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Entitled

Postmodernist Features and Truth In Julian Barnes' *Flaubert's Parrot*

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Dedication

To my parents

To my husband, my children and my brothers and sisters

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grateful to his guidance and insightful remarks on the work.

I am also indebted to my teachers who taught me during my MA. My indebtedness is

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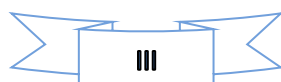
Abstract

This thesis seeks to trace the postmodern features and the truth in Julian Barnes *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984). It also seeks to provide a brief historical background of postmodernism as a movement and its development into a theory. Besides, it tries to present the influence of the theory on different fields. I am emphasizing in this influence on the field of literature- mainly novels and history -mainly biographies. To examine the quest for the truth in the novel, a brief definition to term 'truth' generally is provided with an emphasis on postmodern truth.

I choose the novel because it is a postmodernist literary work which is very interesting. Thus, it is very rich with most of the postmodernist elements and it revolves around the central notion of truth which is postmodernism's main concern. The thesis also aims to show how postmodern elements have an essential influence on the interpretation of the meaning of the novel.

Key words: *Flaubert's Parrot*, Gustav Flaubert, Postmodernist Theory, Postmodernist Literature, Truth, Postmodern Truth ,

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General Introduction

Published in 1984, *Flaubert's Parrot* is one of the most popular and successful novels written by the English writer Julian Barnes. Barnes, besides writing novels, was a journalist, and a writer of many essays and book reviews. The book became famous because of the experimental structure, the themes confronted, and the polyphony of voices present in it. Because of its success the novel was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1984, it won the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Award in 1985 and the Prix Médicis in the non-fiction category in France in 1986.

Barnes's parents were both teachers of French. Thus, he became interested in French literature and was influenced by the style and many works of the French modern writer Gustav Flaubert (1821- 1880). His novel is considered as a sort of biography which incorporates fiction. Barnes writes a fictional account of a real life where a boundary between the real world of the author and the fictional world of the narrator is blurred. This biography is about Gustav Flaubert's life- a very famous French writer at the late of the ninetieth century- and the life of the main character of the novel Braithwaite -a former physician and widower who is fascinated by the life of Flaubert and his works.

Flaubert's Parrot is called a detective novel where Braithwaite collects bibliographical references about Flaubert aiming to find the truth behind the latter's life and also behind his own life and his wife Ellen.

In this research, many text books on postmodernism were helpful and served to accomplish this work. The main aim behind writing the thesis on *Flaubert's Parrot* is to

have a better understanding of the writer and his novel. In doing so, the results of this study will be available and will serve other learners and researchers as well in doing their works.

The dissertation also aims, on the one hand, to discuss the most important features of postmodernism in *Flaubert's Parrot* and the effectiveness of this theory in writing such a fictional history and biography of Gustav Flaubert and Braithwaite. On the other hand, it seeks to discuss and analyze the writer's quest for truth and the methods that he followed to reach it.

The first chapter examines postmodernism. It provides a brief historical background to the term by mentioning some various fields. It also explores the main characteristics and concepts of postmodernist theory with reference to the main figures who adopted it. The second chapter focuses on the postmodernist literature. It mentions the steps it goes through and it discusses the features of postmodernist literature generally, then it specifies it in *Flaubert's Parrot*. These features are mainly the use of various techniques and genres such as: fragmentation, parody, irony significance of historical metafiction, etc. The third chapter explores truth in Barnes's *Flaubert's Parrot*. It casts a light on the term of the truth and how postmodern novels revolve around this notion. It further focuses on the writer's quest of the truth about Flaubert's life, and about the past.

Chapter I

Postmodernism

1-1. Postmodernism: A Historical Background

'Post'-modernism, as the term indicates, is an epochal term that is used to describe the period which comes after modernity. The era of post-modernism is also called, among other names, post- social, post - historical, post - ideological, post - utopian, post - political, post - fascist, post - aesthetic, post - cultural, post - physical, post - humanist, post - white, post - heroic, post - philosophy, post - Marxist, post – contemporary era (Hoffman 35). As an intellectual movement it has its own historical background, its metaphysics, discourses, theory, conceptions of human nature and values and an epistemology. Generally, it refers to a variety of economic, political, social and cultural transformations opposing modernism and rejecting many of its traditional and philosophical alternatives.

The notion of 'postmodernism' appeared after the World War II, in a one volume summation written by D.C Somervell of the first six volumes of British historian Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History* (1947). Somervell and Toynbee suggest that the concept of Post Modern age began in 1875 marking the fourth stage of Western history. The first stage according to him is the Dark Ages (675 - 1075). The second stage is the Middle Ages (1075- 1475) and the third one is Modern Age (1475- 1875) (Best and Kellner 991, 6). Toynbee insists that the term of the Post Modern Age is used to indicate a new transitional period starting from the end of the 19th century. This period according to him represents a dramatic change from the previous Modern Age.

Modern Age which refers to the epoch that followed the Middle Ages or feudalism is described as 'a middle class bourgeoisie era'. It is marked by social stability, rationalism, industrialization, secularization, individualization, and progress. As a philosophical movement, it appeared to contradict traditional societies through the spread of modern

art, the products of consumer society, new technologies and new modes of transportation and communication. Modernity entered every day's life and everywhere. It was transformed from Europe to America and other parts of the world producing a new Industrial Colonial World that can be described as modernization and the exclusion of women and minorities from public sphere   and the genocide of imperialist colonization.

Modernist thinkers such as Descartes, Bacon, and Lock had blind confidence on reason and individualism. They saw that perception and reason could be used as a source of knowledge and society, unlike the pre-modern thinkers who used traditional faith and mysticism as a means to knowledge and saw feudal subordination of the individual to political, social or religious authorities (Hicks 7). According to them individuals are the unit of reality and the individual mind is sovereign. However, this Enlightenment thought led to the appearance of individualism and other theories which postmodernism later on began to question. Politically, the thought brought liberal democracy-liberalism. Economically, it led to the emergence of free markets- capitalism.

Many philosophers started contrasting the Enlightenment account of reason and individualism. They adopted the 'Counter –Enlightenment' philosophy. The most important figure is the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). He argues that analytic reasoning cannot tell us anything that is not already evident. In his book *Critique of Practical Reason,* he examined the extent to which the reason is capable of knowledge.

After Kant, his philosophy of anti-realist invaded the German intellectual world, marking a turning point in the appearance of 'Post –Kantian' philosophy. Three branches of post- Kantian philosophy had emerged. The first branch Neo-Kantianism with two forms: Structuralism (led by Ferdinand de Saussure) and Phenomology (led by Edward Husserl). The second is Speculative Metaphysical branch (led by Hegel, George W.F). The third is the Internationalist branch led by Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (Hicks 43).

By the end of the end of 19th century, the German philosophy had developed two lines of thoughts: The speculative metaphysical thought and the irrational epistemological one. All what the two thoughts needed was to be brought together.

Fortunately, it was the German philosopher Martin Heidegger who introduced a philosophy that integrated the two previous philosophies and rejected the approaches of the former philosophers starting from Descartes and ending with Enlightenment ones. This philosophy he called 'existentialism'. It is this post- Kantian philosophy which led to the rise postmodernist philosophers. But these philosophers were not complete in adopting Kantian epistemology's rejection of the reason.

Early postmodernist philosophers called for the marginalization and demonization of post-renaissance culture by its norms of behavior. This thinking at first began in arts marking the emergence of postwar innovatory artists such as: Stockhausen, Boulez, Robbe, Grillet, etc. (Bulter 5). Later on, it moved to other fields including: philosophy, literature, history, science, art, etc. These philosophers reject modernity and Enlightenment philosophy. They attack the authorship of reason and individuals as a source of knowledge and they criticize capitalism, liberalism, and the objectivity of science and technology. They adopted new principles instead; natural reality was substituted by anti-realism, linguistic social subjectivity instead of experience and reason (Hicks 14). They appeal for communalism, solidarity, egalitarianism instead of valuing individualism in markets, values, and politics. In science and technology postmodernists asked us to be skeptical towards the achievements of the latter for they are not objective, instead of trusting and pricing them (subjectivity).

The British historian Geoffrey Barraclough wrote in detail about the postmodern age in his book *An Introduction to Contemporary History* (1964). He argues that the world in which we live today is different from the world that 'Bismarck lived and

died'(Best, Kellner 1991, 9). Thus, he suggests that the analysis of the structural changes between 'the old the world' and a 'new world' needs ' a new fragment work and new terms of reference. He emphasizes that this postmodern age is an independent period, not a continuation to another previous one and it is characterized by revolutionary developments in science and technology. It is also constituted by new imperialism facing resistance and the Third World revolutionary movements and by transition from individualism to mass society. In addition to that, it witnessed the rise of new visions to the world and appearance of new forms of culture.

