



GAZİANTEP UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Journal homepage: <http://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/jss>



Araştırma Makalesi • Research Article

The Truth(s) of Western Civilization in Julian Barnes' *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*¹

Julian Barnes'ın 10 ½ Bölümde Dünya Tarihi Romanında Batı Medeniyetinin Hakikat(leri)

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MAKALE BİLGİSİ

Makale Geçmişi:

Başvuru tarihi: 18 Temmuz 2023

Kabul tarihi: 29 Şubat 2024

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Batı medeniyeti,

Edebî hakikat,

Tarihsel üstkurmaca,

Julian Barnes,

10 ½ Bölümde Dünya Tarihi.

ÖZ

10 ½ Bölümde Dünya Tarihi (1989) bir dünya tarihi anlatısı vadederken yalnızca çeşitli Batılı karakterlerin öznel alımlamalarını ortaya koymaktadır. Barnes'ın zayıf bağlarla birbirlerine tutturulan hikâyeleri, dünyayı evrensel hakikatin Batılı tanımının kültürel emperyalizm olarak kullanıldığı hegemonik Batılı bir uzam olarak betimlemektedir. Hikâyelerin arasındaki bağlantılar bulanık görünebilir ancak dikkatlice yapılandırılan ataerkil, dinî ve sanatsal unsurlar, hakikat kavramının tanımının çoğulluğunu dışa vururken aynı zamanda hakikatin nasıl belirgin ve ayrıcalıklı bir şekilde Batıya ait bir medeniyet anlayışı yaratmak için bir araç olarak kullanıldığını da göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkileri, din, sanat ve Batı medeniyetinin dışında kalan kültürlerle dair alımlamalara odaklanarak *10 ½ Bölümde Dünya Tarihi* romanında Julian Barnes'ın yapısökümüne uğratmayı hedeflerken yeniden ürettiği Batı medeniyetinin temel dinamiklerini ortaya koymayı hedeflemektedir. Çalışmanın ilk bölümü Barnes'ın romanında hakikatlerin araştırılmasına ve bu hakikatlerin medeniyetin temel değerlerini ayrıcalıklı şekilde Batılı olan öznel bakış açıları ile oluşturduğu hikâyeleri aracılığıyla nasıl yapısökümüne uğratmaya çalıştığına odaklanmaktadır. İkinci bölümde, Batı medeniyetinin ana idealleri tanımlanmakta ve bu değerlerin görünürde yapısökümcü bir söylem sunmaya çalışırken nasıl aynı anda hegemonik alt anlamları yeniden ürettiğini göstermek amaçlanmaktadır. Üçüncü bölümde ise çalışma, Barnes'ın temelde salt Batılı bir perspektiften anlam bulan ataerkillik, din ve sanat kavramlarının hikâyeleri aracılığıyla nasıl yıkmaya çalıştığı değerleri yeniden güçlendirdiği ortaya konulmaktadır.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: July 18, 2023

Accepted: February 29, 2024

Keywords:

Western civilization,

Literary truth,

Historiographic metafiction,

Julian Barnes,

A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters.

ABSTRACT

A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters (1989) promises a history of the world, however, it only provides its readers with subjective perceptions of various Western characters. Barnes' collection of vaguely connected stories depicts the world as a hegemonic Western space in which the Western definition of universal truth is used as a tool of cultural imperialism. The connections between the stories might seem oblique but meticulously structured patriarchal, religious, and artistic elements seem to expose the multiplicity of the definition of truth while simultaneously revealing how truth is used as a tool to create a specific and an exclusive understanding of civilization that is reserved for the West. This study explores how gender relations, religion, art, and perceptions towards cultures outside the Western civilization are narrated in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* to reveal how Barnes reinstalls the very dynamics of the Western civilization he aims to deconstruct. The study starts with an exploration of the truths that are narrated in Barnes' novel in order to demonstrate how Barnes attempts to deconstruct the fundamental values of civilization in his work through his stories offered from subjective points of view that are exclusively Western. The second part of the study defines the main ideals of the Western civilization and correlates these ideals with Barnes' narrative which offers a seemingly deconstructive discourse while simultaneously reinstating hegemonic undertones. The third part of the study focuses on how Barnes reinstalls a fundamentally exclusive Western understanding of patriarchy, religion and art through his stories.

¹ This research article is developed from an abstract presented at the 13th International IDEA Conference: Studies in English IDEA, Hatay, Turkey, held between 11-13 May 2022. The article at hand, however, is drastically different from what had been presented at the conference. The main argument and supporting ideas have changed along with the overall structure of the article.

Introduction

Julian Barnes is a descendant of a reputable line of English authors² who have burdened themselves with the task of writing a history of the world. Even though Barnes himself is a novelist, taking up the role of a historian by using fiction as a tool to communicate his views on civilization appears to be a deliberate choice in revisiting the key factors in the development of Western civilization. Barnes' version of history does not seem to outline any "truths" of history whatsoever. Initially, the ten and a half chapters of the novel which are loosely connected to one another can be meticulously studied through the lens of Linda Hutcheon's "historiographic metafiction" which has been done in previous studies.³ These studies mainly focus on manners in which Barnes' narrative structure based on subjective perceptions that deconstruct the main ideals of Western Civilization with a particular interest in postmodernist techniques to unravel the historiographic connections of the novel. This article, on the other hand, claims that despite appearing to be deconstructive, Barnes' novel reworks the same Western-oriented, gendered, religious, and artistic perspectives of a hegemonic understanding of Western civilization in the process of creating literary truth.

The linguistic turn in the twentieth century undoubtedly altered the perceptions regarding history and carried the documentary stance of historical narratives into the domain of literary theory. Nonetheless, even though New Historicism offered a method through which history could be studied in relation to social, cultural, and literary connections, H. Aram Veiser notes how quick critics were to accuse the method as "canon-bashing," "subversive in its critique, and destructive in its impact" (1989, p. x). Redefining historicism, from its very beginnings, is met with open defiance since it threatens the pillars of civilization built on certain notions of truth as depicted in literature, religion, and art. Once the canonical stance of history

² The oldest history of the world in English is written by an anonymous Anglo-Saxon author during King Alfred's reign around the end of the ninth century (Trilling, 2013, p.232). The earliest chronicles of Anglo-Saxon England carry a keen sense of "heroic English nationalism" which reveals the importance of historiography in building a nation (Trilling, 2013, p. 239). Later, during the Medieval ages, Chris Given-Wilson notes how, despite the focus on a proto-Christian perception of history, the chroniclers' "primary concern was with the history of England," even when they were writing world history which is why they employed "a system of more direct relevance to English and British history" (2004, p. 117). Sir Walter Raleigh's *The History of the World* (1614) and H.G. Wells' *A Short History of the World* (1922) are better known examples of the same ambition of outlining the journey of the human species starting from the very beginnings and reaching up to the point of their contemporary civilizations. Raleigh's account of history is directly connected to the nationalist aspirations of his time. In fact, C. F. Tucker Brooke calls Raleigh's *History* as "one of the best examples of patriotic narrative" and "a masterpiece of far-seeing political philosophy" (1938, p. 106). In a parallel set of mind, Wells comments in the introduction to his *History* that he aims to provide an account of the world history in the name of universal peace: "But there can be *no common peace and prosperity without common historical ideas*. [...] This truth, which was apparent to that great philosopher Kant [...] is the gist of his tract upon universal peace" (p. 6, emphasis original). The emphasis here is on universal peace; however, it is implied that this peace can exclusively be attained through a notion of truth provided by the Enlightenment philosophers of the West. Furthermore, it can be put forward that even though these works stand as accounts of history, reading these texts as accounts written to sustain the hegemonic ideology of the West reveals how fiction and history can be merged into one another to create an understanding of universal "truth" that is only based on Western ideals.

