

FROM POSTMODERNISM TO METAMODERNISM: CHANGING  
PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS IRONY AND METANARRATIVES IN JULIAN  
BARNES'S *A HISTORY OF THE WORLD IN 10 AND ½ CHAPTERS* AND *THE  
NOISE OF TIME*

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## ABSTRACT

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NOISE OF TIME*

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The aim of this thesis is to point out and explore the changing perspectives towards irony and metanarratives in Julian Barnes's fiction by focusing specifically on *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* (1989) and *The Noise of Time* (2016). This discussion will be located into the larger framework of Postmodernism and Metamodernism. These two aesthetic movements will be discussed in terms of their different approaches to irony and metanarratives in order to contextualize the changes in the ways in which irony and metanarratives are employed in Barnes's fiction. Therefore, the differences and parallelisms between the ironic elements, postmodern and metamodern devices in these two novels will constitute the main discussion of the thesis. Through comparing Barnes's one of the earliest (*A History of The World in 10 and ½ Chapters*) and latest works (*The Noise of Time*), the changing perspectives towards irony and metanarratives in Barnes's fiction will be explored with the help of the theoretical background of Postmodernism, Post-Truth and Metamodernism.

**Keywords:** Julian Barnes, postmodernism, metamodernism, post-truth, irony

## ÖZ

POSTMODERNİZMDEN METAMODERNİZME: JULIAN BARNES'IN A  
*HISTORY OF THE WORLD IN 10 AND ½ CHAPTERS* VE *THE NOISE OF TIME*  
ROMANLARINDAKİ İRONİ VE ÜST-ANLATILARA YÖNELİK DEĞİŞEN  
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Mevcut tezin amacı, Julian Barnes'ın kurgusal eserlerinde ironi ve üst-anlatılara yönelik değişen bakış açılarına özellikle *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* (1989) ve *The Noise of Time* (2016)'a odaklanarak dikkat çekmek ve onları incelemektir. Bu tartışma Postmodernizm ve Metamodernizm çerçeveleri içerisinde yürütülecektir. Bu iki estetik hareket, Barnes'ın kurgusunda ironi ve üst-anlatıların nasıl kullanıldığına dair değişiklikleri estetik bağlamları açısından değerlendirmemizi sağlayacaktır. Bu nedenle, bu iki romandaki ironik unsurlar, postmodern ve metamodern araçlar arasındaki farklılıklar ve paralellikler tezin ana tartışma eksenini oluşturacaktır. Barnes'ın en eski (*A History of The World in 10 and ½ Chapters*) ve en yeni eserlerinden birini (*The Noise of Time*) kıyaslayarak, Barnes'ın kurgusunda ironi ve üst-anlatılara yönelik değişen bakış açıları, Postmodernizm, Post-Truth ve Metamodernizm'in kuramsal altyapısının yardımıyla incelenecektir.



**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Julian Barnes, postmodernizm, metamodernizm, post-truth, ironi

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

“History is that certainty produced at the point where the imperfections of memory meet the inadequacies of documentation.”

(Barnes, *The Sense of an Ending* 17)

Starting his writing career in 1980, the British author Julian Barnes has written numerous novels, short stories and essays. The prolific author seems to like experimenting, as nearly all his fictional works are different from each other. He explains why he challenges himself: “In order to write you have to convince yourself that it’s a new departure for you and not only a new departure for you but for the entire history of the novel” (qtd. in Moseley 11). With such an attitude, he wrote numerous experimental fictional works such as *Flaubert’s Parrot* (1984), *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* (1989) and *England, England* (1996). When his fictional works are analyzed, it could be argued that most of his works are affected by postmodernism, as Barnes employs postmodernist techniques by using irony, self-reflexivity and intertextuality. The concepts such as history, truth and love are deconstructed in his fiction, which disrupt linearity and use marginal characters instead of *major* historical characters. It is not surprising that he employed such postmodernist techniques especially in his earlier works, as the 1980s were the times when postmodernism was at its peak. However, with the shift of interest in the Post-Truth Age, the focus on deconstruction and irony has turned into a focus on sincerity and unity. As the Post-Truth Era has had some negative effects such as leading to ennui and oblivion, such a shift towards communication and sincerity has become a necessity to counter the negative effects of this era. Although there is not a sharp transition from postmodernism to another aesthetic, and there are still traces of

postmodernism in literary works, this shift seems to affect contemporary literary works today. Metamodernism, an aesthetic that offers an optimistic and earnest agenda, seems to have affected one of Barnes's latest fictional works, *The Noise of Time* (2016). This present thesis aims to interrogate and discuss Julian Barnes's changing perspectives towards irony and metanarratives by analyzing his two novels: *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* and *The Noise of Time* in the light of the theoretical background related to postmodernism and metamodernism.

As it is suggested by its extraordinary title, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, problematizes the totalization and the conclusiveness of history through its final half chapter. In fact, it is a novel that reverses some important historical events and ideas through including various characters which are not even mentioned in history records such as woodworms and survivors of a nuclear war. Because it has the aim to reverse the assertiveness of official history, it uses irony as a tool to give voice to peripheral characters and gives alternative perspectives of past events such as telling Noah's story through the eyes of a woodworm or mocking a Titanic's survivor. In fact, it is explicit that the novel wrestles with some metanarratives through ironic twists by pointing out the literariness and arbitrariness of the historical, political and religious records. In the half chapter, "Parenthesis", the narrator remarks that history is in the hands of historians, which shows its subjective nature while also adding the chaos that postmodern questions caused by saying:

History isn't what happened. History is just what historians tell us. [...] The history of the world? Just the voices echoing in the dark; images that burn for a few centuries and then fade; stories, old stories that sometimes seem to overlap; strange links, impertinent connections. We think we know who we are, though we don't quite know why we're here, or how long we shall be forced to stay. [...] Our panic and our pain are only eased by soothing fabulation; we call it history. (Barnes, *History* 242)

In the chapter focusing on *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, how and to what extent irony and its devices are used to falsify and deconstruct some grand narratives in history will be discussed.

In the analytical chapter on *The Noise of Time*, which is a biofiction of the famous Russian composer Shostakovich, the perspectives towards irony will be studied from

a metamodern framework. Throughout the novel, Barnes creates a gloomy atmosphere of Russia by narrating the consecutive tragicomic events in Shostakovich's lifetime. He is portrayed as a non-political, sensitive musician who is trying to be heard by the ones who understand his music. However, he lives in the Soviet Russia and the rulers of the country always have some comments on his musician identity or tell him about how to be a good Soviet Russian musician. He is labelled as "Leftist, Petit-bourgeois, formalist" (Barnes, *Noise* 27) because of his composition called *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. As such examples of oppression by Power increase, he starts to be more afraid of composing and initiating new pieces; in the end, even living gets harder for him because he finds himself in the position that he has never thought of: being a party member as Head of the Music Committee. Such ironic twists of life shatter his idea of integrity and his life turns out to be an accumulation of farces that ends up in a huge tragedy.

In the novel, Shostakovich does not lead a happy life at all. In fact, he experiences so many tragicomic events that he tries to deal with all the darkness in his life through irony, but it is impossible to escape from the things that make him afraid of living as a musician. He says:

The natural progression of human life is from optimism to pessimism; and a sense of irony helps temper pessimism, helps produce balance, harmony. But this was not an ideal world, and so irony grew in sudden and strange ways. Overnight, like a mushroom; disastrously, like a cancer. (Barnes, *Noise* 86)

He accepts that irony fails to help him to give meaning to what is happening to him. What has happened and is happening are real and there is no way out of the tragedy of living in the worst time of all (Barnes, *Noise* 115). This time, Barnes uses the reversal of Marx's statement<sup>1</sup>, which is used in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, and says: "History was repeating itself: the first time as farce, the second time as tragedy" (*Noise* 41). In fact, that statement summarizes the main theme of the novel; first, people think that what is happening to them is so ironic that the things

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<sup>1</sup> "Hegel remarks somewhere that all great, world-historical facts and personages occur, as it were, twice. He has forgotten to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce" (Marx 5).

they experience is nothing but a joke. However, as time goes by, the accumulation of the events shows that their whole life is a tragedy.

As a metamodern novel, it raises an explicit critique of tyrants, and through Shostakovich, it universalizes musicians and artists in the world and exalts art. It can also be argued that there is a reversal in the use of irony in that Barnes's novel making it clear that there is no need for using irony to question and give meaning to what is happening. In fact, what is happening is already too dark and obvious, and it is nothing but a tragedy. The last point that will be mentioned in the analysis is that Barnes uses life-writing as a genre and it increases the credibility of Shostakovich's tragedy. Barnes also reveals his sources on Shostakovich and adds that if the reader does not like his version of biography, then they can read those written by other writers<sup>2</sup>.

How Barnes's novels were affected by postmodernism and how they differ from postmodern conventions have been discussed and analysed before. Also, Salman studied the turn to post-postmodernism in Barnes's fiction by analysing *Metroland*, *Flaubert's Parrot*, *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* and *England, England*. In her thesis, she discusses why postmodernism is not a functioning aesthetics anymore, and she points out the revival of revised metanarratives by manifesting how Barnes employs fabulation in his fictions, which could be a helpful tool to bring back unity and hope. Therefore, the shift from postmodernism to metamodernism has been mentioned by Salman before. However, it has been noticed that there is a gap in this field in terms of analysing this shift which points out the differences in Barnes's perspective between the past and the Post-Truth Era. Also, there has been no study in which *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* and *The Noise of Time* are analyzed comparatively. To fill this gap, *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* and *The Noise of Time* have been selected because they manifest this shift by presenting Barnes's changing style. Moreover, they offer

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<sup>2</sup> In the last page of *The Noise of Time* (184), Barnes mentions Elizabeth Wilson who is the writer of *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* as his main guide in writing his novel and he finishes the book by saying: "But this is my book not hers; and if you haven't liked mine, then read hers."



counter arguments by employing Marx's quote on historic recurrence by switching tragedy and farce. Although *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* manifests the original quote and it emphasizes the irony of historic recurrences by reflecting them as farces in some of the stories, *The Noise of Time* points out that such recurrences turn into tragedy. By drawing attention to a tragedy based on a true story, *The Noise of Time* gives us a chance to revise the past teachings in a chaotic and oblivious period by employing life-writing. It also shows that there is still a chance to hope and strive for a better world by reflecting Shostakovich's efforts to make good music despite all the authoritarian sanctions on his work. While *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* undermines the linearity, conclusiveness and one-sidedness of historical narratives by employing arbitrariness and fictitiousness which helps us see these narratives with a postmodern point of view, such an undermining, ground-clearing attitude is not functioning anymore. In fact, a more sincere and mindful agenda has been needed because the Post-Truth Era, along with the negative effects of social media, has led us to forget past injustices and lose our awareness towards present injustices. That is why *The Noise of Time* offers such an agenda by employing metamodernism which could counter the negative effects of the Post-Truth Era. Therefore, these two novels are good examples which reflect the shift from postmodernism to metamodernism by presenting the changing perspectives and focal points in Barnes's fiction.

The main body of the thesis will comprise three chapters. In the first theoretical chapter, the transition from postmodernism to metamodernism will be studied in two sections. In the following analytical chapter, postmodernism's features and devices and their functions will be discussed through an analysis of *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*. The third chapter will include Barnes's changing perspective towards irony, the generic features of biofiction as well as a discussion on *The Noise of Time* from the perspective of metamodernism. The conclusion will summarize the chief findings made in the preceding chapters, and weigh them against the thesis statement. The conclusion will discuss the aftermath of postmodernism and the epoch of metamodernism, fictionally constructed in Julian Barnes's novels *A History*

*of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* and *The Noise of Time*. Also, the possible changes in postmodern fiction writers' attitudes in the Post-Truth Age in terms of their employment of irony and metanarratives will be interrogated.

## CHAPTER 2

### POSTMODERNISM, POST-TRUTH AND METAMODERNISM

Postmodernism is “a condition of incredulity towards metanarratives” (Lyotard 24), manifested mainly in the form of deconstruction, self-reflexivity, and a negation of universality. Why did such a condition come out? One answer to this can be found in our changing relationship with information. According to Lyotard, starting from the 20<sup>th</sup> century onward, our accessibility to information increased, which also increased the manipulation of information for the sake of holding power. As Nicol puts it, “most information is apparently to be distrusted, as being more of a contribution to the manipulative image-making of those in power than to the advancement of knowledge. The postmodernist attitude is therefore one of a suspicion which can border on paranoia” (5). Thus, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when information emerged as a means of power, fiction writers started to point out the self-reflexivity of the texts to foreground their manipulative aspects. Instead of writing narratives that conceal their fictitiousness, they focused on the process of how texts are written to show their artificiality. To this end, they used intertextuality, deconstruction, metafiction, and irony aiming to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality (Waugh 2). However, postmodernism seems to have “gone out of fashion” (Potter and Lopez 4) because these practices of postmodernism have had some negative consequences such as blurring the lines between fact and fiction and crossing the limits of relativism in historicity which resulted in the Post-Truth Age, in which information and knowledge have been outmoded and instead emotions and beliefs have come to gain prominence.

In the Post-Truth Age, news could be diverted through social media manipulation, and fiction could turn into fact as there is no control over personal truths because, it

is argued, postmodernism has led to “incongruence, incoherence, a world of surfaces without depth or roots” (Yousef 35). To explore this claim, in the remaining of this chapter postmodernism and the possible connections between this aesthetic movement and the emergence of what is called the Post-Truth Age will be discussed. Firstly, historiographic metafiction and irony will be analysed specifically in connection with postmodernism. Then, in the next section, why postmodernism has been thought to be outmoded and how metamodernism and metamodernist practices could heal the negative effects of postmodernism and Post-Truth Age will be discussed.

