This assertion, of course, indicates that time does not also unfold in linear way and that is why in the first sentence of the book, the protagonist claims that he does not remember the events in no particular order. What is more intriguing is that time has the power to hold and mold everyone in a variety of ways and we see "philosophically evident" example of it in the fascinating novel, *The Sense of an Ending*.

4. 3. Reconstructing the Past and Time: *Arthur & George*

Julian Barnes's another remarkable novel, *Arthur & George*, which was published before *The Sense of an Ending* and was shortlisted for Booker Prize in 2005, has its own importance in terms of many aspects that we have elaborated in the previous paragraphs, and means great deal to understand the novelist's turning point in writing of historiographic prose. Firstly, reading *Arthur & George* gives us another perspective on the writer's evolution towards historiographic novels that meant to grasp the past closer to so claimed truth and create 'a new historical novel'. The prominent critic, Cristine Berberich asserts that "*Arthur & George* offers something new, an ingenious combination of realism and post-modern historiography. Fact and fiction converge and intermingle in a way that makes it

difficult, or maybe irrelevant, for the reader to see the fine dividing line.”²³⁵ The fact that the novel resembles the Victorian writings in many ways is because of Barnes’s generic hybrid prose, strong interest in history, and experimental attitude. Initially, the novel appears to be a *bildungsroman* about two main characters, Arthur and George, complimented by a lot of characteristics of the Edwardian detective novel, and more importantly, the setting itself is the Edwardian England capturing the life experiences of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and George E. T. Edalji in juxtaposition until their paths cross.

Julian Barnes was much concerned about the historical events when he wrote the novel. Alongside portraying the life story of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *Arthur & George* also presents the life story of George Edalji who was born in 1876 in the family of the future vicar of Great Wyrley in Staffordshire, Shapurji Edalji. Between 1892 and 1895 are the worst years for the family; insulting notes thrown in at windows, fake orders, false advertisements and anonymous letters appear nearby the vicarage to insult the Edalji family. The following years these kinds of mischievous attempts stop, but in 1903 the horse mutilations or vandalism start in Great Wyrley and George is falsely convicted for the pony mutilation. Until that time, George becomes a respected solicitor in Birmingham and with the conviction he loses his freedom and his reputation. After several years, his case is reviewed and George found not guilty of the crimes for which he is convicted. This is the part in the book where George’s story and Arthur Conan Doyle’s story merge in the act of clearing George’s name. Throughout the novel, Barnes seems to be deeply sceptical about the reliability of the conventional historical account about these two historical characters and attempts to expose the different versions of the sequence of events with certain gaps filled. In that sense, it can be understood that Barnes penned this book in interest to expose the lack of fidelity to the

²³⁵ Berberich, Cristine. qtd. in Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs. “Julian Barnes and the Wisdom of Uncertainty.” *Julian Barnes: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. (Eds. Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 5.

historical record and offers another version of the past that is possible, reasonable, and makes sense.

However, the novel is more than that and writer's intention was not to make it just a prose but to create innovative and experimental historiographic fiction with such an intense engagement with the problems of understanding our relationship with history and reality, well in this case, realities, and how these aspects of life can be fabricated in such a way that over time they replace the actual past. For instance, the first major conflict that occurs in the book, except the disease which infects Touie, Arthur's wife, is pure fabricated story against George by the constables who fabulise their own realities about the incidents to sentence George as a scapegoat. As the narrator put it perfectly, "[I]t was just a story, George knew, something made up from scraps and coincidences and hypotheses; he knew too that he was innocent; but something about the repetition of the story by an authority in wig and gown made it take on extra plausibility."²³⁶ That's why Barnes always offers us opportunities to critically assess all narrative and take nothing for granted.

Several readers and critics somehow see *Arthur & George* as the biographies of historical characters in a way that we should consider the work capturing history with certain specific perspectives. However, the fact that Barnes often transforms himself as an author and yet always focuses on the problem of time or past and reality, underlines his potential ongoing curiosity for more hybrid writing style and search for truth. As Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs also maintain "what ultimately becomes evident in the biographer's tale is admiration for the ways in which the novelist creates an amalgam of fact and fiction that illuminated the life of Conan Doyle in a new, and, more importantly, truthful way."²³⁷

²³⁶ Barnes, Julian. *Arthur & George*. (London: Vintage Books, 2006), 167.

²³⁷ Groes, Sebastian and Peter Childs. "Julian Barnes and the Wisdom of Uncertainty." *Julian Barnes: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. (Eds. Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 9.

In *Arthur & George*, Barnes goes into search of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the reason why Barnes includes the story of George Edalji is because he accidentally stumbled across the case of George Edalji just like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in the novel. Later he expresses his impression in an interview:

So I thought that I wanted to read about it and try to find something about it and, to my amazement, I went on the Internet and Googled it and went to Abebooks and all that, and no one had written about it, no one had touched it since the day nearly a hundred years previously when Conan Doyle wrote his article [in support of George Edalji]. So it was part out of frustration that there was nothing written about it that I thought I might write something.²³⁸

Evidently, Barnes's purpose is to illuminate the parts of history that have been forgotten or misrepresented, thus, reconstructing the past in a more truthful way. For many, this attitude may seem more straightforwardly historical than self-reflective and historiographic and many critics, of course, believe we should put *Arthur & George* to a new kind of historical novel. However, Elsa Cavalié asserts that "*Arthur & George* signals a temporal as well as a generic shift in Barnes's fiction, for it foregoes the patently postmodern conundrum for a more subdued approach of story-telling and what one might call a "retro-Victorian" style."²³⁹ Indeed, this also indicates that Barnes has also attempted to re-create his historical novel rather than going along with postmodern fabulation. Now having a certain amount of knowledge about the novel's style and Barnes's purpose of writing, it would be fair to dive into *Arthur & George* to elaborate what are certainly significant aspects of time,

²³⁸ Barnes, Julian. "Xexus Fraga: Interview with Julian Barnes." *Conversations with Julian Barnes* (Eds. Vanessa Guignery and Ryan Roberts. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 134.

²³⁹ Cavalié, Elsa. "Unofficial Englishmen: Representations of the English Gentleman in Julian Barnes's *Arthur & George*," in F. Revirion-Piégay (ed.), *Englishness Revisited*. (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009. 352–64), 89.

history, reality and their vital relationships with each other through some important historical characters.

First of all, there are essential aspects about time and the narrative of the novel including the different tenses that are used for each character. The novel starts with the first memories of two characters though they may not be crucially relevant for the story. However, they give the readers insights about not just physical development of Arthur and George, but also their psychological development which enable us to identify ourselves with them at the same time. In other words, even with a few historical details, Barnes makes the readers get into the time-locus of the characters in the novel. As Barnes himself once said in the interview: “I wanted to 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 characters think and the way that they talk and through the language of the prose rather than amassing a great amount of historical detail.”²⁴⁰ Indeed, it is his unique style that contributes the theme, the aspects, and the major conflicts in the book. Every detail in the novel addresses to both the readers of the Edwardian England and the readers today. This is an apparently another unique perspective to understanding Barnes’s relation with time and history where he travels into the past and takes the readers alongside with him to discover the hidden realities that are often neglected in the traditional history.

Furthermore, the first sentences of the book indicate Barnes’s experimental engagement with time and history as they state: “A child wants to see. It always begins like this, and it began like this then. A child wanted to see.”²⁴¹ Here we are introduced to Arthur as a small child whose curiosity leads him to walk in on his first encounter with corpse, but within this one statement, the shift from the present tense into the past tense makes us

²⁴⁰ Barnes, Julian. “Xexus Fraga: Interview with Julian Barnes.” *Conversations with Julian Barnes*. (Eds. Vanessa Guignery and Ryan Roberts. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 135.

²⁴¹ Barnes, Julian. *Arthur & George*. (London: Vintage Books, 2006), 3.

“descend from the experiential present tense into a historical self-consciousness.”²⁴² Berberich states that here the “first person narrators of Barnes’s early work are replaced by a third-person narration, and with it we have moved from foreground subjectivity to a restrictive third-person consciousness.”²⁴³ These historiographic concerns of the writer also lead us to another innovative characteristic of the novel when we begin reading about George. Unlike Arthur’s story, George’s story is narrated in the present tense where the first like claims that George has no first memory. “He has no recollection obviously preceding all others – not of being picked up, cuddled, laughed at or chastised,”²⁴⁴ states the narrator. In fact, Barnes deliberately delivers George’s story in the present tense rather than the past tense and with such details like having no first memory or depicting him as some kind of stable or naïve character. When asked why he preferred to write George’s story in the present tense, Barnes replies as this:

At one point I thought of writing it differently. I thought, “I don’t want to write a novel that only happens in the past; I’ll write a novel with that story and then a contemporary story of racial prejudice.” But I thought that would be too convoluted, and, partly, the strength of the original story was such that you don’t have to put a parallel story today into the book in order for people to realise that it’s about today as well as it is about hundred years ago. So at one point I thought, “No, the story will do for itself.” If people don’t notice any contemporary parallel, then they’re not very good readers anyway.²⁴⁵

²⁴² Berberich, Cristine. “All Letters Quoted are Authentic: The Past After Postmodern Fabulation in Julian Barnes’s *Arthur & George*.” *Julian Barnes: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. (Eds. Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 120.

²⁴³ Ibid., 120.

²⁴⁴ Barnes, Julian. *Arthur & George*. (London: Vintage Books, 2006), 4.

²⁴⁵ Barnes, Julian. “Xexus Fraga: Interview with Julian Barnes.” *Conversations with Julian Barnes*. (Eds. Vanessa Guignery and Ryan Roberts. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 135.

Indeed, George's way of expressing himself in a pedantic way reminds the boys of today. Then, his story tells that it is also about today, and the present tense is the one of the main reasons that stands for it alongside with indicating Barnes's relation with time as the ending lines of the book also combine three different tenses at once. Besides, even if it is written in the past tense (which it is done in seemingly second part of the novel whereas Arthur's story proceeds in the present tense which eventually goes on again with the past tense), that past is not treated as separate or complete, rather presented as the piece of ever changing or moving present. This may indicate the biographical element of the book and yet, it also reinforces its double perspective in time combining chronological time, fictional time, and psychological duration of characters at once. In addition to that, they may also hint that those parts of the stories can be based on partly speculation and extrapolation never having the whole scale of knowledge about the actual details. After all, the whole book importantly presents us the investigations within investigation of the author. It must be well pointed out that the main reason or motive of Barnes's reconstructing the past concerning Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji is not just to problematize traditional history about them or break up the linear chronology as to engage in experimental time-issues, but also, as Berberich states, "not to create *the* version of the past in *Arthur & George*, but *two* versions: Arthur's and George's," where Barnes plays the roles of both "Barnes the historical researcher [... and] Barnes the novelist, the creator of the *fictional* character George Edalji who only might also bear resemblance to the *real* George Edalji."²⁴⁶ That is mostly why the novel contains the combination of the significant amount of elements of realism and postmodern historiography.