³ There are many studies that analyze Barnes' *History* under the lens of historiographic metafiction. See Cornelia Stott's "The Sound of Truth," (2010); Hassan Abootalebi's "Commingleing of History and Fiction," (2015); Claudia Kotte's "Random Patterns?" (1997); Liana Muthu's "Revisiting Noah's Ark," (2014); Jackie Buxton's "Julian Barnes's Theses on History," (2000); Amy J. Elias' *Sublime Desire* (2001); Eszter Tory's "You Can't Get by Without the Dream," (2014); Bruce Sesto's *Language, History and Metanarrative* (2001); Gregory J. Rubinson's "History's Genres" (2000); Sümeyra Buran's "Death of the History" (2020) and Berna Köseoğlu's "The Characteristics of Historiographic Metafiction" (2018).

is deconstructed, the underlying hegemonic ideologies of the West are exposed. In *The Writing of History*, Michel de Certeau explains that “[i]n the West, the group (or the individual) is legitimized by what it excludes (this is the creation of its own space), and it discovers its faith in the confession that it extracts from a dominated being (thus is established the knowledge based upon, or of, the other: human science)” (1988, p. 5). The Western exclusivity thus creates a binary opposition between the West and all other forms of civilization it confronts. In a parallel manner, Foucault pinpoints “the entire history of Western societies” as being “so different from others in its trajectory and so universalizing, so dominant with respect to the others” (1997, p. 128). The deconstructive attempts of scholars such as Veeseer, Certeau, and Foucault reveal a tendency in criticizing the universal, unified, and ideological construction of history and civilization. Nonetheless, they still carry undertones of Western-oriented superiority and universality while paradoxically carrying the potential to strengthen the notion of truth they seek out to destroy⁴ through deconstructive means.

Despite the leading scientific outlook that has influenced the more recent accounts of world history⁵, English works such as the ones from early chroniclers, Sir Walter Raleigh, and H. G. Wells, that stand at the crossroads of literature and history reveal nationalist tendencies. Such works with nationalist tendencies also have similar motifs. Firstly, these books that predate the postmodernist understanding of history as a subjective concept deal with history as if it was an objective concept to be universally accepted by all other civilizations in a hegemonic manner, despite the subjective Western point of orientations of their English authors. Secondly, they seem to evaluate the history of the world in relation to the progress of civilization since from the early chronicles to H.G. Wells’ historical account they focus mainly on religious, technological, or political advancements of the West. Thirdly, they are confident that they are providing “truths” regarding what has happened to our species throughout centuries with the religious and authorial discourses they use in their works. Barnes’ *History* is admittedly different from this legacy at first look. It focuses on subjective stories and attempts to deconstruct the main ideals of Western civilization. Nevertheless, this paper aims to show how Barnes’ attempt is unsuccessful because it once again hegemonically reconstructs Western perceptions of gender, religion, and art while trying to establish subjective perceptions of truth. Initially, Barnes seems to playfully deconstruct patriarchal, religious, and artistic premises of the Western civilization. Nonetheless, patriarchal characters such as Noah, Franklin Hughes, and Charlie do not face meaningful consequences of their actions while women characters such as Amanda Ferguson, Kathleen Ferris, and Noah’s nameless daughter in laws end their parts in the narrative in quite tragic manners, either by death, insanity or just being used as an assisting

⁴ Throughout *The Politics of Truth*, Foucault traces the concept of truth in Western thought, only referring to the East for minor examples from “Palestine, the Arabs and Israel” that exist in relation to the West (1997, p.140). Certeau refers to the “erotic and warlike scene” of Amerigo Vespucci encountering a nude native woman that symbolizes the “Western desire” of seeing her as a “blank, ‘savage’ page” in the preface of his work to criticize how Western understanding of writing history is related to conquering but focuses on the desire of the West instead of what the native culture has to offer (1998, p. xxv). The presumption in such examples that can be traced through these works is that the all-conquering Western reason has the power to dominate what it deems to be the other at the very first moment of encounter. Therefore, even though these works seem to criticize Western thought, they focus on where the West has gone wrong, i.e., how extreme forms of patriarchal Christianity has harmed the progress of the West, instead of developing a uniting perspective that would include Eastern thought in the process and could unite the progress of the West and the East simultaneously.

⁵ As an important contemporary historian, Patrick K. O’Brien notes in the foreword of *Atlas of World History: Concise Edition* that previous accounts of world history had an inclination of being evaluated “towards comparisons between Western and non-Western cultures and histories” and that “history needs to be widened and repositioned to bring the subject into fruitful exchange with geography and social sciences” (2007, p. 10).

figure to men in their respective stories. Similarly, while referring to religious stories that exist in many different civilizations, Barnes only focuses on a Christian perspective, omitting other religious versions of the same stories around the world. In terms of deconstructing the canonical artistic presumptions, Barnes again only focuses on the paintings of the West, never including an alternative to what he aims to subvert. Moreover, whenever Western characters are placed with characters from other cultures around the world, such as the primitive tribe in “The Upstream” or Amanda Ferguson and Spike Tiggler’s visits to the Middle East, the non-western characters are never given any names, and they only function as tools that can aid the Western characters’ in their journeys. All this can be deemed natural in a fictional work, however, since the title itself connects the stories to a world history and this history is studied many a time as deconstructive, the main idea of this study is to reveal that Barnes opts to use the same hegemonic tendency of reproducing patriarchal characters, portraying female characters in a demeaning manner, overlooking the existence of other civilizations and their potential contributions to a metafictional history through religion and art.