### **2.1. The Functions and Effects of Historiographic Metafiction and Irony in Postmodernism**

According to Hutcheon, postmodern fiction aims to revise the ways in which the past is treated in fiction and in official history: these texts “want to open [the past] up to the present to prevent the narrative of the conclusive and teleological past” (*Poetics* 110). One of the most effective practices that postmodernists use to open the past narratives up to the present is to deconstruct them by having a playful or even anarchic attitude towards the assumptions about the possibility of treating the past in an empirical way. That is why irony, which is a non-literal usage of language, where what is said is contradicted by what is meant (either deliberately or unwittingly) or what is said is subverted by the particular context in which it is said (Nicol 13), is mainly employed to manifest postmodernism’s playful manner, and it is used in their works to break the rigidity of the past and show retrospective possibilities in a humorous manner. To achieve these two goals, postmodernists chose to celebrate diversity and embrace the relativity of truth instead of focusing on intoxication with the world. According to Behler:

Postmodernism is the rejection of the totalized conception of truth in the sense of global philosophies of history, all-embracing systems of meaning, or uniform foundations of knowledge. What motivates the post-modern mentality instead can be described as a radical plurality and openness will ever be realized. (16)

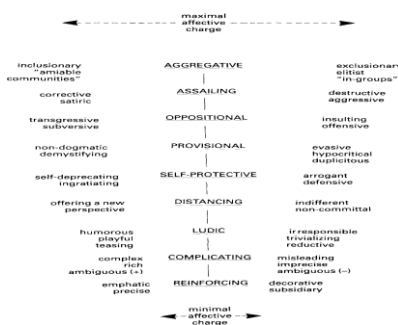
Thus, it could be said that one aim of postmodernists was to make the world more open and pluralist. That is why irony was one of the main tools they used because

they tried to analyse what had been told and interpreted so far through looking at the narrated events from a distanced point of view. Nicol suggests that postmodern irony is not simply a means of making fun of the world; it is used to manifest an awareness about how reality is ideologically constructed (13). Thus, it could be said that the constructed nature of reality started to manifest itself in a playful manner thanks to postmodernism.

Irony has also been applied to falsify the claims that totalize historical truths and say something new through keeping in mind that nothing new can be said without the references of the past. According to Nicol, postmodernism is strongly connected to irony. He states:

Postmodernism has a strong desire to analyse contemporary reality [...], it does not abandon the referential function but preserves it ironically, [...] interrogating it while continuing to use it, continually examining the complex nature of the represented world and the narrative of fiction. (30)

To see how postmodern irony could work to falsify totalizations and broaden horizons in historical interpretations, one should first look at how it functions. Linda Hutcheon discusses the functions and effects of irony in *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* (1994). According to Hutcheon, who identifies the ironic as the predominant postmodern attitude in her earlier works about postmodernism (*A Poetics of Postmodernism* and *The Politics of Postmodernism*), irony may have “destructive” as well as “corrective” functions. In the second chapter of *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, “The Cutting Edge”, she points out how irony may serve both positive and negative ends through a diagram of “The Functions of Irony”:



**Figure 1: The Functions of Irony (Hutcheon, *Irony* 45)**

As it can be seen in the diagram, irony is a bivious tool. According to Hutcheon, it may have a distancing effect both on the ironists and their works, which could detract them from irony's functions of interrogating the facts and offering new perspectives. Drawing on Muecke, she states: "irony by its nature seems to have power to corrupt the ironist ... by offering him both a refuge from life and a means of subjecting it to his own ego" (41). Therefore, it could be argued that irony can become a tool of escape from being involved in real life by maintaining a distance, instead of sincerely questioning and commenting on the facts.

It could be said that most of these functions are commonly employed in postmodern fiction. As postmodernism is an aesthetic which deals with the historical issues in a playful way through using parody and intertextuality, these functions are helpful in terms of contesting hegemonic perspectives through which past events are interpreted and preventing historical facts from being conclusive and dogmatic. However, they do not offer a better alternative to replace older systems when they only aim at criticizing previous discourses, and this fact draws irony away from its corrective and cooperative side. Thus, it could be argued that irony helps to "present undogmatic alternatives to authoritative pronouncements" (Hutcheon, *Irony* 49). However, if its function surpasses manifesting alternatives to deceive the crowds by deliberately manipulating facts, then it turns out to be a "hypocritical" function which is destructive and annihilating. As it will be discussed in the second half of this chapter, such function could not help reverse the effects of the Post-Truth Era since it does not suggest a constructive change that could fill the void that comes with the annihilation of the older systems.

The prominent modes in postmodern fiction that are strongly connected to irony are parody and intertextuality. To start with, it can be said that parody emerges when there is a contrast between texts, "in which the parodic text is put against the parodied one in order to mock it or make it ludicrous" (Salomon 71). Kiremidjian argues that the contrast between the parodied and parodying texts could be helpful in terms of creating awareness about the fictitiousness of form:

[...] a parody forces us to be aware of the form as an artifice or as an artificial discipline which is brought into relation with a radically different phenomenon, that of natural experience itself. In one sense, parody embodies the opposition between the artificial and natural; in another sense, it embodies the concern of the symbolists and much of the art of the twentieth century with the relation between art and life. (233)

Besides embodying the opposition between the artificial and natural, parody also gives a chance to analyze literary texts critically. Benett makes a point about the critical aspect of parody in literature:

Treating discourse as performance, parody enacts its critique of literature from within literature, foregrounding the artifice or factitiousness of its model's representation of reality, reversing the formal self-effacement on which the parodied discourse depends for its claims to mimesis or truth. The principal device parody relies on for this exposure is incongruity. (29)

As parody raises consciousness through interrogating fact and fiction within literary texts, it is used as an efficient mode in postmodern fiction, especially to analyze historical narratives. As a result, parody leads to an analysis that could help question dominant ideologies in history. Hutcheon states:

Parody seems to offer a perspective on the present and the past which allows an artist to speak to a discourse from within it, but without being totally recuperated by it. Parody appears to have become, for this reason, the mode of what I have called the "ex-centric", of those, who are marginalized by a dominant ideology. (*Poetics* 35)

Therefore, it could be said that postmodern parody gives the opportunity to build a bridge between past and present to be able to speak about the past and its effects on the present by creating awareness about fact and fiction in historical narratives and demarginalize historical characters whose voices have been unheard throughout history.

Another postmodern mode that is employed is intertextuality, which links texts through referring to each other. As one of the main aims of postmodern fiction is to emphasize the constructed nature of texts, intertextuality is one of the ways to show that every text has a connection with the earlier texts. In other words, "the renewed engagement with the past is made possible through the use of irony, paradoxically saying something new, but only by acknowledging that it has already been said"

(Nicol 14). Nicol also draws on Eco's description of the postmodern attitude presenting the following example:

I think of the postmodern attitude as that of a man who loves a very cultivated woman and knows that he cannot say to her 'I love you madly', because he knows that she knows (and that she knows he knows) that these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland. Still, there is a solution. He can say 'As Barbara Cartland would put it, I love you madly'. At this point, having avoided false innocence, having said clearly that it is no longer possible to speak innocently, he will nevertheless have said what he wanted to say to the woman: that he loves her in an age of lost innocence. If the woman goes along with this, she will have received a declaration of love all the same. Neither of the two speakers will feel innocent, both will have accepted the challenge of the past, of the already said, which cannot be eliminated; both will consciously and with pleasure play the game of irony... But both will have succeeded, once again, in speaking of love. (14-15)

Thus, postmodern intertextuality points out the fictitiousness of literary texts and integrates the past and present texts through linking them. In postmodern fiction, intertextuality is employed formally to show texts' constructed nature. Hutcheon states:

Postmodern intertextuality is a formal manifestation of both a desire to close the gap between past and present of the reader and a desire to rewrite the past in a new context [...] It is not an attempt to void or avoid history. Instead, it directly confronts the past of literature –and of historiography for it too derives from other texts. (*Poetics* 118)

These two postmodern modes are mainly manifested in metafiction which is a commonly-known practice in postmodernism. Metafiction, which is a text that draws attention to its fictitiousness and shows it through modes such as parody and intertextuality, is a technical device that is used in postmodern fiction. Postmodern fiction writers have especially been interested in historical texts and they have pointed out how so-called historical "facts" are constructed. Therefore, they frequently produce examples of historiographic metafiction, a well-known term coined by Linda Hutcheon in the 1980s, which interrogates past narratives and points out the "fictitiousness" of facts. Besides showing other possible accounts of what could happen in the past without being assertive, it also helps to draw a line between "facts" and "events". It actually emphasizes the totalitarian nature of historiography and fiction, which "constitute their objects of attention; in other words, decide which events will become facts" (Munz 15) because events are only "semiotically



transmitted” (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 122) by the historians and become facts. Therefore, it could be said that historiographic metafiction is a tool which deliberately deconstructs historiographies to save the facts from being conclusive through creating or showing new perspectives and possibilities on the past events. As Hutcheon argues:

Historiographic metafiction plays upon the truth and lies of the historical record [...] certain known historical details are deliberately falsified in order to foreground the possible mnemonic failures of recorded history and the constant potential for both deliberate and inadvertent error. (*Poetics* 114)

Thus, postmodern fiction foregrounds that history is a man-made construction as it is shaped in the hands of historians and it creates different perspectives on the past events. Some points in the historical events are highlighted by the history writers, whereas some others are not. As Hayden White states:

The events are made into a story by suppression or subordination of certain of them and the highlighting of others, by characterization, motific repetition, variation of the tone and point of view, alternative descriptive strategies, and the like –in short, all of the techniques that we would normally expect to find in the emplotment of a novel or a play. (84)

Therefore, he suggests that there are always prioritized and missing points in the narrative of historical events. That is why he holds that if we accept the fact that every historiography has a fictive element in it, a more self-conscious historiography teaching will come out (99). The reflection of such an awareness towards historiography is echoed in literature through an emphasis on the fictitiousness of historical materials by recycling them ironically. As Wesseling states:

Postmodernist novelists do not straightforwardly project inspiring alternatives for the status quo into the future. Rather, they turn to the past in order to look for unrealized possibilities that inhered in historical situations, and subsequently imagine what history would have looked like if unrealized sequences of events and courses of action had come about. This results in the invention of any claim to historical truth, but which may perhaps come true at some point in the future as the return of the repressed. (13)

Although postmodern modes and practices have helped, in a politically progressive manner, in seeing different sides of the facts, especially historical ones, they have also contributed to the emergence of postmodernism as an aesthetic that has stopped working efficiently to interrogate historical facts.

## 2.2. Through the End of Postmodernism: the Post-Truth Era and Metamodernism

The deconstruction of realist history-writing and creating alternatives to historical narratives through irony or metafiction are commonly accepted as efficient postmodern devices to create an awareness of the fictitious nature of historiographies; however, these postmodern perspectives' and devices' efficiency started to be questioned in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Postmodernism has blurred the lines between the historical and the fictional through irony and deconstruction, but it has also undermined the willingness to believe in narratives. Although postmodernism has enabled us to open up the past to the present and deconstruct grand narratives, "it is not unthinkable that after endless proposals for deconstructions, a desire to construct will break through" (Timmer 21). Postmodernism, which questions and criticizes totalizations, turned out to be an encompassing phenomenon of the twentieth century through self-institutionalization. Hutcheon in "Postmodern Afterthoughts" argues:

The postmodern does indeed appear to be a twentieth century phenomenon, that is, a thing of the past. Now fully institutionalised, it has its canonised texts, its anthologies, primers and readers, its dictionaries and its histories. We could even say it has its own publishing houses. *A Postmodernism for Beginners* now exists; teachers' guides proliferate. What we have witnessed in the last ten or fifteen years is not only the institutionalisation of the postmodern, but its transformation into [...] a counter-discourse, and even more specifically, perhaps the generic counter-discourse of the last years of the century. (5)

Although postmodernism "has created new artistic possibilities and it has opened up new fields of intellectual and, either implicitly or explicitly, moral and political inquiry" (Bertens and Fokkema 13), it has become totalization itself which is one of the main reasons of its defuncting.