Being aware of these comprehensive and crucial details of *Arthur & George*, it is not so surprising to see the main aspects (themes, narrative structure, conflicts etc.) of the novel

²⁴⁶ Berberich, Cristine. "All Letters Quoted are Authentic: The Past After Postmodern Fabulation in Julian Barnes's *Arthur & George*." *Julian Barnes: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. (Eds. Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 123.

are linked to one another. Even the book's length reminds the readers of the Victorian and Edwardian novels as to say it almost resembles to many of Arthur Conan Doyle's detective novels. On the other hand, there is significant number of elements, including the very fundamental motive, that deals with especially the postmodern historiographic concerns throughout the book. Perhaps, one of the most compellingly important and conspicuous themes is the strong emphasis on the difference between 'knowing' and 'believing.' Taking the background information into account, it can be considered as the backbone of *Arthur & George*, and also reinforces the postmodern theory of slippery nature of reality as well as time since they are both linked in surprising ways in the novel. For instance, when the jury finds George guilty on his fourth day of the trial, the narrator translates George's feelings and thoughts as he states:

They [the family] knew him innocent, but how could they stop turning over in their heads what they had seen and heard over the last four days? What if their belief in him began to falter? When they said they knew him innocent, what did that really mean? To know him innocent, they must either have sat up all night and observed him sleep, or else been on watch in the Colliery field when some lunatic farmhand arrived with an evil instrument in his pocket. Only thus could they truly know. So what they did was believe, truly believe. And what if, over time, some words of Mr Disturnal, some assertion of Dr Butter, or some private long-held doubt about George, began to undermine their faith in him?²⁴⁷

This statement continues with even more shocking expression on account of the relationship between reality and time. The narrator goes on: "Today: we know George and we know him innocent. But perhaps in three months: we think we know George and we believe him innocent. And then in a year: we realize we did not know George, yet we still

²⁴⁷ Barnes, Julian. *Arthur & George*. (London: Vintage Books, 2006), 202-203.

think him innocent. Who could blame anyone for this declension?”²⁴⁸ These two terms; knowing and believing, constantly shift their grounds over time just like in *The Sense of an Ending* and in real life and yet the tension grows bigger and bigger as the novel proceeds. It is also fairly pointed out by Mr Meek, the advocate of George, that the whole trial and the whole accusations are based on believing rather than evidences and true witnesses as he assures that “[I]t is question of belief. What we believe, why we believe it. From a purely legal point of view, the best witnesses are those whom the jury believes most.”²⁴⁹ This obviously shows us how fragile reality can be even in the most significant moments of one’s life which bring about disappointing and shockingly untrue consequences. Once again Barnes demonstrates not just the relativity of time but also of reality or one may even consider it as knowledge of things.

Moreover, Julian Barnes also thematises the tension between believing and knowing in case of Arthur’s story. For instance, Barnes portrays Arthur as a character who becomes aware of the fact that relativity of knowledge and the difference between knowing and believing is fundamentally connected to time. At one point in the novel, the narrator states “[Arthur] also recognized that knowledge never stayed still, and that today’s certainties might become tomorrow’s superstitions.”²⁵⁰ This provides an important insight about how time changes realities that leads to ever lingering uncertainties related to the past. Apart from this, Arthur is more associated with the tension between knowing and believing that proceeds till the end of the novel.

From the beginning of *Arthur & George*, Arthur is presented as the most reasonable person who becomes an ophthalmologist, ‘the science man,’ and later gives up practising, and when he starts writing the most famous detective novels, *Sherlock Holmes* series, he is

²⁴⁸ Ibid.,203.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.,193.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.,53.

always inclined to reason as the novels also based on reasonable doubt. Yet, the least expected thing from him and untypical of him is the believing in seances and spiritualism whereas everyone around him is opposed to such thing. Although it bothers Arthur's sister and Jean Leckie, Arthur perfectly manages this conflict. However, there are other issues in the life of Arthur that concern the tension between believing and knowing. For instance, when George asks him if he believes his innocence or not, Arthur replies with such great certainty: "No, I do not think you are innocent. No, I do not believe you are innocent. I *know* you are innocent."²⁵¹ This statement does surprise not just George but also the readers as well because Arthur's judgement is merely based on some readings from the newspapers and intuition rather than concrete proof. More importantly, this is also associated with other aspects of George's life. The readers we are aware of George's innocence or at least we are made to believe so, but in this case, Arthur claims himself as the author of George's narrative. In fact, George's story becomes well-known thanks to the intrusion of Arthur, thus, once again George remains inattentive in his own narrative. By the end of the novel, even when Arthur is dead, his narrative still remains dominant in George's story. After the death of Arthur Conan Doyle, George reads his *Memories and Adventures*, and realizes something interesting about Arthur's account of George's case as the narrator states:

No, George thought, this was ungracious of him. Sir Arthur was doubtless working from memory, from the version of events he had himself told and retold down the years. George knew from taking witness statements how the constant recounting of events smoothed the edges of stories, rendered the speaker more self-important, made everything more certain than it had seemed at the time.²⁵²

²⁵¹ Ibid.,306.

²⁵² Ibid.,472.

Indeed, this statement links many dominant themes of the novel such as history writing, biography writing, memory, reality as well as time, and these all are related with the conflict between believing and knowing.

First of all, *Memories and Adventures* is biographical work written by himself and yet it generates a sense of history as well as memoir which offers subjective sense of real past events. However, as it is mentioned beforehand in the previous chapter, the work of historian no longer gives us the feelings of credibility, at least no more than a writer's work, especially when it is a memoir. As Aylin Atilla puts it, [w]hen historiography is placed on the same plane as fiction, then the historian and the writer raise the same questions about the nature of reality and its representations and both genres deal with the disclosures that transcend the local, contingent, time-bound stories and display the loss of faith in their ability to represent reality.”²⁵³ Evidently, here Arthur plays the role of both author and historian. Additionally, Aylin Atilla also draws attention to the subjectivity of those representations or stories as she adds that “[i]nvariably, moral, ethnic, or political messages are included, and this gives shape to the events narrated [or represented]. In that case, regarding the question of objectivity, history's neutral voice no longer exists because discourse inevitably designates the utterance with the intention of influencing the other.”²⁵⁴ This is actually how George thinks about such texts that they can be heavily subjective and edited account of actual past events. Naturally, we must expect subjective reality rather than objective truth. Besides, we must also acknowledge the fact that the past (as the nature of time) is irreversible, can only exist in texts (historical, scientific, literal) and human memory, so naturally when a historian as well as a writer make attempts to revive the past, the inevitable intervention of subjective perspectives or ideology combined with inadequacy of language raises the major challenge and gives the

²⁵³ Atilla, Aylin. “Introduction.” *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 4.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 7-8.

impression of unreliability as does to George in this case. This is, in fact, what postmodern accounts of reality, literature, and history propose where the problems of representations (including history) in relations with language and ideology factors as well as time, require certain serious re-consideration of our understandings of them.

Secondly, although George is aware of the fact that reality is shape shifting through time and as the witness of Arthur's account of history about the case, interestingly, George accepts it, and even grants it as evidence over his own narrative. As the narrator announces it "[t]he book would be his passport in case of difficulty."²⁵⁵ Ironically, the story is about (of) 'Arthur' concerning George, not the way around. Eventually, this leads to George's self-questioning because even in his own life story, the dominant narratives are of others, his father, the police, the jury, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, then Maud and eventually Barnes. At the very end of the story, the narrator translates George's thoughts and feelings as he asserts:

What does he, George, know? Does he finally know anything? What is the sum of knowledge he has acquired in his fifty-four years? Mostly, he has gone through his life learning and waiting to be told. The authority of others has always been important to him; does he have any authority of his own? At fifty-four, he thinks a lot of things, he believes a few, but what can he really claim to know?²⁵⁶

In here, the writer associates the knowing with authority or authorship, but from more comprehensive perspective believing can also be associated with authority or authorship as Barnes the writer has also fabulises many parts of George's story unlike the story of Arthur whose life was recorded carefully. Barnes even admitted that Maud, George's beloved sister is "a complete guess," except the name.²⁵⁷ He believed that the characters, George, his father,

²⁵⁵ Barnes, Julian. *Arthur & George*. (London: Vintage Books, 2006), 472.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 499.

²⁵⁷ Berberich, Cristine. "All Letters Quoted are Authentic: The Past After Postmodern Fabulation in Julian Barnes's *Arthur & George*." *Julian Barnes: Contemporary Critical*

his mother, and Maud had acted the way he has portrayed in the novel, and that is the only option since the past is irreversible unless there is adequate documentation like in the case of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Or as Arthur describes it: “What would it be worth if that was the case? And perhaps proof is impossible anyway. Perhaps the best we can manage is thinking and believing.”²⁵⁸ What Barnes implies is that even reality sometimes slips away from our hands and we will not be able to truly grasp it, only we can do is thinking and believing. Perchance Barnes fictionalized George Edalji as the trademark of this very thought and of his take nothing for granted attitude.

Thirdly, there are two major aspects that are also dominant and as important as the previous one in the statements from *Memories and Adventures*: memory factor and mimesis or mimetic approach. Here George refers to the theory of Paul Ricoeur about memory being often self-serving just like in *The Sense of an Ending*, and yet does not neglect the significant emphasis on mimesis as he thinks that what Arthur wrote in the book is “the version of events he had himself told and retold down the years,” meaning the narrative is re-constructed over and over again, thus, definitely far from Bergson’s *durée*. In other words, Doyle’s *Memories and Adventures* is the history where the imperfections of memory meet the recollections of the witness, thus, creating a self-serving narrative rather than objective representation of the past. However, it would not be fair to jump onto quick conclusions because at this point, we need to consider Barnes’s dazzling experimental approach to memory from a variety of perspectives. Many would agree that Barnes’s previous novels, *Arthur & George*, and his latter novels deal with memory in various ways as the almost all novels begin with an explicit reference to memory. For instance, *England, England* opens with a question – “What’s your

Perspectives. (Eds. Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 138.

