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(POST)STRUCTURAL NOTIONS OF LANGUAGE AND HISTORY IN THE NOVELS
OF JULIAN BARNES

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INTRODUCTION

The literary output of Julian Barnes (1946-) defies exact classification. The distinct narrative techniques he uses as well as the multiplicity of themes and richness of vocabulary make him difficult to define. His novels and short stories are widely read not only by scholars and literary critics but also by the general public. Consequently, Barnes is one of the most popular and recognised authors in English literature of the post-war period. He has been awarded several literary prizes in England, France, Italy, and the United States, among which there were the prestigious Maugham Award, Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize, and Prix Medicis- to name just a few¹. Despite the unquestionable thematic diversity, some reappearing motifs can be enumerated- they are mostly subjects centred on leftist ideas of society, culture, and religion as well as existential issues such as the meaning of art in life and the possibility to perceive truth. The overtone of Barnes's writings is frequently ironic or even satirical but, still, his criticism of middle-class mentality and master-narratives of culture and religion is fairly moderate. Barnes continues to identify himself with bourgeoisie and he uses the imagery of otherness as well as lower-classes not in order to speak in their defence but to ridicule the arrogance and self-confidence of his own class. Moreover, the formal education he received largely amounts to the treatment of certain issues. So far, he has written as many as fourteen novels, a couple of detective stories, a collection of journalism and he also published many articles in, e.g. 'The Observer' and 'The New Yorker'². In my thesis I will concentrate on four novels: *Metroland* (1980), *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984), *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (1989), and *Cross Channel* (1995).

The first one, *Metroland*, is written according to the conventions of *Bildungsroman* which describes the emotional and intellectual development of young protagonists³. The novel is divided into three parts: *Metroland*, *Paris*, and *Metroland II*. Each of them deals with the ensuing stages of development which brings new meanings to the events and situations described and even more possible interpretations. At the beginning, the two main protagonists- Christopher Lloyd and Toni Barbarowski present the same views on life, art, and society. Only in the last passages do they split. Particularly because while, in the course of time, Chris declined in his criticism for the bourgeois district communities, Toni persisted in his rebellious attitude by taking up a job as a University scientist and refusing to ever get married. Despite the simplicity of plot, *Metroland* introduces a number of

¹ Katarzyna Szczepanik, „Julian Barnes”, in: *Współczesna powieść brytyjska*, K. Stamirowska (ed.), Universitas, (Kraków: 1997), p. 121.

² Ibid., pp. 121-122.

³ Ibid., p. 123.

complex ideas not only of social structures but also of some theoretical problems like the construction of meaning in language, the loss of individuality and authenticity in the process of constructing history and the confusion around dictionaries (Barnes himself co-edited *English Oxford Dictionary*⁴).

Flaubert's Parrot is fairly different from all the other literary pieces authored by Barnes. Its form oscillates between essay, novel, short story, diary, and an (auto)biography. The narrative complexity and minute research on Flaubert make it probably the most distinctive novel Barnes has ever written and one of the most important literary phenomena in post-war Britain. The predominating part of the novel is narrated by Geoffrey Braithwaite who tries to discover all the intimate details from Flaubert's life. First and foremost, he wants to examine the authenticity of a parrot considered to have belonged to the author in question. Also, by the end of the novel, Braithwaite realises that through his lifetime he and his wife Ellen have been parroting Flaubertian protagonists- Charles and Emma Bovary. *Flaubert's Parrot* is inter- and intratextual as well as interdisciplinary and heterogeneous. In this novel Barnes proves to be a postmodernist writer as he anticipates poststructural readings of his work; hence, the final form of *Flaubert's...* is meta-linguistic, meta-narrative and meta-theoretical.

A similar method is also visible in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*. In this novel, Barnes strives to shift the critical attention from the Biblical and political to the personal and individual. He consciously deconstructs and questions the meaning of historical events. In doing so, he has no qualms about undermining the validity of western values. He writes the history of the world violating both the temporal as well as the spatial order. Even though each of the stories is to be treated separately, the themes and motifs are consistent with the general historical imagery. In this way, Barnes is very provocative in the subtextual sphere of the novel. Even though Barnes privileges freedom and self-reliance over succumbing to power relations, he, nevertheless, depicts stubborn individualism as futile.

The last novel discussed in my thesis is *Cross Channel*. It is mostly a collection of eight short stories- all of which are focused on the relations between the French and the English. The motifs discussed in *Cross...* are variable. Barnes writes about the Christian church, cross channel labour force, heterosexual relationships, peasant fables and organising publishing conferences. However, the attitude that Barnes presents in *Cross*

⁴ Ibid., p. 121.

Channel no longer superposes the French over the English as it was the case with his previous novels. Accordingly, Barnes depicts culture in its more universal dimension and treats both entities as integral parts of master-narrative. This subject reappears in other novels too.

My analysis of the four mentioned novels is structured into two chapters: *Language as Identity and Difference* and *History in Time and Space*. Since Barnes himself largely draws from literary theory, my analysis includes extensive references to French criticism and theory. The treatment of ideas connected with social domination and ideology is parallel to the works of the thinkers of the New Left such as Michel Foucault and Jurgen Habermas.

The analysis of language is performed on two levels. First, I scrutinise language as it is spoken and understood. Second, I concentrate on the interrelations between the speaking subjects. My interpretation is based on the writings of philosophers like Derrida, Lacan, Wittgenstein and Kristeva as well as structural linguists like de Saussure and Iser. I make a point of depicting the relations between structural linguistic and phenomenology and the often conflicting solutions theory provides.

The interpretation of history, on the other hand, can be roughly divided into history as such and Christian history. The former is depicted in terms of master-narrative which involves the notions of authority, domination, and circulation of discourse. The latter, illustrated especially in *A History...* shows the results of respatialisation of temporal order and the ensuing fusion of the sacred with the profane. The analysis of the novels mentioned is not only devoted to strictly Barnesian imageries. Julian Barnes's literary creativity is only a point of departure to more universal problems of contemporary literary theory and cultural studies.

CHAPTER ONE

Language as Identity and Difference

Barnesian conception of language is formulated mainly on the ground of cultural codes transmission. He concentrates on the semiotic and semantic intricacies of everyday language with an emphasis laid on the parallel distinction between French and English. Whereas the former represents the flexible and figurative quality of socio-cultural discourse, the latter stands for culture-referential convention. Having made a comparative depiction of semiotic interactions in respective cultures, Barnes proceeds to the re-evaluation of the condition of language. He challenges the prescriptive notions imposed on language putting forth the idea of rejecting some of the common modes of thinking about it. Throughout his novels, Barnes makes several points as to this subject matter- some of which are of relative frequency. First, he assumes the rejection of translation for the sake of linguistic autonomy which resists conceptual absorption into the target-language. The ensuing acculturation of the translated terms causes the reduction of meaning as well as the conventionalisation of the usage. Second, he suggests the rejection of domestic homogeneity and verbal schematics in favour of hybrid anarchy of speech. Barnes portrays otherness in terms of linguistic subculture. And ultimately, he postulates the rejection of dictionaries and the authority of lexicographer, in exchange of which, Barnes purports the abolition of long-established canons of meaning. He exhibits the linguistic conventions as violating both the rules of pluralism and the logic of language itself. The core components of his discussion oscillate between structural and poststructural literary theory- often taking deconstruction for their point of departure.

First and foremost, Barnes most distinctively reflects upon the problem of the vast variety of meaning and signification as confronted with the common expectation of accuracy within the framework of *Bildungsroman*. In *Metroland*, apart from self-monitoring the developing characters also monitor the linguistic operations of culture. The primary notion is that of the English language as embedded in the structural system of signification. Both the syntax and semantics of the English language operate in such a way so as to directly address the cultural interests of middle class or any other socially privileged group(s). Toni and Christopher, trying to escape the limitations of English, find rescue in French. The latter becomes the language of rebellion and freedom:

[...] We cared for its language because it sounds very plosive and precise, and we cared for its literature largely for its combativeness. [...]⁵

Whereas English language- mirroring the mentality of middle-class people, does not cross the borders of its system, French is here assumed to violate the fundamentals

⁵ Julian Barnes, *Metroland*, Picador, (London: 1990), p. 16.

of *status quo* in the act of a deliberate assault on culture. Their expectation toward English is for it to become, just like they assume French is, a literature- one that would not fragmentarily reflect culture but, rather, be open to reflect and being reflected in unnumbered ways. Moreover, the perception of English makes it not so much the language of the English-speaking world as that of the bourgeois community consisting of:” *the unidentified legislators, moralists, social luminaries, and parents of outer suburbia*”⁶. In consequence, English and French are the languages of adulthood and adolescence, respectively. The first tends to profess completeness and singularity of ideas, while the latter allows both more freedom of expression and comprehension. In other words: the adult simplification of ultimate definition is contrasted with youthful simplicity of undetermined reference:

[...] At that age everything seems to more open to analogy, to metaphor, than it does now. There were more meanings, more interpretations, a greater variety of available truths. There was more symbolism. Things contained more.[...]⁷

The act of remembering includes critical instances, yet, looking at the situation retrospectively, it ought to be noted that *back then* the fluidity of language and its referents was not just a matter of juvenile fancy. The attitude of Toni and Chris was quite competitive as they counterposed the surrounding reality with their own priorities such as:” *the purity of language, the perfectibility of self, the function of art, plus a clutch of capitalised intangibles like Love, Truth, Authenticity...*”⁸ What draws a close attention in the fragment cited above is a sense of loss after the bygone times of language allowed variable signification. The protagonist recalls teenage years when he did not have to follow the well-worn modes of meaning. But there is also a sense of sympathy for the naivety in taking understanding and opinion-forming for a process of undisturbed, individual, part conscious self-orientation. The fact that the linguistic search for manifold structures of reality is a dead-end enterprise and that it must eventually fail seems to be now realised.

Consequently, meanings become unilateral and the multitude of linguistic reference declines. Within the framework of systematic structuring, language-the-signifier has only the neutral quality of denoting particular concepts of culture-the-signified. Language functions more like a science than practice and even when it becomes one- it tends to submit to its scientific implications. In this sense, in order for a semi-mimetic consistency of speech act and reality to be attained, linguistic units must be estranged from

⁶ Ibid., p. 14.

⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

their natural environment. To Barnes, after it has ceased to be genuinely creative and dynamic, language has become merely an ideology.

One of the ways of overcoming the trap of English language is the transmission of French lexicon into the mother tongue. This practice does challenge the bourgeois sterility of linguistic culture but the French-English relation is a battlefield for signifiers so long as they remain untranslated. The naturally French terms like *ecraser l'infame* and *epater la bourgeoisie* are the foreign-sounding voices of discontent used by Toni and Christopher with the intention to mock the hypocritical rationality of the middle world. If language and culture are placed within the system of *a* word and *the* singular reference then the challenging language must be one from outside the system. Otherness of language invites the difference of identity into the play and the rules are not questioned because they are unknown. A foreign expression is not comprehended by the addressee so there is no authority over its meaning except for that of the actual user. Such utterances, despite their unknowingly fixed semantics, when entering an alien system, automatically lose their own variety of reference and the workings of signification are optional.

This assumption amounts to the intentionalisation of meaning which, despite its deconstructive aspirations, operates on the structural level of signification. Such an approach is characteristic of phenomenological critique questioned mostly by New Critics. The usage of French in this particular example can be seen as derived from Husserlian concept of the form. The idea of form is inseparable from metaphysics since it assumes an essential and self-evident presence. This “presence” results from what Husserl calls a finite system of oppositions working within the framework of noetico-noematic structure⁹. Hence, sense is inscribed in the pure possibility of form which only acquires meaning in the act of expression. Derrida refers to the analysis pinpointing the activity of western dualism of soul and body:” *this enigmatic unity of informing intention and informed matter*”¹⁰. Similarly, the phenomenological views on the expression of meaning in language are shared by Heidegger. In *Language*, we read: “ *In its essence, language is neither expression nor an activity of man. Language speaks*”¹¹. Even though Heidegger frees the production of meaning from the intention of man, he, nevertheless, falls back on inherent structures of meaning within language. In this particular respect phenomenology

⁹ Jacques Derrida, „Form and Meaning. A Note on The Phenomenology of Language”, in: *Margins of Philosophy*, tr. A. Bass, Chicago UP, (Chicago: 1982), p. 158-159.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

¹¹ Martin Heidegger, „Language”, in: *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, V. B. Leitch (ed.), (NY-London: 2002), p. 1126.

corresponds to structuralism. Mainly, the assumption that every expression is utterly novel has been assimilated by theorists and is to be found in the writings of many structuralists. One of the possible examples is Jonathan Culler whose employment of Chomskian “competence”¹² was supposed to account for the readerly comprehension of linguistic codes- deemed universal in structure and operation of meaning. Accordingly, using phrases like *epater l’infame* and *ecraser la bourgeoisie* creates the illusion of self-emancipation from the structural system of signification. First, there is no pre-expressive noema that would, normally, condition the production of meaning. Second, language is spoken and dependant on the speaking subject’s semantic goals. And finally, the rule of “competence” cannot be applied because of the foreignness of these expressions.

However, if such expressions are untranslated and their meaning is virtually reliant on the speaker’s perspective, then they are inclined to get exhausted at certain point. This is because the foreignness of a language cannot guarantee the avoidance of systematic assimilation; especially, when it denotes a concept of a very particular definition. The revolutionary tone in *epater...* and *ecraser...* is both subjective and emotive which makes it even more instantaneous. In fact, intentionality is one of the first starting points for New Critical theorists who rejected structuralism. Wimsatt and Beardsley assert that intentional stances of literary works are not a subject to linguistic analysis but to psychological scrutiny¹³. This stems from the fact that language anticipates intentions that can only be expressed afterwards and only with the help of the system which is available. Similarly, they write that the denotation (meaning) is always more powerful than the connotation (suggestion)¹⁴. Hence, the surplus of intentional meaning is only possible initially and it must inevitably decline.

As a result of the conditions mentioned, preserving linguistic autonomy by means of uttering foreign expressions is not only useless but futile as well. Also the neutrality and mobility of those expressions is merely illusory. Ironically, the ensuing consequences of the assumption implicate the protagonist in a struggle for meaning in the system he had ignored. At first point, Toni and Christopher overestimate system as such. At second point they overestimate their role in the production of meaning:

[...] A simple statement of fact would look ridiculous; the truth would look like a lie. It would have to be slipped casually after all. I practised saying *mon amie anglaise* to myself, and *une amie anglaise* and *cette amie anglaise*. Mentioning nationality would take the sting out of it. [...]¹⁵

¹² Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice*, Routledge, (London- NY: 1991), p. 2.

¹³ W.K. Wimsatt and M.C. Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy”, in: *The Norton...*, op. cit., p. 1381.

¹⁴ Wimsatt and Beardsley, “The Affective Fallacy”, in: *The Norton...*, p.1389.

¹⁵ J. Barnes, *Metroland*, op. cit., p. 15.