Irony, which undermines grand truths and replaces them with fabulated narratives, seems to contribute to the end of postmodernism. In spite of the fact that it gave a totally different perspective to the gloomy atmosphere that modernity left behind and showed a new way out of the intoxication with a new kind of historicity after two great world wars, its playfulness caused a serious confusion between what had been actually experienced and what had been told. Wallace argues:

Irony, entertaining as it is, serves an exclusively negative function. It is critical and destructive, a ground-clearing. Surely, this is the way our postmodern fathers saw it. But irony is singularly unuseful when it comes to constructing anything to replace the hypocrisies it debunks. (183)

In fact, as Wallace also points out, postmodern literature's playfulness has increased the ambiguities between the past and the present, the original and the copy, the meaningful and the meaningless etc. and caused a destruction and confusion in terms of history narration and interpretation. In fact, it could be said that it has caused a limitless relativism by clearing all the grounds. Ihab Hassan in "Beyond Postmodernism: Toward an Aesthetic of Trust" criticizes this aspect of postmodernism and states:

Certainly, we read history from the vantage of the present; certainly we write history as narratives, tropic and revisionary. But this gives us no licence to cannibalise our past to feed our flesh. History, too, has its pragmatic truth, its otherness, which refuses assimilation to our needs, our desires. History, too, requires our tact, our respect, our trust: I mean the measure of intuition, empathy, and self-discipline enabling every cognitive act. (305)

Therefore, as indicated by Hassan, although the playful nature of postmodernism gives us a chance to challenge the narratives of the past, it also undermines credibility of and respect towards history. Hassan, in his other work "Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective", suggests that it is basically an escape from the absence of "a fundamental idea" to immediately employ irony. He states:

In absence of a cardinal principle or paradigm, we turn to play, interplay, dialogue, polylogue, allegory, self-reflection, in short, to irony. This irony assumes indeterminacy, multivalence, aspires to clarity, the clarity to demystification, the pure light of absence, hybridization. (506)

Thus, it can be said that postmodernism, which, perhaps, is characterized more than anything else by irony, has left the world in a state of uncertainty and despair. Brooks argues:

What has changed is how we evaluate and research our ideas, and how we use those ideas to measure progress to chart utility. And yet many "relationships" have a single goal: to meet "the real world." The internet only goes so far: the quotidian, aspects of "the flesh," the world of the five senses that advertising plays on and that human desire ultimately returns to, cannot be found so readily in cyberspace. The virtual gives way to the actual. The bubbles in this world are made mainly of soap. Postmodern discourse has taken us to this point, where many of us think that something lies beyond the horizon. (150)

Hence, postmodernism gave way to a time in which the actual world is the desired destination; the real beliefs and emotions are yearned for but cannot be reached because alternative truths have started to dominate the facts as a consequence of adaptations of reality to personal beliefs and perspectives. Leading to an alternative-truths world where fact and fiction have mixed up, postmodernism has paved the way for another era. Federman says:

[Postmodernism] simply came and went like a flock of migratory birds, and we followed its flight across the sky, and watched it disappear over the horizon. Out of a strange necessity, but above all because it carried in itself its own demise... Postmodernism had to either die or go elsewhere and become something else, which is what it did, even though it continues to be called by the same name. (qtd. in Brooks 95)

Around the same time of such remarks signaling postmodernism's death (1990s), the term "Post-Truth" was coined by the Serbian-American writer Steve Tesich in 1992. According to Grech, this term "describes a mostly political setting whereby debate is framed by appeals to emotion, with repeated assertion of half-truths and outright lies whose factual rebuttals are ignored. Actual truth as relegated as being of secondary importance, a totally alien and inconceivable concept in the sciences" (118). In a more simplistic definition, "Post-Truth" is the term that is used "for circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (*Oxford*) and it has been chosen as the word of 2016 by *Oxford Dictionaries*. This is not surprising because Post-Truth is a term that also gives its name to the era we are living in. In fact, this is an age in which fiction is fancied over facts just like the term suggests; in other words, it is the time of alternative facts. These alternative facts are constructed on personal beliefs and emotions instead of information or proof. There have been contestations against the predominance of reason since the Age of Reason. However, especially with the end of postmodernism, it now becomes clear that freedom of relativism and irony have contributed not only to the multiplicity of truths but also their defense on an "emotional basis". According to D'Ancona:

Every society has its founding legends that bind together, shape its moral boundaries and inhabit its dreams of future. Since the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment, however, these collective narratives have competed with rationality,

pluralism and the priority of truth as a basis for social organization. What is new is the extent to which, in the new setting of digitalization and global interconnectedness, emotion is reclaiming its primacy and truth is in retreat. (31)

Thus, it could be said that, in the age of Post-Truth, truth is avoided because feelings mean a lot more than facts to people. The question is, how did we get to this point?



**Figure 2: Truth vs. Post-Truth (Shovel)**

This is a digitalized world where misinformation spreads much faster and further than truth on Twitter according to an MIT study conducted in 2018 (Ghosh). The data scientist of this study, Soroush Vosoughi states: “It seems to be pretty clear (from our study) that false information outperforms true information, and that is not just because of bots. It might have something to do with human nature” (qtd. in Meyer). As Vosoughi states it seems that we have adapted ourselves to the digital world through avoiding assessing and reassessing information. In fact, through the practices of postmodernism, which established a ground for alternative and subjective historicity, and through the dominance of the virtual world (especially social media), the rational evaluation of facts to discriminate whether they are related to actual events or are solely fictitious seems to be outdated; instead, people have started to “choose their own reality, as if from a buffet” (D’Ancona 56). What is more, people’s reality could also change very quickly because Post-Truth world depends mostly on social media feedback and news that could immediately lead to people’s action. Scott Van Pelt claims: “We have become a society where whatever has happened in the last ten minutes is the most important thing that ever happened”

(qtd. in Brooks 145). This kind of immediacy and subjectivity has resulted in an amnesia about past deeds. Our memory has been filled with the images that social media promoted which seems to result in the absence of our historical consciousness and sensitivity.

Khoury argues that postmodernism has contributed to the privileging of the petits récits (little narratives) of historical injustices against grand narratives, which “gave voice to the victims and their descendants while resisting the co-optation of their suffering into larger stories” (252), but the transnational nature of these historical injustices should not be forgotten. He states:

There is a need to acknowledge these historical injustices in relation to other historical injustices, so that past evils suffered by the Irish and the Maori, amongst others, are dealt as differently experienced crimes of a larger dynamic. Such associations will create the basis of a global memory where particular narratives can be negotiated, revised, and linked in cross-cultural ways. (253)

He suggests that creating a global memory through negotiations and revisions of past injustices in a transnational frame could be a way to prevent the competition between little narratives. In fact, it could be said that reconciliation with the transnational nature of historical injustices could provide us with a way to draw connections between past deeds. That kind of a reconciliation could help us see facts in a universal scale which could make us revise metanarratives and historical materials to see how such kinds of narratives were effective in making masses of people remember facts that were left in the past. That is why, the era that postmodernism left behind needs a different perspective towards irony and metanarratives. As Gibbons states, “with the end of postmodernism’s playfulness and affectation, we are better placed to construct a literature that engages earnestly with real-world problems” (“Postmodernism is dead” 5).

At this point, Huber’s book *Literature After Postmodernism* (2014) can guide us about whether such a new mindset in literature is a rupture from postmodernism, or it presents a shift of interest while having traces of postmodernism. She interrogates this shift by analyzing new literary aesthetics after postmodernism such as Neo-Realism, Digimodernism and Metamodernism, and she emphasizes the importance of

communication and feelings in this age. While emphasizing such concepts, she underlines the fact that this shift is “not against postmodernism, but through and beyond it” (46). Therefore, postmodernist techniques are still used, but the focus in these literary aesthetics is not on form which asserts “suspension of belief” (32), instead these aesthetics’ agenda suggests a willingness to believe. Huber presents how this shift manifests in literary works:

[...] as a critical perspective it echoes the changed preoccupations to be perceived in the fiction under discussion itself by no longer privileging ontological and epistemological questions (that is, by no longer continually interrogating the text’s relation to reality), but rather ethical and pragmatic ones concerned with the motives reflects and conditions of fictive communication. (40)

Such a change in the perspective does not mean that there is a regression towards realism, but instead, this new mindset asserts a shift of interest which suggests a sincere communication as a reaction to the “solipsistic postmodernist subjectivity” (31). Among these aesthetics, metamodern practices, in terms of suggesting an oscillation between modernism and postmodernism and presenting a pragmatic and ethical agenda by emphasizing communication in fictional works, can be applied in historiographies to counter the problems arisen in the Post-Truth Age such as irrationality and over-relativism. Yousef explains:

Post-postmodernism and neomodernism are [...] terms used interchangeably with metamodernism to describe the developments that emerged from or came about as a reaction to postmodernism. Rejecting postmodernist skepticism, originally a reaction against modernist optimism, metamodernism is often seen as mediation between aspects of both modernism and postmodernism [...] It tries to surpass modernism and postmodernism so as to respond to the current cultural mode. Its main tenet is that faith, trust, dialogue and sincerity can work to transcend postmodern irony and detachment. While modernism was basically epistemological (concerned with the nature of knowledge) and postmodernism was primarily ontological (concerned with the nature of being), metamodernism, which appeared in the first decade of the 21st century, questioned the universality and truthfulness of old modernism and the fragmentation and skepticism of postmodernism. (37)

Therefore, metamodernism is an aesthetic which oscillates between modernism and postmodernism, but it has the agenda to problematize and surpass the modernist and postmodern assumptions and practices that seem to have played a role in the emergence of the age of Post-Truth. Vermeulen and Van Den Akker, in “Notes on Metamodernism” state:

Ontologically, metamodernism [...] oscillates between a modern enthusiasm and a postmodern irony, between hope and melancholy, between naivete and knowingness, empathy and apathy, unity and plurality, totality and fragmentation, purity and ambiguity. Indeed, by oscillating to and fro or back and forth, the metamodern negotiates between the modern and the postmodern. One should be careful not to think of this oscillation as a balance however; rather, it is a pendulum swinging between 2, 3, 5, 10, innumerable poles. Each time the metamodern enthusiasm swings toward fanaticism, gravity pulls it back toward irony; the moment its irony swings toward apathy, gravity pulls it back toward enthusiasm. (5-6)

Thus, it draws on both modernism and postmodernism, but its agenda includes using modernist and postmodernist elements for different purposes. Vermeulen and Van Den Akker warn against the confusion between postmodernism and metamodernism by stating:

One should be careful, however, not to confuse this oscillating tension (a both - neither) with some kind of postmodern in-between (a neither - nor). Indeed, both metamodernism and the postmodern turn to pluralism, irony, and deconstruction in order to counter a modernist fanaticism. However, in metamodernism this pluralism and irony are utilized to counter the modern aspiration, while in postmodernism they are employed to cancel it out. That is to say, metamodern irony is intrinsically bound to desire, whereas postmodern irony is inherently tied to apathy. (9-10)

That is why, metamodernism could be a cure to solve the problems arisen in the Post-Truth Age as it “seeks to emphasize positivity in a world which is patently lacking in it” (Rudrum and Stavris 362) by accepting the impossible, but believing in the possible “in order to obtain a moral and political progression” through the effort that is made with hope and enthusiasm (362).

Life-writing, which is an umbrella term used for fictional and non-fictional works, is a helpful tool to bring back the credibility and unity of the past by saving it from fragmentation and ambiguity in the Post-Truth Age. It could be said that life-writing works have become very popular in recent years because people search for the works that provide credibility in the age of scepticism. Especially since the 1960s, there has been a dramatic increase in the sales of life-writing works such as autobiography, memoir and biography (Hoffman 18). About the increase in the writing of autobiographical texts, Hoffman comments as follows:

Some scholars believe that the postmodern lack of grand narratives makes readers anxious for actual accounts of subjectivity. Others believe that a peeping tom mentality, promoted by television’s “reality” concepts, makes contemporary reader



eager to get insights into others' lives. But why is the contemporary reader more bound to a so-called *factual narrative* than to a *fictitious one*? (18)

The answer to that question may be explained by looking at the age of Post-Truth and its effects. As it has been mentioned before, this is an era where fiction and fact can hardly be distinguished and beliefs and emotions have surpassed facts. Perhaps, that is why readers today are looking for ways to reach what they see as most reliable accounts of events.

Kadar defines life-writing as an encompassing “critical practice” and states that it:

encourages (a) the reader to develop and foster his/ her own self-consciousness in order to (b) humanize and make less abstract (which is not to say less mysterious) the self-in-the-writing. Thus, there are many forms, or genres in which the conventional expectation is that the author does not want to pretend he/ she is absent from the text. Add to these original Life-Writing genres the fictionalized equivalents, including self-reflexive metafiction, and Life Writing becomes both the ‘original genre’ and a critical comment on it, and therefore the self-in-the-writing. At its most radical, the critical practice of Life Writing enhances reading as a means of emancipating an overdetermined ‘subject’, or various subject-locations. (12)

Therefore, life-writing is both a genre that includes life narratives and a critical practice that makes it possible to read life stories at a critical distance; readers get the perspective of neither the writer nor various subject locations, instead, they understand that life-writing is also a “fictitious” process because it has both fictional and non-fictional parts. As with the end of postmodernism, the focus is no longer on the emphasis on “fictitiousness” of narratives, but on how efficient these narratives are to bring back credibility in the Post-Truth Era. Hoffman claims:

Most contemporary readers are aware that life writing is just as subjective as any other account given by human beings. That memory can fail, that the past is seen differently in retrospect, that a narrator’s judgment might be influenced by personal relations, prejudices, or the cultural background are aspects of life writing which the reader is aware of. However, when she feels cheated by a factual narrative, it loses its face value. (15)

So it could be said that readers are aware of the fact that metamodern life-writing works have fictitious parts, but, as long as they have a reliable narrative, they could bring credibility back through providing unity and empathy.

What differentiates metamodern life-writing works from postmodern life-writing works is that the former’s focus is on presenting facts by oscillating between irony

and enthusiasm to believe while accepting that it has some fictional parts, whereas the latter's purpose is to deconstruct historical facts through irony. By drawing on Couser, Hoffman defines life-writing as "Creative Nonfiction" and states:

"Creative Nonfiction" [...] is not the end of genre analysis but is starting point. The goal is not to *classify* works but to *clarify* them. We can't fully understand what a particular [...] story is doing without some sense of the operative conventions, which are a function of its genre. Especially in life writing, then genre is not about mere literary form; it's about force –what a narrative's purpose is, what impact it seeks to have on the world. (16)

As postmodernism blurred the lines between fact and fiction by emphasizing the "fictitiousness" of past narratives and contributed to the emergence of the age of Post-Truth, what should be done from now on could be interrogated through metamodernism. Thus, the purpose that Hoffman mentions can be presenting and analyzing facts not by focusing on their fictitiousness and impossibilities, but by focusing on their possibilities and unity through an oscillation between a modern enthusiasm and postmodern irony.

