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Inhumanity and Agnosticism in Barnes's
*Arthur and George (2005) and Nothing to be
Frightened of (2008)***

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To my Father,

my Mother and Sister Y.L

Abstract

The focal point of this dissertation is to demonstrate the continuous demise of religion and Man's hopeless sustainability of the belief in a divine state/purpose in the face of the post-modern reality. The purpose of this modest thesis is to prove that Julian Barnes's anxiety in his admission of God and religion as a divine set of abstract foundation resides in the validity of the truthfulness, or even the authenticity of their nature and essence. The latter being the most doubted characteristic which brings about Man's sceptical position concerning the transcendental. Hence it is the lack of evidence; earthly tangible evidence though, which renders the transcendental uncertain of its being. Postmodernism values the scientifically and empirically sustained truth, the latter being of an eminent foreground in a century which relies on materialistic evidence to forge judgement, knowledge, and sustainability for its legitimacy.

This dissertation is created for a try to decipher these turns of belief and disbelief through the analysis of Barnes's scepticism towards spirituality, yet construed within his research in the history as well as the historicity of the social and individual knowledge of the assumed sacred.

Choosing Barnes as the representative figure of both the English and the Western Man in general who, because of their loss of belief in a deity or any transcendental being, has led to a state of an emotional and existential despair. However the resistance against the belief in religion and God is under the assumption that they are "fabulated", i.e., created by Man, through established institutions, the evidence for which is hardly, if not at all, being proved.

My approach is being parted into dilemmatic positions. By referring to Julian Barnes' *Arthur and George* and *Nothing to be Frightened of*, (I give each of these a chapter for analysis in terms of narrative technique as well as thematic approach), I am to decipher both of inhumanity and agnosticism

which veil upon the narratives, and thereby reflecting the outside social behaviour; responding reflection and approach to these matters.

The other chapter deals with matters of religion and God in terms of their authentic and truthful state/ nature, as being of, or rather emanating from a reported or 'narrated' knowledge, the existence of which isn't rationally sustained.

Résumé

Cette thèse cherche à démontrer ce que le postmodernisme cache derrière sa philosophie sur le plan thématique de la préoccupation de l'Homme contemporain.

En se basant sur les 2 livres de Julian. P. Barnes – que je considère comme étant un des représentants du postmodernisme – cet écrivain Anglais est porté sur la crédibilité du transcendantale; le spirituel ainsi que la fiabilité des sources du savoir, ce dernier qui entre autre, celons Barnes, nous est délivré par le mode de narration.

Ainsi, Barnes est aussi imprégné par les problématiques qui constituent l'identité en elle-même. L'Anglicisme, ayant été une identité et un état d'être porté sur le mysticisme qu'il est généralement difficile à cerner et à définir.

J'essaie tout au long de cette thèse de mapper son historicité – tout en restant sur 'les normes' et conceptions de la position de J. Barnes – de la ramener sur sa réalité/authenticité.

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Introduction

Contemporary Western societies on the general board, and the English in particular have witnessed a liberal tendency of a soaring disinterest in the belief in a spiritual/theistic deity, as well as the disconsolation of religion's coexistence with the 'frenetic materialism' from the advent of the previous modernist ideologies. The latter are implied in the strong belief in rationality, scientifically-based truths, and the hold on the Darwinian evolutionist theory to the detriment of the creationist and transcendental creation of the universe. Similarly, the belief in the fact that science is the way of explaining the universe taking it as the only source for tangible certainty is being doubted.

Barnes quotes Emile Littré's claim that "Man is a most unstable compound, and the Earth a decidedly inferior planet"¹, a very speculative phrase of the state of the postmodernist Man in particular. This is found in the nature of the human being who expresses his/her existence in both an empirical, pragmatic sense as well as the need for that spiritual unscientific belief in a deity or both of the deity and the Holy Scriptures for another hidden satisfaction. Postmodernism expresses this twofold aspect of the self quite plainly. The congruency of the spiritual in conjunction with the tangible sides/ states of the self are the impetus of the postmodern contextual themes.

The belief in God, the monotheistic religions, the display of which in the world is of serious- by which is heard/experienced for cruelty, rigidity, and the primary cause of the world's wars and revolutions². These doubts towards theism, and historical past are as much disclosed on the societal spectrum as on the literary narratives. Mythical versions of the setting of the universe is the claim held by atheism and agnosticism, which in their part neglect and rather pontificates upon the disconsolation of Man's immortality and strong atheism.

¹ Julian Barnes, *Nothing to be Frightened of*, 2008, p. 57.

² Cf: Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 2006, 279- 288.

Matters of death and dying, religion's credibility, the evidence of which isn't disclosed tangibly in our hyper-modernist logicism, and the human's inhumane – by which I ascribe here to racist – reflections are matters close to my heart, enclosing my constant wonderings and therefore form and make the impetus of this modest magister dissertation.

Having read the majority, if not all of Barnes' works which entails a content of existential matter as well as identity issues, I have tried to thin them down to Man's belief in a religious schism and transcendental being despite their intrinsic beastliness witnessed through their inability of racist display towards the other. I therefore chose Arthur and George as a quintessential account of Barnes which uncovers, even denounce the long-held attitude of English racism towards the other. Nothing to be frightened of is related to themes of death, religion, God-question which are retrieved not only in Arthur and George but the majority of his works.

Barnes's concerns with death and dying starts to be of a relentless, regular theme he retrieves in the majority, if not all, of his works. Indeed, in 2004, he published somehow a sequel, or response to his translation in a volume of short stories about the theme of ageing and approaching death, *The Lemon Table* (2004). In 2005, *Arthur and George*, a novel which infers Doyle's spiritism and wonderings upon the existence of God, and eternal promised afterlife as one of many themes which could be withdrawn from this 505-pages fiction narrative. In 2008, Barnes broke his fictional tendency to a more personal, autobiographical memoir, *Nothing to be Frightened of*, in which he endeavours to disclose the nature and essence of his *thanatophobia*³, approaching death from a vast set of existential matters. Otherwise said, the scope here is being construed within the meaningfulness of life, the coexistence of God, and religion, with Man's mortality as well as the demise of religion's importance within the modern or rather the materialist postmodern neo-Darwinian world.

Julian Barnes, seen as “a quintessential humanist, of the pre-modern species”, as well as “the voice of one of the most distinguished and refined

³ An irrational fear of death and the ending of existence, be it the human's or the universe's.

intellectuals in the literary scene of contemporary Britain”⁴, is a postmodern writer with regular production of fictional and essay narratives, journal reviews and a memoir-ish account of his theological and existential issues that Man faces. By choosing two of his works, the first being within the fictional spectrum, the second a divulging narrative and account of his position on issues of existential matters, my research’s basic process aims at delineating, even grasping the roots of his and the human’s existential scope – the consequences for which form an insurmountable dilemma which Man faces.

Racism has soared in Britain, well England, majorly after the Second World War in the sense that what bothered the English most, is the ‘race-relations’ not of their adjacent island lands, the Scottish, welsh, or the Irish since they are white, what bothered for example “Bryant and Powell and the rest was the arrival of people with a different-coloured skin”⁵.

Arthur and George, a title chosen after at least 30 ones that Barnes suggested to his fictional work. He reveals in an interview that: “One of the early title of the book [and in my humble opinion, the most referential and expressive of the themes handled here] is *The Skin of Things*, because it was about the surface of the earth and what was immediately underneath it and the skin of George and the skin of Arthur.”⁶

Barnes celebrates the worldly acclaimed literary figure, Arthur Conan Doyle who helped clear the name of a Birmingham solicitor, George Edalji, sentenced for a 7 years of penal servitude for a crime he did not commit, under no “slightest evidence to connect him to the crime with which he was charged”⁷. George’s wrong conviction came under the fact that “the police was prejudiced against him from the start.”⁸

⁴ The American novelist Joyce Carol Oats’ note on Barnes
<http://www.nytimes.com/books/01/02/25/specials/barnes-history.html>

⁵ Jeremy Paxman, *The English*, 1998, p. 72.

⁶ V. Guignery and R. Roberts, *Conversations with Julian Barnes*, (2009), p. 140.

⁷ Julian Barnes, *Arthur and George*, 2005, p. 195.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 429.

One notices that there is a parallel of the hundred years ago England, and that of nowadays, a theme which I am to clarify and dwell on its nature and progress, rather stagnated state of the English regarding their judgement of the “Others”.

My aim is also to try to demonstrate that Barnes’s scepticism regarding religion and the existence of God lies behind his fear of death. He views religion as a fictional account, and the reliability of which could not be at a certain positioning. Barnes suggests that “the will to believe is often more important than what one actually sees”⁹, a statement which clarifies the human’s obedience to a set of abstract dogmas yet conceived of as being “sacred” is actually contingent of one’s want and will to believe in them.

The first chapter aims at providing a small introductory account of Barnes literary works, alongside the rewards and merits he has received throughout the last decades - up to as recently as the 2011 Man Booker Prize¹⁰ - encompassing a brief account of his personal life. The second part of the chapter aims at giving an account of the first narrative dwelled on in this dissertation, *Arthur and George* (2005). This novel is the representative account of inhumanity and racism of the archetypal white Englishman displayed towards the “other” of a different, darker carnation. The result of which case led to the preposterous grant of the ‘free pardon’ to George sent in a letter by the Gladstone Committee, without any compensation. Arthur’s response to this was simply amazement at the incredulity of the Home Office, a power representing the heart of England neglecting, even diminishing of an English citizen’s – yet of a darker complexion – rights. Barnes concludes quite idiosyncratically mocking enough, through Arthur’s position, that:

... this Home Office, this Government, this country, this England of ours has discovered a new legal concept. ... As from today, we have a new concept in English law – guilty *and* innocent. George Edalji is a

⁹ V. Guignery and R. Roberts, 2009, op. cit. p. 132.

¹⁰ Julian Barnes was awarded the 2011 Man Booker Prize for his fictional account entitled, *The Sense of an Ending* (2011) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/oct/18/booker-prize-julian-barnes-wins> (accessed on October 27, 2011)

pioneer in this regard. The only man to be granted a free pardon for a crime he never committed, and yet to be told at the same time that it was quite right he served three years' penal servitude.¹¹

Still racist reflections and death, subjects which Barnes are incessantly interrelating, do interfere in this case. The Edalji is being asked in the court by the adversary board of prosecution, about what were his motives behind "the unspeakable barbarity of his actions. ... we must, I would suggest, look for the motivation in a brain that was not diseased, but rather formed differently from that of ordinary men and women."¹²

Throughout the third chapter, an account on postmodernism and its abounding concern with religion as well as retrievability of the past is provided. The aim here is to prove that the postmodern narrative's reliance on the use of historicity and that intermingles and converged with fictional imagination. This overuse of historical research as represented within fictional narratives lies in the retrievability of the past for the sake of not only "revising" the past reported truth, but also for a possibility to reconstituting it for a wider visualization, for a multitude of interpretations and understanding of those minor facts which historical record on their own has not disclosed, covered or reported. Barnes contends in an interview that the human mind cannot exist without the illusion of a full story, so it fabulates and convinces itself that the fabulation is as true and concrete as what it 'really' knows. Then it coherently links the real with the totally imagined in a plausible narrative"¹³. Otherwise said, in order to give a coherent account of an event, fact, or figure, one needs to fabulate and pontificate upon, simply to permit the mind to have access to a much fuller story; more authenticity and therefore plausibility.

Focus will be on the western and majorly the Englishman's inability to reconcile the spiritual with the tangible plausibility/credibility of his/her inevitable ending (death). To reconcile his history with the reality he is witnessing, try to

¹¹ Julian Barnes, 2005, op. cit. p. 434.

¹² Ibid. p. 197.

¹³ V. Guignery and R. Roberts, 2009, op. cit. p. 54-55.

relate and disclose close the history of England's with its invention of the Anglican Church¹⁴. This will be related to Englishness- English identity, with inhuman racism which counteracts the teaching of the long-believed-in religion of their own creation. Therefore, delineating and defining the English identity in a set of criteria which makes of them a model role of the aspired-identity by the others is another task in this chapter. The English are known for their arrogance and disinclined attitude for negotiation. They regard themselves as the norm.

¹⁴ J. Paxman, 1998, op. cit. p. 97.

CHAPTER I : Julian Barnes and Postmodernism

I.1. Barnes's Literary Work

It is hard to conceive of an individual's biography when their lifespan is still on the process. However, succinctly yet richly implemented, his literary career reveals in him a versatile and idiosyncratic English writer. Distinguished in his "fine wisdom" displayed in a multitude of narrative modes – which made of him an articulate "chameleon of British letters"¹ – a diligent use of the sense of irony, and an elaborate language use of both English and French, he is a writer "who always pushes argument through to their rational conclusions."² He is regarded as 'one of contemporary Britain's most brilliant and sophisticated novelists'³.

He is one of the quintessential authors in English literature of the last half of the 21st –century postmodernist tendency, the works of whose are within a multitude of narrative genres/discourses. Barnes hasn't left any genre exertion of the silent art. He is the author of eleven novels, the most recent one harks back to a year ago, three collections of short stories, 3 volumes of essays, a memoir, two translations, numerous journalistic reviews and criticism, and two screenplay adaptation drafts - *Growing up in the Gorbals* (1987)⁴ and *The Private Wound*⁵ (1989) based on the novel (1968) by Nicholas Blake.⁶

A Leicester-born Englishman, Julian Patrick Barnes, on January 19th, 1946, the second and youngest child of a French-teaching couple, the influence of whose played a role in shaping his literary themes & writings, but also their influences helped forge Barnes' Anglo-Francophilian educational background, and love of literature. Barnes admits in an

¹ Stout, M. (1992), 'Chameleon Novelist', *New York Times Review of Books*, 22 November, <http://www.nytimes.com/books/01/02/25/specials/barnes-chameleon.html> [Accessed 29 December 2011]

² Vanessa. Guignery and Roberts Ryan, *Conversations with Julian Barnes*, 2009, p. 116.

³ <http://literature.britishcouncil.org/julian-barnes>

⁴ <http://research.hrc.utexas.edu:8080/hrcxtf/view?docId=ead/00182.xml>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Vanessa. Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes*, 2006, p.3.

interview that the household of his upbringing displayed a respect for the word⁷. He is the younger and last child of Albert & Kay Barnes; teachers of French, and whose elder brother Jonathan Barnes is –the now- teacher & philosopher of Ancient Philosophy who has taught in Oxford, Vienna, & the Sorbonne.

Barnes spent his childhood in Acton, London until the age of 10 when his parents moved to Northwood where he attended the City of London School from 1954 to 1964. From 1959, the Barnes family travelled through different regions in France every summer holidays, those moments were, for Barnes, ‘filled with anxiety’ (p. xii) as he recalls in his preface to *Something to Declare* (2002). His childhood as well as his adolescence and early adulthood, - the bulk of which is much disclosed in *Nothing to be frightened of* (2008) – have witnessed vacations spent in his parent’s bungalow in France. At the age of 18, “intellectually ... overdeveloped; socially and emotionally drastically underdeveloped”⁸, in 1964, he entered Magdalen College, Oxford University where he studied modern languages, he taught English for a summer at a French Catholic School in Rennes in 1966. After graduation, he worked as lexicographer for the *Oxford English Dictionary Supplement* from 1969 to 1972, then retrieved college to study for the bar in 1972, qualified as barrister two years later but never practiced⁹. From 1973, he started working as a freelance journalist, a period under which he published book and restaurant reviews and other pieces mostly satire under pen-names. He also published four detective fiction narratives and short stories under Dan Kavanagh.

Barnes served within literary journalism as an editor for the *New Review* under Ian Hamilton from 1976 to 1978, the period in which he published satirical pieces under the name Edward Pygge in the ‘Greek Street’ column of the *New Review* itself. He also served the *New Statesman* as assistant literary editor under Martin Amis from 1977 to 1981, meanwhile exerted as television critic for it as

⁷ V. Guignery. and R. Roberts, *Conversations with Julian Barnes*, 2009.

⁸ Cf. Vanessa. Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes*, 2006.

Peter Childs and Ryan. Roberts, *Julian Barnes*, 2011.

Vanessa. Guignery, and Ryan Roberts, *Conversations with Julian Barnes*, 2009.

⁹ *ibid*

well. He was the Deputy Literary Editor at the Sunday Times. He's been contributing to the *New Yorker* since 1989¹⁰.

In 1979, he had married the literary agent Pat Kavanagh who passed away in 2008, a couple of months after which, he published his memoir on death and dying, under the title *Nothing to be frightened of*.

The first novel of his, *Metroland* (1980) received great acclaim, and won him the Somerset Maugham award. It was adapted into cinematography under Philip Saville which appeared in 1997. However, his most acclaimed novel which appealed more readership, is *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984), which best disclosed his Francophilia, and portrayed a new historically-based-on form in the postmodern fiction. It won him the Geoffrey Faber memorial prize and the Prix Médicis in France in 1985 and 1986 respectively. One year before the publication of *Flaubert's Parrot*, he was chosen by the Book Marketing Council as one of the 'Best of Young British Novelists' under 40, siding in the list with Martin Amis (born in 1949), Pat Barker (born 1943), William Boyd (born 1952), Kazuo Ishiguro (born 1954), Ian McEwan (born 1948), Salman Rushdie (born 1947) and Graham Swift (born 1949)¹¹. All of whom constitute the prominent contemporary British Writers.

Flaubert's Parrot was followed by *Staring at the Sun* (1986) which won him the E. M. Forster American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters award for work of distinction in 1986. In addition to these awards, Julian Barnes received other honours including the Gutenberg Prize in France in 1987, the Premio Grinzane Cavour in Italy in 1988, and in 1992 the Prix Femina in France for *Talking it over* (1991), the Shakespeare Prize of the FVS Foundation of Hamburg in 1993, and the Austrian State Prize for European Literature in 2004. He was named Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters in France in 1988, promoted to Officer in 1995, and finally to Commander in 2004. His latest

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Vanessa. Guignery, *The Fiction of Julian Barnes*, 2006, p.3.

publication *The Sense of an Ending* (2011) won him the Man Booker prize, which is the English version of the Nobel Prize in USA.

Besides *Metroland* adaptation into a movie, *Talking it Over* (1991) was made into a French Movie by Marion Vernoux, called *Love, etc.*(1996), ten years after which publication, Barnes provided a sequel to it under the title *Love, etc* (2001). In 2010, *Arthur and George* (2005), shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, has also been adapted on stage by David Edgar in Birmingham¹².

Barnes's translations include Volker Kriegel's book *The truth about Dogs* (1988), and that of Alphonse Daudet's *La Doulou* (posthumously published by his widow in 1931) under the title *In the Land of Pain* (2002). The latter consists of Daudet's notes on dying while his suffering from syphilis. Barnes 'morbid' fascination with death, the decrepitude of old-age, and the process of dying revealed itself through this beautifully, yet painfully accurate translation of Daudet's notes of the human's physical/psychological decay. Features which Barnes has endeavoured to clarify and bring response to in his memoir *Nothing to be frightened of* (2008).

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

Julian Barnes devoted his tenth novel¹³ *Arthur and George*, (2005) to a prominent British writer, the creator of *Sherlock Holmes*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, related to a case he has helped solve and clear the name of a victim of justice miscarriage, George Edalji (1877-1953), a Birmingham solicitor, the descent of whose is of a Scottish and Parsee miscegenation. The latter wrongly convicted to

¹² <http://www.birmingham-rep.co.uk/event/arthur-george>

¹³ His works include:

Fiction: *Metroland* (1980), *Before She Met me* (1982), *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984), *Staring at the Sun*(1986), *A History of the World in 10 and 1/2 Chapters* (1989), *Talking it Over* (1991), *The Porcupine* (1992), *England, England* (1998), *Love, etc* (2000), the rest are stated in the first pages of this chapter.

Non- fiction: *Letters from London* (1995), *Something to Declare* (2002), *The Pedant in the Kitchen* (2003).

a penal servitude of 7 years in 1903, being misjudged as the culprit of horse mutilation.

The novel *Arthur and George* (2005) is a very long detailed description and identification of both of Arthur's and George's whole lives. It starts with the depiction of both 1st early moments of their existence, rather contemporaneously, as they move from boyhood to schooling and later, to their careers.

The novel treats a multitude of themes within a social, individual, historical, existential, and transcendental interest. Themes which are familiar to Barnes's advocates, matters of love, as well as the retrievability of history for a probably revisionist attitude as compared to the present, and most strikingly matters of self-identity and existential being. Man's mortality in the face of a transcendental being is the driving pulse of this novel.

The title comprising two Christian names is a front "enigmatic"¹⁴ position of the 500-pages novel. The latter could be taken for a fictional autobiography of these characters which is roughly the case; however Julian Barnes makes use of their accounts simply to convey themes of historical and humane concerns. It encompasses matters of racism, inhuman conduct of the white Englishman of the Victorian period to their non-English counterparts. Barnes does indeed reawaken not only these real characters of the late 19th- early 20th- century, but a whole era, the longevity of which impact are still prevalent and witness in our 21st century societies.

Barnes does represent an historical well-known figure into a fictional narrative under detailed scrutiny upon the protagonists as related to the Great Wyrley outrages which victimized the solicitor, George, for his non-white, non-English descent. Indeed, Barnes reveals in an interview¹⁵ that he discovered the case while reading a book about the Dreyfus case in France. And that he fictionalized the reality-based historical account which later came to be revealed to him by a prominent historian of France – Douglas Johnson- that the Edalji's affair was the British parallel version to the Dreyfus affair in France.

¹⁴ V. Guignery, 2006, op. cit. p.127.

¹⁵ V. Guignery and R. Roberts, 2009 op. cit. p.163.

a miscarriage of justice in the heart of England that equally pointed up the nature of an imperial society shuddering into a new century. Racism, fears of miscegenation, imputation of sexual dysfunction, an establishment cover-up, suspicious footprints--- the story had everything.”¹⁶

Conan Doyle is even paralleled to Emile Zola’s involvement in the Dreyfus Case of the late 19th century France, in the sense where once Arthur was called upon by George to help him clarify his name and professional status by urging the Home Office to grant a pardon and compensate for the mistreatment of putting him in jail. Informed about the outrages, he published an 8000-word pamphlet whereby he attacks the constabulary and the British authority for the miscarriage they committed. Doyle claims implicitly throughout the pamphlet that the man convicted, the son of a Church of England vicar was wrongly targeted by “some n’er-do-well from Walsall” because of, most probably than not, “sociopathic tendencies and a plausible blade hanging in the kitchen”, alluding to English individual’s anxiety due to their intrinsic long-constructed relatedness with their past history.

The novel is strikingly packed with literary contextual allusions to the late 19th century/early 20th century major themes which belonged to the colonial rule under the British Empire. These notions of racism, inhumanity towards the other - supposedly lesser civilization, belonging to a different human race/carnation of a much flatter or slightly thicker nose is a *déjà vu* in *Heart of Darkness* (1902) as well as further back to *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)

It is quite extravert, with very rich contemporary novel, yet as a sequel to the past historical moves, with very credible dialogues-a feature which brings the narrative more credibility and authenticity, full of use of black humour; sarcasm and irony on the forcefully victimized solicitor of a supposedly “impure” race from the imperial “sudden and deplorable miscegenation”¹⁷ as Barnes puts it. . A detailed description of every pace of the prominent characters, both of whom are

¹⁶ V. Guignery and R. Roberts, op. cit. p.131.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 385.

described as being involved in the same ordeal brought about by Man's 'inhuman' conduct to his fellow of a darker complexion.

Arthur, a doctor, and an investigator who endeavours to correct the misperception of the justice miscarriage; whereby lies the twofold visual misperceptions of both of George's chronic myopia – yet within vivid accurate insights - and of the justice of the heart of England's implicit disguise for the embodiment righteousness.

These prominent characters are described as individuals following their fate based upon the highly stressed youth, as a receiving/indoctrinated but not contributing vessel as it were, in relation to the cultural, racial, and ethical background.

The author starts the first few pages by implicitly stressing the notion of *first memory*¹⁸, and curiously enough Arthur's first memory harks back to his first walking steps of his babyhood. The notion of first memory here alludes to an accidental moment which shapes and traces one's conduct and attitudes of their behaviour. George doesn't have a *first memory*¹⁹, as if this recalls the notion of *time* and *moment* triggered by Virginia Woolf throughout her major works, and specifically, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). Accordingly, this leads us to conclude that George was not really; psychologically present in his childhood, but was rather absent-minded during those periods of living within his secluded family environment. Later as the story carries on, we discover that George has indeed a first memory²⁰, as if it is a must-gone-through thing that strikes Man's memory and consciousness, whereby human destiny is made. It is, to put it differently, a sort of a coincidental man-made incident which affects one's following perceptions and conceptions upon life.

¹⁸ Julian Barnes, *Arthur and George*, 2005, p.3.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 4.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 145.

The author introduces us to the characters as if they were natural-born survivors within the chaotic yet prosperous late Victorian-beginning of Edwardian England. The latter subdues advances in science, the subtle move and reaction against the conservative ideologies regarding the social and ethical, as well as gender edifice. As the aforementioned notion of survival meets the tensions put on Arthur's environment as well as George's, they are both rebellious to the natural order of law, especially the social and ethical. Arthur recalls Joyce's *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*'s major character (Stephen Dedalus) in his refusal of the social and personal status quo, urging him to make a sort of a reform to the virtual as well as the practical scene (life).

Religion, for Arthur, is a compound for the "life of poverty and obedience"²¹ which impends one from the rational worldly self-fulfilment. Arthur here, right from his early school years tries to decipher the reasons behind the measures of the priests' changing attitudes in matters of the Church's constantly-altered articles of faith. George on the other hands takes the rules of the Church by the letter as is taught by his father. "I am the way, the truth and the life"²². Arthur's "imagination preferred the different, parallel version he was taught at home" by his mother's storytelling of chivalry and romance; of what Englishness once was, stories "designed to teach him the distinction between right and wrong."²³

Arthur, or Arthur Conan Doyle, the writer of Sherlock Holmes stories, a doctor, and an articulate Englishman highly considered by the royalty, is highly epitomized as the admirer of King Arthur and all of the historical/cultural background of what constitutes the pride of England's heritage. The latter is beautifully detailed in the first section of the four sections of the novel, with poetry-like verbalized prose. Englishness or rather the typicalities of an Englishman are encapsulated in Arthur's "extra commandments [he was taught at

²¹ Ibid. p. 19.