The protagonist himself realises that there is a discrepancy between the semantic properties of the uttered word and his actual intentions. Language is divorced from both its mimetic quality and individual authorisation. This is one of the primary claims made by deconstructionists: "Since language is pure form and human users have no place "in" language, intention, meaning to say, and validity of interpretation are "outside of It". Consequently, language, not the users (...), is the final authority on meaning"¹⁶. By the same token, Derrida criticises the assumptions of differential and diacritical properties of language¹⁷. Accordingly, the pure form is not a component of the process of meaning production but an inherent constituent of language. The futility of mixing language systems, as described earlier, is attributable to the fact that the protagonists yield to structural notions of linguistics. This is also what Derrida calls preformism that he discerns in Rousset's analysis of Proust and Claudel¹⁸. Derrida's claim is that *écriture* is always preceded by inscription¹⁹. Hence, even though Toni and Christopher try to deconstruct structuralism using structural tools their aim is accomplished in the earliest stage. In fact, what Derrida calls inscription is the activity of lexical units as well as phrases that they perform in anticipation of being transmitted via speech acts. This problem can be more vividly presented on the following example.

In *Metroland*, the practice of naming as imprisoned in the context of culture is touched upon with respect to the most confusing word- bourgeois. It is one of the English words that Toni and Christopher stick to. To them it functions as an offensive word with a variety of associations. However, as Christopher discovers, a single word has a wide variety of denotative as well with no respect to his interpretative intentions:

[...] Hey. Christ. You can't say that. It's not allowed. Look at yourself. I can call you bourgeois; well, I think I can anyway. You can't call yourself it. It's just not... on. I mean it's against all the known rules. It's like a master admitting he knows his own nickname. It well, I suppose it can only be answered by a non-conventional response. [...]²⁰

Even though words lean in a specific direction of signification, they can be easily reversed. Still, the procedure of reversal does not cause any turbulence in the system, but simply confirms its order. Bourgeois can be a subjectively offensive word only

¹⁶ John K. Sheriff, *The Fate of Meaning*, Princeton UP, (New Jersey: 1989), p. 45.

¹⁷ Ch. Norris, *Deconstruction...*, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

¹⁸ Christopher Johnson, *System and Writing in the Philosophy of Jacques Derrida*, Cambridge UP, (Cambridge: 1993), pp. 22-23.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ J. Barnes, *Metroland*, p. 38.

in the initiating act of will rather than that of a legitimate signification. This time, it is the speaker who is abstracted from the emotive quality of his speech.

Moreover, as Barthes notices in the following fragments, language inevitably slips both the intentions of the speaker and his/her comprehension. It remains a self-governed entity and the speaking subject has only a limited amount of expression possibilities:

[...] When does *je t'aime bien* become *je t'aime*? The easy answer is, you know when you're in love, because there's no way you can doubt it, any more than you can doubt when your house is on fire. That's the trouble, though: try to describe a phenomenon and you get either a tautology or a metaphor. (...) Hesitancy doesn't indicate lack of feeling, just uncertainty about terminology (and perhaps, the after-effects of my conversation with Marion). Doesn't the terminology affect emotion in any case? Shouldn't I just have said *je t'aime* (and who's to say I wouldn't be telling the truth)? Naming can lead to making. [...]²¹

The main distinction in the citation is made between the literalness and literariness of language. The former feature is "*a tautology*" which is a gesture toward the implicit acceptance of linguistic phenomena as described by structuralists. It assumes that the expression of meaning is in itself meaningful as there has been *sense* beforehand. Barthes writes: "*tautology is always aggressive: it signifies a choleric break between the intelligence and its object, the arrogant threat of an order in which we are not to think*"²². Hence, while denotation is fixed, the connotation might be more confusing and, by the same token, make room for interpretative speculations. Tautological overtone of an expression brings it back to its own essential semantic qualities and announces that word not necessarily stands for something else than itself. The literary language, "*a metaphor*", goes to the other extreme by making an expression mean something virtually different than it is expected to. Saussure perceived literary language as not only symbolic but also free from the illusion that it refers to reality²³. Consequently, this sort of semantic relativism is useless in everyday language as it cannot be enforced with literary tropes. The final result of gradual rebellion against linguistic system is always a failure. The conventionalised link between signifier and signified is irreducible but, simultaneously, the "link" fails to recognise its own complexity.

At first sight, it might appear that the rite from the signifier-signified relation to the sign is a linear one. Derrida's recognition of the 'gap' as well as the antiessentialist notion of *supplement* and irreversible *traces* coming about in the process of *differance*

²¹ Ibid., p. 125.

²² Roland Barthes, "Racine is Racine", in: *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*, tr. R. Howard, California UP, (Berkeley: 1979), p. 59.

²³ J. K. Sheriff, *The Fate...*, op. cit., p. 12.

inaugurated the debate over the originality of meaning production. Whether or not the protagonists stick to the structural meaning or invent their own, the “gap” always precedes their utterance. Wittgenstein, in his philosophical scepticism, goes even further claiming that the gaps themselves are multiple which features they acquire in so-called language games²⁴. Ultimately, in the relationship between sign and its referent the gap results from the mobility of conventions.

Among Barnes’s most frequent concerns there is also the question of linguistic subcultures. This theme introduces the ideas connected with language’s variety across linguistic communities. This variety is as dependant on the status of a given community as it is on the subject discussed in language. This motif is elaborated on in relation to three linguistic subgroups: adolescents, artists, and racial others. The position of subculture is not depicted in terms of marginalisation but rather as a self-conscious act of rebellion against culture’s hegemony.

The problem of adolescence is illustrated mostly by the figures of Toni and Christopher. The protagonists pay a considerable amount of attention to the dialogic two-sidedness which proves that the predictability of cultural discourse and the unpredictable trap of the linguistic unit’s semantics- are entwined. The former is attributed to adulthood; it is foreseeable structural combination of syntax and semantics whose simultaneous order breeds certainty. The latter is the projection of youngsters as to vocabulary which, as they suppose, can be intentionalised. The parental familiarity and value are envisioned in the language that parents use:

[...] Parenthood, for Toni and me, was a crime of strict liability. There didn’t need to be any *mens rea*, just the *actus reus* of birth. The sentence we doled out after giving due consideration to all circumstances of the case and the social background of the offenders, was one of perpetual probation. [...]²⁵

Parents symbolise the hegemonic practises that are subject to counter-ideology. In this sense the youngsters can fulfil their duty- the duty of the young generations. This is not only a theoretical design aiming at heterogenising society but, first and foremost, a sociological fact:” *The emergence of such (youth) groups has signalled in a spectacular fashion the breakdown of consensus in the post-war period*”²⁶. The primary goal of such group is to use a symbolic language confirming disobedience toward socio-parental education:

²⁴ Ch. Norris, *Deconstruction...*, p. 130.

²⁵ Barnes, *Metroland*, pp. 40-41.

²⁶ Dick Hebdige, “From Culture to Hegemony”, in: *The Cultural Studies Reader*, S. During (ed.), Routledge, (London- NY: 1993), pp. 366-367.

[...] Adults were boring, with their rationality, their deference, their refusal to punish you as severely as you knew you ought to be punished. Adults were useful because they were boring: they were raw material; they were predictable in their responses. They might be wet and kindly, or sour and vicious; but they were always predictable. [...]²⁷

The predictability of response is linguistic in the first place. Toni and Christopher believe that it is their duty to comply with the ideals of their own generation. The sole act of being disobedient is in itself deconstructive because it introduces chaos into the order of adulthood. With no respect to the falsity of adults, adolescence can be authentic. Hebdige describes this struggle in terms of competing discourses in which the subcultural steals from the cultural and secretly endows the cultural products with new meaning²⁸. In this sense subcultures are heterogeneous because they both respect individuality and tend toward inclusiveness. The way to cultural and linguistic independence is through constant *deconditioning*:

[...] And as for ourselves, the victims, the mal-aimes, we realised that independent existence could only be achieved by strict deconditioning. (...) Deconning, as we called it, savouring the pun, was the duty of every self-respecting adolescent. [...]²⁹

The aspiration to rootlessness is stirred by the historical self-consciousness. The responsibility of the *Anger Generation* must be shouldered and result in the emergence of a kind of linguistic subculture. Christopher enumerates two ways of ideologically justified behaviour. First, the *Scorched Earth* is an attitude of an entire anarchy and consciousness of the would-be historical importance of the underground. The second one, *Reconstruction*, is specifically linguistic: it strives to exchange the static literalness for the energy of metaphor. Despite their challenging character they both fall flat because they bring no tangible effects. The two, revolutionary stages are comparable to the inclusion of French lexicon in English. The application of novel utterances is only initially successful as it is instantaneous too, and their meaning gets exhausted just as the meaning of untranslated foreign expressions. The bourgeois language of married couples and formal institutions absorbs and governs all the sociolects that break ranks with convention.

In separation from strictly social context, Barnes writes about the treatment of taboo in language. The most problematic issue as regards an open discussion is sex. Since such a discussion can only be held with the omission of bourgeois-governed language, it is articulated in the language of French surrealism. It corresponds to the French liberated idea

²⁷ Barnes, *Metroland*, p. 66.

²⁸ D. Hebdige, "From Culture...", op. cit., p. 367.

²⁹ Barnes, *Metroland*, p. 41.

of sexual themes that would, normally, be absent in English or exchanged for a politically correct terminology:

[...] Andre Breton: What is your opinion of love?

'T.F': When two people get married...

Andre Breton: No, no, no. The word marriage is antisurrealist. [...]³⁰

Not only does the conversation about women caressing one another take place in French but it is also associated with modernist avant-gardism. The subcultural language, apart from standing in opposition to the bourgeois, occasionally rejects lexical units that it considers to have too much of a hegemonic overtone. Such a conversation is surrealist because it is not real or, at least, it is not allowed to be made so. The use of avant-garde imagery may, however, be elusive:

[...] I was slumped in the oppressive reflection that my uncle was not just an old bore, but a parody of an old bore. [...]³¹

The surrealist language acts here as a latecomer from the very moment it is allowed to work. It seems like a counter-cultural language neither affects nor is affected by the dispositions of English. Hence, the production of surrealist effect is postponed with respect to convention. Moreover, the word avant-garde with all the associations it carries has fallen into abeyance. The advent of postmodernist critique marks the rejection of modernist assumptions that there are spaces in culture still to be discovered. Lyotard treats avant-garde as: „, *the expression of an outdated modernity*”³².

There is one more illustration of the domesticity of English/French as confronted with foreignness which shows the problem in a broadened sense. The French-English linguistic relation is also depicted in terms of racial otherness. Even though the idea carries strong connotations of the dualism of identity, the other is not situated as parallel to the self. In this case, the other is presented as the 'inbetweenness' of selfhood. The same holds for self-identification within the framework of linguistics since the master-language is not required to undergo partitions to become a mini-language, as it is in itself already partitioned. In this particular sense, otherness is not an external differential of selfhood but an integral part of it. Accordingly, in *Cross Channel: Junction*, what stands for the other is selfhood testifying against itself. The linguistic selves- the French and the

³⁰ J. Barnes, *Cross Channel*, Picador, (London: 1995), p. 49.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

³² Jean-Francois Lyotard, "Note on the Meaning of 'Post-'", in: *Postmodernism. A Reader*, T. Docherty (ed.), Harvester Wheatsheaf, (N-Y: 1993), p. 49.

English are no longer treated as alternative or antagonist, on the contrary, the two languages are comically reconciled:

[...] they heard a language not their own, yet not a foreign tongue either. (...) The larger fellow giving instruction was English ganger, and the smaller one, owner of the shovel, a French peasant. Their patois, or *lingua franca*, was partly English, partly French, and the rest an *olla podrida* of other languages. Even those familiar to the listeners, however, were forced into a distorted shape; while grammar was wrenched violently out of its true way. [...]³³

The citation given above provides two levels of otherness. First, the observers are abstracted from their selfhood because the part-self/ part-other speech is both familiar enough to be comprehended and too much alien to be fully mastered. And second, they realise that selfhood is fixated upon difference and as such it is liable to an entire confusion. The final product of the conversation is a quasi-language regained from previous fragmentation. Additionally, the languages engaged represent not only closed systems of signification but they also signify the master-cultures. The confusion experienced by the protagonists stems from the fact that, as representatives of the western culture(s), their perception of reality is embedded in the western metaphysics which describes the world in one and the same order. The ensuing contradiction is generated in the very centre of this order. Mainly, as Derrida asserts, the phoneticization of writing as well as the assignment of the value of truth to present logos as the basic premises of western science privilege the speaking presence over silence and absence³⁴. Consequently, the phonocentric attitude of the protagonists allows them to reject the language they hear, at least, at the very beginning. At the same time, however, they cannot defy the speaking subjects and their language because, ironically, they unflinchingly meet the criteria of western evaluation of truth and meaning. Because the rules of logos are in fact chaotic the metaphysics can easily turn against itself. In Paul de Man's terminology, such an application of discourse is something he calls 'hybrid text' and associates it mainly with literature: "*The same grammatical pattern engenders two meanings that are mutually exclusive: the literal meaning asks for the concept (difference) whose existence is denied by the figurative meaning*"³⁵. Hence, the concept of the sign must yield to its own pluralism which means that there is not only a 'gap' between the signifier and the signified but the sign is split as well.

Bearing the above remarks in mind, it is easy to notice that the observed others go a little bit further in the affirmation of their otherness. Not only do they rename

³³ J. Barnes, *Cross..*, op. cit., p. 33.

³⁴ J. Derrida, *From „Of Grammatology”*, in: *The Norton...*, p. 1822.

³⁵ Paul de Man, "Semiology and Rhetoric", in: *The Norton...*, p. 1519.

themselves which might be a gesture of self-decolonisation, but also their passivity (the position of the objects of western scrutiny) they cannot be controlled even in terms of western usurpation:

[...] they have rejected their names of Christian baptism, preferring to make themselves known by false names, no doubt with the intention of misleading the forces of order. [...] ³⁶

The western civilisation is met with its own by-product which legitimises itself as civilisational by means of employing typically “western” attitude. It means that there is an inherent otherness within structuralism which does not have reach deconstruction to be invalid. The crucial thing here is also the fact that the cultural agent to whom the novel discourse is addressed is no longer just the English bourgeois. In the ensuing fragment, the difference is built upon the parallel relation with Christian civilisation:

[...] Those who spoke their own native language blasphemed constantly in the course of their labour; while those who spoke the common language of the excavations were no better than the builders of the Tower of Babel- and did not the Tower remain unfinished and its builders confounded and scattered upon the face of the earth? [...] ³⁷

While in the Bible mixing languages was a punishment imposed upon mortals by God here it is an act of emancipation of otherness. Moreover, contrary to the fate of the builders, the peasants and manual workers succeed at ascertaining communication. Consequently, dividing master-language into elemental particulates defers the pre-Babel condition of humanity and poses threat to the whole of Christian civilisation. However, the task of the others is not entirely successful. The language they produce cannot be virtually divorced from the master-narrative. The mini-narrative, by its very essence, stems from the fragmentation of the universe and cannot be substituted for it. Hence, their language is not original:

[...] To parody the language of a class or of a character is still to possess a certain distance, to lay claim to a certain authenticity. (...) human relations, despite their apparent dynamism, are as though verified, ceaselessly deflected by a kind of verbal refraction, and the problem of their “authenticity” vanishes like a lovely (and false) dream. [...] ³⁸

Barthes rejects authenticity of a discourse if it is drawn from some other one. Such a discourse is simply merely a copy of an original. But, simultaneously, Barthes pays too much attention to the role of the original. In his structural approach, he assumes the existence of originals as such and this is the first point that proves the falsity of his premises. Furthermore, he does not account for the idea of multiplicity and multiverse.