At this point, metamodern biofiction, a subgenre of metamodern life-writing, could be discussed as a helpful tool that utilizes fiction and fact to reverse the destructive effects of the Post-Truth Era. Since metamodern biofiction presents new insights about the possibilities related to past events, it helps us deal with the growing ambiguity and ennui about historical narratives, and it achieves it without asserting any dogmatic views. Unlike postmodern biofiction, which emphasizes irony and self-reflexivity, metamodern biofiction presents the scenarios what historians could hesitate to narrate by integrating fiction and life-writing. Including both fiction to enrich the historical narratives and deliver hope to readers, and non-fiction to provide facts that are open to criticism, the high sales of the metamodern biofiction works could turn out to have positive consequences such as bringing back unity and sincerity in the Post-Truth Era.

Using metanarratives could be another metamodern solution to overturn the effects of the age of Post-Truth. As it has been mentioned before, as a consequence of postmodernism's incredulity towards the totalizing concepts, the Post-Truth Era allows people and the media to divert every fact into fiction and every fiction into

fact. In fact, since the boundary between fact and fiction has become exceedingly thin, if not disappeared altogether, people look for a truth that they can hold on to. At that point, it can be said that metanarratives have started to take the lead to bring back hope to deal with complexities in the world of “alternative truths.” According to Salman:

[...] the post-postmodern metanarratives do not conceal the fact of their undeniable constructedness. On the contrary, they exemplify the otherwise abstract ideas and provide men with meaning, hope and reasons to go on, which are essential to live side by side with the otherwise incomprehensible Truth. Besides, the post-postmodern life-narratives renew our sense of the possibility of a meaning in the universe, the meaning of which is hardly ever to be understood. (65)

Thus, it could be said that metamodernism has an optimistic scope to analyse the digital age facts and its aim is not to question metanarratives, but to use them for our benefit. Abramson states:

If postmodernism negated the possibility of personal, local, regional, national, or international metanarratives other than those that were/are strictly dialectical, metamodernism permits us to selectively, and with eyes wide open, return to such metanarratives when they help save us from ennui, anomie, despair, or moral and ethical sloth.

For these reasons, the present thesis argues that metamodernist practices could enable us to approach the age of Post-Truth, its devices and practices critically, especially the use of irony in the service of undermining “truths”, which has played a role in the emergence of “a society of style without substance, of language without meaning, of cynicism without belief, of virtual communities without human connection, of rebellion without change” (Heitkemper-Yates 62) and suggests cures for their subversive effects. In the remaining of this thesis, the changes in the perspectives towards irony and metanarratives in Barnes’s *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* and *The Noise of Time* will be discussed from within a larger framework of the shift from postmodernism to metamodernism, to underline some significant changes in the trajectory of Barnes’s fiction and to illustrate metamodernism’s departure from postmodernism through a close textual analysis.

### CHAPTER 3

#### A POSTMODERN ATTITUDE TO HISTORY: BARNES'S *A HISTORY OF THE WORLD IN 10 AND ½ CHAPTERS*

Published in 1989, *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* is one of Barnes's postmodern fictional works which draws attention to the totalities of history by employing postmodern devices such as self-reflexivity and deconstruction. In fact, by deliberately subverting historical details, employing a polymorphous style and avoiding chronological patterns, the novel manifests the features of historiographic metafiction which "both asserts and is capable of shattering 'the unity of man's being through which it was thought that he could extend his sovereignty to the events of the past'" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 118). The novel outroots such sovereignty through using ironic strategies; not only does irony function as a cynical mode to subvert the dominant ideologies in official history, but it also "demonstrates a knowingness about how reality is ideologically constructed" (Nicol 13). Indeed, having no unitary voice or plot, it could be argued that the novel manifests arbitrariness and chaos throughout metafictional chapters reflecting what Barnes suggested earlier: "There is either a God and a plan and it's all comprehensible, or it's all hazard and chaos, with occasional small pieces of progress. Which is what I think" (qtd. in Guignery 71).

Before analyzing the novel as an example of historiographic metafiction, the novel's title must be examined to have some insights about its form. To begin with, it could be argued that the novel gives a hint about its subversive attitude towards totalizing history in a single plot; using "a" as an article instead of "the" is a move that manifests that *A History of the World* is a history among many histories. In addition to the choice of the article which asserts its arbitrariness, the half chapter in the title is also a significant detail that gives a clue about the structure of the novel.

According to Kotte, Barnes subverts the completeness that could come with ten chapters by adding a half chapter; in this way, the title reflects the fragmented structure of the work (109). Richard Locke also argues that the title emphasizes the fragmented form of the novel:

The title suggests a book that will flaunt genres, categories of communication, numbers that don't neatly conform to our devotion to the order of ten. This self-advertising title is a boast that mocks itself by calling attention to its literary and cognitive form. (qtd. in Moseley 109-110)

Therefore, it could be argued that the self-reflexive attitude of the novel is manifested in its title because the title foreshadows the fictitious nature of the novel by mocking the idea of closure and totality.

*A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* is an omnifarious novel which is comprised of short stories participating in various genres such as the epistolary form, travel writing, and art analysis. According to Guignery, these stories are reflections of some historical events:

The book does [...] draw inspiration from historical events, such as the shipwreck of the Medusa in 1816, that of the Titanic in 1912, the earthquake in Arghuri in 1840, the tragedy of the 937 passengers on board the Saint Louis in 1939, the hijacking in October 1985 of the cruise ship Achille Lauro, and the nuclear catastrophe at Chernobyl on 25 April 1986. (62)

The novel refers to some past events; however, these references are used to blur the edges between fact and fiction to inquire historical narratives through inserting ironic repetitions and returns. According to Kotte, these repetitions and returns do not have a pattern that could create a system throughout the novel. She states:

In *A History of the World*, the tension between the rich randomness of historical reality and the ordering categories of discourse highlights the fact that representation always implies a selection as well as organization. Instead of modeling his *History* on ideas of growth, development and change, Barnes bases his novel on returns and repetitions. Nevertheless, its network of repetitions cannot be deciphered according to a systematic code, for the return is disconnected from the original event and repetitions paradoxically produce the singularity of events. (127)

Therefore, it can be argued that the novel has a postmodern perspective which undermines the idea that historical narratives have reasonable causes, links and effects. To manifest these narratives are “emplotments” made out of chronicles of

events highlighted or subordinated by historians (White 84), the novel blurs the distinction between history and story by imitating and mixing genres and modes through integrating these genres and modes with a self-reflexive attitude.

In the novel, it can be observed that parody and intertextuality are employed to manifest self-reflexivity. Using parodies through turning tragedy into farce and ridiculing the main characters in “Project Ararat”, “Upstream”, and “Three Simple Stories”, the novel undermines historical progress by utilizing Marx’s statement: “Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce” which is also quoted in “Three Simple Stories” (Barnes, *History* 175). It could be argued that these chapters emphasize the constructed nature of the historical and theological narratives through drawing attention to the form. Indeed, the farcical repetitions are employed to distort the teleological metanarratives, and they present alternative plots to the readers to undermine their grand claims.

To start with, “The Mountain” and “Project Ararat” are complementary chapters manifesting a farcical recurrence, which are about finding the Ark on Mount Ararat. In “The Mountain”, Amanda Fergusson, who is portrayed as a true believer, has a conflict with his father. As his father only believes in reason, she tries to convince her father to believe in God until the day he dies. After his death, she devotes herself to climb Mount Ararat to intercede for his father’s soul, as Noah’s Ark could be found there according to the Bible. Taking the trip to Turkey with the company of Miss Logan, Amanda faces several difficulties, but she only sees the perfect design of God in everything and constantly questions her father’s disbelief. She states:

There always appear to be two explanations of everything. That is why we have given free will, in order that we may choose the correct one. My father failed to comprehend that his explanations were based as much upon faith as mine. Faith in nothing. It would be all vapour and clouds and rising air to him. But who created the vapour, who created the clouds? (Barnes, *History* 154)

Explaining all facts through faith, she takes all the steps to find Noah’s Ark with determination; however, she could not find the Ark herself and she dies in one of the caves on the mountain. It could be argued that Ms. Fergusson’s purposeful visit turns

out to be a tragedy; she neither makes his father believe in God nor could she fulfill her goal to intercede for his father's soul.

Although the first Ark-based chapter is about achieving a mission based on a grand narrative, the complementary chapter "Project Ararat" subverts the first narrative's serious mode with a mocking plot. This chapter is about former astronaut Spike Tiggler's journey to Mount Ararat to find the Ark. Although Spike leaves behind all his family and beloved ones to be "a flier, a man of science, an engineer" (Barnes, *History* 254) and becomes a famous astronaut, one day, he decides to go on a journey to Mount Ararat because a mysterious voice tells him to "find Noah's Ark" (Barnes, *History* 256). Indeed, he turns into a devout man who sees the world as God's miraculous design and devotes himself to find the ark, just like Ms. Fergusson does. His dogmatic faith is so strong that, in one of the caves on Mount Ararat, he thinks he has found Noah. Although what he has found is nothing but Amanda Fergusson's 136-year-old remains, he does not even question whose bones they are. When his friend Jimmy interrogates how these bones could endure so many years, he confidently states: "Jimmy, we are talking about miracles and signs here. You'd expect them to be well-preserved, wouldn't you? Noah was a real special guy" (Barnes, *History* 277), Spike adjusts everything according to a sacred perspective just like Ms. Fergusson, but he is portrayed with a mocking attitude. This comical tone in the chapter also gives a hint about the ending of it. After Jimmy convinces Spike to have the bones tested, the test results show that the bones belong to a woman, but Spike does not give up on his case and launches the second Project Ararat. Therefore, "an apparent tragedy is resited in a contemporary farce, one that parodically cites (and rewrites) the nineteenth – century pilgrimage of "The Mountain" in space-age terms" (Buxton 77); what starts as a tragedy is repeated later on a farce. The humorous ending in "Project Ararat" which has a connection with "Mount Ararat" manifests that "history is the sum of our attempts to make sense of our past through numerous narrative genres, whether they are traditionally considered historical or not" (Rubinson 165). Indeed, the novel shows the absurdity of our attempts to adjust metanarratives into our lives when we are blinded by their

dogmatic claims through manifesting Amanda and Spike's journeys to find Ark and connecting their stories with a mocking ending.

Another chapter which reflects history's repetition as a farce is "Three Simple Stories". As it can be understood from its title, it is comprised of three stories that interrogate historical facts by intertwining tragic and farcical elements. In the first story, a Titanic survivor, Beesley's fortunate escape repeats itself with a farcical twist. Firstly, he escapes from Titanic in women's clothes; in his grandson's expression: "the hero of the Titanic was a blanket-forged and transvestite imposter" (Barnes, *History* 174). However, as this escape is not a conventional heroic act, his grandson rationalizes his survival by interrogating Darwin's natural selection theory:

[T]heorists maintained that life amounted to the survival of the fittest were mainly the most cunning? The heroes, the solid men of the yeoman virtue, the good breeding stock, even the captain (especially the captain!) –they all went down nobly with the ship; the cowards, the panickers, the deceivers found reasons for skulking in a lifeboat. (Barnes, *History* 174)

Indeed, manifesting the survivors including his grandfather, Beesley's grandson deconstructs Darwin's theory by mocking heroes and leaders. Referring to Noah's Ark by mentioning "the solid men of the yeoman virtue" and "good breeding stock", he shows how grand narratives fail to recognize the power of random patterns.

Besides undermining the survival of the fittest by manifesting the marginal victors of history, the narrator also ends the chapter with an ironic twist which he interprets as the farcical repetition of history quoting Marx's statement. When Titanic's alternative version, called *A Night to Remember*, is being shot, Beesley gets too excited to take part as an actor and consult people making the film. Even though filmmakers only include him as an extra in the film, Beesley tries to direct the amateur imposter to disembark through his megaphone. That is why he is sent from the ship, but this time, not as a survivor of a tragic event, but because of his own intervention. Such intervention could be interpreted as the subversion of the past narrative through an alternative interpretation; Beesley's tragicomic heroism turns into farce in his second attempt.



The second story is a postmodern interpretation of Jonah's myth. Having a playful attitude while narrating how Jonah keeps on living after staying in a whale's stomach for three days, the chapter deconstructs Jonah's myth by drawing attention to its constructedness. In the novel, when God does not punish "partying Ninevites", the explanation to Jonah is: "you didn't punish the gourd when it failed you, did you; and in the same way I am not going to punish Nineveh" (Barnes, *History* 176). As it can be observed in this example, "God holds all the cards and wins all the tricks" (Barnes, *History* 176) in life; there is no such a thing called "free will", implying God's ways of rewarding and punishing are chaotic and arbitrary. After interrogating theological metanarratives through asserting that God's ways could be anarchic, the chapter presents a modern myth, in which a sailor called James Bartley has the same experience of staying alive in a whale's stomach and amazes doctors with his miracle. Through presenting these two examples from past and present, the narrator manifests how myths survive through evolving:

And if you are a scientist, or infected by gastric doubt, look at it this way. Many people (including me) believe the myth of Bartley, just as millions have believed the myth of Jonah. You may not credit it, but what has happened is that the story has been retold, adjusted, updated; it has shuffled nearer [...] And then people will believe the myth of Bartley, which was begotten by the myth of Jonah. For the point is this; not that myth refers us back to some original event which has been fancifully transcribed as it passed through the collective memory; but that it refers us forward to something that will happen, that must happen. Myth will become reality, however skeptical we might be. (Barnes, *History* 180 – 181)

Thus, an alternative myth, which is the recurrence of Jonah's event, is employed to outroot the canonized grounds of biblical narratives and manifest the fictitiousness of these narratives through presenting their evolving process.

