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İSTANBUL YENİ YÜZYIL UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE DEPARTMENT

**ANGLO-AMERICAN LITERATURE AND CREATIVE
WRITING PROGRAMME**



**RETHINKING THE PAST IN POSTMODERN CONTEXT:
HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION IN JULIAN BARNES'S
FLAUBERT'S PARROT AND *ENGLAND, ENGLAND***

MA THESIS

ASEEL ALHASANI

20131308014

İSTANBUL, JUNE 2023

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ASEEL ABDULMUTTALEB ZAIDAN ALHASANI
20131308014
ORCID NO: 10000-0002-9686-7658

SUPERVISOR
PROF. DR. ERENDİZ ÖZBAYOĞLU

İSTANBUL, JUNE 2023

T.C.
İSTANBUL YENİ YÜZYIL UNİVERSİTESİ
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Öğretim Üyesi Adı ve Soyadı		İmzası
Tez Danışmanı	Prof. Dr. Erendiz Özbayoğlu	
Jüri Üyesi	Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Asghar Heidari	
Jüri Üyesi	Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Şahin Gök	



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ETHICAL STATEMENT

I prepared my project following the thesis writing rules of the Institute of Social Sciences at Istanbul Yeni Yüzyıl University, and I hereby declare that;

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22/06/2023

ASEEL ALHASANI

PREFACE

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for honouring me with carrying the message of knowledge and giving me patience, endurance, and power to overcome all the obstacles I faced during my academic journey.

Next, I would like to thank my family, beginning with my father, my backbone: he was and will always be my most precious blessing; therefore, I dedicate this achievement to his memory. Also, my sincerest thanks to my mum for her support and prayers. Moreover, I do not forget my brother: always present in my heart, he was the one who supported us with his spirit of mercy and immortality. Likewise, I should not forget to thank my sisters for supporting and encouraging me day by day with their precious words written down with golden needles on the corners of my heart's eye. I also thank my true friend, Noor Alazeez, for raising my spirit and passion while I was studying for my Master's degree. She deserves all the best.

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Finally, I thank myself for overcoming all the hardships and obstacles I struggled with to stay strong and make this dream come true. Full of hardships, fatigue, and sadness, my academic journey has not been easy—but here I am to harvest the fruit of my effort. Thus ends the story that changed my way of thinking, my personality, and my determination to reach something better than the past.

ISTANBUL, 2023

ASEEL ALHASANI



ÖZET

POSTMODERN BAĞLAMDA GEÇMİŞİ YENİDEN DÜŞÜNMEK: JULIAN BARNES'İN *FLAUBERT'İN PAPAĞANI* VE *ENGLAND, ENGLAND* ESERLERİNDE TARİHSEL ÜSTKURMACA

ASEEL ALHASANI

ORCID NO: 10000-0002-9686-7658

Bu tezin amacı Julian Barnes'in Flaubert'in Papağanı ve England, England adlı romanlarındaki çeşitli tarihsel üstkurmaca unsurlarını tespit etmek, analiz etmek ve açıklamaktır. Araştırma, Linda Hutcheon'un teorilerine ve A Poetic of Postmodernism adlı kitabında (1988) edebiyatın bu alt türü için tespit ettiği özelliklere odaklanmaktadır. Tarihsel üstkurmaca eserlerinde tarihsel kayıtlarda kasıtlı, satirik ve hatta komik değişiklikler yapılması yaygındır. Tarihsel üstkurmaca, tarihsel olaylara ve figürlere odaklanan ve tarihsel araştırmalara ilgi gösteren bir edebi türdür. Bu çalışmanın temel konusu tarihi edebiyatın incelenmesine yorum getirmektir. Sonuç olarak, tarih yerini kurguya bırakmaktadır. Bu çalışmada şu soruya yanıt aranmaktadır: Barnes'in romanlarında tarihin bir üstkurmaca unsuru olarak nasıl bir rolü vardır? Burada hedeflenen, kurgusal tarihsel anlatılardaki postmodern tekniklere örnek gösterilebilecek konuları tespit etmektir. Bu çalışma, seçilen romanın, tarihi herhangi bir bağımlılık ya da baskı olmadan yapay ve sonradan yaratılmış bir kavram olarak ortaya koymaktır. Roman, belirli bir zaman aralığında geçmektedir ancak Barnes belirli karakterleri ve olayları kanonik açıklamalara şüphe düşürecek biçimde manipüle etmekte ve alternatif bir yorum sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tarih, Üstkurmaca, Julian Barnes, Flaubert'in Papağanı, England, England.

ABSTRACT

RETHINKING THE PAST IN POSTMODERN CONTEXT: HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION IN JULIAN BARNES'S *FLAUBERT'S PARROT AND ENGLAND, ENGLAND*

ASEEL ALHASANI

ORCID NO: 10000-0002-9686-7658

The aim of the present thesis is to analyse, identify, and explain the various elements of historiographic metafiction within Julian Barnes's novels *Flaubert's Parrot* and *England, England*. This investigation is centred on Linda Hutcheon's theories and the features she has identified for this subgenre of literature in her book *A Poetic of Postmodernism* (1988). Deliberate, satirical, and even fun alterations to historical records and events are commonplace in works of historiographic metafiction. "Historiographic metafiction" is a literary genre that obsesses over historical events and figures, demonstrating a keen interest in studying history. The primary subject matter of this work pertains to the account of, and commentary on, the examination of historical literature—the literature which often distorts the accuracy of historical facts in order to create fiction. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following question: What role does history play as a metafictional agency in Barnes's novels? The goal here is to identify the plot points that could be said to be examples of postmodern techniques in fictional historical narratives. This study demonstrates how the chosen novel portrays history as an artificial and created concept devoid of any inherent dependability or authority. The novels centre on given time periods, but Barnes manipulates certain characters and events to cast doubt on the canonical accounts of historical events and present their alternative interpretations.

Keywords: History, Metafiction, Julian Barnes, Flaubert Parrot, England, England.

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INTRODUCTION

In the year 1969, a significant literary event took place with the publication of John Fowles' third novel, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. The work, which immediately caused a lot of controversy both among critics and among ordinary readers, over time was destined not only to gain worldwide fame but also to open a new direction in literature—the historiographic metafiction.

However, the prerequisites for the birth of this new genre were formed long before the publication of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. On the one hand, this was facilitated by the emergence and development of postmodernism with its characteristic fragmentation, intertextuality and travesty of the text—phenomena that did not bypass even such a seemingly conservative type of literature as the historical novel. But the main role in this process was nevertheless played by a change in the attitude towards history as a scientific discipline, its “literaturization,” which has been quite clearly observed over the past thirty or forty years. According to S. Onega, the process of separating literature from history, which began in the eighteenth century, completed a full circle by the twenty first century, and they reunited again (Onega, 1993, p.16).

It's hard to disagree with this statement. After all, the first “historical” works known to mankind— those of Herodotus, Thucydides, Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus, etc. —were mainly narrative in nature. That is, they were more literary than scientific works. Only around the eighteenth century did history finally take shape as science and increasingly move away from literature in terms of the presentation of the material. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, with the spread of post-structuralist ideas, a reverse process began, thanks to which history is now perceived by most of us as simply a story about the events of the past—a story that is told using the same narrative means of literature, and therefore in no way different from it.

Based on this, an attitude has developed towards historical knowledge as something biased, something that has many white spots and leaves a lot of room for

fantasy. Moreover, recently a number of American scientists (H. White, D. LaCarpa, etc.) are increasingly pushing the idea that the historian of the postmodern era should by no means be concerned with the search for truth, but, on the contrary, should “put forward several versions, or interpretations, giving the reader the opportunity to build the meaning for himself” (Rayneke, 2002, p. 50).

All this together led to the emergence of a new genre—the historiographic metafiction. If you try to find a brief definition for it, nothing will suit you better than a summary of what the Canadian literary scholar L. Hutcheon, one of the leading pioneer critics of the genre, writes in her 1988 book *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, describing historiographic metafiction as a self-reflective fiction with rich intertextuality, which is characterized by an ironic attitude to history and the plurality of its interpretations, a mixture of time layers and a pluralism of opinions, an interest in marginal topics and attention to private stories that have no place in scientific works (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 113).

Rooted in the classic historical novel, the historiographic metafiction naturally absorbed its main features, but at the same time it has a number of significant characteristics that allow it to be distinguished into a separate subgenre. Linda Hutcheon identifies several distinctive features of metafiction as the main comparative criteria, which are going to become the object of the examination of the current thesis, both theoretically and practically (see chapters one through three). Throughout her writings and years of work, Hutcheon establishes a correlation between literature and the natural world by amalgamating fictional components with historical events. In order to demonstrate how the genre of historiographic metafiction is built and functions, this research aims to delineate its distinctive attributes as they are portrayed in Julian Barnes’s postmodernist novels *Flaubert’s Parrot* and *England, England*.

However, before we move on to the theories and their application, we need to give definitions to several terms crucial to our understanding of chapter one; as well as to outline the background for the novels that are going to become our literary laboratories in chapters two and three. This is what the rest of this introductory

section deals with, beginning with a brief explanation of the difference between Modernism and Postmodernism, which will provide us with the information necessary to understand the conditions in which the historiographic metafiction was born.

First of all, a distinction should be made between the terms “modernity” and “postmodernity”: the former refers to the current period, while the latter is used to describe the supposed era following that of modernity. The concept of modernization, akin to postmodernism, encompasses a multitude of narratives spanning various domains such as finance, governance, society, and intellect. Marx, Weber, and other scholars posited that Modernism is a periodization framework that denotes the historical epoch following the Medieval era or feudalism. As Per Berman defines it, Modernism is perceived by specific individuals as being antithetical to traditional societies and characterized by innovation, novelty, and dynamism (Berman, 1982, p. 75). It was the time when promoting logic as the foundation for progress in education and society was emphasized. The rationale was deemed proficient in identifying appropriate conceptual and pragmatic principles for constructing frameworks of cognition and conduct and rebuilding communities. The concept of Transcendence was observed in various republican uprisings, such as the American and French revolutions. The objective of these movements was to dismantle medieval civilization and establish a fair and just societal system based on rationality and progress (Toulmin, 1990, pp. 160–162).

The emergence of artistic and literary Modernism can be attributed to the contemporary avant-garde organizations and liberal subgroups that sought to revolutionize tradition and explore innovative expressions in art. This movement was characterized by a rebellion against the isolating features of industry and rationality, as artists sought to assert their creative individuality. The proliferation of modern artistic creations, cultural consumption, technological advancements, and novel modes of transportation and communication have facilitated the integration of contemporary elements into everyday life. The term “modernization” denotes a series of phases, including personalization, reformation, industrialization, cultural differentiation, commercialization, urbanization, formalization, and simplification,

collectively contributing to the formation of contemporary society. The process of modernization has inflicted immeasurable pain and grief upon those who have been oppressed, including farmers, workers, craftsmen, and women who have been excluded from the social sphere. This has been evident in various forms, from capitalist modernization that has oppressed these groups to fascist foreign extermination. The Enlightenment era established a framework of regulatory institutions, patterns of conduct, and belief systems that validated its authority and control methods. The concept of the “Enlightenment Dialectic,” as presented by Horkheimer and Adorno in 1972, suggests a recurring pattern in which rationality is accompanied by its opposite, leading to the masking of tyranny and dominance under the guise of modernity’s pursuit of emancipation. Conversely, proponents of modernity contend that it possesses unexplored possibilities and the capability to surpass its limitations and adverse consequences (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972, p. 11).

Scholars of both Postmodernism and Poststructuralism contend that contemporary mechanisms of development and transformation are engendering a novel modernist culture within the context of our technologically advanced information age. They posit that postmodernism represents a nascent stage of civilization and sociopolitical formation, requiring novel constructs. According to sociologists who subscribe to the dialectical theory, such as Baudrillard, Lyotard, and Harvey, contemporary societal development is driven by novel consciousness forms and sociopolitical changes. According to modern sociologists such as Jameson and Harvey, poststructuralism is viewed as the progression of a heightened stage within the capitalist system characterized by a greater degree of global dissemination and hybridization of equity. Simultaneously, Baudrillard and Lyotard delineate these advancements in terms of novel forms of documentation, expertise, and innovation. The dynamics above give rise to an increasing cultural dispersion, modifications in the perception of temporal and spatial distance, and novel manifestations of consciousness, subjectivity, and societal development. The economic and intellectual conditions presented in this context serve as the basis for modernist ideology. By examining these conditions, one can gain insight into the perspective from which the postmodernism theory claims to be at the forefront of contemporary affairs (Best and

Kellner, 1991, p. 7).

In addition to the distinction between Modernism and Postmodernism within sociological philosophy, postmodern discourse holds relevance to the domains of aesthetics and artistic concepts. The present lesson pertains to the differences between modernity and neoliberalism as they relate to the field of crafts. The present discourse employs the terms “impressionism, *l’art pour l’art*, expressionism, surrealism, and other avant-garde movements” (Best & Kellner, 1991, p. 7) to characterize the abstract expressionists of the contemporary era. Additionally, “postmodernism” is utilized to explicate the diverse art forms and techniques that deviate from and challenge rationalism. The categories above comprise the creative works of Robert Venturi and Philip Johnson in the field of design, John Cage’s innovative approach to composition, the artistic expressions of Warhol and Rauschenberg, literary contributions of Pynchon and Ballard, and cinematic productions such as *Blade Runner* and *Blue Velvet*. The discourse revolves around a distinct philosophical contrast between modernity and postmodernism and the merits and demerits associated with these paradigms (Best & Kellner, 1991, pp. 7).

These were the conditions that, constantly keeping the intellectual elite on the edges of their seats by making them doubt the very foundations of their knowledge, inevitably gave birth to new literary forms, one of which was the historiographic metafiction.

The concept of historiographic metafiction comprises two distinct yet interrelated components, namely historiography and metafiction. Historiography refers to the scholarly examination of the manner in which history has been and continues to be documented and written, encompassing both the historical events themselves and the written accounts of those events. The study of historiography does not entail a direct examination of past events but rather an analysis of the evolving interpretations of said events as presented in the works of various scholars. Metafiction refers to a type of fictional writing that intentionally and methodically highlights its nature as a human-made creation, aiming to raise inquiries about the interplay between fiction and actuality. Metafiction is a literary genre that involves

self-reflexive works of fiction that draw attention to their own fictional nature. It is characterized by the use of techniques that highlight the artificiality of the narrative and the author's role in constructing it. The framework is elucidated, and the state is explicated as a work of fantasy. The author invites their audience to provide voluntary feedback regarding instances of ingratitude. As per the metafictional perspective, readers should not merely acquiesce to their imagination but actively engage with the imaginative universe. It has been observed that the universe depicted in metafictional works does not pertain to the natural universe that it resembles (Best & Kellner, 1991, pp. 7). As LaCapra puts it, "Readers conduct experiments in the universe by utilizing their past and present observations of it." (Capra, 1985, p. 128).

Putting it in other words, historiographic metafiction blends metafictional elements with a deliberate focus on historical inquiry, encompassing three distinct modes: theory, history, and literature. This phenomenon pertains to the intentional and self-aware fusion of imaginative elements and historical contexts within the literature. The postmodern perspective challenges traditional notions. The dichotomy between history and literature pertains to their shared characteristics as modes of written expression characterized by intertextual and linguistic structures.

The literary concept of "historiographic metafiction" usually centres on portraying historical events which—and figures who—have been marginalized or omitted from official historical accounts, recounting their stories through narrative means; it is a literary technique that aims to bring to light the neglected accounts of often-overlooked groups. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that substitutional histories are formulated within the "historiographic metafiction" framework. This is achieved by subverting the conventional narrative structure and presenting an alternative interpretation that sheds light on the previously suppressed histories of peripheral figures. (Somervell, 1947, p. 40)

All these and many more features of the historiographic metafiction will be discussed in chapters one through three in detail and with examples from the works of Julian Barnes; however, for the convenience of the reader, it might be of use to introduce the author and his works chosen to illustrate the principles of

historiographic metafiction here, still in the introductory section.

Julian Barnes, a British analyst and creator of imaginative and cerebral books about obsessive historical figures was born in Leicester, England, on January 19, 1946. His parents, both French instructors, relocated to the outskirts of London six weeks following his birth, where he attended the City of London School (1957 to 1964). He earned an honourable degree in contemporary languages from Magdalen College (Oxford) in 1968. After graduating, he was employed as a literary critic at the Oxford English Dictionary for their supplementary materials and served in that role for three years. Approximately at the same time, in the 1970s, Barnes began writing articles for the *Times Literary Supplement* while also producing novels under the nickname of Kavanagh (actually, it was his wife's family name). Duffy, a bisexual retired cop turned independent investigator, appears in these works, which include *Duffy* (1980), *Fiddle City* (1981), *Putting the Boot In* (1985), and *Going to the Dogs* (1987). Based on the essence of his writings, which deals with the past, honesty, and romance, the writer has gained a lot of renown and admiration with the passing of time. (Lawson, 1991, p. 6).

Barnes came from a household that was passionate about books and reading, with Gustav Flaubert, a French writer known for his concerns for structure, technique, and impartiality, being a special inspiration for young Julian. In opposition to several twentieth-century English writers' relatively conventional storytelling techniques and confined topic issues, Barnes' works remained to display his preoccupation with words and creative experimentation (Lawson, 1991, pp. 1–3), as well as with the figure of the master Flaubert, all of which, without doubt, triggered the birth in 1984 of one of his most famous works: *Flaubert's Parrot* (see chapter two). The novel combines intellectual caricatures and intricate love stories, narrated with reverberating intricacy by individuals lacking knowledge, who construct extensive layers of listings and commentary—in which regard, it shares an apparent parallel with Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962). Overall, *Flaubert's Parrot* is a notable and unique book by a great author who crosses the distance between nineteenth-century tenderness and twentieth-century identity (Vanes, 2006, p. 11). The novel was widely praised as a notable work of writing that was less

provincial in style and method than most English novelists of the period. It's a story about interests and inquiries that spans history and the future. It is, however, not a classic storytelling book, because it incorporates romance, autobiography, background information, and literary critique into its mix of theoretical methods. Here Barnes, like in his many other works, concentrates on a singular character, Geoffrey Braithwaite, a widowed English clinical doctor in his sixties with a long-standing fascination with the French novelist Gustave Flaubert. (Sesto, 2001, p. 43).

