

JULIAN BARNES'İN ROMANLARINDAKİ POST-POSTMODERNİZME DÖNÜŞÜ

*Volha Korbut SALMAN**

Özet

Mevcut makale, üst-anlatıların postmodern ölümlerinden sonraki dirilişinin, yeni, müteakip devrin yükselişi için temel olarak hizmet ettiğini; ki bunun da post-postmodernizm olarak bilindiği konusunu, ele almaktadır. Julian Barnes'ın romanlarında, çok başarılı bir biçimde tasvir edilen bu süreç incelenecektir. Kendi dibini kazması ironisi, umutsuzluğu, kötümserliği ve ufukta görünen sonu ile postmodernizm çağı; dünyayı kopyaların ve aşağılığın baskınlığı, melezlerin şöhreti, belirsizlik, yokluk ve anti-teorik sonuçsuzluk tarafından karakterize edilmiş umutsuzluk içinde bıraktı. Dolayısıyla, doğal olan, insanoğlunu bitmez tükenmez anlam boşluğundan kurtarmak için, üst anlatıların yeniden kurumlaşması zorunlu bir takım çağruları olarak meydana geliyor, ki doğal olanın bu belirışı, ancak ütöpik anlatıların başarısının ortaya çıkması ile güven duygusuna vesile olabilir. Julian Barnes'ın kurgusu da aynı özellikleri barındırıyor. Bir çokları yazarın yapıtlarını postmodernin tipik bir örneği olarak dikkate alırken, aslında böyle olmaktan oldukça uzak, bunun ötesinde yazarın asıl vurgulamak istediği post-postmodernizm aşamasında anlam farklılığının çeşitliliğine rağmen tek bir doğrunun varlığı, üst-anlatıların ve fabülasyonun' insanoğlunun yaşam sürecindeki rehberlik rolünün önemidir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Postmodernizm, Post-postmodernizm, Üst-anlatı, Anlam, 'Fabülasyon', Roman, Julian Barnes*

* TOBB Ekonomi ve Teknoloji Üniversitesi, e-mail: olgakorbut@gmail.com

In his renown essay “Past Conditional. What Mother Would Have Wanted” Julian Barnes (2007) discusses the nature of human memories and quotes his elder brother, who austere believes that most of our memories are fundamentally defected: “So much so that, on the Cartesian principle of the rotten apple, none is to be trusted unless it has some external support” (2). Indeed, the theme of the validity of memories, credence of history and ability to seize the past, propped up by the “idea that history or more precisely, historiography, is ‘fictional’ [(that is, based on intrinsic discursiveness and, hence, limited in nature)]” (Sesto, 2001: 8-9), and shaped by an ever-present incredulity and a ‘ready-to-question’ approach, underlies most of the novelist’s works, interpreted as clearly postmodern.

Undeniably, Barnes’s extensive use of numerous postmodern elements in his fiction allows categorising Barnes as a postmodern writer. These include profound exploration and almost immediate subversion of “realistic strategies, [and are combined with] essentially self-reflexive writing techniques” (Sesto, 2001: 1). The result is the overt metafictional colouring of his works presenting “a novel no different from composing or constructing one’s reality” (Waugh, 1984: 24). The same holds true of Barnes’s wide-ranging use of parodic and ironic devices, acute interest in the problems of “‘naming’ and ‘representation’, awareness of the fictionality of existence, and distrust of what François Lyotard has referred to as [old] metanarratives” (Sesto, 2001: 11), leading to the creation of a myriad of hectic and often contradicting truths.

All of these allow one to incorporate the bulk of Julian Barnes’s fiction within the framework of the definition of postmodernism devised by A. S. Byatt (1979):

An awareness of the difficulty of *realism* combined with a strong attachment to its values, a formal need to comment on their fictiveness combined with a strong sense that models, literature and *tradition* are ambiguous and emblematic goods combined with a profound nostalgia for, rather than rejection of the great works of the past. (34)

As a consequence, as has been previously stated, the existing literary criticism tends to regard Barnes’s works as postmodern. For instance, the postmodern orientation of the novelist’s fiction is advocated in the four largest and most comprehensive

monographs dedicated to the author, including *Understanding Julian Barnes* by Merritt Moseley, *Julian Barnes* by Matthew Pateman, *Language, History, and Metanarrative in the Fiction of Julian Barnes* by Bruce Sesto and *The Fiction of Julian Barnes* by Vanessa Guignery. The same holds true of other essays and reviews on the subject, including “James B. Scott’s deconstructionist analysis and Neil Brooks’s poststructuralist reading” (Guignery, 2006: 6) of the novels under consideration; Gregory Salyer’s and Claudia Kotte’s study of works “through a postmodernist perspective” (Guignery, 2006: 6); and multiple examinations conducted by Joyce Carol Oates, Brian Finney, Catherine Bernard, Alan Clinton, Liliane Louvel, Andrzej Gasiorek, and others.