Besides employing farcical repetitions, the novel also exemplifies tragic narratives such as "Upstream", "The Visitors", the third story of "Three Simple Stories", which suggests that the novel avoids a dominant pattern that links all the chapters in the novel. In fact, it could be argued that the novel avoids any kind of causality or linearity that could lead one to deduce conclusions; that is why, it manifests arbitrariness both in and between the chapters. Therefore, the novel problematizes totalitarian aspects of grand narratives by emphasizing chaos and destruction instead

of manifesting progress and completeness. For that reason, farcical repetitions are interrupted by tragic plots, and the contents and forms of the chapters are fragmented.

“Upstream” is an epistolary narrative about an actor named Charlie, who shoots a film about two Jesuits (Father Firmin and Father Antonio) in a Venezuelan jungle. Charlie narrates everything he goes through in this jungle by writing countless unrequited love letters to his so-called lover Pippa. In these letters, he emphasizes how mature and strong Indians are: “Guess what, THEY DON’T HAVE A NAME FOR THEMSELVES!!! And they don’t have a name for their language either. Isn’t that amazing!! Incredibly mature. It’s like, nationalism out of the window” (Barnes, *History* 200 – 201). He even assumes that Indians are too mature to feel sorry about their friend’s death. Charlie says:

Terrible thing happened. Quite terrible. One of the Indians fell off the raft and was drowned. Just swept away. We stared at the water which was pretty choppy and waited for the Indian to surface but he never did. Naturally we said we’d stop working for the day. Guess what? The Indians wouldn’t hear of it. What good old troupers they are!” (Barnes, *History* 204)

However, while he thinks that Indians could never give any harm to him or his film crew, everything is turned upside down. Charlie’s actor friend, Matt, who thinks that “the Indians are rather cute kids who haven’t yet invented the video recorder” (Barnes, *History* 204) is entrapped by them and murdered. After this event, Charlie tries to rationalize Indians’ deed. He connects Indians’ historical background related to Jesuits by stating “it seems to me that the Indians –our Indians- knew what happened to Father Firmin and Father Antonio all those years ago” (Barnes, *History* 217). Father Firmin and Father Antonio are two missionaries who are intended to change Indians’ lifestyle through teaching them biblical narratives, but they cannot achieve it because their raft capsizes. According to Charlie, as the story gets more “colorful” and “exaggerated” while passing down the generations (Barnes, *History* 217), it might have a huge impact on Indians’ attitude towards them. Indeed, Indians revolts against the new so-called Jesuits with a stronger urge; they do not let Charlie and his friends re-enact the same event and they kill Matt. Therefore, it could be argued that the chapter undermines Charlie’s earlier assumptions and rationalizations

with a tragic recurrence, which exemplifies “the reversal of Marx’s vision of history in a prominent way” (Kotte 119) by manifesting that not all recurrences turn out to be farcical.

In “The Visitors”, Barnes shows what is underneath the iceberg of history (Buxton 70) by manifesting the tragic consequences of historical relativism. The chapter starts with Franklin Hughes, who is a tour guide, getting ready for a trip in a cruise ship full of visitors from different countries. However, Arab visitors turn out to be a terrorist group called “The Black Thunder” who hijack the ship. Creating an immense terror, they reach their aim to leave a mark in history, but through violence. The head of the terrorists states:

Let me put it this way. If things go according to your plan, you will soon be able to continue your explorations of the Minoan Civilization. We shall disappear just as we came, and we shall seem to you simply to have been a dream. Then you can forget us, you will remember only that we were a small delay. So there is no need for you to know who we are or where we come from or what we want. (Barnes, *History* 43)

So, they explain that their aim is not to be forgotten in history by mentioning their position in world history. Separating the clean from the unclean (Barnes, *History* 44), the terrorists separate the visitors according to their nationalities and plan to kill them two by two depending on “the guilt of the Western nations for the situation in the Middle East” (Barnes, *History* 57). The Arab hijacker questions the justice by asking: “People are always telling *us* what is the law. I am often puzzled by what they consider lawful are what is unlawful. Is it lawful to drop bombs on refugee camps, for instance?” (Barnes, *History* 47-48) Thus, the group creates their own law and decide to kill the passengers according to their own causality, but they let Franklin Hughes live because he has an Irish passport. Therefore, Barnes manifests a tragic example of historical relativism by “refusing to rationalize disastrous accidents and making them appear consistent, Barnes signals the singularity and incommensurability of catastrophes” (Kotte 120) and showing how terrorism could lead to arbitrary atrocities.

Another point that could be mentioned is the mission The Black Thunder gives Franklin Hughes: they expect Hughes to justify why they are going to kill them. It is

quite ironic that this mission is given to Hughes, who is a historian and tour guide. In fact, it could be argued that the novel manifests how odd it is to justify the arbitrary logic behind deaths and accidents through creating dialectics on them, and it criticizes the causality presented by historians. The novel explicitly discusses the idea of making sensible connections in “Parenthesis”:

History isn't what happened. History is just what historians tell us. There was a pattern, a plan, a movement, expansion, the march of democracy; it is a tapestry, a flow of events, a complex narrative, connected, explicable. One good story leads to another... [A]ll the time it's connections, progress, meaning. This led to this, this happened because of this. And we, the readers of history, the sufferers from history, we scan the pattern for hopeful conclusions, for the way ahead. (Barnes, *History* 242)

Thus, it could be argued that “The Visitors” has a self-reflexive attitude that subverts causality, but it does that through confronting the readers with the tension that terrorism creates and manifesting the dangerous side of historical relativism, instead of employing a parodic tone.

The third story of “Three Stories” also has a serious tone while reflecting the ironic twists of history. Although the chapter's other two stories manifest a playful mode to undermine theological and historical narratives, the third story does not have a humorous tone. In the third story, Jewish refugees try to run away from Nazis through a ship called St. Louis, but they fail to do so because they cannot land on any country. Although the refugees try to negotiate many countries from Europe and America to land and start living, the leaders of these countries want to take advantage of their neediness and demands as much money as possible. Just when they are about to lose hope about finding a country that could allow them to live, some of the European countries such as Belgium and Holland admit them to their countries. However, when a pro-Nazi group state: “We too want to help the Jews. If they call at our offices each will receive gratis a length of rope and a long nail” (Barnes, *History* 188), the refugees are sent back to Nazi camps and they are tortured to death while they are being transferred. When the Second World War starts, their chance of survival disappears altogether. It could be argued that this chapter also subverts Darwin's theory by reflecting the arbitrary sanctions imposed by the countries

against oppression and injustice; however, this time, the novel manifests how such arbitrary sanctions could cause atrocities by reflecting the desperate and humiliated states of Jewish passengers with a pathetic tone. Therefore, through integrating a tragic narrative into three stories, Barnes distorts the pattern by showing chaotic moments in history both by using parody and employing a tragic tone. As Guignery states:

*A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* deconstructs the rational, consistent and coherent model for the course of history, and replaces it with a sense of entropy which reflects the mutability, discontinuity, arbitrariness and chaos of history. (71)

The novel's arbitrary mode could be analysed as the subversion of the Hegelian concept of history as a dialectical process. By avoiding to provide a hermeneutic perspective which asserts a chronological order in each chapter, the novel employs repetitions, cycles, marginal narrators who create their own truths, instead of providing a causality of the events. Thus, it could be argued that each chapter in the novel challenges Hegel's theory of history as an unfolding discipline<sup>3</sup> by exemplifying the impossibility of causality and progress between historical events. In fact, the novel problematizes the historicism, which compresses past events into deductive narratives. Drawing on Benjamin, Buxton points out that causal connections enslave historicism and he states:

Making "dogmatic claims" for the "irresistible" course of human progress (260), historicism constitutes a false remembrance. Not only does it encourage an uncritical acceptance of history as a series of "necessary" conquests, but also, through its stubborn faith in future redemption, it fosters complacency about the present. (74)

While examining how the novel distorts the causality and rationality through targeting patterns and progress, it could be argued that the novel obviously problematizes the grand narratives which provide a sense of completion and legitimation of historical narratives.

In addition, the novel employs marginal characters and unconventional themes to confront totalitarian historiographies. Throughout the novel it can be observed that

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<sup>3</sup> "Hegel believed that history culminated in an absolute moment –a moment in which a final, rational form of society and state became victorious." (Fukuyama 9)

many chapters include marginal characters such as victims and woodworms as the main characters. As many critics have argued before, these characters are given voice to challenge the dominance of certain groups of people. Thus, the novel manifests the return of the repressed through integrating such characters. Vanessa Guignery states:

Official history is usually written from the vantage point of dominant groups (the victors, the colonizers, men...), while minorities and subordinate communities are condemned to silence, but Barnes departs from the established versions of history and substitutes apocryphal and heterodox rewritings. (69)

Therefore, it can be said that *A History of the World* is a resistance against one-sided representation of historical events. Salyer also argues: “Barnes has confronted us with the possibility of other stories –stories we must deal with in one way or another” (224). Indeed, Barnes chooses to use marginal characters through blurring the edges between fact and fiction and celebrates diversity. According to Guignery:

Throughout the book, the generic, stylistic and narrative blurring challenges classification and categorization, and thus resists history’s inexorable logic of division between pure and impure, clean and unclean, weak and strong, winners and losers. Through its polymorphous form, the book celebrates plurality and hybridity, while remaining accessible and pleasurable to readers. (63)

Indeed, deconstructing theological narratives through voicing marginal characters such as woodworms and victims is a recurring practice throughout the novel. Integrating intertextual references related to Noah’s Ark and woodworms with irony and deconstruction, the novel confronts the dominating aspect of historical and theological narratives.

To start with, in “The Stowaway”, Barnes gives voice to a woodworm to interpret Noah’s ark in its own perspective. Throughout the chapter, the woodworm narrates what happened in Noah’s Ark with an oppositional voice against the theological and historical narratives; in fact, it subverts them through showing an alternative side as a “stowaway” animal. It says:

They were chosen, they endured, they survived: it’s normal for them to gloss over the awkward episodes, to have convenient lapses of memory. But I am not constrained in that way. I was never chosen. In fact, like several other species, I was specifically not chosen. I was a stowaway; I too survived, I escaped (getting off was no easier than getting on); and I have flourished. (Barnes, *History* 4)

It could be argued that the woodworm claims his right to narrate historical events by brushing history against the grain (Benjamin 257). Indeed, letting the woodworm raise its voice against the victors and chosen ones, the novel exemplifies the deconstruction of historical narratives through empowering marginal characters.

Although Noah is portrayed as the savior of humans and animals through taking them into a vessel in theological narratives, the woodworm prefers to portray Noah as a drunkard instead of a pious savior. In this way, the woodworm uses his narrative to destroy Noah's grand image. It says:

There were times when Noah and his sons got quite hysterical. That doesn't tally with your account of things? You've *always been led to believe* that Noah was sage, righteous and God-fearing, and I've already described him as a hysterical rogue with a drink problem? The two views aren't entirely incompatible. Put this way: Noah was pretty bad, but you should have seen the others. (Barnes, *History* 8)

At this point, it could be argued that the chapter uses irony's oppositional function to subvert historical narratives through giving voice to the woodworm, which draws attention to the fictitious nature of Noah's ark as a historical narrative by manifesting an alternative point of view.

Besides portraying Noah as a drunkard, the woodworm also criticizes Noah's practices in terms of separating animals. It says:

[...] you can't stop Nature, can you? Nor could you stop Noah. As soon as he saw the plovers turning white, he decided that they were sickening, and in tender consideration for the rest of the ship's health he had them boiled with a little seaweed on the side. He was an ignorant man in many respects, and certainly no ornithologist. (Barnes, *History* 14)

By manifesting Noah's ignorant act, the chapter shows the irrationality of separating animals through categorizing them as clean / unclean or healthy / unhealthy. Indeed, this example shows how such categorizations may differ from one perspective to another by manifesting the outcome of Noah's act. Through pointing out how randomly the animals are taken into Noah's vessel, it could be argued that the novel not only subverts theological narratives, but it also overturns Darwin's natural selection theory. The woodworm which survives as a stowaway out of many species could be interpreted as an alternative narrative against the survival of the fittest

theory. Also, the way other animals are chosen by Noah, or how they are treated by him signifies the arbitrariness of these animals' chances of survival. Kotte states:

The imaginary woodworm on Noah's ark, however, challenges Darwin's theory by revealing how "unnatural" the survival of certain animals during the deluge was, and how little it was related to adaptation or fitness, but rather to Noah's moody temper (13). The extinction of animals was, in fact, calculated by Noah, who neglected, tortured, and ate several species. [...] The woodworm, moreover, turns Darwin's notion of evolution upside down when arguing that "man is a very unevolved species compared to the animals". (117)

Besides describing Noah as an anti-character, the woodworm also claims the rights of the forgotten historical figures whose stories are unheard or ignored. It warns against the consequences that could come with the oblivion of little narratives by reminding Noah's long lost son's story. It says:

You aren't too good with the truth, either, your species. You keep forgetting things, or you pretend to. The loss of Varadi and his ark –does anyone speak of that? I can see there might be a positive side to this wilful averting of the eye: ignoring the bad things makes you end up believing that bad things never happen. You are always surprised by them. It surprises you that guns kill, that money corrupts, that snow falls in winter. Such naivety can be charming; alas, it can also be perilous. (Barnes, *History* 29)

Indicating how historians can highlight or subordinate certain events (White 84) by manifesting the relativity of facts, the woodworm confronts readers by reminding the effects of such excluded truths.