²⁵⁸ Barnes, Julian. *Arthur & George*. (London: Vintage Books, 2006), 264.

first memory?”²⁵⁹ - as well as *Talking It Over* and *Love, etc*, both begins with the issue of what one remembers. Then, *The Sense of an Ending* opens with the sentence stating “I remember, in no particular order,”²⁶⁰ and even the beginning sentences of Barnes’s one of the latest works, *The Noise of Time*, refer to memory saying “Faces, names, memories.”²⁶¹ So naturally, *Arthur & George*, also starts with crucial statement about Arthur, - “What he saw there became his first memory,” which contrasts with the first line of George’s story – “George does not have a first memory.”²⁶² These references explain Barnes’s constant and yet experimental approach to memory and memory related issues that have significant role in one’s identity, history & future life. In *Arthur & George*, Barnes describes the importance of memories of long-remembered past and re-inventing them so as to challenge and alter the present realities ascribed by the society. Arthur, who is inspired by history of his ancestors, and “long-remembered, long-invented world of chivalry,”²⁶³ devoted his time to re-construct the present situation of George with the help of the memories of people in Great Wyrley and cleared George’s name. On the other hand, George is not often associated with memory related issues as the novel clearly states in the first line of his part, except at the very end where he realizes that the memories Arthur constructed are both his own and George’s reality, and even influencing his future as George is very much worried about proving he was a friend of Arthur. Barnes, first and foremost, draws attention to this dichotomy by juxtaposing two different characters’ stories in a single book where one seeing both the beginning and ending of his story and the other seeing only the present moment of his story. Thus, these features once again reinforce the postmodern historiographic concerns of the novel in a more specific exemplification.

²⁵⁹ Barnes, Julian. *England, England*. (Vintage International, 2000. E-book), 3.

²⁶⁰ Barnes, Julian. *The Sense of an Ending*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), 3.

²⁶¹ Barnes, Julian. *The Noise of Time*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016), 5.

²⁶² Barnes, Julian. *Arthur & George*. (London: Vintage Books, 2006), 3-4.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 31.

Furthermore, all these aspects of the novel are intermingled in one way or another and closely related to the blurry mixture of history writing and fiction writing. Barnes does not just opt to present fictionalized protagonists, but something of hybrid as he did in any of his novels. The certain aspects and episodes of Sir Arthur, whose life had been actually recorded and the life of the Birmingham solicitor, George Edalji are presented through the lenses of Barnes the novelist. Unlike the historian, he combines both history and fiction in the same basis; does not actually aggrandizes Sir Arthur as the prominent historical and literary figure and does not disregard the importance of the criminal case of George Edalji. In fact, just like Arthur in the novel, Barnes himself actually went to the Newspaper Library and to Birmingham to do extensive research on the criminal case of George Edalji and the relationship between George and Arthur, and gives some factual information about the research, letters, documents, and etc. in Author's note part. However, the focus is only partial on the lives of these two protagonists and as Guignery Vanessa states, "Barnes uses his licence as a novelist to try and imagine what the two protagonists were thinking or feeling, or to invent conversations, and the passages devoted to George Edalji certainly bear the mark of his imagination more strongly than some other sections,"²⁶⁴ because one hand, we have a character whose life has been recorded (though partially) and on the other hand, we have lesser-known (thanks to Sir Arthur), ordinary solicitor who was wrongly imprisoned for horse mutilations. Therefore, *Arthur & George* "mixes reality and imagination [or fiction] so that the book is part history, part biography and part fiction."²⁶⁵ To be more precise at the definition, we can conclude that *Arthur & George* is more like 'unofficial history' which captures certain periods of Sir Arthur and George Edalji's lives. Just like Sir Arthur, Barnes turns the spotlight of history and literature towards George and his case by "making noise."

²⁶⁴ Vanessa, Guignery. "Endings and New Beginnings: *Arthur & George* (2005)." *The Fiction of Julian Barnes*. (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 130.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.,129.

As Linda Hutcheon suggests, the intention of writer is to render ‘official history’ problematic, thereby, question the representations of the past in history by constructing hybrid (factual and fictional) worlds. In other words, writers actually do not discard history but combine history and fiction seamlessly by “rejecting the transcendent, timeless meaning [history] has been assigned until now.”²⁶⁶ This is exactly what Barnes does in *Arthur & George*, thus, creating a masterpiece of historiographic metafiction with the real past and the imagined past. In other words, if official history answers the question of what happened, Barnes’s unofficial (fictionalized) history answers the questions of why and how. The whole novel is a Barnes’s creative exercise under the special constraint of staying reasonably close to the historical record, and at the same time, performing such an experimental literary masterpiece under this constraint. This proves why the fiction can be equally significant as a historical text and how historical and fictional texts are often considered equally a matter of constructing and reconstructing, thus making sense of the past.

In addition to these, even though Arthur’s activities as a prominent writer are only brought up in the very beginning of his career as a writer and in some occasions concerning Sherlock Holmes’s popularity and cunning, we cannot reject the fact that in George’s case Arthur acts like his own fictional character, Holmes and his secretary, Wood becomes Dr Watson. These impersonations are actually quite significant in terms of the blurred line between history and fiction writing. Even George often feels like a character in a novel and as we mentioned before, Arthur plays the role of both the writer and the main character (detective) where George’s case is resembled to writing a novel. After the death of Touie and when he first encounters Edalji case, he feels so much eager as if he starts writing a new novel. At one point, he affirms it as he utters this statement: “It was like starting a book: you had the story but not all of it, most of the characters but not all of them, some but not all of

²⁶⁶ Roșcan, Alina. “History in the Postmodern Paradigm.” *Rewriting History in the Novels of Julian Barnes*. (București: Editura Centrul Tecnic-Editorial al Armatei, 2016), 49-50.

the causal links. You had your beginning, and you had your ending.”²⁶⁷ This metafictional assertion provides certain explanations about the nature of history writing and fiction writing and yet, gives confidence about how both of them can sometimes mean the same thing. The *fiction* that Arthur writes is actual case of George Edalji which, in fact, is historical event. Hence, Barnes, who combined the stories of both Arthur and George with certain amount of the insertion of the historical and fictional details, offers us ‘unofficial history’ in the style of historiographical metafiction. By doing so, he urges on us to acquire more comprehensive perspectives on history and alternative histories that co-exist in time.

Moreover, throughout the novel, the terms of “official” and “unofficial” are often associated with identity problem, in this case, Englishness. Arthur and George constantly identify themselves as English though neither ‘is’ English by birth. Arthur is “Irish by ancestry, Scottish by birth, instructed in the faith of Rome by Dutch Jesuits” and George has Parsee father and Scottish mother, and both of them can be confronted by the notion of Englishness. Christine Berberich explains that,

Barnes explores . . . [this theme] in order to express Edwardian anxieties that challenge, in particular, the mythical notion of a secure English identity as yet unscathed by two world wars . . . [, therefore,] Barnes depicts, in particular, Edwardian Englishness as an unstable concept, one that is not necessarily, as common myth would have it, innate and inimitable, but on the contrary, one that is laboriously studied and painstakingly applied – façade, rather than a nation’s pride.²⁶⁸

It is worth to note that in this particular novel, Barnes deals with race prejudice for the first time thanks to historiographic concerns about it. Although the novel initially draws

²⁶⁷ Barnes, Julian. *Arthur & George*. (London: Vintage Books, 2006), 332.

²⁶⁸ Berberich, Cristine. “All Letters Quoted are Authentic: The Past After Postmodern Fabulation in Julian Barnes’s *Arthur & George*.” *Julian Barnes: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. (Eds. Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 123.

attention to the race prejudice in the situation of George, after the second part, the focus shifts more to Sir Arthur's definition of Englishness as having the attitude of "Wait and See."²⁶⁹ Later, Arthur also labels this attitude onto George and to his justification, George always refers himself as an English and even brings the books of Shakespeare and Tennyson as "a suitable wedding present"²⁷⁰ to Sir Arthur and Jean's wedding. Historically, it was very popular English tradition to give books as a present in the Victorian England, especially in the late Victorian era in which the events take place in *Arthur & George*.

Furthermore, the theme of Englishness in the novel is often rendered through the postmodern notion of identity as fluid and imitable as Barnes portrayed the protagonists as ideal Englishmen. In addition to that, Arthur constantly calls himself and sometimes George as "unofficial Englishmen."²⁷¹ This, of course, Barnes's use of twist as he is reconstructing the protagonists' identities 'unofficially' in his unofficial history. Even though, Arthur does not regard himself as an English, George and everyone around him regard him as an ideal English, after all, this was Barnes's fundamental intention in terms of identity issues. This double nature of Englishness reveals the dynamics of identity construction both by the society and by oneself. As Ana- Karina Schneider once puts it, "Julian Barnes is, along with Peter Ackroyd, one of the writers who have made it a legitimate pursuit again to define Englishness in earnest rather than with deprecation."²⁷² Thus, we can easily conclude that the novel is the hybrid-genre, historiographical metafiction about time, the tension between believing and knowing, relativity of knowledge, identity, and reality, and blurring borderlines of fact and fiction or evidence and imagination which are carefully articulated in such a Barnes's way.

²⁶⁹ Barnes, Julian. *Arthur & George*. (London: Vintage Books, 2006), 268.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 444.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 303.

²⁷² Schneider, Ana- Karina. "Competing Narratives in Julian Barnes's *Arthur & George*." *Worlds within Words: Twenty-first Century Visions on the Work of Julian Barnes. American, British, and Canadian Studies*. (Vol 13. Sibiu: Lucian Blaga University Press, 2009), 52.

There are withal apparent, and yet crucial details in *Arthur & George* which contribute to a broader understanding of all those aspects we have mentioned above. Beside the title of the book that clearly expresses what it is all about, the names of the chapters are linked to the themes that are explicated in them and give overall ideas about the book. The first chapter is named, “Beginnings” and as its name suggests it is dedicated to the upbrings of two different protagonists; first to Arthur, then to George. The stories of the characters juxtapose and provide background information for the future notable figures by presenting their impressions, thought, and feelings through the third person narrator. Arthur is mostly influenced by his mother who teaches him family history alongside chivalric stories, and yet teachings of Christianity is also present. Arthur is much more inclined to chivalric stories that thematises bravery, love, honour and becoming a promising storyteller in the future. Contrariwise, George, who does what is told without question, is educated much more a Christian due to the fact that his father is a Vicar and his rather naïve character. Unlike Arthur, George’s upbringing does not have any extraordinary or memorable event. Everything is inside the Vicarage, outside world is merely told and he takes it for granted. As the narrator puts it, “[t]his is the story he has been told, and it is clear and true and happy as everything ought to be.”²⁷³ In matter of fact, Barnes portrays his protagonists’ younger states as realistic as it can be described giving the third person narrator a childlike perspective and avoiding any judgemental claims about them. The prominent critic, F. M. Holmes asserts that, “Barnes’s undramatized third-person narrator does not correct their [Arthur and George’s] misperceptions and prejudices in order to provide readers with a broader understanding of reality.”²⁷⁴ As the novel proceeds, Arthur and George’s personalities start to be shaped; as Arthur establishes himself as a prominent writer having already created Sherlock Holmes character whereas George’s life is shaken by misdeeds of the hoaxer. Until

²⁷³ Barnes, Julian. *Arthur & George*. (London: Vintage Books, 2006), 8.