³⁶ J. Barnes, *Cross...*, p. 38.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ R. Barthes, “Adamov and Language”, in: *The Eiffel...*, op. cit., p. 56.

Therefore, the analysis performed by Bakhtin is more viable at this stage. His theory extends far beyond structuralism and deconstruction, especially in his depiction of the split between structural and functional linguistics. His primary notion is that of ‘heteroglossia’ in which:” *Sociolects (are) constantly struggling to attract words and linguistic forms into their own orbit, in order to reinflect them for their own use*”³⁹. Sociolects correspond to the youth subcultures stealing from the high culture to eventually rename and reevaluate its values. Consequently, the emancipation is gained in the deconstructionist sense as sociolects defy the universality of language. Especially because:” *heteroglossia implies dialogic interaction in which the prestige languages try to extend their control and subordinated languages try to avoid, negotiate, or subvert that control*”⁴⁰. Accordingly, the fragmentation of linguistic reality (as opposed to realities) is achieved in the sole act of speaking sociolects (or dialects for that matter). Bakhtin makes a point of referring to the dialogical situation which he sees as reliant on the economy of domination and subordination. Despite the poststructural overtone, this claim is strongly structural since it assumes the existence of two dissociated entities. A similar claim is purported by Iser. He remarked that there is never one-to-one communication act. In a dialogue there is always the transmitter (operating on the level of artistic techniques) and the receiver (operating with his/her own psychology of reading messages).⁴¹ As a result of the aforesaid, power relations come about not in the sphere of linguistic codes but are inaugurated at the moment of speaking. Even though the similarity between Bakhtin and Iser invites comparison, we should not omit the fact that the former ascribes the social relations to the essential and irreducible quality of language which is a variety of ‘lects’ that comply both with linguistic and social structures. In *Discourse in the Novel*, he makes it clear that form and content is one and the same thing in a discourse⁴². Moreover, Bakhtin sees the “*Tower-of-Babel mixing of languages*” as producing a positive heterogeneity of linguistic structures across societies⁴³. Hence, using sociolects has one more piece of information inscribed in itself: that the idea of using it is already a means of counterposing the existing order.

Having revised linguistic subcultures in terms of generation gap, artism, and racial difference, it should be noted that they all share common characteristics. They

³⁹ Allon White, “Bakhtin, Sociolinguistics, and Deconstruction”, in: *Bakhtinian Thought. An Introductory Reader*, S. Devitith (ed.), Routledge, (London: 1996), p.137.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Wolfgang Iser, “Interaction Between Text and Reader”, in: *The Norton...*, p. 1674.

⁴² M. Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel”, in: *The Norton...*, p. 1190.

⁴³ A. White, “*Bakhtin...*”, op. cit., p. 147.

contribute to the fragmentation of master-narrative, they also blur the lines between taboo and decency, and finally they create a liberated social entity that exist both independently as well as in cohabitation with larger discourses.

The third point to be made on Barnes's conception of language is the institutionalisation of language as regards dictionaries, canons of meaning, and encyclopaedic inclinations of (auto)biographies, as well as the position of lexicographers. The different passages from *Metroland*, *Cross Channel* and *Flaubert's Parrot* present distinct ideas on the condition of language under the prescriptive constraints laid upon its usage.

The problem about dictionaries is that they treat words exclusively as lexical units that are separated from all the possible social contexts. The meanings are drawn from the essences of the words and as such they stand in no oppositional or parallel relations to one another. Moreover, such treatment of semantics in lexicon provokes the situation in which words are abstracted from their natural environment. This issue is illustrated in *Metroland*:

[...] 'Anyway, it's interesting, you know- I looked up marriage the other day in the Frog dic. Did you know that all the phrases in which it's used are disparaging: *marriage de convenance*, *d'interet*, *blanc*, *de raison*, *a la mode*... and so on'.
'Marriage *d'inclination*?'
'Missed it'.
'I haven't- and I put the phone down'. [...]⁴⁴

Apart from the abstraction from social structures, the words to be found in dictionaries refer predominantly to particularity and their most natural meanings are omitted. Establishing canonical meanings serves providing explicit mechanisms of structural signification. This task is one of central acts of scientific exchanges between structural linguistics and structural anthropology. Levi-Strauss writes that only with the help of linguistic etymologies based on phonemes can an anthropologist define kinship systems⁴⁵. Hence, the definitions in dictionaries dwell on the phonocentric parallel relations between the particular components of a lexicon. Similarly, Levi-Strauss privileged the universalised systematism of structuralism over the individualism and atomism of former schools⁴⁶. With these scientific justifications, dictionaries lay claim to objectivity, inclusiveness and authority. This assumes certain distance from the words and

⁴⁴ J. Barnes, *Metroland*, p. 135.

⁴⁵ Claude Levi-Strauss, *From "Structural Anthropology"*, Penguin Press, 1968.

[www.marxists.org.reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/levistra.htm]

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

their meanings which is illusory because lexicography is already a meta-linguistic activity. The only possible distance is an unpositive one:” *dictionaries appear to be above specific language use, they offer a simple list of ‘objective’ meanings, apparently immune from the pressure of context, social use, and local ideological colouring*”⁴⁷. In *Cross Channel: Evermore* the protagonist-lexicographer cannot accept the imposed meaning of the words she thought she knew so well:

[..] EVER MORE: it seemed more weighty like this, with an equal bell-toll on each half. In any case, she had a quarrel with the dictionary about evermore. ‘Always, at all times, constantly, continually’ yes, it could mean this in the ubiquitous inscription. But she preferred sense I: ‘For all future time’. [...]⁴⁸

Also in this fragment the meanings of words are not beyond scientific scrutiny but the estrangement from their natural environment is so strong that it is impossible even for a lexicographer to transform them. In this particular respect dictionaries are comparable to canons. Mainly, just as dictionary is slightly deferred with respect to linguistic reality also canon is deferred with respect to the actual literary texts⁴⁹. By the same token, the means of description are being more and more diluted. The criterion of geographical, territorial and political unity is no longer valid⁵⁰. The canonical may officially be accepted but it is always already outdated. Consequently, the job of the lexicographer is to copy an anonymous-authored ‘original’. The way to overcome the limits of dictionaries is presented in *Flaubert’s Parrot*. Here Braithwaite redefines words in order to make the definitions more practical. In his personal dictionary, Braithwaite insists on the effectivity of a word and concentrates on the result of a practice rather than the practice itself. The effect may be quite surprising- for example in the case of defining ‘whores’: “*Necessary in the nineteenth century for the contraction of syphilis, without which no one could claim genius*”⁵¹.

The fact that the personal dictionary is interjected into biography merits some consideration at this stage. The presence of a dictionary in this sort of a narrative violates the decorum of both. Therefore, a more convenient word to be used here is encyclopaedia. While dictionary is scientifically exclusive, encyclopaedia allows confabulation, multiple

⁴⁷ A. White, “The Dismal Sacred Word’: Academic Language and Social Reproduction of Seriousness”, in: *Carnival, Hysteria and Writing: Collected Essays and Autobiography of Allon White*, (Clarendon Press: 1993), p.126.

⁴⁸ J. Barnes, *Cross Channel*, p. 100.

⁴⁹ Wojciech Hamerski, “Kanonada, czyli ostrzał kanonu z przyczółka fantastyki”, in: *Pro Arte*, vol. 20, 2004/2005, p. 6.

⁵⁰ Śniedziewski Piotr, “Kanon komparatysty”, in: *Pro...*, op. cit., p. 10.

⁵¹ J. Barnes, *Flaubert’s Parrot*, Picador, (London: 1985), p. 158.

narratives, etc⁵². Since the classical form of (auto)biography relies exclusively on the socio-political context⁵³ then confabulation is not at all allowed. Still, we can see that Braithwaite's 'dictionary' is an intermediary between historical record and personal narration. Only in the form of an encyclopaedic volume can a biography and a dictionary co-exist. Moreover, encyclopaedia can develop and thus be interpreted from many points of view⁵⁴. In contrast to the static nature of dictionaries, encyclopaedias can be redistributed both spatially and temporally.

Given this account, we can notice that writing dictionaries is not a dead-end enterprise. Even if lexicography fails to be practical it is counterproductive toward itself. Mainly, it constructs an entity which defines itself as universal which marks point-blank that there has been some exclusion made along the way. In visualising its presence, dictionary announces the presence of its repressed counterpart.

In Barnes's novels and, most distinctively, in *Flaubert's Parrot* the treatment of linguistic phenomena on textual level is even more complex. The emancipation of meaning from language as well as freeing language from the conventional operations of signification prepares room for inter- and intratextual communication. The two modes of *écriture* given above are drawn from Kristevan deconstruction of phallogentrism. She defines intertextuality as an irreducible saturation through cultural and social codes, and intratextuality as introspective and intrapersonal implications of the authorial subject⁵⁵. Both textual spheres are easily discernible in *Flaubert's Parrot*.

The intertextual is very much vivid, especially, because it is represented by the figure of Braithwaite whose position defies direct classification. He is the author and the protagonist of the story at the same time. This makes the statement about power relations debatable. Braithwaite is situated at the brink of negotiating economies- stratifying the personal with the professional as well as desire with duty. What amounts and, simultaneously, distorts Braithwaite as an authorial subject is the self-identification through time and gender. It is implicit in the characterisation of the protagonist that the identification is a discontinuous process.

⁵² Grzegorz Marzec, „Brzemie encyklopedii”, in: *Twórczość*, vol. 4, April, 2005, p. 74.

⁵³ Michał Bachtin, „Antyczna biografia i autobiografia”, in: *Problemy literatury i estetyki*, tr. W. Grajewski, Czytelnik, (Warszawa: 1982), p. 334.

⁵⁴ G. Marzec, „Encyklopedia Schulzowska”, in: *Twórczość*, op. cit., p. 122.

⁵⁵ Pam Morris, “Identities in Process: Poststructuralism, Julia Kristeva and Intertextuality”, in: *Literature and Feminism*, Blackwell Publishers, (Oxford: 1993), pp. 136-137.

In the traditional perception of narrative patterns they served explanation of thinking processes conducted along linear sense of time⁵⁶. It means that human identity is not negotiable and that it fits exactly the ontological experiences across the whole of lifetime. Additionally, human consciousness constitutes narration which is something inherently interior to human psyche⁵⁷. Hence, narrative structures can be expected to be foreseeable and build up a system of explicit syntagmatic relations. The same assumption corresponds to the differentiation between reality and fiction:” *Text-time is thus inescapably linear, and therefore cannot correspond to the multilinearity of ‘real’ story-time*”⁵⁸. However, Hawkes does not account for the complications resulting from the reversal of temporal order as well as the split of the ‘writing subject’ into multiple time-consciousnesses. Realist representation of reality (as it is in *Madame Bovary*) assumes an essentialist notion of ‘universal’ interpretation which strives to treat the descriptions of reality as mirroring itself which, on its part, is attributed to the ‘universalised’ potential to perceive. Realism goes as far as to create a perfect balance between physical movement of the background and the movement of thoughts, Poulet remarks⁵⁹. Whereas, *Madame Bovary* is held within this convention, *Flaubert’s Parrot* rewrites its content introducing temporal anarchy and accepting its own activity as copying. Poulet adds that in fact:” *(r)eading is just that: a way of giving way not only to a host of alien words, images, ideas, but also the very alien principle which utters them and shelters them*”⁶⁰. Hence, on the level of signification the position of the rewritten text is closely connected with the position of its author. In the last chapter of *Flaubert’s...* Braithwaite comes to realise that his authorship has been long deferred within the process of pursuing another author.

The breach in linear narration as well as the growing irrelevance of the authorial subject complicates the procedure of the recognition of oneself within the sphere of authorship. Braithwaite’s behaviour pinpoints readerly activities in which “*we disobediently pursue*”- as Barnes writes⁶¹ the figure of the author. Paradoxically, it is this pursuit what constitutes the writerly accomplishment of the author in question.

The crisis of identity as it is experienced by Braithwaite is explicable in terms of the shift of power relations occurring in the process of interpretation.

⁵⁶ Katarzyna Rosner, *Narracja, tożsamość i czas*, Universitas, (Kraków: 2003), pp. 11-12.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵⁸ Terence Hawkes, *Narrative Fiction, Contemporary Poetics*, Methuen, (London- NY: 1983), p. 45.

⁵⁹ George Poulet, *Metamorfozy czasu*, PIW, (Warszawa: 1977), p. 472.

⁶⁰ G. Poulet, “Objective Interpretation”, in: *The Norton...*, p. 1323.

⁶¹ J. Barnes, *Flaubert’s...*, p. 12.

It stems from the fact that the reader has come to the focal point of attention, as Barthes writes:

[...] in ethnographic societies the responsibility for a narrative is never assumed by a person but by a mediator, shaman or relator whose “performance”- the mastery of the narrative code- may possibly be admired but never his ‘genius’. The author is a modern figure (...) [...] ⁶²

Hence, the author is not removed as s/he has been invented in the first place. Whenever somebody takes up writing a novel he or she ends up in confusion and total loss of one’s self. This is partially attributable to the existence of *écriture* in the philosophy of Poststructuralism:

[...] The conception of *écriture*, as currently employed, is concerned with neither the act of writing nor the indications, as symptoms or signs within a text, of an author’s meaning; rather, it stands for a remarkably profound attempt to elaborate the conditions of any text, both the conditions of its spatial dispersion and its temporal deployment. [...] ⁶³

The same point is made by Barnes. The authorial dispersion across time and space makes room for the reader. Mainly, authoring a novel is merely an act of re-writing while reading a novel is writing- endowing a given text with meaning:

[...] Whereas the common but passionate reader is allowed to forget; he can go away, be unfaithful with other writers, come back and be entranced again. Domesticity need never intrude on the relationship; it may be sporadic, but when there it is always intense. There’s none of the daily rancour which develops when people live bovinely together. [...] ⁶⁴

The relevance or even the existence of an author is dependant on the readerly whims. The author no longer has the power over his or her text because there is no longer his or her presence comprised in it. In other words, the authorial presence is deferred with respect to the completion of the author’s task. In this way, he or she is estranged from his own ‘I’; the ultimate point of visualising identity in its all intimacy breaks the line between the author and his/her authorship. This paradoxical and, simultaneously, unfortunate situation may be overcome to some extent. What brings at least partial solution to the problem is some sort of a supplementary identification.

At this stage we are entering the intratextual dimension of *Flaubert’s Parrot*. To a large extent, Braithwaite manages to reach transgender identity which process is also automatic because it emerges as a product of negotiating desires. To use Kristevan

⁶² R. Barthes, „The Death of the Author”, in: *Image...*, p. 142.