Another Barnes' full-length book that became the second benchmark in his writing career, *England, England*, was published in 1998 (see chapter three). In the interim, he had authored *The Porcupine* (1992), a short novel set in an Eastern European country in the wake of liberalism's demise. Barnes observes how hard it is to flee the old chronology and its misconceptions and fantasies, as well as wonders where one will go, to what fresh falsehoods and fabrications. *England, England* is likewise a historical reflection. It's a meaningful book with a sarcastic and comic heart. (Sesto, 2001, p. 47).

Julian Barnes is regarded as one of the most essential postmodern writers. We may identify postmodern aspects and approaches in all of his writings. He combines conventional realistic ideas with new approaches that defy traditional factual forms, demonstrating postmodern methods. Barnes has explored numerous concepts during his writing career. His books have changed in style and method over time, with the first being more classic and standard and the subsequent being more innovative. Barnes' humour and sarcasm, his mastery of heritage, literary analysis, mythology, and fairytale, his blending of creativity and intelligence, and his continued risks in experimenting with new genres and approaches ended up making him one of the most important English writers of his time (Sesto, 2001, p. 47).

In conclusion, to sum up everything said thus far and to bring us to the aims and objectives of this thesis, it needs to be kept in mind that historiographic metafiction is a literary technique that intentionally presents history as a subjective narrative, incorporating deliberate, ironic, and playful alterations to historical events and accounts. The outcome entails the transformation of historical events into

fictionalized narratives. Therefore, this study aims to address the role of history as a metafictional entity conceptualized by Linda Hutcheon. The objective is to identify the narrative components that can be attributed to defining characteristics of postmodern fictional historiography in the novels of Julian Barnes to see if they meet the expectations of the genre and if they can be viewed as examples to illustrate Hutcheon's concepts. The current study indicates that within the chosen literary works, the portrayal of history is subjective and constructed, lacking inherent reliability or authority. The literary works *Flaubert's Parrot* and *England, England* pertain to a distinct epoch in the past, yet their author employs deliberate alterations to the portrayal of certain persons and events to contest the conventional historical account and present his interpretation thereof.

The present thesis is divided into an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter is divided into several sections; the initial section scrutinizes the theory of postmodernism by concentrating on the pivotal concepts of the most eminent intellectuals who have made significant contributions to the exploration of the historical aspects of metafiction in world literature. The second section provides a postmodern reading of history and historiography. The chapter ends with a section devoted entirely to the study of metafiction definitions.

The second chapter focuses on reading *Flaubert's Parrot* as a postmodernist historiographical novel; it provides a lot of evidence from the text to illustrate different aspects of historiographic metafiction, such as fictive truth vs. reality, history vs. fiction and self-reflexivity, etc. The third chapter elaborates on the historical aspects of metafiction in Julian Barnes's *England, England*, by discussing the concepts of memory, art, and the like in the context of the same historiographic metafiction. The conclusion of this thesis sums up the findings.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Postmodern Theory

Postmodern arguments have occupied the social and academic arena in various disciplines worldwide for the last two centuries. Diatribes have erupted in artistic and critical analysis about if modernity in the art forms has been extinct or alive and what kind of postmodern artworks would precede it. Students have started praising a fresh postmodern theory connected with Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, Rorty, Lyotard, and the like; as a result, discussions have emerged in the literature about whether or not the history of contemporary logic has concluded. Ultimately, the postmodern onslaught spawns additional sociological and governmental ideas and conceptual efforts to explain the phenomenon's many features (Best & Kellner, 1991, p. 1).

Scholars have disagreed over the cultural context and birth of postmodernism in the past. Many commentators claim that the term "postmodern" first appeared in the writings of an English artist named John Watkins Chapman, who coined the phrase "postmodern painting" about 1870 to describe art that was reportedly more highly contemporary and avant-garde than French impressionistic art (Higgins, 1978, p. 7). Several critics have claimed that the phrase was coined in 1917 by Rudolf Pannwitz in *Die Krisis der europäiischen Kultur* to characterize melancholy and the breakdown of morals in current European civilization (cited in Welsch, 1988, pp. 12–13). Pannwitz, after Nietzsche, envisaged the emergence of fresh 'postmodern men' who would embody interventionist, patriotic, and privileged ideals, a phenomenon that would later be paralleled by fascists, which likewise demanded a rupture with contemporary European civilization (Best and Kellner, 1991, p. 3).

Following World War II, D. C. Somervell's summary of the opening six books of British scientist Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History* (1947) popularized the phrase, and Toynbee himself has used it in Books VIII and IX of his *A Study of History*. Following the Dark Ages (675–1075), the Middle Ages (1075–1475), and the Modern period (1475–1875), Somervell and Toynbee have proposed the conception of a "postmodern" age, which began in 1875, to demarcate the fourth era of European culture (Somervell, 1947, p. 39). According to this narrative, circa 1875,

European society reached a distinct transformational stage that Toynbee has dubbed *the postmodern century*. This time marks a drastic shift and breaks beyond the preceding modern era; it has been marked by conflicts, social unrest, and rebellion. The era, according to Toynbee, has been one of chaos and complete nihilism. He describes the prior modern history as a bourgeoisie middle-class era distinguished by societal security, rationality, and progress, a conventional capitalist middle-class view of a past distinguished by swings of crises, conflict, and revolutions.

On the other hand, the postmodernism era is characterized by the breakdown of rationality and the Liberal mentality (Best & Kellner, 1991, p. 6). Toynbee has established the postmodernism principle, yet he has not created a methodical supposition of the innovative postmodern period. His totalizing ideology of heritage, with its belief in chronological loops of the emergence and fall of ancient cultures, his metaphysical individualism, and the religious sonorities of his assessment would be utterly unfamiliar to those who have decided to take up the principle of postmodernity in the modernist image. Given their diagnoses of societal and intellectual pessimism in the current period, Toynbee's picture is evocative in many respects of Nietzsche's *Will to Power* and Spengler's *Decline of the West* (1991, p. 6).

In the 1950s, many chronological concepts of a nascent postmodern period emerged in a range of fields in the United States. Bernard Rosenberg, a critical scholar, popularized the word "postmodern" to characterize the altered circumstances of living in general civilization in his preface to a famous collection on Large Cultures (Rosenberg and White, 1957, pp. 4–5). Rosenberg ends by describing the uncertainty of the emerging postmodern entire planet: "In short, the postmodern world offers man everything or nothing. Any rational consideration of the probabilities leads to a fear that he will be overtaken by the social furies that already beset him" (1957, p. 5).

Although the phrase "postmodern" was employed to define new kinds of building and literature in the 1940s and the 1950s, it has not generally employed in the area of critical analysis till the 1960s and the 1970s to characterize objects that resisted and/or followed modernity. Several intellectual and political thinkers have

started to anticipate dramatic breakdowns in modernist society and the birth of fresh postmodern artistic genres around this time. Irving Howe (1970) and Harry Levin (1966) were both pessimistic about the rising postmodern literature; they saw it as the fall of Enlightened rationality, anti-intellectualism, and the abandonment of the contemporary promise that society might bring about political transformation. Modernist society, on the other hand, is a good evolution that resists the repressive characteristics of liberalism and modernization, according to Susan Sontag (1972) and Leslie Fiedler (1971). Sontag's famous articles from the mid-1960s have praised the birth of a "new sensibility" (a term coined by Howe) in literature and the arts, which defies the rationality demand for substance, significance and structure, voicing her unhappiness with contemporary storytelling and ways of analysis. For comparison, the emerging sense is absorbed in the joys of shape and manner, favouring an "erotics" of artwork above an interpretation exegesis. Postmodern artwork, the cinema society, occurrences, multi-media lighting displays, rocking performances, and many innovative cultural genres dominated the 1960s. According to Sontag, Fiedler, and several other critics, these advancements went beyond the restrictions of prior modes such as literature or the book. Various creators started combining technologies and infusing vibrant and common society into their work. As a result, the emergent mentality became broader and more diverse than modernity and less concerned and moralizing (Best & Kellner, 1991, p. 8–9).

Fiedler, much further than Sontag, has praised the blurring of the elevated artistic divide and the emergence of modern arts and prevalent sociocultural factors. Fiedler has defined emerging society as a "post-" civilization that repudiated Religion, organization tend, rationality, and humanity as conventional principles. Although he criticizes contemporary artworks and the new young population of pessimistic "postmodernists" in his 1971 article, he eventually praises postmodernism and recognizes its usefulness in abolishing artistic and intellectual traditions. He has predicted the demise of the avant-garde and the contemporary book, as well as the creation of alternative contemporary arts that bridged the barrier between artists and public, analysts and layman (Fiedler 1971, pp. 461–85). Fiedler advocates for a radical postmodern critique that rejects formality, reality, and intellectual pretension to analyze the author's reaction inside a mental, sociological,

and political framework, welcoming popular society and denouncing classic snobbery.

In the 1970s and the 1980s, contemporary styles in writing, poems, artwork, and architecture emerge, followed by a profusion of postmodern ideologies in the sciences. The clarity and formality of the early modernist design have sparked significant responses in structure. Several commentators believe postmodernism acquired a catchphrase in the 1980s following the publication of French theorist Jean-François Lyotard's *La Situation Postmodern* (1979), which has been transcribed into English as *The Postmodern Condition* (1984). Faiths, metaphysical processes (e.g., Marxist theory), psychodynamic designs (e.g., Freud's and Lacan's), philosophies such as unrestricted capitalist framework and social-economic initiatives, and the Spirituality story of never-ending advancement and prospective socioeconomic unity have all been revealed as fables operating their numerous classes. Lyotard demarcated dialectics as an "incredulity towards metanarratives" bluntly (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiv). Understanding that there are no means to harmonize radically opposed and evenly balanced "local" storylines without metaphysics, he acknowledged that the modernist state would unavoidably entail counters, resulting in intractable difficulties. In other words, Lyotard's postmodernism, like Derrida's fragmentation, resulted in indecision (Bertens, 2014, Pp. 141–142).

Supporters of the contemporary legacy replied by dismissing the emerging opponent—by the means of criticizing it—or trying to get to ideas with and adapt them to the contemporary narratives and stances. In contrast, proponents of the postmodern shift vigorously denounced old entertainment, philosophy, and governance. Opponents of the modernist shift have claimed it has been likely a transitory trend, a fictitious creation of academics looking for a new narrative and supply of artistic wealth, or just a more conservative mentality aiming to discredit laboratory modern concepts and principles. However, developing postmodern debates and problems create concerns that are difficult to ignore or incorporate into pre-existing frameworks (Britton 1988, p. 12).

To start, one can differentiate between "modernity," which refers to the contemporary era, and "postmodernity," an epiphanic phrase for the purported

century that succeeds materialism. Modernization, like postmodernism, has a diversity of narratives; therefore, the concept applies to several financial, governmental, societal, and intellectual shifts. According to Marx, Weber, and the like, modernism is a chronological periodizing phrase that alludes to the era after the Medieval Times or aristocracy. Modernism, according to some scholars, is in opposition to conventional communities and is defined by invention, originality, and vitality (Berman, 1982, p. 75).

Logic was promoted as the basis of advancement in learning and civilization. It was also the primary site of reality and the cornerstone of organized understanding in the conceptual debates of civilization from Cartesian through the Revolution and its offspring. The rationale has been regarded as capable of discovering suitable conceptual and pragmatic rules to build frameworks of thinking and behaviour and to reconstruct community. This Transcendence vision has been likewise at work in the American, French, and other republican uprisings, seeking to overthrow the medieval civilization and establish an equitable and equal societal system of rationality and development (Toulmin, 1990, p. 160–162).

Artistic modernism arose from the emerging avant-garde contemporary organizations and liberal subgroups, which ought to revolutionize tradition and discover inventive ego in artwork whilst rebelling against the isolating characteristics of industry and rationality. The diffusion of contemporary artworks, consumption of cultural items, new technology, and new forms of transit and communications have helped bring contemporary into ordinary living. “Modernization” is a phrase that refers to the stages of personalization, reformation, industry, cultural difference, commercialization, urbanism, formalization, and simplification that have combined to create the current society. However, from the oppression of the farmers, workers, and craftsmen through capitalist modernization to the restriction of women from the social realm to fascist foreign extermination, the building of modernization has caused incalculable anguish and sorrow for its sufferers. Enlightenment likewise created a system of regulatory organizations, behaviours, and ideologies that legitimized its dominance and controlling modalities. Therefore, the “Enlightenment Dialectic” (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972, p. 192) has portrayed a cycle in which rationality became its polar counterpart, and modernity’s claims of emancipation

veiled tyranny and dominance. On the other hand, modernity's supporters argue that it has "untapped potential" and the means to transcend its constraints and detrimental repercussions.

Conversely, postmodern scholars argue that emerging mechanisms of development and conversion are promoting a new modernist culture in today's high-tech information world, adding that postmodernism is a fresh phase of civilization and sociopolitical creation that necessitates new constructs. Sociologists of dialectics such as Baudrillard, Lyotard, and Harvey argue that new types of awareness and alterations in the sociopolitical structure are causing contemporary societal development. Modernity sociologists like Jameson and Harvey perceive the poststructuralist as the advancement of an elevated phase of the capitalist system labelled by a more considerable extent of equity permeation and hybridization worldwide. At the same time, Baudrillard and Lyotard define these innovations in aspects of innovative kinds of documentation, expertise, and innovations. These dynamics result in growing cultural dispersion, alterations in the sense of distance and history, and new forms of awareness, subjectivity, and civilization. These circumstances offer the economic and intellectual foundation for modernist thought, and their study offers the viewpoints from which the postmodernism hypothesis can profess to be at the forefront of current events (Best and Kellner, 1991, p. 7). Aside from the difference between modernism and postmodernism in sociological philosophy, postmodern rhetoric is relevant to aesthetic and artistic concepts. The discussion here is on the differences between modernity and neoliberalism in the crafts. Within this discussion, the terms "impressionism, l'art pour" ["art, expressionism, surrealism, and other avant-garde movements"] (Best and Kellner, 1991, p. 7) can be utilized to define the abstract expressionists of the current period, whilst also "postmodernism" can be utilized to explain the various artistic shapes and procedures that follow and tear with rationalism. These genres encompass Robert Venturi and Philip Johnson's design, John Cage's compositional experimentation, Warhol and Rauschenberg's artwork, Pynchon and Ballard's books, and movies like *Blade Runner* and *Blue Velvet*. The argument centres on whether or not there is a clear philosophical difference between modernity and postmodernism and the benefits and drawbacks of these approaches (Best & Kellner, 1991, p. 7).

Postmodernist narratives often arise in the concept domain, focusing on critiques of contemporary ideas and justifications for a postmodern break in thought. The advanced principle is critiqued for its seeking of a framework of awareness, for its normative and overarching assertions, for its arrogance in supplying durability and long facts, and for its supposedly specious realism, varying from Philosophers' epistemological proposal via the Awakening to the sociocultural concept of Comte, Marx, Weber, and several others. Proponents of contemporary philosophy attack postmodern materialism, egoism, and pessimism. Further precisely, the postmodern concept criticizes depiction and the modern notion that it reflects realism, arguing that ideas can only offer incomplete views on their topics and that all learning purposes of the environment are temporally and rhetorically distorted. As a result, particular postmodern thought opposes the modern hypothesis with its totalizing macro-perspectives on civilization and events favouring instead micro-theory and micro-politics (Lyotard 1984, p. xxiv). Postmodern thought opposes current conceptions of societal consistency and causation in favor of diversity, pluralism, disintegration, and imprecision. Furthermore, this ideology rejects many contemporary current theories' logical and cohesive subjectivity in favor of a culturally and verbally implemented and fractured topic.

1.2 Postmodern Reading of History and Historiography

An Introduction to Contemporary History by British economist Geoffrey Barraclough provides a more profound, comprehensive, and extensive view of the postmodern era than the literature discussed thus far (1964). The society in which we exist currently is "different, in virtually all of its basic preconditions, from the world in which Bismarck lived and died," according to Barraclough (1964, p. 9). He says that analyzing the fundamental differences underlying the "old world" and the "new world" necessitates "a different paradigm and innovative frames of reference" (p. 9). In response to views that stress historical consistency, Barraclough asserts:

In short, contemporary history should be considered as a distinct period of time, with characteristics of its own which mark it off from the preceding

period, in much the same way as what we call ‘medieval history’ is marked off ... from modern history. (1964, p. 12).

He dismisses prior efforts to explain the present chronological condition, instead coining the word “postmodern” to define the time that precedes modern civilization (1964, p. 23). Barraclough defines postmodernism as being characterized by transformative advances in research and knowledge, new colonialism encountering opposition from Third World democratic forces, the shift from individuality to collective societies, and a new worldview and cultural expression. As Hutcheon puts it, “A project that is postmodern in nature involves the transgression of theoretical and practical boundaries, frequently resulting in their mutual implication, with history frequently serving as the locus of this problematic situation.” (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 90).

The study of historiography in the twentieth decade has typically been shaped by positivist and objectivist principles that have tried to distinguish it from everything that is “merely literary.” The past begs for deconstructing (Parker, 1981, p. 58) to examine the purpose of history authoring altogether in its typical framing up of the “actual” as not contentious existence to be replicated or recreated. In the words of Hayden White, who was purposefully suggestive:

[historians] must be prepared to entertain the notion that history, as currently conceived, is a kind of historical accident, a product of a specific historical situation, and that, with the passing of the misunderstandings that produced that situation, history itself may lose its status as an autonomous and self-authenticating mode of thought. (White 1978, p. 29).

The startling yet widespread unanimity between postmodern sceptics that the postmodern is not chronological is one of the rarely shared rationales. To put it another way, postmodernism seldom asks for the past; rather, it re-criticizes history and its reality. Past is yet more a topic of discussion and a reasonably contentious one. The conceptions of beginnings and goals, wholeness, and totalization, rationality and purpose, awareness and humanity, development and destiny,

representations and reality, not to forget the conceptions of causation and chronological uniformity, regularity, and continuation, appear to be inextricably linked to this collection of disputed cultural and societal norms that likewise shape our conceptions of both philosophy and artwork nowadays (Miller 1974, 460–1).