Nevertheless, there is more in the fiction of Julian Barnes than simple postmodern scepticism and proneness to the disclosure of fictionality, as it is the author himself who dismisses his brother’s avowal, confessing that “I am more trusting, or self-deluding, however, so shall continue as if all my memories were true” (Barnes, 2007: 2). In fact, the significance of the ‘as if’ approach is hard to overestimate, as it marks the novelist’s separation from the fashionable at present trend of postmodern novel-making and identifies him as part of the newly emerging school of post-postmodern reasoning. Thus, Barnes’s personal resolution to envisage human existence ‘as if’ the objective truth was at all times accessible and ‘as if’ ultimate meaning was within reach, notwithstanding the inescapable score of truly postmodern complications - be it the need to construct and deconstruct stale notions, defamiliarise sour truths, underline the constructedness of reality, point to its artifice, or interrogate the ontological status of fictional texts - makes the novelist’s works justly post-postmodern. The works celebrate the necessity to ‘believe’ and the ability to make a new start in the world of chaos, as well as the incessant desire to get closer to the objective truth.

To be sure, Julian Barnes’s fiction may be described in Laurence Lerner’s (1991) words as “striv[ing] for semiosis rather than mimesis” (339), accompanied by a profound emphasis on the paramount importance of the ultimate truth, despite the postmodern attempt to rebuff the notion, for “if perception is not wholly objective, it does not follow that it must be wholly subjective: that would be to ignore the more complex possibility that it results from an interaction between the external world and our method of perceiving” (Lerner, 1991: 335).

In fact, Lerner's quotation underlines the essence of the transitory epoch in which we live, with its ceaseless balancing between life-forging and life-taking, construction and deconstruction, appearance and disappearance, integration and disintegration. As Czeslaw Milosz (1991) puts it, "it is possible that we are witnessing a kind of race between the lifegiving and the destructive activity of civilization's bacteria, and that an unknown result awaits in the future" (357). Indeed, the harsh postmodern incredulity towards the very essence of life left mankind with nothing to be 'deconstructed' from, greatly 'relativised' and 'debased' of values. Nevertheless, according to Czeslaw Milosz (1991),

If disintegration is a function of development, and development a function of disintegration, the race between them may very well end in the victory of disintegration. For a long time, but not forever – and here is where hope enters. [...] On the contrary, every day one can see signs indicating that now, at the present moment, something new, and on the scale never witnessed before, is being born: humanity as an elementary force conscious of transcending. (362)

Milosz (1991) advocates the "search for a reality purified" (361) as a solution to the crisis of mankind, purified either "by the beauty of reality distanced by history" (361), Dostoevskian-like beauty in general, Flaubertian-like art or Barnesian-like love, which "won't change the history of the world, but it will do something much more important: teach us to stand up to history, to ignore its chin-out strut" (Barnes, 1989: 240). But above and beyond, it is the Barnesian notion of the objective truth, which permeates, precedes and supersedes all of the above mentioned phenomena, and is often treated as the panacea necessary to rescue mankind from the danger of relativity:

We all know objective truth is not obtainable, that when some event occurs we shall have a multiplicity of subjective truths which we assess and then fabulate into history, into some God-eyed version of what 'really' happened. This God-eyed version is a fake – a charming, impossible fake, like those medieval paintings which show all the stages of Christ's Passion happening simultaneously in different parts of the picture. But while we know this, we must still believe that objective truth is obtainable; or if we can't believe this we must believe that 43 per cent objective truth is better than 41 per cent. We must do so,