"The Wars of Religion", which is about a trial against the woodworms, also portrays the woodworms as the effective characters who have the power to change the events for the benefit of themselves by putting the Bishop into a ridiculous situation:

Oh malevolent day! Oh malevolent invaders! And how the Bishop fell, striking his head upon the altar step and being hurled against his will into a state of imbecility. And how, when the Bishop and his retinue had departed, bearing off the Bishop in a state of imbecility, the terrified petitioners did examine the Bishop's throne and discover in the leg that had tumbled down like the walls of fericho a vile and unnatural infestation of woodworm, and how these woodworm, having secretly and darkly gone about their devilish work, had so devoured the leg that the Bishop did fall like mighty Daedalus from the heavens of light into the darkness of imbecility. (Barnes, *History* 64)

It could be argued that the scene of falling is narrated in a mocking way by emphasizing the "state of imbecility" caused by the woodworms. In fact, the



absurdity of the trial is stiffened by the actions of the woodworms, so parody is used as a mode to demarginalize the marginal characters and challenge the power of the church as a unitary institution in this chapter. Indeed, “what Barnes has done is to bring to speech the voices of history that have been silenced by the one voice that passes itself off as the voice of God” (Salyer 224). That is why, Barnes uses woodworms to represent the multiplicity of voices in history and give them the opportunity to overturn the totalitarian versions of the past.

Besides overturning the dominance of the church as a unitary institution, the chapter also shows how subjective the interpretation of the theological narratives can be through manifesting the discussions of the procurator who defends the woodworms’ rights and the habitants who state that it is not written in the Scripture that woodworms have the right to “devour the Bishop’s temples” or “inhabit the cut wood” (Barnes, *History* 71). The woodworms’ response against the allegations could be presented as a playful reflection which undermines the theological narratives by voicing subjective interpretations:

To which we reply, firstly that the Scripture does not in any patent form forbid them from so doing, secondly that if God had not intended them (woodworms) to eat the cut wood, He would not have given them the instinct to do so, and thirdly that in the absence of evidence to the contrary, an accused being innocent until proved guilty, an assumption of priority of possession in the matter of the wood must be granted to the bestioles, namely that they were in the wood when it was cut by the woodsman who sold it to the joiner who fashioned it to the throne. Far from the woodworm infesting what Man has constructed, it is Man who has willfully destroyed the woodworms’ habitation and taken it for his own purpose. (Barnes, *History* 75)

While reflecting how all the characters adjust their truth to the statements in the Scripture, the chapter emphasizes the postmodern incredulity towards metanarratives by manifesting the relativity of truths. Rubinson states: “The absurdity (of the trial) is critical [...], for it mirrors the extremes to which interpretations of theological and legal texts can vary” (167). Thus, through “The Wars of Religion”, Barnes exemplifies a playful and deliberate narrative by using a parodic trial against the woodworms and shows the multiplicity of perspectives by giving voice to the woodworms once again.

Kath Ferris, who is the main character of “The Survivor”, is another marginal character, who deconstructs the male-dominant past narratives. After the nuclear war, she tries to survive by getting on a boat with her two cats. Hating on dates, she especially refuses to believe in linear progression narrated by men and suggests believing in cyclical time concept:

I don't keep count of the days. There isn't any point, is there? We aren't going to measure things in days any more. Days and weekends and holidays –that's how the men in grey suits measure things. We'll have to go back to some older cycle, sunrise for a start, and the moon will come into it, and the weather –the now, terrible weather we shall have to live under it. (Barnes, *History* 93)

Indeed, she examines the past through looking at the old connections found in nature to subvert the causality of the historical narratives presented in male perspective. She states:

They say I don't understand things. They say I'm not making the right connections. Listen to them, listen to them and their connections. This happened, they say, and as a consequence that happened. There was a battle here, a war there, a king was deposed, famous men –always famous men, I'm sick of famous men – made things happen. [...] I look at the history of the world, which they don't seem to realize is coming to an end, and I don't see what they see. All I see is the old connections, the ones we don't take any notice of anymore because that makes it easier to poison the reindeer and paint stripes down their backs and feed them to the mink. Who made them happen? Which famous man will claim credit for that? (Barnes, *History* 97)

Therefore, she confronts the teleological tone in male-dominant past narratives through pointing out the destructive actions in nature such conclusive narratives ignore. Not only does she challenge the male autocracy in the past, but she also reinscribes Darwin's survival of the fittest theory. She claims that “worriers” like her will survive instead of people like her ex-boyfriend. She states:

I am a worrier. [...] I'm not so good at being on my own. But I'm the one that's going to survive, or have the chance anyway. The Survival of the Worriers –is that what it means? People like Greg will die out like the dinosaurs. Only those who can see what's happening will survive, that must be the rule. (Barnes, *History* 97)

By betting that “there are hundreds' thousands of boats with people in and animals” doing what she is doing (94), she suggest that victims like herself instead of victors are going to be the survivors by referring to Noah's ark. Childs observes:

Kath sets off from Darwin, the choice of name on Barnes's part hinting at her fitness for survival, and it is her adaptation, progressing beyond a rapacious, destructive male world, that brings her and her two cats [...] to be the latest Ark survivors. (78)

Throughout the chapter, she oscillates between dreaming and waking up, so it would not be wrong to argue that she is an unreliable narrator. She blames her mind to be the cause of all the confusion she has (Barnes, *History* 102), as her thoughts and dreams constantly mix up. Drawing on Sesto, Rostek quotes: "One obstacle in reading 'The Survivor' is the difficulty in determining which of the events recounted in Kathleen's dream actually happened to her and which are merely 'fictions' within the dream" (193). However, blurring the edges between fiction and facts, she uses fabulation as a way of survival. She asks her doctor:

-How do you explain that I remember very clearly everything that's happened from the news of the war breaking out in the north to my here on the island?

-Well, the technical term is fabulation. You make up a story to cover the facts you don't know or can't accept. You keep a few true facts and spin a new story round them. (Barnes, *History* 109)

Thus, the doctor states that Kath's narrative is based on fabulation, which helps her make sense of the world to survive. Then, she reinscribes the exchange she has with the doctor by claiming that what she does is not denying, but looking at things how they are (Barnes, *History* 111) and presents fabulation as a way of survival. As Salyer suggests, "fabulation seems to be what makes life work, and one must fabulate in one way or another for life to have meaning" (226). Therefore, it could be argued that she subverts Darwin's natural selection theory by deconstructing it through using fabulation.

"Shipwreck" is a chapter which is comprised of two different parts. While the first part of the chapter is a historical narrative relating *The Raft of the Medusa* (1819) by Géricault to the actual shipwreck near Senegal in 1816, the second part is the analysis and interpretation of the painting. In this chapter, Barnes gives readers a chance to analyze a work of art through historical and artistic perspectives. Interrogating how to justify catastrophe, the chapter asserts:

We have to understand it, of course, this catastrophe; to understand it, we have to imagine it, so we need the imaginative arts. But we also need to justify it and forgive

it, this catastrophe, however minimally. Why did it happen, this mad act of Nature, this crazed human moment? Well, at least it produced art. Perhaps, in the end, that's what catastrophe is *for*. (Barnes, *History* 125)

Thus, the narrator tries to find an explanation for the catastrophe transcribed in the painting by making a connection between art and history. While the historical part of the chapter has a linear plot which reflects causality, the second part highlights art as a liberating practice which allows a subjective interpretation of the catastrophe:

Time dissolves the story into form, colour, emotion. Modern and ignorant, we reimagine the story; do we vote for the optimistic yellowing sky, or, for the grieving greyboard? Or do we end up believing both versions? The eye can flick from one mood, and one interpretation, to the other: is this what was intended? (Barnes, *History* 133)

Pointing out the fact that the painting does not have an objective conclusion about whether it asserts "hope" or "hope being mocked", the narrator discusses that art gives us a chance to understand the catastrophe without bounding or rationalizing, rather feeling it.

It could also be inferred that the chapter refers to Noah's ark, by employing a theme in which passengers are waiting to be saved on a boat. However, the novel subverts the act of separation one more time, by asserting:

We are all lost at sea, washed between hope and despair, having something that may never come to rescue us. Catastrophe has become art; but this is no reducing process. It is freeing, enlarging, explaining. Catastrophe has become art; that is, after all, what it is for. (Barnes, *History* 137)

Therefore, it could be argued that the chapter asserts art as a liberating practice which permits subjectivity while turning the catastrophe into another form, instead of restricting it in rational boundaries. Childs states: "The point here for the novel is that modern art is more often concerned with tragedy, even if history prefers the march of progress, emphasizing the triumph of the victors". (79) Indeed, while the historical narrative of the chapter deals more with what happens next, the painting lets us understand the tragedy without leading us to reach a causality.

While objective truth is subverted through pointing out the fictitiousness of grand narratives, subjectivity and relativism are emphasized through the chapters. In fact, the novel shows why scepticism is needed through giving examples that dethrone the

dominant perspectives in official history, but it does not assert disbelief in historical narratives while suggesting a sceptical perspective. Indeed, “Parenthesis” is the half chapter in which objective truth and its legitimacy are openly criticized and discussed through a set of reflections about subjectivity and fabulation, but it is also the chapter in which the possibility of hope is discussed by pointing out the function of love. Firstly, the chapter interrogates the linear historiographies which assert causality and rationality through confronting historical recitals:

In fourteen hundred and ninety-two

Columbus sailed the ocean blue

And then what? Everyone became wiser? People stopped building new ghettos in which to practise the old persecution? Stopped making the old mistakes, or new mistakes, or new versions of old mistakes? [...] Dates don't tell the truth. They bawl at us –left, right, left, right, pick'em up there you miserable sower. They want to make us think we're always progressing, always going forward. (Barnes, *History* 241)

However, while reminding the irrationality of reciting historical narratives as causal narratives, the chapter fills the vacancy that comes with the skeptical perspective by asserting love over history. In fact, the chapter argues that love is the only thing that can overcome the fixed truths of overarching ideologies or systems by stating “love makes us see the truth, makes it our duty to tell the truth” (Barnes, *History* 241) because love requires people to see the world in a different perspective:

You can't love someone without imaginative sympathy, without beginning to see the world from another point of view. You can't be a good lover, a good artist or a good politician without this capacity (you can get away with it, but that's not what I mean). Show me the tyrants who have been great lovers. By which I don't mean great fuckers; we all know about power as an aphrodisiac (an auto-aphrodisiac too). Even our democratic hero Kennedy serviced women like an assembly-line worker spraying car bodies. (Barnes, *History* 243)

It seems the novel suggests that the absolutism in historical narratives can only be overcome by the imaginative sympathy that comes along with love. In fact, love is presented as an antidote because it is the utmost feeling that could change people in terms of understanding the others while freeing them from the chains that institutions or ideologies impose. Salyer states:

Barnes's asserting of love over history seems to mean the assertion of individual experience over the view of dominant groups or systems. In that sense, a church is doomed from the start unless it can somehow organize individuals in a way that frees them from institutional power structures and to a personal religious experience. (229)

Such assertion of individual experience paves the way to celebrate the diversity of subjective feelings. However, the chapter does not assert overarching relativism while refusing the absolute truths. Instead, it accepts the blurred edges between subjective truths and objective truth:

We all know objective truth is not obtainable, that when some event occurs we shall have a multiplicity of subjective truths which we assess and then fabulate into history, into some God-eyed version of what "really" happened. This God-eyed version is a fake –a charming, impossible fake [...] But while we know this, we must still believe that objective truth is obtainable; or we must believe that it is 99 percent obtainable; or if we can't believe this we must believe that 43 percent objective truth is better than 41 percent, because if we don't we're lost, we fall into beguiling relativity, we value one liar's version as much as another liar's. (Barnes, *History* 246)

This statement seems to suggest accepting that objective truth is a construct which is an accumulation of subjective truths. However, it also foreshadows the oblivion that could come with overrelativism in the Post-Truth Era, and directs readers to believe in the most possible scenarios of historical events by making a distinction between obtainable, fragmented truth and unobtainable, absolute truth. As it oscillates between totality and fragmentation while suggesting sincerity and openness, this chapter could be accepted as a bridge between postmodernism and metamodernism.