Postmodern age was completely different from the previous Modern Age. It is characterized by revolution in all fields and the rise of post war innovatory artists such as Stock, Boulez, Robbe and Grillet (Bulter 5). These artists call for the collapse of rationalism and principles of the Enlightenment. These postmodern artists revolted against their older modern predecessors. For them, postmodernism is a badge of identity and revolt. This conflict between the older generation and the younger one is due to the old generation's sticking to the modern theory and politics and their serious refusal to postmodern one, whereas the younger generation mutually seeks new cultural capital views which they spread against the old generation (Best, Kellner1997, 10).

Many historical and social notions of the new postmodern age appeared in 1950s in American and European writings. As an example Bernard Rosenberg a cultural historian. In his book *Mass Culture* (1957), he used the term 'postmodern' to describe the new conditions of life in mass society. He qualifies the new postmodern world for being ambiguous and fearful. He said:' in short, the postmodern world offers man everything or nothing. Any rational consideration of probabilities leads to a fear that he will be overtaken by the social furies that already beset him' (7). On the other hand, James sees that

postmodernism appears as a cultural expression of neo-liberalism of what called ' late capitalism'.

The postmodern economist Peter Drucker (1909- 2005) published his famous book *The Landmarks of Tomorrow*: *A Report on the New Post Modern World* (1957). He claims that the postmodern society is similar to a postindustrial society after the world War II. This postmodern world, according to him, would mark the end of poverty, ignorance, the nation state, ideology and a process of modernization (7). Similarly, the American sociologist C. Wright Mills (1916- 1962) used the notion of postmodern age in his book *Sociological Imagination* 1959. In dating this era, he states that just as The Dark Ages was succeeded by The Modern Age. The latter is too succeeded by the Postmodern age.(8)

In his description to the present transformation from modern world to the postmodern, he said that many expectations and standard categories of thought and feelings will be relinquished. As an example, Marxism and Liberalism cannot be assumed now. This is because both of them profess the Enlightenment belief in the connection between reason and freedom. Metaphysically, early postmodernists were against reality. They claimed that it is impossible to talk about existing reality, even when using reason or any other method as a means to reach such an objective knowledge of that reality (Hick 6). Therefore, those philosophers adopted a new theory they named 'Postmodern Theory' in which they express their thoughts and principles.

At its an early stage of appearance, there were two conflicting visions of the postmodern discourse. The first vision is a positive one (optimistic) shared by Etzoni, Felder, Hassan and other followers. They see postmodernism as an approach introduced a new era of freedom that is characterized by diversity. It affects views and lifestyle, besides it stimulates creativity. The second version is a negative one produced by Toynbee, Mills, Baudrillard and others. They see that Western societies and cultures are declining, being affected by change and instability.

Both the positive and negative versions concerning postmodernism contributed in a great extent to the clarification of the era and enriched us with various theories and views which were helpful in understanding and the spread of the discourse of postmodernism.

1- 2. Postmodernist Theory

The term postmodernism, when it appeared at the mid of the 20th century, was used to describe new forms of architecture and poetry. However, after two decades, this term was used to describe artifacts that opposed modernism. Many postmodern forms developed in literature, painting and architecture. These forms were later accompanied by postmodern theories.

Many postmodern theorists claim that the era of postmodernism constitutes a novel stage of history and new social economic and social cultural formation, which requires new concepts and theories. According to them, technologies such as computers and media, new forms of knowledge and changes in the socio-economic systems led to postmodern social formation (Best, Kellner 91, 3). Avoid ending a paragraph with a quote. End it with your own synthesis.

Postmodernist theory insists on the maintenance of skeptical attitude. It severly criticizes the modern belief that pretended to provide and reflect reality. Instead it takes perspectivist and relativist positions that theories provide only partial perspectives on their objects and all cognitive representations of the world are historically and linguistically mediated. Postmodern philosophy appears to provide us with arguments and techniques to make value judgments without such previous authorities. France was the place where postmodern theory rose and flourished. This is because the country witnessed a series of socioeconomic, cultural, theoretical and political events that accelerated this development (Best, Kellner 1991,16).

Having started in France, postmodern theory was influenced by rapid modernizations in Europe and worldwide which followed the Second World War. Among the leading figures who developed the postmodern notion of the era are the French sociologists and philosophers Jean Francois Lyotard (1924-1998), Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) and

Jacques Derrida (1930-2005). Those new French theorists attack Marxism and structuralism. They go further adopting poststructuralist theories.

It was Lyotard who first entered the term 'postmodernism' to philosophy and sociology in his book *The Postmodern Condition*: *A report of knowledge* (1979). The book is considered as the most powerful theoretical expression of postmodernism (Sim 3). Lyotard argues that we live in an era characterized by the decline of master narratives. These narratives should be rejected including major philosophies such as Kantianism, Hegelianism and Marxism of Western culture. Lyotard disagrees with the two previous narratives Progressive Emancipation of humanity and the Triumph of Science (Bulter 13). He sees that such ideologies had lost their credibility since the World War Two. This leads to the suspicion towards meta-narratives which used to legitimize and authorize cultural practices.

William Barrett's *Irrational Man* (1958) was another influential book in which postmodernism as a theory had emerged. The book describes the emergence of a' new philosophy' connected with the clear shift in science, literature and arts. He also talks about poststructuralism and criticizes existentialism. He states that existentialism appears as the product of European modernity. He said ' it is the product of bourgeois society in a state of dissolution' (Best, Kellner 1997, 7). For more clarification, he adds 'the bomb reveals the dreadful and total contingency of human existence. Existentialism is the philosophy of the atomic age (7).

Postmodernism as a philosophical movement is mainly a form of skepticism about all these authorities. It comes to undermine other philosophical theories that claim to possess ultimate truth. The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche insists on describing it as a 'revaluation of all values'(Sim 3). According to Best and Kellner postmodern theory

emphasises on the post and its ideal type can be found in the texts of ' Boudrillard and his followers as well as in some subcultures that use the pathos of the postmodern as a sign of identity and distinction' (Best, Kellner 1997 24). Best and Kellner describes those who believe in postmodernism as ' extreme postmodernists'.

Jean Baudrillard is another famous postmodern figure who criticized Marxism and structuralism. He argues that there are no hidden structures behind all phenomena which it is the analyst's task to identify and explain. He believes that the postmodern world is the world where we could no longer differentiate between reality and simulation (Sim 11). Besides the existence of Nietzsche, Baudrillard and Lyotard as thoughts of postmodern philosophy, there also exist various discourses adopted by other intellectuals such as deconstruction and poststructuralism.

By 1970 and 1980s, 'new social movements' appeared such as feminism, gay, lesbian activism. These movements derive their roots from the social struggles of the 1960s and were affected now by Foucault's theory of deconstruction.

Deconstruction as a term was first used by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. He argues that the truth is always relative based on different standpoints of the judging subjects (relativism). Thus, the main principle of deconstruction is denying the possibility to reach to true or final definitions. Deconstructors believe that since all language systems are inherently unreliable cultural constructs, so the relationship of language to reality is unreliable. In this context, Derrida, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, and others claim that they share the opinion that philosophy and literature in the Western tradition were wrong in their supposition that the relationship between language and the world was well established and reliable. They criticize those Western traditions for their belief that language is the mirror of nature and therefore the meaning of any word has its origins in the structure of reality itself. This language according to them is able to make the truth

about the structure present in the mind. According to Derrida this belief leads to a false metaphysics of presence and therefore Western metaphysical philosophical tradition was unable to question how language fits the world. Furthermore, this thought about language was also a subject of discussion among poststructurlists.

Poststructuralism as a broad cultural and philosophical movement is a critique of structuralism and its methods. It rejects structuralist tradition of thought and its attack on phenomology, existentialism, and humanism. Structuralism is based mainly on the linguistic theories of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. His book *Course in General Linguistics* (1916) became famous as a revolutionary book in the study of linguistics. Saussaure sees language as a system which has rules and regulations. This language is made up of signs. These signs are consisted of two parts: a signifier (a word) and a signified (Concept) which form the sign.

As a postmodern intellectual landscape, Poststructuralism is a political movement as well as a cultural movement. Poststructuralist attacked structuralist's claim that the mind owns innate and universal structure. Main critiques of structuralism were found in the texts of Derrida, Fuocault, kristiva, Lyotard and Barthles. By giving primacy to the signifier over the signified, poststructuralist thus shows the dynamic productivity of language and instability of meaning (Best, kellner 1991, 21).