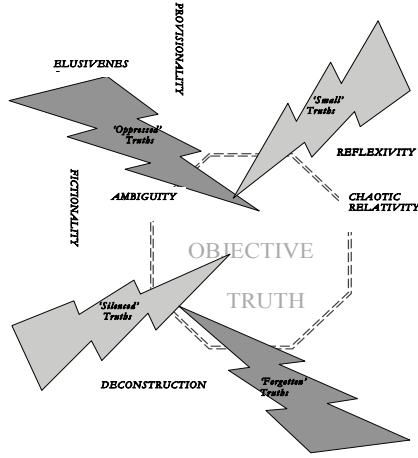


Figure 1: The Essence of Postmodern Writing

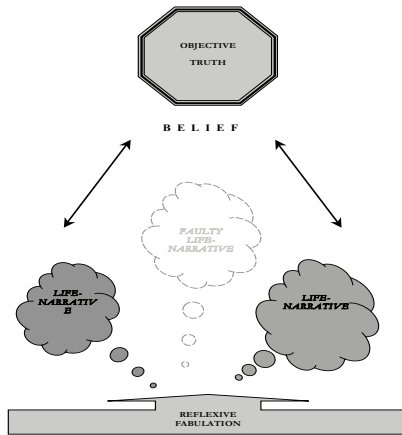


Figure 2: The Essence of Post-Postmodern Fiction

because if we don't we're lost, we fall into beguiling relativity, we value one liar's version as much as another liar's, we throw up our hands at the puzzle of it all, we admit that the victor has the right not just to the spoils but also to the truth. (Barnes, 1989: 245-246)

In addition, as Merritt Moseley (1997) comments on Barnes's theory of love, "if people tell the truth when they are in love, then there is truth to tell" (124). Hence, it is here that one comes across the major difference between

postmodern and post-postmodern modes of thinking. The former advocates the necessity to fabulate the uncountable multiplicity of versions of the ultimate truth, eventually rubbing the very notion off the surface of existence with a load of substituting and slowly devaluating 'small' truths, 'whose' truths and 'oppressed' truths. The latter, in its turn, promotes the need to fabulate (in a reflexive manner) one's way to the belief and to the acceptance of the existence of ultimate truth as such, by means of a set of personal life-narratives and personal searches.

As a result, post-postmodernism envisions the sign as a fabrication, or a purposefully revised reunion of the signifier and signified that had been estranged by postmodernism, and as a wilful construction of truths to counter the otherwise unknowable Truth of creation. Accordingly, as Mikhail Epstein puts it in "The Place of Postmodernism in Postmodernity",

If in postmodernism even the language of feelings was subjected to the use of quotation marks, then at present quotation marks have penetrated the word so deeply that each one of them contains secondariness within itself, which is an imperative condition for the freshness of its repetition to be felt against the background of these former usages. Thus, the [post-postmodern] word contains the presumption of guilt and an implicit act of apology – confessing its own non-substitutionability, its singularity, its absoluteness. It represents the movement of meaning in two directions at once: both the application and removal of quotation marks. The same word may sound like """"I love"""" and I Love!!! (2007: 2)

Thus, what we observe here is a post-postmodern celebration of a purposefully generated absoluteness of a sign, of a reunion of a signifier and signified, constructed by humans in their yearning for the promise of new meanings and truths, fresh in their emphasised secondariness and people-constructed nature. Consequently,

A language act [...] does what it promises. This closed simple whole acquires a potency that can almost only be defined in theological terms. For with it is created a refuge in which all those things are brought together that postmodernism thought definitely dissolved: the *telos*, the author, belief, love, dogma and much, much more. (Eshelman, 1997: 1)

Therefore, post-postmodern fabulation turns into a category of constructive optimism, providing men with a tool to produce (in a self-conscious manner) new life-narratives and meanings, and, as a consequence, strengthen their belief in the *a priori* existence of the ultimate Truth.

As a result, the point here is not the arrival at ultimate truth as such, but conscious acceptance of its *a priori* existence. Thus, it is possible to come up with the following two figures showing the distinction between the postmodern and post-postmodern modes of writing:

As a consequence, Julian Barnes's novels may be well defined in terms of what Allan Wilde (1981) has called postmodern "suspensive irony" (166) conjoined by the redemptive hope of the attainability of ultimate truth through the fabulation of new, life-instilling narratives, so as to combat the danger of postmodern relativity. This introduces Barnes's fiction into the sphere of post-postmodern writing, as the author reflexively "foregrounds the existent confusion and uncertainty of individuals deprived of 'framing certainties'" (Rubinson, 2000: 164) and makes them probe history, art, or religion for either enlightening or completely confusing answers on the way to discovering or re-discovering the original truth.