Exploring the Truths of Western Civilization in Barnes’ *History*

Prior to the analysis of the patriarchal, religious, and artistic elements in Barnes’ stories, the conceptualization of truth in Barnes’ *History*⁶ must be laid out. Barnes’ critical approach while rewriting a fictional world history reveals a “wider postmodern questioning of Enlightenment and positivist philosophies and transitional disciplinary authority” (Rubinson, 2000, p. 161). Gregory J. Rubinson claims that critics have recently been careful to expose the “gaps and biases in Western historiography” (2000, p. 161). Furthermore, Rubinson notes that “historians and other scholars have intensified their analysis and questioning of the structural facets of historical kinds of writing to suggest that historiography, contrary to nineteenth-century realist models which urged the pursuit of ‘scientific’ objectivity, necessarily employs literary conventions” (2000, p. 161). History, therefore, manifests a transformation in the perception of recording history from scientific and objective “truths” to subjective perceptions expressed through literature as can be seen in Barnes’ work. The concept of truth, under the biased lens of those who evaluate the Western Civilization as superior due to modernity, is presented as singular, objective, and universal. There appear to be two different approaches to evaluate this matter: Truth *in* Western civilization and the Truths *of* Western Civilization. The concept of truth in Western civilization⁷ is theorized under a secluded perception of Western philosophy where everything, as famously put by Alfred North Whitehead, is but a footnote to Plato (1979, p. 39). The concept of truth, therefore, has been equated with reason and progression, creating a “myth of history” which “underlies all of the major Western philosophies of history” (Rubinson, 2000, p. 173).

The truths *of* Western civilization, in parallel, focalize around economic, political, and scientific superiority. In order to deconstruct this sense of superiority, Barnes starts with

⁶ *History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* is hereon referred to as *History* throughout the article.

⁷ Theorizing the concept of truth in Western literature requires a far broader study than this one. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen’s *Truth, Fiction and Literature* traces the concept of truth starting from Aristotle’s dictum and determine various clusters of theories which they address as “mimetic,” “epistemological,” “moral,” “integrity,” and “affective,” (1994, p. 12). Thus, the concept of truth is regarded as universal and objective, especially after the epistemological awakenings of the Age of Enlightenment, and the mimetic orientation of the nineteenth century realism, when it is actually a subjectively metamorphosing subject, ever transforming its meaning according to the context it is studied in. Therefore, the truth(s) of Western Civilization, under such reasoning, turn into statements that are used to convince the rest of the world that the West is, indeed, superior to the rest of the world owing to its objectively scientific and universal qualities.

tackling the idea of progress. The novel does not progress in the traditional sense, nor does it allow the reader to follow a linearity while retelling a so-called world history: “Dates don’t tell the truth. [...] They want to make us think we’re always progressing, always going forward. But what happened after 1492?” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 241). The concept of time “dissolves the story into form, colour, emotion” through which the readers “reimagine the story” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 133). Notwithstanding this structure of the narrative, in the words of Kathleen Ferris, the protagonist of “The Survivor,” “[d]ays and weekends and holidays – that’s how the men in grey suits measure things. We’ll have to go back to some older cycle, sunrise to sunset for a start, [...]. How do tribes in the jungle measure the days? It’s not too late to learn from them” (2009a, p. 93). The notion of time as an artificial construct that divides the day according to the necessities of a capitalist world and disrupts the circadian rhythm of humans is criticized through a woman whose mental health is questionable. Even though Barnes makes his character utter that “it is not too late to learn” (p. 93) from other cultures, the fact that Kathleen concludes her story as mentally unstable and weak reveals how Barnes ridicules this desire as a simply romantic but vain quest. Moreover, Kathleen’s interest in cats, and her instinctual obsession of returning to nature to save herself from the crisis she is expecting from the city all direct the readers to one of the basic dichotomies of the West that equates women with nature and men with culture, a war that ends in favour of the men once again in Kathleen’s case.

By using “the inevitable element of ‘fabulation’,” Barnes is implicitly urging us to be suspicious of the truth claims and ideological inflections of such narratives” (Rubinson, 2000, p. 175). Barnes himself advocates the idea that “fiction,” is indeed, “untrue but it’s untrue in a way that ends up telling greater truth than any other information system—if that’s what we like to call it—that exists. [...] [Y]ou write fiction in order to tell the truth” (Barnes, 2009b, p. 39). Therefore, it can be assumed that Barnes’ *History* is not simply a work of fiction that plays with historical truths. It aims to expose the truths of the Western civilization; however, Barnes’ debate with Western history only deconstructs the grand narratives of the West within the scope of the West. It does not consider or include anything the rest of the world might have to offer and this manner of approaching world history is exactly what causes the Western civilization to be considered as hegemonic and exclusive.

Barnes attempts to deconstruct the fundamental values of the Western civilization through an experimental narrative that unwinds any objective notion of time, disorients any objective notion of space and unravels the grand narratives that have defined the Western civilization since Barnes chooses to recount biblical, artistic or simply personal perceptions of his characters from a subjective point of view. The Woodworm has trouble remembering (2009, p.3); Franklin Hughes roams “freely in the worlds of archaeology, history and comparative culture” without a proper education (p. 34); Kathleen Ferris relies on “fabulation” to survive which means relying on “a few true facts” and writing “a new story around them” (p. 111) just to name a few examples. By challenging such notions that enforce a Western conception of universal and scientifically proven truth, Barnes invites his readers to question the very essence of what constitutes the idea of the West. The answers to the question might vary but the common point that Barnes seems to be directing his readers to is that “[o]ur current model for the universe is entropy” (2009a, p. 246). To Barnes, all the focus on progress, production and consumption has no end other than entropy which is why fixating on infinite progress and constant production is meaningless as can be seen in “The Dream” where the ultimate end is annihilation. Nonetheless, all the characters in the stories are unreliable, self-centred characters who can only see through a Western lens. By offering “entropy” as the sole truth of everything outside the modern capitalist West, Barnes is suggesting that there is practically no exit to the system while shutting down any other possibilities of living in an alternative social structure. Lamarque and Olsen put forward that canonical works are often representatives of the “fundamental values

that define our societies as civilized societies” (1994, p. 450). Barnes’ attempt to create a work of fiction that deconstructs the grand narratives of the West, therefore gains a new meaning through which the readers can be able to witness an alternative representation of the Western civilization. Childs argues that the novel has been criticized for being “both arbitrarily piecemeal and unrepresentatively Eurocentric,” however, “Barnes’s retorts to his objectors are incorporated in the book itself, which implies that historiography is always partial and selective” (2011, p. 73). By devising a title that attempts to incorporate the whole world, Barnes tries to point “to the absurdity of” writing “a definitive global history” (Childs, 2011, p. 74). To Vanessa Guignery, “the book does not pretend to be ‘the’ complete, absolute, and monologic history of the world but is ‘a’ partial, subjective and multi-faceted one in which no single discourse or voice achieves outright authority” (2006, p. 68). If this were true, however, all the protagonists of the stories would not have been exclusively Western or all other characters from different civilizations would have had better representation. Barnes does mention the existence of tribes or refers to other cultures, and how noble they are in their primitive state, both in Kathleen Ferris’ and Charlie’s stories, but never once does he give voice to a character from the rest of the world without characterizing them as less civilized, terrorists, cannibals, or in the best case, nameless guides. The “outright authority” in the book clearly belongs to the Westerners, even in its depiction of heaven in “Dream,” where it is tailored to each person’s needs but never once does Barnes use any references that could be attributed to religions outside Christianity. Moreover, Groes and Childs emphasize how the chapters in the novel are not “copies,” but they are “retellings” which are “tangential to their originals” (2011, p. 9). By playing with the concept of “copies,” Barnes tries to create a multilayered version of truth, all kinds of which are subjective, partial, and ultimately fictional without any exceptions, even if they do exist in historical accounts. Yet, these accounts are once again dominantly Western even when the stories refer to common points in Eastern narratives such as Noah and the Flood or Jonah and the Whale, or when characters actually visit Turkey, and it just serves as a setting for foreign Westerners to conduct their research without any interactions with the locals.