Poststructuralism, besides being a production of new models of thought and writing, this critique is appropriated by postmodern theory and expands it to the new theories. Both poststructuralism and postmodern theories take post Marxist tendency which consider Marxism as an oppressive discourse which is irrelevant to this era. It questions the cultural certainties that structuralism adopted. Among these offered certainties: the belief that the world is knowable and that structuralism offered as a methodological key to enter to various systems that made up that world. Poststructuralists however, argue that

since our mind understands everything through language, everything should be regarded as a text. So, nothing should be shown to exist outside texts and it is the readers who should construct the meaning of this text not the writer. They end up concluding that language is pluralistic. By the end of the 1970s, this thought had spread among philosophers and authors. By the beginning of 1980s, various branches of poststructuralist theory in France and worldwide had shifted into postmodern theory.

When using poststructuralist theory for the study of history – i.e. offering the readers the opportunity to put the meaning to texts- historical texts which were used as sources became meaningless apart from what those historians put on them. This led to the collapse of objective history and the blurring of fact and fiction.

Derrida and other deconstrutionists attack those who believe that the world can be described accounty by philosophy and science and that historical narratives can be true. They insist that the relationship between language and the world will go astray.

Modern theorists claim that technologies such as computers and media, new forms of no knowledge and change in the socioeconomic system are producing a postmodern social formation. Thus, scientists think of themselves constructing some unifying theory on 'grand narratives' for their subject matter. However, these claims were questioned by postmodern scientists.

Postmodern scientists deny the truth of basic physics the 'grand narratives' of evolution such as creationism. They generally attack the basic claims that traditionally were made by scientists. They insist that scientists' works are open to all the hidden biases and metaphors. Science should not be questioned only in a matter of its claims to the truth but also is institutional status and application stopped by ideological agendas of powerful elites.

Neo - Marxist theorists like Jameson and Harvey interpret the postmodern in terms of development of higher stage of capitalism marked by greater degree to of capital penetration and homogenization across the globe.

Like other fields, the postmodern art was influenced by postmodern theory. It contradicts some aspects of modernism and present instead a contemporary art starting from 1970 onwards. Among these aspects are traditional values. It adopts new forms instead such as intermedia, installation art, conceptual art, multimedia, performance art and identity politics (Gallery). This adoption of these new forms of arts make postmodernist artists to share among them the thought that 'anything can be art'.

Generally postmodern art refuses the authority of any single style to define art and propose what it should be. similarly, it refuses making distinction between 'high culture' and 'popular culture'. It also doubts the existence of any objective reality. It calls for the existence of pluralism of aesthetic style and games.

Being one of the classical forms of fine art, architecture also was influenced by postmodernism. A remarkable book which was very influential on the development of modernism in architecture is *Complexity and Contradiction Architecture* (1966) written by the American architect Robert Venturi. In his book, Venturi theoretically expresses his rebellion against the purism of modernism. In practice, he calls for the discovery of various meanings included in classical architecture of modern period. Postmodern form in architecture continued its development towards 1970s and 1980s. People in a wide range started contrasting the purity and formalism of high modern style. They were more affected by Charles Jenck' s book *The Language of Modern Architecture* (1977) (Best, Kellner 1991, 11).

Modernist historians used to believe that chronologies were the most value-neutral and veridical genre of historical record. However, according to postmodernist historians, even

lists of dates and events can offer different views of history. Modern historians also made a distinction between history and fiction. They considered that history dealt with things as they were claiming truthfulness whereas fiction was the realm where possibilities were present. Postmodern historians, on the contrary, broke the distinction between the two and seek for blurring the boundary. According to Ignat this blurring of the boundries turned into 'a cultural hybrid: a mixture a fact and fiction of truth and falsehood, of reality and myth' (Rosçan 39).

 Postmodern historians go further ensuring that the historian cannot access the past directly. S/he can only work with partial, fragmentary text. Hence, the output of their research can be complete in scope and imaginative and compensating for the gap. Accordingly, they assert that this historian is just like the novelist a maker of meaning.

Postmodern historians were also affected by post structuralism. They see that the past has no essential meaning and that history has become a discipline where the past events hybrid. Accordingly, the reader faces hybridization. Hassan, on his part claims that facts don't exist but only interpretations. Most postmodern historians stick to the belief of extreme skepticism and relativism about historical knowledge since the language of historical documents is not transparent or neutral. These ideas were shared by many of the Marxists. They contradict traditional autobiographies' claim of telling absolute truth. The aim of postmodern autobiography according to them is "not simply self-understanding but theorizing one's life in ways that disclose its conditioning by history and society. Thus enabling the transformation the social world" (Agger 11).

Deconstruction, Post structuralism, and postmodern history all agree on attacking traditional rationalists and Enlightenment theory. At the same moment, all of them are in accordance with postmodern theory. The first wave of those theorists was influenced by

the theoretical and political experiences of the 1960s And1970s, whereas the second wave starting from 1980 to 1990 had different cultural experiences.

Although postmodern thought, as stated by many theorists, marked a clear break with the modern society and culture (Best, Kellner 1997) and a reflection the time- meaning that it was the demand of the time, it faced a huge criticism. Some Scholars are even not yet sure whether we have really entered a new world that can be termed as postmodern. They see that this current period is only an extension of the modern era. Other scholars who believe in postmodernism's existence, criticize it for its capability to highlight the problems and inability to point or offer any solutions. They state that though it keeps us thinking, it offers no conclusive answer. Accordingly, postmodernism for them remains just a theory not a fact. They go further attacking its relativism, irrationalism and nihilism. Sabina Lovibond, a literary critic, accuses postmodernism of abandoning the modern projects of Enlightenment and its belief in progress and reason which she as a negative action. She warns 'postmodernism represents a dangerous approach for any marginalized group to adopt' (Hoffmann 40). In this context, some other critics state that postmodernity is a period of pessimism that contrast with modernity's optimism.

Despite this stinging criticism, no one can deny that postmodern theory positively influenced views and lifestyle. It is appreciated for providing a different approach in understanding social reality. Chase L. Clow considers that this theory 'has changed the world, and very few areas of existence have been spared. He go further appreciating it for it 'has altered how individuals create and perceive art, read and report the news, ponder and produce philosophical arguments, and perhaps most importantly, interpret and venerate spiritual texts, religion, and God' (Abdul Azeez, Shah, Suratman, Bin Salamon, Bin, Awal 535).

By criticizing the domination and authority of specific culture and values (Western one) and negative aspects of democracy which are the marginalization of social groups by racism, genderism, and nationalism that prevalent in the modern era, postmodernism offers a chance to the equality of values and culture. Besides, it shares strong points such as 'fighting against globalization', 'fighting against scientistism' and ' emphasizing dynamism' (Forghany, Keshtiaray, Yousfy 98). Kellner and Butler appreciate postmodern theory for its capability to provide 'a critique of representation and relativist positions. The theories at best provide partial perspectives on their objects and that all cognitive representations of the world are historically and linguistically mediated' (Best, Kellner 1991, 4).

When applying postmodern theory in history, it led to the examination historical interpretations and facts because of their skepticism towards traditional and modernist theories of history.

Similar to other fields, literature was too influenced by the postmodern theory constituting postmodernist literature. This literature was characterized by its rejection of the idea of a single theme or meaning to literary texts. They, instead, propose to give various meanings to a single text. Therefore, this literature vehemently rejects objectivity and universal truth. It reflects social and political viewpoints and challenges authorities. Among the earliest writers who embraced this thought, was the British writer Julian Barnes in his most remarkable novel *Flaubert 's Parrot*.

Just as there are diverse versions of postmodern theory, there are also differences between postmodern philosophers themselves, such as Baudrillard, Derrida, Foucault (Best, Kellner 1997, 24). They hold contradictory opinions about the theory. If postmodernist writers such as Sontag, Fielder and Hassan appreciate the theory and approve postmodernism and postmodern culture as a new 'post culture', some other thinkers furiously attack it. They claim that those who believe in postmodernism are

extreme postmodernists. In this sense Best and Kellner said ' Those who claim that we are now in a new era of modernity …are examples of what we are calling 'extreme postmodernists' (Best Kellner 1997, 20).

George Steiner (1971) admits that society can not turn back and it has only to move into the new world of science and technology. He severely criticizes postmodern culture for rejecting and destroying the essential assumptions and values of Western society (Best, Kellner 1991, 12). This post Enlightenment or post culture according to him led to the loss of ethical absolutes and certainties. Though these thinkers have different views and assessment to postmodern theory, what they share in common is that all of their theories participated and provided various explanation and perspectives which widely serve the theory of postmodernism.

Chapter II

Postmodernist Dimensions

In *Flaubert's Parrot*

2-.1. Postmodernist Literature: Historical Background

Modernism was the central literary movement that was prevalent in the 19th century and early 20th century. However, by the mid of the 20th century, postmodern literature appeared as a new movement in reaction to the modern one. It came to fill the gap left by the collapse of European modern literature. Similar to modern literature, postmodern literature was affected by the socio- political, cultural and historical developments and events which occurred at that period which is called ' the post-World War II period'. This period is characterized by the collapse of the old European empires. Consequently, higher Western modernism fell down leaving a gap to be filled. Afforded that opportunity, Americans started exporting their culture to the world (Michal and Platt 24). Thus, towards the 1960s and 1980s, the concept of postmodern culture spread among Americans. This American cultural expansion led to the emergence of various postmodern literary works.