Hence, post-postmodernism tends to exercise numerous reflexive methods conceived by postmodernism, so as to depict the artifice of the means employed to fabulate one's way to the ultimate truth,

Point[ing] to their own mask and invit[ing] the public to examine its design and texture, [...] break[ing] with art as enchantment and call[ing] attention to their own factitiousness as textual constructs [through] gaps and holes and seams in the narrative tissue [...], shocks of rupture and discontinuity". (Stam, 1985: 1)

At the same time, the trend reconstructs the notion of ultimate truth, which has been distorted by postmodernism, and celebrates its significance. As a consequence, as Vanessa Guignery (2006) puts it, the novelist is never "constrained by the heritage of past conventions, but manage[s] on the contrary to create a voice of his own and a form of his own" (49), by means of "rehabilitating truth [...]" as a goal and a safeguard against the dangers of "beguiling relativity" (68).

Yet, the double essence of post-postmodern writing makes many critics mistakenly refer Julian Barnes's fiction to the domain of postmodern writing. For instance, in the prominent article "One Good Story Leads to Another: Julian Barnes's 'A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters'" Gregory Salyer (1991) claims that "with this paradox of subverting objective truth and then reinstalling it, Barnes is right back in the thick of postmodernist thought" (228), while Vanessa Guignery (2006) claims in a similar fashion that "this stance corresponds to the postmodernist strategy of inscribing and subverting, installing and deconstructing, except that Barnes does it in the reverse way" (68). Nevertheless, it is the 'reverse part' or the 'endorsement part' that is undoubtedly post-postmodern. Therefore, Mathew Pateman (1998) argues that "this position places Barnes in opposition to the philosophers of the postmodern, such as Jean-Francois Lyotard, who deny the very idea of the accessibility of truth" (53). Jackie Buxton (2000), in her turn, states that "Barnes's advocacy of the belief in love and truth provides the theoretical alternative to a plunge into postmodern relativity" (85). As a result, it is simple redemption through happiness and love, together with an unquestionable belief in ultimate truth that become the post-postmodern hallmarks of Julian Barnes's fiction.

In addition, many of Barnes's novels are based on the incontestably post-postmodern thematic pattern, portraying either the full progression of main characters to the stage of post-postmodern fabulation (as in *Metroland*), or exploring the theme of the search for the objective truth. The search can be both enlightening and confusing, yet it results in a final apprehension of the indispensability of fabulation for the construction of narratives instilling down-to-earth meaning into day-to-day life (as depicted in the novels *Flaubert's Parrot*, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* and *England, England*). Thus, to cite Vanessa Guignery (2006) commenting on the thematic contents of Barnes's first novel *Metroland*, "the progression of the epigraphs [in the novel] reflects the evolution of the main protagonists 'from complexity to simplification, from the desire to search to the desire to accept'" (13). Though Guignery never discloses the symbolism of such an evolution, it is quite evident that the evolution represents the course of human progression towards the stage of post-postmodern fabulation, which is marked by the 'desire to accept' the maxim of the original truth, as an aftermath of numerous reflexive

searches through a multitude of personally fabulated life-narratives.

In this connection, it is necessary to provide an additional analysis of the term ‘fabulation’, as Barnes’s treatment of it may seem somewhat confusing to an unprepared reader. Thus, in the interview given to Vanessa Guignery, Julian Barnes confesses that the term has been borrowed from clinical terminology to refer to the fact that “the human mind can’t exist without the full story. So it fabulates and it takes what it thinks it knows, and then it makes a convincing link between the two” (Guignery, 2000: 64). Furthermore, in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* the novelist defines fabulation in the following way: “We make up a story to cover the facts we don’t know or can’t accept; we keep a few true facts and spin a new story round them. Our panic and our pain are only eased by soothing fabulation” (Barnes, 1989: 242). Yet, in the course of narrative development one might notice that the meaning of the term does not remain stable and acquires several connotations:

Fabulation practiced to oppress/ control/ govern, as practiced by the ‘founders’ of the official history “bulldoz[ing] [everything] into rubble” (Barnes, 1989: 240); Relativistic fabulation for the sake of fabulation, eradicating the notion of the Truth as such and substituting for it a multitude of fabulated mini-truths. Life-fostering fabulation of personal life-narratives based on the belief in and the desire to achieve the objective truth, as opposed to the slavish submission to someone else’s tyrannical fabulation.