²² Ibid. p. 5.

²³ Ibid.

home] on top of the ten he knew from church. 'Fearless to the strong; humble to the weak' was one, and 'Chivalry towards women, of high and low degree'."²⁴

By the same token, Arthur is considerably nationalistic and fights for, defends his Motherland, England, even though he is Scottish by birth and of an Irish descent, but regards himself as an Englishman. In fact, he is not an English-born, nor is he English by ancestry; yet, he still self-ascribes the English identity. This point is shared rather wilfully with George's English self-identity but not an authentically English by ancestry. I. e. a self psychological identity which has come to be all of a delusionary moment of pure infantization. George received racist reflection since his schooling years, the impact of which has inflicted his adulthood and even whole life.

Here the author tackles the notion of Englishness by putting forward the way an Englishman came to be an aspiring model role and why the history of England has made such an epitome of identification even at the rational modern age. Is Barnes trying to put it to the fore, to foreground it as it were, in order to try and put an end to it? Is it a typical English behaviour to segregate all the other non English individuals as they are seen as lower in the human classification chart?

Besides Englishness, the author mentions many well known figures in history, be they in politics, ethics, science ... etc. Some of the best who understood Natural Sciences, he mentions them here, William Crookes, Oliver Lodge, and Alfred Russell Wallace. The latter came to make a point in religious beliefs of Arthur's since religion and the questioning of the stable rules of it happen to be of a serious concern for Arthur after his beloved wife (Touie) was ill of an almost incurable "evil", as Arthur puts it. He doubts the sufficiency and validity of General Drayson's argument of the asserted supposition of a life after death.

Barnes alludes to other prominent British literary figures of the late 19th century, beginning of the 20th century, the descent of whose differs from Scottish, English, and Irish descents such as, R. L. Stevenson, W. Scott, G. Meredith, H. G.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 7.

Wells, and O. Wild, the latter whom Arthur dined with since he became “a face in the literary circle”²⁵ A note which stresses his pride in his birth country. This also proves Arthur’s literary gravitation besides his scientific field of doctoring. Arthur as a doctor accomplished another status on the literary front with his detective fiction, he is an aspiring figure on the social spectrum as well as the individual; a doctor, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, and an accomplished Man; he is portrayed as the prototype of the aspired-to Englishman, however he doesn’t deliver to the qualities ascribed to the concept. He does betray his wife with a young lady called Jean whom he married after his wife had passed away.

Although this novel lays most of the personal themes that one encounters during our times, as in the conflictual dilemma within Man’s psyche, whether to muffle his longings for the forbidden or choose the frustrating bottled conventional agreed-upon social norms. It is strikingly convincing that Barnes writes in the Victorian Age style, and indeed, the case of George Edalji is considered as a historical landmark of Humanity. Nevertheless, another implicit version of inhumanity displays itself under Arthur’s betrayal to his wife Touie, identified by Arthur as “an invalid” due her accidental illness which resumes her life span.

Written in 2005, the novel opens with laying Arthur’s first childhood moments as well as George’s in a successive manner, jumping from Arthur’s description followed by George’s until the end of the novel. This technique might confuse the reader since the focus is abrupt and therefore suddenly moves to the second character, then to come back to the first one alternatively. This historical novel²⁶ puts forward Dr Arthur Conan Doyle ahead of George in that the first one with a rebellious attitude as a young boy, questioning and debating the institutional dogmas, namely the doctrine of Papal Infallibility, with his friend

²⁵ Ibid. p. 75.

²⁶ “The historical novel is a form of fictional narrative which reconstructs history and re-creates it imaginatively ... In 1814, Sir Walter Scott published *Waverly*, the first of his many novels. Scott remains the supreme example of the historical novelist in English Literature.” Cf. J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 1999. For more details on the Historical Novel, see G. Lukàcs, *The Historical Novel*, 1962.

Partridge as schoolboys.²⁷ George –whose father is a vicar- on the other hand has grown in the vicarage of Great Wyrley on a strict disciplined mode of life which made of him quite instinctively a prudish, thoughtful, and cautious man; a decent methodical English figure of East Indian descent- of a Parsee descent) which made him reconsider his self-identity since his melting with the other citizens' children at school: "You're not a right sort?"²⁸ Here the racial issue is being tackled by Barnes, in reference to the old-age English racism, and which is implicitly alluded to as reflecting the postmodern period. In fact, the author ironically alludes to racism and its prominence in the contemporary period .

The reader can almost see that George was secluded with a blinding emptiness within himself. The details Barnes puts forward in this novel come from a real story in fictional form. A highly biographical categorized fiction writing of both Arthur's and George's life. A call or outcry against the inhuman loss of values, essentially faith. What is at stake here is the questioning and wondering whether God has always existed, but never thought about His real presence. This is a constant question that the philosophers have been pontificating upon throughout centuries right to the present time, and still a questioning which has probably no definite answer.

Barnes' works in general, and specifically the ones at hand, play a role of self-projection of his personal character alongside the deep truthfulness of his elaborately cultural and societal, as well as ancestral moulded thoughts and opinions. This use of an actual story telling which belongs to a galvanizing moment in the history of humanity and sociology is a mere means of divulging the author's inner philosophical life-related authenticity. Julian Barnes is not directly subjective and didactic while layering a novel or any other means of literary expression. Instead, he as well as any other writer of the postmodern fiction, leaves the objective evaluation and interpretation to their readers. This is what the what fiction is about, and specifically Barnes's tendency to leave the narrative, here Arthur and George, open, the unclosing finality of the novel leaves the reader with a multitude of possible ending constructed upon their own perceptions and

²⁷ Julian Barnes, 2005, op. cit. p. 19 - 20- 21.

²⁸ Ibid. , p. 12.

understanding. However on The other hand, the thematic of racism as residing within the inhuman beastliness of Man, religion, spiritism, identity, and history are being reflected throughout this fictional account, a set of themes which are if not always, incessantly retrieved in his novels and non-fictional narratives even by a succinct reference. Hence any fictional narrative implicitly infers the author's subjective concerns. The author's journals and literary records are doomed to personal interpretation of a sort to their self-ascribed personification.

Otherwise said, however the story or the plot of a fictional work is done, and even the genre classification of a literary piece of writing is categorized, it always and constantly pertains to and reflects the author's experience, the conclusion or closure of its ending is relevant accordingly.

Roughly through the end of the second chapter, Arthur ponders upon the seemingly indubitable finality/ending of the human lives: death. The latter reveals itself as being rather one of Arthur's mesmerising obsessions throughout his entire lifespan; looking at facts, measuring them and packing them into a squared visualisation of the nothingness. Barnes actually reveals his thanatophobia²⁹ in a memoir which he published following this fictional account. Assumingly, Barnes does indeed portray or personify himself through the characters of his fiction.

Arthur's wonderings upon Man's inevitable mortality may lead to the mysticism of Man's acceptance of his/her ending – most probably as the book goes, Man's avoiding to think about the spectre of human deterioration into non-existence. On the other hand, Connie, happens to have “a wait and see” attitude to the eternal which Arthur makes of typical of the English, “I'll cross that Bridge when I come to it”³⁰. The typical English make-do-with-it temperament, or stance upon one's life's closure, and even further onto the unknown not-informed-upon afterlife. Arthur presumes this attitude of his sister -proper to the English “Breed” or race - of coming to an expiration date of one's existence is a fact which is voluntarily put aside, i.e., not happening as in order to live up life fully, one needs

²⁹ An irrational fear of death and the ending of existence, be it the human's or the universe's.

³⁰ Julian Barnes, 2005, op. cit. p. 268-269.

to create his existence under the delusion of infinite immortality, “the best way to be resigned to your fate was to want it.”³¹ George on his position contends.

Arthur is more than ever humanistic, “humane” in his self-ascription to an “unofficial Englishman” “spiritist”, uncovering his bona fides upon the blunt truth of Man’s reality vis-à-vis the truth of his ending; death. A quasi universal truth triggered off/tackled by former philosophers throughout the previous centuries. As far as morality, religion and spiritualism are concerned; Doyle implicitly unveils the existence of something innate, pure, virginal, clear-edged, and mundane nature and sense eventually. It is *l’humanité*³² which Doyle embodies, a prerequisite sense of Man’s characterisation which is merely unconstructed, say, intrinsic, born-with. Otherwise said, it is because we are human beings with emotions, spiritual values, and consciousness that we set forth ourselves into a spectrum of unclouded human categorisation. Hence the construction or acquired moral/religious conformism of institutionalised rules. Spiritualism, or “spiritism”, for Doyle, is not acquired and could not be indoctrinated; it is according to one’s ability and will to see through the reality for deep perceptions of the truth behind it. It has always reflected itself in the nature of the human being. A nature which encompasses both the altruistic goodness; “humane”, and the indubitable evil “inhumane”, as he does personify 4 selves or characters, namely four according to the telling:

Sir Arthur's life, on the other hand, which is all most people see, is in royal shape. Knight of the realm, friend of the King, champion of the Empire, and Deputy Lieutenant of Surrey. A man constantly in public demand. ... Then there is Conan Doyle's life, which is also in fine fettle. He is too professional and too energetic ever to suffer from writer's block for more than a day or two. He identifies a story, researches and plans it, then writes it out. He is quite clear about the writer's responsibilities: they are firstly, to be intelligible, secondly, to be interesting, and thirdly, to be clever. He knows his own abilities, and he also knows that in the end the reader is king.: the University of Edinburgh has made him an Honorary Doctor of Letters. He may never be a big man like Kipling, but as he walked in parade through the city of his birth, he felt at ease in those academic robes; more so, he has to admit, than in the quaint garb of a Deputy

³¹ Ibid. p. 213.

³² for humanely fraternal values.

Lieutenant of Surrey And then there is his fourth life, the one where he is neither Arthur, nor Sir Arthur, nor Dr Conan Doyle; the life in which name is irrelevant, as is wealth and rank and outward display and bodily carapace; the world of the spirit. The sense that he has been born for something else grows with each year. It is not easy; it will never be easy. It is not like signing up for one of the established religions. It is new, and dangerous, and utterly important. If you were to become a Hindoo, it would be regarded by society as an eccentricity rather than a derangement. But if you are prepared to open yourself to the world of Spiritism, then you must also be prepared to endure the jocosities and shallow paradoxes with which the Press misleads the public. .³³

Barnes's reawakening process of an era which harks back to a century ago - emphasising the creator of Sherlock Holmes' textual effect into exonerating George- and the theme of innocence – allude to the assumption that what Barnes does is not only the recreation of the historical incident, but also the celebration and appeal for the readmission of the long-forgotten detective novel as if he is the portrayal of Conan Doyle. This post-war tendency – historical representation within literary narratives – sets Barnes's uniqueness (in Britain) through the revival of the historical narrative. Barnes also seeks answers to his query of the past, by reconstituting it, making it experienced anew, simply with the aim of penetrating it again, of regarding its revaluation for some meaningfulness of the present time and age/state. In this regard, Natasha Walter claims that “there are loose ends, uncertainties and unproven accusations, which allow us to reflect on the difference between the knowability of detective fiction and the unknowability of real life, which Barnes intelligently draws out for our edification”³⁴. Yet, Barnes's very distinct idiosyncratic attitude to the past (history) resides in the authenticity and faithfulness as reported to us. This implies the role of language playfulness to transmit and transmute such and such wanted credibility.

This clarification of what the Edwardian period consisted of ideologically, considering it to be of a crucial importance in the construction of the present English society, makes his ingenious confection of *Arthur and George* to be both

³³ Julian Barnes, 2005, p. 275-276.

³⁴ <http://www.guardiana.co.uk/books/2005/jul/02/bookerprize2005.bookerprize>

realistic and postmodern in its historiographic constructedness. Indeed, Barnes does related the authenticity of the credible reliability of his researched accounts of the early 20th century.

I.2. Barnes's Postmodernist Novel (*Arthur and George*)

Post-modernism is essentially that movement which grew out of a reaction against Modernism. The latter was essentially influenced by the Enlightenment and rejected tradition and authority in favor of a reliance solely on reason and science. In contradistinction, Post-modernism breaks away from the Modernist belief that contemporary Man can reach an of the world understanding through a reliance on reason and science. The Modernist positivist heritage of the primacy of human reason leaves room now to non-scientific, human values and emotions, too. In this regard, Mary Klage writes:

Modernity is fundamentally about order: about rationality and rationalization, creating order out of chaos. The assumption is that creating more rationality is conducive to creating more order, and that the more ordered a society is, the better [i.e., the more rationally]. . .it will function³⁵.

In fact, it is a much debated concept as J.A. Cuddon writes:

Post-modernism is a general (and sometimes controversial) term used to refer to changes, developments and tendencies which have taken place (and are taking place) in literature, art, music, architecture, philosophy, etc since the 1940s or 1950s. Post-modernism is different from modernism, even a reaction against it....As far as literature is concerned it is possible to descry certain features in post-modernism. For instance, there is literature which tends to be non-traditional and against authority and signification.³⁶

Postmodernist fiction, for instance, since it is our main issue here, is characterized by several features, namely: experimentation in matters of novelistic form with a particular interest in new ones, much less reliance on the old forms of character development, new ways of implementing points of view, elaborating on the use of language with regards to meanings, hybridity in language too, and a mixture of “high-brow” and “low-brow” cultures, as it were. In certain cases, some post-modernist novels look rather “close to mere gimmickry”.³⁷ But the main framing

³⁵ Cf. The Postmodern Novel, <http://www.nvcc.edu/home/ataormina/novels/history/postmod.htm>, accessed July 15, 2012

³⁶ J.A. Cuddon, *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 1999 , pp. 689-690.

³⁷ Ibid

aspect of any proclaimed post-modernist piece of fiction is inevitably metafiction (see below)

Post-modernism in British Literature refers to the era shaped by the leading conservative figure in the late 20th century. The effects of Margaret's politics led to the deconstruction of the notion of society and most importantly the notion of selfhood. Thus the appearance of a new ground for the contextual core of literature took place amid the writers of the time. It mostly evolved upon a new air of aesthetics called contra-realism which appeared after the 1970's, and it fully nurtured in the 1980 to characterize the following 20 years, it goes to the turn back and falsification of the previous or the known-realistic trend of the 19th century - the roots of which are to be found in the Enlightenment version of reality and its definitive notions based on the future-based progress and emancipation and the secularization of Man- in its manifestations threatening the anything "... outside fiction, are generally regarded as the rational and the logical³⁸." Other discernible aspects are: eclecticism, "aleatory writing", parody and pastiche, including in many cases the use of magic realism.³⁹

The postmodern tendency is, much often if not always, attributed to the word alienation. As if Man is facing a turn down upon the notion of the world and the human functioning. Man is alienated vis-à-vis what? This might be due to the uniaxial form of the world's modern cultures, the roots of which come from the prototyped westernization of the societies of the globe- that Man feels strikingly alienated according to the conventional, cultural, traditional, and economic background/mores of the previous times. Materialism of the capitalist economic

³⁸ Taylor, Andrew. "A Secret Mystery of History". Rev. of *Arthur and George*, by Julian Barnes. Independent 15 July 2005. 13 December 2008 <
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2005/ju/02/bookerprize2005.bookerprize>

³⁹ Term used and coined for the first time by the German Franz Roh (1925). He used it to describe the characteristics and tendencies visible in some German paintings; the latter were marked by aspects or images close to surrealism. In fiction, the term was first used to a "quasi-surrealistic" kind of writing in the work of the Austrian George Saiko (1892-1962); Borges (Argentina) also developed it in his stories as well as the Columbian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Nobel Prize, 1982). Magic realism can be found in the fiction of the British J. Fowls (1926-) etc. For more details, see J. A. Cuddon, op. cit, pp.487-488.

system also plays a great role in the dehumanization of Man, leading him to a disillusionment concerning the conceptual ideas and notions upon existence. Individualism is also a major point emanating from pragmatic utilitarian character of the previous time within the socially and economically shaped tendency of modernity. Thus the outside literary ground of exploration has been affected by the multi effects of this drastic change of disillusionment, and thereafter a rejection of all previous notions to fit into a new body of lost definition of one's existential meaningfulness, be it on the social spectrum and also on the individual perceptions of his own. There has been a fear of reincarnating the modes of realism of the 19thC within the post war period that moulded the new prospects and ideological urge for the realistic and daily ascription in the literary contexts.

Barnes gathers a whole of different literary techniques from detective journalism to the fictional/psychoanalytical version and dreamlike moulding and creation of his novel. The narrative, indeed, encapsulates different literary techniques besides a revolutionary almost misleading methodology in layering each character's pace in his own little world to move quite suddenly into the second one. Thus familiar literary techniques are pointed as well, such as the realistic technique as well as the journalistic notes; reporting the story of George Edalji and the creator of Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, with stunning details, depicting every pace of the characters, as if he himself witnessed the story, with a third personal as well as the 1st personal pronouns, the "I" witness, an idiosyncratic trait of the late 19th century literary technique. Here, Barnes merges the lived- and experienced story by real individuals within a tangible setting (The City of London, Birmingham, and Great Wyrley district), but in a narrative which divulges the whole details, facts, and even interpretations of such and such gestalt. Such details that requires the penetration into the psychic part of the mind refers to the aspect of the modernist version of narrating, making psychological interpretations, using satire, irony and sarcasm, to dramatize the nature of Man, the supposedly sensible, moral, and pure-like creature. Now the level of the discourse in narrating the story is 'a heterodiegetic third-person omniscient

narrator'⁴⁰ in the sense where Barnes plays no role in disclosing his views or penetrating into the story, only the protagonists evolves in the interpretation of their surrounding agents.

However, if one reads the narrative, and is familiar with Barnes' own and constant concerns, one eventually feels the voice and personal layering of Barnes' minds. Furthermore, any narrative is according to the narrator's experiences, fears, anxieties, and thoughts. A narrative, even a simple text emits and displays the author or writer ulterior minds. It is a linguistic and symbolic personification portraying the author's self and mind. It is apparent in the way Barnes fictionalize the spiritual interest and pondering of Arthur's questionings of the hereafter of death. His omniscience, or know-all narrator lays in the psychological unfolding of the characters not in his involvement within the story, it maintains a distant role in "having complete access to his protagonists' inner lives, but [...] maintain(ing) a flaubertian detachment"⁴¹.

This discursive device is what is known as an heterodiegetic mode or level of the narrative, or the free indirect discourse "which combine(s) features of the characters' direct speech with those of the narrator's indirect reports"⁴² This free indirect discourse is also called the narrated monologue through which the narrator represent the thoughts and consciousness and purge them in a direct way. This mode of thought and consciousness may confuse the reader in setting a line between the narrator and the character since the voices of both merges to create one. However the narrator, here Barnes, personates the characters for the sake of presenting their inner views according to their personalities and themes treated in the narrative, to give an authentic 'feel' of the situation set in the Edwardian Era. The subsections devoted to the protagonists Arthur, George, Arthur and George, George and Arthur also cohabit with subsections headed by secondary character's, such as Inspector Campbell⁴³, or Captain Anson⁴⁴. This device

⁴⁰ Olivia Frey, *Narrative Technique in Julian Barnes's Arthur and George. Negotiating Truth and Fiction*, 2009, p. 10.

⁴¹ F. M. Holmes, *Julian Barnes*, 2009, p. 59.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Julian Barnes, 2005, op. cit. p. (104-113, 119-126, 130-138)

⁴⁴ Ibid. P. 366-392

permits Barnes “to play in this fictional universe by slipping easily in and out of the character’ minds, thereby nearly blurring the distinction between narrator and character, between objective, faithful representation and subjective, fictionalized point of view.”⁴⁵

The psychological introspection of the narrator into the characters inner thoughts and reactions gives the readers a vivid and blatant insight into their functioning minds. Many instances highlighting this psychical/psychological extradiegetic mode of thought and narrative, is through their endeavouring to punctuate the truth in their quest for the existence of absolute truth as well as the difference between knowledge and faith – life and spiritualism – or between reality and fiction. When Arthur meets George for the first time (beginning of the third chapter), he was ostensibly convinced of George’s innocence, and George being dumbfounded by this compromising position of Arthur’s, yet intriguing since the knowledge Arthur has to maintain such a position is questionable. George happens to solve this wondering only until the end of the narrative that it required him to have a starting point whereby he put a complete conviction then do his best to prove its viability. Nevertheless, the free indirect discourse which enables Barnes’ to disclose contemporary concerns related to the way one takes the truth, the ability to view, see, and visualize its hidden root. This metaphor of sight and vision is mainly viewed throughout the third section of the novel whereby the notions of believing and knowing become less of platitudinous definitions entering the spectrum of remarkable dubiousness; vanity, and confusion. Still the metaphoric allusion also refers to the abortive quest for the clear absolute truth, and here Barnes uniqueness is appealed. His twisty workable literary reference often, if not always, revolves upon doubting the mundane, the easily absorbed hidden verities of concepts and things. Barnes endeavours to shed light upon the minds of his audience, implicitly denoting the postmodern void, even hopeless mind in searching for what is behind the presented:

Barnes’s undramatized third-person narrator does not correct their misperceptions and prejudices in order to provide readers with a broader understanding of reality. [...] The narrator refuses to

⁴⁵ Olivia Frey, 2008, op. cit. p. 10.

pronounce authoritatively on matters that are in dispute, to offer moral judgements, or to clear up all of the novel's mysteries and uncertainties."⁴⁶

Barnes, from this extrapolation, happens to be categorised within the sceptical spectrum portraying himself the postmodern character, he is incredulous towards any statement or perception (Lyotard's ascription to anything postmodern, the mind and the narrative, to "incredulity towards metanarrative"⁴⁷, and by implication referring to the notion of relativism, every truth is biased upon its background of logicism. Throughout the narrative, Barnes purposefully probes in the hidden aspects/essence of the loosely thought-of matters, he is known for complicating the manner he structures his narratives in general, and their related themes simply to convey more of a heterogeneous sense of knowledge and truth, rather than a homogeneous absolutism.

Here, being restrained to *Arthur and George*, Barnes demonstrates the unsuccessful attempt to trace and solve the mystery of the Great Wyrley Outrages, and to ensure justice, "it's [...] about the difference between what you think and what you can prove. You think someone's guilty, you believe they're guilty, but how can you *know* they're guilty, how can you prove they're guilty?"⁴⁸

Assumingly, one may bring the novel's level of discourse as being descriptive rather than prescriptive. The truth in Barnes' authentic true world and essence is void and multi faceted, and far from being single-barrelled. Hence, the use of a variety of balanced positions upon the supposedly authentic truth concerning the investigation of George's case – oscillating between Arthur's and the Staffordshire police's lining of investigative hypotheses - alongside the modes of identification, and 'spiritism' are left under an open-end discursive element so that the readers are brought to an intriguing, yet relativized position to work for their own logicism, ending of the case verdict. Still, what Barnes claims

⁴⁶ F. M. Holmes, 2009, op. cit. p. 59.

⁴⁷ This is how Jean François Lyotard defines postmodernism in his 1979 book entitled *La Condition Postmodern*. D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity. An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, 1990, p. 45.

⁴⁸ Schiff James. A. "A Conversation with Julian Barnes", 2007, *The Missouri Review* http://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/missouri_review/v030/30.3schiff.pdf

throughout the novel, the matter concerning the notion of truth and its irretrievability, he sets the concept as something purely personal, the absolute or claimed truth of one's is purely subjective, and it is regarded as a truth only under a strong personal conviction.

This is rather peculiar to the late 1980's and 1990s literary works which rendered the readers quite autonomous of the 'closure and finality' of a narrative. Here, what Barnes delineates throughout the impossibility of finding out what the truth is concerning the case but also the 'spiritism' he dwells on, is also personified in the way he leaves the ending to his readers, according to their relatedness and side-positioning to the multiple paradoxical yet balanced views he layered throughout the narrative. Schneider claims that 'Arthur and George could thus be read as a recuperative virtuoso performance of an old story that both meets and problematizes the expectations of twenty-first century audiences'⁴⁹ Indeed, this also implies Barnes' stress on the impossibility of one absolute truth, each truth is absolute vis-à-vis the beholder's conviction in its validity and way of logical linearization.

The police investigative process which demonstrates George's guilt is maintained as the culminating result of their own conviction in this guilt stance. On the other hand, Arthur's innocence stance vis-à-vis George is also true according to his investigative linearity and conviction. The narrative is therefore left with blank spaces and unanswered exclamations and questions, left unresolved on purpose to leave an open view to the readers. This is actually what postmodernist mind is all about, the rejection and absolute denial for a single truth. Truths, for the postmodern Man, are all truth-claims, self- and mind- biased. We resort to the sense of plurality of responses which resonates/echoes the plurality of characters' minds upon the case, victimization, and verdict George Edalji.

The dispute upon George's innocence/guilt position is brought in a conversational dialectical manner. The innocence and guilt positions are

⁴⁹ A. Schneider, *Competing Narratives in Julian Barnes's Arthur and George* (2005), 2009, p. 51. *American, British and Canadian Studies*, 13, December, 2009.

contrasted by the investigators Arthur and Captain Anson respectively, yet none of them is able to present reliable sense of argument to their subjective and supposedly true convictions. Anson criticises Arthur's analysis as being highly intuitive, unrealistic, blames him for having based his investigation upon fictional "series of mistakes"⁵⁰ the same way he conceives his Sherlock Holmes crime narrative, relying upon the search of absolute truth, whereas Anson himself based his conviction upon "the consequences of police observations and reports over a number of years" (J. Barnes 2005: 374).