Many literary theorists argue that early postmodern literature can be marked by the works of John Howkes *The Cannibal* 1949, the first performance of *En Attendant Godot* 1953, William Gaddis *'s The Recognitions* 1955, William Burrough's *Naked Lunch*, etc. Those early postmodern writers started asking how they could keep on writing in the face of developments in new artistic forms like internet, cinema and TV, and the strong sense shared by people that the novel is exhausted as a literary form. Ronald Sukenick said "what we think of as the novel has lost its credibility'. Thus, towards the 1960s and 1970, postmodern literature refreshed strongly. Some prominent postmodern writers include Joseph Heller in his *Catch 22* in 1961, John Biths' *Lost in the Funhouse* 1968, Thomas Pynchon's novel *Gravity's Rainbow* 1973, etc.

At its early phase of the 1950s, postmodern literature was concerned with portraying the postmodern life and culture of the time using various themes related to that era, such as: challenging authority, the crisis of identity of human beings and its research for its

legitimization in a hypocritical society, human rights violations including the

Holocaust, the atomic bombing of Japan and Algeria, the Civil Right movements of 1960s

in America, etc.

However, a decade later, new authors' voice of minority ethnics who were voiceless

writers, started to sound loudly. Those writers who embraced postmodernism thought

began in the USA- mainly with immigrants and Red Indians, Britain, Canada and other

parts of the world. Famous writers are: Allen Ginsberg, Salman Rushdie, William

Burroghs, etc. Those writers started by now discussing some topics and dealing with many

themes that the White British and American writers did not discuss or wrote a little about,

such as: the racial politics of postmodern writers and their opposition to the postcolonial

writers' dealing with race, the effects of colonization on the colonized peoples, etc.(Platt

3). According to them, the reason behind such concern was that Western postmodern

culture itself was not concerned with such topics, it rather called for marginality. Based on

these views, those authors who were marginalized deeply criticized the attitudes

of Western civilization towards the other peoples of the world; the negative effects of

industrialization; and commercialization of public life.

Hassan was an important figure who served postmodern literature at its early phase.

He was so active in publishing a series of discussions of postmodern literature from 1970

to1998. In his books and essays, he describes Postmodernism as 'a decisive historical

mutation from industrial capitalism and Western categories and values' (Best, Kellner

1991, 11). He sees postmodern literature as 'symptomatic of the changes occurring

throughout Western society' (11). It is characterized by revolution against the Western self

and Western civilization in general.

By the 1960s many academics and writers throughout the world like chart Richard

Bernstein, Hom K. Baha Baha, Judith Bulter, Allan Luke and others produced new forms

of feminism, queer theory, cultural studies, postcolonial theory and a wide range of racebased theory (Best, Kellner 1997, 10). They were partial and refused to adopt either modern or postmodern theories. They rather combined themes from both of the two theories.

Postmodern authors mainly reject many principles of modernism. They deliberately build their meanings on the use of the old forms and genres like, plagiarism, kitch, false or pretended quotations from famous literary text and other texts. They also undermine and parody and the idea of the text's originality and authenticity. They, besides, do not concentrate on subjectivity. They rather reject the belief that the mind and the consciousness are capable of perceiving the outer experience. Instead, they emphasize on radical plurality and relativism. By radical plurality, postmodern writers mean that reason should no longer be trusted as a means to understand and explain the world either subjectively or objectively. Accordingly, there is no unifying concept of truth or experience, there are only intuitions instead. This intuitive reflection is characterized by its openness, personality, instability, flexibility, ability to be changed or modified or even in some cases undermined by various version or reality. Stanley Grenz believes that unlike the modrn mind, the postmodern mind refuses to 'limit truth to its rational dimension and thus dethrones the human intellect as the arbiter of truth....the postmodern mind no longer accepts the Enlightenment belief that knowledge is objective.' (Qureshi 31). He insists that we can have an access to knowledge through various ways including the emotions and the intuition.

Radical plurality which is used in texts offers the opportunity to the formerly marginalized people such as different ethnic groups, jerkies, homosexual and deviants to be seen as positive and efficient characters. To portray these characters appropriately in their prose and poetry, and theatre, postmodern writers use various narrative voices,

different genres like popular literature, myths, classical literary texts and styles of other kinds of literature and genres. Postmodern form in literature, poetry, painting and architecture continued its development in the 1970 and 1980.

When postmodern poetry emerged at the mid of the 20th century, it was declared as a new type of poetry. This kind of poetry is mainly characterized by new way of writing such as free format. Thus, many poets started breaking the lines and the structures of poems used previously by poets believing that forms are meaningless. Although their poems seemed difficult to be read or understood for many critics, they claim that the reason behind their use of this style was to indicate the chaotic sleepiness of the world. Early postmodern poets include: Charles Olson, John Cage, Josef Abers, Pierre Boulez, etc. Those poets dealt mainly with themes such as meaninglessness, lack of reality, restlessness, existentialism or nihilism, etc. Olson urges poets to write open poetry'. His early famous long poem *The Maximus Poems* (1950- 1970) is considered as the beginning of postmodern explorations in poetry. What characterizes those poets from other previous modern ones is their attention to speech patterns, avoiding the lyrical interference of ego and their suspicion of language as a source of self-expression.

Postmodern theater emerged as a reaction against modernist theater. If modern theater was based on Aristotle belief that drama could reveal universal truth, and this universal truths can be achieved through formal devices such as plot, causes and effects, character development, postmodern theater on the other side, concentrates on highlighting the weakness of definite truth stating the existence of many truths depending on various points of views. Accordingly, playwrights, actors and audience members all share their perspectives to the creative process. In postmodern theater, performers act upon an audience. So, the audience are participants together with actors in creating the theater experience. The aim of postmodern theatre is to encourage the audience to reach their own

individual understanding sticking to the idea that there is no grand narrative or ultimate truth but there are many possible truths. Famous figures who entered the postmodern term to the theater are Michael Kirly and Robert Wilson. What is added to the postmodern theater is the use of dance, dark lighting for violence and social conflict scenes.

Continuing the process of innovation, likewise, the novel faced radical changes. It was affected by postmodern theory and it shifted from 'modern novel' to ' postmodern novel'. It mainly uses new forms and content to represent contemporary global culture which is dominated by new technologies. Many critics and literary theorists tried to define it. In his definition and explanation to this kind of novel, Mark Currie considers that Postmodern novel takes' the issue of relationship of fiction and reality as a central concern… They construct fictional worlds only to expose them… by constructing an internal boundary between fiction and reality.' (Currie 1).

The literary theorist Keith Hopper proposes the novel *The Third Policeman* written by the Irish novelist Flam O Brien as the first postmodern novel. If modern novelists convey historical knowledge in an active way without questioning its values and validity, postmodernists consider this knowledge as ' a means for inquiry into epistemological problems of historiography (Guignery 44) .The postmodern novelists opposed limits on novels and broke the borders of traditional novels and added other fields of social sciences. They started to take a political view through historical occurrences. What characterizes postmodern novel is that the narrator and the main character are unreliable. It deals with historical and political issues. It also focuses deeply on events, or images which are absurd or uncanny. Postmodern historical novels use historical details in order to provide strong verifiability that provides an authenticity to the text. According to the Canadian literary theorist Linda Hutcheon assumes that these novels deliberately offers false information to break the sense of authority that history is granted.

Characteristics of Postmodern Literature

Most of literary scholars agree that postmodern literature was affected by radical changes in society at that period after the World War II. This led writers to challenge and respond to that new world in different ways. Their writings are not concerned with objective reality but with its own creative process. They reject Western values, ideas, beliefs, culture, and norms proposed by modern writers. Those writers generally agree on breaking the old forms proposed by modernist writers, they mixed some old forms with new ones. Stylistically and ideologically, they use some techniques and genres in their literary works such as: fragmentation, irony, black humor, and playfulness, parody, intertextuality, pastiche, metafiction, historiographical metafiction, fabulation, magical realism, maximalism, minimalism, etc. Besides, the two essential themes they deal with are: the absence of objective of reality and the absence of scientific or historical truth (objective truth).