Many of the defining features of the current literature are the underpinning notion that previous awareness must be eradicated if the author is to study those levels of life experiences that the present style's singular goal is to reveal with sufficient sincerity. These frames' issues are not original in fundamental aspects: their conceptual origins go back decades, but their current concentration in numerous such contexts causes us to pay attention. According to David Hackett Fischer, a well-known XXth-century educator and historian, just in the 1970s, authors and dramatists, biological researchers and sociologists, poets, forecasters, commentators, and thinkers of various influences expressed a strong dislike for historical philosophy, "Many of our contemporaries are extraordinarily reluctant to acknowledge the reality of past time and prior events, and stubbornly resistant to all arguments for the possibility or utility of historical knowledge." (Fischer 1970, 307). There appears to be a fresh urge to consider the traditional and reflect on ancient times; these times are to be examined analytically and culturally, as we would need to change our assertion about them significantly in the aftermath of Michael Graves and Paolo Portoghesi's modernist design; or movies such as *The Return of Martin Guerre*; or historical intertextualities like *Dvorak in Love* by Skvorecky or *The Old Gringo* by Fuentes.

Gerald Graff (1973) complains that arguing about provisionality and uncertainty and offering an analytical perspective on history should not be to reject background reality. As a result, how can we understand history currently as a source of education for us at the moment? "For if history is seen as an incoherent flow of facts, devoid of inherent importance and structure, then any efforts to shape and organize the past can only be a dishonest refuge from the truth." (Graff, 1973, p. 403). Postmodernism is not about recovery, melancholy, or evangelicalism. History and fantasy are essentially narratives; both establish frameworks of meaning through the fact that we create knowledge of the previous "exertions of the shaping, organizing imagination", as contemporary writings in both histories and language

have shown us (p. 403). Put another way, the significance and structure of occurrences are determined by the institutions that transform previous “events” into current chronological “facts”. As a result, the postmodern makes two concurrent motions. First, it reintroduces historical circumstances as essential and even deciding, although it also casts doubt on genuine understanding as a whole. The modern literary past is not an effort to conserve and convey a standard or a legacy of thinking; instead, it has a thorny and ambiguous relationship to both heritage and literary critique, as in:

Because its progenitors were raised in the theoretical climate of the 1970s, when the individual literary work came to lose its organic unity, when literature as an organized body of knowledge abandoned the boundaries that had hitherto enclosed it, and when history began to seem disco, the new history we are beginning to see today has little in common with the old. (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 91).

For the sake of plurality and dispersion, postmodern writers frequently attack the uniqueness and wholeness of storytelling. They supply fictitious corporality rather than concepts via story, yet they also serve to fracture or, at worst, make insecure the conventional cohesive identification or subjective figure. To demonstrate this argument, historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie has surprised his audience by refusing to disguise his interpreting and narrating activities beneath the third-person impartial tone that is so ubiquitous in all political and creative critique writings. For instance, in his *Carnival in Romans* (1979), the author portrays himself as a researcher, reflecting from behind the tale he narrates, yet from an openly and highly biased standpoint that sets out its moral framework for the audience to assess for themselves. This blatant disregard for historiographical standards is a postmodern confluence of several enunciated processes identified by Emile Benveniste as chronological and conceptual (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 91). For Benveniste, chronological assertions in history and idealist literature seek to omit linguistic references to the conceptual position of the speech (production, recipient, background, intention) in their effort to describe historical actions in such a way that the facts appear to

describe themselves (1971, Pp. 206–8).

The innovative and analytical “return to history,” according to David Carroll, faces “the conflictual interpenetration of many series, contexts, and grounds composing any basis or process of grounding.” (1983, p. 66). Hutcheon says that the contradiction of poststructuralist historiography and fiction writings is that it accomplishes so through first establishing and then severely addressing both the grounded procedure and the foundations themselves. It is a dilemma that emphasizes the distinction between “history” as “the unobstructed sequence of basic empirical realities,” as Murray Krieger puts it (1974, p. 339), and “history” as either technique or composing: “The process of critically examining and analyzing the records and survivals of the past is ...historical method.” (Gottschalk, 1969, 48). The emphasis of the postmodern reconsideration of the questions of how we can and may acquire to have an awareness of history is creative restoration or cognitive standardizing. As Paul Ricoeur has demonstrated, the recording of history is “constitutive of the historical way of knowledge.” (1984, p. 162). We define actual occurrences as the descriptive and interpretive representations of past events in history. Irrespective of Enlightened progression or growth, idealist/Hegelian global activity or result demonstrates Marxist conceptions of society. This is the framework in which postmodernism’s historical sensibility finds itself.

In the 1960s, there was a shift “out of the frame” (Suknick, 1985, p. 43) into the realm of current events, as evidenced by anything from freedom rallies to the New Reporting, as well as sensuality (George Segal’s marble castings of “truth” in the artwork). Our current and perhaps distant history is things we all experience, and the plethora of factual novels and documentaries being produced and consumed now could be a symptom of a longing for what Doctorow memorably described as “community reading.” (Trenner, 1983, p. 59). To put it another way, “history, whether as the collective public memory of the past, private modifications of public experience, or even the elevation of private experience to public consciousness, forms the epicentre of contemporary fictional action,” as one modernist observer puts it (Roth, 1980, p. 24) That postmodern literature “decreases” past is not the case (p. 14).

1.2.1 Historiographic Metafiction

Literary writings and historiography have been regarded as parts of the same tree of knowledge in the nineteenth century, particularly until the advent of Ranke's "scientific history", a tree that attempted to "understand the experience, for the purpose of directing and uplifting man." (Nye 1966, p. 123). Notwithstanding the idea that the realistic book and Rankean poststructuralism have several comparable assumptions regarding the ability to communicate accurately about an accessible world, the division culminated in the independent fields of literary and scientific analysis today (White 1976, p. 25). Furthermore, in postmodern thought and artwork, this distinction between the literary and the factual is being questioned, and contemporary analytical interpretations of both biography and literature have concentrated increasingly on precisely what the author is saying. The similar cynicism or mistrust regarding the recording of biography contained in the writings of Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra is reflected in the internalization objections to chronology in books like *Shame* (Salman Rushdie), *The Public Burning* (Robert Coover), or *A Maggot* (John Fowles): they reflect the identical questioning position regarding their shared usage of storytelling, references, and the utilization of the past (Foley 1986, pp. 170–1). Our faith in experimentalist and realist systems of thought has been disturbed in today's literature, and biography writing has shaken but not obliterated. Furthermore, this explains the doubt instead of any actual condemnation; it certainly explains characteristic inconsistencies of the postmodern rhetoric.

Postmodernism is a problematic intellectual endeavour, inextricably entangled in the very thing it claims to oppose. It puts to question the very institutions and ideals it exploits and violates. Historiographical intertextuality, for instance, separates its technical auto-representation from its solid background, posing questions about the validity of historical knowledge as a whole since there is no closure, no synthesis here, only unsolved conflict. Thus, the postmodern contradictions are numerous. The denial of both "genuine" depiction and "inauthentic" imitation equally is foregrounded by the combination of the historiographical and the metafictional; the entire idea of artistic uniqueness is as

aggressively questioned as the clarity of factual allusion. In postmodernism, historiographic intertextuality, elevating “private experience to public consciousness,” is not about expanding the subjectivity; it is about rendering the public and chronological inextricably linked with the personal and autobiographical. Postmodernism narrative says that rewriting or representing the old in literature or its background is to offer it up to the current time, to keep it from being definitive and metaphysical in both situations. Novels like Susan Daitch’s *L.C.*, with its dual overlay of concrete restoration, both of which are portrayed with different direction identities, convey this lesson. According to historiography, intertextuality, reality, and falsehood may not be the best concepts to use when discussing narrative, although not for the causes stated previously. Books like *Flaubert’s Parrot* (Julian Barnes), *Famous Last Words* (Timothy Findley), and *A Maggot* (John Fowles) explicitly claim that there are just numerous realities—seldom one—and that there is hardly falsehood parse, simply other people’s facts. Revisionist metafiction creates and then bridges the frameworks of fantasy and biography, postulating both the general agreements of literature and heritage (Hutcheon, 1988, pp. 109-11).

What is the connection between postmodern literature and the narrative literature typically associated with the nineteenth century? Historical novels can perform historical processes by portraying a microcosm that extrapolates and intensifies (Lukács, 1962, p. 39). As a result, the protagonists should be kind, a composite of the universal and specific of “all the important human and social determinants.” (p. 39). The heroes of historiographic metafiction are not conventional kinds; they are the former, the ostracized, the outlying characters of fictitious history: the Coalhouse Walkers (in *Ragtime* by E. L. Doctorow), the Saleem Sinais (in *Midnight’s Children* by Salman Rushdie) and the Fevvers (in *Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter). Doctor Copernicus (in the novel *Doctor Copernicus* by John Banville), Houdini (in *Ragtime* by E. L. Doctorow), and Richard Nixon (in *The Public Burning* by Robert Coover) all take on separate, specific, and eventually ex-centric significance. Historiographical intertextuality promotes a postmodern philosophy of multiplicity and appreciation of diversity; “type” serves only to subvert this ideal hilariously. No concept of historical uniformity exists. In his reaction to both public and internal events, the hero of a postmodern fiction like

Doctorow's *Book of Daniel* is particular, personal, artistically, and affectionately formed. No matter how hard Daniel tries to imagine himself as the embodiment of the New Left or his folks' mission, the narrative structure enforces the truth that he is not a prototype of anybody (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 114).

Lukács' conviction that contemporary fiction is characterized by its utilization of details, which he considered as "simply a way of establishing historical fidelity, for rendering conclusively evident the chronological inevitability of a concrete circumstance" (Lukács 1962, p. 59), is linked to this concept of types. As a result, correctness or even particular truthfulness is immaterial. In several respects, the postmodern narrative challenges this distinguishing feature. First, its magical realism exploits the truths and falsehoods of the factual track. Some established historical elements are purposefully altered in books like *Foe* (J. M. Coetzee), *Burning Water* (George Bowering), and *Famous Last Words* (Timothy Findley) to highlight the inherent cognitive failings of documented history and the endless possibility of intentional and unwitting inaccuracy. The second distinction is in how postmodern literature utilizes details or historical information. In an attempt to give the fictitious world a sense of verification (or air of deepness and peculiarity), chronological fantasy frequently includes and integrates this information. Historiographical intertextuality includes such knowledge yet seldom integrates it. The effort of striving to absorb is frequently highlighted: we see the monologues of M. Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* or T. Findley's *The Wars* seeking to create the light of the historical information they have gathered. We notice both the gathering and the efforts to put the story in perspective as viewers. Today, the dichotomy of the past's existence and its textualized availability is acknowledged in historiographical metaphors.

Reducing historical figures to subordinate positions is Lukács' third main distinguishing trait of historical fiction. This, however, is not the situation with postmodern books like *Doctor Copernicus* and *Kepler* by John Banville, *Legs* by William Kennedy, and *Antichthon* by Chris Scott. Several literary works use genuine historical characters to verify or legitimize the fictitious world through their participation, as though to conceal the discontinuities between imagination and reality in a technical and metaphysical ruse. Postmodern books' influence on the

perception of identity precludes anything such as deception and raises the existential connection as an issue: how can we understand the legacy? What do (can) we currently know about it? For instance, in *The Public Burning*, Coover commits significant aggression against the Rosenbergs' documented background, although for satirical purposes and in the service of social criticism. The provocative (and political) interest in the acceptance of historiographic metafiction, for its viewer, would call into question the underlying differentiation:

The discursive criterion that distinguishes narrative history from the historical novel is that history evokes testing behaviour in reception; historical discipline requires an author-reader contract that stipulates investigative equity. Historical novels are not histories, not because of a penchant for untruth, but because the author-reader contract denies the reader participation in the communal project (Streuver 1985, p. 264).

The aforementioned lines suggest that the emphasis of historiographic metafiction on its enunciative situation, which includes the text, producer, receiver, historical and social context, results in the reinstatement of a highly intricate collaborative project. Although discussions over the concept of chronological novels continue, a new variation on the heritage conflict emerged in the 1960s: the non-fictional book. This has contrasted with William Manchester's portrayal of contemporary natural occurrences as fictional biography in *The Death of a President*. It has been sort of a factual tale that overtly exploited fantasy tactics and maintained no pretence of neutrality in presentation. The directorial organizing perspective has been frequently at the centre as the new assurance of "truth" in the writings of Hunter S. Thompson, Tom Wolfe, and Norman Mailer, as speakers independently strove to detect and enforce structure on what they observed around them. The semi-autobiographical narrative and diachronic intertextuality are clearly linked by metafictionality and provisionality. As Robert Scholes has asserted, the fictionalised book of the 1960s and 1970s has not just reflected the contemporaneous panic of the past (1968); it has not simply aimed to accept "the fictional element inherent in all reporting" (p. 37) before attempting to conceive its "path to the truth" (p. 37).

On the contrary, it has raised significant questions about the authorship of the establishment and manufacturing of reality, specifically exploring the element that allows for deeper contradictory inquiry. It is through this exploration that historiographic metafiction delves into the complexities of constructed narratives and their impact on our understanding of history. Various commentators recognize similarities between the two genres; however, they cannot decide what form that comparison should assume. For one, “both stress the overt, totalizing power of the imagination of the writers to create unities” (Hellmann 1981, 16); thus far, for other critics, “both refuse to neutralize contingency by reducing it to unified meaning.” (Zavarzadeh 1976, p. 41). Linda Hutcheon believes in the former statement as a classification of the purely imaginary book, but not all intertextuality; while the latter indeed more truly describes a majority of the current identity of writing than developed in the 1960s and 1970s New Journalism, a literary style reminiscent of long-form non-fiction. Historiographic metanarratives meet both categories conversely: it establishes a universalist structure just to challenge it through extreme provisionality, metafiction, and, in many cases, disintegration.

The essence of individuality and relativism, the challenge of comparison and depiction, the interpretive origin of the previous era, as well as the intellectual repercussions of composing concerning heritage, are just a few of the particular problems raised by postmodern novelists relating the interplay of historians and narrative that receive further attention. Several viewpoints, as in Thomas’s *The White Hotel*, or an explicitly dominating storyteller, as in Swift’s *Water Land*, seem to be preferred techniques of storytelling in historiographic metafiction. We do not discover a topic in each which is sure in his or her capacity to understand the history using any confidence. This is a waste of valuable resources inscribing personality into events, not a surpassing of heritage. Hardly anything, not even the mind’s basic form, endures the volatility generated by considering the history in non-developmental, non-continuous categories in a book like Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*. To borrow Michel Foucault’s terminology, Saleem Sinai’s physique is revealed as “completely imprinted by history and the process of history’s annihilation of the body.” (1977, p. 148).

Postmodernism can be considered to develop, distinguish, and afterwards

disseminate fixed narrative perspectives (and forms) that employ memories to create meaning in history. It establishes and instead upends conventional notions of consciousness; it affirms and is susceptible to breaking “the unity of man’s being through which it was imagined that he might extend his sovereignty to past occurrences.” (Foucault, 1977, p. 153). Humour is one of these features because it is a postmodern technique of actually merging the textualized previous events into the language of the current. The ironic intertexts in John Fowles’ *A Maggot* are simultaneously creative and factual. Sections from the 1736 “Gentleman’s Magazine” are intermingled across the text, although there are also several parallels to eighteenth-century play, connections that are technically driven given the existence of performers in the story.

Metafiction in the postmodern period is a further technical representation of a need to bridge the distance between the audience’s history and present, as well as a yearning to recreate the past from a new perspective. It is not a contemporary ambition to organize the present via history; otherwise, the rendered present appears sparse compared to the past historical wealth (Antin 1972, p. 106–14). It is not an effort to erase or ignore the past. Instead, it addresses the past of literature and chronology because it is derived from earlier “documents.” It uses and exploits interpretive resonance, scrawling their potent references and then inverting their force with mockery. Overall, there is a less modernistic idea of a singular, metaphorical, prophetic “piece of art” instead of previously published narratives. The fictitious Willie Brown and Lightning Boy in Walter Hill’s film *Crossroads* take up the redemptive temptation from the demon of his composition “Crossroads’ Blues,” based on Robert Johnson’s story and lyrics (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 118).

These concerns of subjectivity, metafiction, allusion, and ideology underpin postmodernism’s problematic relationships between the past and literature. However, several scholars have identified storytelling as the one topic that encompasses all of these because narrativization has grown to be understood as an essential kind of cognitive perception, imposing significance and structural consistency on the randomness of occurrences. Understanding is translated into speaking through narration, and postmodern literature is obsessed with this transformation. In both biography and fiction, narrative traditions are thus no restrictions, facilitating

circumstances for producing meaning (White 1980, p. 5).

Historiographic metanarratives, like chronological fantasy and narrative biography, must confront the issue of the legitimacy of their “facts” and the form of their proof or sources. Moreover, of course, there is the question of how those historical materials are used: can they be connected honestly and dispassionately? Or does narrativization necessarily lead to the explanation? The metaphysical issue of the nature of the remains of history combines with the epistemic issue of how we know history. Naturally, the postmodern posing of these issues yields few solutions; yet this provisionality does not imply chronological realism or materialist philosophy. On the contrary, it resists imposing current attitudes and ideals upon history and emphasizes the uniqueness of each historical occurrence. Nonetheless, it recognizes that our capacity to understand history is ontologically restricted because we are both observers and participants in chronological activity. Several scholars agree that there is a separation between “events” and “facts” in historiographic metafiction. Actions are legitimized as facts when they are associated with conceptual frameworks that define their validity (Munz, 1977, p. 15).

As previously said, chronology and narrative define their subjects of focus; in other terms, they determine which occurrences will become realities. The postmodern problematization draws attention to our inescapable challenges with the specificity of incidents in the repository, where we can simply locate literary evidence to convert to truths and their availability. All records transmit knowledge, and the manner they accomplish so is a chronological reality in and of itself, limiting the empirical idea of factual understanding as Dominick LaCapra argues:

all documents or artifacts used by historians are not neutral evidence for reconstructing phenomena which are assumed to have some independent existence outside them. All documents process information and the very way in which they do so is itself a historical fact that limits the documentary conception of historical knowledge. (1985, p. 45).