The personal stories that constitute the chapters of the novel are intentionally left without any solid connections. *History* “lacks causality and logical links, for none of the events can be explained in terms of a preceding chapter nor does it in any way account for subsequent stories. Events do not evolve or develop in time, but are simply accumulated and juxtaposed” (Kotte, 1997, p. 108). This account is intentionally erroneous, it does not start with the creation, it does not use proper categorization, and it does not cover the world, but only a part of the world that includes West and its circumference. It ends with a dramatic solution to the open-ended nature of history books by offering a “dream” as its last chapter that closes the cycle of life once and for all, in eternity. Barnes’ novel does not merely provide the readers with a mimetic reproduction of history. In Hutcheon’s words that define “historiographic metafiction,” it offers an alternative form of discourse through which the readers are offered their own versions of reality (2003, p. 40). Instead of embracing a universally welcoming narrative tone that could be expected from a narrative that is presented as offering an alternative lens while looking back at a universal world history, the versions of reality in the stories of *History* are structured on the very notions that a hegemonic understanding of Western civilization uses to claim superiority over the rest of the world.

Characters in search of the truth embark upon journeys both through the sea and the land, failing to notice that what they are seeking are merely stories fabricated with the aim of building a form of civilization that would hold ultimate hegemony. As the protagonist of the “Paranthesis” notes as if to echo Barnes’ own perceptions, “[w]e 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”

(Barnes, 2009a, p. 245). The omnipotent gaze of the author/god Barnes regarding the historicity of the past is here intertwined with that of the reader who assumes the position of the perceiver who has to create a version of truth through what has been stated in the narration. Nevertheless, the readers are exposed to an exclusively Western narrative which guides their subjective perceptions regarding the truth as set by a Western author; even though this truth is deconstructed, it does not offer other alternative truths but that of the West. Barnes is criticized for creating a dilemma for this quotation since later on the protagonist also exclaims that “we must believe in free will and objective truth” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 246), and “we must still believe that objective truth is obtainable; or we must believe that it is 99 per cent obtainable; or if we can’t believe this we must believe that 43 per cent objective truth is better than 41 per cent” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 245-6). The claim of the protagonist that objective truth is unattainable and yet must be believed in might seem contradictory at first sight, however, what is emphasized here is the notion of “believing.” Barnes portrays the importance of representation in creating belief: “Religion decays, the icon remains; a narrative is forgotten, yet its representation still magnetizes” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 133). Since the reality of history will always be out of objective awareness because of subjective perceptions of humans both during the processes of impression and expression, Barnes’ protagonist claims that “[t]ruth to life, at the start, to be sure; yet once the process gets under way, truth to art is the greater allegiance” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 135). Here, the problematic stance is not that the allegiance is towards art itself, but an exclusively Western form of art that is deemed hegemonically canonical, even sacred.

Defining The Main Ideals of The Western Civilization

To better analyse how Western civilization appears as a hegemonic power against the rest of the world, one can turn to Kishlansky, Geary, and O’Brien who, in their *Civilization in the West*, assert that “[t]he West is an idea” (2010, p. 2). In this perspective, first and foremost, West has become synonymous with the idea of civilization itself (2020, p. 2). There are several characteristics of the Western civilization used by critics to set it apart from others: “The Classical Legacy,” “Western Christianity,” “European Languages,” “Separation of Spiritual and Temporal Authority,” “Rule of Law,” “Social Pluralism and Civil Society,” “Representative Bodies,” and “Individualism” (Huntington, 1996, p. 30-3). Huntington goes as far as to assert that “[i]n recent years Westerners have reassured themselves and irritated others by expounding the notion that the culture of the West is and ought to be the culture of the world” (1996, p. 28). This form of culture is superior to others since it claims that the main pillars of civilization have been invented by the West, solely for the West. While defining civilization, Lawrence Birken claims that it is “the largest cultural unit about which a linear history may be written” (1992, p. 453). In this context, the development of a civilization is paralleled to its historical accounts. Since the West takes itself as the primary cultural unit, writing world history from the perspective of the West seems like a natural consequence. Nonetheless, if Western ideals such as “culture,” “democracy,” and “individual freedom” were exclusively Western, the world history accounts of the West would have to incorporate the rest of the world in a similar democratic manner where the individual freedoms of people from other cultures were taken into account. In his introduction to *Culture and Society*, Raymond Williams puts forward that five keywords can be used to define Western Civilization during the end of the eighteenth century, an age after which the West asserted its hegemonic power over the rest of the world through capitalism: “[I]ndustry, democracy, class, art and culture” (1960, p. 6). According to Williams, these keywords have gained new meanings during the age, especially with the influence of the Age of Enlightenment and the rapid progress of the industrialization. The rapidly growing economic, scientific, and political evolution in the West through capitalism elevated the Western civilization to a dominant state, implying that it now had a “unique mission and status in human history,” which resulted in claiming an “innate racial superiority

over all other peoples” (Gamble, 2009, p. 6-7). Moreover, Philippe Nemo claims that the “cultural evolution of the West” can be taken far back into history, in five stages of “the Greek invention of the City,” “the Roman invention of Law,” “the ethical and eschatological revolution of the Bible,” “the Papal Revolution of the Middle Ages,” and “the great revolutions, fostering liberal democracy” (2005, p. 3-4). Nemo is of the opinion that “[a]s a matter of fact, Western civilization may define itself, by approximation in any case, in terms of the constitutional state, democracy, intellectual freedom, critical reason, science, and the liberal economy rooted in the principle of private property” (2005, p. 3-4). Thus, Nemo argues that “freedom of thought” became a defining aspect of the Western civilization and led Westerners to realize “humanity was able and, indeed, needed to look everywhere for the Truth, and that the potential for new discoveries was infinite” (2005, p. 67). To Nemo, concepts such as “intellectual honesty, a sense of exactness and objective proof, an appetite for knowledge and learning, encyclopaedic ambitions, and an absolute rejection of the argument of authority” were notions that were exclusively Western (2005, p. 67). The dominance of the Western civilization was rightfully conducted since “*all of this happened only in the West; and when elsewhere, then only recently and under the influence of the West*” (2005, p. 67, emphasis original). Nemo’s emphasis on the dominance of the West reveals a political bias. Nemo’s understanding of history, civilization, and truth being direct results of the development of the Western civilization is neglecting the influence of all other civilizations that have had an intercultural progress throughout centuries, creating a false impression on his readers that the West has *earned* its dominance and therefore holds the power to rightfully control and subjugate the rest of the world. This internalized hegemonic approach while studying the civilizations of the West and the East infiltrates the narrative structure of Barnes’ *History*.