Arthur on the other hand still counters Anson's analysis for having "made the boy a target from the beginning" (J. Barnes 2005: 374), upon no tangible evidence, rather bits of created and irrelevant evidence, also for the racial prejudice displayed through the urge to undermine, or bring the demise of a successful half-Parsee Man (see p. 375 of the novel). Again, Anson uses a piece of evidence which sets not only Arthur's conviction of George's innocence dumbfounded, but also the readers' belief upon his innocence. It is that of showing Arthur a letter which attests to George's debts (J. Barnes 2005: 378).

Arthur however judges this piece of argument as being irrelevant and ascribes it to a "desperate appeal of an honourable young man let down by his generosity" (J. Barnes 2005: 379) The dispute or debate upon the validity of his final trial continues regarding George's racial descent, as well as his social and personal accounts until Anson brought the conclusion in "I am not making some philosophical argument, I am being practical. What we know, what we end up knowing, is – enough to secure a conviction. Forgive me for lecturing you about the real world" (J. Barnes 2005: 382) again, Anson maintains that Arthur's structure of his investigative analysis of the case can't approve to his unrealistic fictional element –which he applied - in setting an absolute truth at the end of a crime. Reality, or to put it right, the real world's investigative and final conclusions are ostensibly the decisive amounts of speculations and truth claims.

The latter constitutes the real world's impossibility of retrieving an

⁵⁰Julian Barnes, 2005, p. 372. All forthcoming quotations from this book and their page numbers will be mentioned between brackets.

absolute truth, whether authentic deep-rooted truth could ever be discovered. What we believe and think is what we know, and set as the absolute authentic truths of life's matters. Barnes negotiates the nature of the authenticity of reality through the different story levels. Such a relevant instance would be the co-occurring conflictual trait of guilt and innocence in the mysterious unresolved case of the Great Wyrley Outrages, and measurement of the ostensible legitimacy and the deceiving quest of truth about love and spiritualism. Hence Barnes relentlessly conveys the different subjective truths and positions regarding these issues through the character's own voices and convictions.

The multiplicity of voices is very striking, and is the basic cause for the readers' confusing attitude towards the novel, whose voice is claiming such and such. Barnes uses multiple discursive devices to convey these subjective voices and positions, the whole of which forms sort of a conglomerate of narrative techniques:

“Barnes selects, omits, emphasises and interprets. He controls the content and how it reaches the reader. As so often in his novel, he reminds us that history is inexact, partial and fanciful, that it is concerned with fiction as much as fact. The mechanics of detection, the due process of the law, the soothing claims of spiritualism – nothing is quite what it seems.”⁵¹

Arthur and George fits the postmodern fictional account and categorization which works on a metafictional⁵² level and “self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality”,⁵³

⁵¹ Taylor, Andrew. “A Secret Mystery of History.” Rev. of *Arthur and George*, by Julian Barnes. Independent 15 July 2005. 13 December 2008.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2005/ju/02/bookerprize2005.bookerprize>

⁵² Metafiction is basically fiction about fiction, or to put it more elaborately, Metafiction explores the dilemmas of both language as a “prison-house” and of writing as a construct, quite away from the conventions of traditional realism. For more, see E. Waugh, *Metafiction*, 1984

⁵³ Lethbridge, Stefanie, and Jarmila Mildorf, (2004), “Prose.” *Basics of English Studies*, 2004, p. 83. <http://www2.anglistik.uni-freiburg.de/intranet/englishbasics/PDF/Prose.pdf>

This is disclosed/viewed in the way the multi-personifications accounts of George and the case given/written by the police, the newspapers and Arthur. Barnes endeavours to disclose “the invisible borderline between truth and fiction”⁵⁴.

The boundary of the authenticity of truth and fact as being if not always, often fictionalized. *Arthur and George* is a peculiar postmodern novel not only owing to its discursive discourses; the multi-faceted narrative devices, but also in the contextual dimension. Barnes himself “didn’t think of it as a historical novel. [...] (but) as a contemporary novel which happened a hundred years ago”⁵⁵ Indeed, the positions it entailed is that of knowledge and understanding, “(the) cultural gap between *Arthur and George’s* turn-of-the-twentieth-century characters and Barnes’s twenty-first-century readers”⁵⁶ leads to a lack of information concerning matters of spiritualism the Edwardian jurisdiction.

The novel furthermore as most of Barnes’s novels “intertwine reality and fiction, historical figures and imaginary ones.”⁵⁷ this position is claimed by himself when asked about the ambiguous state of determining the genre categorization of his novels, as representing the postmodernist genre, ‘resort(ing) and subvert(ing) realistic strategies’, being “self-reflexive, and celebrates the literary past, but also considers it with irony”⁵⁸

Barnes gets offended, rather irritated when he is asked in an interview under the title of *Do You Consider Yourself a Postmodern Author?* What he makes of it is turning the irony back; he thinks that it construes his ability and freedom in writing, “because they tend to imprison his novels in a constructed grid”. Hence his answers: “novels come out of life, not out of theories”, and that “I quite like putting real things and real stories into my fiction”⁵⁹.

Nevertheless the book reveals contemporary issues of high concern.

⁵⁴ Olivia Frey, 2008, op. cit. p. 22.

⁵⁵ Schiff James. A. “A Conversation with Julian Barnes”, 2007, p. 71.
<http://muse.jhu.edu/>.

⁵⁶ F. M. Holmes, 2009, op. cit. p. 60.

⁵⁷ V. Guignery and R. Roberts, 2009, op. cit. p. 45.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. xii.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

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

Barnes' statement of his intertextual inclusion or incorporation of public and private materials into the novel is important for his readers to note. Merely so that he delineates the authenticity of his novel, however the use of intertexts "only form the red thread in his *fictional* account of the chronology of events"⁶⁰

The novel is not a historical narrative, but a genre on its own. Barnes' constant concern with 'troubled histories'⁶¹ led his 'artistic Licence'⁶² to converge or mingle a literary fictional creativity into realistic/authentic facticity. Hence the categorization of this novel writing; "a work that is on the borderline between fact and fiction, concerned primarily with a real event or persons, but using imagined details to increase readability and verisimilitude"⁶³.

The genre as the novel is ascribed to is that of 'faction'⁶⁴, which consists of merging fiction and facts to illuminate the real truth of the Edalji case, the authentic hidden urges and the mystery of the case's unknown culprit - to our days and age - which brought the justice miscarriage of George Edalji, the Edinburgh man of law. Barnes mentions in the author's note the incorporation/inclusion of intertextual references which he refers to by giving the whole titles of the major works which helped him construct the chronological order of the story's events. This in turn makes his novel trustworthy in terms of authenticity and realistic report. He relies upon the contextual themes of Arthur's writings to try to get a close understanding of how the inner self and mind of the characters, protagonists

⁶⁰ Olivia Frey, 2008, op. cit. p. 12.

⁶¹ J. Acheson and S. C. E. Ross, *The Contemporary British Novel*, 2005, p. 203.

⁶² V. Guignery, 2006, op. cit. p. 130.

⁶³ J. Hawthorn, *Studying the Novel*, 1997, p. 64.

⁶⁴ Olivia Frey 2008, op. cit. p. 1.

mainly. The authentication of his novel owes to research he conducted upon Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of *Sherlock Holmes*, hence Barnes refers to Arthur Conan Doyle's fictional works as well as his autobiographical account *Memories and Adventures* (1924) (see Barnes 2005: 470-472) which contains Arthur's involvement into the Edalji case, and other Doyle's works such as; *The Doings of Raffles Haw* (see Barnes 2005: 60), *Micah Clarke* (see Barnes 2005: 75) or *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (see Barnes 2005: 119, 164, 256) The synopsis (see the back cover of the novel) proves Barnes dissatisfaction of mere factual references and intertexts he relied upon for presenting the factual relevance of the case, a feature proper to historicity. Instead, he assuaged the surface historicity of the case by also to give a psychological and social account of the case.

Barnes clearly makes use of distinct discursive devices whereby he could penetrate the inner consciousness as well as the emotions of his characters; hence the novel is given a factual dimension, but also a fictional commentary/interpretative version of its facticity. It is this huge account of the character's and the case eventually which helped Barnes create a psychological and conscious unfolding of the case, but most particularly so that it serves him to play the role of a heterodiegetic third-person or the omniscient/know-all narrator to give a full and detailed account of the case. Hence, Barnes could recount the inner worlds and psyches of Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji. This is apparent in the way he explains what they think, for example: Arthur's conscious realization about being chastely in love with Jean Leckie, is being revealed by the psychonarrative analysis; Arthur feels:

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

It is here, as already stated, where Barnes's fictionalization occurs and he gives a contradicting, yet simultaneously balancing opinionated truths. The latter

is exemplified by Jean's "Part of him has frozen time at the day and the year when he met Jean — the day his heart was utterly brought to life, and also placed in a state of suspended animation." (Barnes 2005: 279) The notion or difference between the right supposed, and expected love, as completely opposed to the true, great love.

Jean's position about Arthur's personality, as being 'a man of honour' (Barnes: 310), she veneers him, and later she is dumbfounded by the fact of his endorsement of 'spiritism', as the latter opposing his 'right mind'; rational and materialistic. The polyphony of presenting a twofold identification of Arthur undeniably revolves around the indeterminacy of Arthur's true personality. At a parallel dimension, The reader is also given a plurality and a multiplicity of character-identification/description or rather personalities included by Barnes in the form of either newspapers clippings from the Birmingham *Daily Gazette's* authentic articles in the context of the prosecution against George⁶⁵, as well as two other articles from the same newspaper line about George's character in that "the accused man, as his name implies, is of Eastern origin" (J. Barnes 2005: 153-154) with a "swarthy face, with its full, dark eyes, prominent mouth, and small round chin. His appearance is essentially Oriental in its stolidity, no sign of emotion escaping him beyond a faint smile as the extraordinary story of the prosecution unfolded." (J. Barnes 2005: 157)

George's aged Hindu father and his white-haired English mother were in court, and followed the proceedings with pathetic interest" (Barnes 2005: 157). These racist/segregationist notes of 'swarthy face, [with an] Oriental [descent and attributed-appearance] 'in its stolidity' despite his being English by birth, education, and civism, displaying 'no sign of emotion' alongside the positive witness account of him, majorly his father's and uncle's⁶⁶, do not help part a singled objective verity of his personality, a "dilemma [which] reminds us that our self-images are constructed not only from the stories that we tell ourselves about who we are but also from the stories that others tell about us"⁶⁷ and un-

⁶⁵ (see p. 153-154, 205) of the novel

⁶⁶ (see p. 43, 57) .

⁶⁷ F. M. Holmes, 2009, op. cit. p. 66.

conspicuously, this notion refers to the actual anxiety that the postmodern individual in their human essence faces about their own identity. Indeed, on the sociolinguistic sphere, it is assumed that Man is subject to display many selves, hence the inconceivability of a regular unified image/personality of an individual. Barnes' giving opposing opinions upon a single character or fact as George's guilt yet innocence, unquestionably sets the reader to ponder the notion of truth and fiction/created assumption being constructed and defined as truth are very finely parallel. Hence the readers' difficulty to set the narrative as a factual and historical account, or a fictional creation.

The same procedure applies for George's consciousness. Let us take as an example his days and years in prison. Here, Barnes reveals George's inner thoughts and feelings, something which contradicts and reverses his principles impinged by his father's teaching; as well as his self-constituted conceptions of what Law entails and is there for. The case deconstructed George's faith and conviction in Law, a discipline he venerated, hence his profession, undermining the possibility of truth query and clarification which he used to ascribe to 'a journey from confusion to clarity' (Barnes 2005: 90), now he's considering the complexity of righteousness as being unreachable, the world of reality and fiction collides to form an unresolved phenomena entity and therefore is the real-life incidents and fate. Barnes tries to invoke a seemingly authentic insight into George's consciousness and inner mind; emphasising his conflictual emotions and almost disillusionment about the true nature of Law, and the supposedly notion of right overhauling wrong.

The psycho-narration of George's character while in prison, is very disclosed through these extrapolated lines:

Part of him wanted to stay in his cell, plaining nose-bags and reading the works of Sir Walter Scott, catching colds when his hair was cut in the freezing courtyard, and hearing the old joke about bed-bugs again. He wanted this because he knew it was likely to be his fate, and the best way to be resigned to your fate was to want it. The other part of him, which wanted to be free tomorrow, which wanted to embrace his mother and sister, which wanted public acknowledgement of the great injustice done him – this was the part he could not give full rein to, since it could end by causing him the most pain. (Barnes 2005: 213)

Barnes' free indirect discourse and psycho-narration⁶⁸ leads him either consciously or unconsciously to be racist in his description. Consciously I the way he fits his description according to the psycho-narration to fit the contextual/thematic element of the Edwardian class-bound and segregationist judgemental tone, and unconsciously as fitting the typical Englishman, of the always-existed thought of them. The use of factual intertexts within a fictionalized aspect/dimension through psycho-narration entails polyphony, which resides in misleading the reader and critics in comprehending and getting to unified version of both the story and the characters.

Intertextual references from newspaper clippings, witness accounts, quotes and allusions to letters, is simply for the authentication of his fictional narrative, and to give a faithful reproduction of the Edalji case. However facticity is withdrawn from the narrative in terms of historical evidence and the psycho-narration in terms of fictionalization which to the ambiguity of what and where truth lies in the narrative, and by implication in reality. Apart from that, polyphony, entailed through the beholders' acclaimed truths; Arthur's investigative truth of George's innocence, and the Staffordshire police alongside the Quarter Sessions Court, unquestionably implies authenticity of all truths. Arthur's conviction of George's innocence opposed to the above-mentioned board of prosecution's conviction of George's guilt are subjective truths, claims, and convictions related to the linearity and process of investigation of each part. This leads to the implicit metaphorical as well as the metafictional dimension of story, it is that of the impossibility of retrieving truth in a single objective sphere.

The impossible and even inconceivable absolute truth is what Barnes refers to. If we regard the psycho-narration which Barnes utilizes for the alleviation and fictionalization of his real life characters, however the intertexts imply metafiction, especially the way Barnes fictionalizes a fictitious story, or rather the

⁶⁸ It is in the sense where the author endeavours to fit within the psychology of his characters, paving the way for the possibility of an impression of a more credible and fuller story. It is also a means by which the author mingles the imaginative, or the fictional with the reality-based, i.e. the credible and historical, simply for more authenticity and reliability of the narrative.

essence of the case, constructed ending truth; the final verdict; and the guilt displayed by the Staffordshire police's whose immediate judgement of George, and working for the justification of their constructed, presupposed targeted assumption. In conclusion; the fictionalization of the characters lies in the use of the third-person free indirect speech, as well as the psycho-narrative devices which give Barnes's literary talent an overlapping dimension of the everlasting and constant unknowability about the mystery of the Great Wyrley case. The latter which consists of a number of menacing obscene religious and racist hate mail of the period 1892-1896⁶⁹, recurring again in 1903 with mutilating the parish animals; particularly horses⁷⁰. The mutilations' culprit – which is most likely fictitious - has not been disclosed up to nowadays, Gorge at the end of the narrative, reveals in an article written to daily Gazette. Right from the beginning, George is claimed to 'lack imagination' (Barnes 2005: 4) and imagination being socially ascribed to 'a term of dispraise' and those with 'too much imagination' are simply 'tellers of tall stories' and 'fibbers' and that imagination and creativity is the property of 'liar(s) through and through' (Barnes 2005: 4-5) . This implies that Barnes sets his readers upon the constructedness of tall stories; narratives. The paragraph continues: "George himself is never urged to speak the truth: this would imply that he needs encouragement. It is simpler than this: he is expected to tell the truth because at the Vicarage no alternative exists." (Barnes 2005: 5) If we look closely at the words Barnes juxtaposes, imagination, tellers of tall stories and fibbers, expected to tell the truth because at the Vicarage no alternative exists. This implies that the Vicarage is the truth in its essence, and religiosity is the authentic truthful path of a convenient survival. He sets us to expect doubts, pondering the truth of religion, and sets all breachers – in all their relatedness to either atheism, agnosticism here in my rationale) as teller of lies, and vainly claiming their truths which essentially constitute the absolute reversion of religion truthfulness. Either you abide by the religious truths, dogmas, or you are a liar. Liar to yourself. Imagination figuratively implies philosophising upon religion. Arthur's articles upon the Edalji's case were released in two forms in the *Daily*

⁶⁹ (see 47, 48, 56, 63 of the novel)

⁷⁰ (see 113-115)

Telegraph on 11 and 12 January 1907⁷¹ whereby he describes George as “ very shy and nervous [...] [and] a most distinguished student” (Barnes 2005: 416) makes George’s disillusion upon the true person he is, which makes him ‘feel like several overlapping people at the same time: a victim seeking redress; a solicitor facing the highest tribunal in the country; and a character in a novel” (Barnes 2005: 416) The psycho-narrative device of George’s thought and position about the fictionalization and fabrication of his guilt (put this in fictionalization of his guilt by the police and both Arthur especially, and also that Arthur the investigator and writer collide) During and after the second world war, the 1940s, national self-awareness reached its high stake. The social motion, the English new and faced the advent of the wars, ‘realized that economic base of the country, compromised by WW I and shattered by WW II. He knew that a country so shaken could not continue to assert its authority over a quarter of mankind.’⁷²

Accordingly, a note here upon Barnes’s use of this vivid and real incident; a higher power mistake of the Home office vis-à-vis a commoner (George) leads to the consideration of ‘how history repeats itself’. Here, the incident viewed as a mere reproduction of the past history into the present aims at shaking the audience to reveal them outspokenly, but yet in an entertaining and creative form (narrative), that these notions existed in the past, and still do. They’re not proper to the highly capitalist consumerism which prevails and characterises our 21st century status quo. Still, he uncovers the reality of Man’s nature which helps sustain the corrupted history since the birth of man on earth. A reconciliation of, or he helps the readers reconcile both evil and goodness of the homo sapiens’ nature as well as essence, and the acceptance that this is what and how the working of Man is, it has always been, and yet, will always be.

Now the reason why Barnes’ works in general, are complicated is due to the fact that Barnes takes the universe of a more psychological creation and presence, rather than of a physical existential process. He undertakes his work, as a try in delineating the working of the psychic and spiritist behind the presented

⁷¹ (see 395-396, 415-417)

⁷² David Rogers, *The Revision of Englishness*, John McLeod. Manchester University Pres. 2004

and unexplored rigidity of life, as a way to comprehend the actual living life. The influence of the abstract world upon Barnes' enthusiastic research and detective work leads him; as Kara Riopelle puts it, to take his characters; here both of Arthur and George, as "*vehicles for a greater purpose: Barnes's incisive and probing psychological investigation.*"⁷³

Indeed, Barnes is not interested in the creator or the exploits of Sherlock Holmes of Arthur, or, George's publication of the Railway Law, for the "Man in the Train", instead, he is more fascinated by the figures, persons and the way they manhandle their lives as being brought in the historical front owing to the fame they came to either way. Barnes' distinctive endeavouring to penetrate both of the figures selves, otherwise said, the person's mind and rather rational of Arthur Conan Doyle in proceeding his life. As to George who is a mere utility in spotting the non-English native and the way he handled and lived through his acquiescent attitude and fatalistic fate triggered by justice miscarriage.

If one is familiar with Barnes' works, they must have noticed the disquisitional process of elaborating the themes of every piece of writing of his. *Arthur and George* is delightfully laid in a very complex exposition of events, factual, as well as fictional elements. The way Julian Barnes creates the seemingly confusing, misleading, and incongruent thematic elements is based upon the reconciliation of two grounds: the factual or practical; the realistically existent; with the fictional. Indeed in an interview, Vanessa Guignery in *Julian Barnes in Conversation*⁷⁴ (2002), states her question to Barnes upon Flaubert Parrots as being described complicated and confusing. Barnes with his strong wit and ironic tone responded "*I think I only confuse the academic reader*" with laughter. And his brother the philosopher of ancient philosophy with "*a very logical mind*" as Julian maintains, sent him a letter from Paris where he lives, sketching "*I enjoyed your novel very much, except of course I did not know what was true and was not*

⁷³ K. Riopelle, *Color and Clarity in Victorian Britain*, 2008.

<http://www.hcs.harvard.edu/~hbr/issues/7.2winter06/articles/arthurandgeorge.shtml>

⁷⁴ V. Guignery and R. Roberts, 2009, op. cit. p. 101-114.

... etc., etc.”

From this question, we can draw exactly the same concluding position upon *Arthur and George*, since Barnes endeavours to make these important individuals in the history of humanistic emancipation away from the puritanical Victorian ground. This goes through a detailed circumstantial exposition of their lives from the onset of their babyhood. The journey throughout their breeding and maturity toward adulthood, faced the ulterior and conflicting versions of reality. Indeed, the narrative form resembles very much a *bildungsroman* layering the ensuing phases of his protagonists' lives but as related to the case. Barnes relies here on analepsis and prolepsis through the use of past tense for Arthur and present tense for George, whose miscarried prosecution and thereafter conviction becomes the heart of the novel's story as it moves. Another matter in the exposition of confusing positions concerning the trial and its justification by Arthur to exonerate George's guilt, as confronted to the prosecution board constructed justification for his guilt, and on another field, Arthur's conflicting position of his love to his wife Touie and on the side having an intercourse with Jean who is to be his second wife later after Touie dies, and Arthur's position about existentialist matters; spiritism, death, leads to nature of absolute truth. Barnes holds through this narrative the controversial version of truth legitimacy, the authenticity of truth reports.

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

Barnes fictionalized bits of the narrative are included to collide with the

factual, reality-based facts of the historical incident⁷⁵, yet the author seems and does speak for his own version of the mystery of the famous case, yet made infamous conveniently by the British media, simply to keep the authority of Englishness at its high valour. However, the novel impinges “*a light on the complexities and intractability of racism, 'the stain' of the British Empire.*”⁷⁶

What makes one think they exist? Leading to a problematic of identity and existence alongside with moral, or as Barnes has put it, Arthur's spiritist values. Pondering the existence of God through a conversation that Arthur held with his obstruct and rigidly pious sister Connie makes the reader realize a bottled anxiety clung onto his soul and self.

As to the conversation held by Arthur with his sister, it considered this problematic questioning: to what extent could one with a logical/rational mind believe in the existence of a later life? As sketched in the novel (I'll look and choose it from Arthur's conversation with his sis Connie upon spiritism (see Barnes 2005: 267-274). The answer of this verbalized existential issue, yet with disquisitional existentialist answer led Barnes to set on a journey of spiritism or spiritual values as viewed by Arthur, and implicitly by Man at a general extent. The way Arthur pontificates upon the definition of spirituality- God, and whether there is a later life once death takes place- are merely pictured as a stringent mental chaos of Man since it is assumed that a sane mind would take the dogmas and absorb them without any beyond questioning. But yet, what Barnes tries to demonstrate implicitly, that the doubts are constantly there, within every human mind, the supposedly targeted sane as well as the insane sort of mind or brain. Arthur takes her stance, or position as being typical of an archetypal English character who portrays the Anglican, and even the puritan church as he repeats her answer accordingly: “... wait until you cross the bridge” (Barnes 2005: 268-269)

⁷⁵ George Edalji's case, being convicted under unrealistic and created evidence against him. The foremost character of the Board of Prosecution which contributed in the unjust incarceration of George, is Captain Anson, the chief of Great Wyrley Constabulary. The Edalji's case, even though its minor retrievability, or contribution role in the history of England, it contributed to the establishment of the Court of Criminal Appeal in 1907, which stand for a means to corrects other miscarriages of justice.

⁷⁶ Berry Dicker, *The Edalji Five and the Shadow of Sherlock Holmes*, 2011, on the long-held and -perished prestige of Englishness. <http://www.outrage-rogeroldfield.co.uk/reviews.php>

What the author lays through Arthur here, is the existence of another problematic. That of Mortality, which galvanizes Man's spirit concerning the questioning of his sense or meaningful continuity of his days. Mortality to Man, the belief that God exists or not, and the striking fear of death eventually lead Man to a sort of a constantly existent struggle which the human being undertakes throughout their lifespan whole. The only difference is assumed to be found within the one who swallow his anxiety; or fear of death and marches his life blindfolded, yet with peace of mind assumed as being ignorant for Arthur here, or take the gut to work out the questioning and fully experiences the existential problematic of the mind.

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

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

Compounding this, Barnes owes this ingenuity to a rich verbal source, whereby he uses artful accumulation of compelling details in most of his works, and the handled ones here, as if he seeks divulgence, the bottling out of a frustrated spirit of the postmodernist as well as the modernist Man, and yet seems –as according to the reader – baffled by the working of the ostensible existential process into either obnoxious or merely innocuous moulding of the deep-down-self of Man, i.e., the humane characteristics.

Thanks to Barnes' cuttingly distinct verbal ability which makes of him a

‘creative writer’, breathlessly confectioning the way his story is presented to his audience. Indeed, he is a poetry-like prose read, with a unique voice which plays different roles as well as ideological/psychological positions. He is an examiner of the situations his characters are drawn into. He considers his characters as patients submitted to a psychological evaluation, or “mise au point”.

This attribute of a strong capacity of wordy expressionism in fact renders the ‘unsaid’ difficult to work out linguistically, quite outspokenly easy to express. The uncovering of ‘the feared’, the -much often than not- avoided non-uttered side of existence. The latter alludes to an existence of conflicts and denials, and even disguise of the motives of one’s driving motions into existing. Does one exist out of personal, humane, or religious completions? Or are these just concepts which we cling to give a sense to our existence? Does Man take these beliefs as the pillars under the spectrum of reasonable and innate *raison d’êtres*? Does Man blind himself intentionally under unconscious interpretations of his flesh and spiritual wills? These questions Barnes strives to disclose through the real, early 19th century case of George Edalji. The author undertakes history into a literary and fictionalised form.