Such kind of discovery has contributed to the development of a historical

semiology, in which materials serve as indications of occurrences that the researcher then converts into truths (Williams, 1985, p. 40). Carl Becker stated (1910) that “[t]he facts of history do not exist for any historian until he makes them” (p. 525), implying that depictions of history are chosen to symbolize whichever the historians desire. Postmodernism excessively emphasizes the distinction between incidents (which have no inherent meaning) and statements (which are assigned a meaning). Particularly publications are chosen to address a specific issue or perspective (Ricoeur 1984, p. 108). The use of narrative referential norms (particularly references) to simultaneously enter and undercut the validity and impartiality of factual materials and interpretations is a common theme in the intertextuality of historical metafiction. Despite the bookish facts, Barbara Foley defines it as follows: “[W]hat I’ve been labelling postmodern literature aspires to challenge who deserves to speak the facts.” (1986, p. 302). It contests the basis of any assertion to scientific verification rather than associating “this truth with claims to empirical validation.” (p. 304). How could a researcher (or a writer) validate a chronological record by comparing it to previous factual truth? Realities are created by our inquiries about situations, not handed to us (White 1978, p. 43).

The spontaneous or prevalent techniques of differentiating between factual reality and imagination are refuted by diachronic intertextuality. It rejects the notion that exclusively the past has a right to reality, primarily by questioning the basis for that claim in historiography and stating that both past and fantasy are narratives, cultural creations, and indicating structures. Both get their primary pretension to reality from that identification. In the spirit of artistic independence, this type of postmodern literature likewise rejects relegating the created with the intent of history to the province of chronology. Novels such as *The Public Burning* and *Legs* claim that the event existed before it was “entextualized” into narrative or background. They further demonstrate whether these forms inexorably create history as they textualize it. Their language’s “true” referent existed once, but it is now only available to us in textual form: records, eyewitness testimonies, and archives. Although the past is “archaeologized” (Lemaire 1981, p. 14), the textualized stock of accessible data is constantly recognized. As a result, narrative intertextuality is prepared to depend on any indicating traditions it can uncover in a community. It

seeks to criticize and utilize those ideologies, ultimately milking them for all they are valuable.



2. BARNES'S *FLAUBERT'S PARROT* AS A POSTMODERNIST HISTORIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL

2.1 Introduction

The present chapter aims to identify and analyze Julian Barnes's *Flaubert's Parrot* as postmodernist historical fiction to show how this novel matches the criteria for historiographic metafiction, a term coined by postmodern critic Linda Hutcheon. New literary works dispute the veracity of history and historical accounts, and this example will demonstrate how the lines between fiction and history are becoming blurred. The author seeks to illustrate how perspectives vary in their interpretation of a particular historic event and how subjectivity and ideology play a role in this process. Postmodernists seek to demonstrate that historical narratives are themselves fictitious creations. Barnes' position incorporates the concept of many meanings and truths instead of a single purpose or one "Truth". It's a rejection of historical realism, the empirical principles on which books about the past relied before postmodernism. Focusing on Julian Barnes's *Flaubert's Parrot*, this study asks how historical truth serves as a metafictional agency. The objective is to identify whether parts of the story might be considered examples of postmodern approaches to fictional historical narratives. This study demonstrates that the chosen novel portrays the shifting of reality and the uncertainty of the past. To provide his interpretation of history and cast doubt on the canonical one, Barnes manipulates certain characters and events from a specific period.

Published in 1984, the novel is a metafictional twist that follows Geoffrey Braithwaite, a former surgeon, a widower, and an ardent enthusiast of Gustave Flaubert, a well-known author who specializes in realistic fiction. Braithwaite gathers bio-bibliographical references about Flaubert. He has access to a large collection of letters written by or about the French writer; however, none of this material satisfies his original goal: "Nothing much else to do with Flaubert has ever lasted. He passed away a little over a century ago, and now only his written words survive." Literal "paper," "thoughts," "phrases," "metaphors," and "structured prose" that "becomes" audible. The story is apparently about Braithwaite looking for the actual parrot that inspired Flaubert's famous painting around the time when he was

writing “A Simple Heart”. Yet, it is not so much a whole narrative as a collection of Flaubert-related writing. Part literary critique, half historical fiction, this novel has it all. Peter Childs (2011) defines it as “a novel at one remove: partly a novel about a novelist, partly a novel about a man obsessed with a novelist, and partly a novel about the business of novel writing.” (Childs, 2011, p. 46). It is a classic novel for studying early postmodernism due to its mixture of genres, reflective tone, and pursuit of historical truth. In his often-cited humorous definition of the novel, Randall Jarrell describes it as “[a] prose narrative of some length that has something wrong with it.” (Childs, 2011, p. 74), which seems to fit *Flaubert’s Parrot* more than others.

2.2 Reading *Flaubert’s Parrot* as a Postmodernist Historiographical Novel

The term “historiography” describes the practice of writing history, which encompasses the methods, techniques, and approaches used to research, interpret, and present historical events and narratives and involves the study and analysis of primary and secondary sources, the selection of relevant information, and the construction of a historical account, and the politics of writing, the aspect which recognizes that historical narratives are not simply objective or neutral accounts of the past but are influenced by various factors, including the historian’s perspective, ideological biases, cultural context, and the prevailing power dynamics in society. The politics of historiography explores how different interpretations and representations of history can shape collective memory, influence public opinion, and serve specific agendas.

Concerning the historical account, history, according to Derrida, always has a goal in mind. It gives the past significance by imposing a meaning on it. Fiction, like reality, has a beginning and an end, at least in theory. Postmodern fiction differs in that its provisional character lies in the fact that it challenges the self-awareness of that imposition. Historiography, as Michael De Certeau (2019) has pointed out, “is an action that displaces the actual, outdated, confined attempt to comprehend the connections between a setting, a field, and the textual elaboration.” (Certeau, 2019 p. 55–64). According to him, writing about history attempts to bridge the gap between

the past and the present. “To understand the present, we must go to the past, the current result of the past’s actions.” (Certeau, 2019, p. 261–64). In Hayden White’s opinion, historians’ current consensus has to believe that creating historical accounts in narrative form is a very traditional and literary effort “though this does not imply that the authors think the incident never happened before in history.” Literature studies have been influenced by historiography beyond the realm of new historicism. The rejection of projection is a central theme in historiographic metafiction, a subgenre of postmodern fiction, which often compares the present norms and values to those of the past and argues for the uniqueness and individuality of these separate instances of the past, thereby challenging the notion of a singular historical truth. It also implies a clear delineation between what happens and what is true.

Linda Hutcheon coined the term “historiographic metafiction” defining it as literary works that use fictive characters to portray real-life historical persons or events. The point is that the past did exist, but our modern understanding of it is based on semiotic transmission. To highlight the truth, writers of historical fiction frequently employ paratextual techniques like rhetoric and reflexivity historiographic practices to inscribe and discredit the authority, accuracy, and fairness of historical accounts. Similar traits may be seen in postmodern historiographic metafiction. Historical fiction, or historical metafiction, uses historical events or figures as its subject—a fictional setting based on real-world people and events. The genre indicates more than the world of fiction, even if it is shown as a created one with self-awareness, but also a life out there in the public eye. It raises interesting concerns about the boundaries between fiction and history. Nonetheless, it does not claim to have conclusive evidence in this discussion, and the point is to bring the topic to the forefront and encourage further reflection. Focus on whose reality is being presented, as historiographic metafiction highlights the many truths. The fact that there is no such thing as “The Truth, with capital T”. Works of historiography, as Hutcheon (1985) argues in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, that famous and popular novella that is also intensely self-reflexive “is a definition of metafiction, contradictions, paradoxes, and claims to historical figures and events.” (Hutcheon, 1985, p. 116).

With its emphasis on textual play, satire, and the re-conceptualization of

history, historiographic metafiction is a hallmark of the postmodern era. Historiographic metafictionists include Michael Ondaatje, Salman Rushdie, and Julian Barnes. Recent critical interpretations of both history and fiction have tended to focus on their shared features rather than their distinct differences; in postmodern theory and art, this partition between literature and history is not being questioned. It appears that both are equally intertextual, employing the texts of the past within their own complex textually; both are believed to be more convincing due to their realism than any actual truth they may contain; both are recognized as examples of linguistic constructions that follow highly conventionalized narrative conventions; both are opaque in their language and structure. This type of storytelling challenges readers to think about how concepts like history and fiction have changed through time and how they are defined and related to one another. In a letter to the editor of his publication, Barnes wrote about the work, “so it’s a book about Flaubert about writing, it’s about contemporary writing, too; and it’s a semi-fiction in itself.” (as cited in Childs, 2011, p. 74).

Because of this mash-up, some reviewers have claimed that Barnes diverges from the conventions, which proves Moseley (1997) notes about the book, saying, “Barnes writes books that look like novels and are shelved as novels, but when you open them, they are something else than novels.” (Moseley, 1997, p. 9). The story is primarily a set of studies about Flaubert and his parrot. By turns a chronology, autobiography, philosophical dialogue, critical essay, manifesto, appendix, dictionary, examination paper, mythical references, and pure story, *Flaubert’s Parrot* deftly dissects itself into a wide variety of competing document types and a manual for train spotters. Since its publication in 1984, *Flaubert’s Parrot* opens itself up to a wide range of interpretations from reviewers and critics for its melding of postmodern themes such as shifting reality and uncertain past. Malcolm Bradbury (1990) highlights the book’s strengths and declares it a key postmodern work:

To date [1993] his best book, it is half critical text, half a human narrative, all based around the life and artistic impulse of the great nineteenth-century French realist, who also opened the door to fictional Modernism [...] ‘the text itself takes multiple forms’ it is research, a meditation, an examination paper, a playful latter-day commentary, on

Flaubert's own ambiguous realism, and on the strange stimuli of art. It busily plays with notions of the real and fictional, makes its own rules, and breaks up its own discourse, level behind its own ambiguities: a postmodern 'text' indeed. (Bradbury, 1990, p. 437).

Similar to bourgeois liberalism, Linda Hutcheon (1988) argues that "postmodern art affirms and then actively destroys such ideas as value, order, meaning, control, and identity." (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 13). The postmodernism might be readily changed with *Flaubert's Parrot*," she states, and the assertion would still be accurate. This phenomenon, which is central to postmodernist preoccupations, is also extensively discussed in the novel. By supporting Geoffrey in his quest to identify the real parrot and learn more about Flaubert, when necessary, the study investigates many important issues in the postmodern era. Barnes's intended form goes beyond the scope of traditional biographies.

Flaubert's Parrot, with its experimental structure that combines numerous forms, successfully undermines the standard chronology of the biography and disrupts its purported impartiality. Barnes wrote an essay for *The Guardian* in 2005 titled "When Flaubert Took Wing" to celebrate the novel's 20th anniversary. He claims that throughout the work, he experiments with the "constraints of traditional narrative" to see "how far [he] could distort and fragment the narrative line." (Barnes, 2005, p. 1). Then, Barnes explains how the idea initially came about:

At the age of fifteen, I read *Madame Bovary* for the first time. In college, I wrote a research paper on Flaubert and knew then that I would one day write about him. I had no idea what I wanted to write, other than that it wasn't a biography or part of the wonderfully illustrated Thames & Hudson series focusing on famous authors and their works. (2005, p. 11).

Barnes seems to be implying that traditional biographies written on the subject of artists and their works claim to hold the keys to the kingdom, but he cautions, "Don't think you can get in touch with the artist as easily as that." (2005, p. 1). Barnes plans to subvert the traditional biography by writing it in a way that combines

truth and fiction and that has “an attenuated fictional infrastructure that supports a factual superstructure.” (2005, p. 1). The biography, writings, and quotations of Flaubert provide the novel’s factual superstructure, while Geoffrey Braithwaite, whose life closely parallels Flaubert’s, provides the novel’s fictional foundation.

2.1.1 Fictive Truth and Reality to Demonstrate Historical Events in the Novel

Flaubert’s Parrot asks the readers to think back to that time period when the novel was cited, when truth and fiction are historical words whose meanings and relationships have changed throughout time, rooted in the past and shifted throughout time. Postmodernism, thus, challenges the notion that signifiers always point to an absolute truth, as the relationship between signifiers and their meanings is more complex and contingent. As there are no instances of original ideas in the text, this assertion is crucial. James B. Stott (1990) provides a concise overview of the originality problem; while the parrot is described as a symbol of the writer’s voice, which may be interpreted in light of Barthes’s theory as well as Kristeva’s theory of intertextuality, the truth and reality are not only products of language. He argues that the lesson to be learned from Flaubert’s Parrot is that phrases are hollow signifiers that never fully reach their intended signifieds:

That reality and truth are illusions produced when systems of discourse (especially artistic discourse) impact human consciousness would form the basis of much of postmodern literary theory. In practice, this had led postmodern novelists to attempt to undermine hermeneutic responses to art by foregrounding the discourse that informs their artifact, implying that not only is the final meaning arbitrary. (1990, p. 57)

The postmodern novel of Barnes, as pointed out by Malcolm Bradbury (1993), combines fiction and nonfiction, appears in a variety of formats, and “busily plays with notions of the truth and the fictional, makes its own rules, breaks up its discourse, leaves behind its own ambiguities [...]” (Bradbury, 1993, p. 437).

Certainly, *Flaubert's Parrot* is postmodern if this is the accepted definition, yet it is not as insistent as many other works of its type on destroying the frame or revealing its artificiality. In this postmodernist novel, the domain has moved from an epistemological to an ontological one, in which Barnes presents his readers with some of the most infamous ontological shifts in literature. The lines between fact and fiction become increasingly hazy, testing the reader's ability to suspend disbelief. As soon as the readers begin to believe that what they are reading may be true, something happens to shock them back to the reality that they are reading a work of fiction. For instance, Barnes blatantly informs the reader that they are reading nothing but fiction "Do the books that writers don't write matter? It's easy to forget them, to assume that the apocryphal bibliography must contain nothing but bad ideas, justly abandoned projects, embarrassing first thoughts" (2011, p. 115).

For two reasons, it's worth delving into these lines. First, readers are reminded that they are reading fiction when a mythical figure discusses fiction books. Second, the narrator, Braithwaite, is a fictional writer talking about another writer of fictional works; the reader of *Flaubert's Parrot* is presented with a double ontological flicker, as the text was presumably written by Julian Barnes at some point in the future and the narrator is discussing what other writers do and don't write. Before writing *The Luminaries*, Barnes may have avoided writing about Geoffrey Braithwaite or come up with an alternative take on the character who chose to release *Flaubert's Parrot*. Julian Barnes's fictitious character, Geoffrey Braithwaite, cautions the reader not to believe what they read, even if that advice leads them to doubt what Barnes himself authored and chose not to publish.

After examining which fictitious characters reflect upon fiction, it's hard to avoid mentioning metafiction and how it challenges the reader's suspension of disbelief. According to Wladimir Krysinski (2002), the attribute of being "met fictional" in a book is synonymous with that of being "self-reflexive." Therefore, works of fiction that reference or reflect on other works of fiction are considered metafictional. As Krysinski notes in his genre analysis, "metafictional novels tend to be constructed on the principle of a fundamental and sustained opposition: the construction of a fictional illusion (as in traditional realism) and the laying bare of that illusion." (Krysinski, 2002, p. 188). This description of "met fiction" books fits

the game that Barnes is engaged in as well. *Flaubert's Parrot* has a blatant example of metafiction labelled "The Dog Figurative," narrated by Geoffrey Braithwaite and included in the "Flaubert Bestiary" chapter. The fictitious narrator now assumes the role of literary critic, delving into the significance of the dog in Emma (or Madame) Bovary's famous novel, with which any reader of *Flaubert's Parrot* will undoubtedly be familiar:

Madame Bovary has a dog, given to her by a game-keeper whose chest infection has been cured by her husband. It is *une petite levrette d'Italie*: a small Italian greyhound bitch. Nabokov, who is exceedingly peremptory with all translators of Flaubert, renders this as whippet. Whether he is zoologically correct or not, he certainly loses the sex of the animal, which seems to me important. This dog is given a passing significance as...less than a symbol, not exactly a metaphor; call it a figure (Barnes, 2011, p. 63).

In this passage, readers witness the narrator analyze *Madame Bovary* with the same kind of authority that any literary critic would bring to bear on a work of literature. This metafictional intervention throws the reader's search for truth and reality out of whack once again in *Flaubert's Parrot*. The postmodernist conception of truth is Chitchat. This novel reminds the reader that not only Gustave Flaubert muddled the canine's meaning in *Madame Bovary*, but also the narrator, Geoffrey Braithwaite, and maybe even Julian Barnes be very well playing with the symbols and meanings the reader of *Flaubert's Parrot* is compelled to take for granted.

Another idea that postmodern novels frequently toy with is that of "objective reality." Writing in the 18th and 19th centuries was dominated by, as David Lodge explains, "the effort to capture reality in narrative fiction." (1977, p. 3). Writings that accurately and honestly portrayed the world around them were a goal of this movement. However, this trend reverses dramatically in postmodernist literature, forcing the reader to confront the idea that the realities depicted in narratives from the previous centuries are not and were never realistic. The "objective reality" in *Flaubert's Parrot* is shown when Geoffrey Braithwaite begins to explore the parallels

between God and the author, both of whom possess complete and total knowledge of their own fictional worlds: “Look at Sartre and Camus. God is dead, they told us, and therefore so is the God-like novelist. Omniscience is impossible, man’s knowledge is partial; therefore the novel itself must be partial” (Barnes, 2011, pp. 88–89).

This heavy incursion of metafiction gives the reader a very useful weapon for challenging the basic concept of reality in this story. These sentences make it clear that any hope of building an objective world in *Flaubert’s Parrot* has vanished in a cloud of smoke. A fictitious character expressly warns against putting faith in him and his narrative. If the reader has no faith in the novel’s narrator, who alone knows the truth, then the reader is left with nothing but a stunning postmodernist checkmate. Historical metafiction suggests that truth and falsity might not be the right word to investigate fiction, despite the novel’s clear premise that there are only countless truths. The novel promotes several points of view and throws doubt on a single underlying reality.