Fragmentation

It most generally means the process of fragmenting—breaking into pieces or being divided into parts. It can also refer to the state or result of being broken up or having been divided. Modern narratives used to tell their story in a straightforward, linear and easy-to-follow way. Fragmented narratives, on the other hand, broke the modern sequencing of a story. They fragment various elements, concerning plot, characters, themes, imagery and factual references. Fragmented narratives, on the other hand, jumble up the sequencing of a story, challenging the reader to piece together the different components of the story so as they could make sense of it. Famous novels use fragmentation are *Midnight's Children* (1981)by author Salman Rushdie , Vineland (1990) by Thomas Pynchon, *Before She Met Me* (1982), *Flaubert's Parrot* (1985)by Julian Barnes.

Irony, Black Humor, Playfulness

Postmodernist writers usually treat serious subjects in a playful and humorous way. Linda Hutcheon asserts that postmodern fiction is characterized by the use of ironic quote marks. Though this irony together with black humor and play are the most important aspects of postmodern literature, indeed, they were used by the former modern writers. However, it was used by the postmodern writers as a method to deconstruct grand narratives and unexamined concepts. (Williams 95). The aim behind such use was to revisit the past. Umberto Eco clarifies 'the postmodern reply to the modern consists of recognizing that the past, since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited: but with irony not innocently (Rasçan 36). Some famous postmodernist writers who dealt with their subjects in a playful and humorous and ironic way are: Donald Barthelmes in his famous novel *The School*; Joseph Heller's *Catch 22*; Thomas Pynchon *The Crying of Lot 49* and Julian Barnes '*Flaubert's Parrot.* In most of his novels, Barnes ironizes the nature of 'a single truth' by replacing it with 'multiple truths'.

 Parody

It is a funny imitation of another work. The function of the genre according to Hutcheon is ' to evoke what reception theorists call the horizon of expectation of the spectator, a horizon formed by recognizable conventions of genres, styles, or form of representation. This is when destabilized and dismantled step by step'(Guignery 44). Postmodern writers use parody or satire to comment on or criticize the original text. They challenge the readers to think of it in a new light. Authors who used parodies of popular literature genres include John Fowles, Angela Carter, Jobby Litt, Julian Barnes, Donald Barthelme, Robert Coover, Richard Brqutingan, Micheal Welding, etc. Using this parody, those authours question and criticize a number of traditional assumptions about the aesthetic product such as the belief that subjectivity is stable, and self-determining, and the belief of individual 's ability to know history the way it really was. They also revise and

reread the past that was written. In this context, Barnes' *Flaubert 's Parrot* makes the parody of the past events of Flaubert. What characterizes the works of those writers is their use of a palimpsetic technique of rewriting the old texts by putting them in different linguistic and cultural contexts. As a result, a new text is produced on the layers of the old one.

Intertextuality

The term 'intertextuality' was first coined by the Bulgarian structuralist Julian Kristeva in 1960s. It studies the interrelations between individual texts, between the text and the cultural condition and between the text and the literary tradition. It means shaping the meaning of texts by another text. It was developed as a part of poststructuralist studies. Therefore, the text lost its authorship. It is opened to different understandings and interpretations. Structuralists hence, state that all texts whether written or spoken are to some extent related to each other. They share the thought that no text can be dealt with a self- sufficient whole. So every text is the related to all other existing texts. Micheale Worton and Judith say that happen because in one hand, every writer is inevitably influenced by everything he or she reads before and automatically will use this in his or her creations. On the other hand, every reader has his own experience. Duly, he or she will bring this experience to the interpretation of the text (Hyme 5). The theory of intertextuality offers a new level of interpreting a text putting it in a relation to the other texts. This is seeing clearly in the works of Margaret Atwood, George Luis, Borges, and Julian Barnes. Some critics however, see that this is an indication of postmodern lack of originality and reliance on clichés.

Pastiche

It is related to postmodern intertextuality. It means to combine or to paste together multiple elements; such as combining various genres in order to create a unique narrative

(Sharma, Chaudhary 194). In his definition to pastiche Jameson said ' pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language' (Jameson 17). He added' pastiche is thus blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs: it is to parody what other interesting and historically original modern things, the practice of a kind of blank irony, is to what Wayne Booth calls 'the stable ironies of the 18th century (7). Postmodern writers take different ideas from previous writings and literary styles and combine them together to make new styles or to comment on the writings of their contemporaries. This is seen clearly in the works of Thomas Pyncheon who in his novels includes detective fiction, science fiction and war fiction, songs, popular culture references, mixing well known history together, etc. Generally, this technique is used to represent the chaotic aspect of postmodern society.

Metafiction

' Meta' means about. Metafiction means writing about writing or 'fogrounding the apparatus' (Sharna and Chandhary 195). It was first coined in 1970 by William H. Gass in his book *Fiction and the Figures of Life* . Postmodern writers use metafiction which is not new, to create an extra layer to a fictional work. It is used to undermine the authority or authenticity of the text. This can be found is the novels and short stories of Peter Akroyd, Paul Auster, and John Stone. In this technique, the narrator or characters are aware that they take part in the work of fiction. They are engaged in the acts of composition. Sometimes authors are pointed behind a succession of narrators.

Historigraphic Metafiction

The term was first created by the literary theorist Linda Hucheon in the 1980s in which she replaced the term of 'postmodern fiction' with 'historiographic metafiction'. She defines it as "One kind postmodern novel which rejects beliefs and standards onto the past and

asserts the specificity and particularity of the individual past events. It also suggests a distinction between 'events' and 'facts' that is one shared by many historians (Sator 22). It is used for particular works of fiction that combine the literary devices of metafiction with historical fiction. In other words, it combines the three domains: fiction, history and theory. In interweaving the three, postmodern writers explore and deconstruct the traditional notion of history and the reliability of knowledge of the past that traditional historiography is objective. Rosçan sees that history and fiction constitute a special relationship forming a kind of a hybrid, which is called historiographic metafiction. This hybrid according to her' does not comply with the common-sense methods used to distinguish between historical fact and fiction'. Moreover, it falsifies the thought that 'only history has truth-claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both are discourses… and both derive their "truth" from that identity'.(Rosçan 50).

Historigraphic Metafiction asks questions such as how do we know about the past ? Which version do we know? And who told us and what do they told us? The theorist claims that novels can functionise actual historical events and characters. Remarkable examples include *The General in His Labyrinth* by Gabriel Gracia, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* 1981. Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* 1992. Most novels written by the British writer Julian Barens use historical fiction; famous ones are: *A Maggat, A History of the World in 10½ Chapters and Flaubert's Parrot*. Most of these novels assert that there are only multiple truths and question the general truth.

 Fabulation

   The term was first used by Robert Scholes in his book *The Fabulators.* (Sharma, Chaudhary 195). It is used sometimes to relate to pastiche and magical realism. Fabulation rejects realism and challenges some traditional notions of literature such as the traditional

structure of novel, or the role of the narrator and it combines other traditional notions of storytelling adding magic, myths, and science fiction. It also believes that the data of the past will never be recovered but as interpretative masks. Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and The Sea of Stories* are considered as a good example fabulation.

Magical Realism

The themes and subjects are often imaginary. This kind of fiction is characterized by its use of substantial amounts of realistic detail in addition to magical elements in order to make a point about reality. Magical realism is often associated with Latin-American literature, including founders of the genre, particularly the authors: María Luisa Bombal, García Márquez , Isabel Angélica Allende and others.

Maximalism

The term maximalism or "maximalist fiction," is derived from the philosophical idea 'more is more'. It refers to fictional works, particularly novels that are unusually long and complex, are digressive in style, and make use of a variety of literary devices and techniques and genres. It can be found in novels, such as those written by David Foster Wallace and Thomas Pynchon, Don Delillo where digression, reference, and elaboration of detail occupy a great fraction of the text.

Minimalism

It contrasts maximalism and it adopts the philosophical idea 'less is more'. In literary minimalism the authors focuses on a surface description leaving the readers to take an active role in the creation of a story. It represents the most basic and necessary pieces. They avoid using adjectives, adverbs, or meaningless details. They provide general context rather than providing them with minute details. This gives an opportunity to the readers' imagination to shape the story. This style is available in the works of Ernest Hemingway, Raymond Carver and Frederick Barthelme.

Postmodern writers deliberately use these various techniques and genres which most of them are not new, to thematize both historical and political issues in an effective way and to highlight the possibility of multiple meanings within a singular literary work. Thus, they express the world they live in a creative way offering the freedom to the readers to interpret it in different ways. That what makes postmodern literature to become valid and a creative literature.

2-3. Postmodernist Features in Julian Barnes *'Flaubert's Parrots*

Postmodern fiction is considered as a self-reflexive art. Self- flexibility is seen clearly in the doubts of the author, narrator or character about the world they live in and their own art. *Flaubert's Parrot* is a famous novel written by Julian Barnes in 1985. It is a multi-layered novel which tells three stories at the same time: the story of Flaubert, a famous French novelist at the mid-19th century, the story of the famous parrot of Flaubert, and the story of Geoffrey Braithwaite, a British retired doctor. The narrator of the novel, Braithwaite said 'three stories contend with me one about Flaubert, one about Ellen and one about myself ' (Barnes 94). Barnes is a masterful writer who was able craftily to interweave the three stories together in a very fantastic way, employing various postmodern genres and stylistic techniques of fiction writing.