⁶³ M. Foucault, „What is an Author?”, in: *The Norton...*, p. 1625.

⁶⁴ J. Barnes, *Flaubert’s...*, p. 76.

vocabulary, the sphere of a novel is a sphere of 'chora'- the place where the first signification takes place⁶⁵. Hence, the relation between Braithwaite and his novel is like the relation between a foetus and the m/other. Following this line of argument, we can see that the abjection from the material sphere of belonging is both unpleasant and necessary. Braithwaite, "parroting" the life of Charles Bovary is also comparable to Madame Bovary- especially in terms of a kind of unfulfillment. The main difference is that Braithwaite becomes more and more conscious of the situation in the course of the novel. *Flaubert's Parrot* is consequently meta-textual and self-reflexive.

At this stage, we can also see that Barnesian portrayal of Christianity is inconsistent. It is so because of the fact that the self-identification occurs within the framework of order in a purely Christian sense. Mainly, Braithwaite performs an explicit movement across the borders of time and space- and also across gender-borders. In order to feel fulfilled he must now assume an androgynous form. Eliade writes that androgyny is not necessarily pagan imagery as it was witnessed in the early stages of Christianity too⁶⁶. The abstract perfection to which Braithwaite aspires is expected to compensate for the loss of authorial significance. Therefore, in his research on Flaubert, Braithwaite stays close to most of Flaubert's protagonists.

All this implies not only self-pity and lack of confidence but also envy. Braithwaite cannot be envious of his being an author beforehand and pity himself for not being one afterwards. That is why he must redistribute his envy and project the object of the irresistible desire in the external environment. Girard explains that desires are "borrowed" from others in an act of a voluntary self-abjection⁶⁷ - in this way Braithwaite may inflict on himself the sense of having a goal without admitting that he has already been rejected and deprived of the right to his own text. He also notices that imitation belongs to the realm of Christian teachings- sinners are expected to imitate Jesus⁶⁸. The same rule acquires a considerable amount of pejorative meaning in a different context. Imitation is not a virtue but the idea becomes more and more complex. The desire to write a book is in the case of the protagonist discussed a peculiar example of vanity. However, the

⁶⁵ Michael Payne, *Reading Theory*, Blackwell Publishers, (Cambridge: 1993), p.167.

⁶⁶ Mircea Eliade, *Mefistofeles i Androgyn*, KR, (Warszawa: 1999), p. 123.

⁶⁷ Rene Girard, *Prawda powieściowa i kłamstwo romantyczne*, KR, (Warszawa: 2001), p. 9.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

notion of vanity cannot be defined in an ordinary way. It is a heroic act of rebellion neither against oneself nor against the other but against the injustices of literary reality⁶⁹.

In many ways Braithwaite is an unconventional protagonist. Since *Flaubert's Parrot* is a self-reflexive novel, the character is both an author and a reader. Braithwaite does not want to give up his importance as an author but he does not want to become a legitimate reader of his own work either. The references to Flaubert's writings pinpoint the idea of both intertextuality and intratextuality as based on an uneven economy of self-preservation and self-rejection. The same situation holds for the combination of professional occupation with personal anxieties. In this way, Braithwaite continues to imitate Flaubertian protagonists rather than Flaubert himself.

To sum up, I have tried to present the most important points Barnes makes as to language. I concentrated on four novels: *Metroland*, *Flaubert's Parrot*, *A History of the world in 10 ½ Chapters* and *Cross Channel*. The parallel distinction between French and English help to envision theoretical problems of every day usage of language in practical terms. In *Flaubert's Parrot*, on the other hand, we have an elaboration on the question of narration and authorial identity.

The first problem that I raise in this chapter is the distinction between linguistic individualism and the abuse of language. Consequently, I raise the question of translation, cultural background of language, and the speaker's semantic intentions as contrasted with the interpretation of the addressee. By the same token, I discuss the interconnections between structural linguistics and phenomenology that seem to hold the same views on certain aspects of spoken discourse. Specifically, it refers to the common assumptions of both tendencies which claim the existence of a universalised competence that enables successful communication between the users of language. Barnes's aim is, however, not to point to the futility of such assumptions. He exhibits that language-the-signifier denotes culture-the-signified and is universal in terms of a universal misconception about language which perceived as perfectly mirroring the meaning which is expressed.

The second problem is focused on the power relations that come about between different social groups of users of language. In the case of racial others, adolescents and cultural taboo, language works in a little bit different way. Mainly, we can see how much diversified and unstable the power relations may be.

⁶⁹ Cezary Rowinski, „Rozważania nad książką Rene Girarda „Mensonage Romantique et Verite Romanesque”, in: *Kłamstwo w literaturze*, Z. Wójcicka and P. Urbański (eds.), Wydawnictwo Szumacher, (Kielce: 1996), p.132.

The dominant group- even if it is artificial- cannot prevent the situation of language being partitioned and reshaped for subversive practices. Barnes also portrays the loss of power to control the fragmentation and individualisation of language. The dominant group in the society can hardly tell the difference between the 'right' and 'wrong' discourse. In a similar manner, Barnes proves the western presuppositions as to the meaning and truth of a spoken word may easily turn against the order for the benefit of which they were supposed to work. Consequently, an entire confusion is the effect of a constant and unflinching ordering of what cannot be controlled.

The third point raises the question about the function of dictionaries. Also here the order which they are supposed to provide proves to be counterproductive. On the one hand, dictionaries privilege the abstract and often redundant meanings of words over the practical solutions. On the other hand, they simultaneously work as catalysts in the process of stratification into the official and the unofficial. It means, among other things, that a dictionary, despite abstracting words from their natural environments, announces that every other definition of a word may function as subversion. In this way, dictionaries fail to establish the power relations based on an economy of domination and subordination. On the contrary, they facilitate the erection of power within cultural subordination. Consequently, the dominant definitions of words do not impose themselves on the subordinate ones but are being violated in a number of distinct situations.

Finally, Barnes elaborates on the intricacies of deconstructed narrative patterns and the declining importance of the figure of an authorial subject. In contemporary literary theory which rejects authorship as a guarantee of truth and objectivity, author is somebody who exists only before s/he writes a novel. Braithwaite is an unfulfilled author who strives to preserve authorial identity in the course of writing his novel. He does not want to give up the right to authorise his work but he is conscious of the fact that the cultural rejection of his person is inevitable. All he can do is to try to compensate for the loss of identity by assuming other forms of identification. He achieves it by uncountable identifications across both temporal and spatial order. As a consequence to the aforesaid, Braithwaite experiments with pursuing an/other author, identifying himself with the author's protagonists and performing transgender gestures. At the same time he strives to stay as close to the order of universal logic, or Christian system of values as possible. In doing so, he hopes he will not be abstracted from his identity and sense of the self. The complicated process of trying to preserve one's subjectivity within the procedure of losing significance in the course of the process mentioned creates for him a paradoxical situation. The desire

to write a book is fulfilled by the end of the novel. Suddenly, authorial identity can be claimed on the part of Braithwaite and an identity of a protagonist is automatically acquired. Braithwaite is both an author and a reader of his novel which is generated at the level of creating a self-reflexive piece of writing.

CHAPTER TWO

History in Time and Space

In the novels of Julian Barnes, history is one of the most frequently raised subjects. The ordered reappearance of the historical instances allows implementation of a classificatory system in which two main problems can be discerned. Firstly, history as objective science and a reliable source of knowledge is revised and, thus, directly challenged. Barnes reconsiders the relation between multiple personal stories as opposed to the grandeur of dated events. He also submits to scrutiny the authenticity of historical research and depicts the unfeasibility of definitive completion of historical study. And secondly, Barnes focuses on the problem of Christian history with respect to both its temporal and spatial intricacies. He perceives the discrepancy occurring between the mythical iconography of Christian faith and the ironic emphasis laid on the idea of survival. He also exhibits the blasphemous elements of a physical movement toward the carnivalesque which portrays the relativity of absolute values. In doing so, Barnes touches upon themes like irony and schizophrenia as well as political issues such as democracy, imperialism and terrorism. He also examines the role of animals in historical discourse re-evaluating the ideas of absence and muteness. Lastly, Barnes describes the erection of institutional church with a focus on power relations occurring in the process of sacralisation. Barnes's depiction of history is hence very vivid and it is centralised mostly in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*.

In *Metroland*, Barnesian depiction of history often dwells on the antagonist relation between both spatial and temporal generalisation of historical discourse as well as the fragmented dislocation of stories. Historical generalisation, by its very essence, tends toward reductionism and, as a consequence, is indicative of exclusion while asserting to be inclusive. In other words, history specifies the point of reference so as to fix signification which practice is liable to the erasure of particularity. Postmodern novels, just like Barnes's fiction, often deal with the problem stressing the importance of multiple personal stories. In his literary criticism, John Barth, refers to historical generalisation in terms of 'ultimacy' whose destruction ought to be the aim of contemporary literature:

[...] One of the modern things about these two [Beckett and Borges] is that in an age of ultimacies and 'final solutions'- at least felt ultimacies, in everything from weaponry to theology, the celebrated dehumanisation of society, and the history of the novel- their work in separate ways reflects and deals with ultimacy both technically and thematically. [...]⁷⁰

After all the literary means have been exhausted, it is time to exhaust ultimate statements but, simultaneously; the process of exhaustion must itself avoid ultimacy. The

⁷⁰ John Barth, "The Literature of Exhaustion", in: *The Novel Today. Contemporary Writers on Modern Fiction*, M. Bradbury (ed.), Fontana Paperbacks, (Glasgow: 1977), p. 73.

technique employed by the two mentioned authors, apart from undermining the meta-narratives of culture, also offers an alternative mode of historical consciousness. Accordingly, the multiversal themes developed by Barnes are only interjected into the universe and not substituted for it. The sort of deconstructive binaries are observable in the form of a clash between the personal and the political. There is a marked contrast between the pluralist process of personal signification and the singularity-biased political operations. Christopher describes his summer vacation of '68 in the following way:

[...] Ask me what I did in 1968 and I'll tell you: worked on my thesis (discovering little known exchange of letters between Hugo and Coleridge on nature of poetic drama which I published in the *Modern Language Quarterly*); fell in love, had my heart chipped; improved my French; wrote a lapidary volume, issued in a handwritten edition of one; did some drawing; made some friends; met my wife [...]⁷¹

A little bit earlier, he says:

[...] I lost my virginity on the 25th May 1968 (is it odd to remember the date?) [...]⁷²

Even though everybody else in the novel expects Christopher to recount the historic *les evenements* of Paris, he can only remember his own stories. The event is closed under the date-definition- as narrow as to exclude anything else and, paradoxically, spacious enough to account for the historical significance. Hence, the intention here might be to mock the idea of dating. Furthermore, Christopher's actions are diverse and multiple which assures his stories with infinite multiplicity of meaning. This technique exposes the situation where the conotative meaning of a date is so overwhelming that there is no place for more concrete denotations. In this sense, story- undermining the historical generalisation- stands for a particular meaning which outmanoeuvres conventional connotation. Foucault described the problem in a similar manner. He juxtaposed history with ideology treating the latter as an explanation to history always formulated so as to address the bourgeois cultural interests⁷³. A bourgeois society can convenience itself by constructing historical meta-narratives in order to take the personal under control. This can be seen as an attempt at ascertaining social domination- Foucault's often used term, which signifies deliberate manipulation of the masses. It happens through stripping society members off their personal stories and denying the possibility to participate in history legitimately: it is the history of facts not humans.

⁷¹ Julian Barnes, *Metroland*, Picador, (London: 1980), p. 128.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁷³ Michel Foucault, "Powrót do historii", in: *Filozofia, historia, polityka. Wybór pism.*, tr. D. Leszczyński and L. Rasiński, PWN, (Warszawa- Wrocław: 2000), p. 105.

Hutcheon carried out an analysis of the relation between historiographic and metafictional components of postmodern novels and her analysis amounts to the one already presented:

[...] There has also been another long tradition dating (as we have just seen) from Aristotle, but also superior to history, which is a mode of writing limited to the presentation of the contingent, and the particular. [...]⁷⁴

Hence, the role of literature is to rewrite history in accordance with literary standards and means of expression. Such treatment of history accentuates the similarity between the scientific and the imaginary- science and fiction respectively, in the sense that it explores the narrative constituents of both. As Hutcheon writes, to the postmodern consciousness history no longer occupies the place of a summarised objectivity or pure science of fact and logic. History as a background or an appearing motif of a literary work easily complies with the rules of fabulation. The myth of history as mastered by the minority-as-majority (dictatorship) of those in possession of power is dispelled not only because it has been transmitted to the majorities-in-minority (insignificant masses). One more important fact is that history as such has been emancipated from archiving the past: the overtone of history in *Metroland* also pinpoints a kind of personal history-consciousness. The emancipation mentioned lies in the historical consciousness no longer belonging to the realm of historical knowledge or authority. It is exchanged for the personal sensation that some part of presence is of historical importance. It is also anticipated because the present-historical is named and dated even before it will have gone down in history. Such a would-be event that is already experienced evokes a sense of duty in the protagonists of *Metroland*:

[...] We thought about the capital-F Future. I explained that I was a part of The Anger Generation; she asked me if I was going to take a job; I said I wasn't sure- you can never tell which way Anger was going to jump; she said she understood.[...]⁷⁵

It seems as though history is constituted only in the consciousness of the present time. Presence becomes past as it moves toward the future, but to human consciousness presence is already past even before the completion of its temporal motion. The operations of time-consciousness as described here are attributable to the character of the thinking subject in the Nietzschean sense. The philosopher rewrites the post Cartesian interpretation of essential identity into *cogito ergo fictio sum*⁷⁶. Nietzsche alleges that the thinking subject or "eternal identity" is nothing but fiction. He deemed subjects fictitious and, simultaneously, he did not place the real and the unreal on divergent paths. Fiction-as-

⁷⁴ Linda Hutcheon, "Historiographic Metafiction", in: *Theory of the Novel. A Historical Approach*, M. McKeon (ed.), Johns Hopkins UP, (Baltimore- London: 2000), p. 105.

⁷⁵ J. Barnes, *Metroland*, op. cit., p. 80.

⁷⁶ M. P. Markowski, *Nietzsche. Filozofia interpretacji*, Universitas, (Kraków: 2001), pp. 119-121.

identity is the only possible identity which interprets the real. To Nietzsche, the historical subject is devoid of objectivity and order; in the same manner, he assumes the death of God- the absolute subject no longer exists⁷⁷. By the same token, the position of cogito in history is shifted into the one of dispersed fiction which is one of the primary thoughts drawn from Nietzschean philosophy by the postmodern. Similarly, the postmodern critique of post Hegelian reason conceived of as parallel to the self-knowledge of an absolute spirit⁷⁸. The criticism dwells on the fact that God was seen as unaffected by historical processes:” *absolute spirit was posited unperturbed beyond the process of a history, open to the future and beyond the unreconciled character of the present*”⁷⁹. Later on we shall see what the position of God in postmodern history is. Ultimately, history surfaces the human cognition only in the form of a subjective projection: Nietzsche deemed history and selfhood a hermeneutic circle: the reality is only accessible through the perception of the unreal⁸⁰. Following this line of argument, Barnes presents history as merely the protagonists’ projection whose cognition is embedded in presence as well as their own subjectivity. The ensuing date-definition is to ascribe importance and a rationale of being to the event in question. Hence, along with the critique of the bourgeois, Barnes rejects history as political/social issue and places its derivative in the privacy of particular time-consciousnesses. Consequently, the moralising effect of history becomes individual and relative. Moreover, it can be easily interchanged which, in terms of morality and social order, makes the emancipation of history a process of conceptual permissivism and implies a considerable amount of pejorative meaning.