What is interesting here is the highlighting of a stoical historical account within an artful reciting. As if Barnes tries to give more interpretation to history, crucial non debated, realistic, and real -life events. A hint of disbelief, openness towards multi interpretation in accordance to Man’s hermeneutic judgement. This allows events, and hence the general history, to be multi opinionated, to give forth other compounding perspective forms to history. This may also implicitly accuse the objectivity of historicism in the layering of events as they are, a kind of falsification and may be reconciled with a multitude of views and associative motives that might be regarded as either reasonable actions or merely crude barbarian and racist deeds.

As it follows, the author constructs the novel with a revolutionary sort of literary technique. First the cut characters description of the ongoing throughout their lives, and peculiarly at their late fifties whereby the crucial plot is to begin, where Sir Arthur get involved in George Edalji’s case to prove him innocent and

get him back his prerogative right as a solicitor. A solicitor prosecuted into 7 years of penal servitude, but incarcerated for 3 years out of no reason, without pardon or any sort of indemnification.

The other striking literary point is that Barnes use of distinctive details, settings, names of real characters in real places – which he more often utilises throughout his whole works as in *England, England* (1998), and many others-makes of him the know-everything character, as if he personifies himself to every character's steps and thoughtful process within both the case and life. Thus Barnes sets himself as the creator of Sherlock Holmes, the police officers, George, and even an outside omniscient viewer and narrator. Accordingly one is to place Barnes Novel within the realistic literary style.

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

CHAPTER II: Inhumanity and Agnosticism in *Arthur and George* (2005)

II. 1. Postmodernism and Literature

II.1.1. Postmodern Historiography: Historical representation within fictional narrative

Julian Barnes, like his postmodern contemporaries, shares the constant display of concerns towards “troubled histories”¹. Postmodern literature displays a sceptical view upon the reliability of what History discloses. The focus came to be upon the analysis of historiographic narration, which is claimed to be biased and construal of the general facts. Historians bring narrations of actual scientific facts, events, etc through witnessed narration or experiences. However, it does disclose the general, and thereby construes its focus upon the grand, general historicity neglecting the particular cases. Hence history is being represented and re-narrated through literary narratives. The historical representation through literary narration or style is of a common thematic concern of postmodernist fiction writers. The cause or rather what these writers aim at is disclosing the particularities to give an openness and illumination of the understanding of history, i.e. facts, events, crises, revolutions... Dimitrina Kondeva, (a Bulgarian Translator of Barnes’s works, and a contributor to the writing and exchange of Barnes for The Porcupine) notes that Barnes is interested in the individual’s ‘inner voices’² to fetch for their inner truths, rather than the ultimate ‘Truth’. Hence castigating the credibility of the modernist narrative tradition of what Lyotard calls, as being ‘metanarrative’³, and his postmodernism is shaped by ‘incredulity

¹ J. Acheson and S. C. E. Ross, *The Contemporary British Novel*, 2005, p. 203.

² S. Groes and P. Childs, *Julian Barnes*, 2011, p. 16

³ Christopher Norris, *What’s Wrong with Postmodernism?*, 1990, p. 7. Moreover, “metanarrative” is understood as follows. “A *metanarrative* can include any grand, all-encompassing story, classic text, or archetypal account of the historical record. They can also provide a framework upon which an individual's own experiences and thoughts may be ordered. These grand, all-encompassing stories are typically characterised by some form of 'transcendent and universal truth' in addition to an evolutionary tale of human existence (a story with a beginning, middle and an end). The majority of *metanarratives* tend to be relatively optimistic in their visions for human kind, some verge on utopia, but different schools of thought offer very differing accounts”.

See <http://www.wordiq.com/definition/Metanarratives>, accessed September 1, 2011.

to metanarrative’⁴. In an interview Barnes suggests that this literary tendency of fiction narratives “based on a true historical event is certainly one current literary trend at the moment. But it’s not especially new. ... I think this is partly a question of filling a vacuum.”⁵. Barnes also makes of this tendency as an explanation of moulding history within fictional accounts, as in to: “approach the general through the particular”⁶, that’s to say, getting a coherent plausibility of the past history through the approach of the particular and rather unmentioned or relegated facts. Because the reality-based account of the past is viewed as being misreported, interpreted and brought to focus on the agreed upon, the general, whereas the realistic account lies behind the mentioned, i.e. the minor facts.

Literary narration of history reveals much research of the writers, and the re-telling of history in a fictional tone reveals other truths, truths hidden due to the historiographic narration’s approach of the general on the demise of the particular. Hence, the concern with the past is displayed through its retrieval as a means to uncover hidden perceptions upon the interpretation of remote past historical records; Man’s access to which is via ‘narrated’ narration. Barnes’ writings are considered to “reveal the constant remaking of the past to fit into concerns of the present as problematic.”⁷ This statement leads to the assumption that the retrieval of history for Barnes plays a ‘revisionist’ role of sacred history, his reply is that the possibility to conclude such as being true is almost impossible, since ‘narrated’ reportedness will be still partial truth. Truth is subjective and self-reflexive.

This appeals to the sceptical approach of the nature and origins of knowledge, is our accessibility to knowledge is of a mythically-created ‘narrated’ source or is it reliable through the sustainability via scientific empirical evidence? The nature or the lack of proved sustainability of knowledge is what postmodern thinkers and writers, here Julian Barnes are most concerned with. Indeed Barnes’

⁴ This is how Jean François Lyotard defines postmodernism in his 1979 book entitled *La Condition Postmodern*. D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity. An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, 1990, p. 45.

⁵ V. Guignery and R. Roberts, *Conversations with Julian Barnes*, (2009), pp. 72-73.

⁶ *Ibid*, p.165.

⁷ J. Acheson and S. C. E. Ross, 2005, op. cit. p. 204.

fictional works are: “all searching for ways of knowing the world, each other; they all have characters who are striving for some way of finding meaning in an increasingly depoliticized, secularized, localized, and depth-less world”⁸

II.1.2 The Interrelation of Historical Theory and Literary Technicalities / Postmodern Novel is being historiographic

Historical representation in literary narratives has undermined the single-bias status of historiography. The Postmodern narrative is characterized by the historical representation proliferated in the hands of fictional narratives for a multitude of interpretations, a set of ‘histories’ of a given historical record, event, character ... etc as Daniel Bedggood notes.⁹ This offers a sceptical position with regards to the modernist liability on the centralized ‘objective’ truth, and the supposedly auto-ascribed certainty of the ‘European’ historiographic narrative. Just as Keith Jenkins suggests that our assumptions about history and the form in which modern historiography reported them are being suspected, i.e. ‘no longer so readily acceptable’¹⁰. In similar respects, Robert J. Young defines postmodern historiography as the ‘European culture’s awareness that it is no longer the unquestioned and dominant centre of the world’.¹¹

Hence, the prospect of history is being ‘open’ to hybrid visualized re evaluation. The retrieval of history through historical representation within a fictional form is conceived as a revisionist sort of retelling of the history. It is also regarded as a way for the reconciliation with the past. These aspects of historiographic metafiction are prominent and proper to the postmodern narrative. It is a way to illuminate the real hidden interpretations of history, as being reported to the nowadays peoples in a ‘narrated’ form. The distrust of the past records has soared to the point of segregating any piece of narrative according to the cultural perspectives of the writer or teller/reporter of such and such.

⁸ Matthew Pateman, *Julian Barnes: Writers and their Work*, 2002, p. 2.

⁹ J. Acheson and S. C. E. Ross, 2005, op. cit. p. 204.

¹⁰ K. Jenkins, *The Postmodern History Reader*, 1997, p. 6.

¹¹ R. Young, *White Mythologies*, 2004, p. 75.

Bedggood states that Julian Barnes holds on a sceptical attitude; that's to say, Julian Barnes' works display a distrust towards 'metanarrative'¹² and 'old certainties'.¹³ Indeed, according to his attenuated belief in the stateliness of religion and God as being of a divine nature is both conceivable and inconceivable owing to one's cultural perspectives. This hybrid position upon the matter of the transcendental is pretty common and defined as a trait within the postmodern trend.

Again, postmodern historiography would be presented as: instead of the traditional modern "metanarrative prescriptiveness, postmodern narrative is more disjunctive, inhabited by the stories of those excluded by previous historical accounts, and a more 'heteroglossic' awareness of the way that history can be found in a wider range of 'types' of sources"¹⁴ Frederick Jameson goes within the same respect, the narrated history of the previous modern "old certainties, aims and ideals ... are now insecure and debatable."¹⁵ Since historiography has been biased upon the European's reportedness of such and such, then it is constructed upon a single cultural perspective. A distrust of the truthfulness of knowledge is what Fredrick Jameson defines as postmodernity. Such is what the postmodern critics are concerned with; the contingency of facts as related to an openness of their interpretative 'meanings'. History is then a set of facts interrelated to other particular 'histories' which are conceived in a coherent narrative however the understanding remains dependant and single-biased, constructed, Modern narrative does takes the major historical happenings leaving aside he particular, to present them in a form which gives a sense of linear, well-ordered credibility. Postmodern historiography presents 'the discourse of history as 'opened up': that is, no longer singular or subservient to a particular cultural perspective.'¹⁶

¹² Christopher Norris, 1990, op. cit. p. 7.

¹³ J. Acheson and S.C.E. Ross, 2005, op. cit. p. 7.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 204.

¹⁵ F. Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 1997, p. 267.

¹⁶ J. Acheson and S.C.E. Ross, op. cit. p. 204.

Lyotard articulates his view of the traditional modernist discourse as relying on the general approach; supposedly objective discourse, as being “legitimated” i.e. only according or based upon a previous such. His sceptical position or distrust of the modernist or traditional ‘metanarrative’ discourse, or ‘grand narratives’ led by the reliability or the recourse to former ‘legitimated’ grounds claimed as objective truths as what postmodernism is alleged by. He defines anything “postmodern as incredulity towards metanarrative”.¹⁷

Postmodern attitude to modern narratives is, as being regarded, no longer taken for the alleged reported truthfulness.

Barnes’ concern with history resides in the referability or referentiality to the condition of Christianity as history in itself. He devotes his search of the origins and nature of Man’s history in his/her religion; here the condition of Christianity as history. Jeremy Paxman quotes something very reminiscent of Barnes’ approach of the concept of Englishness to the Anglican Church.

II.1.3. Postmodern concern with Religion

Postmodernism contributes to the demise of religion under the position of its intangibly inconsistent truthfulness in accordance with the scientifically indoctrinated hyper-modern, neo-Darwinian ideology. Whitehead as being the example of postmodern concern with religion whose rationale or position is based upon the modern scientific impact and influence on the alleviation of religion’s importance. His philosophical tenet is argued to be under the ‘dominant modern mentality, which equates the real with the objects of sensory perception, [the latter which] excludes the possible causality and even reality of God and thereby leads to relativism and nihilism’¹⁸

¹⁷ Jean François Lyotard, ‘*The Postmodern Condition*’, in, K. Jenkins, *The Postmodern History Reader*, p. 36.

¹⁸ As according to John Cobb’s argument in a 1964 essay entitled “*From Crisis Theology to the Post-Modern World*”, the latter dealing with the emerging discussion of the “death of God”. In, David Ray Griffin, *Whitehead’s Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy*, 2007, p. 4.

Barnes does refer to religion and the belief in God in most of his works which reflect his beliefs in a way which proves his atheism, yet his later works reveal his sceptical position, as if he has gained the will into the belief in God. This is an aspect of what postmodern fictional and philosophical tendency is shaped by, the retrieval of the state of Religion in a way of reevaluating its plausibility and relevance/ accordance to the hyper scientific time Man arrived to. One could assume that it is due to the dehumanization of modernism – as being ascribed to the belief in the evolutionist theory - which led Man to reconsider the spiritual world.

Nothing to be frightened of (2008), a non-fictional account, is a representation of Barnes consideration of the history of religion; Christianity and its demise in the face of hyper modern, neo-Darwinian century. Barnes does take religion as history in itself. He dwells on defining the conditions behind the modern Man's loss of the belief in the Holy Scriptures and the position of God in modern and eventually postmodern world. He holds by the divinity of art which is more palpable and it entails an impact on the consumer or producer of art a sense of immortality. Though the latter that art offers is temporary, it still is more reliable; could be experienced.

II.2. Englishness and Inhumanity in *Arthur and George*

Barnes provides us with his position on history and religion through the portrayal of Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji as the prominent protagonist of his 505-pages novel, *Arthur and George*. He implicitly shares his personal viewpoints in the attitude he holds through his characters (through the notion of heteroglossia¹⁹), but within fictional technicalities and forms: ‘my attitude to the emotional life of my characters is similar to much else in writing: a mixture of subjective involvement and emotional control’²⁰.

Barnes’s critique of some social or cultural aspects of contemporary Britain is quite often revealed in the implicit discourse about inhumanity. The latter is formulated and rather expressed in different ways. It is also interchangeably used with the term *Dehumanization*²¹. In our discussion, it will be taken as the non sympathetic behaviour between individuals, i.e. human beings in all their physical appearance, including colour, social stratum and racial descent/discrimination. Thus, racism is one particular form or aspect of inhumanity, a term whose existence designates the juxtaposition of the twofold good/evil intrinsic nature of Man and is still striking in the present times. Hence, the currently treated subject of the post-modern condition of Man highlights the inclusive inhuman versions that are afflicted in Western societies; societies which view and experience vividly the advent of the former utilitarian modern conditions. This modern period characterised by optimism, and absolutism in terms of evolutionary sciences, this happens to be a by-pass into a sceptical period of doubts concerning the virtual yet sacred knowledge; that of religion and the transcendental in particular and the roots of knowledge in itself at broad.

Furthermore, not only man came to reverse the modern values, but also happened to face a disillusionment, the roots of which harks back to a long-track

¹⁹ The portrayal of a writer’s position on such and such through the voice of his his/her characters in a given fiction narrative. Heteroglossia is notion in which: “Sociolects [are] constantly struggling to attract words and linguistic forms into their own orbit, in order to reinfect them for their own use”. Cf

²⁰ http://lidiavianu.mttlc.ro/julian_barnes.htm, an interview with Julian Barnes. November 2000, accessed, June 2011.

²¹ In the sense of losing values that Man instinctively possesses and embodies through his conduct vis-à-vis his fellows. A form of cruelty or harsh treatment of others.

record found in the evolution of the previous time. Man became mechanical, and the new wave of post-modernism thereafter led man to reconsider his position as a living creature getting his way into existing. What is to humanise something is not to make him techno-addict, or mechanize them, trapping them within a different set of vital process.

Modernity had already alienated Man and had spoiled their symbiosis with the natural world. In fact, post-modernity simply accelerated the pace towards deeper alienation. Elsewhere is the meaningfulness of life, as Barnes tackles the matter in his major works. The notion of human values, morals, and the ability to legitimize the discrepancy of good and evil, what is life and how an individual does legitimize a sense of their being/raison d'être, this set of existential and epistemological wondering/human issue is what shapes Barnes work, and it eventually portrays the post-modern Man.

Elitism, which is a sort of an abrupt opprobrium within the world of values, is the affinity word for inhumanity caused by the dehumanization at a given point of one's life. It displays itself quite repeatedly in this work, through a multitude of both verbal and behavioural versions such as racism toward the "other". Racism -in accordance to the story telling- takes place implicitly and preparedly right from the first pages of the novel, when the author depicts the second prominent character, George Ernest Thompson Edalji, as having witnessed moments of racist – by which I ascribe to 'inhumane' – treatment from the outside environment as opposed to his inside space whereby he was a puppet-like character, a dutiful child to his parents.

There is the Vicarage, the church, the building where Mother teaches Sunday school, the garden, the cat, the hens, the stretch of grass they cross between the Vicarage and the church, and the churchyard. This is George's world, and he knows it well.²²

²² Julian Barnes, *Arthur and George*, (2005), p. 8. All forthcoming quotations from this book and their page numbers will be mentioned between brackets.

Barnes does infer notions of George's indoctrination into the personification of Englishness with all of its regards. George – a half cast of a Parsee and Scottish miscegenation – does belong to the Church of England, which some claims that: “In developing a sense of national identity... There is a case saying that the invention of the Church of England *was* the invention of England.”²³

George, born and educated in England, his father being the Vicar of district Great Wyrley of Staffordshire county, is English, however of a Parsee descent.

... he is expected to tell the truth because at the Vicarage no alternative exists. 'I am the way, the truth and the life': he is to hear this many times on his father's lips. The way, the truth and the life. You go on your way through life telling the truth. George knows that this is not exactly what the Bible means, but as he grows up this is how the words sound to him. (Barnes 2005: 5)

He regards himself an Englishman, except that he is “not the right sort” of the typical or archetypal blue-eyed, fair-skinned Englishman. “You're not the right sort” (Barnes 2005: 12), Wallie Sharp, a classmate whispers to George's ear at his primary schooling years. George response, or rather reflection, in Barnes words, that at this particular moment George “feels as if he is being slowly banished from the way, the truth and the life.” (Barnes 2005: 5), banished or stripped from his indoctrinated beliefs of the Church of England, and therefore his self-ascribed English Identity.

The matter of racism is very striking throughout the novel, since the age of Edwardian England believed in the homogeneity of England. George, a Birmingham solicitor, of a Parsee descent was convicted for maiming horses and cattle under no “slightest evidence to connect him to the crime with which he was charged” (Barnes 2005: 195) “The police had no evidence against him” (Barnes 2005: 149).

²³ J. Paxman, *The English : A Portrait of a People*, 1998, p. 97.

Racism has continued and even soared to be of a constant problematic question in Britain, majorly England since the Second World War. The English, a homogeneous blood, started to encounter a different 'breed' while the invention of the British Empire and its amplification/spread worldwide. Racism therefore is viewed as an attenuation of the homogeneity of the English; "The Breed"²⁴. To illustrate the English fear or rather dislike their race and land to coexist with the "others", historically, Jeremy Paxman, a twenty-first century author and historian, refers to the 1963 Arthur Bryant's message to the *Illustrated London News*' readers that: "an influx ... of men and women of alien race, accentuated by strongly marked differences of pigmentation and mould of feature, as well as habits and beliefs' would be very undesirable."²⁵

Jeremy Paxman believes in the mythical notion of the ideal Englishman and -woman, and therefore he merely strengthens the distrust of the concept of Englishness. "Oh, the Breed, how we miss them. Fearless and philistine ... they were the embodiment of the ruling class ... What The Breed represented was a certain ideal"²⁶ of the self-propelled best race of all species. The ideal Englishmen "were all driven men, with great ambitions, for themselves and for the Empire ... self-control extended much beyond the mortification of the flesh."²⁷

Nevertheless, George experienced moments of ostracism by the English community of his neighbourhood, Great Wyrley Village. But the clear-displayed racism happens when George Edalji was convicted under no slightest direct and certain evidence against him. In fact, what the trial discussed was the supposed allegations thrown upon him, a far-fetched created scene of maiming horses by an intruder who put it on the back of this Parsee-English solicitor. Here, the focus is upon racism towards non-Caucasian specimens. The latter can be seen as a capitalised trait of 19th -century Victorian Britain's social advents onto the

²⁴Ibid. p. 176. "The Breed", Jeremy Paxman's referral to the ideal Englishman in Sapper's *Mufti*.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 71.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 177.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 181.

Edwardian setting, right to the present time. Such worldly existing notions and matters belonging to the historiography of Men and societies are very well portrayed by Barnes through his idiosyncratic ways of transmitting the behind-the-scene actual occurrences to his readers.

Indeed, what Barnes tries to deliver with the retrieval of the long-ago historical fact alongside these prominent figures of quite an assertive social status is to warn his reader of the inequalities of the English towards the non-white English citizen however their contributory role within the working process of the English social and economic apparatus. “At the time of Arthur and George, Englishness seemed much more about being inclusive or seeming to be inclusive”²⁸ Barnes explains contends in an interview, to be English was an a priori to conformism of the country’s culture and religion. Not only that, Barnes smoothly or quite direly diverge his readers into making a link to our times’ injustice towards the other. That racial prejudice is still living up to our supposedly postmodern open-mindedness. The notion of homogeneity is emulated by Barnes, since he does think that “governments nowadays are being less powerful in following suit of the other European nations which they abide by the transnational market. They “are more willing to do what transnational companies want them to do. They are setting the agenda, and the ideal agenda for them is a vast community of consumers, all of whom want the same thing. So that is clearly, it seems to me, the enemy of individuality amongst nations.”²⁹

The author uses a scrutinized form of literary techniques that permit him to divulge very distinct ideological perspectives, the roots of which hark back to the previous centuries’ historical, as well as the British social and economic status. One could easily deduce from the bulk of his work that he fitted the spectrum of the literary fictional frame although he is a writer of multidisciplinary contextualized themes. Barnes concerns himself with the visualised/witnessed inhumanity or the slight-hearted selves of the postmodern societies; a sort of a

²⁸ V. Guignery and R. Roberts, 2009, op. cit. p. 142.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 143.

constant issue which claims itself quite vividly in the historical detective telling of *Arthur and George*. Another criterion among the coming ones, is Barnes's use of the stream of consciousness (or the interior monologue), as well as the author playing both the character in himself (Barnes' fictionalization of George's personal way of responding and being), and the outside viewer (or the 'psychoanalyst') at the same time, simply to help place himself within his characters for a detailed and uncovered detective truth telling. The author, here, tells the uttered reality, putting himself in the 'skin' of the 'judge' or the interlocutor (the social/second-part view) but also the third-part representing the counterpart, the interpreter (the viewer).

The hard structural elaboration of this fictional narrative, Barnes asserts, owes much to the debt of the documentation and research he did only, as Berberich states it, "an attempt to re-create an authentic Edwardian 'feel' to the world of his two protagonists"³⁰ Barnes asserts this in the following lines:

I wanted them to be real people so I had to get inside their heads to start off with. I suppose my way of getting into that period and evoking that period for readers today is to do it through the way the characters think and the way that they talk ad through the language of the prose rather than amassing a great amount of historical detail. There are occasional references to clothes and furniture, but not really very many. That seems to me a very ponderous way to write a historical novel. You can do a lot more using just a few words that give you the period.³¹

Arthur's obsessive identity, and probably more like existential decency lays in the civility that one maintains throughout the control they make upon their behaviour. Arthur's secret affair with Jean Leckie, that was once hidden, came to play a big role in his personal and satisfactory emotional fullness, to the point where he had the duty to apprise his family. The latter is first of all his life tenet; mother and sisters and even to his mother in-law Mrs Hawkins about her. Yet Arthur's humanity, and self-consciousness about his fragile wife lead him to face a psychological conflict and a sense of being in the following lines: "Arthur gives

³⁰ S. Groes. And P. Childs, *Julian Barnes: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, 2011, p. 153.

³¹ V. Guignery and R. Roberts , 2009, op. cit. p. 135.

assurance to everyone that Touie “will be shielded at all cost from knowledge, pain, and dishonour. That is my first principle. It will remain so.” (Barnes 2005: 246). Barnes puts a stress upon Arthur’s hindering his wife from knowing about him betraying her with another woman. As he once loved her, or rather thought he loved her just as much as he loved himself. It turned out that Jean not only made him experience a new kind of love, but she struck him into getting to know his true self as one that was buried, and hitherto unknown to him. She made him live life fully. The control which displays masks of identities is construed to the individual will and determination to be ascribed to a humane existence, humane not only to his self, but also to his other surrounding beloved ones. The “sense of duty”, according to Barnes, is of a crucial importance to fulfil a decent and accomplished-like abstract self-reality. This lies within the scope of selfishness, since he is being dutiful, loveable, and frame faithful to his wife only to make him content with his image and self conception. Otherwise said, it is his consciousness, humane values, and social status which prevented him from bluntly exposing his inhuman values and blunt self as it is. Goodness as opposed to evil are the striking points of monitoring one’s psyche which displays itself in the behaviour of an individual.

What Arthur does here, through Barnes’ symbolic verbosity, tone and exposition, tries to make a compromise or a reconciliation of both of the opposite forces fabricating an interloping (combining) fusion of two inevitable elements which form the existential reality and urges of Man, the hidden conflictual crisis in the deep-down-self of a human being.

Arthur’s interminable love to his mother, unconditional certainly, is quite unsurprising in the history of a human being, but how he refers to her as the basic pillar of his vital ‘iron-sided triangle’ (Barnes 2005: 267) is because, as Lawrence puts it:

... there is established between me and her a direct, powerful circuit of vital magnetism, call it what you will, but a direct flow of dynamic *vital* interchange and intercourse. I will not call this vital flow a *force*,

because it depends on the incomprehensible initiative and control of the individual soul or self. Force is that which is directed only from some universal will or law. Life is *always* individual, and therefore never controlled by one law, one God.³²

Indeed, Lawrence gives a straightforward explanation of this innate love which starts with the connection with a mother as being vital for a stable/settled living continuity. It is not explained; beyond the incomprehensible, neither is it a force driven by the politics of the whole natural world upon an individual. It is individualistic and should stem from the “soul-pulse” that the self impregnates. Arthur therefore relies much on his life’s decisions and is rather accountable of his mother’s guidance in clearing his path in existence.