The novel is considered by critics as a postmodern text because of the experimental structure and themes it deals with. Barnes himself when asked in an interview with Rudolf Freiburg whether he considers the novel as postmodernist novel, he replied:

> The whole question of postmodernism came up… I would say that I have never read any literary theory. I've read a few pages of Derrida, I've occasionally been sent theses on my work where there would be a paragraph of quotation from me, in which my purposes seemed to me self-evident and self-explanatory; and then two pages of a sort of Derridaish prose which seemed to me to make the whole thing much less clear than it was in the first place (Dalton 8).

Most of those critics call it 'a multi- generic novel' that mixes facts and fiction using different conventions. They also call it a hybrid book that blurs fiction and history. This blurring of fiction and history is seen in real people and historical facts. Guignery describes the novel as being 'a hybrid book which challenges any attempt at categorization, classification and genre taxonomy (Guignrey 37). It is consisted of both fictional and non fictional elements, factual data on Flaubert's life, quotes from his correspondence and works; There are real couple of Flaubert sided by the fictious couple of Geoffrey

Braithwaite and Ellen Braithwaite. Other real people such as: Maxime de Cam, Louis Colet, Luois Boulhet, Mayor of Rouen, Leopold Bernstamm. The setting of the novel is real, some real places include the museum of Flaubert, Rouen, Croisset, towns of Trouville and Barentim.

In his criticism to the novel, Mikhail Bakhtin argues that it takes part in cornivalisation of literature' which means according to Guignery it 'mixes genres, styles and language in a heterogamous whole'. Guignery expresses this mixure of genres clearly saying that' Barns appears to advocate innovation and attempts to renew the outmoded, warm

out exhausted forms and genres of the past by mixing them'. In this sense Barnes

in his novel *Flaubert's Parrot* ' exhibits a proclivity for hybridity multiplicity and

decompartmentalization and the mixture of genres enables the narrator to approach

Flaubert, the original and varied ways and to avoid the pitfalls of each individual genre'

(Guignrey 40).

To understand the novel and have a good interpretation, I have adopted Lyotard, James, Hutcheon and other postmodern theories to track and analyze the postmodern features there, the narration of the story, characters, plot and themes. These features are represented mainly in discourses - can be seen in the narrative methods - and various linguistic techniques, besides a mixture of genres that the novel is loaded with such as: intertextuality, metafiction, historiographical metafiction, irony, fabulation, maximalism, minimalism, etc. In addition to the themes the novel deals with.

Braithwaite who is the narrator and the storyteller of the novel, is an English retired widowed doctor who devoted himself to tell us about past events, some of which he witnessed and took part in. His exceptional narrative style attracted the critic Vanessa Guigney and dropped her to distinguish him as 'a typical postmodernist self-conscious narrator in so far as he exposes the constraints upon his research and comments on his own

choices as he goes along' (Guignery 47). Other critics consider him as unreliable narrator, though he tries to give his narrative a great significance and objectivity, his narration is unreliable. In his research for minute details about Flaubert's life, he uses some traditional genres such as biography and historiography. Vanessa Guignry sees that his approach is characterized by the use 'the codes of traditional genres such as biography or historiography and then subverting them by revealing their inadequacy, which corresponds to the postmodernist method as delineated by Linda Hutcheon' (Acarovic 252).

The term 'unreliable narrator' was coined first by the American literary critic Wayne Booth in 1961. For him, unreliable narrator is not only a narrator who uses irony or deliberately deceives the readers, but also 'when he is mistaken, or he believes himself to have qualities in which the author denies him. The critic Shlomith Rimmon kenan offers us another definition, he said:

> A reliable narrator is one whose rendering of the story and commentary on it the reader is supposed to take as an authoritative account of the fictional truth, whereas an an unreliable narrator is the narrator ' whose rendering of the story and/or commentary on it the reader has reasons to suspect' (Rimmond-Kenan 103).

Based on these definitions to the concept of unreliable narrator, sometimes in reporting but mostly in evaluating and interpreting the stories he tells. Braithwaite is judged to be so for sharing all of these characteristics. As a narrator, he is expected by the readers to present a biography of Flaubert - a famous French novelist of the 19th century- providing a fairly reliable presentation of events that are full of factual information, but this almost did not happen. When it comes to true stories, he uses only hints to lead the readers towards the truth. As an example, about himself, he occasionally comments on love and adultery of Ellen, but he is unable to speak about his own marriage or his wife's adultery. It is this ambiguity which makes the readers unable to reach the final truth.

Being closer to postmodernism in his crossing boundaries between fiction and reality. Bares uses fragmentation which is a postmodernist aesthetic in most of his narratives. So, the novel shifts from story to the other. Each story is unrelated to the previous one. Each of the 15 chapters tell different story in a discontinuous way, breaking the traditional form in which we have a beginning middle and an end. Barnes was struggling himself to do this. He said' I found myself excitedly wondering how far I could push the constraints of traditional narrative: how far I could distort and fragment the narrative line while still keeping a continuous and rising expectation in the reader'.

Using this fragmentation in his novel, Barnes is declaring the death of grand narratives. In the meantime, he is confusing the readers so as not to provide them with a coherent knowledge Flaubert.

Alongside fragmentation, Barnes uses polyphony voices in the novel. These voices are in disagreement with one another. Each voice provides us with different version of what really happened and how it happened and which event is true. As an example, chapter 4: The Flaubert Bestiary, Braithwaite provides different description to Flaubert:

> He is a literary lizard basking in the sun of Beauty (1846). He becomes as soft and nervous as a cow (1867); he feels as worn out as a donkey (1867); yet still he splashes in the Seine like a porpoise (1870). He lives a life which would kill three rhinos (1872); he works 'like XV oxen' (1878). (Barnes 38).

By using this fragmentation together with polyphone voices in his narration, Barnes highlights the belief that language reveals reality and truth. Following the postmodernist argument, he insists that language is impressive because signifiers such as sounds, or visible markers such as letters, records are open onto a plurality of signifieds (conceptual components of the sign). So, some words don't refer to the same meaning and reality in the 19th century and today (Guignery 43). Braithwaite himself said that' we no longer believe

that language and reality 'match up' so congruently - indeed, we probably think that words give birth to things as much as things give birth to words' (Barnes 98).

The narrator Braithwaite identifies himself with Flaubert in his narration. He did so in order to avoid the reader's knowledge of facts about his own life. Intertexuality is clear the third chapter of Flaubert. Barnes takes quotations from the personal writings as an example Flaubert's reference to Juliet Herbet in his letter to Bouillet (Barnes 29). Also, Braithwaite takes some writings of Flaubert such as 'Gustave writes: 'When we are children, we all want to live in the country of parrots and candied dates' (Barnes 45). A correspondence is so clear between the narrator and his wife and her extra relationship and the main character of Flaubert's novel Madame Bovary. However, Braithwaite thinks that his wife is more complicated compared to Madam Bovary. There is an intertextuality in the book of Ford Madox Ford (1873-1939). The Good Soldiers (1915). The narrator John Dowell who is the protagonist writes the story of his unfaithful wife and her lover. There are many similarities between the two novels Such as the plot, self-delinded narrators. However, there are many difference between the two. One is that the former is a classic modernist novel whereas the latter is a postmodern novel.

In order to revisit the past of Flaubert and Braithwaite, the postmodern writer Barnes uses a lot of ironies. This is seen clearly in the letter of Flaubert to Louis Colet and Maxime de Champ. At this stage readers are suspicious in the authenticity of these letters for the ironic way they are presented. Another irony is when Braithwaite offers an image of himself for the readers at an early stage even before they could see him. So the readers can suspect his innocence and may feel that apart from his physical appearance, there is some kind of trauma in his past connected with his wife' death.

 chapter 6 'Snap' is full of ironic elements. As an example, Flaubert wrote when theFranco-Prussian war broke out, 'we shall remain stupid.' Mere boastful pessimism? Or a

necessary razing of expectation before anything can be properly thought, or done, or written? There are some sentences which are full of irony such when the narrator ironies his research about the real parrot ' it took me about two years to solve the case of the stuffed parrots' (Barnes 116).

Flaubert's Parrot is a parody of past life and characters of Gustav besides that one of Braithwaite. Barnes uses this technique of parodying the past life experiences of the 19th century modernist writer Gustave Flaubert with the postmodern narrator Braithwaite so as to show us the self-reflexivity, open-endedness, and intertextuality on one hand. On the other hand, he uses it to criticize traditional beliefs and assumptions of individualism and objectivity.