However, Barnes, obviously, ignores the two-sided effect of his metahistorical scrutiny. The justification for the firm statements not yielding to self-reflexive relativism is to come in *Flaubert’s Parrot*. In the chapter entitled *Chronology* he structures artistic biography, enlists personal successes and failures, and the history of emotional and intellectual development in exactly the same manner. In this way, he proves that deaths of friends can be dated just like instances of inspiration or emotional introspection. In the moment of being written down the events are lost to the past; but, by the same token, they can be brought back to presence with the help of personal mini-narratives. Since the master

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 204.

⁷⁸ Jurgen Habermas, “The Entry into Postmodernity: Nietzsche as a Turning Point”, in: *Postmodernism. A Reader*, T. Docherty (ed.), Harvester Wheatsheaf, (NY: 1993), p. 52.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

In *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, the only Barnesian historian-protagonist appears in *Visitors*. The chapter summarises the methods of historical research which summary explains why history cannot be trusted, at least, not in the form in which it circulates. First, speaking about history is preceded and entangled by the academic authority. Second, the speaking subject must take into consideration the audience and adopt the possibly most moderate position while approaching the negotiation between the known and the assumed. Factuality as a term describing the procedure of encompassing the whole of true facts is only a matter of appearances; moreover, factuality appears to be question of interpretation not knowledge. Historian who aims at acquiring situational credibility must account for authoritarian diction, casual manner and familiar eye-contact, therefore, reception wins over factuality. Paradoxically, in spite of the unprivileged position of the historian, manipulation is still at work. Franklin tells the would-be victims a story about history which, basically, justifies killing innocent people. It is, indeed, an act of manipulation even though the facts are true, and only the perspective changes. Foucault viewed this as a discursive tactics undertaken in order to build a political power by means of a specific way of transmitting historical knowledge⁸¹. Still, Franklin's intentions ought not to be mistaken for an immediate power exercise. In his essays on history, Patocka pinpoints the fact that history can only be made accessible through story-telling which, by its very essence, is a subjective and occasional logic of articulation⁸². The operations of domination are not of offensive character. The story is benevolently offered to the victims of history:

[...] The circumstances were unusual, but they were being told a story and they were offering themselves to the story-teller in the manner of audiences down the ages, wanting to see how things turned out, wanting to have the world explained to them. [...]⁸³

The explanation is not fought back; on the contrary, the victims seek historical justifications. History as presented by the historian in these conditions is so general and overwhelming that Franklin's travelling-companions cannot question it. They cannot tell the difference between knowledge and interpretation and, hence, at a critical moment they have no other option but to believe it and/or accept it. History in its original version- as an objective science never really existed; it has always been either recounted or described: there is no such thing as historical originals. Although Franklin is not at fault here, history

⁸¹ M. Foucault, *Trzeba bronić społeczeństwa. Wykłady w College de France, 1976*, tr. M. Kowalska, KR, (Warszawa: 1998), p. 189.

⁸² Jan Patocka, *Eseje heretyckie z filozofii dziejów*, tr. A. Czycibor-Piotrowski and E. Szczepańska and J. Zychowicz, Fundacja Alatheia, (Warszawa: 1998), p. 40.

⁸³ J. Barnes, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, Picador, (London: 1989), p. 175.

as it is retold cannot itself escape self-manipulation. Patocka agrees with Foucault in this particular respect that history has always been a discourse largely stabilising social and cultural life⁸⁴. Therefore history should not be treated even as a science but as a dialectics of public relations with which idea Barnes apparently conforms. Also Baudrillard notices that history is more like a simulation of science rather than science itself. He describes history as:” *our lost referential, that is to say our lost myth*”⁸⁵. The act of coming back to history is self-comforting- it gives the illusion of meaning- just as in the case of the travellers in *Visitors*.

The predominating part of Barnesian speculation on history is devoted to the condition of Christianity as history. The most substantial points Barnes makes on this subject revolve around the depiction of dialectic interactions between religious and secular histories. He situates the theological issues of his discussion in the centre of this interaction. The emphasis is laid on the unstable image of God which, in turn, is attributed mostly to the fusion of the sacred with the profane. Moreover, the fusion mentioned can be associated with the position of history in postmodernism implying the erratic status of the transcendental subject. In *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, the subtextual inspiration is drawn from the story of Noah’s Ark, which is recounted several times across the chapters but never in its biblical version. The title and thematic organisation of the volume introduce the idea of history as repetitive and erratic. Barnesian repetition never really refers to the ‘original’; rather, the original is merely assumed to have had a form while the successive analogies fill it with content. Consequently, what applies to the original is a predictable mode of emotion, while the analogical works so as to challenge the stability and sameness of that emotion:” *history repeats itself, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce*”⁸⁶. In this sense, any narrative reference to the Bible might be considered as blasphemous because it would automatically undermine the genuineness and accuracy of God’s word. In the first place, such a narrative would reduce the sanctity of the mythical meaning to an archetypical fabulation. In the second place, as a consequence, the fabulation would become profane. This unfortunate situation for religion is possible because it is stories what constitutes history, and since stories are mobile history does not remain intact either. Still, Barnes takes a further step toward heterogeneity of sacred

⁸⁴ J. Patocka, *Eseje heretyckie...*, op. cit., p. 41.

⁸⁵ Jean Baudrillard, “History: A Retro Scenario”, in: *Simulacra and Simulation*, tr. S.F. Glaser, Michigan UP, (Michigan: 1994), p. 43.

⁸⁶ J. Barnes, *A History...*, op. cit., p. 175.

history. In *The Mountain*, the main protagonists' conversations prove that history is a twofold structure consisting of belief and knowledge:

[...] Where Amanda discovered in the world divine intent, benevolent order and rigorous justice, her father had seen only chaos, hazard and malice. *Yet, they were both examining the same world.* [...]⁸⁷

Even though Christianity does have *the* history it is not built upon the known or the recognised. The central historical fact is that God is the doer and the agent of the whole creation. Colonel perceives the effects of history as attributable to human action. Hence, the conflict between the order of divinity and the chaos of humanity is a matter of historical perception. This discrepancy lies in the difference between scientific and religious history as described by Eliade. Since the exclusive relation of historical religion and non-religion lies in their treatment of time- the difference is essential. In religious history, time is static just as the referential meaning of events it dates. To put it in Eliade's words: time assures mythical endurance applied by the regularity of liturgical celebration which provides the illusory access to eternity⁸⁸. In scientific history, on the other hand, time is only discernible subjectively: in its rhythms and the existential consciousness of the beginning and termination of human life⁸⁹. Consequently, religious history strives to maintain the *status quo* of time because in doing so it preserves the stability of Christian iconography. The operations of time in Christian faith paralyse blasphemous contextualisation. The meaning of biblical parables, however figurative it may be, is fixed which also concerns the immobile image of God. Iconic representation of God is non-visual so intentional sight cannot determine its meaning because it is largely predetermined⁹⁰. The visuality of non-iconic God, on the other extreme, God-as-idol, brings with itself a surplus of conceptual freedom⁹¹. God-as-icon is the transcendental signified to be found in the biblical texts; while God-as-idol is merely a signifier displaced in the process of historical signification. The representational twoness is overcome in the moment of Christ's incarnation because, at this stage, religious history enters the human history of society and culture⁹². As a consequence, time is no longer abstract; Christian history loses against concretisation of time and meaning: Christian history becomes another collection of stories. Playing with temporality is not a blasphemy because it was

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 148. (emphasis added)

⁸⁸ Mircea Eliade, *Sacrum i profanum. O istocie religijności*, tr. R Reszke, KR, (Warszawa: 1999), pp. 55-56.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 57.

⁹⁰ Halina Perkowski, *Bóg filozofów XX wieku. Wybrane koncepcje*, PWN, (Warszawa- Poznań: 2001), p. 428.

⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 427-428.

⁹² M. Eliade, *Sacrum...*, op. cit., p. 58.

caused by God's will. Moreover, as Žižek asserts, eternity is lifeless potentiality and in order for God to actualise Himself he needs to go through the temporal and gain human recognition⁹³ God is transmitted into human history and human perception of time which allows factuality and fabulation to be entwined: "you keep a few true facts and spin a new story round them"⁹⁴. In this manner God ceases to be the transcendental I and bears no archetypal meaning. This is because idol cannot signify everlasting presence but only mirror human projections that change across time⁹⁵.

As a background to his literary elaboration on biblical motifs, Barnes chooses Noah's Ark which on temporal level belongs to the religious history. He also adds the spatial level, in this case: recontextualisation. Barnesian blasphemy, on its part, is constructed around recontextualisation of biblical (fixed) meaning. This methodology is undertaken already at the level of narration. In *A History...* the interpretation of the story employs a mechanism which can be described as both successive and simultaneous. The two characteristics of the narrative pattern make it possible for the text concerned to be endlessly retold and placed in a variety of contexts. Barnes obviously notices that as long as history depends for its dialectics on time, it remains abstracted from social context because, in this case, history is non-absorbent of local and/or personal geographies:

As a consequence of introducing the spatial, Barnes's history of Christianity concentrates on mortals rather than divinity. The shift is from the unification of God to the disperse multiplicity of the humane so the Ark-stories can be placed in many different contexts. Ultimately, to spatialise the temporal means to transfer the divine archetype out of the focal point of historical sequence. The sacrum of Christian history can be realised in terms of Foucaultian 'heterotopias':

[...] These heterogeneous spaces of sites and relations- Foucaultian heterotopias- are constituted in every society but take quite varied forms and change over time, as history 'unfolds' in its adherent spatiality. [...]⁹⁶

Such an approach toward history and religious themes arise immediate consequences. After the existence of God ceased to be self-evident, there have been many attempts in philosophy at instituting an investiture as the existence of a Supreme Being. Still, many philosophers considered seeking proofs for *His* existence to be highly immoral. This line of argument is followed by Kierkegaard, for instance. He severely criticised the aspiration of

⁹³ Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf. The Perverse Core of Christianity*, Massachusetts UP, (Massachusetts: 2003), p. 13.

⁹⁴ J. Barnes, *A History...*, p. 109

⁹⁵ H. Perkowska, *Bóg filozofów...*, op. cit., p.430.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.142.

humanity to acquire the ultimate knowledge. He claimed that knowledge excludes faith and vice versa- he rejected history as that of Christianity⁹⁷. Human history shows that there is an enhanced need in mortals to search for historical myths about God that might stand for the knowledge of the divine. However, Kierkegaard, from whom Barnes draws inspiration, understood history as secular and as a source of knowledge in which the question of God cannot be raised at all⁹⁸. Probably one most moderate positions is on the part of Pascal. His proposition was that the existence of God could be harmlessly assumed- in this way, faith would be, automatically, generated⁹⁹. This mode of thinking can be identified in *A History...*

The religious assumption in the background of narration- spatial recontextualisation touching upon human history and the persistence in suspending the order of temporality- serves making room for re-interpretation. Generally, the broadening of the contexts flows in two main directions. Firstly, the social reproduction of knowledge over space is expressed in the fluidity of Barnesian stylistics. Secondly, Barnes's 'heterotopias' is diversified and responds to many social and political contexts.

As far as the stylistics of *A History...* is concerned, the overtone is frequently ironic. The most vivid example of this troop can be found in *Visitors*. Here, the question of irony can be viewed in terms of Kierkegaardian *gjentagelse*. The Danish philosopher describes irony as a romantic approach to truth which in order to become true must be faced with its own contradiction¹⁰⁰. *Gjentagelse* is his point of departure: it fires the temporal order so that time is no longer sequential, but he also cuts off from spatial metamorphosis¹⁰¹. Similarly, Franklin Hughes employs an ironic attitude in the time of psychological crisis. He wants to survive the terrorist attack but what actually saves his life is pure coincidence, which fact his ethics and system of values can hardly bear. Moreover, the coincidence is not accidental but simply pre-planned by God. Barnes depicts the opposition between God's ruthless politics of coinciding and irony as the human weapon against helplessness in *Flaubert's Parrot*:

[...] There's something spooky about them [coincidences]: you sense momentarily what it must be like to live in an ordered God-run universe, with Himself looking over your shoulder and helpfully dropping coarse hints about a cosmic plan. I prefer to believe that things are chaotic, free-wheeling; permanently as well as temporarily crazy- to feel the certainty of human ignorance, brutality and

⁹⁷ S.A. Kierkegaard, "Wprowadzenie Chrystianizmu do świata chrześcijańskiego. Wiedza i historia a chrystologia", in: *Kierkegaard, K. Toeplitz* (ed.), *Mysli i ludzie*, (Warszawa: 1980), p. 241.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁹⁹ N. Warburton, *Filozofia od podstaw*, Fundacja Alatheia, (Warszawa: 1998), pp. 46-47.

¹⁰⁰ Arne Melberg, *Teorie Mimesis. Repetycja*, tr. J. Balbierz, Universitas, (Kraków: 1992), p. 166.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 172-174.

folly [...] I'd ban coincidences, if I were a dictator of fiction. [...] One way of legitimising coincidences is to call them ironies. That's what smart people do. Irony is, after all, the modern mode, a drinking companion for resonance and wit. [...]¹⁰²

The above quotation is identifiable with the status of irony in *Visitors*. The rhetoric of *Santa Euphemia* closely corresponds to the attitude of Franklin. In reference to the *Stowaway*, as well as the major part of the remaining chapters, the reality on the ship is analogical to Noah's Ark and its proceedings. According to Kierkegaard's views on irony, the overtone of the events happening on the boat contradicts the values assumed in the biblical version of the sea cruise. Also, irony blurs the lines between religion and politics. Furthermore, none of them is treated conventionally, mainly, as separate fields of social activity. Religion and politics work here, again, as a dialectics of public relations. The dictator in *Visitors* is embodied by the party of Arab terrorists who get killed in the end. Similarly, the disembarked company of the Ark gradually uses God from sight. At this particular stage, we fall back on the Nietzschean 'God is dead'. After the Arabs got killed one has neither prosecutive nor executive power over them; the only profit is that they are gone. Consequently, the racial segregations and condemning to death is substituted by freedom and celebration of human life. Ark as *Santa Euphemia* with all the atrocities that happen on board violates the sanctity of religious discourse. It is not a place of life but mere debris of life and almost a parody of death. Ark is the sacred euphemism covering self-profanation of God and His symbolism. The position of Franklin is more or less like that of Noah- they are the negotiating mediators whom nobody supervises. Their irony when revised in terms of historical interpretation is a way of transgressing the intricacies of communication between sacrum and profanum. To Kierkegaard, ironists developed an existential reduction of the historical system where heresy is articulated in defence of God¹⁰³. But God himself is now self-identified; the protagonist is positioned at the stake of the past and future. Franklin seeks an extremity of ahistorical subjectivity¹⁰⁴ to find rescue from being subordinate to God-terrorist. The power of irony is, thus, unquestionable:

[...] And yet sometimes I wonder if the wittiest, most resonant irony isn't just a well-brushed, well educated coincidence. [...]¹⁰⁵

Franklin's irony masks God-like coincidence making he aspires to. Baudrillard writes that nihilism can be a form of terrorism¹⁰⁶. He pinpoints the idea of meaning as subjected

¹⁰² J. Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot*, Picador, (London: 1985), pp. 66-67.