His constant questioning upon matters of religiosity, and abstract spiritual, “spiritist” as he would prefer to name it, is consulted by his pious mother, and would consider these moral uncertainties and doubts as blaspheming:

. Arthur confides everything to the Mam: his deepest fears, his greatest elations, and all the intermediate tribulations and joys of the material world. What he can never allude to is his deepening interest in spiritualism, or spiritism as he prefers it. The Mam, having left Catholic Edinburgh behind, has become, by a sheer process of attendance, a member of the Church of England. Three of her children have now been married at St Oswald's: Arthur himself, Ida and Dodo. She is instinctively opposed to the psychic world, which for her represents anarchy and mumbo-jumbo. She holds that people can only come to any understanding of their lives if society makes clear its truths to them; further, that its religious truths must be expressed through an established institution, be it Catholic or Anglican. And then there is the family to consider. Arthur is a knight of the realm; he has lunched and dined with the King; he is a public figure — she repeats back to him his boast that he is second only to Kipling in his influence on the healthy, sporting young men of the country. What if it

³² D.H. Lawrence, “Vicious Circle”, in *Fantasia of the Unconscious: Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, 1971, p.131.

came out that he was involved in séances and suchlike? (Barnes 2005: 266)

But still, she takes them and swallows them despite her convictions, she contends that “perhaps proof is impossible anyway. Perhaps the best we can manage is thinking and believing. Perhaps we only truly know in the hereafter.” (Barnes 2005: 264)

This proves the unconditional state of connectedness between two individuals via the medium of love. The reason Arthur leans to his mother’s clarification or explanation of things is also due to her different self, quite different from that of Arthur. So much so that Arthur finds a kind of completion in the subtle relatedness of his person to hers. In this regard, Kierkegaard defines this situation of “free love” as that which, he writes, “... condemned every human relation wherein one human person “loves” another human person in the sense of absorbing the other as an extension of one’s own being.”³³

This notion of stating an individual, as a vital being in the existence of another is implicitly highlighted in the wondering urges on spiritism which was tormenting his mental state, and actual sense of existing/being. He leans to his mother as she is a completion of his own person: what he is not, his mother will complete the other missing part in his mind and self. This is why he associated his person to his mother’s throughout the infinite longings for his final decision-taking as well as the explanatory “behaviourism” of his sentimental and physical alterations. She is his guidance; and one could then think about a probable assumption of his spiritism or lack of faith in determining his principles. He is the founder of his own principles and laws which are contingent to his personal empirical experiences throughout his way in life. He considers his mother’s stances and positions as a pillar of his own selfhood, and therefore it could be assumed or taken for a sort of an already acquired faith, simply that it is not a world’s religion, but a person’s religiosity and convictions. These convictions of

³³ A. Bruce. Come, *Kierkegaard as humanist: discovering my self*, 1995, p. 379.

his mother set Arthur, the son, in a position where he no longer admits their questioning, but revising them -at a later stage of his life, adulthood or old age, since the consciousness of a near death process is ultimately unavoids- yet in a philosophical way, as in taking a religious dogma, and even cultural conformism and try to scrutinize them, strip them naked to their roots where the basis of their essence is founded.

Arthur questioning of religion harks back to his childhood where he debated the principles in the school yard with his schoolmates. This goes for the uncertainty of Arthur's sceptical position concerning the acknowledgement of the surrounding beliefs with rational and reasonable logic. Arthur's treatment of these principles is construed within the concept of agnosticism. Indeed, the factitiousness that these religious rules with the existence of the creator, God is so present that he could not reject them, but merely needed a tangible reason and explanation to them.

This great concern of Arthur's in the world of spiritism, or mainly the existence of God- who is fair- to his created individual within a fair society, happens to be triggered substantially right from the "consuming evil" for the disease which attacked his wife Touie into a "state of delirium" and thereafter to her extinction, death. He found himself helpless vis-à-vis that power above the "force" upholding the will of his life and his surrounding. This superpower which claims to be a fair and humanistic existence went even beyond belief when his life crossed the one of George Edalji who was inhumanely treated by the world power, or God-like presence, the government or Home Secretary and the Home Office, Justice as it is put: "The vicar described his son's treatment, by both the police and the Home Office, as *most shocking and heartless*. As for the conduct and conclusions of the Home Secretary and its committee: *This may be diplomacy, statecraft, but it is not what they would have done if he had been a son of an English squire or an English nobleman.*" (Barnes 2005: 436-437)

In fact, Barnes expresses – as the predominant themes shaping the novel – the problematics of the notion of “Englishness” and what it entails (from themes of Memory and Identity, both personal and national)³⁴. He seems to be involved in the debate with a new interest or rather a new issue that portrays the present day social spectrum. Hence, the novel echoes the contemporary present day national consciousness (and hence supranational by extrapolation) of issues of low crime and high spirituality. The latter seem to fit the ideal Englishman’s sense of honour and sense of duty which appeal itself in Arthur’s commitment to his wife, yet having a secret sexual intercourse with Miss Jean Leckie.

Opposing his spiritual beliefs, and being agnostic of his faith, he ignores all traditional Christian tenets and values. Yet, he displays some form of the guilt towards his wife whom he believes is full of innocence, as he had been cheating on her with his paramour Jean for some ten long years while she was being consumed, diseased. George also feels guilty when facing the police conviction, identity and nationality as well as race, and the big theme reoccurring constantly in Barnes novels and narrative in general (detective stories under pseudonyms and short stories) the problematics of wanting to know the deep truth, and therefore questioning and doubting notions of what we think, what we know, and what we believe. Matthew Pateman asserts this position in that: “Barnes novels are all searching for ways of knowing the world, each other; they all have characters who are striving for ways of finding meaning in an increasingly depoliticised, secularized, localized, and depth-less world”³⁵

Hence, throughout this narrative of an Edwardian sense/feel, Barnes makes the reader – either thematically or contextually speaking – encounter problematics of racial prejudice and “national identity that resonates with the contemporary assumptions about belonging and naturalization.”³⁶

³⁴ See Barnes 2005, p. 156.

³⁵ M. Pateman, *Julian Barnes: Writers and their Work*, 2002, p. 2.

³⁶ S. Groes and P. Childs, 2011, op. cit. p. 158.

Indeed, this is striking in the way Barnes constructs these prominent characters in a somehow self-ascribed and idealized identity, if we take the following example:

Irish by ancestry, Scottish by birth, instructed in the faith of Rome by Dutch Jesuits, Arthur became English. English history inspired him; English freedom made him proud; English cricket made him patriotic. And the greatest epoch in English history – with many to choose from – was the fourteenth century: a time when the English archer commanded the field, and when both the French and Scottish Kings were held prisoner in London... For Arthur the root of Englishness lay in the long-gone, long-remembered, long-invented world of chivalry. There was no knight more faithful than Sir Kaye, none so brave and amorous as Sir Lancelot, none so virtuous as Sir Galahad.... And of course there was no braver or more noble king than Arthur. (Barnes 2005: 31)

Arthur here is of Scottish and Irish mix, but still he considers himself as a true Englishman by conforming to the rules and boundaries of what being English entails. We now know what Barnes alludes to as to what Englishness really means historically. In other words, the author demystifies it by unmasking the myth of Englishness as being more of a socio-cultural nature rather than ethnic. Englishness as a notion appears to have been constructed and is attainable by a given set of prescriptive virtues only. The tone of the telling however confers a sort of coming mistrust and disillusionment at the end of the story.

Arthur is English at heart, and this sort of exaggerated idealization of “English freedom” always refers to a disappointing and counterclaim effect – as the story unfolds – of the earlier beliefs. Among other aspects of Arthur’s disillusionment of the fervently averred Englishness in its whole is the contribution of his involvement in the investigation of the miscarriage of Edalji which made him aware of the English; the reality of the worldly- acclaimed portrayal of freedom, fairness, righteousness, the beholders of rationality, emancipation, and a strong sense of duty.

Yet, this conscious identity realization “clearly and irrevocably weakened his belief in the English Justice system.”³⁷. George’s pride in his Englishness, on the other hand, is instilled by the repetitive instructions of his Parsee father Shapurji, as in:

- George where do you live?

- The Vicarage, Great Wyrley.

- And where is that?

- Staffordshire , father, is the beating heart of the Empire, father.

- And where is that?

- The centre of England.

- And what is England, George?”

- England is the beating heart of the Empire, father.

- Good. And what is the blood that flows through the arteries and veins of the Empire to reach even its farthest shore?

- The Church of England.

- Good, George. (Barnes 2005: 23)

George is being propelled into a typical “English indoctrination” as is mentioned to be a mythical notion of a secure English identity by the use of “mantra” which is tangentially related to the character of *England, England*; Martha Cochrane when she makes the children of the class chant the landmarks of the history of Great Britain.³⁸

³⁷ Ibid. p. 157.

³⁸ Julian Barnes, *England, England*, 1998, p. 11.

Thus, “Barnes clearly points out nationality’s artificiality, its often laborious acquisition, and its early imprint on impressionable children”³⁹. Accordingly, Barnes contends that this English national identity acquisition is immersed within George and Arthur unconsciously, despite their – literally speaking – unrelated blood line to the English breed. Barnes implicitly drives the reader to be aware of a sense of the “memory of a lost England”⁴⁰. George’s witty visualisation and alter thoughts implicitly render him blatant, wondering at a map of England staring at the Empire’s ‘bloodiness’ giving him “the pulse of blood in his ears” (Barnes 2005: 23-24). This pulse alludes to a confused state of mind, what England is, her greatness, lies in the English self-ascribed superiority, and the exaggerated nationalist and historical wars’ victories, the latter as being radiated from “a certain element of myth-making ... but their durability tell us something about the way the British see themselves. The common thread is sacrifice in an against-the-odds adventure. ... The impression is always of a small, nobly embattled people.”⁴¹

The Edwardian era is drawn or characterized by the conflictual social as well as the psychological state of individuals, being torn between preaching the dominant absolutism of religion, or the evolutionist rational absolutism of logicism, leading to the sceptic attitude towards absolutism, be it religious or scientific, since the predominance of the latter back at the early twentieth-century period. It induced the debasement of the spiritual/religious importance in shaping the individuals’ minds.

Arthur and George’s richness of the attributes of the Edwardian era are simply entangled:

...in order to express Edwardian anxieties that change, in particular, the mythical notion of a secure English identity as yet unscathed by two world wars...Whereas many twentieth-century novels depict the Edwardian era as some kind of Indian summer of English supremacy and unchallenged greatness, Barnes depicts, in particular, Edwardian Englishness as an unstable concept, one that is not necessarily, as

³⁹ S. Groes and P. Childs, 2011, op. cit. p.157.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p11.

⁴¹ J. Paxman, 1998, op. cit. p. 88.

common myth would have it, innate and inimitable, but on the contrary, one that is laboriously studied and painstakingly applied – a façade, rather than a nation’s pride.⁴²

For Barnes, when it comes to national identity, he shares the same position with J. Paxman on the myth-making of English identity. He happens to be unable to give a clear succinct definition of what makes an Englishman. He contends that it is a process through which:

We create something from fragments and bits of memory, national memory, and we stick it together with a very rough glue and then once it’s been there for a certain time, like a year, we think this is real, this is authentic, and then we celebrate it. It’s fabrication all over again—convincing ourselves of coherence between things that are largely true and things that are wholly imagined.⁴³

However what makes of this urge, of implementing “the idea of England” and define Englishness is a reductive sense of a nation, “the thinning down of the national culture of each country” is indeed is the price we’re paying for a “much greater homogenization and internationalization”⁴⁴ of the world.

Hence, Englishness, for Barnes, is only a “mythical” exertion and notion upon the unchallenged greatness of the English supremacy historically speaking, and a greatness being emulated and voiced in numerous narratives of the 20th century literature. An example is the English consideration of otherness as being of a lesser civilisational and even physical stratum and nature. In an interview, Barnes was asked to define the essence of the nature of being English, his response was that:

One of the things about the British, the English particularly, is that they’re not very good about what it means to be English. ... [but typically generally an Englishman or woman] You think that you are

⁴² S. Groes and P. Childs, 2011, op. cit. p. 156.

⁴³ V. Guignery and R. Roberts, 2009, op. cit. p. 63.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 142.

the norm and that everyone else is a variant form of what it is the norm. The Welsh and the Irish and Scots have always had the English to define themselves against, whereas the English don't really know who to define themselves against.⁴⁵

Englishness – which the reader perceives while reading the novel – is the Englishness of Barnes, through his wordy description of the characters and ironically enough, very elaborate and reminiscent of a English typical blue-blood's self-ascribed superior genes. It is here where the old Edwardian displayed superiority of the English towards the other is brought to a blatant similitude with the 21st postmodern century Englishman (i.e., Barnes himself). This suggests the long-forged inevitability of the self-applied superiority of Englishness over “otherness”. The former, as being ascribed to *the* civilisation throughout the 20th century, seems to entangle a sceptical view regarding its authenticity in the late 20th century/early 21st century , an example of the critical study by Jeremy Paxman *The English: A Portrait of a People*, in which he notes the viewpoint of a visitors – around the late 1400's and early 1500's, “the English are great lovers of themselves...” and an Englishman takes it a pity that nice-looking foreigners were not English, implying they were a lesser human being.⁴⁶ Another illustration of Paxman quoting the visitors, here, the Dutch merchant, Emmanuel van Meteren's positin on the English; “The people are bold, courageous, ardent and cruel in war, but very inconstant, rash, vainglorious, light and deceiving, and very suspicious, especially of foreigners, whom they despise’.⁴⁷

Indeed, the contributory influences and aspects in the setting apart of the English as a unique race alongside their self-appointed superiority are majorly due to the isolation of the land of Great Britain. “They were born on an island rather living on a continental landmass“⁴⁸ has had an effect since “geography matters; it makes people who they are.”⁴⁹. The second fact is a known incident in the history of

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ J. Paxman, 1998, op. cit. p. 35.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. viii.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 3.

Great Britain, “They came from a country where Protestant reformation had put the Church firmly in its place. They had inherited a deep belief in individual liberty.”⁵⁰

Again, historically speaking, the powerful armada of Queen Elizabeth I, the First which defeated the most powerful nation of Spain back at the time, has earned the English a sense of pride and strength, alongside their victories during the Second World War asserted the English sense of duty towards their land. However these victories are being reported in a delusional exaggeration or not, England has perished in a sense pride and honour, which are their most possessed prize for the English.

Nevertheless, the most important factor in the English superior contentment owes to the role of the Protestant Church of Henry VIII demand for the reformation, putting Protestantism ahead of Catholicism. “In a sense, England is hardly a Protestant country at all. As every schoolboy knows, its national church was invented so that Henry VIII could get a divorce.”⁵¹

Hence the particular sense of pride and national identity, The English owes it much to the invention of Anglicanism, since it is agreed upon that “the invention of the Church of England *was* the invention of England.” P.97 even though the English “were not in any meaningful sense religious, the Church of England being a political invention which had elevated being ‘a good chap’ to something akin to canonization.”⁵². They had what they call a self-created religion conceived under the omission of the tyranny of the Roman Catholicism, with a book replacing the Bible which was the most valuable book in the land after the Bible; that of John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs (which appeared in 1563)*, the aim of which was to strengthen the English confidence in alleviating their reluctance over the withering away of Catholicism. It described how the Protestants were persecuted and executed during Queen Mary’s attempt to turn England back to

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 3.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 98.

⁵² Ibid. p. 6.

Rome, it has, indeed, hugely contributed to rendering England anti-clerical, and that's how the English like their religion to be.

Assumingly, Englishness happens to be of a 'mythical' constructedness, reinforced by the historical background of England. Secondly, the theme of identity as- fictionally speaking of the novel, has an actual post-war social dimension, rather crisis, alluding to the mass immigration alongside to the psychological and existential (substantial), and social conflictual issue of belonging of the citizens of a foreign descent, and therefore to what extent could naturalization's role be decisive of one's cultural and national categorisation.

Hence, Englishness, for Barnes, is only a 'mythical' exertion and notion upon the unchallenged greatness of the English Supremacy historically speaking, and a greatness being emulated and voiced in numerous narratives of the 20th century literature. An example is the English consideration of otherness as being of a lesser civilisational and even physical nature.

Barnes's abounding tangible illustration of the Edwardian era permits him to give an overall idea about the exact feel and tone for its creation. The social, human, ideological, and religious aspect of the whole era is what Barnes tends to superpose over the detailed short period on that era. This helps his readers have a view over the broad characteristics of the period covering the social and ideological mood which shaped not only the period at the historical level, but also the attributes that propelled and constrained the protagonists throughout their lives. Thus, the importance of the conflicts and dilemmas, as witnessed in Arthur's doubts of any religious essence, casts doubts upon the authenticity of love, and upon what essentially constitutes a human being in terms of identity related to the long forged Englishness. The idealization of the latter throughout centuries, encompassing honour, sense of duty as displayed in Arthur's dutiful model role to his diseased wife Touie and his "dishonourable" and immoral infatuation to Jean Leckie are very striking aspects of the period. This demeans the properties of the Edwardian era, in the sense that within that period, whereby a realistic stance came to strike the English people on the face, as they happen to have lost the long constructedness of what makes their "greatness" on the

civilisational spectrum.

Barnes put forward Doyle's chivalric mannerism towards women, despite his contradicting sexual oppressive expressiveness. The latter statement is reflected in an interview again, with Stuart Jeffries (2005), which Barnes assumingly relate this English typicality vis-à-vis sex to "[...] a tradition of English emotional reticence which can easily fall away into inexpressive oppressiveness and frigidity"⁵³. An attitude presumed proper to the English as known throughout the centuries, in books we read and movies, even real life when being in the land of Great Britain, however Barnes seems to mourn that period, alluding to a sort of "there used to be an England so idiosyncratically distinguished, unique and different, with its characteristics so proper to 'her', it's no more that England nowadays, it's been commercialized and 'universalized', merged into the world mono version mould."⁵⁴

Revealing as it were the inner functioning of this period, yet general scene of the typical Edwardian society, Barnes not only posters the ideal Englishness but he also gives a historical transition of what the old England was and what is becoming. He even alludes to the imperceptible and inevitable existence of these conflictual matters, the psychological and the social, to have a long rooted essence, and implicitly clamours the visibility of these traits as being attributes of the English societal "uniqueness".

⁵³ V. Guignery and R. Roberts , 2009, op. cit. p. 132.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 143.

II.3. Eschatology in Barnes's Articulation of the Absence of Spirituality in English Society

The matter of thinking about death, as in the extinction of his wife and thinking about his own and the human being passing away through a discussion with his sister Connie, implicitly triggers another matter in Arthur's circumstantial pace in his psyche. This sets the reader of this novel – related to real individuals – to conclude the problematics of Mortality in Arthur's mind and conceptions. Indeed, the problem of Mortality and Eschatology⁵⁵ as it were, is Barnes's most tackled theme in his later work such as *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008), *Sense of an Ending* (2011) and *Pulse* (2011).

A tragic historical novel depicting the Victorian characters Arthur and George whose heteropolar background and nature designate a common ethical urge for the sake of righteousness as well as social, or moral, and peculiarly human(e) justice. Hence the omniscient tone of the author in the narrative reveals a sort of melancholic venture which reflects or call for the reader's empathy.

The venture is powerfully abounding in sceptic attitudes of the author, or the narrator towards the trial of George Edalji as well as the relating complex matters of existence such as the legitimacy of moral righteousness, historical reports, and on the broad spectrum; what Jean François Lyotard ascribes as “incredulity toward metanarrative” to postmodernism. The latter both as a concept and social mood

⁵⁵ Eschatology is a branch of theology concerned with the final events in the history of the world or of humankind. A belief concerning death, the end of the world, or the ultimate destiny of humankind; *specifically* : any of various Christian doctrines concerning the Second Coming, the resurrection of the dead, or the Last Judgment. Cf. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/eschatology>, accessed September 1, 2012.

The most important themes of the novel considers the validity or authority of the existence of spiritism throughout indirect thematic questionings in the free indirect discourse, as the author ponders notions of Death, Identity Honour, Love, and religion, and mostly upon what we are to legitimize the truthfulness of narratives of the past. How could we assert the viability of absolute truths or dogmas? Death is juxtaposed with Life right from the first lines of the novel, as Arthur faces the image and memory of a “waxen” which is to have strong impact on his own life. This pictorial description implies Arthur’s constant quest of whether there exists a survival after death or not, as well as the sacred book of religion, This realm of religion leads George to ponder the existence of God and often very abstract, say metaphysical matters. This memory is to shape the psyche and root of his ongoing in life.

The author through his fictionalization permits himself to infer his own religious and anxieties, fears which he reveals later in his memoirs *Nothing to be Frightened of*, i.e. nothing to fear from death, as the doubt he displays upon the legitimacy of absolute dogmas and sacred narrative. He views our relation to the world and its history, or rather our/Man’s relation with history as being ‘narrated’⁵⁶. ‘Fiction, in its own mode of narration, is an historical record reflecting the changes in ideological concerns of the time of its production. [...] These authors’ use of referentiality and a greater diversity in considering what can be ‘history’, present I both historical material and historicised narratives, is combined to produce complementary effects of inclusiveness without conclusiveness.’ Hence the representation of history in literature ‘constitutes an opening up of possibilities for finding meanings from fictive pasts, yet one that resists desire for stability in those meanings.’ The conclusiveness of coherent accounts of historical past is different now, it is “plural, self-aware of its constructed status, and reliant on a larger range of mediums of recording”⁵⁷

⁵⁶ S. Groes and P. Childs, 2011, op. cit. p. 149.

⁵⁷ J. Acheson and S. C. E. Ross, 2005, op. cit. p. 214.

Barnes nevertheless, conveys a conglomerate of many themes, infinite actually of the hidden philosophies behind the nature of the legitimacy of the truth and the plausibility of historical records, the relationship between the received or preconceived data and unquestionable dogmas and their acquisition in the human mind vis-à-vis the attitude of Man towards them. Thus with regards to the ‘spiritism’ of Arthur’s, so beautifully and fictionally elaborated by the author, contours the existence of Man and his struggle, yet hidden condition of Man as faced with the issues and questionings of Mortality. Barnes relies on the analysis of the blind digestive cognitive conditioning of such religious rules and states of the aftermath of the human existence. Arthur as a scientifically avid proponent from his middle years until his graduation as a GP seems to have leant to a more spiritualist and philosophical way. This is reminiscent to the first line, of the first image and of his grandmother’s “white waxen thing” (Barnes 2005: 03), an image which stresses the importance of a first memory which eventually shapes matters of memory, the authenticity of love and human relationships as in motherhood and the constant varied changes of the inevitable alterations in Man’s life, maturity, and death as related to religious or rather existential matters, spiritual doubts.

This first line as opposing the beginning and ending of a life, birth and death. The birth and early consciousness of Arthur as a little boy with his first conscious memory of his grandmother ‘waxen corpse’, forms the first and last obsession which foregrounds his memory, Arthur went from being a boy with a talent of imagination which he imbibed at his mother’s knee throughout the stories she recounted him, stories of heroic ancestors and medieval Chivalry which shapes the greatness of Englishness. The latter also made Arthur ponder this illusive conventional admission of English as being a set apart civilization, which shaped and still does shape Barnes writing. Retrieving to the matter of Arthur’s ‘spiritism’ as tackled by Death, his obsession - throughout Barnes words and own creative and actual issues he tries to solve- came to exist not only from the first phase of his childhood, meaning the first conscious memory, vision, and instinctive innocent urge to learn and see as he stumbled upon mother’s ‘waxen corps while walking on into a room, but also has been reinforced with the

experiences he faced in his life. These existential issues, such as the matter of Death, Identity or National, as well as the authenticity of human nature (love and ethical relationships, the bond between relatives and so on, Barnes assumes, well the postmodern reader assumes that they shape the human psyche and version of existence in general, Arthur's and Barnes's, but also any human being's.

Arthur's second incident which set him question this matter of death and existence in the aftermath, is stressed while Arthur's realization of his wife Touie, inevitable death, when being consumed by tuberculosis. This matter of death, is seen in his conversation with his mother, who thinks her son is slipping away from the Christian church that she and her daughter Connie embody. This consumption, illness which attacked his wife, "the accursed microbe which was intending to consume her vitals." (Barnes 2005: 95)

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

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

The slow death of Louisa Hawkins, Arthur's wife, being referred to inconspicuously or directly, seems to shape most of the 2nd Chapter, a thing which is the basis for Arthur's ulterior rationale of his reasoning throughout his life, the professional as well as the personal.

Characters, mainly Arthur, have a strong theological dimension, as stated by Frank Kermode in what he calls 'end-determined fictions'⁵⁸. These narratives are in fact defined by the search for a meaningful resolution at the ending. Indeed, as related to theology and spirituality as concerned here particularly, George attends a Spiritual memorial for Sir Arthur despite his sceptical attitude upon the obscure insignificance of an existing afterlife. The latter statement is what Arthur endeavoured to prove by his philosophy of spiritism. It is that of one's identity is never to meet an ending, it exists 'physically' in the brief light of seeing called life, but will 'spiritually' encounter two polarised sets of existence of darkness in both the physical and spiritual lives. George reflects that:

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

Writing such a narrative, emphatically going on the question of spiritualism as related to a sceptical agnostic position regarding religion 'Barnes represents Doyle as a restless soul given to the same kind of melancholy as his literary alter ego'⁵⁹ Indeed, when reading the novel, the reader feels the resonance of Barnes inner voiced anxieties. Any piece of writing - particularly the fictional genre- it is inevitable for the writer not to voice his inner thoughts, conceptions, and even what he's most frightened of , his anxieties, just as his most pleasurable dreams and urges, yet through a character which portrays these aspects of yours. This is the power of fiction, you could be very realistic, autobiographical, but implicitly, your voice and person disguised through another owner of your self, the characters which you make of them puppets of your own speech. This is what Barnes and majorly postmodern fiction do. Intertextual references are abounding. Hence Barnes's self-reflective voice and inevitable voice concerned with the

⁵⁸ Kermode, Frank, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, 1967, p.6.

⁵⁹ S. Groes and P. Childs, 2011, op. cit. p. 8.

spiritual resonance of his through Arthur, as well as of any human beings is inevitable. Penetrating any narrative, looking through the metaphorical version and interpretation of the themes alongside the details the author stresses on, are unquestionably of his own creation, yet hidden perceptions, thoughts, fears, as is the case here, Barnes's anxiety upon the sacred legitimacy of the matter of religion and spirituality which are blatant and constant. Barnes portrays his self through Arthur's voice concerning the problematic, or rather unsolved mysteriousness of bringing proof to the world of spirituality and religion. The way Barnes put forward his fears is through questioning the authenticity of his Roman Catholic upbringing throughout his schooling years, and later at an adulthood phase whereby this doubting attitude is exposed in oppugning matters of existentialism⁶⁰. The latter are high pitched and related to the abstract spiritual beliefs, which are ignited by the authenticity and truthfulness of love, and the investigative hypothesis Arthur formed, the stratagem of which he is to trace its legitimacy.