Some elements of historiographic metafiction appear to include many alternate historical narratives or counterfactual biographies of real-world historical individuals as part of this objective. Historiographic metafiction centres on the incorporation of different counterfactual biographies or alternative histories of genuine historical characters into the text. Barnes’s *Flaubert’s Parrot* focuses heavily on the core issues of historiographical metafiction, including scepticism of authenticity and the claim of fabrication. The story’s final game with variations, originals, and forgeries is inspired by Geoffrey Braithwaite’s search for the original parrot, while the fiction also depicts several different biographies. Biographies always end up being the author’s interpretation of events rather than the truth. In this vein, Barnes has some really thought-provoking things to say regarding the process of writing a biography:

But you could [...] define a net as a jocular lexicographer once did: he called it a collection of holes tied together with string. You can do the same with a biography. The trawling net fills, then the biographer hauls it in, sorts, throws back, stores, fillets and sells. Yet consider what he doesn’t catch. [...] think

of everything that got away, that fled with the last deathbed exhalation of the biographee (Barnes, 2011, p. 47).

These sentences might become an unsettling distraction from the plot much too soon. In the course of chronicling his search for the parrot, Geoffrey Braithwaite tells the reader that he does not believe in the verisimilitude of biographies, despite the fact that he is, in fact, summarizing the life of Gustave Flaubert. Again, the reader is hit with a barrage of postmodernist devices at once: the metafictional intrusion of a character analyzing a literary genre who suddenly reminds the reader that this text is indeed fiction; Geoffrey's assurance that biography is nothing but fiction; the terrible feeling that the narrator cannot be trusted; and the realization that, from those lines onwards, truth becomes a rare and distant concept. The intervention of the biography is a last point of contention, "There is always some trace of the biographer's character and preoccupations in each biography" (Barnes, 2011, p. 240). These remarks, expressed with remarkable insight by Brian Finney (1992), illuminate the subjectivity of the writer, which will affect the contents of the biography to a greater or lesser extent, and the function of the biographer in the life tales to be published.

According to Linda Hutcheon's "Postmodern Paratextuality and History," "when the term *postmodernism* is used in these days concerning fiction, it generally signifies metafiction" (1986, p. 301). These lines of thinking are consistent with what was discussed in the prior section's consideration of metafictional examples. On the other hand, Hutcheon (1986) argues that "we add to that metafictional impulse of contemporary postmodernist fiction something: the presence of the past" or "historical metafiction" (p. 301). In this thoughtful introspection, Hutcheon joins postmodernist Barnes by bringing the idea of the past into the present. The "problem" of the past and the human propensity to grasp it are introduced early on in *Flaubert's Parrot*:

How do we seize the past? Can we ever do so? When I was a medical student some pranksters at an end-of-term dance released into the hall a piglet which had been smeared with grease. It squirmed between legs, evaded capture, squealed a lot. People fell over trying to grasp it, and were made to look

ridiculous in the process. The past often seems to behave like that piglet (Barnes, 2011, p. 14).

Geoffrey Brathwaite, as the narrator, questions how humans manage to grasp the past and if it is really feasible to do so. For two reasons, these phrases might seem incredibly ironic: first, because he's trying to seize the past in his own journey to find Flaubert's parrot, and second, because he's saying that people who do what he's doing "look ridiculous in the process" (Barnes, 2011, p. 14). While attempting to grab the past for himself, he questions if others should do similarly. Hence, the reader's realization that, while events did occur, any document or historical record they read about them is merely a narrative and, thus, biased makes this lack of any possible objective way of recovering the past all the more brutal. "We can study files for decades, but every so often, we are tempted to throw up our hands and declare that history is merely another literary genre: the past is autobiographical fiction pretending to be a parliamentary report." (Barnes, 2011, p. 91).

The narrator in this passage not only declares his firm belief that history is really another form of fiction but also, via his usage of "we," draws the reader into his own conviction. Readers are immediately jolted into deep reflection by the realization that *Flaubert's Parrot* is fiction and must reevaluate his prior assumptions about the veracity of nonfiction works. The passage from *Flaubert's Parrot* undermines the reader's confidence in the credibility of historical accounts. Readers who have been taught that fact and fiction can't ever intersect should take caution. However, postmodernists disagree. Their narrative has been fictionalized throughout history.

As Himmelfarb (1999, p. 72) puts it, "Postmodernism is denying of the fixity of the past, of the reality of the past apart from what the historian chooses to make of it, and thus of any objective truth about the past vanished" in historical analysis. When things are unclear, it's best to consult with professionals. Another interesting consideration when determining authenticity is how much faith one may put in official papers. Linda Hutcheon writes, "The notion of objective documentation in historiography has been brought into doubt" (1986, p. 321). Although the novel does not take place in the past, it does centre on other versions of the writer's, Gustave

Flaubert's, life. It's intriguing to note the ways in which Barnes casts doubt on the relevance and use of evidence: "The dog's fate was never documented." "What Emma thought of these tales is unknown." "There is also no mention of the dog's fate. The fate of the truth remains unknown." (Barnes, 2011, pp. 61, 62, 64).

There are two possible responses to these three snippets from the text. On the one hand, they may encourage the reader to trust the narrator by establishing that he is honest about the gaps in his account and has no intention of providing any fictitious details to fill them in. On the other hand, this vagueness might have been intentionally created by the narrator, who opted not to elaborate at that point in the tale. These are not recorded variants that change how readers think about the narrative. The onus of determining whether or not these deviations weaken the story by forcing the reader to see its inherent limits is on the reader.

In the eighteenth century, historians who took a scientific approach asserted that historical events could be accurately recreated. Susana Onega (1995) describes 18th-century history "As an empirical search for external truths corresponding to what was considered the absolute reality of the past events." (Onega, 1995, p. 12). That is why it might be called a scientific quest for answers. Later historians—led by the postmodernist philosopher of history Hayden White and poststructuralist theories that emphasize the textuality of reality—provide the foundation for arguments in the postmodern historical approach, which dispute this interpretation and maintain that historical facts cannot be portrayed objectively since they do not exist independently of the present. According to poststructuralist theory, the text of history is "a discourse which consists of representations that are verbal formations" (Abrams, 1999, p. 183). We can only access the past beyond its pure form as historical occurrences through chronicles and archival materials.

Readers can access the past only through chronicles and archive materials, which are never available in their pure form as historical occurrences. The influence of poststructuralism paves the way for a historicist approach to literature, which examines works within their social, political, and cultural contexts and treats literary history as a subset of the more extraordinary cultural history. Louis Montrose (1989) describes this method of studying literature and history as one that pays attention to

both the historicity of texts. By the text of history, Montrose means to imply that all styles of writing have a unique cultural history and social context, and the textuality of history:

By the textuality of history, I mean to suggest, firstly, that we can have no access to a full and authentic past, a lived material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question – traces whose survival we cannot assume to be merely contingent but must rather presume to be at least partially consequent upon complex and subtle social processes of preservation and effacement. Secondly, that those textual traces are themselves subject to subsequent textual mediations when they are construed as the ‘documents’ upon which historians ground their own texts, called histories. (Montrose, 1989, p. 20).

Montrose’s perspective rejects the notion of viewing history solely as an external reflection of past events. The written record of history is a product of human construction, despite its outward appearance of depicting an impartial and factual account of events. As a result, scholars contend that the cultural and ideological depictions found within texts primarily function to perpetuate, validate, and disseminate the power dynamics of hegemony and subjugation that typify a particular society (Abrams, 1999, p. 184). Also, according to Abrams, history, similar to literature, is a manifestation of language and a narrative discourse that reflects historical circumstances and possesses a corresponding power structure.

This literary work merits significant commendation. Simultaneously, the situation evokes both a sense of melancholy and amusement. This text offers a unique perspective on the presentation of facts regarding Gustav Flaubert, which may be novel to some readers. Additionally, the author provides insightful conjecture regarding the significance and value of these facts, rendering this piece a crucial read. The significance of authorship and the potential for adoration of a writer are topics of interest. The concept of loving a writer is often considered to be a form of

pure love. According to Barnes (2011), the epigrammatist Geoffrey Braithwaite has frequently overlooked the concept of “Mystification” and has asserted that writing with clarity is the most arduous task. Braithwaite’s statement emphasizes the difficulty of achieving clarity in writing (p. 102). According to Barnes (2011), the past can be likened to a distant, receding shoreline, and all individuals are in a similar situation. This statement implies a shared experience of the passage of time and the inevitability of change. The author provides the reader with an exposition regarding historical events. Barnes (2011) also suggests that the past can be likened to a greased pig, a bear in its burrow, or merely the flash of a parrot with two mocking eyes shining from the jungle (p. 112). Furthermore, the author posits that while books may provide explanations for why a person acts a certain way, ultimately, it is life itself that dictates their actions. According to Barnes (2011), while books provide explanations, real-life situations often lack such clarity (p. 168).

Geoffrey Braithwaite’s self-referential declaration regarding the past holds considerable importance. The author expresses uncertainty regarding their beliefs about the past, stating, “I’m not sure what I believe about the past.” Additionally, the author employs metaphorical language to describe the past as a distant and receding coastline and all individuals as being in the same boat, as documented in Barnes’ work (2011, p. 101). Significantly, the author’s statements are situated within the context of a discourse on the comparative prevalence of corpulent males in Flaubert’s era versus contemporary times. The speaker inquired as to the means by which one may ascertain such intricate yet pivotal particulars. Despite years of scholarly inquiry, it is possible to perceive history as merely a literary classification and the past as a form of autobiographical fiction masquerading as a legislative account. The narrative structure of the novel reflects the narrator’s critical examination of conventional historical perspectives and his own perspective on the construction of historical events in contemporary society.

According to Linda Hutcheon’s classification of “historiographic metafiction” (1985), *Flaubert’s Parrot* illustrates the notion that “language constructs reality, and language is unavoidably diverse.” This encompasses works that possess inherent self-awareness, intertextuality, parody, self-reflexivity, multidisciplinary or interdisciplinarity, irony, and an open-ended nature (Hutcheon,

1985, p. 63). The plot of this work exhibits a moderate degree of progression in line with that of a conventional grand narrative novel. The text offers a collection of fifteen chapters that exhibit a tenuous interconnection and adhere to the structure of a subjective account. Upon initial examination, the literary work presents itself as a postmodern pastiche, featuring a narrative voice in the form of the opinionated character Braithwaite, who engages in a satirical critique of Gustave Flaubert's life. The arrangement of the chapters lacks coherence, with only the introductory and concluding sections exhibiting a discernible linkage. Similar to numerous works of literature, *Flaubert's Parrot* provides an initial indication to its audience regarding its intended objectives. The book features an epigraph by Flaubert, which states, "When you write the biography of a friend, you must do it as if you were taking revenge for him" (Barnes, 2011, p. 1). This suggests that we possess unrestricted artistic liberty in depicting our companions in any piece of work we intend to create. Divergent perspectives, encompassing both favourable and unfavourable evaluations, can be held regarding the conduct of this individual. The epigraph employed by Barnes implies that the literary work will transform into the adversaries of Flaubert, both living and deceased. Despite the presence of numerous French words and phrases throughout the text, some of which are untranslatable and constitute enjoyable delicacies of the French language, the task of comprehending Flaubert's work is rendered arduous. The introductory epigraph serves to acquaint the reader with both the imaginative and factual aspects of Flaubert's existence. The present literary piece predominantly comprises personal anecdotes of the author and posits a justification in the Flaubertian tradition. The book in question exhibits a higher degree of bias compared to a conventional biography, as it primarily serves as a vindication of the artist rather than a mere portrayal of their life. Dr Geoffrey Braithwaite, a retired medical practitioner, has been entrusted with Barnes's narrative owing to his enduring affection for the deceased author. The epigraph alludes to the notion that the individual's quest for the departed writer is driven by a desire to seek solace in the face of adversity.

The literary work entitled *Flaubert's Parrot* commences with the protagonist, Geoffrey Braithwaite, providing a depiction of a commemorative structure dedicated to Flaubert. The original statue was unlawfully taken by the Nazi regime in 1941;

consequently, the current structure is a replica erected in its stead. Subsequently, the mayor of Rouen was able to locate the plaster mould of the initial statue and proceeded to recreate it. The second chapter incorporates temporal markers pertaining to Flaubert's biography. The text comprises three discrete components. The text initially presents details regarding the life of Flaubert and his achievements. The second part of the text documents the fatalities and disillusionment experienced by Flaubert. The ideas of Flaubert are systematically arranged chronologically in the concluding section. Gustave Flaubert's birth year is recorded as 1821, and it is documented that his caretaker, Julie, began residing with his family in 1825. In 1831, he commenced his academic pursuits at the esteemed "college de Rouen." In 1836, the individual in question initiated a romantic affiliation with Elisa Schlesinger. Additionally, at the age of 41, they engaged in sexual intercourse with a domestic worker employed by their mother. The individual in question had a written work published in the year 1837, and by 1844, they were confined to their residence. The third chapter, titled "Finder's Keepers," presents a comprehensive account of Flaubert's biography. In chapter four, "The Flaubert Bestiary," Flaubert is metaphorically associated with a bear, while his sister Caroline is symbolically represented as a rat. All individuals in question perceive themselves as these creatures, and Flaubert draws numerous parallels between himself and them. Snap, in chapter five, portrays Geoffrey's aversion towards coincidences and his preference for the belief that life is characterized by chaos. In the hypothetical scenario where Geoffrey held the position of supreme authority in the realm of literature, he would enact a prohibition on the occurrence of coincidences within literary works. Chapter six, "Emma Bovary's Eyes," features Geoffrey's expression of contempt towards reviewers. Geoffrey posits that the origin of initial dissatisfaction in such a scenario lies with the writer rather than the reviewer. Chapter Seven, entitled "Cross Channel," depicts Geoffrey's journey across the English Channel by means of a ferry. He has a preference for crossing over during the transitional phases that occur between different seasons. These months exhibit an ambiguous nature, as they do not fall distinctly into the category of either summer or winter. According to Flaubert's perspective, progress was not a desirable outcome as he believed that democracy had the potential to lower the intellectual capacity of the masses. Flaubert and Geoffrey

discover shared perspectives. Geoffrey intends to narrate three accounts, namely the narrative of Flaubert, the narrative of his spouse Ellen, and the narrative of his own self. The initial phase of narrating his story presents the greatest challenge. Chapter eight of the book delves into the various perspectives and personal belongings of Flaubert, providing readers with a comprehensive guide on the subject matter, according to Onega (1995, p. 39).

In Chapter Nine, “Flaubert Apocrypha,” Geoffrey looks at the fictitious canon, starting with autobiographies. In “The Case Against,” chapter ten, Geoffrey questions our desire for pessimistic information. His love for his wife did not prevent him from wanting to discover the worst about her. In the eleventh chapter, “Louise Colet’s Version,” Colet relates her experience with Flaubert. She had an affair with Flaubert when she was 35, famous and gorgeous. She accounts for Flaubert’s personality, focusing on his treatment of women. Chapter twelve of Braithwaite’s Dictionary, “Accepted Ideas,” defines the names and concepts associated with Flaubert. In the thirteenth chapter, “Pure Story,” the private lives of Geoffrey and Ellen Braithwaite are examined. He thinks about his marriage, admits that he and his wife had an affair, and compares her to Emma Bovary, the woman from Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*. A conclusive analysis of Flaubert is provided in chapter fourteen. Literature, economics, geography, logic, biography, psychology, phonology, and history are only some topics covered. Geoffrey finally connects the dots between the first and fifteenth (“And the Parrot”) chapters indicating that he had to consider the two parrots’ mystery for nearly two years. Even at the end, Flaubert’s *Un Coeur Simple* protagonist still doesn’t know which Parrot is the real deal (A Simple Heart). This novel combines different kinds of writing, such as literary criticism and biographies. This is the work in which historical figures and events are shown, while the reader is also encouraged to consider questions about the recovery of the past. The book’s narrator tries to make up Flaubert’s life story, which was that of a realist writer from 1800.

One explanation has to do with the book’s essential mixture: that between the reticently autobiographical account of Geoffrey Braithwaite and a biographical and analytical commentary on and conjecture about the novel. Additionally, there are roughly fiction and nonfiction. By adopting the fictional and historical events from

the life of nineteenth-century author Gustave Flaubert into a postmodern book, Barnes is demonstrating his political views. When Dr Geoffrey Braithwaite tells his own experience and draws parallels to the fictitious Madame Bovary, Barnes's other politics of storytelling become evident. Barnes's narrator grew introspective and personal while engaging in these pursuits. Throughout the narrative, Barnes gives his narrator complete independence. The narrator contrasts the realistic nineteenth-century renditions with the postmodern twentieth-century versions. The narrator's tone during this process frequently shifts from ridicule to irony to self-reflexivity. The entirety of the Flaubert biographies, including the bestiary and test questions, are not provided by Julian Barnes, but rather by his main character and narrator Braithwaite, therefore the haphazard plotting, the book's essayistic nature and Braithwaite's obsessive attention to detail both reflect Braithwaite's thinking and interests rather than Barnes'. Furthermore, as a historical narrative, a biography can only give a partial picture of its subject's life. Braithwaite makes a comparison to a "net," which he defines as "a meshed instrument designed to catch fish" (Barnes, 2011, p. 38), but which can equally be seen as "a collection of holes tied together with string" (Barnes, 2011, p. 38). To highlight the absence of biographical information like a net, a biography may either catch something or let a lot of other things go through:

When I was a medical student, some pranksters at an end-of-term dance released into the hall a piglet which had been smeared with grease. It squirmed between legs, evaded capture, squealed a lot. People fell over trying to grasp it, and were made to look ridiculous in the process. The past often seems to behave like that piglet. (Barnes, 2011, p. 19)

Those who try to grab the past are constantly left feeling dissatisfied as it slips farther and farther away. People, in Braithwaite's view, "are all in the same boat" and resemble "a distant, receding coastline"; the ship's crew members utilise telescopes to peer into the past: "If the ship's crew is sleeping, one of the constant use of telescopes will provide the impression of revealing all the details of an unchanging truth. However, the boat is actually moving away from you; therefore,

this is an illusion” (Barnes, 2011, p. 101). Coast to Barnes is the same as writing a biography; as time passes, however, each telescope “brings the shore into the biographer’s vision, distorting and shifting their perspective centre of attention at a fixed distance” (Barnes, 2011, p. 101). The past is a coveted yet evasive prize. The biographer, on the other hand, can only catch a glimpse of it, and there are only archival materials from which he may construct his narrative. Hutcheon (1995) asserts that history “can be understood solely via the literature and history that have preserved it” (p. 125).