Such an orientation of the West reinvents the problematic perceptions of studying civilization and cultures in a manner of hierarchical importance. Such perceptions only value cultures that are compatible with the ideals of the capitalist society of the West and assume ultimate control over the ones they deem to be “inferior.” While economic and scientific progression becomes of utmost value, ethnic and local elements of culture are marginalized and rendered meaningless as key points that must be changed under the guise of being more “civilized.” It can be argued that the emphasis on an exclusively Western understanding of civilization is due to the prejudice against Eastern civilizations. This prejudice causes an author such as Nemo to neglect the intercultural dynamics between all civilizations throughout ages while studying the concept of civilization. Steven Runciman references how “[t]he anonymous Norman author of the *Gesta* considered that the Turks would be the finest of races if only they were Christians” (1995, p. 187). In *What Went Wrong?*, however, Bernard Lewis traces how the Islamic civilization had combined the inherited information of the ancient Middle East with that of the Chinese and Indian innovations to the point that “[i]t is difficult to imagine modern literature or science without the one or the other” (2002, p. 6). During the historical progress that eventually led Europe to Renaissance and with the influence of the Crusades, “the relationship changed,” and from “the Middle East” an important amount of knowledge—including the “Arabic numerals” still used today—was “transmitted to the West” (Lewis, 2002, p. 6). As such notes⁸ reveal, civilizations learn from one another, creating a constant dynamic

⁸ Heraclides and Dialla also point out the reasons of such a discriminatory study by stating how in the nineteenth century critics were quite sceptical of a universal understanding of civilization, especially towards “Turkey,” “the great Oriental Empires,” “Asia,” and “Africa” (2015, p. 36). They note that “European powers were biased, anti-Ottoman and, according to modern scholars, Orientalist. Moreover, the massacres committed by the Ottomans were grossly exaggerated, while those committed by the Christians were downplayed or even justified, and there was no concern whatsoever for the plight of the Muslims at the hands of the Christian insurgents” (2015, p. 47).

between intercultural relationships. Therefore, assuming one civilization is hierarchically above the other solely by focusing on a singular point of view is fundamentally problematic. Barnes' internalized sense of Western superiority is what constitutes the notion of truth in his narrative. Such a notion of truth is constructed by patriarchal, religious, and artistic references in Barnes' stories that are presented as universal and yet they are unmistakably Western.

Reinstalling Patriarchy, Religion, and Art in Barnes' *History*

Barnes' hegemonic approach in terms of patriarchy is most apparent when male and female characters are placed in a hierarchical manner in "Stowaway," "The Visitors," and "Upstream," even though all these stories appear to deconstruct patriarchal stereotypes. Respectively, Noah is presented as a brute self-proclaimed father, Franklin Hughes as a coward who is ready to sacrifice everyone to save himself and Charlie as a self-centred actor who seems to learn what it is to be human only to forget it the moment he returns to civilization. These men might have been characterized in a critical manner; however, they still manage to exercise their powers over others in their stories. In these stories, women are placed merely as figures of assistance: Noah's daughters in law appear with their desires of consumption, both physically and mentally; Tricia Maitland passively witnesses Hughes' deal to save himself; Charlie's lover is completely absent from the narrative, never even once replying to his letters. "The Survivor" and "The Mountain" directly depict women characters as mentally questionable. In the "Dream," women appear as objects of desire, existing in a form that grants all wishes of the male resident of heaven. In "Project Ararat," Spike Tiggler's wife only seems to support him when he is powerful and famous. "The Survivor," tells the story of Kathleen Ferris who is trying to escape apocalypse, only to find herself back in a hospital, leaving the readers to question whether she is telling the truth, or she has lost her mind. Kathy tries to go back to the soothing arms of nature, as if to symbolize the Pagan matriarchal past of the West. Nonetheless, she cannot escape the dominance of the scientifically and culturally advanced system of thought that does not believe her. In fact, women are almost entirely non-existent apart from their roles revealing the patriarchal fallacies of men. In "The Survivor" and "The Mountain," both protagonists are women, and yet, the first story ends with the possible madness of one and the second with the death of the other. This formation reminds one of Rachel Blau Duplessis' *Writing Beyond the Ending* where it is argued that women often conclude narratives either in marriage or death because of the ideologically afflicted cultural setting that does not leave any other public space for women (1985, p. 4). Kathleen Ferris' "failure" in her relationship is an active factor in elevating her anxieties regarding the society she is living in. Amanda Ferguson goes as far as metaphorically chaining herself to the Mountain where she knows she will die to prove her father who despises his daughter's faith. Sümeyra Buran reads these stories as Barnes' questioning of history and claims that "[t]he novel questions what would happen if the history is told by the unclean, unseen, victim, unhealthy, abnormal, mad, the other, women and children, that is, by the weak ones" (2020, p. 480). While it is true that Barnes does give voice to women in these stories, he does not give any powerful words to these women. Amanda Ferguson and Kathleen Ferris are still portrayed as "weak". Daniel Candel rightfully puts forward that "Julian Barnes may not be able to imagine nature and femininity in terms other than those he has inherited" and these terms are hegemonic and patriarchal (1999, p. 39). Despite the deconstructive approach of Barnes, Kathleen concludes her story as a woman in a mental health institution and Amanda Ferguson concludes hers dead which reveals a tendency to reinvent the patriarchal dichotomy Barnes aims to deconstruct.