This inter relatedness of spiritualist theme conjures not only of religion, existentialist issues of Man such as mortality, and how man does conceive his death, but also how George's wrong conviction would contribute in illustrating or shedding light upon the reality of existence and the uncontrolled power of a supernatural existence which forms and guide one's life. He goes on framing Arthur's death as a celebration of a prominent British proponent of spiritualism, and implicitly agnosticism, when George attends the Albert spiritual Memorial for Arthur's who died on 7 July 1930. This celebration is paradoxical since the great creator of Sherlock Holmes passed away, but leaving a trace of the mortal but everlasting existence of an individual, in the form of their spirit. George had a close vision upon the Memorial, 'he swept slowly up the Memorial, above the levels at which art and science and industry held sway, above the seated figure of

⁶⁰ J.A.Cuddon defines it as follows: "Philosophically, it now applies to a vision of the condition and existence of man, his place and function in the world, and his relationship, or lack of one, with God...." See his *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 1999, pp. 294-295.

the pensive Consort, up to a higher realm. The burred knob was hard to control, and sometimes there was a mass of unfocused foliage filling the lens, but eventually he emerged at the plain vision of a chunky Christian cross' (Barnes 2005: 339). The medium directing the memorial states that Arthur's present, his spirit. Out of confusion, George resorts to his binoculars again to get to some proved explanation by observation, expecting to *see* Arthur, but a lady sitting behind him notes: 'You will only see him with the eyes of faith' (Barnes 2005: 355). It is here where George relates the legitimacy of truthfulness to his case, whose hypothesis Arthur assumed out of intuition (humanized property). Arthur not only believed and perceived George's innocence, but he knew it. He trusted and had faith in his inner voice, and worked for it to prove it under rational scientific analysis of observable criteria. Hence the hybrid construction of both the observed scientific experience related to the abstract and non palpable, uncontrolled power of faith, and belief, which render the impossible possible by construction only. The hybrid strategy also resides in the connectedness or merging rather of two literary sub-genres, the novel; the fictional, with the realistic biography, the authentic. Objective and imaginative structure do collide to form Barnes's unique yet experimental strategy of writing fiction.

Arthur's emulation for every sort of English rooted object and being belongs to the historical setting of England, and Great Britain at large. Still, the different characters of George and Arthur may hint at the different sorts of Englishmen; hence the discrepancy of the protagonists' personification lies within their polarised points of view upon one's existence and discipline to shape their path throughout life. Arthur is of an Irish descent, Scottish by birth, he became English due to the instruction into the faith of Rome by Dutch Jesuits.⁶¹ Arthur's struggle with his identification to a conformist sort of moralist figure has led to the construction of his own beliefs, or to relate it to the non-fictional narrative - *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008) - Arthur constructed his own "Idea of God"⁶²

⁶¹ See Barnes, *Arthur and George*, 2005, p. 31.

⁶² Julian Barnes, *Nothing to be Frightened of*, 2008, p. 45.

(Barnes: 2008: 45) and religion. As far as accepted virtues are concerned, he views himself as a “spiritist”, or spiritual. Indeed this led him to ponder over the institutionalized dogmas of what religion is in general, away from the religious indoctrination which his sister, Connie portrays. This fact of spiritual thought led the novel, *Arthur and George*, to turn into a sort of philosophical quest for truth and peculiarly Doyle’s own confessions upon the Creator, and therefore God’s role of moulding and guiding His “created” puppets’ circumstantial lives.

CHAPTER III : Agnosticism in *Nothing to be Frightened of*

III. 1. Agnosticism in *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008)

Agnosticism is often misunderstood as atheism. There are several misconceptions about it. It is conceived of as a philosophy or simply an isolated position on the existence of God. Its definition rather contentious as some agnostics continue to think that agnosticism represents a kind of "third way" between atheism and theism. It was originally conceived by Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895). He invented the term to describe what he thought:

They were quite sure that they had attained a certain "gnosis" -- had more or less successfully solved the problem of existence; while I was quite sure I had not, and had a pretty strong conviction that the problem was insoluble.¹

It is basically a "skeptical challenge to the notion that any religious conclusion can really be "known" in the first place."² The agnostic holds that human knowledge is limited to the natural world, that the mind is incapable of knowledge of the supernatural. Understood this way, an agnostic could also be a theist or an atheist. The former is called a *fideist*, one who believes in God purely on faith. The latter is sometimes accused by theists of having *faith in the non-existence of god*, but the accusation is absurd and the expression meaningless. The agnostic atheist simply finds no compelling reason to believe in God. In the British tradition, agnosticism has often been seen as "reasonable" or tenable and has played (and still does) an important role in the philosophy of religion.

Barnes idiosyncratic leitmotif thematics are constrained within the spectrum of the knowability of the truth behind the institutional religions, the existence of God, and mostly the matter of old-age, death and dying. In Barnes

¹ <http://skepdic.com/agnosticism.html>, accessed on September 14th, 2012.

² http://atheism.about.com/od/aboutagnosticism/Agnosticism_Agnostics_What_Do_Agnostics_Believe_W hats_Agnosticism.htm, accessed on September 14th, 2012.

eschatology, there are two deaths. The first death as he refers to Montaigne's, is: "the death of youth, which often takes place unnoticed, is the harder death", the second death which "what we habitually refer to as 'death', is no more than the death of old age."³

Nothing to be frightened of is a meditative account upon the disconsolations of mortality, it is 'a book about books, anecdotes, and thoughts about final things, as well as Barnes own experiences of mortality'⁴. The human's extinction is what appeals to him. He discloses it as being unnatural to conceive one of his/her extinction after all the living, irrelevant bitterness which strikes Man paralysed to make a sense out of his/her existence when there is an ending at the end. Barnes *thanatophobia*⁵, or frightfully fear of death is relentlessly disclosed throughout his works, and it is mentioned in the second chapter of this dissertation, with Arthur's conversation with his sister Connie, about the thought of it and the possible reconciliation for it as being unanswered. Terrestrial eternity is a wish of all human beings, and the complaining self about it of no remedy. 'Fuck off and die' (uttered 4 times; twice on page 88, again on page 226, and another time on page 249), Barnes assumes of Life. The finite Nothingness after death, is the major protagonist of this narrative as mentioned previously. Nothingness, as of the title suggests, is the most frightened of agent, '*the word that is most true, most exact, most filled with meaning, is the word 'nothing'.*' (J. Barnes 2005: 100)

The 'Nothing' of the title itself is very reminiscent, actually vividly evocative - for those familiar with Barnes's writings and thematics - of the first page of the previous, yet fictional narrative 'Arthur and George'. Arthur, as a child, stumbled on scene which was to shape his first memory, 'a white waxen

³ Julian Barnes, *Nothing to be Frightened of*, (2008), p. 42. All forthcoming quotations from this book and their page numbers will be mentioned between brackets.

⁴ Sebastian Groes, and Peter Childs, *Julian Barnes*, (2011), p. 133.

⁵ An irrational, excessive fear of death and the ending of existence, be it the human's or the universe's.

thing'⁶, his grandmother's corpse being shown to him, 'Perhaps ... There might have been a desire to impress upon the child the horror of death; or, more optimistically, to show him that death was nothing to be feared.' That 'Nothing' of the title is 'The word that is most true, most exact, most filled with meaning' (Barnes 2008: 100, 164). It is the void, the ending, the nothingness which Barnes frightfully fears and makes of it the driving pulse of this catharsis form of revelatory narrative. Nothingness, for Barnes, is a sense-provider of irrelevance to life's meaningfulness. It is obviously denoting his melancholic yearnings for a full understanding of life meaningfulness with regards to Religion, specifically Death and the extent at which one does believe in our 'Risen Lord' (Barnes 2008: 53).

Barnes does retrieve this notion of death fearing in accordance to existential dilemma of Man even fictionally, as in *Arthur and George*.

Indeed, the human's extinction is what appeals to him. He discloses it as being unnatural to conceive one of his/her extinction after all the living, irrelevant bitterness which strikes Man paralysed to make a sense out of his/her existence when there is an ending at the end. Barnes thanatophobia, or frightfully fear of death is relentlessly disclosed throughout his works, and it is mentioned in the second chapter of this dissertation, with Arthur's conversation with his sister Connie, about the thought of it and the possible reconciliation for it as being unanswered. Arthur goes:

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

⁶ Julian Barnes, *Arthur and George*, (2005), p.3.

⁷ Julian Barnes, *Arthur and George*, 2005, p.180.

Barnes's book under study here opens with "I don't believe in God, but I miss" (Barnes 2008: 1) as the first sentence of the narrative. Quite daring, and preposterous for the religious, as well as "soppy"- his elder brother, Jonathan Barnes⁸ responds to Julian Barnes when asked what he makes of this attitude when asked about religion. Barnes delineates his sense of Missing God as an attitude people holds when they approach their ending, a response for their fear of death and the unknown afterlife which claims itself by some will to belief, or a sudden religious interest and piety. Throughout this narrative, the author not only provides some speculations which might have formed the nature of his fear of death as well as his sense of Missing the Lord. This comes in a sort of a way to find comfort somewhere against the hauntedness of his extinction. Barnes escapes his *timor mortis*⁹ (a 'replacement' for or rather endeavouring to find some reconsolidation against the disconsoling nature of its stateliness). On this issue, Barnes states that:

Fear of death replaces fear of God. But fear of God ... at least allowed for negotiations. We talked God down from being the Vengeful One and rebranded Him the Infinitely Merciful; we changed Him from Old to New, like the Testaments and the Labour Party. We levered up His graven image, put it in runners, and dragged it to a place where the weather was sunnier. We can't do the same with death. Death can't be talked down, or parlayed into anything; ... It is impervious to insult, complaint or condescension."(Barnes 2008: 70)

In an interview, Barnes states that: 'I fear death and I believe there is nothing after it, but does this necessarily make it courageous of me not to believe in God? I just think he doesn't exist and that's it.'¹⁰ For him, Religion is not an option in alleviating his fear. "I had no faith to lose" Barnes notes that given his family's "background of attenuated belief combined with brisk irreligion" (Barnes 2008: 12), he had "nothing to rebel against", "I had no faith to loose" He states in

⁸ Jonathan Barnes, a Philosopher of Ancient Philosophy, taught at the Sorbonne, Vienna, and Oxford. He now lives in France.

⁹ Barnes writes; *timor mortis* of Latin origin, which is the equivalent of fear of death. Julian Barnes, 2008, p. 98.

¹⁰ V. Guignery and R. Roberts, *Conversations with Julian Barnes*, 2009, p. 164.

an interview¹¹ that he grew up in a liberal household, with an atheist mother who was conservative politically, and an agnostic yet liberal/conservative Father. They weren't overtly tolerant just avoiding the mumbo jumbo that the church offered. "I was never baptized, never sent to Sunday school. I have never been to a normal church service in my life. ... I am constantly going into churches, but for architectural reasons; and, more widely, to get a sense of what Englishness once was" (Barnes 2008: 25).

Barnes being inoculated to the scope of Death and mortality-related matters give way to other matters which help delineate Barnes' fear of - as the title suggests- 'Nothing', or more correctly, Fear of the 'Nothingness'

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

Old age is considered as moment of 'breathing decrepitude', loss of lucidity, loss of memory, accompanied by delirium, mental agony, physical deterioration; the aging torture. Yet this is inevitable, the post- mortal and termination condition. What Barnes alludes to/deduces of this post- mortal, terminating condition is the regret which entails of this loss of the self, an extreme agony of a kind, and regrets of self-pity while being aware of their withering stage. His father's 'sceptic' contemplation at physiotherapy is, as being an 'absurd' mode of hopelessly hopeful recovery; 'delusional' - similar to his mother's 'decline of the hypothetical recovery' - since "it wouldn't make a difference to his condition". His old long-used physical agents have come to their exasperated over functioning, ultimately to their ending. This sense of despair is the most pitied, apprehended for Barnes Julian, and that is approached to his mother's "way of dealing with [his] father's condition was to stress her own inconvenience and sufferings". She apprehends her coming-of-dependency

¹¹ Ibid.

moment. Her refute of old age and its eventual, entailing condition is completely human, a way of not conceiving the sufferings which await her.

Similarly, Barnes parallels, though indirectly, this approach of his mother's and the humans' post-termination anxiety to John Miller's, which is compared to Freud's "own inconceivability of his own extinction". "Life Vs Death becomes Old age Vs Death"¹² Barnes refer to Montaigne's, just as old age becomes a sort of a pre-death in life. "What makes you think the thing you have at the moment is life?" (Barnes 2008: 41) Caesar tells his former legionary in agony. Approaching death, is similar to all individuals, Barnes' father answering his wife's almost mean question if he remembered who she was: 'I think you're my wife', or telling Julian at his departure of home: 'next time, bring ... bring ... then he stuck. ... Bring ... bring ...' His expression was now one of furious frustration at his own brain. ... Bring ... Julian's wife.' (Barnes 2008: 102-103) Isn't this undeniably depressing. Barnes provides other similar examples of old-age decrepitude, Emmanuel Chabrier not recognizing his own music, or Ravel's joining the applaud -at a musical party- addressed to him, thinking the applaud was to his Italian friend sitting next to him. Or, as occurred to Chabrier, Ravel exclaiming, at one of his composed music at the record studio, 'That was really very good. Remind me of the composer.' His condition, well, old age condition is 'inoperable'. Another illustration is Daudet's forgetfulness of his being a famous playwright. But isn't 'this [...] poignant enough to forget what we were'¹³? Barnes asserts/admits. (but I formed it to a question). The answer of which is – according to my ordinary and humble opinion – that it is senseless to bring upon such matters, these matters shouldn't be divulged for the simple reason behind their disclosures.

The human Condition, dilemma, is already enough despairing, least of all when being heard, read about, or maybe, we might find, or rather we surely find, some relief in approaching what we frightfully fear since we don't need to remind

¹² J. Barnes, *Nothing to be Frightened of*, 2008, p. 143.

¹³ *Ibid.* 155.

ourselves of our inevitable mortality , we are being reminded of, ‘mortality [rather], or more truthfully ...reminding me of itself [and which is deduced from that this remindedness of itself might be viewed as] a useful and necessary prod’ (Barnes 2008: 139)

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

In fact, this contemplation of oblivion comes to no matter. Barnes seems to be saying that it doesn’t matter if we are pre-cynical of our mortal enclosure, what matters, is that there is death of the human, just as there is an ending of a book, or a novel. Hence, Barnes suggests that if there was no ending, it would be lacking something, ‘the pinch of salt which intensifies the flavour” (Barnes 2008: 89) of life, just as the judgement of an open-ending book is viewed as lacking ‘compactness towards the end’. Barnes describes death as ‘the spell of Darkness’, Mortal termination’, the ending of one’s self. He states the death of several of his progenitors, his ‘life’s true companions’, the anxiety they endure approaching their death or right at the moment of it, on the spot. And every now and then, gives an account of his parents ‘breathing decrepitude’, their last moments from their initial strokes. His father’s death, in 1992, ‘was his death’, but his mother’s in 1997, ‘was their death’.¹⁴

For the author, religion in England has drained away smoothly, though continually. He contends that the Christian religion has lasted because it is: “a beautiful lie, ... a tragedy with a happy ending” (Barnes 2008: 73).

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

¹⁴ In fact, Barnes claims to have inherited his father’s genetic replica, in being sentimentalist, despite the fact that he despised his gentle yet indifferent servitude or obedience to his ruling wife.

my family vestigial to nonexistent sense of religion over successive generations is typical of what has happened to religion in Britain, at least in terms of the indigenous British Anglicans. ... I live in a country where members of the official religion of the state, Anglicanism, produce fewer people going to church every Sunday than Catholics whom Anglicans have been per – often very successfully - for centuries. And there are few practicing Anglicans than Muslims now in this country. So I'm obviously taking about the traditional white English – also English rather than Scottish or Irish – remnant or whatever we call ourselves, we're a majority – majority remnant. I think that the way that religion has seeped away in our family can be used as an example.¹⁵

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

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

Here appears the temporary feeling of immortality which art offers when Man does escape his mortality or extinction to find comfort in art. Religion offers eternal immortality though it is less sustained, only through scriptures, the credibility of which is doubted. But art is there, one could feel it, experience it, or; read it as with the silent art, linguistically, it is sustainable/ tangible. Hence the gravitation towards art, due to religious escapism, is more likely, more appealing.

For him, art could be a consoling mode or solace, for those sceptical of religion, which does entail the promised immortality longed for by Man. Art or

¹⁵ V. Guignery and R. Roberts, *Conversations with Julian Barnes*, 2009, p. 165-166.

the ‘*sublime beauty*’ (Barnes 2008: 99) – as is referred to by Beyle or Stendhal; the latter as the *nom de plume* he gave himself – and religion happen to be oxymoronic parallels, the nature and aims of each are quite similar. That’s to say - as according to Professor S. of Cambridge whose note Barnes uses in his memoir - art is: “essentially religious because the artist aims at immortality by avoiding ‘the banal democracy of death’ ” (Barnes 2008: 76).

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

Religion, he says, ‘gave human life a sense of context, and therefore seriousness’ (Barnes 2008: 57); it is metaphorically considered as ‘a rehearsal’ for the human’s immortality of the promised afterlife. As for art, it does provide a sense of immortality, yet only an oxymoronic sort of ‘*temporary*’ immortality. This notion of Art, which could be viewed as ‘a psychological replacement for religion’ (Barnes 2008: 75), death and the void, echoes Barnes first novel; *Metroland* (1980), the protagonist of which, Christopher Lloyd, discusses the matter as ‘the big D’, noting that: ‘I wouldn’t mind Dying at all, I thought, as long as I didn’t end up dead at the end of it’ (Barnes 1980: 101). The latter does not stand for the real Death, only a metaphor of contemplating at a piece of art which gives him a temporary sense of immortality. This autobiographical novel of Barnes proves the long ago and the still-recurrent escapism – or “the humorous resignation advocated by Somerset Maugham” (Barnes 2008: 94) resignation

which provides him comfort within the mode Art in all of its form, visual, linguistic – say music, paintings, literature... etc.

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

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

Having been awoken by what Barnes’ friend, Charles du Bos names ‘*le réveil mortel*’ (Barnes 2008: 23), the author translates it as “the wake-up call to mortality”(p.23) and makes of it the protagonist of his divulging, catharsis-form narrative. Barnes doesn’t go on writing the psychotherapy of a long-ago haunting fear of his; say mortal awareness and Death fearing, but simply tries to finally write what he long ago, in his 40s, began to, and the first line of which was “let’s

get this death thing straight' (Barnes 2008: 190). He maintains later that this memoir-ish account of his *thanatophobia*¹⁶ being revealed, is a mere 'research for your book', addressing the reader who in turn tries to dwell on the matter of complexities that the universe offers. Throughout the memoir, if we are not taken into death speculations and meditations of some of Barnes' progenitors and his as well, the author does provide the process of death of (for example): Jules Renard, Montaigne, Daudet, Somerset Maugham, George Sand and George Braque, Sibelius, Ravel, and many others.

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

Christian morality still loosely governs Britain ... my sense of morality is influenced by Christian teaching (or, more exactly, pre-Christian tribal behaviours codified by the religion); and the God I don't believe in yet miss is naturally the Christian God of Western Europe and non-fundamentalist America. ... I don't miss Allah or Buddha, anymore than I miss Odin or Zeus. And I miss the New Testament God rather than The Old Testament one.' Tracing which God he misses, he continues: 'I miss the God that inspired Italian painting, and French stained glass, German music and English chapter houses, ... which were once symbolic beacons in the darkness and the storm. (Barnes 2008: 117-118)

We can see here that he is trying to unmask religion (at least the one he knows of and discusses, Christianity) as merely another sort of art, representational, or a codified schism which offers clarification, and Man-created. He further claims that "Some see art as a psychological replacement for religion ... [since] art and religion will always shadow one another through the abstract nouns they both invoke: truth, seriousness, imagination, sympathy, morality, transcendence." (Barnes 2008: 76-77)

¹⁶ An irrational, excessive fear of death.

The God he misses is the God of Art, despite some contingent misunderstanding in these quotes, both Gods are inferred here, but the God he prefers over the other is the God of Art. That is his inspiration for truth; Art. Reading the Bible as literature, is ‘boring’, ‘not beautiful’ for him, since ‘the more beautiful [the text is], the more true’. Beauty goes with truth, and vice versa. The bible is tyrannical, reductive of the human’s free-will. Hence, the English, whose professing of freedom, leaves no room for any scripture or philosophy which demise their liberty and freedom.

Some may regard art as ‘a psychological replacement for religion’ take the example of Flaubert who claims that ‘the religion of art’ is stronger than the mere ‘love of art’. However this claim is rebuked by a modern critic of Cambridge, Professor S who argues that art and religion do coexist in the same strand, since religion promises resurrection, say, the eternal afterlife after death, just as art who in itself ‘is essentially religious because the artist aims at immortality by avoiding ‘the banal democracy of death’’. (Barnes 2008: 76)

For his part, Barnes tells us, Zola describes the death of Daudet, George Sand and George Braque as being ‘*une belle mort*’. However Barnes being sceptical upon this notion, takes it for an optimistic exaggeration, since no such a thing actually exist, death is comparable to the smell of ‘the stink of decomposition.’’ (Barnes 2008: 96). In his tone, Who would want that? What’s beautiful about it? The finite extinction of the human being, the physical dependence, and probably old age is similar to delirium, agony, and dependency, is what Barnes frightfully fears. Besides, Julian Barnes, being a rational, yet sentimental person, could no more bear the exasperation of extreme rationality such as, his brother’s reflections. Hence he’s looking for an answer elsewhere, the answer to his incurable fear, or what he calls ‘‘the tumour [which] is staying the same size’¹⁷, within the long-ago, long-forged, ancestral neglected agenda: religion and God. Barnes’ position can be explained for he was an atheist in his

¹⁷ V. Guignery and R. Roberts, *Conversations with Julian Barnes*, 2009, p. 162.

20s and an agnostic in his 50s and 60s: “because I’ve acquired more knowledge in the meantime: just more awareness of ignorance.” (Barnes 2008: 22).

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

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

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

However Barnes’s deduction of the creation, or more or less the prolonged longevity of religion over the centuries not because of its credibility, or of its entailing behavioural enlightening faculties on our concrete, tangible world, but “because it was a means of social control, because it was the only story in town, and because if you didn’t believe it - or disbelieved it too vociferously – you might have a quickly truncated life” (Barnes 2008: 53). Barnes continues, “It

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

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

For Barnes religion and art goes interchangeably with the theoretical yet improvable real and the extra provable real respectively. The not beautiful and the fictional; the beautiful, the unidentified and the identified. The ending of Life is melancholic if it is viewed as the ending towards – as Larkin puts it – ‘Nothingness’. Again this helps assert the use of ‘Nothing’ in the title which refers to the Existential/worldly void after one’s termination. The British prototype of atheistic embodiment is Bertrand Russell, who did propagandized Atheism, claiming that if there ever was a God or a Deity after death, “I would go up to

Him, and I would say, “You didn’t give us enough evidence” (Barnes 2008: 213) for the belief in You. This goes with Barnes surprising interjection at a young boy asking why Jesus was chosen to be the son of God, and not another ordinary Man from our century. Barnes replied quite ‘uncivilly’: “Because He’s *God*, for Christ’s sake. ... The point is, that if you’re a Christian, it did.” (Barnes 2008: 77)

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

The author does rebuke the Bible for its fictitious nature, he discloses the state and contents of religious scriptures to fictional representation; “When asked What the Novel Does, I tend to answer, ‘It tells beautiful, shapely lies which enclose hard, exact truth.’”¹⁸ His account and verbalism could be taken for morbid absurdity. The Holy scriptures do not apply to a supposedly harmless institution named religion. For him it is a beautiful book; “As a writer, I would see we made up the Bible as a very good novel which then got corrupted by power systems. It’s a wonderful story in the great tradition of Hollywood, a great tragedy with a happy ending. It’s not such a good story when you die and don’t go to heaven’¹⁹.

In trying to trace his fear of death, he speculates and supposes that it might be congenital or simply that he is ‘frightened by the idea of not existing anymore for eternity’²⁰ from ‘not wanting and liking ‘the idea of being dead’²¹ May be, beneath his relentless productions of fiction, and meditations upon abstract

¹⁸ Ibid. 2008, p. 78.

¹⁹ David. L, ‘*We made up the Bible as a good Novel*’, 2008. p. 18,

²⁰ V. Guignery and R. Roberts, 2009, op. cit. p. 161.

²¹ Ibid.

matters, majorly death and mortality, hence is he produces fiction, he might survive longer than his physical body is capable of.

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

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

He claims that 'fear of death replaces fear of God', the 'great escapologist'²² Here referring to God, hence his self-supposed escapism from religion despite his fear of death is still intrinsic. He claims he is 'an aesthete' and by that he professes the God of art, and the modern God in 'God doesn't believe in our God'. The art resort he found is in his literary and philosophical productions and consumption respectively. The universe is mere cosmic merging of earthly texture resulting in what is planet earth now, and religion is man-made, created and the reason for religion's interminable longevity, according to J. Barnes, "isn't because everyone believed it, because it was imposed by ruler and

²² Julian Barnes, 2008, p. 68.

priesthood, because it was a means of social control, because it was the only story in town ... " this is the concluding thinking result of the human being, the modern human being. He also relates the fact that he missing God to a sort of national appeal or duty. "Missing God is for me rather like being English." (Barnes 2008: 77) He holds a sceptical view upon Religion, the createdness of the scriptures by Man, and the prophets' existence and continual doctrines as lacking evidence, scientific plausibility. Just as the delusional belief in miracles, as Dr Max alluding to the fallacy of the existence or creation of a 'prime moment'²³. Barnes position is that

The great religions make one up always. They always make up a particular moment [of authentic purity and beginning]when it all began, whereas we know that, for instance, Christ was just one of any number of similar prophets around at the time and he just happened to get lucky historically, to be taken up.²⁴

Indeed, Barnes writes that "Religion no more makes people better than it makes them behave worse" (Barnes 2008: 120-121). On the other hand Dawkins refers to the Nobel Prize-winning American physicist, Steven Weinberg who says: 'Religion is an insult to human dignity. With or without it, you'd have good people doing good things and evil people doing evil things. But for good people to do evil things, it takes religion.' Another reference to Blaise Pascal's similar to Weinberg's: 'Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.'²⁵ Another aspect to religion's impact on mankind is that: "wars, and feuds between religious groups or sects, are seldom actually about theological disagreements."²⁶

²³ V. Guignery and R. Roberts, *Conversations with Julian Barnes*, 2009, p. 34.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 61

²⁵ Richard Dawkins, 2006, p. 249.