²⁷⁴ Holmes, F. M. *Julian Barnes*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 59.

this point, the story goes forward chronologically giving even exact dates and it also continues in the same way in the second chapter of the book as it is called, “Beginning with an Ending.” The title itself can be identified with the investigative technique used by Sir Arthur the investigator, Sir Arthur the writer, by the police, and more importantly, by Barnes himself. At one point, Arthur asks a metafictional question about it: “How can you make sense of the beginning if you don’t know what the ending is?”²⁷⁵ He also admits that he applies this technique when writing his famous detective novels; he knows the ending and writes towards it. Considering this characteristic of him may give us a hint about why he claims that he *knows* George is innocent. He knows or at least pretends to know so that his all efforts are inclined towards that conclusion. Furthermore, Barnes as a writer and an investigator knows the beginning and the ending of the story of Arthur and Edalji case and fills the gaps between them in order to make sense of the events happened in the past. This, of course, challenges the conventional genres and proves to a self-reflective where reality is a construct, relative, and there is always a room for hypothesizing and artistic abilities of an author.

Moreover, the third chapter of the book is called, “Ending with a Beginning,” seemingly the opposite of the second chapter’s title. For the first time the stories of Arthur and George meet and narrated together as the first part of the chapter also indicate the title of the book: “Arthur & George.” In this chapter, unlike the second chapter, the story flows backward as it starts with the current situation of George who is recently released from the prison. If the second chapter proceeds towards the known ending, the third chapter as its name suggest proceeds towards the beginning of the events with the hoaxer situation. Sir Arthur plays the role of Sherlock Holmes as he travels back to the begging of the events that triggered the Edalji case and eventually his imprisonment. Barnes designed this chapter as the

²⁷⁵ Barnes, Julian. *Arthur & George*. (London: Vintage Books, 2006), 269.

climax of the novel where the George's story changes almost entirely thanks to Sir Arthur's findings and resolution, yet George's surprisingly unexpected reactions manages to surprise the readers as there is no glimpse of any kind of surprise or unexpected impression to the misdeeds of Royden Sharp who was the actual culprit for hoaxes and animal mutilations. This chapter also serves as the resolution as everything related to George's story make sense and ends up with cleaning his name except illogical situation of writing anonymous letters.

Interesting enough that the last chapter almost resembles to traditional endings of the Victorian novels, as its name is also called "Endings," implying a closure. George's aspiration for a closure is expressed when he remembers the past, about how Maud always gives him hope and joy. Unlike Tony Webster in *The Sense of an Ending*, George wants to bury the memories of his unpleasant past in the past. As the narrator states,

George thought his way back from the Maud he knew now, and realized there must have been a lot more of this woman in that girl than he was aware of at the time. But he had no desire to pursue the complications of this. He had decided long ago what had happened; he knew his own story. He might be willing to accept a general correction of the kind just made; but the last thing he wanted was fresh detail.²⁷⁶

This statement actually juxtaposes with the case of Arthur's funeral. Ironically, George is surprised when he learns that there is public séance dedicated for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle which clearly indicates that they do not want closure for Arthur's story. In fact, the seances continued for a while till they served no more use. However, as for the ending George's story, Barnes puts a closure and the expression of lingering uncertainty in the shape of the ambiguous ending of the book:

[George] gazes through his succession of lenses, out into the air and beyond.

What does he see?

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 462.

What did he see?

What will he see?²⁷⁷

This combination of three tenses or three parts of time which as Christine Berberich suggests “are symptomatic of uncertainty regarding not only the Edalji case, but historical events in general. As readers, finding out about the case over a hundred years later, we can never know the entire truth; we can only assume, conject and hypothesize.”²⁷⁸ Even though Barnes’s view on time does not necessarily reinforce a drive to locate a ground of being outside time, it does suggest relativity of time and reality when we acknowledge uncertainty and unseizable nature of the past, and luckily, the fictional world of *Arthur & George* offers the possibility to create such complex, deep atmosphere alongside the comprehensive perspective on the relationship between time and reality. The novel, as being a unique example of self-reflexive historiographic metafiction, does not actually need closure, but rather something the readers make up their own minds as it presents alternative, “unofficial version of history” about the events happened more than a century ago.

Furthermore, in one of his interviews, Barnes has explained fiction writing’s importance as a crucial lead to understanding the past and the present. A history reader wants to be told the whole story, wants to understand all motivations, wants to know exactly what happened but traditional history usually does not present the whole things. However, Barnes’s novels “coherently link the real” events which mainly make sense even though it is partially “imagined in a plausible narrative.”²⁷⁹ In short, for Barnes, books make sense of life. That’s why they are often more appealingly convincing than historical documents just like in

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 501.

²⁷⁸ Berberich, Christine. “‘All Letters Quoted Are Authentic’: The Past After Postmodern Fabulation in Julian Barnes’s *Arthur & George*.” *Julian Barnes: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. (Eds. Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 128.

²⁷⁹ Barnes, Julian. qtd. in Vanessa Guignery. “‘History in question(s)’: an interview with Julian Barnes.” *Conversations with Julian Barnes* (Eds. Vanessa Guignery and Ryan Roberts. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 55.

the case of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji. In *Arthur & George*, Barnes “proposes that in order to make sense of history, the historian [just like a writer] should create a sense of continuity by combining the bits in a narrative with causality.”²⁸⁰ There is even almost identical statement in the book that proves the actual application of it, - “It was like starting a book: you had the story but not all of it, most of the characters but not all of them, some but not all of the causal links. You had your beginning, and you had your ending.”²⁸¹ Besides, Barnes himself also positions himself not just as a writer but also as a critic of history by questioning the fundamental principles of the traditional historiography through the elusiveness of language, relativity of knowledge, and demonstrating multiple layers of meanings and realities in time.

3. 4. Dealing with Traumatic Realities of (in) Time: *The Noise of Time*

Another brilliant and multi-faceted novel by Julian Barnes, *The Noise of Time*, which is one of the author’s latest works, is centred on many of the recurrent themes that constitute the backbones of the previous novels, *The Sense of an Ending* and *Arthur & George*, and deserves much of the praise for its unusual narrative style. The novel is about the life of the prominent twentieth century Soviet composer Dmitri Dmitrievich Shostakovich (1906-1975) who lives his life as a tragedy in almost Sisyphean²⁸² sense, and Barnes draws much of the attention to his inner world, his distressing struggles against the power under Stalin’s rule. The novel fundamentally deals with several characteristics of the postmodern understanding of the past, history, and historiography: “the ‘end of history’; the endeavours of historians

²⁸⁰ Atilla, Aylin. “Fictional Auto/bio/graphies: Julian Barnes’s *Flaubert’s Parrot* and Penelope Lively’s *Moon Tiger*.” *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 160.

²⁸¹ Barnes, Julian. *Arthur & George*. (London: Vintage Books, 2006), 332.

²⁸² Refers to Albert Camus’s book, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays* which is based on the Myth of Sisyphus. Meaning of the word is the condition of being in an endless and unavailing labor or a task achieving nothing.

[and the writers] as makers of meanings; the dialogic relationship between history and memory; the narrative, the ideological and the discursive dimensions of history; and historiographic metafiction.”²⁸³ The novel itself, in fact, signifies Barnes’s literary and artistic evaluation since it is one of his latest works and even though it is much shorter in length, it is much more comprehensive, longer in themes, or in other word, terse. Yet it shares many same features with the previous novels and contains the similar generic hybridity and irony that evade clear categorization. In *The Noise of Time*, Barnes explores a variety of defining features of the historiographic metafiction and the more importantly, he explores “his fascination for people ‘living in interesting times’”²⁸⁴ with acknowledgement that their “stories come in many versions, worked up and ‘improved’ over the years.”²⁸⁵ Although the novel presents fictionalized biography of the prominent Soviet composer, Dmitri Dmitrievich Shostakovich (1906-1975), and share common characteristics with *Arthur & George* in terms of historiographic concerns and time, *The Noise of Time* is much more complex and multifaceted with its particularly unusual narrative style and certain political inclination in order to portray the whole picture including all relevant factors that make up the complete story. In “Author’s note” part, Barnes put down this sentence to show his commitment to capturing the whole truth and his determination to penetrate the contemporary: “I have treated it as I would a private diary: as appearing to give the full truth, yet usually written at the same time of day, in the same prevailing mood, with the same prejudices and forgettings.”²⁸⁶ It is worth to note that the political references in the book meaning quite a lot, do not make up the core of the story but rather serve as side-lines since politics has been

²⁸³ Roșcan, Alina. “Introduction.” *Rewriting History in the Novels of Julian Barnes*. (București: Editura Centrul Tehnic-Editorial al Armatei, 2016), 13.

²⁸⁴ Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs. “Julian Barnes and the Wisdom of Uncertainty.” *Julian Barnes: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. (Eds. Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 5.

²⁸⁵ Barnes, Julian. “Author’s note.” *The Noise of Time*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016), 86.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 86.

inseparable part of history and the story of Shostakovich is mainly about the mixture of music and politics or “Power.” Therefore, it is important to remember that the subject of politics is mostly for the historiographic concerns of the novel as the it deals with the ideological and discursive dimensions of history, postmodern notion of reality and its representations (history versus fiction, history versus power), irony, power and art, time, and re-constructing the past into the contemporary.

First of all, the novel does not capture all moments of the life of Dmitri Shostakovich, but it does capture the crucial periods of his life with some significant amount of credibility and with acute historical, social, and psychological analysis. The most importantly, they are all expounded with the particularly unusual narrative technique that reflects Barnes’s evolutionary and revolutionary progress in writing. Initially, the novel clearly demonstrates the use of the technique of stream-of-consciousness as the first page of the first part of the book shows the flow of thoughts of the character where he jumps from one thought to another very rapidly unable to control this flow. Reading further sheds lights on some crucial factors related to the narrative technique. Firstly, the similar flow of thoughts appears almost in every page of the novel where Shostakovich becomes terrible anxious due to the present circumstances and deep down, he himself “knew he was a shy and anxious person.”²⁸⁷ The hints about his personality goes even further that at one point he says: “[i]n truth, he was a neurotic. He thought he knew what he wanted, he got what he wanted, he didn’t want it any more, it went from him, he wanted it back again. . . . But his underlying condition was one of high anxiety. He was a thorough-going neurotic. No, again it was worse than that: he was a hysteric.”²⁸⁸ This explains his rapid flow of thought when he is anxious, mostly because of fear, or menaced. This has to do much more with the narrative technique than one can anticipate because the one and only narrator in the novel is Dmitri Shostakovich himself.