The other bridging chapter is "Dream" in which the narrator dreams that he has woken up (Barnes, *History* 283). In this chapter, the narrator realizes that he can do whatever he wants to do, as he is in heaven. He has breakfast anytime he wants, plays golf all day, has sex with whomever he wants to, and meets all the famous people he wants to meet. However, such kind of a dream makes him question the idea of heaven; he would like to be judged after a while for the life he has lived (Barnes, *History* 293). He wants judgement not only for himself, but also some prominent historical figures like Hitler:

Then, there was Hitler business. You waited behind a bush and he strolled past, a stocky figure in a nasty uniform with a false smile on his face. Fair enough, I'd seen

him now, and my curiosity was satisfied, but, well, I had to ask myself, what was he doing here in the first place? Did he order breakfast like everybody else? I'd already observed that he was allowed to wear his own clothes. Did this mean he could also play golf and have sex if he wanted to? How did this thing operate? (Barnes, *History* 296-297)

The anxious attitude of the narrator in this statement could be interpreted as a reaction to the system that treats everyone equally, even to people whose actions caused mass murders in the past. In fact, it could be argued that the chapter directly questions what would happen if all the past deeds and their transnational connections were forgotten, and reflects the horror that comes with such a dystopian utopia. Moreover, the chapter not only asks what would happen if everybody lived in such an oblivious world after they died, but it also points out the necessity of recognition of injustices while we are alive. Pointing out our responsibility about the recognition of historical deeds and injustices, Allison Gibbons argues: “the world is an interconnected and independent community”, so too is ‘our moral responsibility...therefore, correspondingly, a globalized and universal concern’ (“I haven’t seen you since” 228). When we examine the effects of the Post-Truth Era such as oblivion and ennui, “Dream” could be accepted as the other foreshadowing chapter which draws attention to such effects and confronts the readers by creating a setting in heaven. As the chapter reflects the feelings that emerge with the oblivion of the past deeds by oscillating between universality and subjectivity, it is the other chapter that bridges postmodernism and metamodernism.

To conclude, the novel functions as a historiographic metafiction by employing a self-reflexive attitude to undermine the totality and causality asserted by historical metanarratives. To subvert such metanarratives’ dominance, the novel employs deconstruction and irony by creating alternative plots which emphasize arbitrariness and chaos in historical narratives. Indeed, the novel draws attention to its own postmodern mode by mocking the idea of totalized history and emphasizing historical narratives’ fictitiousness:

The history of the world? Just voices echoing in the dark; images that burn for a few centuries and then fade; stories, old stories that sometimes seem to overlap; strange links, impertinent connections. We lie here in our hospital bed of the present (what nice clean sheets we get nowadays) with a bubble of daily news drip-fed into our

arm. We think we know who we are, though we don't quite know why we're here, or how long we shall be forced to stay. And while we fret and write in bandaged uncertainty - are we a voluntary patient? - we fabulate. We make up a story to cover the facts we don't know or can't accept; we keep a few true facts and spin a new story round them. Our panic and our pain are only eased by soothing fabulation; we call it history. (Barnes, *History* 242)

Furthermore, the novel establishes a ground between postmodernism and metamodernism through “Parenthesis” and “Dream”, as these chapters point out the oblivion that could come with the Post-Truth Era and present an oscillation between sincerity and scepticism. Therefore, it could be argued that the novel outroots the dominant patterns and ideologies in historical narratives and celebrates its hybridity through combining various genres and schools of thought, but it also foreshadows the Post-Truth Era and its effects through interrogating subjectivity and oblivion.



## CHAPTER 4

### A METAMODERN ATTITUDE TO HISTORY: BARNES'S *THE NOISE OF TIME*

#### 4.1. Metamodernism as a Functional Tool in the Post-Truth Era

As postmodernists support the idea that there is no universal truth or progress, they blur the lines between fact and fiction through irony and deconstruction, especially in historical and religious narratives. In this way, postmodernism has enabled many chances to talk about the past events that caused pain in the past. However, while helping show the failings of totalitarian historiographies, it has contributed to the blurring of the connection between past and present and promoted skepticism and humor by drawing attention to the fictitiousness of historical narratives. Such kind of self-reflexive attitude has created a different kind of challenge, because it has contributed to the emergence of the Post-truth Era, in which “the facts are of the matter of secondary importance to the free floating opinion. Instead, truth is replaced by demonstrative arguments that appeal to the electorate on a more visceral and emotional level” (Laybats and Tredinnick 204). Moreover, it can be said that postmodernism, along with the adverse effects of social media which can be manipulative in terms of shaping people’s opinions, has a huge impact on the decrease of the credibility of historical narratives, which resulted in boosting emotions and relativity and celebrating irrationality. What is more, the celebration of irrationality and over-relativity has caused oblivion about past events, a lack of historical consciousness and spreading of misinformation; that is why today many people – both writers and readers – have started to look for the sources that could revise historical deeds and provide a reconciliation between past and present in the Post-Truth Era.

The remedy for this misinformation era can be “information literacy, digital literacy, and critical reasoning skills” (Laybats and Tredinnick 205). Especially, critical reasoning skills are quite important because emotions take over reasoning in the Post-Truth Era. Therefore, we need such tools that could be both compatible with the era’s needs, but also can convert the world of “alternative facts” into a more conscious world. That is why metamodernism, engaging critically both with modernism and postmodernism, can give us a chance to focus on “a sense of moving on”. Metamodernism does not yearn for a meaning nor does it subvert historical facts, but it “moves for the sake of moving, attempts in spite of its inevitable failure; it seeks forever for a truth that it never expects to find” (Vermeulen and Van Den Akker 4).

Metamodernism is important in terms of suggesting “utopian desires if not ... utopian possibility” (Brunton 62) to reverse the disbelief in metanarratives and the misleading effects of social media. As quoted in Brunton (62), Vermeulen and Van Den Akker suggest, “[...] the utopian narrative must be approached with caution, for even as the desire for a better world must necessarily be kept alive, utopia itself can never finally be reached –it is an impossible possibility”. Although utopia is a far-fetched idea, especially in the Post-Truth Era in which facts are dominated by fiction, we can take action through revising historical narratives and critical-thinking in order not to give in to indifference and amnesia in this age. That is why grand narratives can be beneficial to revise past teachings and provide hope and skepticism at the same time to do better in the future because they help analyze present facts and get people out of feeling lost in the Post-truth Era. In fact, they may be useful in terms of reminding people of past injustices and making them aware of the massive effects of such totalitarian ideologies, which could increase people’s historical consciousness as people can make connections between past and present injustices. In other words, metamodern works bridge the insights we have gained thanks to postmodernism with the historical teachings that could save us from oblivion and give us urge to change present problems by presenting a skeptical but a hopeful attitude towards metanarratives.

Another point to discuss while pointing out the different attitude that metamodernism has, when it is compared to modernism and postmodernism, is the way it uses irony. Although irony is the primary tool in postmodern fiction in terms of showing the fictitiousness of the historical narratives and creating alternative facts, metamodern works benefit from it only when it is needed, because their main aim is to “provide meaning, hope and reasons to go on” (Salman 65). In postmodern practices, one can see the dominance of irony in both structure and content; however, this has led to the fact that “all totalizing schemes and narratives have lost credibility, and there is no longer even any sense of where to look to repair the lack” (Simpson 115). In metamodernism, the main concern is not to show the fictitiousness of historical narratives, but to show where to look to reach credible sources and what can be done with the information that we already have, to be able to revise the possible scenarios related to historical events. Hence, instead of clearing the grounds through subverting historical facts with a playful attitude, metamodern fiction utilizes historical narratives with a sincere attitude. In an interview with McCaffery, David Foster Wallace, one of the key figures associated with postmodernism and metamodernism, states that fiction should reflect “what it is to be a fucking human being”, as being human already creates an inevitable dark humor. To elaborate on this claim, his example on Kafka’s fiction could be examined:

It’s not that students don’t get Kafka’s humor, but we’ve taught them to see humor as something you get –the same way we’ve taught them that a self is something you just have. No wonder they cannot appreciate the really central Kafka joke that the horrific struggle to establish a human self results in a self whose humanity is inseparable from that horrific struggle. (qtd. in Kaiser 35)

It can be argued that Wallace actually points out one of the tools that can be applied in metamodernism: to reflect the struggle of humans, which already creates irony. Therefore, metamodern fiction could make us face the constant struggle of humanity, which invokes feelings of empathy and sincerity, through rendering manifest the ironical twists of life.

There are certainly a lot of things that postmodernism taught us through its practices such as opposing the one-sidedness of the “noble” aims in totalitarian metanarratives (Russman 128), but now, in the Post-Truth Era, we need an “expanded common

vocabulary” (Simpson 115) and a more serious attitude towards historical narratives. Not only can this expanded common vocabulary remind us of what makes us human, but it can also make us remember the fact that past injustices are beyond national boundaries; they are universal. There is immense confusion and ennui in the Post-Truth Era, so approaching the past from an ironic distance can only lead to more confusion and detachment; what we need is the recognition of pain and a common language to heal from it through regaining credibility in historical narratives, which can be possible through metamodern practices.

As the dominance of emotions and beliefs over facts in the Post-truth Era causes ambiguities and falsehoods related to past narratives especially with the effects of social media, it is not surprising that metamodern life-writing works have recently gained popularity. Metamodern life-writing narratives, for instance, accept their own fictitiousness, but their aim is not to emphasize their fictitiousness to challenge the credibility of past narratives; instead, they collaborate with fact and fiction to manifest the most possible scenarios in a sincere way. In this way, they play an important role in bringing back the credibility of historical narratives and constructing a unity between past teachings and present experiences.

#### **4.2. Biofiction: a Thriving Genre in the Post-Truth Era**

Biofiction is one of the genres that is thriving as a combination of life-writing and fiction and it has become a dominant literary form over the last thirty years (Lackey, “Futures” 343). To elaborate on why biofiction is becoming popular day by day, we should first look at its definition and the difference between biography and biofiction. Although the main concern is to represent the historical subjects in biography, the concern of biofiction is telling a story through using history; biofiction is always aware of its own fictitiousness. Drawing on Keener, Lackey quotes: “biographical fiction is that which applies ‘novelistic’ discourse to the representation of an historical life” (“Locating” 5). Therefore, biofiction’s purpose is to “generate and tell a story. It is not to correct history or write an addendum to the historical or biographical record” (Banks 45). In fact, it can be said that biofiction is a hybrid genre that takes what history gives and combines fiction and facts to create a

good story. The question is, why has there been such a dramatic interest on biofiction? Why do readers want to hear more about historical subjects through such works? The answer can be the increasing search for the credible accounts of historical events, but there is also another aspect that makes biofiction powerful: it is quite effective in conveying story while narrating history because fiction writers integrate their story-making skills with historical facts which helps them turn their works into catchy, reader-friendly pieces that also fulfill readers' need to reach reliable historical accounts. The main difference between a postmodern and metamodern biofiction is that postmodern biofiction emphasizes its fictitiousness through deconstructing historical events with irony and self-reflexivity, while metamodern biofiction presents the facts that can be used in fiction by distancing itself from these facts through postmodern skepticism, but does not give up on presenting the possible scenarios related to historical events. In other words, metamodern biofiction accepts that it is impossible to reflect past events as they are; it is a known fact that memory is a tricky tool that can distort the events, and that even when people experience the same events, they can interpret them differently (Parini 25). However, it keeps on shedding light on historical facts while integrating those facts with imagination. Therefore, metamodern biofiction is helpful in reversing the adverse effects of the Post-Truth Era by eliminating the over-skepticism that caused detachment from historical narratives and replacing it with a self-conscious, fact-integrated fiction that can bring unity and hope. As parallel to this idea, Michael Lackey argues that biofiction writers can be effective in taking the disbelief away, by stating: "What prominent historians once assured us was inconceivable is now considered the most likely scenario, and it was biographical novelist who significantly contributed to this reversal in our historical thinking" ("Futures" 345). Therefore, unlike postmodern biofiction writers who integrate historical reference provided that it is treated from an ironic distance and applies postmodern tools such as parody and intertextuality to manifest self-reflexivity in their works, metamodern biofiction writers present the most likely scenarios through integrating biographical evidence in historical records *and* imagination. As a biofiction writer, Parini shares his purpose while creating biographical novels as

follows: “In these novels, I hoped that my fiction might shine a light into dark corners and make connections that a professional historian or biographer might hesitate to make” (26). Therefore, it can be said that metamodern biofiction writers are more licensed than historians or biographers in presenting the most likely versions of the historical events and making connections between historical events, which make their works more effective in terms of creating a sense of credibility and unity, as they both use the power of their imagination and historical evidence. That is why metamodern biofiction is one of the most important practices that can be used to reverse the unfavorable effects of the Post-Truth Era such as detachment from the past events and manipulation of the historical narratives.

#### **4.3. An Analysis of *The Noise of Time* as an Example of Metamodern Biofiction**

Although Barnes’s fiction shows differences in terms of style and theme in each of his works, numerous postmodern elements such as mixing up genres, subverting historical narratives, and using marginalized characters to emphasize the truths that have been ignored can be seen in most of his fiction, which is the reason why he is mostly known as a postmodern writer. Being different from his postmodern novels, *The Noise of Time*, based on the biography of Shostakovich, shows the features of a metamodern novel in terms of its employment of irony in ways that are different from the use of irony in postmodern fiction, manifesting the effects of the totalitarian ideology and regime and creating empathy towards the main character through drawing on life-writing. Although irony is the main mode in some of Barnes’s fictional works, in *The Noise of Time*, how irony fails to help Shostakovich in terms of fighting against Power is manifested. While presenting how the sanctions of a totalitarian regime affects Shostakovich’s life, the novel presents the examples of verbal, situational and dramatic irony. Manifesting the fears of a well-known composer through including historical events happening in the Soviet Russia and raising questions related to the period, the novel reflects the tragic life of Shostakovich through mixing biography with fiction. The main aim of this chapter is to discuss how irony is employed differently from Barnes’s postmodern fiction, metamodern features of the novel. Furthermore, the novel will be analyzed as an

example of biofiction and its possible functions in the Post-Truth Era will be discussed.