²⁶ Ibid, 2006, p. 259.

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

Another aspect which denounces the credibility of the Holy scripture is that the gospels were written about 6 centuries after Jesus’ time²⁷. Dawkins states of the writing of the gospels that:

All were then copied and recopied ... by fallible scribes who, in any case, had their own religious agendas. A good example of the colouring by religious agendas in the whole heart-warming legend of Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem ... When the gospels were written, many years after Jesus’ death, nobody knew where he was born. But an Old Testament prophecy (Micah 5:2) had led Jews to expect that the long-awaited Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. In the light of this prophecy, John’s gospel specifically remarks that his followers were surprised that he was not born in Bethlehem.²⁸

Therefore this lack of religious confidence is originated in the way the English has been regarding religion for the last five hundred years. Henry the eighth brought the breakthrough in reforming the English church and later Elizabeth the first, followed on her father’s feet. In fact, the nature and essence of religion in playing a role in the societal and individualistic agents is of very weak nature, Barnes seems to be saying.

This is partly the way the English treat or include religion in their lives (insisting on the regional differences, since the Scottish, and Irish are of a fervent religious practice compared to the English). The fact that they ‘were born on an island rather than living on a continental landmass’ the English and British have always considered themselves as being unique not like the other human beings, then as relating to religiousness, they ‘come from a country where Protestant

²⁷ Ibid. p. 73.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 93.

reformation had put the church firmly in its place. [Hence] they had inherited a deep belief in individual liberty'²⁹.

The British as being under the Anglican Church, whereby the Prime Minister has complete right to appoint senior clerics and the Church's agents. Furthermore the official status of the Church of England, sits in the House of The Lords, the relatedness (the state/Parliament and the Church of England) is close. However this relatedness; 'is not that it represents some profound spirituality in the people, but that it suits mutually convenient purposes for state and Church.'³⁰. The paradoxical presence of the bishop in the House of the Lords takes place unless there exist some extent interchangeable correlation of contributory effect of the parliament into the Church. The bishop or rather the English view of a possibility for the coexistence of Religion of Politics under mutual compliance. The English state is both secular and religious. Both coexists in a same spectrum. The inclusion or omitting of some articles of faith is not literal but only another way of interpreting them The levitation of the religious rigidity takes place according to the modern societal status quo. They are people who' had put the Church in its 'firm' place'. One could take the evolution of the Bible from Old Testament (tyrant) and the New version of it called the New Testament.

But this New Testament being differently interpreted according to what? Whom? Human beings, then this is a reason why the rational individuals do cease the idea of religion as being Man-made, created to fuse dogmas, or 'social control' as Barnes puts it. It could even regarded as new spectrum of competitiveness.

'The finest spirit of England'³¹ lays in its disclosure or apertedness from the Church, and the Vicars being proud of not taking extreme positions leading their churches according to the throne and Parliament ruling. Indeed they do

²⁹ Jeremy Paxman, *The English*, 1998, p. viii.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 100.

³¹ Conf T. S. Eliot in 'Lancelot Andrews', in *Essays on Style and Content*, p.14

castigate it as strength, a thing which harks back to the 16th of century of Elizabethan time. In 1997, Dr Robert Runcie quotes ‘There are other churches in Christendom which take pride in their lack of ambiguity – in doctrine or leadership, or in monolithic interpretation of the Gospel. Anglicanism, by contrast, is a synthesis, and a synthesis necessarily unites thesis and antithesis.’³²

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

A strong atheist in his mid-twenties, and an agnostic in his 50’s and 60’s, Barnes claims this divergence did not come ‘because I’ve acquired more knowledge in the meantime: just more awareness of ignorance’, he goes on to write. His position is: ‘I don’t believe in God, but I miss Him’. Such is his position. If God exists or Not, no one could tell. If God created the universe, that would be plausible to believe’, adds Barnes.³³

Barnes’s eschatology comprises 2 deaths/extinctions, the death of old age, and death of youth. ” the death of youth, which often takes place unnoticed, is the harder death” (Barnes 2008: 42), Barnes is quoting Montaigne who in turn quotes

³² Robert Runcie, ‘Lecture on the 1400th Anniversary of the Mission of St Augustine to Canterbury’, 27 February 1997

³³ V. Guignery and R. Roberts, 2009, op. cit. p.135.

Cicero, and the latter, referring to Socrates. The narrative is overloaded with polyphonic statements, yet of contradicting and dual positions. Hence the impossibility to take a single-sided conclusion, or even deduction. Beside, what unilateral position to hold upon matters of religion, God, death, individuality, life's meaningfulness ... etc. Somerset Maugham says 'the great tragedy in life is not that men perish, but that they cease to love' Real life is the youth life, once old age strikes one, he begins to conceive he's own termination, i.e. his departure into Nothingness. And this pessimistic view is due to dependency, bitterness in life, agony, deterioration, ... Loss of enthusiasm for life, when 'lucidity gone, speech gone, ... memory gone' when death-anxiety or in the opposite direction, having a calm attitude that 'it's time to let it go', let the self go.

Barnes states 'the religion of art' somehow alludes to the replacement of the 'tyrant' man-made religious institutions. What he professes is the love of art, the consumption and production of art in stead of the religion, the officially claimed religion. 'God doesn't believe in our God' (Barnes 2008: 46), be Him the God of Art or the God of Materialism and self-emancipation fulfilment.

III. 3 . Postmodernism, Barnes and Religion

Religion, for the postmodernists, is no longer capable of explaining the surrounding world and circumstances. Besides, there is the conviction, the will to believe in the new god that is science and progress we move from a kind of religious epistemology to a sort of secular epistemology. Epistemologically speaking Postmodernism rejects the religious authority in favour of science and progress. Autonomous individualism, as the soul is the source of truth and belief, authenticity. Progress and novelty are valorised within the modern world. The history of the real world becomes objectified.

As far as postmodern fiction is concerned, James Wood, a representative of the English Empirical strand, describes postmodern fiction as: “beguiling because it is confident about the known and jauntily undoubted about the unknown”³⁴. Similarly with Julian Barnes’s works which shadows again the decline of “institutional Christianity” which has been more often than not the background of hundreds of narratives of late-twentieth-century British history.³⁵

The Postmodern philosophers – most of whom are strong believers in the previous Darwinian evolutionist theory – try to give a set of counterparts in the face of God’s existence. Richard Dawkins, for example, makes out of religion a scientific based research and leads to a state of atheism, yet rationally admitting the human’s death as an inevitable occurrence, therefore the disbelief in an afterlife. For “God is an imaginary friend”³⁶ –as Richard Dawkins hold this statement- a being, and concept created by the delusion of faith. The latter being constructed by Man for the social order.

One question arises here though. The postmodern Man, as Barnes pertains to, is to be an extreme version of modernism, a push forward to the highly

³⁴ James. Wood, *The Broken Estate: Essays in Literature and Belief*, p. 264.

³⁵ Groes and Child, *Julian Barnes*, 2011, p. 64.

³⁶ Julian Barnes, 2008, p. 115, and p. 120.

rational, empirical, and secular modernist stream of reasoning (which harks back to the 18th century Enlightenment breakthrough: secularism). On the other hand, however, religion is still occupying the postmodernist individuals while it should have been unquestionably delusional, or at least on its own spectrum. The why could only supposed upon as the cause of some political or purely religious influence, or importance that societies, western mainly are witnessing its return. Or maybe as Julian Barnes's mother claims it is because of age/aging, even he, himself admits a hint on this fact of aging that religious cautiousness is taking place³⁷.

Whitehead on the other hand stands for the position of considering God as 'John Cobb's arguments in *A Christian Natural Theology*, that Whiteheadian metaphysics requires that "God be conceived not as an everlasting concrescence but as an everlasting personally ordered society of all-inclusive occasions of experience. Only through this modification can process theism be made coherent."³⁸ And that God is certainly extent on an unidentified form, say tangibly, but only by some abstract knowledge, John Cobb claims of Whitehead's postmodern philosophy and view of religion's place as, "God can be regarded as somewhat expressed by all events, and some events can be understood as more revelatory of God than others."³⁹ However the identification or application of what postmodernism is, relies on both positions, it is referred to with regards to religion as being relative, with a pluralist mind-sets.

What is the difference between those who fervently believe in God, how Barnes describes them in "credulous knee-bender", and those 'exasperatedly rational' post-Darwinian modern individuals? Despite eminent striking evidence of the scientific cosmic mergence of textures, and things in the construction of the world. Then one assumes that the difference lays in their will to believe in the abstract matter, because there might have been tired of rationality, or falling in

³⁷ V. Guignery and R. Roberts, 2009, op. cit. p.124.

³⁸ David Ray Griffin, *Whitehead's Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy*, 2007, p. 109.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 209.

moments of despair and the ultimate need for something to cling themselves onto for some self- and spirit relief. Because after all, as Barnes puts Voltaire's words 'if God didn't exist, it would be necessary for us to invent Him' (Barnes 2008: 82).

On the other hand, Dawkins drops or rejects this position by the claim that 'Grow up', 'god is an imaginary friend we have created for ourselves' (Barnes 2008: 89) and science is proving everything, one needs to be rational. Death inevitability is surely incurable, but if it is because of the fear of Death or due to the aging stage of one's span of life, one become faithful to a given scripture, its is created, take the example of the birth of Christianity which took place or had been proceeded only 6 centuries after Jesus time⁴⁰. Dawkins's; who in turn taking Darwin's position that "we are survival machines ... blindly programmed to preserve the selfish molecule known as genes... the illusion of individuality is less than we imagined" (Barnes 2008: 93). The human being is now being modern, empirical, rational, yet he is turmoiled with the other spiritual world which is need, necessary for the spirit relief and calmness. Despite the rational thinker and institutions dazzle our life strikingly and inevitably, we are left with the notion of the self that it is no more that "units of self-obedience", hence the mechanism and despair of the belief in God.

Modern Man is desperate when it comes to believing in religion, and Dawkins position on this is that such is the universe, evolutes and alternates according to tangible discoveries, leaving no room for the abstract phenomena. Emile Littré's 'Man is a most unstable compound, and the Earth a decidedly inferior planet.' That's to say, such is the universe, Dawkins claims, 'the universe doesn't owe us condolence or consolation; it doesn't owe us a nice warm feeling inside. If it's true, it's true, and you'd better live it.' (Barnes 2008: 88) such a created world, with all of its breathing puppets, who in their turns create dogmas, and the rest is to abide by it Such is the world; insurmountable, '*fuck off and die indeed*' Julian Barnes concludes. Then why miss religion and God, Barnes wonders despite all these rational ponderings of his own observation.

⁴⁰ Cf. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 2006.

Barnes claims that it is to the existence of Religion, the power of which is prominent in the 'minority' of the societal individuals, yet stronger and could not be passed out. The second claim is that religion's createdness is for a more serious life. However seriousness of life goes for 'boring' just as he describes the reading of the Bible, but also the word 'serious' " in most religions invariably means punitive" (Barnes 2008: 81). Religion does not apply to our 'frenetic materialist' self-elevation existence, worldly life. But, Barnes position of Religion, as being created and believed in mostly at its time of creation. He takes the example of Edith Wharton and Phillip Larkin's as well. Edith Wharton claims that we do appreciate religions, or rather representational religious form- religious art, architecture ...) when we cease to believe in them. Since the mysteriousness of their essence become enviable, and keeps soaring. This is mostly due to our disability to comprehend their functioning, and probably because of the lack of evidential empirical rationality, and logicism.

The second position is that of Larkin, wondering upon the fall of cathedral use, no visitors, no preacher whatsoever, the complete decline of belief, then whether we shall 'keep/ A few cathedrals chronically on show' or 'Shall we avoid them as unlucky places?' then he concludes that 'we shall – always – be drawn towards such abandoned sites, because 'someone ill forever be surprising / A hunger in himself to be more serious.'⁴¹

Barnes claims that 'God doesn't believe in our God', here he means his God of Art specifically. Art which professed by some 'God-escapists', trying to find relief, since 'aesthetic rapture' replaces 'Religious rapture' (Barnes 2008: 72). And 'Art can save us ... though just in this world, some see art as a psychological replacement for religion'' (Barnes 2008: 75). Here, for Barnes, art is regarded as the truth, the representation of reality as it is: void, meaningless, and short-spanned, our life is representational, not a terrestrial, eternal landmark. The position on this Art thing as a replacement for Religion is debated by 2 modern critics; Professor S of Cambridge, and Professor C of Oxford, the former

⁴¹ Cf. Alan Brown john, *Philip Larkin*, 1975, p.13.

argues that' art is essentially irreligious since the artist aims at immortality by avoiding the banal democracy of death', the second critic, C, rebuts this statement since 'even the greatest art last no more than an eye blink in geological time.' What if we take the Religion out Religious Art, just as God out of the Universe? Here appears the essence of life is in the remindedness of God. It is art which is the essence of religious art, just as God is the essence of life.

Very typical of Barnes' sophisticated cynicism, fine yet accurate statements upon the reality of Man's existence. Barnes infers that despite our effort for the building of some meaningfulness to our sense of being, or individuality, it will go in to the void. To quote Barnes:

To reconsider your own individuality which you are morning in advance is to reinforce the sense of that individuality, the process is one of digging yourself into an ever larger hole that will eventually become your grave. (Barnes 2008: 88)

Death is the same, and the same to all humans, there is – Barnes position- no a thing as "une belle mort", as Zola claims his fellows George Sand, George Braque, and Daudet had, or endured a beautiful, brave 'mort' (Barnes describes Daudet's death which Zola describes in his turn as 'une belle mort').

Death, being the impetus and driving agent of writing this memoir, Barnes at last does openly divulge his personal consideration of the matter. This haunting element, fear of death, set him most perplexed, entailing his meditation being brought in this book. Barnes is disabled to give a clear answer to death's mystery, (and it is to no surprise for those familiar with Barnes writing, novel-writing majorly, are known for their lack of enclosure. Death is treated as being something which can not be conceived, accepted, for anyone rational as Barnes is, and for his long-term readers, Barnes treatment or blunt consideration of the human death, and the acceptance of mortality hasn't been much of a surprise. He constantly retrieves it, even with a slight hint; he does always provide us with some of wisdom upon this inevitable termination. For an example, The lemon table, about Sibelius, the composure known for his 30 years silence,

contemplating his own death. *Flaubert's Parrot* one of his most fond of non-blood companion. Or, as witnessed in the second chapter of 'Arthur and George', which personifies Arthur as the 'spiritist' who considers or rather ponders Death. And as far as Barnes's recent productions, *Sense of and Ending* (2011), and *Pulse* (2011), are also dense with reflections upon the matter of death.

Barnes here analyses death's inevitability, and the way humans could cope with the idea of their own extinction.

Barnes has slipped this time from fiction to something more autobiographical sort of narrative, as a way of psychotherapy, he doesn't look for a way to clear it out, or find a specific answer to it, but only does refer to death-thinkers, and writers as well as other major artists of both music and painting fields. He gives his own views, explanations, his way of conceiving such and such.

The narrative, viewed or rather read at the first reading seems to be chaotic for the move from the first autobiography-like sections dealing with his parents, grandparents, and brother and nieces, retrieving memories dating to his early childhood, then his experiences at college Magdalene Oxford University. Including his college vacation, teaching English at a French catholic school in Rennes precisely., but then he moves directly to literary figures' biographies however succinct, we feel as if we're diverging from his person to other 'relatives of his' which are writers, musicians, painters, say artists...Yet the narrative at a second reading, we feel that it is somehow 'neutral' if not objective from the point of view of those who are familiar with the writers' accounts and leading philosophies mentioned here. Even though they actually shaped Barnes' creative writing as well as self and minds, since it is said in the book, repeatedly about what relation or how Barnes does relate to them, and whose writings, or as simply as their fine wisdom, have influenced him. These are his progenitors. The book, could be referred to as a small version of ontological account on death since it comprises an accumulation of known figures pertaining to the last centuries, and whose reflections upon matters of mortality, and religion, God, Individualism, free will et, are disclosed, to state some, even there are Russian, English, Italians, and of course French figures, from 16th century French writer Montaigne right to

20th century and 21st century Somerset Maugham and Richard Dawkins respectively. The majority of these figure holds on a disbelief, or rather to put it straightforwardly, an atheistic, agnostic, or rigid fervent religious persons, all of which are being quoted, or referred to in terms of their views. Many of his friends or relatives are being referred to as well, majorly his parents, grandparents, his brother friends referred to with their initials such as, G, K, R, and even his wife P.

Death, as being the foremost reason behind and the important subject retrieved throughout the whole narrative, Barnes traces the human extinction as the first cause of his fear, not religion.

Barnes constant awareness of death and revelation through writing harks back to his early age, and despite the fact of brooding and being in a state of amazement at it.

There are approximate answers he provided in when considering matters of history and identity which we can easily draw a hint at the way Barnes is obsessed or has been inoculated with matters deeper than the actual subject. The way he says in an interview: '... but of course, history will be forgotten just as people will be forgotten.'⁴². One could easily penetrate the behind the surface layer of this statement. Hence, his obsession is more of the Human being's extinction, being forgotten as if they hadn't contributed to the evolution or existence of the earth.

While trying to give an analytical tracing of how Death and Man's mortality came to 'haunt his nights', he slips every now and then to rigid imprecisely identified states, concepts, even the setting of notions. These notions are among others, Religion, God, Life, and the status of memory in its being: on one hand innate, and constant in the mind, and on the other hand, another criteria which his brother holds position for/of, is its constructedness from imaginary with realistic memories, being repeated in the mind over time and conceived of as forming the real or authentic memory.

⁴² V. Guignery and R. Roberts, 2009, p.59.

Based upon the assumption of God's and religious scriptures' promise of afterlife immortality, Barnes suggests the deduction which makes life resemble a rehearsal for the delusional unworldly immortality. On the other hand, if life really 'is viewed as a rehearsal, or a preparation ... then it becomes at the same time less valuable and more serious.' (Barnes 2008: 59) The travails of Man will be based on following the abstract created false truth, a delusion called religion. Since religion is viewed as a form of terror which restrains Man's freedom on the real here and now setting, life, the evidence of which is rationally proved, the promised heaven is still unproved.

Worldly life is the only the survival being, setting which Man is offered. Barnes pessimistically describes it, or rather reduce it to the mere '*stretch of time we have*', such identification, could in no way be denied. That is, that is so. Life is as such, Existence is as such. Man's existence is at stake, there would be no tomorrow as Julian alludes to. We; 'As twenty-first-century neo-Darwinian materialists', tend to a frenetic rational world. As Dawkins observes that we are mere sets of 'survival machines – robot vehicles blindly programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes'. On the other hand individualism is paradox which similarly to Dawkins deduction, offers the triumph of free-thinking brought by artists and scientists, leading Man to 'a state of self-awareness in which we can now view ourselves as units of genetic self-obedience.' (Barnes 2008: 93)

Barnes makes use of the Roman Caesar's response to a decrepit soldier approaching him, requiring for putting an end to his 'burdensome life', Caesar responds, bitterly though: 'What makes you think the thing you have at the moment is life?' Accurate, cynical, realistic statement upon the essence behind the human being's existence. What does make us think the thing e have here is life? This is a matter left to existential philosophers.

Hence, life isn't to be enjoyed, when you look at it deeply, or just as Montaigne suggests that in order to decrease the fear of Death, one should '... have the taste of death in your mouth, and its name on your tongue' (Barnes 2008 41). Barnes catharsis form of divulging his fear of death and pondering upon

matters, the lack of evidence of which leads to the impossibility of a determined unilateral conclusion, is for the hope or possibility of bringing him some relief as based upon Montaigne's '*philosopher c'est apprendre à mourir*' (Barnes 2008: 43). The anticipation of death and being reminded of it constantly is already of form of escaping or relieving from its servitude, hence teaching someone how to die is to teach him how to live, according to Montaigne. However Barnes make of this position as a thinking process which tends to 'rêverie' (dreaming). Barnes's similar suggestion of life is that to find some beauty in it, as a resorting idea for living it and holding oneself from terminating this meaningless void, or '*stretch of time*', there are things such as music, art, ...etc - which are a sort of replacements for religious expression and freedom- restraining tyranny and absolutism- to make life possible; enjoyable as according to Richard Dawkins, similarly, Stravinsky's quote that 'Music is the best way of digesting time'' (Barnes 2008: 45)

Old age is for Barnes, once Death awareness, or 'le réveil mortel' hits one's vision, one cease to experience 'real living [hence the literal sense of existing becomes mere, and bitter] few days and hours of breathing decrepitude' Man disposes of real living at 'le réveil mortel', then at this particular moment, he/she starts foreseeing their dependency and withering away.('le réveil mortel' comes at any age, even at an early young age- there some if not many who are young, but are already brooding on, and morning their extinction, soon extinction, or other's extinction, such as relatives they love. Then this death-awareness leads those beholders of it into living this 'breathing decrepitude', bitter hours spent forcibly, efforts being put for the eternal ingratitude, and extinction. That is so, such is life.)

Barnes's awareness in retrieving history, being remoulded according to his creative yet rational/reasonable-as the words are almost overused- is well aware of his reactionary or simply suggestive of very personal positions on almost 'sacred matters'. Still, at some point he tends to be coarsely be ironic about death, God, and religious, credulous 'knee-bending' individuals, almost indifferently to the long-ago built and believed in institutions if we could call religions as such. His idiosyncratic overuse of irony could be taken for a blasphemy. To give example,

the exasperating almost extreme irony and euphemism he makes use of in castigating God while quoting other's or his utterances such as, Jules Renard's: ' I don't know if God exists but it would be better for His reputation if He didn't' (Barnes 2008: 46)

In trying to decipher the reasons behind his fear of death, Barnes reveals that beneath it, there might lay some religious indoctrination behind. It couldn't have been from childhood, or family background, since his family has been irreligious, or simply indifferent to what his mother calls 'mumbo jumbo', and his brother as 'ramblings'. However, one might conclude his fear as stemming from the cultural obliteration of religion. In this regard, Barnes mentions at a given point " fear of God to me is like being English ..." (Barnes 2008: 77) Alluding to his religion under his national or rather regional belonging/identification, so perhaps the lack of religious certainties, here strongly related to the certainty of what come after death (survival, or after life, or simple complete 'oblivion', extinction as he states he most fear).

Again, Barnes claims, with his ironic tone what if "not be given other 100 years to come or to other disappointment in life" this alludes to his pessimism in life despite professing the God and field of art, and that is because there is an ending, his extinction. A thing which he concludes never to have made a dint of influence, ever to have lived. 'This stretch of time is all we have' (Barnes 2008: 59), as in the human being has to pass by this 'interminable' life waiting desperately for his death; extinction... Also would that mean that his life is full of disappointment, and one has to embrace the way it is because there is no healing or extinction of extinction itself. 'That is so that is so'. Flaubert say that 'one must be equal to one's destiny, that's to say impassive like it. By dint of saying "That is so! That is so!" and of gazing down into the black pit of one's feet, one remains calm.' Flaubert claims, or rather observe, but later comes to disincline at it since the pit-gazing didn't work when his Friend (he calls him his left testicle) le Louis Bouilhet died and find it insurmountable to bid him good bye.

Barnes's missing religion is related to Edith Wharton claims that one admires best Churches, (as he claims that his visits churches out of architectural

admiration, not religious) when he ceases believing in their doctrines. And that is disclosed to the fact that, or rather resembles the ending and closure of a novel reading, 'one feels bereft'. And this is because they become mysterious; comprehending how they function according to what basis is out one's reach, well the agnostics and atheists. And those knee bending individuals, who strongly believes in it because they chose to believe it. It's naïve, and will to believe, hence the beauty of religion in the eyes of its believers. Barnes, as an illustration has been invited to a friend's place for sinner, and the son of the host exclaimed why God chose Jesus among all others. This family being rationalist, rigidly, Barnes, to an amazement, answered: 'because he's God, that's the point, if you believed it would be true and therefore beautiful' (Barnes 2008: 77).

This belief, then, depends on the person's will, well also the upbringing is important in shaping his conceptions of life. Émile Littré notes that: 'Man is a most unstable compound, and he Earth a decidedly inferior planet.'" (Barnes 2008: 57) Julian Barnes wonders " what would it be like when Christianity joins the list of dead religions" which a similar version of Larkin's whether we are to destroy the churches or leave them. Barnes concludes that religion still" gives a sense of context to life" (Barnes 2008: 57), and Larkin's – paraphrasing his phrase - there should be kept to nurture one's reliefs. "what if we take art out of religious art, ... God out of the universe" (Barnes 2008: 54), It Is the concept of God which gives sense to the universe, the essence of the universe, God as agent giving sense, a context to the concept which is the universe, life.

Therefore history should not be treated even as a science – accuracy - but as a dialectics of public relations with which idea Barnes apparently conforms. Baudrillard notices that history is more like a simulation of science rather than science itself. He identifies history as: "*our lost referential, that is to say our lost myth*"⁴³ The act of coming back to history is self-comforting- it gives the illusion of meaning- just as in the case of the travel

⁴³ Jean Baudrillard, *History: A Retro Scenario, Simulacra and Simulation*, (1994), p. 43.