²⁸⁷ Barnes, Julian. *The Noise of Time*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016), 7.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

Barnes uses such an experimental narrative technique that Shostakovich is acting as the main character, and narrates as both the first-person and the third-person narrator. Moreover, it goes even further with occasional second-person narrative hints and imitating other characters' voices, impressions, and thoughts as if addressing the readers in the disguise of self-reflection and self-advice. Take a look at one of many examples of such narrative style where Shostakovich expresses his aspiration for a foreign car, a Mercedes:

As the chauffeur braked, the car pulled to the left. It was a Volga, comfortable enough. He had always wanted to own a foreign car. He had always wanted, very specifically, a Mercedes. He had foreign currency sitting in the copyright bureau, but was never allowed to spend it on a foreign car. What is wrong with our Soviet cars, Dmitri Dmitrievich? Do they not take you from place to place, are they not reliable, and built with Soviet roads in mind? How would it look if our most distinguished composer was seen to insult the Soviet motor industry by buying a Mercedes? Do members of the Politburo drive around in capitalist vehicles? Surely you can see that it is quite impossible.²⁸⁹

This is one of the many examples in the novel. It starts with the third-person narration, then imitating the explicit insinuation of "Power" in the form of the first-person narration or as in dialogue, and then ending in the second-person narration by addressing the readers as giving the reason of inability to obtain a Mercedes. This kind of statements are not few to neglect the complex nature of the novel's narrative style and it allows us to access all possibilities and information, and raises credibility. This can be the most accurate explanation of why Barnes preferred this narrative technique. In the "Author's note" part, Barnes explicitly wrote it with certain indications to the novel's historiographic concerns:

Shostakovich as a multiple narrator of his own life. Some stories come in many

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 60.

versions, worked up and ‘improved’ over the years. Others – for instance, what happened at the Big House in Leningrad – exist only in a single version, told many years after the composer’s death, by a single source. More broadly, truth was a hard thing to find, let alone maintain, in Stalin’s Russia. Even the names mutate uncertainly: so, Shostakovich’s interrogator at the Big House is variously given as Zanchevsky, Zakrevsky and Zakovsky. All this is highly frustrating to any biographer, but most welcome to any novelist.²⁹⁰

So, the only way to give the full truth is to choose the way how Barnes masterfully articulated in *The Noise of Time*. Although the lived experiences, trauma, and anguish of the famous Soviet composer is not reducible to a purely textual experience, Barnes does accomplish the task of evoking great sympathy and for some, even empathy for Shostakovich’s life. In fact, the novel is not just about Shostakovich, but also it is a story of “a man, like hundreds of others across the city, waiting night after night, for arrest”²⁹¹ and to be taken away, because it was the setting where there was [n]othing but madness in the world.”²⁹² The latter phrase is repeated several times throughout the book which reinforces the severity of the composer’s world. Additionally, there is also another crucial characteristic of the novel’s narrative technique that contributes the overall themes, particularly the depiction of the truest version of past reality. Just like the usage of the late Victorian language in *Arthur & George*, in *The Noise of Time*, the most words are wisely chosen as closer to Russian itself (at least in sound), often starting with or containing “r” letter that sound harsh or Russian. More importantly, the fictional world Barnes has created in the novel radiates pessimistic aura that is associated with being a Russian and Shostakovich. This is another important proof of Barnes’s unyielding commitment to representation of the past, of

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 86.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 11.

²⁹² Ibid., 25.

reality which has been one of the main concerns of the contemporary postmodern literature. Thus, almost every aspect of the novel is linked to the main themes of it that are expounded in the most unusual and stylish way, and offers us alternative perspectives on time, reality (as well as representations of reality), history and fiction writing in re-constructing past reality, irony, and their relationships with each other.

Secondly, we must acknowledge the fact that Julian Barnes is not the first or the only author who wrote about the great Soviet composer; there are several well-known books that are dedicated to Shostakovich and Barnes himself used some of them as the primary sources such as *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (1994) by Elizabeth Wilson, *Testimony: The Memoirs of Shostakovich* (1979) by Solomon Volkov, and the most recently, *Memories of Shostakovich* (2004) by Michael Ardov. These books are biographical writings as well as contain the significant amounts of certain aspects of fabulation, and so does *The Noise of Time*. Then, the very first question about this particular novel must be: Why did Julian Barnes trouble himself by writing it where there had been written many books previously on Shostakovich? The answer is simple; what Barnes fundamentally tries to display by this magnificent masterpiece is to problematize the traditional history which claims objective truth or pure historical information. Even the so called most accurate historical texts is made up of subjective interpretations or fabulation, ideological (or political) motives, and the most importantly, challenging linguistic obstacles in the process of construction of a true and coherent version of history. As Aylin Atilla puts it in her book, *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*, “[i]nvariably, moral, ethnic, or political messages are included, and this gives shape to the events narrated. In that case, regarding the question of objectivity, history’s neutral voice no longer exists because discourse inevitably designates the utterance

with the intention of influencing the other.”²⁹³ Given historical accounts require a narrative construction or a coherent story where linguistic problems can be even more challenging, thanks to the case of fabulation, the outcome texts do contain as much fiction as historical data. Consequently, history in itself is divided into fragments, more precisely, the different, alternative versions of the past, and more importantly, they can be significantly variable in terms of reality in different planes of time. The variety of different biographical works on Shostakovich, including *The Noise of Time*, is also a solid proof of alternative histories.

Furthermore, it is symbolic enough that Barnes constantly refers to these problems of history, of reality in *The Noise of Time*, especially in the third part, he explicitly points out that history (the past, the present, the future) is shaped according to “Soviet reality,”²⁹⁴ which is obviously is associated with Power or Stalin. In the novel, the political ideology or Power shapes and re-shapes history, the truth becomes the most far-fetched aspect of life as Shostakovich states, “it was impossible to tell the truth here and live.”²⁹⁵ In fact, dying was not a choice either. There is a powerful statement where Barnes reinforces the historiographic concerns about reality and the idea of how history can end up being a story of victor or Power. At one point, Shostakovich explains the major reason for not committing suicide and how a threatening Power with suicide can be an empty, or even worse, how dangerous consequences it would bring upon himself:

But he realised it was an empty threat, and Power’s response hardly needed articulation. It would be this: Fine, go ahead, then we shall tell the world your story. The story of how you were up to your neck in the Tukhachevsky assassination plot, how for decades you schemed to undermine Soviet music, how you corrupted younger composers, sought to restore capitalism in the USSR, and were a leading

²⁹³ Atilla, Aylin. “Introduction.” *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 7-8.

²⁹⁴ Barnes, Julian. *The Noise of Time*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016), 60.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 51.

element in the musicologists' plot which will soon be disclosed to the world. All of which is made plain in your suicide note. And that was why he could not kill himself: because then they would steal his story and rewrite it. He needed, if only in his hopeless, hysterical way, to have some charge of his life, of his story.²⁹⁶

It is apparent enough to conclude that reality can be shape-shifting or even fluid rather than objective regarding present circumstances of time. Hence historical data does not represent reality, stories gain the quality of re-constructing realities regarding the past. As Barnes remarks it, "the more a story circulated, the truer it became. What mattered was not so much whether a particular story was factually true, but rather, what it signified."²⁹⁷ Interestingly, the former sentence emphasizes that "history [and reality, just like fiction] is a human construct and histories inevitably are made and remade."²⁹⁸ Therefore, the main focus must be on the part of 'making' which leads to one of the main features of any narrative: rhetoric. The latter statement in Barnes's remark confirms that both history and fiction are self-contained ideological sign systems and alludes Saussure's structuralist theory of how language occupies great role in making reality, thus, history. One the most prominent literary critics, Roland Barthes characterizes this situation by calling it "*realistic effect*" and suggests that it is closely related to historical discourse by stating that "[h]istorical discourse does not follow the real, it can do no more than signify the real, constantly repeating that *it happened*, without this assertion amounting to anything but signified "other side" of the whole process of historical narration."²⁹⁹ Barthes also adds that this is one of the distinctive traits of historical texts which critics try to expound and their refusal to accept history's truth claims.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 46-47.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 50.

²⁹⁸ Atilla, Aylin. "Introduction." *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 12.

²⁹⁹ Barthes, Roland. "The Discourse of History." *The Postmodern History Reader*. (Ed. Keith Jenkins. London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 122.

In addition to these defining features of the novel regarding the historiographic concerns, as the novel progresses, Barnes even mocks the word “historic” where the special focus lies on problems of interpretation in historical inquiry. In the novel, while Shostakovich struggles to deal with the noise of time and acquires great deal of fame, he reluctantly denounces (only in words) some prominent Soviet artists such as Stravinsky and Anna Akhmatova. However, his denunciations are only in words, he does not mean them, and the denounced artists are aware of this fact. So, at one point, Shostakovich and Akhmatova meet but do not have any real conversation, but the representation of that “historic meeting” on the news shows the problematic representations of history. The narrator states that,

[Shostakovich] had also had a ‘historic meeting’ with Akhmatova. He had invited her to visit him at Repino. She came. He sat in silence; so did she; after twenty such minutes, she rose and left. She said afterwards, ‘It was wonderful.’ . . . There was a different version of Akhmatova’s visit to Repino going the rounds. In this, her report went: ‘We talked for twenty minutes. It was wonderful.’ If she’d actually said that, she was fantasising. But that was the trouble with ‘historic meetings.’ What was posterity to believe? Sometimes, he thought that there was a different version of everything.³⁰⁰

This crucial exemplification how Barnes problematizes history is complemented by series of other similar situations where Shostakovich has to read or “perform reading” quite unfamiliar texts for the welfare of Power. These contradictory versions of histories indicate not just the impossibility of true representation of the past reality, but also even a true interpretation of the past is jeopardized, becomes impossible in the presence of a dominant ideology. That’s why “the preoccupation with history in contemporary fiction is not limited

³⁰⁰ Barnes, Julian. *The Noise of Time*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016), 63-64.

to historical fiction, but some other genres as auto-bio-graphy, memoir or detective fiction”³⁰¹ to give more comprehensive and indisputable definition. Barnes’s *Arthur & George*, *The Noise of Time* being biographical novels (as much as fictional), and *The Sense of an Ending* having significant defining characteristics of memoir though not a memoir, determine his unyielding commitment to give us a variety of different perspectives on understanding fiction, history, reality, time, and their inextricable relationships with each other.