When it comes to religion, another important pillar of Western civilization, the first chapter, "The Stowaway," presents the image of Noah, transforming him from a proto-Christian sage to a representative of patriarchal control and abuse in the image of a "father." This instance can initially be read as a deconstruction of a Christian figure since Noah is not depicted as a

wise sage but as a “greedy and drunk” man on a mission (Köseoğlu, 2018, p. 404); however, at the end of the story Noah seems to be redeemed. The narrator, “Woodworm,” exclaims that it was God who “drove Noah to drink” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 30). “Guilt, immaturity, the constant struggle to hold down a job beyond [his] capabilities” made Noah turn into the terrible tyrant that he is (Barnes, 2009a, p. 30). What is criticized here is not Noah’s actions as much as it is God’s choice to appoint him in the first place. Even though it appears as if Barnes is deconstructing a biblical incident, it is apparent that a Christian God is a prerequisite in this story. Even though Barnes tries to subvert religious premises, he only offers a Christian perception of a god instead of reproducing an image of god that can be used in a manner to enhance plurality. Here, the existence of a Christian God seems to be a given and the discussion is how the characters orient themselves against this image of God, instead of completely existing as perceiving subjects with their own understandings of truth in order to produce a narrative that welcomes subjective plurality. Moreover, even though the story of the flood appears in many cultures, including Judaism and Islam - where the discussion of the fourth son is in the image of Canaan or Yam and not “Varadi” as invented by Barnes - only the Christian version is reworked here in the quite significant first story of Barnes’ world *History*. Barnes reimagines the biblical story, perhaps, too much in the image of the original one. Barnes’ version is rather more extreme in its depiction of Noah as an alcoholic figure, but it is still quite faithful to the dynamics of the biblical version with its focus on God’s supreme authority, the survival of the animals only to serve the human species and Noah’s hegemonic control of his ark and family. Barnes seems to provide alternatives to the existing norms of the Western civilization, and yet, these alternatives are still fundamentally hegemonically patriarchal.

Furthermore, the second chapter, “The Visitors,” outlines the fears regarding the East and terrorism. Barnes’ deconstructive tone in this chapter is also interesting since the terrorists in the story are, in a quite stereotypical fashion, Arabs. The Arabs, despite carrying machine guns in their hands, use quite a polite language to the passengers while talking about their circumstances: “If things go according to plan, you will soon be able to continue your explorations of the Minoan Civilization. We shall disappear just as we came, and we shall seem to you simply to have been a dream. Then you can forget us. You will remember only that we were a small delay” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 43). Here, Barnes presents the terrorists in a playful language as being very civilized and only conducting business. This playful tone of language aims to caricaturize the terrorists but it actually underestimates the serious connotations of such a depiction of a terrorist group. In fact, these terrorists are intellectual enough to ironically comment that it is important for the passengers on the boat to appreciate the existence of other civilizations, including Eastern ones, around Knossos: “It is important for you to understand other civilizations. How they are great, and how’ – he paused meaningfully – ‘they fall. I hope very much that you will enjoy your trip to Knossos” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 43). Considering that the name of the boat is “Euphemism,” it can be argued that Barnes is dangerously playing with the concepts of terrorism and freedom fighting in this story. On one hand, Barnes is providing his readers a portrayal of a terrorist with good manners who wants the passengers on the ship to be educated on Western and Eastern political matters. Yet, on the other, this politically aware part of the story only refers to several crucial events one after the other as uttered by an unreliable Franklin Hughes who is handed the speech by the terrorists themselves, thereby underestimating the importance of such events. For a narrative that aims to provide an alternative perception of history through means of deconstruction, it seems quite strange to include Western criticism only in the lines of a character such as Franklin Hughes who is criticized because of his lack of intellectual depth. Hughes speaks of

early Zionist settlers and Western concepts of land-ownership. The Balfour Declaration. Jewish immigration from Europe. The Second World War. European guilt over the Holocaust being paid for by the Arabs. The Jews having learned from their persecution by the Nazis that the only way to survive was

to be like Nazis. Their militarism, expansionism, racism. [...] The Arabs only asking from the Western Powers for the same justice in the Middle East as had already been accorded to the Jews. The regrettable necessity of violence, a lesson taught to the Arabs by the Jews, just as it had been taught the Jews by the Nazis (Barnes, 2009a, p. 55).

Hughes' long speech borrowed from the Arabs that continues in the next paragraphs to explain how Arab terrorists have no other choice but violence might make the readers think as if Barnes is deconstructing the Western advances in the Middle East. Kotte is of the opinion that in this story, "the course of events appears outrageously arbitrary; the killing of tourists lacks any rationality and clear agency" (1997, p. 120). Nevertheless, Barnes' choice to portray the terrorists in the image of the Arabs does not seem arbitrary, nor are the events seem to be coincidentally structured. At the end of the story, it is the American Special Forces who arrive to bring peace to the ship and the terrorists do not survive the story, rendering any chance to create a political awareness behind the events meaningless. In this story, two instances are clear. The first is that Franklin Hughes as a Westerner, albeit with poor education, manages to strike a bargain with the terrorists using his rhetorical powers to convince them as can be seen in his speech above. The second is that Western forces have brought peace to the ship at the end. Even though Barnes tries to make his readers reconsider their Western stances while approaching issues regarding the Middle East, he is reinstalling the message that, one way or another Arabs are terrorists who resort to violence and the West will restore peace by force at the end.

In a similar manner that reinforces the Western religious dynamics in Barnes' *History*, in "The Mountain," a pilgrimage to Mount Ararat turns into a kind of suicide mission, where a devout Christian called Miss Amanda Ferguson seems to be sacrificing herself to the mountain to purge the monastery from the sin of not remaining true to the mission of protecting the sacred vineyards of Noah. Apparently, the local priests of the Eastern monastery have not been able to take care of Noah's legacy properly. Despite the fact that they are locals who have dedicated their lives to the place, to Miss Ferguson, an outsider, they are committing blasphemy: "'It is a blasphemy,' said Miss Ferguson eventually. 'A blasphemy. On Noah's mountain. He lives like a farmer. He invites women to stay with him. He ferments the grape of the Patriarch. It is a blasphemy'" (Barnes, 2009a, p. 159-60). While Amanda Ferguson herself can be read as a delusional figure to the point of sacrificing herself on the mountain just because of her faith, the Western claim to the legacy of Noah still stands as a given in her case as an earthquake strikes the monastery during her quest to find the Ark. Miss Ferguson is warned by their Kurdish guide of "the villagers' belief that the mountain was sacred, and that no-one should venture upon it higher than the Monastery of Saint James" but Miss Ferguson insists on trespassing the limits set by the locals (Barnes, 2009a, p. 163). On her way to the top of the mountain an earthquake happens and the timing of it in the narrative carefully saves Miss Ferguson and her English companion while having devastating effects on the locals. In fact, the earthquake that shatters the monastery and kills many of the locals leaves the sacred vines intact (Barnes, 2009a, p. 166-167). In Ferguson's words, this is a "punishment" for "disobedience" in failing to preserve the holy legacy of Noah (Barnes, 2009a, p. 163). Moreover, the narrator reminds the readers that the Kurdish guide might not have left them after the earthquake because "[p]erhaps he intended to slit their throats while they slept" (Barnes, 2009a, p. 163). It is true that this sentence might be added to reveal the mindset of Miss Ferguson to elevate the tone of tension in the narrative, but it still reinstates the existing prejudices against people who live in the East since this sentence is not followed by any other comment and throughout the story the guide is referred to as the Kurd, not even being given a name of his own. The characterization of Miss Ferguson might lead one to think that religious extremity has blinded her and yet the earthquake does strike in the manner that Ferguson can reach such a conclusion. Andrew Tate notes that "the narrative subtly recuperates an element of Christian theology while remaining suspicious of institutional creeds and expressions of faith" (2011, p. 61). Yet, the fact that Miss Ferguson

can trespass the sacred mountain despite the local's beliefs, even though this is just a story, reveals a hegemonic tendency to claim the ownership of any location as long as it has a justification behind it, and in this case, it is the Christian version of finding Noah's ark.