While reading the novel, we notice that most of the characteristics that are associated with metafiction are there. The narrator is aware that he is taking an essential role in the novel and he is using a postmodern fiction to offer the readers with different endings to the novel. Blurring this metafiction with history to form historiographical metafiction, Barnes insists that the two modes of discourses have a lot in common. Therefore, it strengthens the relationship between fictional writings and history writings (Salter 22).

The narrator appears of a postmodern historiographer. He narrates the events of his stories by mixing historical facts and fictive events related to Gustav, the famous a realist writer in the 19th century. He collects biographical references about him. He has an access to many letters, journals, but still unsatisfactory. So, there are real places, persons and events sided by fictious ones. He said -about Flaubert - The purpose is ironically true revisit the past. By interweaving the triple: history, literature, and theory, the writer aims eagerly to explore and deconstruct the traditional views and notions about history. Hence, he suspects the reliability and objectivity of past knowledge proposed by traditional history.

Barnes uses all these postmodern elements in the novel to question most assumption and theories proposed by modern writers and historians concerning truth and past. Besides, the use of these various genres and techniques contribute to a fuller understanding of the past and derived us to the conclusion that the truth is inaccessible and the past is unrecovered.

Chapter III

The Truth in *Flaubert's Parrot*

. 3.1 The Postmodern Concept of Truth

Truth as defined by Merriam Webster is 'a judgment, proposition, or idea that is true or accepted as true'. It is usually the opposite of falsehood. It is one of the most important topics of discussion and debates for thousands of years in different fields: in philosophy, theology, science, art, literature, history, etc. Scholars and theorists 'main discussion was about how words, symbols, ideas and beliefs are considered true whether by individuals or by an entire society.

Before modern science emerged, pre-modern people used to know the truth of something either by experiencing it directly or by trusting another person who declares that thing to be true. People in this case, even if they doubted such truth proposed by this person, it remains so because it is the truthsayer who declared it to be so. The truthsayers who are mainly priests, tribal or social elders or superiors (monarchs), had the authority to declare what is true or false, right or wrong and everyone had to accept their assertion. Premodern philosophers 'main search of truth was through only two means: thought and reason. This means used to search for truth however, was changed later on with the arrival of modernist scholars and philosophers.

The modern era which was marked by tremendous progress in different fields, led to the emergence of science and new theories and forms of truth arose. Modern scholars and philosophers believed that truth can be measured, calculated and proven. Thus, for them, truthful statements about the past in historiography could be gained through a guided research. They exemplify that a scientific truth is created first by observation, then creating a hypothesis, and finally deriving an experiment to determine the truthfulness or falsehood of this hypothesis. In case the hypothesis is proven, they claim we would have a scientific theory which could be guaranteed as truth. Those Enlightenment philosophers also

authorized the individuals to be the creator, arbiter of meaning, truth and reality. George Hegel believed that ' absolute truth, reality exists and that the human mind can know it because whatever is real is rational' (Asghar 308).

Some people who follow the divine religion such as Muslims and Christians think that both reality and truth are unified since the origin is the elderly creation of God (Lemke1). Doug Grothuis asserts that we live in a 'Uni-verse' not a 'Multi-verse'. Sharing the same view, Sayyid Hussein Nasr states:

> Islam is based from beginning to end on the idea of unity, for God is one. Unity is the alpha and Omega of Islam…Unity is, in addition to a metaphysical essertion about the nature of the Absolute, a method of integration, a means of becoming whole and realizing the profound oneness of all existence… (Asghar 30)

Postmodernists challenge all the truths proposed by premodernists, modernists and believers. They challenged scientific, philosophical, psychological, historical and other truths. They insist that there are no truth or objective reality but convenience and illusion. They criticize the premodernist belief of the truth Sayers 'capability to access the absolute truth through reason and thought. They completely deny the right of any individuals, political, or ethical doctrine to mobilize truth against its opponent (Round 6).

Adopting a constructivist epistemology, postmodernists value the Enlightenment perspectives as 'being overly individualistic and propose instead a more community, based standard of truth' (Lemke 10). The epistemology states that the truth is created and or made not discovered or repeated. Therefore, we are the creators of our truths by our language and perception. i.e. This truth emerges from social constructs within communities. Thus, truth is a product of human thought rather than a thing that is external to ourselves. The epistemology also states that the truth is pluralistic, community- based or internally coherent .

Postmodernists go further falsifying modernists 'claim that science creates an absolute truth. They argue that science can only create theories. The natural sciences such as physics and chemistry, according to them, do experiments only to prove their hypothesis and the conclude district laws. They consider philosophy as a pseudo -science which cause problem because people may become unreliable and can change their behaviour. Besides, the mind can play with what we believe to be true .

In this content, the three famous postmodern theorists: Jacques Lacan, Micheal Foucault and Derrida severely attack truth via language. Among their arguments is that the ideas and the theories about human nature and society which is considered as permanent truth, change overtime; language instead of just reflecting reality, it constitutes and construct it; texts should be examined critically to reach the hidden meanings. These deconstructive techniques adopted by postmodernist led to the denial of language's role as a bearer of truth. Therefore, language becomes powerless and less authoritative. They firmly refer to Wittgenstein's philosophy of 'language game'. Wittgenstein insists that 'words don't you have fixed and independently existing meaning. The meaning of words is in their use' (Round 3).

The prevailing thought that history was considered as rational and objective science that reflects historical reality lasted for many centuries. Ancient historians believed that similar to poets and writers, they can create narrative but different from them, they can offer a reliable description to their narrative. This is because history is written based on documents, monuments and military resources. This belief was prevalent among historians until the 20th century. However, it started to be questionable by the middle of the century.

Postmodernists question the availability of applying the scientific criteria of truth for recounting the past. They argue that no one can know what actually happened but we have only a description of the past events created by historians. Thus, the claims of

historiography about truth are not justified and historical narratives can to be true or false, it is consistent or inconsistent with the source. As an example, when historians are doing their research, it happens that the same event can be interpreted from different points of view (narrative sources) which all of them can be true. Accordingly, historiography contains various opinions each of them are equally verifiable leading to antinomies based on sources that are interpreted by historians. On the other hand, they state that if we agree with historians 'claim of objectivity while stating facts, these facts while being selected, are determined by the researcher' viewpoints.

Tolstoy strongly affirms that the approach used by modern scolars in history did not solve the epistemological problem of establishing the truth of the past (Nesterenko 748). Other postmodernists argue that if it is possible to reach the truth in science by verifying it through experiment, then by comparing a thought with its real object; it is impossible to reach it in history. This is because we cannot use this procedure to recount the past, for the past itself does not exist as an object in one hand. On the other hand, if we want to verify a given past event we have to compare the source with a non- linguistic reference, which is in this case impossible. Therefore, we can only compare this source with itself or other sources that describe the same event or in some cases even fail to do so (source unreliability). Consequently, everything is considered by a historian as true is true. Then the criterion for the truth in historiography is the historian. Accordingly, we cannot take history as a scientific fact but as a subjective narrative of past events .

Postmodernists come up with the idea that the historiography is selective and biased; views about the past are unreliable, because they reflect certain viewpoints and the fact that support this view points. So, we have a continuous historical interpretations only. Thus, every generation has the right to frame its own interpretation (Nesterenko 750). In such case the criterion of truth in historiography is 'the correspondence between the narrative

and the 'we- group' self-identity. The criterion is not variety (as in science) but correctness

understood as conforming to the 'we-group' version of the past (750).

3.2. The Truth in Flaubert's Parrot

As a postmodern writer who was influenced by the ideas of J. Lyotard , Focoult that there is no single truth but multiple truths, Barnes defines his novel *Flaubert's Parrot* saying that 'it is about the shiftiness of past and uncertainty of fact (Guignery 43). Barnes is eager to know the truth about Flaubert whom he glorifies and describes him as:

> The hermit of Croisset.The first modern novelist. The father of Realism. The butcher
>
> of Romanticism. The pontoon bridge linking Balzac to Joyce. The precursor of
>
> Proust. The bear in his lair. The bourgeois bourgeoisophobe. In Egypt, ' the father of
>
> the Moustache'. Saint Polycarpe; the old Seigneur; the Idiot of the Salons. (Barnes
>
> 129).

At the beginning Barnes is obsessed by the following epistemological question: how do we size the past? Suggesting that the narrator does not consider historical or biographical knowledge as unproblematic category but questions the ways in which we come to know the past(Guingrey 43.)

Throughout his novel, the writer questions the multiple truths about Flaubert through his narrator Braithwaite. He was mainly searching about the real parrot of Flaubert. In the first chapter, he said:

> I sat on my hotel bed…I thought about the parrot in its alcove barely half a mile away. A
>
> cheeky bird, inducing affection, even reverence. What had Flaubert done with it after finishing
>
> *Un coeur simple*? Did he put it away in a cupboard and forget about its irritating existence until
>
> he was searching for an extra blanket? (Barnes, 8).