Furthermore, there is one of significant examples of how Barnes problematizes documentation of history where it often remains very much silent, senseless or even meaningless. In the novel, Shostakovich becomes the best voice to carry out this idea as he writes a letter to Stalin himself expressing his gratitude (in ironic way) and speculates that no one would understand what he actually means in the letter. He says, “[a]s he signed [the letter], he doubted the Great Leader and Helmsman would read it himself. Perhaps its contents would be conveyed to him, and then the letter would disappear into some file in some archive. It might stay there for decades, perhaps generations, perhaps 200,000,000,000 years; and then someone might read it, and wonder what exactly – if anything – he had meant by it.”³⁰² This is the point where Barnes emphasizes that history can make no sense of events that happened in the past while fiction make sense of the past by offering even the least possible alternatives. This is also the point when Shostakovich starts to be inclined to use irony as a tool for mockery and hopes that irony can preserve what he values against the oppressor, because “truth’s disguise was irony.”³⁰³ This is one of the main reasons why Shostakovich is portrayed as a heroic character. Although he often feels trapped and lives in distress or anguish, his determination to overcome traumatic experiences with the sense of irony is the most possible way to silence the noise of time.

³⁰¹ Atilla, Aylin. “Introduction.” *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 86.

³⁰² Barnes, Julian. *The Noise of Time*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016), 41.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 41.

Moreover, there is an important postmodernist trope that is relatively associated with the writer's historiographic concerns in *The Noise of Time*: the trope of irony. For Ankersmit, irony "confronts us with the limitations and shortcomings of the other tropes; it is, so to speak, the trope that is the natural ally of historical reality itself."³⁰⁴ Barnes uses irony in many different ways in his books including *The Sense of an Ending* and *The Noise of Time*. For instance, in *The Sense of an Ending* Tony Webster's story ends up with great irony where he faces "time's revenge" and things he avoided throughout his whole life: responsibility and unrest. In *The Noise of Time*, as it is mentioned above, irony becomes some sort of tool for living and it develops in unexpected ways. Shostakovich expresses his distress of how irony penetrates his life as an inevitable survival's motif in the Soviet reality: "The natural progression of human life is from optimism to pessimism; and a sense of irony helps temper pessimism, helps produce balance, harmony. But this was not an ideal world, and so irony grew in sudden and strange ways. Overnight, like a mushroom; disastrously, like a cancer."³⁰⁵ As the novel progresses, it becomes apparent that Shostakovich becomes very much ironic person in order to remain honest to himself. It seems that although he relies on irony as a tool for survival, for self-assurance, later he explains his anguish that irony has failed him, creating an illusion of self-preservation. Taking up the role of the third-person narrator, Shostakovich articulates the irony of his whole life:

Irony, he had come to realise, was as vulnerable to the accidents of life and time as any other sense. You woke up one morning and no longer knew if your tongue was in your cheek; and even if it was, whether that mattered any more, whether anyone noticed. . . . And irony had its limits. For instance, you could not be an ironic torturer; or an ironic victim of torture. Equally, you couldn't join the Party ironically.

³⁰⁴ Ankersmit, Frank. qtd in Aylin Atilla. "Introduction." *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 10.

³⁰⁵ Barnes, Julian. *The Noise of Time*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016), 41.

You could join the Party honestly, or you could join it cynically: those were the only two possibilities. . . . Instead of killing him, they had allowed him to live, and by allowing him to live, they had killed him. This was the final, unanswerable irony to his life: that by allowing him to live, they had killed him.³⁰⁶

Indeed, this statement is true that Shostakovich is tormented by his own dishonesty to himself, by Power, and by the noise of time. However, he uses his music to express his contradictions and make his inner voice audible, thus, as a tool of mockery against Power. Perhaps, this is the most effective irony Shostakovich succeeds the most, because “what they wanted was ‘an optimistic Shostakovich,’”³⁰⁷ but what they get is pessimistic Shostakovich despite the constant attempts throughout his life. The prominent postmodern critic, Linda Hutcheon, claims that one of important function of postmodern irony “is the ludic role when irony functions for teasing, humour and playfulness.”³⁰⁸ One of the greatest examples of such works that contains irony is the composer’s opera, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* which earns great popularity for Shostakovich in Europe and America. Perchance, another irony is that while the opera is famous in Europe and America, it is denounced and then banned in the USSR. Shostakovich directly asks Stalin himself why this is the case with his works and the reply is “we didn’t give that order. It is a mistake.”³⁰⁹ The whole situation is contradictory and Shostakovich expresses his surprise and triumph by calling it just another obscure, dark comedy. Throughout the novel, Barnes demonstrates a multitude of similar examples of irony and many of them are related to Power. For instance, the case of Zakrevsky who interrogates Shostakovich and disappears into the mist between the Saturday and Monday. The narrator

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 82-83.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 34.

³⁰⁸ Hutcheon, Linda. *Irony’s Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*. (London: Routledge, 1995), 49.

³⁰⁹ Barnes, Julian. *The Noise of Time*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016), 39.

states that “[h]is interrogator interrogated. His arrester arrested.”³¹⁰ By demonstrating this ironic case, Barnes actually mocks power, and yet, the sudden dismissal and disappearance of Zakrevsky reveals just how fragile and unstable human politics are, compared to the terror and terrifying power they can unleash. In fact, that terror haunts Shostakovich throughout his life and this situation leads to the next or ultimate irony of that surrounds Dmitri Dmitrievich. He experiences the ironic mode of living, and mostly because of his music. Despite the fact that Barnes tells the readers the story of the man who is anguished, trapped, and undergoes some traumatic circumstances, there is situational irony that Shostakovich “swam in honours like a shrimp in shrimp-cocktail sauce.”³¹¹ Hence, it would be fair to conclude with Hayden White’s famous definition of irony: “Irony presupposes awareness of the distinction between truth and falsehood, of the possibility of misrepresenting reality in language, and of the difference between a literal and a figurative representation.”³¹² In *The Noise of Time*, Barnes does not only use irony as the useful tool to challenge social relations of the oppressor and the suppressed, but also to expose how reality can be shape-shifting and often merges with fiction through language.

It is worth to mention that the novel has particular emphasize on close resembles to George Orwell’s *1984* which is very striking. Barnes has created a world that is so bleak and, in many ways, it alludes Orwellian atmosphere; from the elusiveness of truth, manipulation of past, present, future realities, art versus totalitarian government, Sisyphean struggles of individuals, and use of language (in this case, even music) to show off how glorious and right the government is. In the narrator’s words, “here was music, and here was [Shostakovich’s] own particular talent; there lay Power, and bureaucracy, and politico-musicological

³¹⁰ Ibid., 24.

³¹¹ Ibid., 64.

³¹² White, Hayden. qtd. in Aylin Atilla. “Defining Irony as a Postmodern Trope.” *Historiography and The English Novel (1980-90)*. (İzmir: Ege University Press, 2008), 91.

theory.”³¹³ The clash between Power and the individuals, between truth and Power, between time and Power in *The Noise of Time* is very much explicit just like in *1984*. There are even identical statements in the novel to indicate the manipulation of realities that is related with time such as this one: “. . . what the Party had said yesterday was often in direct contradiction to what the Party was saying today.”³¹⁴ The more striking comparison is that if any individual goes against Power, “his name and his music [anything that would reminds of him or her] would be obliterated. Not only would he not exist, he would never have existed. He had been a mistake, swiftly corrected; a face in a photograph that went missing the next time that photograph was printed.”³¹⁵ This statement, indeed, expresses many of both Orwell and Barnes’s historiographic concerns that are related to dominant ideology.

Firstly, we may conclude that one of the biggest problems of historical reality, or truth, can easily vary not just with time, but also with power. Orwell uses the word “evaporation” and Barnes uses the similar word, “obliteration”; both indicate the act or non-act of not existing, in this case, utter alteration or, non-existing of reality which has existed already. The same implication is made by the narrator in *Arthur & George* that today’s reality can be tomorrow’s superstition or belief, but the difference is that in *The Noise of Time*, it is the act of complete change or deletion rather than misdirecting and gradual shift. Therefore, Barnes describes the power that has ability to change past, present, and future realities, and invent or in Barnes’s term, ‘fabulise’ another to replace the previous ones. This, of course, supports the definition that reality is human construct and inevitably, history as well. In fact, this definition is reinforced in the latter sentences of the Barnes’s statement above where he uses a metaphor of photographing. Any historical knowledge can be an outcome of such

³¹³ Barnes, Julian. *The Noise of Time*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016), 50.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

process; just like a photographer, a historian can also change the narrative and reality for certain purpose that is meant to be historical fact.

Additionally, Barnes does not fail to refer the act of mimesis regarding such constructs as history. As a result, “facts were no longer facts, merely statements open to divergent interpretation,”³¹⁶ and the word, “divergent,” is the key because what Barnes attempts to expound is how different realities can co-exist in (with) time. For one, in this case, the reality that dominant ideology such as Power carefully constructs, then the reality that individuals such as Dmitri Dmitrievich Shostakovich construct for themselves, and more importantly, the reality the historian, the biographer, the writer write and shape about the same ideology and for the same people in each different era. Therefore, access for objective reality or truth becomes almost impossible. One would even assert that reality or realities are shaped and re-shaped according to a dominant ideology and circumstances of certain specific time. Besides, we must also acknowledge that objectivity is no longer possible given the reasons above, thus, relativity and multiplicity must be positioned in the centre of the attention. This is one of the main reasons why Julian Barnes especially emphasizes the phrase “the Soviet reality” in Shostakovich’s narration, because Shostakovich stands as an agent to reveal the fundamental problems with history, reality, and their interrelations with time. It is interesting to think that there are plenty of different versions of stories about the life of Shostakovich where Barnes as the writer and the biographer ‘self-consciously’ establishes another ‘unofficial history’ for him, but with the big detailed picture of his inner life. As Hayden White once wrote, “[t]here are many histories that could pass for novels, and many novels that could pass for histories,”³¹⁷ and both *Arthur & George* and *The Noise of Time* are such novels that could pass for histories.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 25.

³¹⁷ White, Hayden. *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 121.

Throughout the novel, Barnes presents us multiple examples of how history, fiction, fact and fabulation – artistic licence – merge in a variety of ways. This applies to all three novels, *The Sense of an Ending* and *Arthur & George* as well as *The Noise of Time*. In *The Sense of an Ending*, these terms are very much interrelated with memory and time where Tony Webster fabulises almost perfect story for himself for the sake of self-preservation while in *Arthur & George*, the new features such as historical research and the blurry line between knowing and believing play great roles as history and fiction, fact and fabulation merge. In *The Noise of Time*, there are a lot of expounding examples; some are already mentioned in the previous paragraphs. As the novel progresses, one case in point is the starting sentences of each chapter as they go similarly like this – “ALL HE KNEW was that this was the worst time.”³¹⁸ Each chapter begins with the same claim attempting to convince that it is about the worst part of the protagonist’s life, but they share the same importance and depth in themselves. The question is in knowing or convincing that it is the worst time over and over again, however, there cannot be three “the worst times,” but only one. This triggers another matter that actually explains the situation: memory versus fabulation. There is the point in the third chapter of the book where Shostakovich undergoes the lack of trust in his memory similar to the case of Tony Webster. As the narrator states:

When Lenin arrived at the Finland Station, Dmitri Dmitrievich and a group of schoolfellows had rushed there to greet the returning hero. It was a story he had told many times. However, since he had been a delicate, protected child, he might not have been allowed to go off just like that. It was more plausible that his Old Bolshevik uncle, Maxim Lavrentyevich Kostrikin, would have accompanied him to the station. He had told this version as well, many times. Both accounts helped burnish his revolutionary credentials. Ten-year-old Mitya at Finland Station, inspired by the Great

³¹⁸ Barnes, Julian. *The Noise of Time*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016), 5, 30, 55.