In the second part of the "Three Simple Stories," the story of Jonah is reinvented with a sole focus on Judea-Christian legacies of the West even though the story of Jonah exists in other religions, too. Barbara G. Walker claims that the story of Jonah also exists in Babylonian myths and Indian tales (1983, p. 73, p. 116). Moreover, there is also a reference to Jonah in Islam. Barnes' aim to renegotiate the influence of the grand narratives that have shaped the West is quite understandably Western-oriented. Yet, claiming to write a history of the world and excluding other versions of the story, as he does in stories related to Noah as well, reveals a hegemonic tone in his narrative. For an author who aims to deconstruct the main ideals of the Western civilization, Barnes cannot oversee the limits of his own Western orientation as an author. Including and welcoming other versions of such religious stories would be of better use to deconstruct the hegemonic tone of the West while writing a fictional history of the world where narrative possibilities are infinite.

In the final chapter that is "The Dream," Barnes aims to reconstruct the image of biblical heaven. Rubinson evaluates this version of heaven as a "corporeal and sybaritic" space designed for specific subjective pleasure (2000, p. 176). The protagonist meets important names from world history, such as John F. Kennedy, Charlie Chaplin and Marilyn Monroe; however, these names are dominantly Western (Barnes, 2009a, p. 295). The protagonist's game improves to "no end" (Barnes, 2009a, p. 297), as if to criticize the urge for constant progress and development found at the core of modern Western mindset. Nonetheless, the protagonist cannot think of anything else but to consume, never once reaching an enlightened phase. To the protagonist, "[i]t had all been very pleasant: the shopping, the golf, the sex, the meeting famous people, the not feeling bad, the not being dead" (Barnes, 2009a, p. 309). The angel-like companion of the protagonist, Margaret, does comment that "[a]fter a while, getting what you want all the time is very close to not getting what you want all the time" (Barnes, 2009a, p. 309). Nevertheless, the protagonist does not ponder much about how his object of desire is constantly out of reach. This is heaven, precisely because it is capitalist. The biblical version of heaven is deconstructed in this version of Barnes; however, it reinstates the ultimate capitalist pleasures of modern times since the protagonist chooses to continue his dream by waking up at the very end. He does not resist, nor after having lived there for a long time grows tired enough to turn his back to it. Thereby, Barnes seems to propose that capitalist desires are the ultimate point of eternal happiness for humans since without them the only option is death: "So it's just like the first time round? You always die in the end?" "Yes, except don't forget the quality of life here is much better" (Barnes, 2009a, p. 305). Furthermore, Barnes offers a solipsistic perception of heaven when the protagonist learns that God exists for those who believe in him but not for those who do not (Barnes, 2009a, p. 302). Rubinson asserts that such "dreams of heaven [...] may help some endure history's violence, universal entropy, and death, but they are ultimately a kind of self-delusive wishful thinking" (2000, p. 177). In this creation of heaven, where anything is possible, it is quite interesting that the protagonist cannot escape from a consumer-based mentality where the exit of a capitalist structure is only presented as the ultimate death.

In "Project Ararat," astronaut Spike Tiggler sets on a self-proclaimed quest to Mount Ararat to find the truth after hearing a voice in the space. As a man of science and a voyager, Tiggler embarks on a journey to find Noah's Ark, to the "land of miracles" (Barnes, 2009a, p. 271), the Middle East. The contrast of presenting Tiggler as a Western man of science and the East as a land of faith purposefully creates a dilemma and reinvents the dichotomic representations of the West and the East. As West is undeniably Christian in its disposition,

using an Eastern location, Mount Ararat, as the zero point orientation for Christian endeavours reveals why Barnes chooses a crossroad on purpose while he unites the “three great empires—Russia, Persia and Turkey” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 270) in the image of the Mount Ararat in order to draw a broad picture of the East within a single entity. Tiggler’s companion Jimmy comments that by giving a piece of the mountain to the Soviets, God has let “his holy mountain fall into the hands of infidels” to which Tiggler replies, “I guess the Turks aren’t exactly Christians” either (Barnes, 2009a, p. 271). Nonetheless, they both agree in the end that the Turks are “not as infidel as the Soviets” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 271). In this instant, the image of the East unites Russia with Turkey as the direct others against the West, the only difference being which country poses a bigger threat to political ideologies. In fact, both on Miss Ferguson and Spike Tiggler’s visits to Turkey, there is not a single Turkish character that is introduced in the stories. The locals exist only on transportation points to take characters where they would like to go, act as guides, or appear as servants. Furthermore, the Judaic or Islamic influences on these spaces are neglected by Barnes, the local culture is brushed off as a minor detail in his account of the East.

Through all these religiously imposed stories, Barnes manages to create evanescent connections between stories that have no ties on the surface level. Religion thus turns into a tool which governs the actions of the characters. The use of religion as such a unifying tool between stories can also be read as a node to Bible, one of the most popular historical records of the world, which is universally accepted to be objective by those who believe in it and mere stories to those who do not. Nonetheless, the exclusion of other religions around the world that have similar stories to the Bible makes the title, *A History of the World in 10/2 Chapters* culturally quite problematic. Stott is of the opinion that by choosing the indefinite article of “a” in the title, Barnes provides “one version of events, rather than a world history aiming at all-encompassing completeness. Similarly, the idiosyncratic use of a half chapter draws attention to the subjective choice of topics and chapters” (2010, p. 37). This might be a version of history but it definitely is not a world history. This is a collection of stories from the West and the attempt of deconstructing it fails in the limitation of the stories to all Western protagonists hegemonically approaching the East whenever they encounter it.

Another important tool Barnes uses to represent Western civilization is art. Barnes specifically uses visual forms of art, namely that of painting and films, which emphasizes the ocularcentricism intrinsic to the Western civilization, rising after the Renaissance and reaching its peak during the twentieth century when cinema, as a medium, began to prove itself to be highly powerful in terms of economic growth and production in a capitalist manner. In the “Shipwreck,” for instance, Barnes starts deconstructing a major product of Western history of paintings. Jackie Buxton suggests that Barnes’ “art history lesson with its weighty ‘universal’ moral, is completely undercut by Gericault’s own estimation of his painting’s importance: ‘Bah, une vignette!’ (p. 139). Even the painting itself appears to deny its monumental status as a cultural treasure” (Buxton, 2000, p. 79-80). Gericault’s painting that is deemed to be a classic is rendered meaningless through the words of its own painter as if to signal how the canonical artworks of the West are promoted for a specific purpose other than their own artistic value. Art is used as a part of the global market through which the Western canon creates an image of superiority over all other civilizations. An important part regarding what happened in the events that have led to the *Raft of Medusa*, for instance, is left out to create this superior image. The protagonist of the story utters that “[i]t brings truth to life” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 126), and yet, an important possible truth regarding the events, cannibalism, is politely left out since “[t]here is very little cannibalism in Western art” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 128). The protagonist indicates that the choice to leave out cannibalism despite Gericault’s initial sketches to include a scene is arbitrary: “[S]ome subjects just seem to get painted more than others” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 128).