¹⁰³ K. Toepfritz, *Kierkegaard*, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 93.

¹⁰⁵ J. Barnes, *Flaubert's...*, op. cit., p. 67.

¹⁰⁶ J. Baudrillard, "On Nihilism", in: *Simulacra...*, op. cit., p. 160.

to manipulation. Franklin evades the terrorist threat with the support of an attitude of nihilism. The form of the lecture Franklin gives to the rest of the crew stems from the fact that the actual situation privileges manipulation of which the character is pretty much conscious. Baudrillard describes the operations of meaning as instituting justified indifference:

[...] The dialectic stage, the critical stage is empty. There is no more stage. There is no therapy of meaning or therapy through meaning: therapy itself is a part of the generalised process of indifferenciation. [...]¹⁰⁷

Franklin realises that, indeed, self-interest always wins over altruism. He is not only the historian-manipulator but also an icon of an egocentric God. He is licensed to act as he did because his passivity is not really induced by pure egotism. As Baudrillard states, nihilism privileges inertia¹⁰⁸, so his behaviour appears to be adequate to the situation. The chapter entitled *Survivor* represents quite a parallel situation.

The schizophrenic Kath, in the deep structure of the textual, may signify a continuation of Franklin's fate. If we treat the subject matter in Paul de Man's theory terms then, in the course of action, irony becomes the reversed mirror-image of allegory¹⁰⁹, so that an ironic tone directly indicates that a given narrative is intentionally allegorical. The trap of allegory is inevitable: whenever a protagonist turns to irony he or she ends up in hermeneutic experience where the conclusion is pre-planned. The culmination is what de Man calls *le comique absolu*- a permanent state at the brink of total madness¹¹⁰. In this way, Kath meets all the criteria required for constructing an unfortunate continuum of the historian's life. The allegorical quality is maintained by Franklin himself. Kath, on the other hand, undergoes the subsequent stages of madness and alienation. Hence, *Survivor* can be seen as an explication and conclusion to *Visitors*.

Kath's disability to communicate with others implicates the protagonist in a situation ruled by specific power relations. Robert Wilson described schizophrenic language as an alternative to the standard language of social control that puts constraints on otherness¹¹¹. The schizophrenic speech, as Jameson argues, is characterised by a flow of signifiers without signifieds¹¹². Accordingly, Kath's identity is fragmented and refuses classification- to a small degree- the protagonist can place herself at the brink of control

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 161.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁰⁹ A. Melberg, *Teorie...*, op. cit., p. 223.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 224-225.

¹¹¹ Agata Adamiecka-Sitek, "Roberta Wilsona teatr schizofreniczny", in *Opcje*, vol. 4, December, 2004, p. 116.

¹¹² Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernizm i społeczeństwo konsumpcyjne", in: *Postmodernizm. Antologia przekładów*, R. Nycz (ed.), Baran i Suszyński, (Kraków: 1998), p. 207.

and being controlled. Jameson adds that schizophrenic discourse corresponds to ahistoricism represented by a time-consciousness that is excessively concentrated on presence¹¹³. Also, schizophrenia as a typically medical category implies a certain “illness” that calls for “treatment”. As a consequence, Kath gains emancipation as she performs an internal struggle not to self-identify herself as well as alienation resulting from the external struggle with the forces that distort her subjectivity. The latter is additionally stirred by the melancholic mood that accompanies her sea travel. Simultaneously, the cruise, despite being an act of rebellion, is already a method of therapeutics:

[...] The rolling of the sea, the most regular, the most natural movement in the world, and one most in accord with cosmic order(...) Travel is efficacious not by its incessant breaks in continuity, but by the novelty of the objects it affords, by the curiosity to which it gives birth(...) Utilized for the changes it affords in melancholia, or for the regularity it imposes upon mania, the therapeutics of movement conceals the idea of a seizure by the world of the alienated mind. [...]¹¹⁴

The aim of such a journey is to return the patient to the world of reason. However, Kath’s “treatment procedure” is administered by the figure of her husband whom she cannot erase. Fromm explains that patients unwillingness to partake of therapy is attributable to premature relations with parental figures¹¹⁵. Hence, the conditions mentioned create a situation where power relations are stratified into patients and doctors. Moreover, in his commentary on Pierre Riviere, Castel remarks that judicial methods of control can easily develop into medical ones- the shift from verdict to diagnosis¹¹⁶. Furthermore, it is not a new form of knowledge but a new sanction of power¹¹⁷. The main exercise of domination resides in the fact that Kath cannot break free from her marital status which, apparently, affects her self-description. Kath’s melancholy is a rebellion against domestic and emotional confinement which she tries to overcome entrusting herself to egotism. Hence, the question of emancipation is debatable. However, in relation to the disappearing men, Kath seems to take her self-appointed role quite seriously. She approves of her trip not only in personal but also moral terms. The state of alienation-reinforced by melancholy- gives her a peculiar sense of superiority:

[...] I look at the history of the world, which they don’t seem to realise is coming to an end, and I don’t see what they see. [...]¹¹⁸

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 204.

¹¹⁴ Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation. A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, tr. R. Howard, Routledge, (London: 1993), pp. 174-175.

¹¹⁵ Erach Fromm, *O sztuce sluchania. Terapeutyczne aspekty psychoanalizy*, tr. R. Saciuk, PWN, (Warszawa-Wrocław: 2002), p. 95.

¹¹⁶ Robert Castel, “The Doctors and Judges”, in: *I, Pierre Riviere. A Case of Parricide in the 19th Century*, M. Foucault (ed.), tr. F. Jelinek, Nebraska UP, (Lincoln- London: 1975), pp. 251-252.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 252.

¹¹⁸ J. Barnes, *A History...*, p. 97.

In terms of scientific analysis, people suffering from permanent melancholia have tendencies toward both isolation and a sense of authority¹¹⁹. The way Kath responds to the men nagging at her about the imbecility of her journey shows strong implications of protectionalism. Her actions do not make her feel alienated, on the contrary, they make her feel unique and special. Hence, her schizophrenia is conjoined with narcissism. Her egotism is not exclusively a trait of a sinner- it is a trait of God just as well. At this stage, *Survivor* moves away from strictly Christian imagery of God. Even though Kath, obviously, aspires to prophecy she lacks audience before whom she might speak as a prophet. The mystic experience the protagonist has is, as Eliade describes it, a technique of ecstasy practised solitarily¹²⁰. Kath's prophecy takes place in her inward monologues projected as imaginary dialogues with God- standing here for the ultimate knowledge. In this sense, Kath's sense of authority can be explicated but the problem of melancholy is still far from settled.

To a large extent, melancholy might also signify a painful longing for God, the reliability of meaning and stability of reference¹²¹. Additionally, as Eliade states, a mentally disturbed homo religious is an unsuccessful mystic¹²². The protagonist, consequently, signifies a futile prophecy. Moreover, her story illustrates the degradation of God-like saviour to a human survivor. The futility of the protagonist's task may be explained in terms of contemporary practice of blasphemy that often turns out to be counterproductive. Mainly, the combination of the history of religion and literary science-fiction result in the production of a tense imbalance between technological development and religious orthodoxy¹²³. Similarly, in the *Survivor* we have both prophetic imagery with a mystic journey in the background as well as futuristic ideas of biological mutations (the red-nosed reindeer, e.g.). The rich symbolism of the story alludes to the fact that blasphemy can be a part of the sacred symbolism. It originates from the position of religion in modern life; Jung writes that: "The spiritual life had simply faded away.(...) There is no Mass either; there is no confession; there is no ritual, symbolic life"¹²⁴. Moreover, he writes that one of

¹¹⁹ Roy Porter, *Szaleństwo. Rys historyczny*, tr. J. Karłowski, Rebis, (Poznań: 2003), p. 59.

¹²⁰ M. Eliade, *Szamanizm i archaiczne techniki ekstazy*, tr. K. Kocjan, PWN, (Warszawa: 2001), pp. 15-19.

¹²¹ H. Perkowska, *Bóg filozofów...*, p. 439.

¹²² M. Eliade, *Szamanizm...*, op. cit., p. 38.

¹²³ Roman Bromboszcz, "Komiks jako intermedium dla malarstwa, fotografii, filmu i poezji wizualnej", in: *Pro Arte*, vol. 20, winter 2004/2005, p. 97.

¹²⁴ C.G. Jung, "The Symbolic Life", in: *The Symbolic Life. Miscellaneous Writings*, Princeton UP, (Princeton: 1976), pp. 272-273

the important factors conditioning mental health is the religious aspect of confession¹²⁵. The situation of the protagonist is, therefore, a representation of the state of spiritual life in postmodernity. Religious life continues to be embedded in cultural and social life which fact arises many consequences. The most important one is that religion and culture are inseparable and the position of respective artefacts is never stable or fixed.

Barnes often repeats the juxtaposition of myth and survival. The fairytale-like atmosphere of mythical journey is contrasted with the drama of mortals striving to survive it. This technique serves not only demythologising biblical imagery but it also transports many geopolitical issues revolving around mainly European history. The illustration of myth vs. survival as related to history and politics is concentrated on two ideas. First, 'survival of the fittest' is depicted in terms of geographical relations between south and north which introduces Bakhtinian carnivalesque. Second, the democratic values of European societies are revised with reference to a terrorist threat.

Barnes uses the distinction between north and south almost peripherally. In *A History...* it starts with *Survivor* as Kath performs a movement southward, toward the hostile lands from which the Northerners are isolated from. In the story, the carnivalesque is represented by the decline of spatial limits and the erection of the "real" form of life itself¹²⁶. These features involve a particular record of time. The compliance with historical inversion in the sense of preserving mythological harmony between nature and culture¹²⁷ is not maintained. On the contrary, the unhappy marriage of nature and culture, having reached its culmination in the release of radioactivity polluting the surrounding areas, force the humane to seek an alternative environment. Furthermore, the idea of survival is transmitted into a new form of life which, in turn, relies on random victimhood. Only in this way can the myth be maintained provided that the victim is also self-identified. The sole decision to travel makes Kath a voluntary martyr; heading for south as her original destination since she suffers from *Persistent Victim Syndrome*. This is, nonetheless, a mode of therapy since Kath undergoes *catharsis* through reconciliation with the colonised south¹²⁸. Particularly because, as Eliade points out, the original version of shamanism

¹²⁵ Ibid., pp. 268-269.

¹²⁶ Michał Bachtin, „Właściwości ludowej kultury śmiechu”, in: *Bachtin*, E. Czaplejewicz and E. Kasperski (eds.), tr. A. Goreniov, PWN, (Warszawa: 1983), p. 146.

¹²⁷ M. Bachtin, „Problem inwersji historycznej i czasoprzeżyczeni folkloru”, in: *Problemy literatury i estetyki*, tr. W. Grajewski, Czytelnik, (Warszawa: 1982), pp. 352-353.

¹²⁸ Peter Stallybrass, Allon White, „Bourgeois Hysteria and the Carnavalesque”, in: *The Cultural Studies...*, p. 285.

comes from the north and becomes merely a psychotic ambivalence in the south¹²⁹. Despite the obvious blasphemy and disobedience toward God, Kath manages to accomplish her task, mainly, to reaffirm the importance of human existence. In cultural terms, it is the discovery of a ‘hidden tradition’ or a subculture; Parker notices that:” *A vision of evil and wickedness has given way to a kind of playful celebration of the most fundamental possibilities of life*”¹³⁰. Traditional perception of evil and sin is transformed into the celebration of life. Despite the:” *conflicting perceptions of reality that result as much from political as from psychological repression*”¹³¹, Kath succeeds at achieving her goal.

In terms of politics, there is a very similar relation between Western Europe and the Balkans. The latter comprises both the otherness of the East and the southern carnivalesque. In his essay on the condition of Balkan identity, Primoz Repar uses metaphor of *Zona- the Forbidden City*¹³². He described the unwelcoming environment of Balkan cities and in doing so, he notices that history is temporal but the effect is spatial. In the western consciousness of the sacred peace, the threat is to come from the uncontrolled savage Balkan¹³³. Repar explains that the Balkan is the contemporary anti-hero of Europe, who by means of negative identification becomes a voluntary victim of geopolitical repression¹³⁴. Spatialisation allows cultural codes to be ceaselessly redistributed. Ultimately, the aggressor may easily become the victim and vice versa.

The north-south issue is analysed also in other Barnesian novels. The author is quite consistent as to the character of respective directions. In *Flaubert’s Parrot* south signifies the artistic freedom and tolerance:” *Flaubert doesn’t return the gaze. He stares south from the place des Carmes towards the Cathedral, out over the city he despised, and which in turn has largely ignored him*”¹³⁵. The fragment corresponds to the idea of escape which is something that concerns Kath just as well. In *Cross Channel: Dragons* it is explained why north must be escaped. The protagonists of the story fall victims to the evil influences coming from the north:

[...] Everything bad came from the north. Whatever else they believed, the whole town, both parts of it, knew that.(...) And now, they said, the dragons were coming, from the north, the north. [...]

¹²⁹ M. Eliade, *Szamanizm...*, p. 35.

¹³⁰ R. Parker, “The Carnivalization of the World”, in: *The Gender/Sexuality Reader. Culture, History, Political Economy*, R.N. Lancaster and M. di Leonardo (eds), Rutledge, (NY-London: 1997), p. 362.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Primoz Repar, “Zona, miasto zabronione”, in: *Studium*, vol. 1, 2005, p. 99.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 100.

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 100-105.

¹³⁵ J. Barnes, *Flaubert’s...*, p. 11.

¹³⁶ Nietzsche. Barnes, *Cross...*, p. 131-132.