The validity of the Christian religion is contingent only with a credible tangible sustainability. Its truthfulness and substantial reliability in the hyper-modernist worldly context happens only when it meets its contextualisation. Arthur who “learnt extra commandments at home.. but he preferred .. those of the Mam, and on the other hand George who can’t c if it helps , his religion in the outside world.

Indeed, Arthur’s divergence to spiritualism as a resort or rather a better religion of hat he picked up from school, the latter as it doesn’t meet the reality.

The modern Man as living in a created Myth, created faith then left it because it because restraining, and even went to an extremist sense and context. The latter which turned from civilization to barbarianism or pagan sense to life. And that by the creation of religion, order, and forming the human kingdom out and away from his counterpart animal kingdom to give a decent possibility for the individuals to live within a society to a nonsensical sort of culture.

Life is not a Rehearsal. We encourage one another towards the secular modern heaven of self-fulfilment: the development of the personality, the relationships which help define us, the status-giving job, the material goods, the ownership of property, the foreign holidays, the acquisition of savings, the accumulation of sexual exploits, the visits to the gym, the consumption of culture. It all adds up to happiness, doesn’t it – doesn’t it? This is our chosen myth, and almost as much of a delusion as the myth that insisted on fulfilment and rapture when the last trump sounded and the graves were flung open ... But if life *is* viewed as a rehearsal, or a preparation, or an anteroom, or whichever metaphor we choose, but at any rate as something contingent, something dependant on a greater reality elsewhere, then it becomes at the same time less valuable and more serious. Those part of the world where religion has drained away and there is a general acknowledgement that this short stretch of time is all we have, ... On the whole, they yield to a frenetic materialism; although the ingenious human animal is well capable of constructing civilizations where religion coexists with frenetic materialism (where the former might even be an emetic consequence of the latter): witness America.’ (Barnes 2008: 59)

For Barnes, there is no possible route for the coexistence of religion and the 'frenetic materialism' on which we hold on, modern and postmodern Man. But the disbelief in God probably stems from the cruelty, and inequalities which the world proposes to its humans, or residues, and given this construal condition, some fears God and therefore become religious, however Barnes stance on this is that "It's feeble to become religious because you're afraid of ... the idea that God created the world in which we live, given its inequalities and injustices, is incredible. If He were an unjust God and He created the world, on the other hand, that would make more sense."⁴⁴ Typical of Barnes sense of reasoning who always pushes arguments, statements, and concepts through to their rational conclusions, sometimes with a slight inference to blaspheming. Hence he is, more often than not, being characterized as one of the New Atheist novelist regarding not only his personal beliefs, but also the contents and thematics of his works.

Wittgenstein quotes 'Go on, believe, it does no harm' one needs to cling up to something for a sense of context to his life. Hen 'Life can educate one to a belief in God'

Banes held an interview with a less known writer to write a column for the New Review magazine which flourished for about a decade in the late 70s. He was the last person to interview the 'bedridden' writer; William Gerhardy who was about 90 of age. At a given point of the interview, the writer took over the interview asking Barnes: "Do you believe in God, young man?" Barnes responded in blunt honesty: " No, I don't, actually." Gerhardy answered: " Well, by the time you're my age, maybe you will." Barnes considered it as an indirectly gentle rebuke.⁴⁵

Barnes has always been fascinated by those who are freed of the existence "mumbo jumbo" or "ramblings" as his mother and brother -respectively- would call the religion-related matters and death eventually. Or on the other opposite

⁴⁴ V. Guignery and R. Roberts, 2009, op. cit. p. 116.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 124.

direction, those who credulously knee-bended themselves morally and physically to the delusion of a created God. As an example, his recent well to this narrative , fiction production *Arthur and George*, he emphasises at the last quarter of the novel, say the last 200 pages upon the spirituality that Arthur Conan Doyle gained clear sight of. He devoted himself to a sort God created of his own. Well the belief in an afterlife survival, resurrection, or a way through which he will be present in the eyes of those who will read his fiction. In an interview he quotes that he finds Arthur's religiousness at the end of his life's span and " his career ending as a sort of spiritualist evangelist I found fascinating."⁴⁶

Barnes confessed upon his death fearing at an earlier time, when he translated Daudet's *La Douleur* – which is first published by his widow in 1931- into English under the title *In The Land of Pain* in 2002. He said he was fascinated at 'its honesty and its directness and its lack of either sentimentality or self-dramatisation.' He uses Flaubert's claim that 'its only by looking down at the black pit at our feet that we can remain calm (i.e. you're more likely to panic if you don't look at it ... with a straightforward stare.)'⁴⁷. The only way to avoid or rather diminish of its panic is to look at it metaphorically with a constant stare. He's been writing much about the matter of death and dying, aging and what entails from it from *Staring at the Sun* to *The Lemon Table*, from Nothing to be frightened of, well even from *Arthur and George* the his most recent collection of short stories, *Pulse*. Whether this is an obsession of his, no, he denies it, simply because: a) he is 'not much of a joiner or "belonger"' and b) 'the tumour is staying the same ... and I always planned to write a book whose line was " Let's get this death thing straight."⁴⁸. The "tumour" – i.e. the frightfully fear of death- which has been rooted in him since the age of 16.⁴⁹.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 134.

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 96.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 162

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 116.

By the late 20th-century, beginning of the 21st century, religion witnessed both attitudes of its complete denial and complete rejection by fervent believers in the evolutionist, Darwinian scientific theory, from philosophers, biologists, historians, right to literary figures; Richard Dawkins, John Cobb, Whitehead, David Hume, Phil Zuckerman and eventually Julian Barnes to name some of them.

Accordingly, the seriousness and rigidity of Religion prove to be restraining Man's free will, and decreasing, even violating his sense of individualism, after all what the 18th century Enlightenment, modern philosophers have brought for a civilized, ordered, enlightened sense of existence. Rationality is the essence of our modern selves and lives, hence the mode of our spirit goes by the strands of self-fulfilment, materialist profit-seeking improvement, strengthening our individuality merely because 'we hold ourselves categorically wiser than those credulous knee-benders who, a speck of time away, believed in divine purpose, an ordered world, resurrection, and the Last Judgement' (Barnes 2008: 22). We cling onto the 'frenetic materialism' (Barnes 2008: 59), otherwise said, we more gravitate to –though egotistically - the 'frenetic materialist God'. Hence Religion is viewed as a social and individual blocking point to our freedom, free-will since 'Religion tends to authoritarianism as capitalism tends to monopoly' (Barnes 2008: 82) just as death to social demographic control as religion tends to 'social control', as deduced from a pragmatic ground. This statement of Barnes could be of another subject research, which is that of the politics' use of the moral/relief offerings of religion for the sake of maintaining or increasing the longevity of social dominance, control over individuals.

Even though the Enlightenment period provided logical underlined certainties, it has contributed to the collapse of religion in Europe. Barnes claim that without those anthropologists and evolutionary biologists (of the 19th century Darwinian Theory), the need for a religion is senseless. 'Religion no more makes people behave better that it makes them behave worse – which might be a disappointment to the aristocratic atheist as much as to the believer.' What Barnes most fears is the Nothingness of the afterlife. He cannot imagine his complete

utter extinction. This is the fear Barnes contends in an interview: ‘comes from ... being frightened by the idea of not existing anymore for eternity’⁵⁰. Hence as according to Shostakovich’s claim which contends that under the influence of that fear, artists - just as, here Barnes - disguise their urge, want for some form of eternal terrestrial longevity the influence on which could only be maintained by producing Art in all of its expressing representational forms; linguistic here since we’re concerned with prose writing. Scripture, or poetry since it’s an early form of literature, ‘*lasts longer than bronze*’ (Barnes 2008: 205), here Barnes quotes or rather refers to Gautier’s phrase. Barnes seeks by leaving a literary influence, as an evidence to prove that: ‘I was here too’ (Barnes 2008: 205)

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 161.

Conclusion

Matters of old age, dying, death, religion, and God are undeniably matters of Barnes's constant concerns which are blatantly reflected throughout his fictional narratives. The latter are suffused with details of his characters wondering upon the working of the universe, facing an endless anxiety in the face of the disconsolations of mortality and the human's impossibility to know more upon the transcendental, religion's truth, and God's existence, as well as the issue of human's extinction, the process of which hasn't been reported or 'narrated'.

X is true according to one's perspectives. Truth is subjective par excellence. The convergence of postmodern historiographic theory with postmodern literary techniques permits Barnes to give his novel here Arthur and George, multiplicity of views, in that the concern is put upon the constructedness of history as a discourse or text; for a sceptical position, and therefore paving the way for multiple perspectives of historical subjects and relevance. This matter is illustrated in the novel when Arthur takes in his novelistic investigative creativity of his detective narratives to clear George's guilt. This is even mentioned by George himself, who is a solicitor, in criticising Arthur's investigative skills for being unrealistically fictitious, based upon his fictional creativity, yet convincing investigative artistic/illogical- based upon the constructedness and structure of the investigation of Sherlock Holmes. The latter's structure puts forward a detective investigation upon the assumption of any statement at the start of the investigation, then the investigator is to work out the way to onset claims and pre-supposed allegations- be they of guilt or innocence. Barnes's clarification upon the authenticity of claims and presupposed, preconceived truths is stressed upon when he highlights Arthur's 'constructed' truth- of George's innocence- and the he works o rather starts conceiving a justified process and route for its construction to prove the legitimacy of George's innocence. This faithful truth based upon the linearity of fictional-based claim, is perceived as a "fallacy" in its authenticity.

The thematic as well as the metaphorical implication of the novel treated here – *Arthur and George* – infers a representation/reflection of today's social crisis in challenging racism in the world, mostly Britain, the latter whose history bears inhuman treatment towards the “others” of a different skin colour. Reading the first pages of the novel echoes reality-based, witnessed experiences of Arthur stumbling in “a white waxen thing” which his grandmother left once dead, meaning her body, as well as George encountering racist reflection from his neighbourhood and primary schoolmates that he is “not a right sort”. Drawing a parallel between the novel which represent a historical event of a hundred years ago, and which in itself echoes nowadays social circumstances, then it is easy to relate both of the conditions and themes of the novel's characters with Man of the present day.

Indeed, the novel is dense with enough information upon inhuman and rather retrograding, grotesque – as Barnes puts it in an interview - racist facts which took place in the past and are still present, that is to say, the novel didn't need drawing a parallel or mentioning that it alludes to today's reality. Matters of identity and what constitutes and differentiates a given nation apart from the other are also explored in the novel. In fact, identity for Barnes is being demystified here since it is fabricated by the ideology of a given state or nation. For him, national identity is an ideological construct like traditions ... etc; it is made for the people, be they subjects or citizens, so that they do believe in it and thereby help cement the social and political orders. Hence, these ‘indoctrinated’ individuals think this is real, authentic, and therefore celebrate it. From here, one could conclude that Barnes holds an idea of identity that it is constructed by its own nation. Put differently, he assumes that the identity of a nation is constructed under “mythical” grounds which belong or hark back to the “narrated” past. Therefore, it is mere fabulation.

On the other hand, Englishness as he fits within this national identity is a valued notion of pride, as any other citizen is proud of his national identity. He does apprehend the draining away of it just as religion's importance did over the centuries. This is due to governments being influenced by the trade market and

globalization that they aim at internationalizing and transnationalizing the world's societies into a single model. Barnes implicitly veneers and endorses the notion of Englishness, even though he declares that Englishness is a mythical notion, and concept, built upon patriarchal self-construction.

Yet the metaphorical version lays behind the form and linguistic technicalities of the novel; *Arthur and George*, Barnes sudden interest in uncovering the long-existing and long-lived social issue of racism which is a version of inhumanity in itself, appears quite incessantly from the beginning to the ending. Barnes, or the author, the third-person omniscient speaker, or even the know-all narrator treats characters with a good amount of racism as shown in through the police and the Great Wyrley's English behaviour to the non-English at origins, here the surrounding neighbourhood of the Edalji's family. Barnes spiritual interest in the novel appeals itself through Arthur's quest for the authentication of spiritist existence throughout proving the everlasting existence of the human spirit and soul, the latter which transcends the physical existence of it.

Indeed, Barnes's eschatology is divided between 2 deaths, and which is to appear more strikingly throughout the next chapter, dealing with his sort of a memoir of his inner spiritualist self. For Barnes, there are two deaths, death of youth and death of old age, the former being the harder death.

Concerning the novel, *Arthur and George*, Barnes's reawakening process of an era which harks back to a century ago- emphasising the creator of Sherlock Holmes's textual effect into exonerating George, and innocence- allude to the assumption that what Barnes does is not only the recreation of the historical incident, but also the celebration and appeal for the readmission of the long-forgotten detective novel as if he's the portrayal of Conan Doyle. This postmodern, rather post-war literary tendency; historical representation within literary narratives; sets Barnes' uniqueness through the revival of the historical narrative.' Barnes also seeks answers to his query of the past, by reconstituting it, making it experienced anew, simply for a possibility to penetrate it again, to re evaluate it for some meaningfulness of the present time and age/state. Natasha

Walter claims that: ‘There are loose ends, uncertainties and unproven accusations, which allow us to reflect on the difference between the knowability of detective fiction and the unknowability of real life, which Barnes intelligently draws out for our edification.’¹

Arthur and George, is first and foremost Barnes’s recreation of a historical figure in the literary, scientific, and most importantly the detective spectrum with his world acclaimed detective narrative of his own creation – Sherlock Holmes. The author brings the historical incident of a hundred years ago back into light, reconstructs a long-forgotten yet unquestionably controversial truth of the Edalji’s case of the mysterious outrages of Great Wyrley. Reawakening the historical incident in the history of England which contributed in the establishment of the Court of Criminal Appeal in 1907, highlighting the racist prejudices of the late-Victorian and the beginning of the Edwardian setting. Barnes implicitly denounces the Victorian perished age scientifically and socially, yet abounding with racial prejudice. Through his analytical visualisation of the inhuman treatment of the Victoria English and the English in general towards ‘the other’ – here George of a Parsee descent – he implicitly attacks the Victorian principles, standards, and the so-called great era whereby the industrial revolution saw its fruits through the railway engineering.

Barnes’s works are known to be highly irreligious, secular, ethical humanist, and liberal. They “limn a world of contingency, trauma and absurdity”, rejoice in the matter of the ‘God Question’ as well as the meaningfulness of the human’s existence. Barnes seems to be reconciles to a godless universe. *Nothing to be Frightened of*, the non-fictional accounts somehow regrets the decline of orthodox spirituality by the modern materialist hyper scientific tendency. Man came to drive religion for the democratic good; religion has become a mundane institution, politicised, democratic, consensus bound and mundane. Barnes closing the memoir with the death of Ravel, cutting it with a silence, leaving it unanswered is actually a tendency very familiar to Barnes readership; witness here

¹ N. Walter, *Our Mutual Friend*, 2009, <http://www.gardian.co.uk/books/2005/jul/02/bookerprize2005.bookerprize> Accessed on 29 September 2012.

Arthur and George's open ending narrative. Barnes leaves his readers to almost conclude, well, a thing which is evident and obvious, that Man, or we are living in doubts in the face of our ability to know of the transcendental, the mortality and death, and an afterlife. This recalls Jean4s a character in his *Staring at the Sun*, states that 'the mind longs for certainty', it is its prerogative, right, however incapable of disclosing the truth, the mind and Man will always typify the urge for knowing the truth, however she, and just as Julian Barnes or the Christian sceptic is to disguise his contentment with living in 'a state of doubts', this is what John Keats named 'negative capability'.

Barnes couldn't enclose his non-fictional narrative with a rational explanation, simply because there is understanding upon the inevitability of Death. Barnes's work also suggest that we are 'tolerant but also know that the liberal tradition makes us passive; that we have a desire to believe in God but fear the mysteries of life and death; that we are selfish and cannot accept the fact that we are limited beings; that we have faith in progress and the power of rationality, but are haunted by the darker regressive aspects of human nature; we are fascinated by sex, but terrified by the sexual imagination and continue to embrace taboos as a form of self-protection; we believe in social equality but are afraid of an underworld of social outcast and immigrants; we are afraid of our bodies and, above all, we fear the ultimate taboo, death. We are an accident of evolution, but like to think that man is at the heart of the universe. It is this heritage of paradox that is particularly strong in Barnes's writing: challenging ideologies with the novel as a form of intellectual inquiry and not as a moral position.

On the other hand, the self-ascribed superiority of the English resides within the history of the Church of England as well as the history of the English Empire. Henry the VIII who first contributed to the politicization of the Church by parliamentary alteration which helped the English gain confidence over their individualism. In other words, the power of the Lords and the King led to the separation and alleviation of the Church's and religion's influence in afflicting the societal. This change ushered to the belief in the self as capable of ruling the world on its own rather than relying on religion for its success. Another

explanation of the English ascription to superiority - to which Jeremy Paxman, an English journalist, author and a broadcaster, refers to quite plainly in his *A Portrait of a People: The English* - is the British Empire as related to the Church of England, which provided a mantra sort for the indisputability of a God-ordained duty to invade and colonize “the other”. The amplification of the British overseas lands was a sign of blessing from the Lord. The more the British Empire amplified, the more the English confidence soared.

However this assumption could be viewed as self-deluding or mythical, even though this delusion is merely created for the relief of consciousness. In fact, around 1870, Cecile Rhodes asserted in an Oxford Lecture, that “we are to be the best people in the world, with the highest ideals of decency and justice and liberty and peace.” The English, assumedly, held and still hold on the belief that other races are mere ‘aspirant Englishmen and Englishwomen’².

The Postmodern spirit/zeitgeist is concerned with the retrievability of religion’s and history’s plausibility by referring to past historical accounts as being re-narrated/reformulated within fictional forms. These aspects of historical representation through literary narrative aims at disclosing the reliability of their truth. The knowability of the truth is what shapes Barnes and the postmodern concern in general.

The retrieval of the past historical “reported” narratives, through which Barnes aims at not only revising the supposedly reliable and true accounts, but also as a means for reconstituting it, and that by opening a vast multiple interpretative perspectives, for him, as I will try to demonstrate, truth is biased and therefore is relative to one’s logical as well as sceptical and dimensional measures of one’s cultural background.

The latter as the basis for defining what is true and what is not. Hence by measuring the relative perspectives of past accounts, Barnes lead to discussing religion’s truth, whether it is a truthful version of life’s meaningfulness or simply a created institution by Man for the sake of social order.

² J. Paxman, *The English*, 1998, p64-66.

Barnes evaluation of the reported truth lies within historical as well as –if not mostly- religious spectrums. For him religion is the first historical account of the human’s history, he regards it as fiction just as he regards - through Arthur’s character of Arthur and George – priest as “the story-teller he no longer believed in”. The Edwardian era is drawn or characterised by the conflictual social as well as the psychological state of the advent of the Victorian age inflicted upon the English, being torn between preaching the dominant absolutism of religion, or, the evolutionist rational absolutism of logicism, leading to the sceptic attitude towards absolutism, be it the religious or scientific absolutism, since the predominance of the latter back at the early twentieth-century, induced the debasement of the spiritual, rather religious importance in shaping the individuals minds.

Yet, Barnes very distinct idiosyncratic attitude to the past (history) resides, rather dwell with the authenticity, and its faithfulness as reported to us. This implies the role of language playfulness to transmit, and transmute such and such for a ore credibility and trustworthiness and therefore a profound, accurate visualisation and interpretation. For him, historical representation with literary fictional genre proves to e more revealing of the truth behind the historical story since “literature is the best way of telling he truth; it’s a process of producing grand, beautiful, well-ordered lies that tell more truth than any assemblage of facts. ... describes the world in a way which has not been done before; ... telling new truths about – society or the way in which emotional lives are led, or both— such truths having not been previously available, certainly not from official records or government documents, or from journalism or television. ... I do think that there is this central, groundbreaking veracity in literature, which is part of its grandeur.”³

Literature gives more of an openness of interpretation and understanding to history than what historiography on its own could not disclose. Besides, history is just history, the retelling, reporting of the way things happened, creation, it could void at some parts being undiscovered or unresolved, however literature, the novel ‘there is no substitute ... that can handle psychological complexity and

³ V. Guignery and R. Roberts, *Conversations with Julian Barnes*, 2009, p. 64-65.

inwardness and reflection in the way that the novel can.’⁴ Indeed, if we take the example of Schopenhauer who learnt more psychology from Dostoyevsky’s fiction than from all the books he read on the subject. A personal example which I provide, with my humble position, is that I learnt how to identify my grief-supposedly shallow for the others- as well as the reasons behind my psychological state through Lord Byron, Virginia Woolf, Joseph Conrad, Bernhard Schlink, and Julian Barnes successively. Barnes textual representation fits within the historiographic metafictional narrative which is postmodern per say, bringing the reconsideration of the difference between historical and literary narratives since both of the historiographic and fictional forms are discourses which came to be merged by postmodern writers. Accordingly, Julian Barnes’s works predisposed a historical figure or setting into fitting the fictional discourse, interrelating the realistic discourse to the fictional; i.e. the imagined. His works profuse ‘a fascination with troubled histories’⁵ just as his fellow Graham Swift. Barnes Flaubert’s Parrot (1884) which reawakens the French author Gustave Flaubert, Sibelius in *The Lemon Table* (2004), Arthur Conan Doyle in *Arthur and George* (2005) are examples of Barnes’s literary representation of past history.

Julian Barnes names this merging of these completely different discourses as being fabulation, the features of which serve ‘the human mind [which] can’t exist without the illusion of a full story. So it fabulates and it convinces itself that the fabulation is as true and concrete as what it “really” knows.’ The fitting of history into literary fiction as being only of a postmodern criterion, is irrelevant for him. He is claimed to be postmodern because he produces fiction, the basic of which is conceived from past/historical character/figure or event then the building of a fictional edifice around it, such as Flaubert’s Parrot, and Arthur Conan Doyle to take examples. Another example is Penelope Fitzgerald with *The Blue Flower* (1995) based on the 18th-century German poet and philosopher Novalis featuring as minor characters the poet Goethe and the philosopher K. W. Friedrich von Schlegel. Hence, the novel based on an authentic historical event or character is

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ J. Acheson and S. C. E. Ross, *The Contemporary British Novel*, 2005, p. 203.

undeniably of a current literary tendency, and is certainly not proper to the postmodernist trend, it is not something new, take the example, which Barnes refers to, of Flaubert's *Salammbô*, (1862) a novel based on the oriental Mercenary Revolt in Carthage during the 3rd century BCE then it would certainly be irrelevant to place it within the postmodern literary trend.

Barnes's textual representation is viewed as being 'fascinated with troubled histories' in that his texts represent not only the influence of literary theory on historical representation but also of historical theory on literature. The postmodern condition vis-à-vis the role of history in searching meaning for the actual world functioning seems debatable and uncertain. Theorists view today's interest in the viability of historical records as characteristic of the 'end of history'. History's significance has changed since the questioning of the legitimacy of truth-telling happens to be doubted and viewed with scepticism. Historical records therefore turned into being represented within fictional literary representation. History turned to a form of 'histories' simply because fictional narratives happen to be 'heteroglossic', in the sense that fiction in itself-according to the Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin in his 'Discourse in the Novel' - is inclusive of different types of speeches, voices of protagonists, narrators, and also the author himself. This culminates in the multiple opinionated voices, here both of the historical facticity, but also of its interpretations according to different sets of cultural background and according to the personal and intellectual perspectives of the reader.

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FOR FURTHER READING

In 2011, Barnes published a Novella *The Sense of an Ending* and a collection of short stories under the title *Pulse*.

For an up-to-date list of Julian Barnes' works, see his official website at www.julianbarnes.com

For a more up-to-date list on the internet, see the British

Council website: <http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/>

For an extensive discussion of the postmodern traits, see Jean Baudrillard,

Simulacra and Simulation, trans. Sheila Faria Glasser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994)

Abstract

The focal point of this dissertation is to demonstrate the continuous demise of religion and Man's hopeless sustainability of the belief in a divine state/purpose in the face of the post-modern reality. The purpose of this modest thesis is to prove that Julian Barnes's anxiety in his admission of God and religion as a divine set of abstract foundation resides in the validity of the truthfulness, or even the authenticity of their nature and essence. The latter being the most doubted characteristic which brings about Man's sceptical position concerning the transcendental. Hence it is the lack of evidence; earthly tangible evidence though, which renders the transcendental uncertain of its being. Postmodernism values the scientifically and empirically sustained truth, the latter being of an eminent foreground in a century which relies on materialistic evidence to forge judgement, knowledge, and sustainability for its legitimacy. This dissertation is created for a try to decipher these turns of belief and disbelief through the analysis of Barnes's scepticism towards spirituality, yet construed within his research in the history as well as the historicity of the social and individual knowledge of the assumed sacred. Choosing Barnes as the representative figure of both the English and the Western Man in general who, because of their loss of belief in a deity or any transcendental being, has led to a state of an emotional and existential despair. However the resistance against the belief in religion and God is under the assumption that they are "fabulated", i.e., created by Man, through established institutions, the evidence for which is hardly, if not at all, being proved. My approach is being parted into dilemmatic positions. By referring to Julian Barnes' *Arthur and George and Nothing to be Frightened of*, (I give each of these a chapter for analysis in terms of narrative technique as well as thematic approach), I am to decipher both of inhumanity and agnosticism which veil upon the narratives, and thereby reflecting the outside social behaviour; responding reflection and approach to these matters. The other chapter deals with matters of religion and God in terms of their authentic and truthful state/ nature, as being of, or rather emanating from a reported or 'narrated' knowledge, the existence of which isn't rationally sustained.

Key words

Julian Barnes; Postmodern English Literature; Inhumanity; Existentialism and Agnosticism; The God Question; Richard Dawkins; Man; Ethics Religion; Immortality; *Arthur and George* (2005); *Nothing to be Frightened of* (2008)