Braithwaite follows all possible tracks, accumulates information, and tries to solve a mystery of Flaubert and of the stuffed parrot. He searches for the truth concerning the real parrot which sat on Flaubert's desk during the writing of A Coeur Simple one of the three tales collected in Trois Coutes (1877). He dedicated two chapters for that. The first

entitled 'Flaubert's parrot' and the second 'And the parrot' whereas the remaining twelve chapters indirectly refer to it. When he found one seemingly authentic parrot, Braithwaite feels that he had almost known the writer. But when he was frustrated when he discovered the existence of another authentic parrot, he begins his journey to search which of the two parrots is the genuine one. At the end he discovers more two candidate stuffed parrots: the first at the Hotel –Dieu and the second at Croisset both of them share the qualities which certify that parrot Flaubert borrowed from the Museum of Rouen all that remain of a collection which one held 50 parrots at the Museum of National History. Braithwaite murmers 'perhaps it was one of them (Barnes 165).

Once finish reading all the fifteen chapters we discover that we are unable to know the truth about the real parrot which sat on the desk of Flaubert. Barnes wants to prove that there is no single truth but there are two versions either /or logic. The real parrot can be either one of them or neither of them. Therefore, we don't have a particular way to follow to know the real parrot borrowed by Flaubert. We have only plurality of choices, of meaning and of interpretations. In her critique to the novel Alison Lee developing firmly a poststructuralist and deconstructionist arguments states that the narrative shows that 'there is no single truth any more than there is a single parrot (Guignery 43).

The narrator Braithwaite gives bibliographical references such as 'Maxime du Camp's Souvenirs Literaires, long and detailed references to Musgrave's books on 19th Century France. He has also an access to many letters, journals, and books. These precise references are supposed to assert the validity and reliability the narrative. However, they are still unsatisfactory for he still faced challenges such as the lack of data, temporal distance, bias and prejudices that are attached to any historical researcher (subjectivity) .

Taking a postmodernist view of truth that it is unobtainable, Barnes, throughout the novel verifies truth and objectivity of any statements regarding Flaubert. He reconstructs

Flaubert .He sees that any biography is not completely objective (Dalton 23). This is because the intention of the biographer is biased. When Braithwaite is reconstructing Flaubert, he is aware that there are many undiscovered areas such as the stuffed parrot and his knowledge and research will never be completed. In this search, he is neither objective nor neutral because his attempt to know Flaubert, reflects his real intention and desire to know his wife Ellen .

Braithwaite early informs the readers about his wife's death Ellen. This makes the readers eager to know the truth about how and why she died and to what extent he is involved in her death. However, the readers are faced with an ignorance of eternal truth. All what they know, is that she was unfaithful and committed suicide. He said 'this is a pure story whatever you may think.'(Barnes 132). Unlike Flaubert' s story, the narrator did not even provide his readers with evidence or documents to post from or a body to prove that what he is presenting is true. The narrator intentionally did that to give the readers the freedom to interpret whatever he is saying about her. So the readers are left doubtful about the narrator and about his wife too. In doubting the narrator, the readers might also doubt the writer and his intention and purpose.

In the second chapter 'Chronology' (Barnes 12-26) we have three sections lebelled: I,II,III. Therefore, three different timelines of Flaubert's life. In the first section Braithwaite offers us an optimistic view of Flaubert providing details about his successes. The second section, the narrator offers us a pessimistic view of Flaubert insisting on the writer's failures and deaths that he witnessed. The third section Flaubert's thoughts are listed by dates. The three chronologies of Flaubert's life seem to be contradictory with each other. Barnes' aim behind presenting three characters each of them resembles the original one is to offer the readers with multiple interpretations of a single life so as to make them grasp the idea that truth is singular and we have to go through a variety of tunnels to pursue it. In

an interview, Barnes provides an explanation for the three different visions that as a writer he has to establish facts for his readers. Therefore, it is his duty to give some sort of account of Flaubert's life.

Similarly, he notices that biography provides us with different views about the governess of Flaubert's niece Caroline. He said:

> Biographers disagree about Juliet Herbert. ..the shortage of evidence indicates that she was of small significance in Flaubert's life; others conclude the opposite, and assert that the tantalizing governess was certainly one of the writer's mistresses, possibly the Great Unknown Passion of his life, and perhaps even his fiancée. (Barnes 29).

Through the coexistence the three versions the writer aims also to reveal the active role of the biographer while presenting facts and thus he undermines the certainties of conventional biography and the existence of truth in biography. Barnes said 'I regard biography with some suspicion as a genre. I am frequently made uncomfortable and even disapproving of the certainties with which biographers describe lives'(Guignery 45). He ensures this idea in the novel through his narrator Braithwaite who said' Autobiography. 'One day, if I write my memoirs—the only thing I shall write well, if ever I put myself to the task of doing it—you will find a place in them, and what a place!(Barnes 96).

In this sense, Braithwaite also presents two contradictory definitions to Louise Colet in the chapter of 'Dictionary of Alphabetic Ideas'. In the first definition she is ' a Tedious, importunate, promiscuous woman…who tried to trap Gustavo into marriage. Imagine the squawking children! Imagine Gustav miserable! imagine Gustav happy!'

In the second definition she is 'Brave, passionate, deeply misunderstood women crucified by her love for the heartless, impossible, provincial Flaubert. She all rightly complained: 'Gustave never writes to me of anything except Art or himself' (Barnes 128).

While- this presentation about her is in front of us, we start asking which one is closer to the real Colet and which one is not (fake); which one is the truer version. We end not

knowing which one is the real Colet i.e. the true version about her. By not affording a singular vision about her, Braithwaite is shaking our confidence on truth about her and generally about historical biographies. In similar way, for a while, he presents us some minute details about facts concerning people, animals and things related to Flaubert's period. In another, he shows his his complete deficiency and disability to know the truth about some other facts because they were not recorded. He said 'What happened to the dragoman is not recorded (Barnes 51). He added 'What happened to the dog is also not recorded '(50). He concluded 'What happened to the truth is not recorded (Barnes 51).

While reading the novel we notice that the story of Flaubert is sided by the story of Braithwaite. According to William Bill, the effect of juxtaposing the stories of Flaubert and of the Braithwaite's is 'to sow confusion and to force on the reader a re-examination of what s/he believes historiography to be' (Guignrey 43).

Barnes also challenges established account of history in order to show some limits and biases of historiography. In the novel, he particularly questions the idea that history is considered as the metanarrative. According to him, the truth doesn't exist, it is ungraspable. Besides, there are multiple versions of truths.

Braithwaite is obsessed with the idea that finding the real parrot will give him a perfect insight into Flaubert's life and works. However, the novel ends suggesting that the quest for the real parrot, for Flauber's voice and past, and for the truth of Braithwaite's own life, has never been completed for we could not obtain the absolute truth.   In a similar way many questions about Flaubert's true self will not be answered and many versions and facts about people, animals or things will not be complete.

Thus the novel encourages us to question the limitations of any textual record of the past. So, the reads will question the distinction between fictional and factual genres .

When Braithwaite gives two or three versions of Flaubert or Louise Colet, he helped providing us with multiple perspectives views of Flaubert. However, this should not lead us to abandon historical inquiry to relativism, but it should lead us to acknowledge that there is no single recoverable truth just as there is no single parrot.

Braithwaite's quest for the true parrot, the true Flaubert and the true wife- Ellen- throughout the novel ends in failure to find an absolute truth. This failure symbolizes to the difficulties which historians face in their reconstruction of the past.

General Conclusion

This study has attempted to shed light on the question whether Barnes's influential work *Flaubert's Parrot* is postmodern work in terms of narrative strategies, the use of postmodern theory, postmodern literary techniques and genres. Besides, the theme it deals with. The scope of the study has been limited to these aspects of the novel. We came to a conclusion that the novel contains most of the postmodern techniques and genres proposed by most postmodern theorists. Thus, we consider it as a postmodern novel.

The use of various postmodern discourses and genres in the novel helps us to challenge and be skeptical towards modern historians 'assumption of truth and recovering of the past. However, many critics view it negatively. They see that it makes the novel complex and difficult to be read and interpreted by ordinary readers. Thus, its effectiveness is limited.

Flaubert's Parrot is considered as a critique book that criticizes different aspects of modern theory mainly the ability to reach the truth in historiography and know the reality about the past. Braithwaite's quest for the real parrot, the real Flaubert and his wife throughout   the novel results in the impossibility to reach an absolute or single truth. Instead we are faced with various parrots and various versions about Flaubert. This means that we have multiple truths instead of singular one.

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