Leader! That image had not been a hindrance to his early career. But there was a third possibility: that he had not seen Lenin at all, and been nowhere near the station. He might just have adopted a schoolfellow's report of the event as his own. These days, he no longer knew which version to trust. Had he really, truly, been at the Finland Station? Well, he lies like an eyewitness, as the saying goes.³¹⁹

First of all, corroboration and old age can cause the lack of trust or deceitfulness of memory which leads to fabulation or fictionalize your own life story in the absence of corroboration. Secondly, by deliberately subscribing to the different versions of the past, the narrator does not just emphasize blurred distinction between knowing (remembering correctly) and fabulation, but also acknowledges blurry, almost fading line between history and fiction. Clearly, verisimilitude is not Barnes's aim, it is to offer more comprehensive perspectives on the questions of and shape the interests on history, fiction, fact, and fabulation.

With the remarkable novel that addresses to the twentieth and the twenty first century readers as well as historicists, Barnes put the strong emphasize on the narrative of *The Noise of Time*, which explains why he has preferred Shostakovich as the protagonist and the narrator in all three modes. It is worth mentioning that Shostakovich's story can be considered as a trauma narrative where he expresses his anguish, distress, and eventual self-loathing. Although his narrative in Barnes's voice is actually mimesis of the story lived in some region of historical reality (see "Author's note"), the narrative technique reinforces its truthfulness to historical reality, to actual Shostakovich. As it is mentioned above, the narrative technique is not traditional one where an interpretation of the first or the third person narrator reflects his mimesis. In *The Noise of Time*, the narrator does not only reflect the main character's actions, thoughts, or feelings, but also his suggestions, his deep

³¹⁹ Ibid., 55.

anxieties, his interactions with the world around spiritually, psychologically, physically, and more importantly his attempts to interact with the readers through the second-person narration. What is more is that the content of the narrative is historical and maybe for us, a variety of past-referring statements within the representation of the past reality. This is one of fundamental characteristics that makes the narrative both historical and fictional. However, for Hegel, the content (or referent) of the specifically historical discourse was not the real story of what happened, but the peculiar relation between a public present and a past.³²⁰ This, of course, brings us to the aspect of Time which Barnes implicitly refers as one of the major topics in *The Noise of Time*. Hegel initially uses this statement for the existence of political constitution though its ambiguity leads to the different subjects, specifically the unity of the past, the present, and the future, which later Hegel subscribes to the theory of history as the production and progress of its own being.

Although the political subject is much more evident and plays an important role in Shostakovich's story, Barnes does not put it in the centre of the narrative due to the fact that Barnes usually uses such kind of vital subject matters as tools to demonstrate how relativity, different realities, time and art (including fiction) can avoid dominant social restraints. From the beginning of the novel, unity of time becomes recurring subject in Shostakovich's narrative. Initially, he asserts that history repeats itself and imagines himself as a dramatic character in it. He states that "[h]istory was repeating itself: the first time as farce, the second time as tragedy."³²¹ Then, there are several pessimistic statements that imply future would be no different, just another version of the present. At one point, Shostakovich the narrator

³²⁰ Hegel, G. W. Friedrich. qtd. in Hayden White. "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory." *History and Theory*. (Vol 23, No. 1 (February 1984), 1-33. *JSTOR*), 4.

³²¹ Barnes, Julian. *The Noise of Time*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016), 20.

* Barnes edits the famous statement of Karl Marx which appears in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*: "Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce."

explains a peculiar relation between the past, the present and the future as he says, “[a]nd then he stood and waited, thinking about the past, fearing for the future, smoking his way through the brief present.”³²² This combination of three parts of time actually explains how there are relative and dependant to each other in a way that it is impossible to make sense of one without the other. This is what Hegel refers as a peculiar relation: when you talk about the past, you are also influenced by present circumstances, so in a way, you talk about the present as well. The texts, whether historical or fictional as being the narrative mode of representation, combine both the past and the present in order to make sense, to create continuity (logical explanation for the passage of time) in any given time in the future. The process is called as fictional time as we explained in the second chapter of this thesis. In *The Sense of an Ending*, *Arthur & George*, and *The Noise of Time*, Barnes expounds the relation of how past affects present and how the present affects the past, presumably future as well. In the case of Tony Webster, the present changes the past reality and future of old Tony, and in George Edalji’s case, Arthur alters the past, the present, and presumably the future reality of George in the present time as he re-writes George’s story all over again. In *The Noise of Time*, Power has ability to re-construct realities related to the past, the present for certain as the narrator states,

Under pressure of Power, the self cracks and splits. The public coward lives with the private hero. Or vice versa. Or, more usually, the public coward lives with the private coward. But that was too simple: the idea of a man split into two by a dividing axe.

Better: a man crushed into a hundred pieces of rubble, vainly trying to remember how they – he – had once fitted together.³²³

This statement does not just explain how people live with split personalities under the rule of such power, but also how power engineers private and public realities while

³²² Ibid., 25.

³²³ Ibid., 73.

controlling every opposing thought. However, as time passes, power grows vegetarian and the present quarrels with the past; calling the previous power as the Cult of Personality and trying to re-write the past by building a better future. Yet, throughout the novel, there is one thing that liberates itself from power: art. “Art belongs to everybody and nobody. Art belongs to all time and no time. . . . Art is the whisper of history, heard above the noise of time,”³²⁴ utters Shostakovich the narrator. That is why Barnes depicts art as useful tool against Power, calls writers as “the engineers of human souls”³²⁵ and Shostakovich uses his music in a satirical way despite the numerous attempts of the party control. Thus, art reinforces the unity of time by emancipating itself from the past, the present, and the future, and Julian Barnes presents a new reality through the meaningful employment of the past event though it primarily focuses on the life of the prominent Soviet composer, Dmitri Dmitrievich Shostakovich.

In addition to all these profound characteristics of the book concerning time, there is another significant and direct reference to time which Barnes wants the readers to see: the title. The Barnes’s book takes its title from an autobiographical book by Osip Mandelstam, who was an outspoken critic, political activist during the Stalinist Russia. Even though it seems that Barnes uses a ghost companion for *The Noise of Time*, the novel itself is opposite version of Mandelstam’s memoir where Shostakovich remains a passive individual who “ . . . had seen more of life, and been deafened by the noise of time”³²⁶ whereas in Mandelstam’s book, the protagonist is a brave, revolutionary activist who actually tries to suppress the noise of time. Apart from the origin of the title, it would be fairer to focus on what it symbolises regarding the novel and Barnes. The title specifically emphasizes the distinction between voice and noise as noise denotes some unpleasant, even traumatic experience; in Shostakovich’s case, it is mainly politically imposed. The word “time” symbolises the era

³²⁴ Ibid., 44.

³²⁵ Ibid., 20.

³²⁶ Ibid., 78.

(setting) in which the character lived, and signals that the book is much concerned with time related issues. This, of course, is also indicated in the beginnings of each chapter that begins with phrase “this was the worst time.” Interestingly, each chapter also expounds the parts of time on the basis of the life of Shostakovich. In the first chapter, the narrator’s focus is on the past of the character while in the second and third chapters, focus in narrative shifts into the present and the future life of Shostakovich with certain important references to the past. Perhaps, that is why there is a Russian proverb standing as the epigraph of the novel, “One to hear / One to remember / And one to drink,” meaning one learns, then remembers (past in present), and eventually forgets in the future because drinking is often associated with oblivion. This flexibility in narrative (as a mode of representation) concerning history, time and reality is what enables Barnes “to tell beautiful, exact, and well-constructed lies which enclose hard and shimmering truths.”³²⁷

Consequently, with this magnificent and perfectly appealing masterpiece, Julian Barnes does not only offer a variety of different perspectives on reality or realities and about their nature that is closely linked to understanding the notion of history and historiography, but also enables us to perceive bigger picture of comprehending the nature of time through the lenses of one of the most distinguished contemporary novelists. Additionally, with *The Noise of Time*, Barnes gives us the broader understanding of reality in relation with time and the people who live in interesting times alongside putting the readers into the worlds of both historical and fictional characters.

³²⁷ Barnes, Julian. qtd. in Brian Finney. “Irony: Truth’s Disguise.” *Los Angeles Review of Books*. (lareviewofbooks.org. Web. (June 20, 2016)), 2.

CONCLUSION

This thesis presents the comprehensive analysis of three novels, *The Sense of an Ending* (2011), *Arthur & George* (2005), and *The Noise of Time* (2016), written by one of the most prolific and experimental writers in contemporary English literature, Julian Barnes, who has the knack of enchanting his audience with each new book. The novels are expounded within the framework of theories on time and coexistence of different realities, especially, “Theory of Relativity,” the New Historicism, and postmodernist notion of time and reality which have penetrated the writings of the novelist over the past few decades. Moreover, this subscribes to the fact that Barnes “is constantly looking for new topics and original ways of dealing with narrative.”³²⁸ In fact, he once said: “You don’t want to go to the grave having not tried out every prose facility and faculty you’ve got.”³²⁹ That is why Barnes’s novels make use of many different subject matters and investigate crucial aspects of the formal theories. Even the earliest novels can be considered as multifaceted and dwell on special features of time and relativity of reality in the form of unreliable, slippery historical knowledge. Later on, Julian Barnes focuses on more grand subject matters such as love, death, art, justice, truth or relativity of truth, and rarely on politics in relation with the theory of relativity in terms of time, memory, and history. This, of course, obviously shows the evolution of the novelist and influences of scientific explorations of the era in the contemporary English literature. Therefore, Barnes evades clear categorisations and labels as he can be best described as a “hybrid” writer who is willing to discover new experimental writing as he has already written several postmodern biographical, semi-biographical, conventional and experimental novels, a political fable alongside with several essays and

³²⁸ Vanessa, Guignery. “Endings and New Beginnings: *Arthur & George* (2005).” *The Fiction of Julian Barnes*. (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 132.