In this connection, to exemplify the above typology of ‘fabulation’, it seems necessary to analyse several stories from Barnes’s *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, which seems to be the most illustrative of the term. Thus, Kath’s story in “The Survivor” provides a proof of the multi-dimensionality of the term. Accordingly, unwilling to submit to the ‘official’ fabulation of truth about the nuclear disaster and her own whereabouts, imposed by “men in grey suits and striped ties [...] men like Greg in thongs and T-shirts staying out late in bars trying to pick up girls [...] [and the men of her dreams] always very polite, even gentle” (89-100), Kath fabulates her own version of the events (fully aware of the fact that the Truth does exist somewhere out there), which endows her with a strong feeling of hope to start a new beginning in the surrounding sea of chaos. In fact, Julian Barnes strongly encourages the reader

to believe in the power of love and the supremacy of the objective truth, for “if we don't, then we merely surrender to the history of the world and someone else's truth” (246). Hence, the author seems to prioritise the post-postmodern fabulation of one's own life-inspiring narratives, supporting the idea of the Truth over the postmodern dictum decrying big words and high aspirations. For this reason, Kath Ferris denounces the postmodern-like fabulation, or fabulation for the sake of fabulation, diffusing the notion of the Truth into a myriad of unrelated, senseless and chaotic narratives: “We've got to look at things how they are; we can't rely on [pure] fabulation any more. It's the only way we survive” (111). Thus, ‘looking at things how they are’, or accepting the everlasting presence of the single Truth, becomes the leitmotif of the post-postmodern epoch. Hence, it is the life-fostering fabulation that is the key element of the stage of fabulation, else known as post-postmodernism.

The fabulation presented in “The Stowaway”, aimed at subverting the official version of the Flood myth, as well as underlining the possibility of the existence of other ‘credible’ narratives of the event is very indicative of the postmodern or dismantling type of fabulation:

I escaped [...]; and I have flourished. I am a little set apart from the rest of animal society, which still has its nostalgic reunions. [...] When I recall the Voyage, I feel no sense of obligation; gratitude puts no smear of Vaseline on the lens. My account you can trust. (4).

Thus, in this case the fabulation represents the voice of the underrepresented in the multitude of other possible voices and takes apart the likelihood of the existence of any unified and objective truth.

The same line of reasoning may be applied to the chapter entitled “The Wars of Religion”, in which the author clashes together two versions of the same event – the trial of hellish *bestioles* guilty of putting in danger the life of the Bishop of Besançon, as presented through the script of the trial containing both the accusations of the *pétition des habitants* and the counterclaims of the *plaidoyer des habitants*. Thus, the official fabulation of events is weighed against the fabricated version provided by the silent and the repressed, while no effort is being made to construct an unbiased version of the happenings. As a result, the notion of the Truth as such is found unwanted and, therefore, dispersed

in the endless crossfire on the subject. No wonder that the manuscript itself gets eaten by woodworms, leaving no trace of the Truth about the verdict pronounced:

Here the manuscript in the Archives Municipales de Besançon breaks off, without giving details of the annual penance or remembrance imposed by the court. It appears from the condition of the parchment that in the course of the last four and a half centuries it has been attacked, perhaps on more than one occasion, by some species of termite, which has devoured the closing words of the juge d'Église. (80)

In “Shipwreck”, Gericault fabulates his own version of the course of tragic events on board the *Medusa*, resulting in the birth of the “Scene of Shipwreck”. The painter surrounds himself with artefacts aimed to guide him towards the Truth about the wreck:

It begins with truth to life. [...] He compiled a dossier of the case. He sought out the carpenter from the *Medusa*, who had survived, and got him to build a scale model of his original machine. On it he positioned wax models to represent the survivors. Around him in his studio he placed his own painting of severed heads and dissected limbs, to infiltrate the air of mortality. Recognizable portraits of Savigny, Corréard and the carpenter are included in the final picture. (126)

Yet the painting that emerges, following weeks of meticulous work, remains very distant from the underlying truth of the tragedy. Thus, the narrator provides the reader with a list of things Gericault did not paint:

The *Medusa* striking the reef; the moment when the tow-ropes were cast off and the raft abandoned; the mutinies in the night; the necessary cannibalism; the self-protective mass murder; the arrival of the butterfly, the actual moment of rescue” (126-7).