2.2.2 Reflexivity as a Way to Narrate Historical Metafictional Elements in the Novel

Postmodern literature is more nuanced and fraught than the simplistic idea of no presence, no external reality that confirms or unites, and only self-reference would imply. Metafictional histories hint at this but only to highlight any reference’s arbitrary character. Wladimir Krysinski (2002) compares the “metafictional” quality of a text to its being “self-reflexive”; he comments, “Throughout the twentieth century, the relationship between narrative form and metafictional distance of the self-reflexive has been systematically explored, enhanced, and put to the test by writers such as André Gide, Samuel Beckett, Arno Schmidt, Giorgio Manganelli.” (Krysinski, 2002, p. 147).

Therefore, works of fiction that make references to or reflections on other works of fiction are considered metafictional. In his examination of the subgenre, Krysinski (2002) observes that metafictional books are typically built on the premise of a basic and persistent opposition: the creation of a fictional illusion, as in realistic fiction, and its subsequent deconstruction. Self-reflection is the act of actively questioning and analyzing one’s actions and thoughts at the moment. At present, the concept of self-reflexivity involves the cognitive processing of one’s emotions and thoughts at a meta-level. The ontological relationship is presented as a challenge in self-reflexive works of metafiction. Postmodern literature frequently incorporates objective assessments of the creative decisions undertaken. Narratives that are self-reflexive commonly feature a narrator who exhibits self-awareness. The

comprehensive analysis of the novel elucidates the fact that the narrator of the novel, Dr Geoffrey Braithwaite, exhibits a high degree of self-awareness and possesses a strong set of opinions. The utilization of the first-person singular pronoun “I” by the narrator to denote himself and the second-person singular pronoun “you” to indicate the audience is evident in the text. Braithwaite, akin to other metafictional narrators, consistently implores readers to engage in diverse activities: “Do you know? Don’t get me wrong. Does life improve? Is it splendid or stupid to take life seriously? I’ll start again. This is a clean story. Whatever you may think... Do you like it or not?” (Barnes, 2011, p. 199).

At the heart of Barnes’s *Flaubert’s Parrot* are questions of authenticity, claims of forgery, and several counterfactual biographies of real-world historical characters. The story was inspired by Geoffrey Braithwaite’s search for the original parrot to create the novel’s final game with variants, originals, and forgeries, but these elements are present throughout. If the parrot is real, Braithwaite won’t be able to tell it apart from the many stuffed parrots he sees on display in Rouen. The novel’s narrator has doubts about the parrot’s legitimacy and remarks:

After I got home the duplicate parrots continued to flutter in my mind, I wrote letters to various academics who might know if either of the parrots had been authenticated. I wrote to the French Embassy and to the editor of the Michelin guide books. (Barnes, 2011, p. 22).

The issue of narrative voice and textual authority is approached in a manner that remains stubbornly one-sided, despite the frequent allusions to the concept of dialogue. The potential divergence between the expressions used in public versus private contexts is a topic of general conjecture that directly pertains to the issue of authorial presentation and its role in artistic works. The individual asserts:

Poets seem to write more easily about love than prose writers. For a start, they own that flexible “I” [when I say “I” you will want to know within a paragraph or two whether I mean Julian Barnes or someone invented; a poet can shimmy between the two, getting credit for both deep feeling and

objectivity] (Barnes, 2011, p. 225).

Barnes adeptly navigates between poetic and prose discourses, utilizing the malleable nature of the first-person perspective to craft unique authorial rhetoric that blends emotional depth with objective analysis. Barnes employs various literary techniques such as Biblical exegesis, legal case history, political and social journalism, biography, autobiography, dream, literature, vision and science fiction to create a work that is both stylized and parodied. The structural coherence of the work is based on three pillars: the continuity of imagery provided by the flood-voyage motif, the interplay between the artist and the artefact, and the relationship between contingency and form. Additionally, the narrative persona of Barnes himself plays a significant role in the work. The author unambiguously directs the audience to harbour doubts regarding the accuracy of historical accounts and the effectiveness of historical understanding. The author of the text draws a comparison between the process of historical inquiry and the utilization of a net.

In the eleventh chapter of *Flaubert's Parrot*, entitled "Louise Colet's Version," the narrator appears receptive to alternative perspectives on Flaubert. This is evidenced by the narrator's acknowledgement that "Gustave's side of the story" is the only one that is heard (Barnes, 2011, p. 59). The individual employs their expertise in ventriloquism to provide agency to a woman who lacks a means of vocal expression. The present work exhibits a dynamic and inventive tribute, characterized by the narrator's introspective perspective, as evidenced by his adept deferral of his personal revelation concerning his spouse until the concluding chapter. The prevalence of intertextuality in Flaubert's literary works is noteworthy to the extent that the narrator's voice may become obscured. This is exemplified in certain chapters, such as "The Flaubert Bestiary" and "Examination Paper," which consist primarily of excerpts extracted from Flaubert's correspondence. In such instances, the storyteller's role is reduced to that of a mere compiler—or parrot—effectively rendering them a manifestation of Flaubert's parrot. Braithwaite's "Dictionary of Accepted Ideas" serves as both a satirical and aesthetic pastiche of Flaubert's work of the same name, effectively showcasing the narrator's skilful ventriloquism across a broad spectrum. The extent to which the narrator has

assumed the persona of Flaubert is such that certain portions of the text appear to be a paraphrasing of the author's words, lacking the use of quotation marks or an inverted comma, which raises concerns of potential plagiarism. The third chronology of Flaubert's life has been a source of confusion for many readers due to its intricate nature, prompting speculation that it may have been an effort to emulate Flaubert's distinctive writing style. However, it is important to note that this chronology is composed entirely of metaphorical and comparative excerpts from Flaubert's own works, resulting in a unique form of autobiography. The narrator adeptly delves into the themes of emotion and loss in a contemplative and artistic manner throughout the narrative, ultimately reaching a poignant climax in the chapter entitled "Pure Story."

He makes Louise Colet's unseen and unrecognized voice come to life through him. According to Hayden White (1986), the current consensus among historians is that retelling the past in narrative form is a very conventional and literary enterprise. The style is precise and elegant, with a distinctly Barnesian flavor, and literary devices like metaphor are well-developed and relevant to life in the twenty-first century. As a result, Flaubert's *Parrot* vacillates between a familiarity with classic literature and a want to create something wholly unique and chimerical. Julian Barnes, the author of this piece, states:

I imagined *Flaubert's Parrot* when I started writing as plainly an unofficial and informal, non-conventional type of novel—an upside-down novel. A work of fiction with substantial nonfictional components, even entire chapters that are nothing but ordered facts (Barnes, 2011, p. 259).

If readers reach broad conclusions after reading this novel, they are engaging in postmodern sceptical fiction. By challenging the idea that history and fiction can be read side by side, this novel argues that neither can be trusted, serving as a sign of what "really" occurred in "real life." Regardless of what it is, history is untrustworthy. *Flaubert's Parrot's* narrator repeatedly states what he is occasionally inclined to believe. The temptation is understandable, given the trauma he has endured. As a result, he starts reflecting on himself in every chapter.

In conclusion, *Flaubert's Parrot* is a work that exploits and subverts the

need for structure while simultaneously challenging any attempt at categorization, classification, or genre taxonomy. The narrator fictionalizes Flaubert's biography by employing literary devices such as criticism, chronology, metaphor, irony, and the creation of inter-textuality, meta-textuality, hyper-textuality, self-reflexivity, interconnectivity, and open-endedness. These elements combine to make the novel's snarky protagonist and narrator, Braithwaite, an opinionated postmodern historian of Gustave Flaubert, a famous nineteenth-century realism novelist, and the novel a postmodern example of historiographical metafiction with a 'chameleon-like' quality of genres. With the help of its candid and self-reflective narrator, this work also subverts the single *Truth* and grand story in favor of petty narratives and various truths. Dr. Geoffrey Braithwaite uses self-critical instance and confession to satirize the life and character of Gustave Flaubert. He becomes self-critical by confessing his own experiences as he relates the events and stories connected to the famous nineteenth-century realist writer. Through the narrator, who creates a parody of Flaubert's earlier life, Julian Barnes seeks to investigate the various truths about the author, which makes *Flaubert's Parrot* a nearly perfect example of postmodern historiographic metafiction.

3. THE HISTORY OF NATION FROM POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVE IN *ENGLAND, ENGLAND*

3.1 Introduction

Many ideas presented by postmodernist thinkers have been fictionalized, and one of these ideas is the representation of history. More clearly, Julian Barnes represents a new perspective on historical understanding in the postmodern period. To understand what the term history implies, *England, England* (1998) offers a new perspective on the movement in that the novel has a well-organized plot and a depth of thinking of history in the postmodern period. Additionally, the main characteristics of postmodernism can be represented by the history of the nation and national identity.

Peter Childs (2011), writes that Barnes' book "displays a self-reflective postmodernist scepticism towards any truth claims, even those that maybe could anchor human identity and challenge the simulacra of cyberculture." . Thin and cynical depictions of high ideals, melancholy, and a misguided sense of agency apply to the protagonist's search for truth, love, and the arts. Barnes is offended when his novels are labelled literary fiction, and while they may include elements of modern life and formal sophistication, they also appear to make more reference to the past than the present. Barnes's works, as portrayed by Peter Childs, are highly intertextual, making references to a wide variety of other literary and artistic works, as well as musical and theatrical compositions and performances. Other contemporary British authors, such as Barry Unsworth and Penelope Lively, have incorporated this insight into their writing, in contrast to Barnes's more overt assumption that historical fact is practically impossible to accomplish. On the other hand, modern novels, such as *England, England*, include a level of self-reflexive awareness on this point of critical acknowledgement. (Childs, 2011, pp.113–15).

Historiography, according to Barthes, can be seen as a creative explanation at odds with truth (or the reality of historical truths) since the latter not only depicts the objectivity of circumstances but also an "elaboration" of truth that is more closely related to what Hayden White called the "poetic and rhetorical elements." (1997, p. 393). Thus, he explains, "Narrative accounts do not consist only of factual statements

(singular existential propositions) and arguments; they consist as well as poetic and rhetorical elements by which what would otherwise be a list of facts is transformed into a story.” (p. 393).

The story primarily focuses on the recollections of the novel’s female heroine, Martha Cochrane. Martha has a hard time remembering significant events from her upbringing since she really questions their veracity. Even before the opening page of the chapter labelled “England,” the reader knows that the haziness of recollection is a major theme. The novel’s opening phrase depicts someone questioning Martha’s recollection by asking, “What is your first memory?” (Barnes, 1998, p. 3) As a result, we see that Martha can no longer remember anything. From her, we might deduce that our recollections are suspect since “[a] memory was by definition not a thing, it was... a memory” (p. 3). Memory is the starting point for the reader, the origin of the tale, and the beginning of the other’s identity in *England, England*, as Julian Wolfreys puts it (Wolfreys, 2018, p. 219). It should be made clear that, according to postmodernist thought, human memory and the written record are inadequate for comprehending the past.

3.1.1 The Use of Personal Memory to Criticize History and Historiographic Metafiction

To intertwine the personal and cooperative memories and their functions in the development of individual and national identity with this scripted instinctual memory, Barnes uses the metaphor of the jigsaw riddle of the Counties of England. As Wendy Joy Darby refers, “the construction of identity through recreational participation in valued and symbolic landscapes.” (Darby, 2001, p. 1) Barnes has Martha imagine the jigsaw in terms of human conceptions of connection and exclusions in order to drive this point even more. She envisions, for example, how “Norfolk and Suffolk sat on top of one another like brother and sister, or clutched one another like husband and wife” or “Kent pointing its finger or its nose out at the Continent in warning—careful, foreigners over there.” (Barnes, 1998, p. 5) For Martha, the jigsaw begins to represent the most dramatic moment of her upbringing. The event of her father abandoning his wife and kid is particularly significant in her

memory since it also marks the removal of Nottinghamshire from the puzzle. In a childish misunderstanding of reason and impact, Martha feels bad about her father's departure because "Daddy had gone off to find Nottinghamshire" (p. 14), which she had earlier lost. As a result, she gets rid of the jigsaw puzzle by cramming the counties one at a time into the chairs of her school bus. The truth that Martha constantly fails to complete the jigsaw because one piece (often from the Midlands area) is always missing earlier suggests the flawed condition of family ties. Hence, the circumstances of the narrative—as well as Martha's personality changes—are significantly influenced by her father's memories. Martha lived in great remorse for her father's departure until meeting him, thinking that she was the reason for her father's departure and the disappearance the Nottinghamshire (the jigsaw piece). The Nottinghamshire piece represents her self-blame over her father's abandonment of the family. She requests her father for the misplaced piece when she sees him again, but he does not recall her enjoying those puzzles. Then, Martha is distraught when she understands that her father likely has no idea how much Martha has been affected by his departure, and thus "Neither the jigsaw, nor England, nor Martha's heart can be made whole again" (Guignery 2006, p. 106). It is clear in this situation that some events just have various meanings to different people, so a comparison could be between this moment and the postmodernist preoccupation with "the question of whose history gets written and survives." (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 120). The reader might learn from this passage that the work explores the falseness of memory when it comes to historical events; as Vanessa Guignery adds, "the malleability of history and the unreliability of collective and individual memory are what enable the creators of the theme park on the Isle of Wight to rewrite, simplify and caricature national history so as to meet the expectations of tourists" (Guignery, 2006, p. 106).

As a memento of the other in Barnes' work, the uncertainties, the unreliable, and frequently the undecidability dwell in that which disturbs the comic aspect of his writings. The reader is compelled to consider their knowledge of memory and, in turn, the veracity and accuracy of history via the character of Martha. Later, Martha confuses herself by asserting that it is a truth that she was lying on the floor three days following the Agricultural Show. Although Martha implies that she is certain about it when she says that it was a fact, since this line follows the one where she

concedes that memory is an unreliable form of history, we realize that Martha is merely assuring herself and is not really certain that it is a reality.

Linda Hutcheon remarks once that “Historiographic metafiction self-consciously reminds us that, while events did occur in the real empirical past, we name and constitute those events as historical facts by selection and narrative positioning. And, even more basically, we only know of those past events through their discursive inscription, through their traces in the present” (1988, p. 97).

When Martha muses in the book, Barnes changes his perspective on the actual perception of memory:

if a memory wasn't a thing but a memory of a memory of a memory, ...It was like a country remembering its history: the past was never just the past, it was what made the present able to live with itself (Barnes, 1998, p. 6).

Hence, Martha expresses the viewpoint and behaviour of the majority of the postmodern intellectuals, scholars, and authors that seek investigating and testing the impartiality of the history people are familiar with, trying to establish new significance by challenging the viewpoint and demonstrating that one can only understand the past via contemporary explanations. The humour and farce of history, when it repeats itself, are transformed into elegiac thought in Barnes' works.

However, Martha's issue isn't as simple as what I adored or what I lost. Memory frequently alters past actions for its own objectives in addition to failing to recall the past accurately. The past is not “a solid, seizable thing,” according to Martha, “by definition not a thing”; instead, it is:

[a] memory now of a memory a bit earlier of a memory before that of a memory way back when. So people assertively remembered a face, a knee that bounced them, a springtime meadow; a dog, a granny, a woollen animal whose ear disintegrated after wet chewing; they remembered a pram, the view from a pram, falling out of a pram and striking their head on an upturned (Barnes, 1998, p. 3).

Any effort to arrive at the uninhibited “truth” about her past is thwarted by this recursive pattern; memory is a symbol that can never point anywhere other than back to another symbol. Memory is also theatrical rather than merely commemorative since most childhood memories are mere “a calculated attempt to take the listener’s heart between finger and thumb and give it a tweak whose spreading bruise last till love had struck” (Barnes, 1998, p. 4). In other terms, every attempt at accuracy pales in comparison to the literary role of memory. In order to illustrate how the methods justify the objectives in historical reconstruction, Martha contrasts personal memory with a country’s history: “It was like a country remembering its history: the past was never just the past, it was what made the present able to live with itself. The same went for individuals, though the process obviously wasn’t straightforward” (Barnes, 1998, p. 6).

From a postmodern viewpoint, it is necessary to examine the past, history, and its records from various angles. Barnes exemplifies the requirement for a variety of viewpoints when Martha tries in vain to recollect her first memory. She begins with a brief narrative about some small chat she had with Cristina, a classmate who is studying Spanish. When discussing their respective countries’ “contentious” histories, Cristina brought up the fact that “Francis Drake was a pirate” (Barnes, 1998, p. 7). This description infuriated Martha, who responds, “No he wasn’t”, for she believed he was an English hero and a Sir and a Captain and consequently a Gentleman (p. 7). She acknowledges that she “could readily see that one person’s plundering privateer would be another person’s pirate” when she later discovered that Francis Drake was a “privateer and plunder” in a British reference (p. 7). From this point, it could be said that the novel challenges the traditional, unbiased view of history and provides an artistic portrayal of the postmodernist perspective.

These hints from Martha’s early years have been distilled into two separate memory groups. One entails a joyful family visit to a farm fair. In Martha’s memory of the agricultural fair, the ‘strange poetry’ of the pamphlet with the ‘District Agricultural and Horticultural Society’s Schedule of Prizes’ is what stays out rather than the real animals and plants on display. The other aspect is the consequence of chanting as a method of memorization for memorizing historical events. These two moments, which portray the sequential and material aspects of English national

individuality, respectively, add to the geographical component signified by the Counties of England jigsaw puzzle in accordance with the novel's essential systemic concept of aligning the structure of subjective and collective identity. The reader's focus is once more attracted to the objectivity of historical truths in the book when Martha exposes the pleased part of her childhood and remembers that her history teacher (Miss Mason) required the students to sing chants that involved historical factual information along with some falsified dates, which are inevitably initiated with chants like:

55BC (clap clap) Roman Invasion

1066 (clap clap) Battle of Hastings

1215 (clap clap) Magna Carta

1512 (clap clap) Henry the Eighth (clap clap)

Defender of Faith (clap clap). (Barnes, 1998, p. 11).