In *Cross Channel* not only the atmosphere is spiteful but also north is the place which poses potential threat to peasants. While the victimhood of Kath as well as the Balkan she might stand for is symbolic, here we have to do with a fantasy. So far random victimhood has been dramatic only in pure abstraction. The situation is, however, realistically dramatic when it comes to the passengers in *Visitors* and the mariners in *Shipwreck*. The former, having been segregated by nationalities, are executed for the political ‘sins’ of their countries. This does not apply to the survival of the fittest per se but even here, within these human relations, the God-human issue can be transported. The position of terrorists can be reversed- now they are the victims finally taking revenge on the Occidental callous God represented by members of some western societies. Patocka writes that the fragmentation of master-narrative has been politicised which is the very consequence of capitalism and imperialism¹³⁷. There is no possibility to stick to alternative politics because all aspects of public life reinforce and are reinforced by ideology. Moreover, as Patocka argues it is Judaeo-Christian tradition what justifies the maintenance of master-narrative under the disguise of democracy¹³⁸. Western democracy (not even pluralized) preserves status quo by reproducing the original democratic values¹³⁹. Terrorism, hence, gains the ill-defined role of questioning and fighting back the totalitarian facets of status quo. Fukuyama distinguishes between left-wing totalitarianism and right-wing authoritarianism in terms of different means of imposing political control on societies kept within the illusion of democracy¹⁴⁰. The aim here is not to seek moral rationale of terrorism. Barnes shows how much western values can be overburdened with master-narrative which, eventually, must turn against itself. Even if the internal contradictions and by-products of democracy and capitalist society are overlooked the external violence may smoothly enter it. The same falsity lies in the early imperial premises:” *the notion that Europeans in the colonies made up an easily identifiable and discrete biological and social entity; a “natural” community of common class interests, racial attributes, political affinities, and superior culture*”¹⁴¹. The break-up of the Empire amounts to the deconstruction of the illusion of no inward contradictions within an ideology..

Barnes elaborates on the subject illustrating the situation in which victims shift positions with their oppressors. Accordingly, Barnes writes a story about unwanted Jewish

¹³⁷ Patocka, *Eseje heretyckie...*, p. 164.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 165-166.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 166.

¹⁴⁰ Francis Fukuyama, *Koniec historii*, tr. T. Bieruń and M. Wichrowski, Zysk i S-ka, (Poznań: 1996), p. 33.

¹⁴¹ Ann Laura Stoler, „Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power”, in: *The Cultural...*, p. 14.

people in *Three Simple Stories*. The Jews ejected from Nazi-Germany, in spite of great efforts to disembark elsewhere in the world, come back to Europe to face the fate of other Europeans:

[...] On 1st September the Second World War began, and the passengers from St Louis shared the fate of European Jewry. Their chances rose depending upon the country to which they had been allotted. Estimates of how many survived vary. [...] ¹⁴²

The victimhood is far more tragical: first because it is enforced and second because it is doubled. God/ Europe rejects its children only temporarily. They are never really welcome back, but sooner or later they are forced to play their role in the God's theatre/ on the Euro-stage. Barnes confirms the unfavourable image of Europe and its tradition also with reference to concrete historical events. The ensuing extermination of Jews is presented as an inevitable continuation of European culture. Imre Kertész, a Jewish Bulgarian-born writer believes that the historic(al) had been encoded in western civilisation and only as an essential component of local discourse history can be comprehended at all ¹⁴³. However, history is equated with knowledge so long as it remains abstracted from individual consciousness. The myth of history within the framework of knowledge permits gradual forgetting for the sake of discovering the new. Baudrillard remarks that: „*Forgetting extermination is part of extermination, because it is also the extermination of memory, of history, of the social*” ¹⁴⁴. Consequently, the myth serves making the survival of the oppressed unfeasible. A similar mode of argument concerns the idea of ‘the survival of the fittest’ with the reference to masculine heroism.

In *Shipwreck* the mariners fail to survive honourably but the myth that follows them after having being saved persists that they are heroes. Barnes is not very willing to blame them here:

[...] And thus, after a debate in which the most dreadful despair presided, it was agreed among the fifteen healthy persons that their sick comrades must, for the common good of those who might yet survive, be cast into the sea. [...] ¹⁴⁵

Survival is another Godly coincidence that implicates humans into quasi-moral dilemmas. The citation also pinpoints the idea of democratic approach toward society/ community which results in a Nazi-like (God-like?) selection of the ‘inferior’. The ‘survival of the fittest’ is, in actual fact, ‘the victimhood of the unfit’. But in this case,

¹⁴² J. Barnes, *A History...*, p. 188.

¹⁴³ Jerzy Gizella, “Europa napiętnowana”, in: *Czas Kultury*, vol. 1, 2005, p. 126.

¹⁴⁴ J. Baudrillard, „Holocaust”, in: *Simulacra...*, p. 49.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

victimhood results neither from violence nor negative identification. One becomes a victim for the simple reason of having been outsmarted:

[...] And on wider scale, theorists maintained that life amounted to the survival of the fittest: did not Beesley hypothesis prove that the 'fittest' were merely the most cunning? The heroes, the solid men of yeoman virtue, the good breeding stock [...] – they all went down nobly with the ship; whereas the cowards, the panickers, the deceivers found reasons for skulking in a lifeboat. [...] ¹⁴⁶

Consequently, 'the survival of the fittest' is the survival of the cheats whose heroism is, in truth, cowardice and hypocrisy. On *Medusa*, there are also acts of cannibalism which uncovers the basic instincts humans develop at times of danger. Quite the contrary, patriarchal perception of masculinity is depicted in its degenerated form. In this case, the myth of survival is applied to the decline in values, especially in the context of deteriorating of interhuman relations.

The motifs connected with nature and environment as referred to history are also presented in the human attitude toward animals. The depiction is, however, obscure. On the one hand, animals are associated with a higher degree of existence which is authentic and natural. Barnes presents animals in a more universal dimension than "human" discourses, concentrating largely on animals' role in history. In *A History...* and in *Flaubert's Parrot* they represent not only mini-narratives but also means of expression. Additionally, stressing the importance of animals does not comply with Judeo-Christian tradition which Barnes contradicts also in this respect.

To a large extent, animal nature is equated with madness and bestiality- especially in the discourse of psychiatry. Peter and Favret interpret animality as a feature madmen recognise in themselves: "*Perhaps he seemed so only because he himself appreciated how dangerous his secret thoughts were and because he was sometimes uncertain when he wondered in what order (superhuman or animal) this thought classified him*" ¹⁴⁷. Moreover, Judeo-Christian teachings assume subordination of nature together with animals for the sake of human convenience:

[...] Is it not clear from the holy book of Genesis that the animals which were created before man, were so created in order to be subservient to his use? [...] ¹⁴⁸

This assumption has vividly developed in the western culture across centuries. Already at the decline of matriarchy attached to natural environment and its laws, and the ensuing erection of patriarchal culture, a shift from deification of nature to reification can

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 174.

¹⁴⁷ J.-P. Peter, J. Favret, „The Animal, the Madman, and Death”, in: *Pierre...*, op. cit., p. 193.

¹⁴⁸ J. Barnes, *A History...*, p. 69.

be observed¹⁴⁹. The same approach is distinctive of contemporary human-centric ecologists. This idea is drawn from Cartesian *res cogitans* who, deemed superior, are supposed to govern animals and plants¹⁵⁰. Nevertheless, human activity is not entirely divorced from nature. Especially, because environment can be treated as an aesthetic object. In this case, environmental sensitivity is divided in distance receptors belonging to human high-quality cognition and contact receptors as the basic instincts of animals.¹⁵¹ Paradoxically, animals' closeness to nature is where Barnes sees their uniqueness and superiority over the human race.

In the context of history, animals stand for a fairly distinct time-consciousness. Nietzsche believed that drawing parallels between monumental past and mythical presence is useless¹⁵². Following this line of argument, it is easy to notice the role of animals in narratives. They function in discourses but unlike human beings animals never change their predispositions. Nietzsche says that animals always speak in the name of presence because they are ahistorical¹⁵³. They present a sort of consciousness that is fairly distinct from the one that humans have, because animal sensations are spatial rather than temporal. Accordingly, the beasts do not need to break through the temporal conceptions in order to spatialise their perspective. Hence, the traditional role for animals is to retain their bestiality. Baudrillard states that:

[...] Everywhere bestiality must yield to reflex animality, exorcising an order of the indecipherable, of the savage, of which, precisely in their silence, animals have remained the incarnation for us. [...]¹⁵⁴

The position of animals is definitely unfavourable. The inferiority of animals with respect to humans lies in the fact that they cannot speak any human language. Their appearance must suffice for all discourses that would, normally, follow. In Barnes's novels they often embody mini-narratives that are neither heard nor listened to. Yet, animals have the special quality of deconstructing human master-narratives which they obtain by means of standing in opposition to humanity. Derrida writes that the revolution against reason is

¹⁴⁹ E. Fromm, *Miłość, pleć i matriarchat*, tr. B. Radomska and G. Sowinski, Rebis, (Poznań: 2002), p. 33.

¹⁵⁰ Rosemarie Putnam Tong, *Mysł feministyczna. Wprowadzenie*, tr. Mikos and Uminska, PWN, (Warszawa: 2002), p. 326.

¹⁵¹ Krystyna Wilkoszewska, „Nowe inspiracje w estetyce XX wieku”, in: *Estetyki filozoficzne XX wieku*, K. Wilkoszewska (ed.), Universitas, (Kraków: 2000), p. 295.

¹⁵² Friedrich Nietzsche, “O pożytkach i szkodliwości historii dla życia”, in: *Niewczesne rozważania*, Znak, (Kraków: 1996), p. 99.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 87.

¹⁵⁴ J. Baudrillard, “The Animals: Territory and Metamorphosis”, in: *Simulacra...*, p. 130.

the classical form of Reason as such¹⁵⁵. Only in the context of relations with animals can there a master-narrative encompassing the whole humanity. Therefore animals belong to the human order almost inevitably. In this way the idea of the discourse is undermined; it no longer refers to the interhuman power relations. And the extremity, with which meta-discourse is globalised, ridicules the human ambition to globalise other discourses: in other words, animals cause master-narrative to be self-globalised.

In *A History...* the stowaway is the only animal who can narrate and speak in the name of “the margins”. The fact that *Stowaway* is situated at the very beginning of the volume may signify the author’s intention to anticipate animal’s discursive absence in the ensuing chapters. The protagonist clearly defines the status of his position, he is aware of the historical importance of his actions. Moreover, he realises that his narrative is something unknown and unexpected; hence, the ultimate shape of his expression is explanatory. He also seems to claim the whole of human knowledge to be inadequate and untrue:

[...] Now I realise that accounts differ. You species have its much repeated version, which still charms even sceptics; while the animals have a compendium of sentimental myths. [...] ¹⁵⁶

Not only do animals have discourse but they also have a superior one. They manage to ascertain the myth that is inaccessible to humanity. And as the passage shows it is not science what deters people from believing in myths or, perhaps, believing in stories that they call myths. It is a matter of truthfulness which humans seek in the wrong place; they seek objectivity which is merely an abstract idea evoking connotation with Godly power not be contextualised. This situation, to a certain degree, is something humanity knows and so takes revenge on animals for not being able to obtain something they have by their very nature:

[...] We weren’t in any way to blame (you don’t really believe that story about the serpent, do you? - it was just Adam’s black propaganda) [...] ¹⁵⁷

The question of collective guilt is very much associated with animals. In the history of the world, animals have always been marginalised and mistreated for having inherited sins from previous generations. This motif can be observed more vividly in another chapter

¹⁵⁵ Jacques Derrida, „Cogito and the History of Madness”, in: *Writing and Differance*, Routledge, (London: 1990), p. 36.

¹⁵⁶ J. Barnes, *A History...*, p. 4.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

entitled *Wars of Religion*. Moreover, human ways of classification turn out to be futile in the sense of not being able to abide by its own rules of order and reason:

[...] There was, as you can imagine, deep resentment at the divisiveness of God's animal policy. Though being 'clean', as they rapidly realised, was a mixed blessing. Being 'clean' meant that they could be eaten. [...]¹⁵⁸

The idea of (un)clean animals is vague not only to Barnes. Also Frazer ponders himself over the religious ambiguities connected with animals. He writes that in most religions world-wide the idea of the (un)clean appears, however, even the religions themselves are never really consistent as to the selection¹⁵⁹. Consequently, Barnes classifies animals in his own way in *Flaubert's Parrot*. In *The Flaubert Bestiary*, Barnes describes how Flaubert ascribes animal features to himself and hence redefines his identity on a number of occasions. Being a Bear, for example, frees him from the bourgeois; other animals usually serve activities like consumption, anecdotes relating, expressing states of mind and many more. In this way, the status of animals is never quite fixed.

As Barnes seems to notice, the history of Christianity is largely associated with the development of institutional church. After Christian religion had been secularised on historical level and adopted by philosophy for speculative practices, the Church came to stabilise its position. The source of church authority is at the stake of the secular and the religious. It implicates the being-world with its inhabitants in situation of global restoration of the sacred order. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the very concept of the church is responded to by architectural organisation of the building¹⁶⁰. In this context, blasphemy can be visualised as a cultural formation of ideas. Barnes puts forth two examples of cultural blasphemy as synonymous with disobedience toward the Church: in the textual sphere and in the form of reference to historical event.

In *The Wars of Religion*, Barnes uses sixteenth century diction and vocabulary- both adequate to the historical background. He pictures the conflict between woodworms and a bishop as lying not in the intricacies of law but, rather, as views resulting from theological speculation. The source of both theoretical arguments dismissing one another is the Bible, and more specifically, *Genesis* and *Exodus*. The solicitor, speaking in the name of the insects points to *Genesis* as an evidence of universal equality among living beings. Even when the prosecutor draws from *Exodus* to prove inferiority of the *bestioles*, there are, still, grounds for defence: the woodworms either survived the Flood because such was the will

¹⁵⁸ J. Barnes, *History...*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁵⁹ James George Frazer, *Złota Galazka*, tr. H. Krzeczowski, PIW, (Warszawa: 1962), pp. 376-377.

¹⁶⁰ M. Eliade, *Sacrum...*, pp. 49-51.

of God or they were miraculously resurrected after the catastrophe while all the spiteful creatures had already been extinct. In this respect, Barnes seems to agree with Barthes's interpretation of the Book of Creation. Mainly, Barnes follows the assumption that *Genesis* can be characterised by a sort of redundancy. That is, as Barthes explains, an information that is given once and repeated- at the end of the text-production there is a lack of determination which homogenises the message¹⁶¹. In the text of *Wars.* there is however the maintenance of a homology between indicial¹⁶² and actantial¹⁶³ analysis: the psychology as well as the values represented correspond to both the aforesaid redundancy and the functions performed by the protagonists.

The motif of collective guilt reappears in the chapter discussed and is abhorred by the solicitor: " *Must a whole village be summoned to court because there is a gang of robbers living within it?*"¹⁶⁴ The defence is based on the view that there should be equality and tolerance toward non-church otherness. The image of the institution is very unflattering and the representation implies lack of competence to speak in the name of God. This is because the Church is too much enveloped in human ways of classification. Despite the obvious differences between parochial power and traditional one, Foucault points to the inseparability of Church from the social and the political¹⁶⁵. Nevertheless, the church claims rights to be *the* authority and it is the church authorities who issue the most commonly known interpretative versions of the bible.