Indeed, as has been mentioned earlier, the Truth is almost impossible to perceive (though always near), which ignites the need to fabulate a substituting narrative, instilling meaning into the otherwise chaotic existence. Henceforth, the “Scene of Shipwreck” entered the memory of the observers of the 1819 Salon as the only available truth about the tragedy, while the big Truth still

lingered somewhere out there. As a consequence, the narrator makes the following declaration: “The painting which survives is the one that outlives its story. Religion decays, the icon remains; a narrative is forgotten, yet its representation still magnetizes (the ignorant eye triumphs – how galling for the informed eye)” (133). Indeed, it is the representation and the icon (or else, fabulation) that becomes the only means to build one’s existence on and to instil it with credible meaning.

In “The Visitors” Franklin Hughes is forced to fabricate the ‘his-story’ of the Palestinian conflict, which serves as a sort of an oral re-confirmation of the terrorist’s self-pronounced righteousness. The fact that most of Hughes’s life has been spent in self-deception about his personal learnedness – “he had started as a mouthpiece for other people’s views, a young man in a corduroy suit with an affable and unthreatening way of explaining culture” (34) – underlines the fact of Franklin’s unreliability as a ‘renderer of Truth’ and the relativistic nature of his fabrication. Hence, Hughes’s vision of the conflict becomes a version out of many, eventually run over by the official doctrines of Western governments, re-imposed with the arrival of the American Special Forces. As a result, the notion of the Truth gets dismantled in the never-ending clash of opposing fabrications: “Neither the leader nor the second-in-command survived, so there remained no witness to corroborate Franklin Hughes’s story of the bargain he struck with the Arabs” (58).

There exists a striking similarity between the types of fabrication generated by Amanda Fergusson in “The Mountain” and Spike Tiggler in “Project Ararat”. Both of the characters can be seen as lost in the disarray of personal thoughts, fears and insecurities. Thus, Amanda – a firmly resolved spinster, refusing her father’s proposal “to go off and to get married to that lieutenant whose name he could never recall” (144) – dedicates the whole of her existence to serving both her earthly and heavenly fathers, and continuously engages herself in “reading some piece of religious mumbo-jumbo” (143). This constant involvement in religious reading is aimed to aggravate Colonel Fergusson’s stark denial of God, his belief in the power of science, “the world’s ability to progress, in man’s ascent, in the defeat of superstition” (143). At the same time, the seeming obsession with “Parson Noah’s latest pamphlet[s]” (143) tends to function as a shield, safeguarding Amanda from the full-blown

attack of rationalism undertaken by her father. Henceforth, the death of the Colonel - to the very end denying the existence of any “divine plan” (147) and explaining the constant ticking heard above the head of his bed as the sign of love making of *xestobium rufo-villosum* – perplexes Amanda’s soul, making her deeply worried about her father’s “ontological status” (147).

Yet, the emptiness caused by the Colonel’s death, accompanied by the tumult instigated by his constant celebration of contingency, “chaos, hazard and malice” (148), never shakes Amanda’s belief in the existence of God *per se*, or the grand truth as such. Hence, the heroine elaborates a new paradigm of behaviour, as well as fabulates novel life-narratives, providing her altered life with a sense of new meaning and purpose. As a consequence, Miss Fergusson embarks on a trip to Mt Ararat (the place of the universal ‘beginning’) to seek salvation for her blasphemous father’s soul. It is on the slopes of the mountain that Amanda breaks her leg and makes a sort of a figurative “fall”. Yet, the “fall” becomes the heroine’s ‘beginning’ (echoing the beginning of life after Noah’s landing on the top of the mountain), leading to the fabrication of one more meaning-instilling narrative regarding the whereabouts of Noah’s grave. As a result, the heroine’s strong belief in the existence of the Truth, supported by the multitude of personally fabricated life-narratives, allows her to die peacefully on the slopes of the Ararat, sheltered by the light of the moon, which had once caressed the body of Noah himself. The chapter closes with Miss Logan’s reflection on Miss Fergusson’s words, pronounced before their trip up the mountain:

Miss Fergusson had maintained, when they first stood before the haloed mountain, that there were two explanations of everything, that each required the exercise of faith, and that we had been given free will in order that we might choose between them. (168)

Indeed, a profound post-postmodern faith in the existence of the Truth is needed to deal with a multitude of narratives, fabricated according to the principle of free will, allowing one to access the realm of life-inspiring meaning and guiding purpose.