Nonetheless, it is also noted that “cannibalism was a heathen practice which could be usefully condemned in paint while surreptitiously enflaming the spectator” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 128). By revealing the possible cannibalism behind such an important painting, Barnes deconstructs the Western illusion that cannibalism is merely a “heathen” practice, and the West is exempt from uncivilized behaviour and simultaneously makes the readers aware of the “truth” behind Western history of art. Nonetheless, in a novel on world history where many of the stories have natural connections with the East while being referred to so briefly, it is interesting that the East always comes up with concepts such as cannibalism, uncivilized behaviour, or simple primitivism. The point here in Barnes’ deconstructive tone is not that the East has pejorative connotations that the West connects immediately to practices such as cannibalism, it is rather that the West, too, might have such practices within it. Instead of referring to the paintings of the rest of the world that focus on the same subject matter in the name of deconstruction, Barnes only refers to the Western canon as if it is the only one.

Another story that exposes Western hegemony while narrating the connection between truth and fiction is “Upstream,” where an actor’s love letters turn into devices through which the readers can experience the transformation of a self-centred actor, Charlie, into a character that is “truer” to himself during the shooting of a film in the heart of a jungle. In the beginning, Charlie appears to be quite a self-centred actor who despises the idea of filming in a jungle. As Charlie spends time with the local primitive tribe at the site of filming, he starts to explore his own “true” self. Once Charlie returns to a city, a symbol of civilization, he starts calling himself “the Hell-Raiser” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 221), reverting to his old aggressive self. Interestingly, the director of the film Charlie is a part of focuses on “Truthspiel” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 194)⁹ and forces the actors to witness the “reality” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 195) of the priests they are playing. As Charlie starts experiencing the “reality” of the priests, he starts to change, focusing on what is “true,” and claiming that “cities make people lie to one another” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 205). He further notes in his letters that there is a conflict in “every civilization,” regarding “the letter of the law v. sticking to its spirit” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 208). The locals seem to be the polar opposite of what Charlie deems as civilized, they do not take part in the “truth game,” they do not have a “name for themselves” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 200), which Charlie finds quite shocking. The problem of naming here strikes as a vital element in defining an individual and assigning any kind of meaning to their existence. Without a name, the locals suffer from a prejudice that makes them seem “lesser” than the Westerners occupying their spaces to make art and using them as slaves in the process. Charlie finds this namelessness liberating, though, commenting that it is “[i]ncredibly mature,” without the pressure of experiencing “nationalism” (Barnes, 2009a, p. 201). Moreover, the absence of technological devices such as the radio makes the locals seem “fantastically advanced and mature” to Charlie (Barnes, 2009a, p. 200). Charlie, as a product of the Western Civilization, is placed within the heart of what seems to be a primitive “uncivilized” culture and starts respecting them. The orientation of Charlie as an insider, however, has a two-fold effect: On the one hand, it enables Barnes to place Westerners and the people of other cultures as binary oppositions, situating the Westerners as producers of art as perceiving subjects and the locals as the ones merely serving them as those who have not even mastered the art of language as perceived objects. There is an underlying tone in the story that the locals may have murdered Matt since they have fallen into the trap of the truth game and

⁹ Barnes’ use of “truth” and “spiel” together indicates that Charlie sees filming as a “game of truth.” Thus, the cinematic performance of a historical truth regarding the experiences of two priests transforms into a game that cannot be expressed in an objective manner in any case. The game in the story, however, is a fatal one. An Indian falls of the raft and after the incident, Matt, the other actor, suspiciously also loses his life (Barnes, 2009a, p. 216).

believed that Matt was actually trying to hurt Charlie, an element that shows how the locals do not understand cinematic art. On the other hand, Barnes has a chance to manifest how the Westerners can actually learn from the primitively noble culture of the jungle. Charlie grows critical and weary of technology, progress, and art, all important notions of the Western civilization which, in return, makes him a more understanding person who tries to communicate with the locals and becomes more loving in his letters towards his lover. Nevertheless, the moment Charlie goes back to civilization, he reverts to his old ways. Barnes does not let Charlie completely transform or adapt to the locals. Charlie uses the locals for his own pseudo-personal growth and moves on. Thus, Barnes' attempt to portray the romantic image of the "noble primitive" falls short in carrying out his message that the West can learn from the tribe. Buxton also comments that "Charlie's appropriately one-way correspondence reflects a similarly ignorant ethnocentrism, as he waxes lyrical about the salutary effects of his contact with 'Natural Man'" (2000, p. 73). In the end, the tribe most probably did commit murder, they are used by the producers of the film and Charlie's Rousseauian ambitions are forgotten the moment he turns back to modernity. The chance of learning and growing from the tribe is hence rendered impossible since there is no alternative to living in the city and being respectful toward others.

Conclusion

If the debate is about creating beliefs and representation regarding truth as Barnes suggests in his *History*, then his narrative certainly seems to challenge the beliefs regarding the truths of Western civilization through a deconstruction of canonical representations of the West at first reading. Nevertheless, this deconstruction cannot transgress the limits of the West. *A History of the World in 10/2 Chapters* is a form of representation that takes its place as an account of history, whether it is fiction or not, since it is a product of twentieth century literature that exposes the tendencies of its own time and does have an effect on creating subjective beliefs while perceiving the West. Barnes' *History* does aim to challenge the grand narratives of the Western civilization; however, the all-Western characterization, the patriarchal undertones while narrating gender relations, the primary focus on Christianity, the exclusive tone while referring to artworks and narrating the Eastern parts of the world reveal why Barnes' *History* reinstalls the truths of Western civilization he seeks out to destroy. By exposing the truths behind the sacred notions of the West, *A History of the World in 10/2 Chapters* attempts to deconstruct the binary pillars of the Western civilization. Nonetheless, the novel cannot escape from displaying the hegemonic tone of the West with its male characters who assume ultimate superiority over others and the existence of local cultures that only serve as a tool to Westerners. Barnes' depiction of a dream state of eternal existence seems to be an ultimate capitalist utopia from which there is no escape. Despite being a fictional account of the world history, the novel mainly focuses on Christianity, whereas the geographical locations stated in the novel also suggest the existence of other religions which are never once mentioned in an apparent manner. Thus, cultural perceptions of gender roles, religion, and art are intertwined to depict an ultimately fragmented painting of the world history diluted in the shape and colour of the West where even subjective literary truth is fundamentally and exclusively Western.

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