History is as much a marginalized repository that is rote-learned and ultimately worthless as it is "truth." The chant also demonstrates how history is a chosen skeletal storyline that tends to justify one particular notion of English identity teleologically. In addition, this is stripped of all importance due to how it was delivered and received, where in memory form (the chant and clap, the enjoyment of structured features like rehearsal and rhyme) supposes higher relevance, aesthetic "truth" for Martha than what the outcome of a convoluted series of something happens might be. Two dates of these historical facts are wrong; the first is Henry the Eighth, Defender of the Faith (1512), and the second is the Treaty of Rome (1973). The year 1512 is not particularly notable because Henry the Eighth was born in 1491, ascended to the throne of England in 1509, and received the title Defender of the Faith in 1521.

The argument that the year 1512 was not important in Henry the Eighth's life is based on the idea that history is an accurate representation of the occurrences that truly occurred at the same time and place as they are represented in the texts by

which we comprehend such happenings. What if Henry the Eighth's year had a great historical significance? Nobody can say for sure that the history of *England, England* is more precise than what truly happened, or it is, at the very least, extremely unlikely (as far as the dates related to Henry the Eighth are concerned).

In general, postmodernist authors and historiographic metafiction "remain inherently contradictory, presenting only questions, never complete answers," since this is typical of their work (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 42). The second is a historical account of the Treaty of Rome, which was not concluded in 1949, as the book claims. By doing this, Barnes creates "alternative history" in the novel by altering the historical record's substance. (1987, McHale, p. 90). As a result, postmodernism questions history "by violating the constraints on 'classic' historical fiction: by blatantly contradicting the public record of 'official' history; by flaunting anachronisms; and by combining history and the fantastic" (p. 90). From a postmodern point of view, these incorrect dates lead to rise many questions about the credibility of history; in other regards, postmodernist revised novels frequently employ intentional anachronism or historical fiction. As Hutcheon adds, postmodernism "[u]sually incorporates and assimilates data in order to lend a feeling of verifiability" (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 114). Given that Martha is a figure in a postmodernist novel, her switching of the dates is thus not very noteworthy. The postmodernist historical fiction, or historiographic metafiction, "incorporates, but rarely assimilates such data... and known historical details are deliberately falsified in order to stress the possible mnemonic failures of recorded history" (p. 114). Consequently, Martha shouldn't be viewed as lacking historical understanding; rather, her perception of history should cause the reader to reflect on the reliability and veracity of the sources we cite.

Although government efforts to promote the national image, other processes, such as literature, tend to build or destroy official forms of history, leading to the discussion and reconsideration of collective memory along with the depiction of national selfhood. Julian Barnes is one of several authors who have addressed these issues. In many ways, he investigated elements of National Identity, Britishness/Englishness, historical awareness, the formation of identification in connection to history, and the activity of producing history as narrative speech. Barnes centred his

book on a theme park created to modernize England for the twenty-first century in order to offer a postmodern point of view.

3.1.2 Baudrillard's Concept of *Disneyland-like* as a Way of Expressing Historiographic Metafiction

The lion's share of Julian Barnes' 1998 novel, which is *Disneyland-like* in its creation, construction, and operation of the island assignment, is sardonic in nature and questions our value-laden differences between "Original and Copy, Reality and Performance" (Henstra, 2005, p. 95). But two shorter segments that examine the paradoxes of *England, England's* story with more sincerity follow the comedy. The plot of the theme park changes into a sort of parable about the fate of a national individuality as Barnes' characters playfight with doubts about the reliability of memory (both personal and governmental), the uses of history, and the likelihood of genuine contact with others in a world of computation and hyperreality. The subject of England's shared selfhood in the post-Empire era permeates the entire book. What fate is in store for a "country weary of its own history"? (Barnes 1998, P. 253) The dystopian option presented by the novel's image of the future is to belittle and commercialize the illusions of "Englishness" in order to make money at the island theme park. In other sense, England must either give out or become bankrupt; otherwise, it may retire to the more remote and poor mainland or to "Old England," as it becomes called abroad.

A practical lesson in the postmodern usefulness of a conception of authenticity as anchored in concepts of uniqueness and a Benjaminian sense of individuality in time and space can be found throughout the whole planning phase of the theme park. It is replaced by a system of historical namedropping and pseudo-events in the Boorstin meaning. The philosophy of the theme-park encounter is rather literally premised on "substituting the signs of the real for the real itself," so free-floating identifiers and simulacra rule dominant (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 2). Or, as he adds:

Disneyland is a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulacra. It is first of all a play of illusions and phantasms: the Pirates, the Frontier, the

Future World, etc. This imaginary world is supposed to ensure the success of the operation. But what attracts the crowds the most is without a doubt the social microcosm, the religious, miniaturized pleasure of real America, of its constraints and joys (p. 10).

The same is true of *England, England*, according to Baudrillard: it is a site of illusions that attempts to depict the “genuine” England and draws crowds; “Thus, everywhere in Disneyland, the objective profile of America, down to the morphology of individuals and of the crowd, is drawn” (p. 10).

England, England also makes an effort to include all of the elements that comprise England, but it only embalms and appeases these elements. The reason Disneyland occurs is to conceal the fact that it is the entire “actual” America (10). Likewise, from the moment of its inception, England remains the “actual” country.

The satirical account of the theme-park tale places a particular emphasis on Sir Jack Pitman, the project’s advertising whiz. Sir Jack is presented as the embodiment of everything that is incorrect with the notion of being English in the modern era. Jack’s name is alleged to have been either Anglicized to mask Eastern European roots or purposefully veiled in such a story to conceal his working-class English background. The identity has been hijacked by someone without the inheritance (Barnes, 1998, P. 33). Sir Jack Pitman is plotting how to carry out his last brilliant idea: despite his own denials, he intends to build a theme park that captures the sense of Englishness since he believes that Britain is a beautiful country with a rich history:

We are not talking Disneyland, World’s Fair, Festival of Britain, Legoland, or Pare Asterix. Colonial Williamsburg? Excuse me—a couple of old-style turkeys roosting on a picket fence while out-of-work actors serve gruel in pewter plates and let you pay by credit-card (P. 59).

Pitman extends a step farther than Disney World since he intends the replica to fully grasp the truth and transform over time. He demonstrates how anything can

be made into amusement, particularly with the help of mass media like television and advertisements. He promotes every characteristic and item that was found in the study, which demonstrates to us that you may promote anything you want and believe will make you money. Zygmunt Bauman utters that “[t]he commercial exploitation of everything that is understood as a human need does not surprise since we live in the society where human needs are mediated by the goods market” (Ficza, 2012, p. 39).

The persona of Sir Jack Pitman also reflects Barnes’s insistence that historical sources be treated critically. Even with his questionable Eastern European ancestry, Sir Jack is a media mogul with a clear vision for how to turn the symbols of English identity into lucrative tourist attractions and business ventures while also refreshing the philosophical underpinnings of what truthful knowledge can actually entail (Funk, 2015, p. 110). This person wants to be recorded in history and recognized by all people. Sir Jack must speak his thoughts out loud in his office, and his idea-catcher Paul is required to record them. He aspires to write memoirs that will go on for future generations and accurately reflect the work he has done. Nonetheless, he occasionally adds comments like these when he demands or muses:

Have had great ideas in my time, but somehow—do not record this, Paul, I am not certain it is for the archive—somehow, sometimes I wonder how real they were. These may be the ramblings of a senile fool—I do not hear your cries of contradiction so I presume you agree—but perhaps there is life in the old dog yet. Perhaps what I need is one last great idea. One for the road, eh, Paul? That you may record (Barnes, 1998, p. 33).

Paul is also in charge of revising anything that was ordered to better reflect the qualities that Jack thinks he possesses. Barnes demonstrates deftly how history can be preserved and how the past and history, as we recognize it, could have developed. Here, history is shown as a creation of humans, a discourse, literature, or structure that resembles fiction in specific ways.

As if in regards to this, in her 1988 work *Poetics of Postmodernism*,

Hutcheon cites Bradbury, “it [postmodernism] mixes argument by poetics [metafiction] with argument by historicism [historiographic] in fiction in such a way as to inscribe a mutual interrogation with the texts themselves” (p. 114). Somewhere else in the same text she adds that “[t]he meaning and shape are not in the events, but in the systems which make those past events into present historical facts. This is not a dishonest refuge from the truth but an acknowledgement of the meaning-making function of human constructs” (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 89). Using Jack Pitman, Barnes demonstrates that the past is a human construction made up of writings created by historians who then assigned subjective significance to these constructions, as Hutcheon expresses in her scientific concepts. Pitman’s memoirs would be regarded as an objective piece of writing. We learn from postmodernism that such works (or constructions) should be analyzed and examined because their creators claim that they are impartial and objective (Ficza, 2012, p. 39–40).

3.1.3 Baudrillard’s Simulacra to Understand Postmodern Historical Facts

To assure postmodernism’s semantic and epistemological coherence and to make even the most intellectually unaffected reader aware of the novel’s profound philosophical importance, Bentley claims that Barnes convinces Sir Jack to invite a French scholar who is “clearly a spoof of Jean Baudrillard” (2007, p. 491), who, in classic Baudrillardian style, elaborates on how we’re tired of reality nowadays and how we “prefer the imitation to the original” (Barnes, 1998, P. 53). As Barnes adds, “Pascal led to Saussure via Laurence Sterne; Rousseau to Baudrillard via Edgar Allan Poe, the Marquis de Sade, Jerry Lewis, Dexter Gordon, Bernard Hinault and the early work of Anne Sylvestre; Lévi-Strauss led to Lévi-Strauss” (1998, 54).

Baudrillard is the main individual discussed in the speech. Since his 1981 work *Simulacra and Simulation* is involved, Baudrillard has unexpectedly emerged as a significant voice and unquestionably a postmodern philosopher. Most of his work serves as a primary influence for the entire novel. Baudrillard discusses representations and simulacrum in the cited piece. He contends that the equivalent relationship between the actual and the mark is the source of representation (though he states that this fairness is idealistic, it is still a basic relationship, an axiom).

Moreover, simulation incorporates the entire notion of depiction itself as a simulacrum and derives immediately from this utopian premise, negating the sign as worth. Baudrillard demonstrates that there is no discernible difference between the original and the imitation because the simulation uses the same visuals and symbols as the actual thing. A third-order simulation, known as hyperreality, is a situation in which the replica prevails and is preferable to the real; while a reflection of the actual is a first-order simulation, a second-order simulation is viewed as a concept that dissolves the boundaries between actuality and representations. *England, England* was greatly impacted by all ideas of replication, simulation, and their relationship to reality (Ficza, 2012, pp. 22–24). The obsession with making copies permeates both our society and that in *England, England*. It is more practical for us to construct a model of reality and, first, act as though we are aware that the model is only a figment of reality; second, our awareness of the distinction progressively fades away. In other terms, we have become so reliant on made patterns and explanations that we have lost contact with reality. We are subjected to models that were created without reference to reality. He refers to this as hyperreality, a third-order simulation. When the duplicate is compelling and captivating enough, it accepts its source. As a result, it keeps us from realizing that it isn't true. Even though we are aware that reality is not present, the hyperreal simulacrum is so potent that we still favor it since it is more practical and profitable.

The following quotes from James Miracky (2004) on *England, England* are influenced by Baudrillard's beliefs about Disneyland:

A literary satire of English cultural and political decline set in the early third millennium, the novel presents a last-gasp effort to revive England's image through a media tycoon's project to replicate the 'quintessences' of England for popular consumption in a 'Quality Leisure' site on the Isle of Wight (164).

The truth that the performers in *England, England* transform into the figures they play is indicative, in his opinion that the novel functions on the second level of simulation, which blurs the distinction between reality and simulation. James

Miracky points out that the book also illustrates the third level of simulation, that is, the simulation coming before and surpassing the real, as seen by its analysis of how history and reality are created. In the book, reality may be manipulated effortlessly and quickly. Pitman adapts and reshapes English components to his ambitious idea in order to keep them as digestible and unthreatening as feasible. He makes an effort to make everything more comfortable and welcoming, which makes his theme park a big success, as shown in the book. The French thinker clarifies, “Nowadays we prefer the replica to the original. We prefer the reproduction of the work of art to the work of art itself...” (Barnes, 1998, p. 53).

Since postmodernism’s art is profoundly counterintuitive and self-consciously or self-reflective, it opens itself up to both sorts of interpretations; as Hutcheon notes, “the art and concept itself is double encoded and allows for such seemingly mutually conflicting interpretations” (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 204). For instance, the French thinker concluded his argument by stating that replicas of artwork are preferred to originals. In other respects, individuals choose the reproduction of an artwork over the original, the excellent audio quality and privacy of a CD over a symphonic concert with a thousand other individuals wheezing, and a book on tape or a thin screen over a thick book on their lap. Giving an example:

If you are to visit the Bayeux Tapestry in my country, you will find that in order to reach the original work of the eleventh century, you must first pass by a full-length replica produced by modern techniques; here there is a documentary exposition which situates the work of art for the visitor, the pilgrim as it were. (Barnes, 1998, p. 53)

His definition of the simulacrum includes the architectural restorations done by Viollet-Le-Duc’s, who was tasked with saving many of his country’s deteriorating chateaux and *fortresses* in the early nineteenth century. There have historically been two ways to interpret his work: first, he was protecting the old boulders as much as he could in an effort to prevent their complete deterioration and loss. Second, he was aiming to recreate the structure as it had been when it had first been erected, which was a far more complex endeavour that some have deemed effective while others

have found to be unsuccessful. However, there is an alternative method of handling the situation, and that is as follows: Viollet-Le-Duc wanted to do away with the actuality of those antiquated structures as the reality of his own time began to confront another—bigger and more meaningful—one (Barnes, 1988, p. 54). Although Pitman already refers to the Project as “*the thing itself*” (p. 59), it is still in its conceptual phase in this section of the story. As a result, the Project follows all of Baudrillard’s instructions, from initially blurring the line between reality and simulation to ultimately substituting the original with a replica entirely. By asserting that there is “*rivalization of reality*” (p. 54), which is the primary premise of the entire undertaking, the French scientist entirely contradicts the ideas of the philosophers. The simulacra shouldn’t be seen as a rival to reality; rather, they should merge fully with it and finally reach the third level of simulation.

Hutcheon formulates her viewpoint on the phenomenon of simulation and portrayal, and while she largely concurs with it, she emphasizes that it is a modern analytical truism that realism is a series of rules and that a depiction of the real is different from the real itself. That is to say, historiographic metafiction questions both any naive realism definition of representation and any similarly naive textualist or functionalist affirmations of the complete separation of art from the world. Or, as Foucault says, the postmodern is self-consciously art “within the archive” (Foucault, 1977, p. 92), and that archive is both historical and literary. For example, the character of the French intellectual, in order to present a postmodern view of the history of arts, he conserves Baudrillard’s ideas with a self-centred attitude, and the French thinker publicly applauds it by saying:

We must demand the replica, since the reality, the truth, the authenticity of the replica is the one we can possess, colonize, reorder, and *jouissance* in, and, finally, if and when we decide, it is the reality which, since it is our destiny, we may meet, confront, and destroy (Barnes, 1988, p. 55).

In other side, Pitman backs up this point of view by noting that, even if we believe, for instance, that there is nothing truly realistic and pristine than wildlife in the countryside; “The hill was an Iron Age burial mound, the undulating field a

vestige of Saxon agriculture [...]. We change it all, Mark, the trees, the crops, the animals. And now, follow me further” (p. 60).

Interestingly, Pitman may be used to defend one of the central ideas of postmodernism, which is that we are encircled by an endless cycle of human creations while continuing to value what we see as natural and pure without questioning if it truly is. According to Hutcheon, the postmodern movement contends that what we once held in such high regard is a construction, not a given and that it also holds a position of power in our society. Postmodernism is sardonic and detached; it lacks nostalgia, not even for the 1960s (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 203).

The anonymous French thinker continues by outlining the advantages of simulation and enhanced reality in an almost similar analogue to the notion of the authenticity of the fake as expressed by Doniger and Romer:

Once, there was only the world, directly lived. Now there is the representation—let me fracture that word, the re-presentation—of the world. It is not a substitute for that plain and primitive world, but an enhancement and enrichment, an ironisation and summation of that world. [...] Is this our loss? No, it is our conquest, our victory (Barnes, 1998, p. 55).

Even though Sir Jack Pitman makes an effort to present himself as a great Englishman, as evidenced by his wearing false MCC or Garrick Club membership bracelets, there is no question that the main driving force behind the entire operation is net revenue rather than national pride. As the iconic identity indicators of (Old) England are effortlessly reassigned, either patently or symbolically, throughout the Solent to function as tourist destinations, the runaway achievement of *England, England* illustrates the shakiness of any national identity development and the changeability of any form of collective memory.

Along with Pitman and the French scholar, Dr. Max, an authorized historian, who is likely the only blameless person on the entire island, acknowledges that the theme park has some historical value. He continues by saying that it is a faithful recreation of the historiographic process on the basis of this virtue. Pitman, who

seeks to change history to make it more likeable and profitable, also manipulates Dr. Max: “Right, well, the point of our history—and I stress the our—will be to make our guests, those buying what is for the moment referred to as Quality Leisure, feel better” (53). In order to accomplish this, the book calls into question the veracity of both national identification and national history. According to him, it also calls into doubt the accuracy and dependability of research and lists pertaining to these ideas:

But as an historian I have to tell you that such labeling is intellectually indefensible. What we are looking at is almost always a replica, if that is the locally fashionable term, of something earlier. There is no prime moment.
(Barnes, 1998, p. 132)

Hutcheon cites Baudrillard’s observation that the mass media has progressively rendered reality neutral to us, moving from a stage of reflection to one of masking reality, then masking the absence of reality, and ultimately, having no correlation with reality whatsoever (Hutcheon, 1988, 223). Hutcheon subsequently asserts that “[t]his represents the simulacrum, the ultimate fabrication of significance.” Postmodern art seeks to challenge the process of mass culture’s “simulacrizization” by problematizing the concept of reality representation rather than denying or lamenting it (p. 223). Mark highlights in the narrative that Pitman employs currencies to elucidate to his companions the relationship between reality and its imitation, stating that “pounds being the actual thing, and dollars the replica, but after a while the real thing becomes the replica” (61). The phenomenon of blending replicas and reality is primarily attributed to broadcasting.