The same line of reasoning may be applied to Spike Tiggler in “Project Ararat” – a young man deeply decentred among bits of science, religion, technology

and carnality. The change arrives during his flight to the moon as a member of the crew for Project Apollo. The idea of the *a priori* existence of the Truth is rendered to him while playing football on the surface of the moon by the voice heard through the earphones in his helmet, ordering him to “Find Noah’s Ark” (256). Spike gets shaken to such an extent that he accepts Noah and Noah’s Ark as an unquestionable maxim, becoming his grand Truth for the life thereafter. The existence of such a maxim allows him to fabulate numerous narratives, infusing his life with ultimate meaning. As a result, Tiggler decides to accomplish a trip up Mt Ararat in the quest of the Ark. After its relative failure (the bones found on the slopes of the mountain “were approximately one hundred and fifty years old, plus or minus twenty years [...] the vertebra was almost certainly that of a woman” (280) Spike fabulates more narratives allowing him to embark on the second trip up the Mountain and to “launch the second Project Ararat” (280). The paragraph rounding up the chapter is very symbolic in a sense since the image of a marker light guiding the ship through a sea-mist serves as an icon of the post-postmodern truth, allowing one to construct a road map of meaningful narratives, which plays a resuscitatorial function in the surrounding tumult of existence:

A sea-mist shifts listlessly across the black water as the seven o'clock ferry makes its way from Cape Hatteras to Ocracoke Island. The searchlight charges at the water ahead. Every night the vessel has to find its way again, as if for the first time. Marker lights, white and green and red, guide the boat on its nervous course. You come out on deck, shrugging against the cold, and look upward; but this time the mist has shut off the stars, and it's impossible to tell whether or not there is meant to be a moon. (280)

Thus, the function of fabulation is ‘to hint’ at the full narrative, to gesture at ultimate truth, which helps us “to make sense of the hopelessness of history” (Rubinson, 2000: 170), and to depict “how hopelessly we signal; how dark the sky; how big the waves. We are all lost at sea, washed between hope and despair, hailing something that may never come to rescue us” (Barnes, 1989: 137). After all, “fable and fabulation are cathartic as they attenuate the horror, brutality and arbitrariness of the history of the world” (Guignery, 2006: 67) and block out the danger of falling prey to postmodern relativity.

All in all, Julian Barnes's novels are marked by a pronounced heterogeneity of genres, styles and approaches, which accounts for their extensive criticism in contemporary literary circles. Thus, Miranda Seymour (1989) displays a type of a "but-does-he-write-proper-novels' school of criticism" (35), asserting that as a rule there are not "enough logical connections to justify calling this a novel, rather than a clever collection of linked stories of startlingly mixed quality" (35). Joyce Carol Oates (1989), in her turn, characterises Barnes's fiction as "gathering of prose pieces, some fiction, others rather like essays" (13), while D.J. Taylor (1991) claims that the novelist's works are "not novel[s], according to the staid definitions; [they generally] possess no character who rises above the level of a cipher and no plot worth speaking of" (40). Hence, as Merritt Moseley (1997) puts it, Barnes's novels may be marked by either partial or full absence of "normality" (110). Furthermore, Richard Locke (1989), for instance, labels them as "tragi-comic *concordiae discors*" (42), denying the existence of any concordant narrative structure as such. Yet, a careful examination will disclose the fact that rather than functioning as a 'tragi-comic *concordiae discors*', novels do work as a whole in the manner of an anthology, triptych, symphony, etc., unified by the harmony of themes and motifs, rather than characters and structural logic.