³²⁹ Barnes, Julian. qtd. in Steven Poole. “Why Don’t We Make It All Up?” *Independent on Sunday*, 447 (30 August 1998), 10.

translations. Two of the prominent literary critics of Barnes, Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs describe Julian Barnes as “the most versatile and idiosyncratic author of astoundingly talented generation of writers, and he is also intensely prolific and at home in many genres.”³³⁰ After the perusal of Barnes’s extraordinary and thrilling novels up to the last ones, *The Noise of Time* (2016) and *The Man in the Red Coat* (2019), it is clear to see a fascinating trajectory that traces the changing tastes and interest of the evolving writer. His strong curiosity and unending focus on problems of history (the past & memory), time, representations of reality(ies) as well as on multiple layers of meanings are the main things that set Barnes apart from other contemporary British writers. In his ground-breaking and fascinating novels such as *Arthur & George* (2005), *The Sense of an Ending* (2011), and *The Noise of Time* (2016), Barnes engaged in distinctive and rather experimental approaches towards history or the past, reality and their representations as well as time itself that illuminate and deepen our understanding of them and Barnes.

The first and the second chapters of this thesis offer an inspirational journey through history surveying some cogent theories about time, reality, and their representations in the various centuries which illuminated our understanding of them that showed a path to re-evaluate and re-value those terms in relation with Julian Barnes’s three novels. Firstly, it is always hard to define time, therefore, the initial paragraphs of the thesis attempt to offer multiple definitions and explanations about the nature of time and its importance. Starting from Aristotle’s remarkable statement, “time is the numberer of things,”³³¹ to Albert Einstein’s “Theory of Relativity,” the first part of the thesis prepares the ground for literary analysis on integrated topics such as time, history, and reality. Einstein’s defining time and

³³⁰ Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs. “Julian Barnes and the Wisdom of Uncertainty.” *Julian Barnes: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. (Eds. Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 1.

³³¹ Aristotle. *The Complete Works of Aristotle: Physics*. (ed. Jonathan Barnes, the revised Oxford translation. Vol 1. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 223b.

relevant measurements as relative subscribes to the idea that all events, movements, their representations in art, history, and literature need to be elaborated ‘with respect to’ to one another. Hence, time and reality become slippery, however, their representations within the framework of multiple artistic factors such as, characters, plot structure, time-planes, and the most importantly, language in literature become much more complicated and difficult task to deal with. The prominent British scholar and literary critic, Adam Abraham Mendilow’s book called *Time and the Novel* provided much of information and significant amount of resource to elaborate the topics of time, reality, and language comprehensively in relation with the novel. He concludes that time is like some kind of succession or acts like a regulator of succession of events, or marker of succession of events and movements, however, the definition gets blurry in terms of psychology because psychological time is measured by the states of consciousness. For instance, time runs faster for people in action depending on the intensity of events, and we simply say, ‘time flies.’ However, at some point near the state of stillness or boredom, time passes more slowly, and interestingly, that period of time lasts shorter in memory. This, of course, depends on the sequence and frequency of changes. The problem is how we perceive and process all these complexities of time-issues, and how authors depict them in their works. The part, “Fiction, Language, Time and Bergson’s *durée*” in this thesis attempted to expound this matter as clear as possible.

Additionally, the importance of Bergson’s *durée*, literary techniques such as time-shift, flashback, and stream-of-consciousness are duly noted in the second chapter. Thanks to the revolutionary theories of Albert Einstein, Henri Bergson, Roland Barthes, Hayden White, Linda Hutcheon, A. A. Mendilow and many other notable figures, it can be understood that the traditional literary styles and techniques, even the themes began to no longer exist in the novels in which the new romantic attitude to reality and history (or time) as embodied in the theory of flow, *durée* and the relation of language to reality and history have taken place. The

modernist and postmodernist writers began giving up the idea of reproducing reality, and started to write in such a style using unconventional literary techniques and linguistic devices to evoke illogical and irrational feel of reality in the readers. As one of the biggest outcomes of such radical changes in literature, the novelists made sure the readers must be aware of the fact that it is impossible to capture all-encompassing objective reality, but can access to as many realities as there are people. Even the most common yet abstract reality like time, proved to be relative, individual or subjectively perceived condition that we are all part of. And in case of narrative, whether it is historical or fictional, “the more a story circulated, the truer it became. What mattered was not so much whether a particular story was factually true, but rather, what it signified,”³³² Julian Barnes affirms enthusiastically.

Keeping in mind a variety of theories including the theory of relativity, postmodernist notion of time, history, and reality, the New Historicism and the idea of “fabulation” in reconstructing realities regarding the past, the present, and the future proposed by Barnes himself, in the fourth chapter of this thesis, all these historiographic concerns, questions of reality(ies), and problems of time are articulated thoroughly in Julian Barnes’s three major novels, *The Sense of an Ending*, *Arthur & George*, and *The Noise of Time*.

The Sense of an Ending, published in 2011, presents a journey to the past in search of meaning as the main protagonist named Tony Webster struggles with ‘corroboration’ and imperfections of memory, thus, deals with personalised reality and time throughout the novel. The novel demonstrates the story that exemplifies Albert Einstein’s famous statement: “Events can look very different to onlookers in different situations, especially if they are moving relative to one another.”³³³ In addition to that, the word “time” appears so many times in the book in different contexts that it is one of the main motifs that shapes the nature

³³² Barnes, Julian. *The Noise of Time*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016), 50.

³³³ Einstein, Albert. *Relativity: The Special and the General Theory*. (trans. Robert W. Lawson. New York: Penguin Books, 2006), xi-10-14.

of the events present in the novel. At one point, the narrator and the protagonist, Tony utters this: “We live in time, it bounds us and defines us, and time is supposed to measure history, isn’t it? But if we can’t understand time, can’t grasp its mysteries of pace and progress, what chance do we have with history – even our own small, personal, largely undocumented piece of it?”³³⁴ Although, for many, the whole novel seems to revolve around this quote, it is significantly small piece of iceberg. In *The Sense of an Ending*, Barnes does not just problematize history and its truth claims, he also focuses on the imperfections of memory, coexistence of realities, compellingly intricate relationship between the past, the present, and their relationship with shaping one’s realities and the most importantly, how we tell our own stories to ourselves and to the others. Furthermore, Barnes also proposes certain perspectives on why our ways of making sense of reality must emphasize the *making*. Thus, the reality or ‘realities,’ whether historical or fictional, are inseparably related to time and language with which they are presented to us.

The second and third parts of the last chapter of this thesis aim to expound Julian Barnes’s *Arthur & George* (2005) and *The Noise of Time* (2016) which are considered as (semi)biographical, yet blurs the line between fact and fiction, history and fabulation as Barnes opts to present the mixture of history writing and fiction writing through the fictionalised protagonists in order to construct ‘unofficial history.’ As Linda Hutcheon suggests, the intention of the writer is to render ‘official history’ problematic, thereby, question the representations of the past in history by constructing hybrid (factual and fictional) worlds. In other words, writers actually do not discard history but combine history and fiction seamlessly by “rejecting the transcendent, timeless meaning [history] has been assigned until now. The past is foregrounded as a construct incorporated into fresh narratives

³³⁴ Ibid., 60.

which give it life and meaning anew.”³³⁵ This is exactly what Barnes does in *Arthur & George* and in *The Noise of Time*, thus, creating a masterpiece of historiographic metafiction with the real past and the imagined past. In other words, if official history answers the question of what happened, Barnes’s unofficial (fictionalized) histories answer the questions of why and how. Moreover, he emphasizes the re-construction of the past & re-writing of history through different narratives; through fiction and of course, the mechanisms of retrospection, recollection, and memory whether it is true or false, and as a result, re-shaping reality(ies).

With *Arthur & George*, Barnes created such a masterpiece that the novel initially appears to be a *bildungsroman* about two main characters, Arthur and George, complimented by a lot of characteristics of the Edwardian detective novel, and more importantly, the setting itself is the Edwardian England capturing the life experiences of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and George E. T. Edalji in juxtaposition until their paths merge. However, the novel is more than that and writer’s intention was not to make it just a prose but to create innovative and experimental historiographic fiction with such an intense engagement with the problems of understanding our relationship with history and reality, well in this case, realities, and how these aspects of life can be fabricated in such a way that over time they replace the actual past.

Similarly, in *The Noise of Time*, Barnes’s one of the latest novels, he explores a variety of defining features of the historiographic metafiction and the more importantly, he explores “his fascination for people ‘living in interesting times’”³³⁶ with acknowledgement

³³⁵ Roşcan, Alina. “History in the Postmodern Paradigm.” *Rewriting History in the Novels of Julian Barnes*. (Bucureşti: Editura Centrul Tecnic-Editorial al Armatei, 2016), 49-50.

³³⁶ Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs. “Julian Barnes and the Wisdom of Uncertainty.” *Julian Barnes: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. (Eds. Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 5.

that their “stories come in many versions, worked up and ‘improved’ over the years.”³³⁷ Although the novel presents fictionalized biography of the prominent Soviet composer, Dmitri Dmitrievich Shostakovich (1906-1975), and share common characteristics with *Arthur & George* in terms of historiographic concerns and time, *The Noise of Time* is much more complex and multifaceted with its particularly unusual narrative style and certain political inclination in order to portray the whole picture, including all relevant factors that make up the complete story. In “Author’s note” part, Barnes put down this sentence to show his commitment to capturing the whole truth and his determination to penetrate the contemporary: “I have treated it as I would a private diary: as appearing to give the full truth, yet usually written at the same time of day, in the same prevailing mood, with the same prejudices and forgettings.”³³⁸ It is worth to note that the political references in the book (quite a lot), do not make up the core of the story but rather serve as side-lines since politics has been inseparable part of history and the story of Shostakovich is mainly about the mixture of music and politics or power. Therefore, it is important to remember that the subject of politics is mostly for the historiographic concerns of the novel as it deals with the ideological and discursive dimensions of history, postmodern notion of reality and its representations (history versus fiction, history versus power), irony, power, art, time, and re-constructing the past into the contemporary.

All in all, this thesis offers new insights and new impulses on the concepts of time, reality, historiography, and the most importantly, on their complex relationships through a variety of characters that make up the fictional world which most resembles to real life. Additionally, this study demonstrates Julian Barnes’s depictions and treatment of time, reality, and history through this study, thereby contributing to the critical analysis of the three novels. As a result, it is equally important to emphasize that the works of Julian Barnes, who

³³⁷ Barnes, Julian. “Author’s note.” *The Noise of Time*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016), 86.

³³⁸ Ibid., 86.

made great contributions to the contemporary English novel and world literature, clearly show how the concepts of time and reality, which have been discussed in the fields of science or philosophy for centuries, are conveyed to us from the perspective of the novelist, thus, literature cannot be separated from other fields such as history, philosophy, and science.



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