The Christian authorisations are related to space as well. In the Puritan imagination Churches were always topographical and moral centres of life of particular communities. Christian geography is an ordered structure which separates the sacred from the profane. The separation is justified by the sanctity and grandeur of Christ's martyrdom. In *Cross Channel* it is translated into the humane but the mechanism is dehumanised:

[...] You followed signposts in British racing green, then walked across fields guarded by Wooden Martyred Christs to these sanctuaries of orderliness, where everything was accounted for. Headstones were lined up like dominoes on edge; beneath them their owners were present and correct, listed, tended. [...]¹⁶⁶

The war-heroes cementary is presented as a sacred place that is kept in perfect order and charged with respectful attention. What brings chaos into the religious rigour and

¹⁶¹ Roland Barthes, „The Struggle with The Angel”, in: *Image, Music, Text*, S.Heath (ed.), Fontana Press, (London: 1977), p. 129.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ J. Barnes, *A History...*, p. 67.

¹⁶⁵ M. Foucault, „Seksualność i władza”, in: *Filozofia...*, p. 209.

¹⁶⁶ J. Barnes, *Cross Channel*, p. 94.

discipline is the behaviour of the others- be those worms or human beings. The spiteful dismissal of otherness within the church results from the presuppositions, the belief which cannot withstand confrontation with science. That is why the subtextual critique may be that of Enlightenment.

Foucault analysed the philosophical thoughts as related to modernity and he devoted a substantial part of his analysis to the writings of Kant. The latter, as Foucault asserts, sees Enlightenment as the passage rite marking the way from immaturity standing for the condition of human will which is controlled by authority- among which Kant enumerates the Church.¹⁶⁷ Even in *Cross Channel* the priest preaches to the congregation in a truly Puritan fashion. His vocabulary is offensive and his diction smacks of threat. The discursive realm is structured around the church:

[...] What did you come to church for, if not to hear a powerful denunciation of others and an implicit confirmation of your own virtue? [...]¹⁶⁸

Religious knowledge is another means of manipulation. The congregation is a mass of people seeking not facts or interpretations to develop but fixed static explanations. In this sense, in *The Wars of Religion* the narrative recounts the future of religion; mainly, it could be interpreted as the forthcoming conflict between Puritan spirituality and Arminian reason that the seventeenth century brought with itself.

The primary guilt of the woodworms is disobedience and lack of respect for the institution of the church. When the problem is transferred into the social and cultural context of the turn of the two centuries, it is identifiable in the fractions that occurred in the Anglican Church. The relation between the two antagonists is structural: the traditional antiscientific Puritanism is counterposed with Arminian aspiration to religion as scientific certainty that enables leaving all superstitions aside and focus on knowledge:

[...] Arminian rejection of predestination had at its concomitant an emphasis upon the grace attainable by all through the sacraments, and hence reasserted the significance of liturgy and ritual. Both elements- doctrinal emphasis upon free will and ecclesiastical emphasis upon sacerdotalism and ceremony- effectively represented a reduction in the Anglican Church which, to traditionalists, smacked of counterreformation.[...]¹⁶⁹

In spite of very energetic action of challenge and counter-argumentation, the Puritans would not let it go so easily. As Stocker writes: " *Puritanism had an authoritarian*

¹⁶⁷ M. Foucault, 'Czym jest Oświecenie?', in: *Filozofia...*, p. 278.

¹⁶⁸ J. Barnes, *Cross...*, p. 94.

¹⁶⁹ Margarita Stocker, "From Faith to Faith in Reason. Religious Thought in the Seventeenth Century", in: *Into Another Mould*, T.G.S. Cain and K. Robinson (eds), Routledge, (London- NY: 1992), p. 63.

urge to impose moral order upon the nation"¹⁷⁰. The situation remained so for years to come and, analogically, Barnes leaves the chapter without conclusion. Even though the sentence was passed we cannot know what it was. The vermits were tried *in absentia*, but Barnes assumes that they may have got rid of the conclusion over decades:

[...] It appears from the condition of the parchment that in the course of the last four years and 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'Eglise. [...]¹⁷¹

The citation given above may symbolise the silent victory of the vermits. It is the moral victory; one that history will recognise and chronicle. The *Wars of Religion* shows how Puritan consciousness falls into abeyance and is substituted by the ideals of humanism. The Enlightenment-informed influences like an emphasis upon individuality and educational self-development destabilised the Anglican Church introducing human chaos into the static world of religion.

Barnes's interpretation of history dwells on a number of social and cultural ideas. The main inspirations are drawn from postmodern theories of meta-narratives which basically deconstruct the universal and "fabulated" assumptions. The fact that Christian religion is often subjected to the process of reevaluation stems from the postmodern rejection of an Absolute Spirit. As has already been pointed out, nihilism does not inevitably erase the figure of God but only questions his input to human history. This is what Irving Howe writes on the importance of a new time-consciousness which decentres God:

[...] It was deism that taught us to accept the pain of historicity. By granting God powers of initiation and then putting him to sleep forever, deism freed the mind from the puzzle of origins and cleared the way for historical consciousness. [...]¹⁷²

The Pascalian imagery of God is easily perceptible in Barnes's novels. Spatial contexts as well as the rejection of linear temporality amount to the decline of importance of the mythical origin. Philosophers like Nietzsche, Bergson and Heidegger are among those who contributed to the thought¹⁷³. Consequently, the classical version of Reason is questioned. The heterogeneity of history is also to be found in the writings of Deleuze. His synthesis of time include a mixture of past and presence characterised by difference and repetition as well as future that signifies the openness to irrationality¹⁷⁴. Similarly, Barnes treats past and presence as parallel thematically and distinct in values. The futuristic

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 80.

¹⁷¹ J. Barnes, *A History...*, p. 80.

¹⁷² Irving Howe, „History and The Novel”, in: *The Norton...*, p. 1536.

¹⁷³ Kuba Wandachowicz, „Wszystko jest retro”, in: *Czas Kultury*, vol. 1, 2005, p. 17.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 18.

symbols, especially in *Survivor*, combine the rational with the irrational which makes a debate on history a process of constant re-presentations. Accordingly, the same function is prescribed for the rhetoric of place. Architectural artefacts (in *Wars...* e.g.) are endowed with meaning very time anew and this is the only reason for their duration¹⁷⁵. Ultimately, deconstruction of history does not mean disappreciation of its value but only showing its more implicit version.

¹⁷⁵ K.F. Kafka and K. Nawratek, „Przestrzeń zniechęcenia, Czas nadziei”, in: *Czas Kultury*, op. cit., p. 26.

CONCLUSION

Even though Julian Barnes is a very prolific author whose literary output cannot be easily defined, in my thesis I try to outline the repetitive motifs and themes around which the mainstream interests of the author are structured. I concentrate on four novels:

Metroland, *Flaubert's Parrot*, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* and *Cross Channel*. The generic ideas are language and history- each discussed in a separate chapter. I have been forced to omit certain aspects of both the ideas mentioned and other subjects on which Barnes elaborates. These are, among others, problems such as the function of art in life, love and the possibility to define truth. However, the analysis of linguistic and historical aspects of Barnesian imageries involves the interpretation of quite diversified ideas.

In the first chapter entitled *Language as Identity and Difference* there is a detailed account of the interrelations between different cultures. A lot of attention is devoted to, what might be called, Barnesian phrancophilia. He obviously superposes French culture over the one of the British Isles. There is only one instant of an implied criticism directed at both cultures when it concerns French and English as signifiers of master-cultures. This problem usually occurs in the background of his texts. I divided the key issues that are held within the framework of language and speaking into three parts. The first one tells about the ambiguities around (un)translating terms and the emotive quality of speech. The second point is made with reference to a phenomenon that I describe as linguistic subcultures- it implies ideas such as selfhood and otherness- which in turn is presented in an unconventional way. In the third point I try to give an account of Barnes's depiction of dictionaries as well as the complicated relations they have with other encyclopaedic forms of archiving "objective" knowledge. Ultimately, *Flaubert's Parrot* with its distructured narration comes to the focal point of attention.

The fact that in Barnes's novels the problem of language appears so frequently merits some consideration at this stage. Barnes's approach toward linguistics defies exact definition. His depiction of the issue, despite its meta-theoretical nature, is concentrated on everyday life situations. Hence, the contexts are rarely abstract. They are so; however, in the case of the aforesaid *Flaubert's Parrot* where Barnes writes about the process of writing and the pursuit of an author. Since his considerations are directly referred to structural and poststructural literary theory, the readerly interpretation of each and every novel has largely been planned. Consequently, typically Barnesian vocabulary complies with the theoretical overtone which makes his texts even more essay-like. According to Barnes, there is no one answer to the problem whether language can be mastered by people or not. He portrays speakers of languages as users of cultural commodities. The operations of language are usually ignored because they correspond the cultural reality and, hence, seem to be true and adequate. The author is far more critical than – as he assumes- his

other contemporaries are. Barnes strives to juxtapose the general usage of language with individual perspective. Consequently, he moves about contrasting theories of language showing that no theory can be definitive.

In the second chapter which is entitled as *History in Time and Space*, I write about Barnes's illustration of historicity and other problems it implicates. The first part concerns the idea of history as science. This perspective pinpoints the inseparability of interpretation and historical study which is envisioned in the personal and professional activities of historians and lexicographers. The subject of Christian religion appears on the level of an archetypal Judeo-Christian tradition and culture. The underlying theme is history which transcends both temporal and spatial limits imposed on it by Christian iconography. In this way, Barnes is able to display the contrasting interpretations and emotions that come about in the process of history. The juxtaposition of myth and survival underlines the idea of fabulation that is to be found in the literary criticism of many experimental writers. Entering the carnivalesque spaces allows for reconciliation with well-worn fears uncovering, at the same time, western "schizophrenias".

Generally, Barnes pictures the crisis in historical identity of the post-war and post-Empire Britain. In his typically ironic manner, he describes the two-sided nature of democracy. The negative aspects of imperial politics and capitalist society are relativised. He creates an atmosphere of disillusionment with both Englishness and Britishness. This can be seen in terms of another historical process connected with the emergence of Labour Party and Whig-interpretation of England's imperial past. Furthermore, the revision of the assumed muteness of certain social groups prepares room for re-telling history. Barnes's criticism also touches upon religious and public institutions such as the church or a university. History as it is depicted by Barnes works as a sort of analogy to many parallel social discourses. Mainly, the author presents a wide array of problems that are hardly discernible in every-day life because they have been assimilated into culture as "norms". Paradoxically, Barnes simplifies the comprehension of western reality by constant defamiliarisation. However, even in portraying distinct values as relative, he does not turn to nihilism or pessimism. Rather, his undecidedness and his multiverse work so as to invite differences and multiplicities into the discursive games of culture.

The literary creativity of Julian Barnes is a large-scale undertaking. Apart from linguistic and historical contexts, Barnes broadly discusses many facets of contemporary culture. The discussion of certain problems is accompanied by a specific vocabulary and

diversified narrative technique. As I try to point out in respective chapters, Barnes displays a severe criticism of western life, perception of reality and hierarchy of values.

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ABSTRACT

In my thesis I elaborate on the literary creativity of Julian Barnes. My paper consists of two chapters entitled *Language as Identity and Difference* and *History in Time and*

Space. The predominating part of each chapter is devoted to the position of individuals competing with meta-narratives of language, history, politics, religion, and culture. The ultimate outcome of the protagonists' proceedings is ambivalent in the sense that their efforts are successful only to some extent. However, at the same time, I illustrate that by opposing domination the protagonists manage to undermine the assumed rationale of social discourses and revise the long-established hierarchies of western values. In the first chapter, we have to do with a broad spectrum of ambiguities connected with the usage of language. Barnes's representation of linguistic reality comprises elements of both structural and poststructural linguistics. The author's analysis is based on the writings of many different philosophers and linguists such as: Wolfgang Iser, Ferdinand de Saussure, Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Ludwig Wittgenstein. The subsequent part of the same chapter is devoted to the problem of fragmented narration- mainly with respect to *Flaubert's Parrot*. In the second chapter, I elaborate on the status of history in Barnes's novels. It is focused on the interrelations between history and society as well as history and individuals. This sort of research profile leads to posing further questions about the master-narratives that encapsulate the image of God and the vision of the whole world- in temporal and spatial terms. This interpretation is performed with the help of some French philosophers like Michel Foucault and Jean Baudrillard. The theoretical account of the linguistic and historical aspects of discourse, as they are presented by Barnes, allows me to describe the author as a left-wing one who rejects formal knowledge that circulates via social and political institutions. The scrutiny of Barnes's texts is the main point of departure to more general questions connected with contemporary literary theory and cultural studies.

STRESZCZENIE

Moja praca licencjacka dotyczy twórczości Juliana Barnesesa. Składa się ona z dwóch rozdziałów zatytułowanych kolejno: *Język jako tożsamość i różnica*, oraz *Historia w czasie i przestrzeni*. Znaczna część wymienionych rozdziałów została poświęcona sytuacji indywidualnego człowieka, który przeciwstawia się wielkim narracjom języka, historii, polityki, religii, oraz kultury. Ostateczny wynik tej konfrontacji jest jednak ambiwalenty w tym sensie, że żaden z protagonistów nie jest w stanie w pełni osiągnąć zamierzonego celu. Niemniej, jak staram się wykazać, konsekwentne akty sprzeciwu wobec kulturowej dominacji, pozwalają tym samym bohaterom na zakwestionowanie racji dyskursów społecznych. Jednocześnie umożliwiają one podważenie fundamentalnych wartości przyjętych głównie przez kulturę zachodu. W pierwszym rozdziale mamy do czynienia z całym spektrum problemów związanych z używalnością języka. Barnesowskie ujęcie rzeczywistości językowej zawiera elementy zarówno strukturalnego jak i poststrukturalnego językoznawstwa. Moja analiza jest przeprowadzona na podstawie pism wielu różnych filozofów i lingwistów, wśród których wymienić należy przede wszystkim: Wolfganga Isera, Ferdynanda de Saussure'a, Michała Bachtina, Rolanda Barthesa, Jacquesa Derride, oraz Ludwiga Wittgensteina. Druga część tego samego rozdziału została poświęcona zagadnieniu fragmentaryczności narracji- głównie w odniesieniu do *Papugi Flauberta*. Z kolei w następnym rozdziale staram się nakreślić status historii w powieściach Barnesesa. W oparciu o dzieła niektórych francuskich filozofów takich jak Michel Foucault i Jean Baudrillard, koncentruję się tu na związkach zachodzących między historią a społeczeństwem oraz historią a jednostką. Ten konkretny kierunek badawczy zmierza do podniesienia kolejnych zagadnień związanych z obrazem Boga oraz czasoprzestrzenną wizją świata. Teoretyczna analiza zarówno językowych jak i historycznych aspektów dyskursu w formie w jakiej jest on przedstawiony przez Barnesesa, odkrywa lewicowe przekonania wspomnianego autora. Barnes stanowczo odrzuca oficjalną wiedzę jako, iż w

jego przekonaniu, jest ona subiektywnie przetwarzana przez różne instytucje życia społecznego oraz politycznego. Moja interpretacja tekstów Barnes'a jest jedynie punktem wyjścia do bardziej ogólnych rozważań na temat niektórych zagadnień współczesnego literaturoznawstwa oraz studiów kulturowych.