Indeed, one should not be confused by such an attack on the novelist, as it is Julian Barnes himself who defines the genre underlying his fiction. Thus, David Saxton (1989) provides the following definition of the novel, originally engendered by Julian Barnes - "an extended piece of prose, largely fictional, which is planned and executed as a whole piece" (42). To be sure, Barnes's works are 'extended pieces of prose', though often containing numerous quotations from mainly French literature. They are 'largely fictional', despite multiple inclusions of real historical personae, lists, chronologies, or biographies into their contents, for, as has been discussed before, fictional fabulation forms the basis for the construction of all forms of writing, with the sole exception of strictly scientific forms of numerical calculations and data operations. What is more, many of Barnes's novels are held together either by an overall theme of the human progress to the stage of post-postmodern fabulation, depicted metaphorically; or by the theme of post-postmodern fabulation as such, with its production of life-narratives based on the belief in the 'always-there' objective truth, instilling life with meaning. What is more, the novels are

held together by a number of other, no less important themes, be it reliability of memories and history, ability to know the past, attainability of truth, life versus art, human need of God, or purifying power of love. As a result, all of the above arguments point to the fact that one may justly attribute the term 'novel' to the whole bulk of Barnes's lengthy fictional works, as many scholars, bookstores and the general public have always done.

To conclude, one may ask what is the dominating genre of Julian Barnes's novels. For this purpose, the most suitable label appears to be Amy J. Elias's notion of 'metahistorical romance', elaborated in *Sublime Desire: History and Post-1960s Fiction*. Such romance manifests what she calls "a desire for the Truth that is Out There" (Elias, 2001: xviii), while at the same time it "fend[s] off the encounter with that Truth [...] since history in the twentieth century (perhaps history in general) has been nothing if not traumatic" (Elias, 2001: xii). Indeed, all Barnes's novels are organised around the pattern of deconstruction, countless rummages and doubtful investigations into the notion of truth, yet, never denying the fact of its incontestable objective existence somewhere out there. As a result, the notion of ultimate truth gets solidly constructed all over again, bringing forward the post-postmodern colouring of Julian Barnes's works.

Kaynakça

- Barnes, J. (1989). *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*. London: Picador. ---. (2007). "The Past Conditional. What Mother Would Have Wanted." *The New Yorker*, 25, 56.
- Buxton, J. (2000). "Julian Barnes's Theses on History (In 10 ½ Chapters)." *Contemporary Literature*, 4 (1), 56-86.
- Byatt, A. (1979). *People in Paper Houses*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Elias, A. (2001). *Sublime Desire: History and Post-1960 Fiction*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press.
- Epstein, M. (1997). *The Place of Postmodernism in Postmodernity*.
http://www.focusing.org/apm_papers/epstein.html (erişim tarihi: 5 Eylül 2007).
- Eshelman, R. (2001). "Performatism or the End of Postmodernism." *Anthropoetics*, 6 (2), 1.
- Guignery, V. (2000). "History in Question(s)." *Voix*, Spring, 59-72. ---. (2006). *The Fiction of Julian Barnes*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, Macmillan.
- Lerner, L. (1991). *History and Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press in Association with the Open University.
- Locke, R. (1989). Flood of Forms, *New Republic*, 201, 40-43.
- Milosz, C. (1991). "On Hope." Dennis Walder (ed.), *Literature in the Modern World, Critical Essays and Documents*. Oxford: Oxford University Press in Association with the Open University.
- Moseley, M. (1997). *Understanding Julian Barnes*. Los Angeles: University of South California Press.
- Oates, J. C. (1989). "But Noah Was Not a Nice Man." *New York Times Book Review*, 1, 12-13
- Pateman, M. (1998). "Is There a Novel in this Text? Identities of Narrative in *Flaubert's Parrot*." Michel Morel (ed.), *L'Exil et l'Allégorie dans le Roman Anglaphone Contemporain*. Paris: Messene.
- Rubinson, G. (2000). "History's Genres: Julian Barnes's 'A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters'." *Modern Language Studies*, 30 (2), 159-179.
- Salyer, G. (1991). "One Good Story Leads to Another: Julian Barnes's 'A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters'." *Literature and Theology*, 5 (2), 220-233.
- Saxton, D. (1989). "Still Parroting on About God." *Sunday Telegraph*, 11, 42.
- Sesto, B. (2001). *Language, History and Metanarrative in the Fiction of Julian Barnes*. New York: Peter Lang.

- Seymour, M. (1989). "All the World's a Fable." *Evening Standard*, 22, 35.
- Stam, R. (1985). *Reflexivity in Film and Literature from Don Quixote to Jean-Luc Godard*. Ann Arbor: UNI Research Press.
- Taylor, D. (1991). "Fearful Symmetry." *New Statesman and Society*, 4, 35.
- Waugh, P. (1984). *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. London: Routledge.
- Wilde, A. (1981). *Horizons of Assent: Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Ironic Imagination*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press.