It is a big ask for a community whose national pictures have been shown to be historically abusive as well as dubious in content to memorialize the original image. Martha finally travels to the British mainland, now known as Old England (as the island contains everything that is present “English”), in an effort to regain her composure. There, massive population loss and a downturn in the economy have turned back time: “Villagers subsist on harvesting local crops and digging coal, and the countryside is dotted with windmills, sundials, barge-horses, and hedgerows” (Barnes, 1998, p. 255). As a result, if readers continue on to the book’s final section,

“Anglia,” they will once more encounter simulation-related topics, completing Barnes’ ongoing investigation of the idea that begins with Martha’s memories and peaks in the second part with the theme park, and finally reaching to third part, as Nick Bentley adds, “One way of interpreting this section might be to read for the same satirical treatment that characterizes the theme-park plot. Anglia is precisely the opposite extreme, as radical as *England, England* and utterly reliant upon its existence” (Bentley, 2005, pp. 102–103). The majority of the people living in Anglia are acting out their positions as village residents in a similar way to how the Pitco personnel are acting out the tales and stories of *England, England*. The Village Fete, the Dance of the May Queen, or the tales created by retired American legal expert Jack Oshinsky, now identified by a phony name of Jez Harris, are all phony replicas and instances of local folklore. They were created to give the village society a shared basis for identification. Further demonstrating the simulated nature of Anglia is the personality of Jez Harris in the film Anglia. Forced to leave his nation, working now as a farrier, he, in addition to shoeing horses, “built barrel hoops, sharpened knives and sickles, cut keys, and tended the verges” (p. 157). He is physically acting in Anglia, with a polished British dialect and a newly formed identity:

Harris was no more authentic. Jez Harris, formerly Jack Oshinsky, junior legal expert with an American electronics firm obliged to leave the country during the emergency. He’d preferred to stay, and backdate both his name and his technology. (Barnes, 1998, p. 157)

The comparison between the two titles is most definitely not coincidental, as these recreated tales and stories have no real historical or geographic roots, much like the simplified and consumer-friendly depiction of English culture that Sir Jack envisioned. Anglia is the exact opposite side, equally radical as *England, England*, and wholly dependent on it for survival.

Anglia can be interpreted as a remedy for the concern about what is “real” that permeates the entire book. The idea of true identity is complicated and thwarted by the instability of memory, the disgracing and abandoning of an imperial history, and the sensation of personal treachery connected to national letdown. In Anglia,

Barnes creates a remembrance of England's lost beginning and a funeral for the long-debunked notion of an organic community. Retirement might be a more apt description of the conclusion presented in *Anglia* than "recovery." For instance, when Martha eventually decides to stop living, she decides to immerse herself in the scenery of a long-gone past. Difficult to bring her cynicism and desire for completeness together. This is proven by the assertion that, in *Anglia*, Martha ultimately makes another investment in the popular myth of a complete, innate identity:

These questions [of how and why *Anglia* arose] were not debated in the village: a sign perhaps that the country's fretful, psoriatic self-consciousness had finally come to an end. And eventually she herself fitted into the village, because she herself no longer itched with her own private questions. (Barnes, 1998, p. 257)

Here, Barnes enforces a solution to the issues brought up in the book by reintroducing the notion of an identity devoid of self-consciousness. With the help of the organic society of *Anglia*, England finally finds its "natural" self, and Martha puts behind the self-consciousness that has followed her since her first encounter of treachery. Readers who honestly accept the novel's questions to the idea of an organic "person" hidden out behind the covers required by modern existence are going to find such a resolution to be somewhat disappointing. The absence of the challenge adds to the overarching feeling of retirement present at the book's conclusion.

Despite the fact that Martha's final thought is about how Gibbet Hill might appear as an island landmark (Barnes, 1998, p. 265), the novel ends with our protagonist resting in the moonlight and viewing a rabbit that is "fearless and quietly confident of its territory" (Barnes, 1998, p. 266). Two dramatic consequences result from this final portrait: first, it responds to a previous metaphor Dr. Max used to show how marketable "reality" is; second, "[t]he great public [. . .] want reality to be like a pet bunny. They want it to lollop along and thump its foot picturesquely in its home-made hutch and eat lettuce out of their hand" (Barnes 1998, p. 133).

It appears that a “reality” has once again established its actual existence, or at the very least that a balance has been regained between that “reality” and the signification structures that give it significance, as we watch this Anglian rabbit go about its work unsourced by human aspirations. What more could post-Empire England wish for than to once longer be “fearless and quietly confident of its territory?” The image invokes yet another old myth. But readers of the book are still left with big unanswered issues that Martha has suppressed in herself. Barnes’ satire challenges the notion of a personal or national “actual thing,” and this challenge extends beyond the confines of Anglia and remains to animate the contradictions between collective identities and collective history. To put it another way, what Martha tells about Old England is taken as fact and genuine, but she is aware that she is retelling her own version from her limited viewpoint and faulty memory. As she continues, “Old England had progressively shed power, territory, wealth, influence, and population” (Barnes, 1998, p. 162). She concluded by saying that Old England had committed suicide by hanging itself in the ditch beneath a ghostly gas light, serving solely as a warning to others. She also notices that despite their best efforts, the locals will never be able to truly capture the essence of Old England since it already existed then and then, and they are no longer connected to that reality. Instead, they are vainly attempting to replicate it in the present. Old England had forgotten its past, and as identity is rooted in memory, it had also forgotten all of its meaning (p. 162).

Concluding, the narrativization of history is an additional type of discourse reporting historical realities, often intended to offset the official stories that the public has access to. Literature appears to have a significant part in this process of historical relativization since it appears to be a step toward institutionalizing the many interpretations of the past of people and various narratives that go into creating the history of a nation. Thus, the reading of history, collective memory, and national identity, while including a subjectivity as well as bias within the understanding of events, can be considered a convergence of postmodern historiographic metafiction and literary techniques.

CONCLUSION

The main target of this research is based on the analysis of textual and critical references; it can be concluded that the novels *Flaubert's Parrot* and *England, England* exemplify the characteristics of historical metafiction. History in these two novels plays a significant role in which *Flaubert's Parrot* has been used as a means to question the reliability of truth and the past and is commonly used subjectively, while in the second novel, *England, England*, Barnes used it as a means to criticize nationalism. The historical study was given first priority, with emphasis on a thorough search of the historical record that involved drawing a complete boundary line between reality and fiction. This thesis analyzes textual and critical references, and it can be concluded that the novels *Flaubert's Parrot* and *England, England* exemplify the characteristics of historical metafiction. The research also sheds light on Barnes' literary works that are not centred on the past but can be likened to an archaeological effort. The dominant features of postmodern historiographic metafiction, including the self-opinionated narrator, self-reflexive narration, a parody of history, and interpretation of past events in present forms and subjectivity, are evident in Barnes's postmodern narratives, *Flaubert's Parrot* and *England, England*.

Historiographic metafiction is a subgenre of fiction that draws attention to the authorial process and the interpretive biases inherent in using historical persons and events. Canadian literary theorist Linda Hutcheon first used the term "historiographic metafiction" in her 1988 book *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, and Fiction*. The goal of this "subversion" is to bring to light hidden pasts in order to redefine reality and truth. Postmodernists critique assertions of universal truths and positive affirmations, asserting that they can no longer rely on uncontested concepts of truth, objectivity, and universal knowledge. They advocate for the acceptance of multiple truths. The contemporary understanding posits that the notion of a comprehensive and all-encompassing viewpoint should be supplanted by a diversity of outlooks. The notion of history has transformed and has become diverse. The contemporary understanding of history, which portrays it as a sequential and advancing series of occurrences, has been contrasted with a postmodern understanding of history as an interlinked network of references where coherence and linearity are unattainable. While postmodernism rejects the concept of grand

narratives and the theory of the end of history as a grand narrative, the novelty of this study lies in its examination of themes that present the historiographic metafiction through a narrative lens, particularly in the context of Hutcheon's arguments as well as the postmodernist response to them. This study aims to explore their impact on English historiographic metafiction and postmodernist fiction.

Postmodernists argue that historical representations of the past are narrative discourses and that the objective reconstruction of history is an unattainable goal. The interpretation of historical events varies depending on the vantage point from which they are observed, resulting in differing accounts. The historian's perspective plays a significant role in shaping these variations. The construction of historical knowledge is subjective and specific to a particular culture. The purportedly impartial perspective on historical events is, in fact, a product of ideological agendas. The term is applied to fictional works that fuse elements of metafiction with those of historical fiction. In order to demonstrate how dependent both literary and scholarly works are on the history of speech, works that are considered historiographic metafiction often make numerous references to other works of art, history, and literature. The present thesis situates itself within the discourse of postmodernism as shaped by prominent scholars like Hutcheon. The aim of this study is to demonstrate how postmodern historiography challenges conventional understandings of history and how this thesis contributes to this ongoing scholarly conversation. The manifestation of modification is evident in contemporary English literature, categorized as postmodern fiction. The research centres on the literary works of Julian Barnes, which are recognized for their exploration of the challenges associated with accurately recounting historical events.

Although Hutcheon claims that historiographic metafiction is not another version of the historical novel, some academics have described it as such, arguing that it is simply an updated late-twentieth-century version of the genre because it embraces novel and historiographical conceptualizations from the twentieth century (e.g., see Rayneke, 2002). Typically, the phrase is most closely connected with postmodern literature in novels. As defined by Hutcheon in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, historiographic metafiction includes "those well-known and popular novels that both intensely self-reflexively and yet paradoxically also lay claim to

historical events and personages.” (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 626). The genres that historiographic metafiction parodies are ones that it both exploits and abuses, making each parody a critique by highlighting flaws in the original work.

The present thesis situates itself within the discourse of postmodernism as shaped by prominent scholars like Hutcheon. This study aims to demonstrate how postmodern historiography challenges conventional understandings of history and how this thesis contributes to this ongoing scholarly conversation. The manifestation of modification is evident in contemporary English literature, categorized as postmodern fiction. During the postmodern era, there is a challenge to the credibility of historical evidence as well as the conventional concept of a sequential and dependable historical account. In response to the postmodern historical theories of Lind Hutcheon and Hayden White, the fiction of Barnes can be viewed as a form of metahistory or archaeology of the past. Barnes’s work emphasizes the textuality of the past rather than attempting to uncover the thoughts, representations, images, themes, or preoccupations that may be concealed or revealed in discourses. This approach aligns with Foucault’s archaeological method, which seeks to define discourses, and with White’s proposal that historical work takes the form of narrative prose discourse. The author’s literary works involve an interrogation of historical knowledge through the utilization of historical remnants.

Julian Barnes is widely recognized as a postmodernist figure in the realm of English literature, primarily due to his recurrent exploration of themes such as suspicion and defiance towards metanarratives, which are prominent features in his fictional works. Barnes’ reputation during the latter part of the twentieth century largely derives from his unwavering interrogation of all-encompassing and uncritically embraced narratives that purport to possess ultimate knowledge and significance. He is widely recognized as one of the most productive novelists in present-day in England. The author’s literary works explore the potential for recounting historical events on an individual and societal level, utilizing a diverse array of stylistic and thematic techniques. The main target of this research is based on the analysis of textual and critical references; therefore, it can be concluded that the novels *Flaubert’s Parrot* and *England, England* exemplify the characteristics of historical metafiction.

One of the purposes of this research is to discuss the elements of historiographic metafiction, such as self-reflexivity, in *Flaubert's Parrot*. Barnes employs Braithwaite's preoccupation with Flaubert as a means of examining inquiries of the essence of art and literature, the interplay between author and text, and the challenges associated with comprehending oneself and others. This preoccupation serves as a means for Braithwaite to avoid any discussion regarding his wife's tragic suicide while allowing him to address this very topic. The individual's continual investigations into the life of Flaubert can be interpreted as a means of negating the impact of Ellen's passing, meanwhile providing a systematic framework for adjustment to the death. Furthermore, not only does the text focus on the use of self-reflexivity but also on Dr. Geoffrey Braithwaite's undermining of the one "Truth" in favour of several "Truths". Dr. Geoffrey Braithwaite especially satirizes the life and characters of Gustave Flaubert, a well-known nineteenth-century realist author, via self-critical instance, confession, and self-opinionated narrative. Besides, Barnes is satirical, but he uses Braithwaite's character to do so. The novel's sarcastic protagonist and narrator shows his proficiency as a postmodern historian. The notion of subjectivity is closely linked to the concept of truth. The conventional belief that a singular version of truth dominates as Geoffrey's exploration reveals the insurmountable challenge of discovering the veracity of historical events. The dependence of historians and biographers on sources contingent upon memory renders constructing a singular, objective truth an unattainable feat. Geoffrey's findings reveal that historians and biographers can selectively exclude information that may cast their subject unfavourably. Geoffrey's utilization of multiple biographical accounts results in varying conclusions regarding Flaubert's life. Geoffrey's perspective on Flaubert's character is hopeful, despite his guilt.

Also, the thesis studies center on using another element of satire in the past. Geoffrey Braithwaite's statement about the past (which reflects the author himself) shows how the postmodern perspective about the past is very different. The author also uses figurative language to describe the past as a faraway shoreline that is eroding and everyone as being in the same boat. His comments are important, for they are part of a discussion about how common fat men were in Flaubert's time and how common they are now. The speaker asked how someone could find out such

complicated but important information. Even after years of research, it's possible to think of history as just a classification of literature and the past as personal fiction disguised as a legal account. The way that the story is told shows the narrator's critical look at traditional historical viewpoints and his own view of how historical events are put together in modern society. Barnes employs Geoffrey's journey to demonstrate that, akin to the stuffed parrots, there is no absolute veracity but multiple interpretations of a given occurrence and individual, including elements of reality and fiction. The literary work is composed of a blend of factual and fictional components, illustrating that the method of narrating another individual's life account is partly a product of artistic license and entails the author's imaginative capability and personal convictions.

The second novel referred to in the thesis is *England, England*, which spots light on a fresh outlook on the literary movement through its closely structured storyline and nuanced exploration of historical themes in the postmodern era. Also, it shows how the principal attributes of postmodernism may be exemplified by the narrative of nation and national identity. This literary work exhibits a self-referential postmodernist doubt towards all assertions of truth, including those that could potentially serve as a foundation for human identity and question the artificiality of cyberspace also a satirically and politically charged exploration of complex issues such as national identity, Englishness, and documented history. In addition, Barnes highlights the potential for human memory to be unreliable in his critique of historiographic metafiction and the concepts of reality and authenticity. This perspective bears a resemblance to Baudrillard's analysis of the significance of meaning and history in contemporary society. The pursuits of truth and artistic expression are portrayed in a weak and sceptical manner as well as melancholy and the untrue conviction of individual autonomy. Barnes exhibits notable distaste for classifying his novels as literary fiction. His works are characterized by a noticeable contemporary awareness and formal complexity.

The thesis focuses on England's loss of historical memory and its past, which consequently led to a loss of its identity and significance. As the research has demonstrated, history narration represents an additional form of discourse that reports on historical realities, frequently with the aim of balancing the official

narratives available to the public. Explaining history, collective memory, and national identity includes recognition of the presence of subjectivity and the tendency to comprehend events. This can be viewed as a merging of postmodern historiographic metafiction and literary techniques. Regarding this matter, Barnes' postmodern novel raises concerns about the accuracy of historical records; he argues that recorded history is merely a flawed replica of the true past, resulting from an imperfect system of memory. Barnes posited that the act of writing history can be viewed as a creative interpretation that is at odds with objective truth or the actuality of historical events. This implies that historical truth is not merely a representation of factual circumstances but rather a "construction" of truth that is more closely aligned with what Hayden White referred to as the aesthetic and rhetorical components. As stated by the author, history is composed of more than just factual statements and arguments. Narrative accounts also contain poetic and rhetorical elements that serve to transform a mere list of facts into a compelling story.

Ultimately, the research presents the prospect of construing the literary works *Flaubert's Parrot* and *England, England*, as examples of postmodern historiographical metafiction, thereby raising the inquiry of when and how the truth can be achieved. The protagonists of the two novels attempt to reveal the truth related to themselves and their peers, yet their efforts prove to be useless in achieving any conclusive outcomes. The author's analysis focuses on Linda Hutcheon's approach, which includes the French context and historical issue aspects in the novels. The ethical technique is linked with significant themes such as truth and the uncertainty of history. The study of postmodernist history within the context of historical metafiction is rooted in a long history of engagements between indigenous populations and external entities across the Indian Ocean. It can be understood that Barnes does not idealize the extensive history of interaction. Barnes' novels present a favourable perspective on significant historical occurrences of the past. Additionally, the author provides further details regarding the effects of this phenomenon on present-day society. Barnes's narrative technique employs co-narration, historical hints, and symbolism to highlight the overlooked history. This literary work additionally illustrates how Barnes's narratives effectively engage the reader in exploring the multifaceted truths of memory, history, the past, and reality. Barnes'

literary works exhibit a diverse collection of styles and themes via a postmodernist perspective; he delves into various approaches to recounting historical events, thus earning him the classification of an experimental novelist.

The findings of this study assert that Barnes' novels serve as a noteworthy illustration of postmodern metafictional historiographies. Furthermore, the narrators of the novels assume the role of self-assured postmodern metafictional historiographers, which pertains to Julian Barnes's postmodern narrative politics that challenges the notion of a singular "truth" and instead promotes the existence of diverse and contextual truths. In addition to the distinct formal and stylistic features, each novel seeks to know the historical truth and emphasizes the necessity of recognizing the impossibility of recapturing the past and the necessity of learning to bear its present effects, as well as the necessity of knowing the original truth which is replaced by copies which are simulated rather than authentic. The thesis posits that the author's fiction proposes the notion that histories are not simply narrated but rather reconstructed in response to the confirmations mentioned. Scholars have posited that within the realm of fiction, the narrator-historian assumes the role of shaping historical accounts in accordance with their sociocultural positioning.

By all counts and with proven results, it is no wonder that the historian–narrator reconstructs the historical event rather than simply narrating it. Stated differently, the historical records are transformed into fictionalized renditions of the actual occurrences. Hence, these interactions are fundamentally subjective constructs. The narrator–historian, who is positioned within a particular ideology, constructs a narrative of a historical event that appears credible but is influenced by their subjective beliefs. This is achieved by incorporating their pre-existing notions into the narrative. Barnes employs metafictional techniques, a frequently utilized approach in postmodern literature, to reveal the process of reconstructing histories. This, in turn, imbues his fiction with a metahistorical dimension.

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