As Barnes points out in the Author's Note (*Noise* 184), his two main sources are *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (2006) and *Testimony: The Memoirs of Shostakovich* (1979). Basing the novel on biographical sources, Barnes displays slices of the prominent composer Shostakovich's life and how his life was affected by the Soviet Union's sanctions through reflecting on the gloomy atmosphere in which Shostakovich lived. Consisting of three chapters, "On the Landing", "On the Plane" and "In the Car", *The Noise of Time* is a compilation of the highlights of Shostakovich's life based on life-writing and asking crucial questions related to power, history and art through portraying Shostakovich's state of mind. In this novel, it could be argued that Barnes performs "the act of incorporating into himself the experience of another...becoming for a while that other person even while remaining himself" (Holden 919), because he puts himself in Shostakovich's shoes through combining Shostakovich's actual memories with his fictional interrogations and reflections. Unlike Elizabeth Wilson's *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*, which goes over the events in the composer's life year by year, the novel focuses mainly on three years of his life: 1936, 1948 and 1960 – the leap years that brought bad luck to him, because he had been challenged by the Power mainly in these years. In fact, the novel unravels the events through using flashbacks and hints in each chapter, which gives the reader an opportunity to connect the dots in his life throughout the chapters.

The title of the first chapter, "On the Landing", refers to the fearful years of Shostakovich's life in which he spends waiting on the landing by the lift to get arrested. The first chapter is mostly set in 1936 and is one of the most disastrous years of the composer's life because an article "Muddle Instead of Music" that was published in *Pravda* denounced his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. From that moment on, Shostakovich started to be afraid of getting arrested for his music as it was publicly denounced as inappropriate. It is still not known whether Stalin wrote the condemning article or not, but the horror that this article brought to Shostakovich's life is immense; the publication day of the article remains as "the

most memorable day of his life” (Barnes, *Noise* 18). Though the opera was a huge success abroad, it was condemned in the Soviet Union because it was “non-political and confusing” (Barnes, *Noise* 27). Stalin states: “[...] But now when an explanation has been given in Pravda, all our composers should start creating music that is transparent and understandable, and not rebuses and riddles in which the meaning of the work dies” (Fay 48) and he points out Shostakovich’s opera as one of the products of formalism. This was not the first time that Shostakovich had been labeled as a formalist, the music authorities labeled his first opera *The Nose* (1928) as a formalist work, too. In those years, formalism was condemned by the Soviet Union because it offered a different style focusing on structure more than content. Realist works which had a clear message for society were expected from the composers; that is why, Shostakovich’s creative musical attempts had some negative consequences for him. The tragedy was that the composers of this period were constantly persecuted by the Soviet Union’s authorities. Although Shostakovich had been denounced as being one of those composers “who had failed to glorify the state” (Volkov 212), he kept on striving for good music:

In his Conservatoire progress report of October 1929, Shostakovich set out to prove his ideological ‘correctness’, declaring that he was about to start work on a “Soviet” opera [...] In the same document he moots the conviction that music was one of the arts most accessible to the “masses”. While wishing to write accessible music, he also considered it a duty to wage war on the “musical pornography” which was being heaped on the mass listeners in the name of accessibility. (Wilson 90)

Thus, it could be said that Shostakovich’s priority was to work hard on his music in order to share the best compositions with the world. However, this was not the ideal world for creative people, as Power was trying to have control over his music. Barnes portrays Shostakovich’s inner state mostly through interrogations on Power and its perplexing sanctions:

Why, he wondered, had Power now turned its attention to music, and to him? Power had always been more interested in the word than the note: writers, not composers, had been proclaimed the engineers of human souls. Writers were condemned on page one of *Pravda*, composers on page three. Two pages apart. And yet it was not nothing: it could make the difference between death and life. (Barnes, *Noise* 40)

The novel emphasizes the fact that Shostakovich’s life is an accumulation of farces turning into a tragedy throughout the novel by reflecting on such interrogations to



manifest the destructive effects of the Soviet Union authorities on Shostakovich. To show the beginning of his tragedy, the novel refers to how Shostakovich's symphony was sabotaged by the barking dogs as an example of how it all started to startle the perfectionist composer:

He remembered an open-air concert at a park in Kharkov. His first Symphony had set all the neighbourhood dogs barking. The crowd laughed, the orchestra played louder, the dogs yapped all the more, the audience laughed all the more. Now, his music had set bigger dogs barking. History was repeating itself: the first time as farce, the second time as tragedy. (Barnes, *Noise* 41)

It is significant to see why Barnes uses the reversal of Marx's statement "History repeats itself: first time as tragedy, second time as farce" (5) to reflect on Shostakovich's life. Shostakovich's life literally looks like a compilation of jokes – "a vast catalogue of little farces adding up to an immense tragedy" (Barnes, *Noise* 172). In fact, it could be argued that his life is a reflection of the irony of fate, in which each event he went through contributed to another farce in his tragic story. Arguably, what he experienced as the irony of fate was caused by the manipulation of a grand narrative, in which truths were adjusted according to power holders. Therefore, unlike *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters*, which reflects historic recurrences mostly as farcical and parodic, *The Noise of Time* has a serious tone which makes us face the challenges of living under an autocratic regime through portraying Shostakovich. It could be argued that the novel sheds light on present events while reminding us of the corruption and manipulation that could come with absolute power.

Besides the things he experienced as a composer, Shostakovich's personal life also included many ironic twists that kept repeating themselves. In fact, he is described as a man who is not very strong when it comes to love and the cycle of his love affairs is summed up in the novel in the following description:

And so he and Nina met, and they became lovers, but he was still trying to win Tanya back from her husband, and then Tanya fell pregnant, and then he and Nina fixed a day for their wedding, but at the last minute he couldn't face it so failed to turn up and ran away and hid, but still persevered and a few months later they married, and then Nina took a lover, and they separated and put in the papers for a divorce, but by the time the divorce came through they realized they had made mistake and so six weeks after the divorce they remarried, but still they had not

resolved their troubles. And in the middle of it all he wrote to his lover Yelena, “I am very weak-willed and do not know if I will be able to achieve happiness.” (Barnes, *Noise* 38)

It seems as though Shostakovich’s life was a joke, but in fact, this was really how his life was going. That is why, both as a composer and lover, he often felt that he had no control over his life. He said to Glikman: “From childhood I have been doing things that I wanted *not* to do” (Wilson 377). He neither could find peace in his personal life, nor did the terror he felt as a composer diminish over time. He tried to survive through accepting that he was a part of farce and tried to play his part accordingly. Shostakovich’s daughter Galina reminisces about the advice they used to receive frequently from their father as follows:

He often told us when we erupted over yet another injustice, “Don’t waste your efforts. Work, play. You are living here, in this country, and you must see everything as it is. Don’t create illusions. There’s no other life. There can’t be any. Just be thankful that you’re still allowed to breathe!” He felt that we were all participants in the farce. And having agreed to be clown, one might as well play that role to final curtain. (qtd. in Wilson 487)

As it is also argued in the novel, Shostakovich tried to use irony as a weapon towards the horror he was experiencing in Soviet Russia, but it could not help much to ease the pain. He waited with his briefcase by the lift for days, but Stalin did not remove him, instead he removed the people who were close to him (Volkov 210), which made Shostakovich scared for his family and himself more day by day. After the denouncing *Pravda* article, his patron Tukhachevsky got arrested and shot, his sister’s husband and his mother-in-law were arrested and his sister was sent into exile (Wilson 145). While these arrests were going on, Shostakovich had an appointment to have the First Conversation with Power and answered the questions of Zakrevsky – an investigator from NKVD<sup>4</sup> related to Tukhachevsky in 1937. Zakrevsky gave him two days to remember everything related to his patron– scaring Shostakovich to death. However, when he went to the Big House to have the second appointment with Zakrevsky, he learnt that Zakrevsky had been arrested. The guard at the Big House’s reception said: “Well, you can go home. You are not on the list. Zakrevsky isn’t coming in today, so there’s nobody to receive you” (Barnes, *Noise* 50).

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<sup>4</sup> The People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs, an interior ministry of the Soviet Union

Assuming that he was going to be killed, Shostakovich learnt that his arrester was arrested (Barnes, *Noise* 50) which is another farce that is added to his story. Indeed, Shostakovich experiences a chain of situational irony, as he goes through a lot of terrifying events except being arrested.

The first chapter mostly revolves around how immensely *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District* changed his life by causing him to be afraid for his life, which contests, in a straightforward manner, the notions of hope and progress:

He did not want to make himself into a dramatic character. But sometimes, as his mind skittered in the small hours, he thought: so this is what history has come to. All that striving and idealism and hope and progress and science and art and conscience, and it all ends like this, with a man standing by a lift, at his feet a small case containing cigarettes, underwear and tooth powder; standing there and waiting to be taken away. (Barnes, *Noise* 41)

At this point, it could be argued that the novel singles itself out from Barnes's postmodern novels which mock the idea of progress through subverting the historical narratives or demarginalizing the marginal characters from the past; it rather discusses that hope and progress are two impossible concepts that can be reached in history in an un-ironic way through portraying a successful composer that really suffered because of the totalitarian regime. In fact, the novel integrates the most striking details from Shostakovich's life with Barnes's connections and sheds light on the dark corners of the past.

The novel not only reflects the fact that Shostakovich led a life full of sorrow and anxiety, but it also builds a bridge between past and present by the insights it casts on the Post-Truth Era. It explicitly shows what could happen to people living in countries ruled by totalitarian regimes. In other words, the novel reflects the destructive effects of beliefs when they surpass the facts. Throughout the novel, it can be seen oppression in this period was so strong that every statement could lead to different convictions, every truth was disguised and "facts were no longer facts, merely statements open to divergent interpretation" (Barnes, *Noise* 52). It can be argued that history literally does not progress; it only repeats itself in different motives and shapes, as beliefs and emotions still take over facts in the Post-Truth Era. What oppressed people in the Soviet Union for the sake of rules and beliefs

turned into the ignorance of facts with the contribution of postmodernism, and because of the manipulation on social media. Drawing on Brotherton, D'Ancona quotes: "Our beliefs come first; we make up reasons as we go along. Being smarter or having access to more information doesn't necessarily make us less susceptible to faulty beliefs." (70), which points out the fact that we will continue to be susceptible to faulty beliefs as long as facts are disguised and ignored.

The oppressions of the authoritarian sanctions of the Soviet Union continue to be exemplified in the novel's next chapter, too. The second chapter mainly focuses on how Shostakovich turned into a Soviet Union representative in the U.S. which provides a hint on why its title is "On the Plane". In the first chapter, all the interrogations and recollections of Shostakovich are reflected while he is waiting on the landing by the lift. This time, Barnes reflects Shostakovich's reminiscences and interrogations in addition to giving hints on what is going to happen next in his life mainly while he is on the plane. Mostly focusing on another leap year 1948, the novel reveals piece by piece how "tyranny turned the world upside down" (Barnes, *Noise* 67) in twelve years. Between those years, Shostakovich's hometown Leningrad was sieged by Germans in 1941 and the chapter mainly manifests how those years of war affected the Soviet Union and Shostakovich's life. Shostakovich composed his 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Symphonies about the start and end of the war and those symphonies were crucial in shaping his career and reputation. Although Lenin's statement<sup>5</sup> was constantly reminded to Shostakovich, who was accused with formalism to lead him to compose realistic music that could be understood by everyone, this fact did not affect the way he composed his works: he made music both for the sake of art and people. He did not shape his life according to the criticisms and condemnations of the authorities, and his unique style made him both stronger and more susceptible throughout his career. His 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony, which was written about Hitler's Invasion of Leningrad in 1941, became one of the turning points in his life that turned him into an international hero. The playwright Alexander

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<sup>5</sup> Lenin's statement on art: "Art belongs to the people. [...] It should be understood for the masses and loved by them. It must unite the feelings, thoughts and the will of the masses and raise them. It should awaken artists in them and develop them."

Kron describes the Leningraders' reaction to the 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony in this way: "People who no longer knew how to shed tears of sorrow and misery now cried from sheer of joy" (qtd. in Wilson 174) and "the 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony's message of anti-Fascism had resounded across the world" (Barnes, *Noise* 74) that made him more prominent as an international composer.

Thus, as the novel suggests, Shostakovich achieved forgiveness with the 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony after his great "fault" in writing *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District* (Barnes, *Noise* 74), but it only lasted for a while. The authorities never stopped imposing their ideas and desires on Shostakovich about how he should compose, disregarding the fact that the war killed thousands of innocent people which had a devastating effect on the nation and the only thing Shostakovich could feel was sadness instead of celebrating the Red Army's accomplishments. When his biography is analyzed, it can be noticed that there is a parallelism between the way the historical Shostakovich responds to the events in his life and that of his fictional counterpart in Barnes's novel, in that they both employ irony as a tool to shake off social pressure on their shoulders. According to his biography, on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1943, he mocked the approaching victory of the Soviet Union against Germany in his letter to Isaak Glikman as follows:

1944 is around the corner. A year full of happiness, joy and victory. This year will bring us much joy. The freedom loving people will at long last throw off the yoke of Hitlerism, and peace will reign throughout the world and the sunny rays of Stalin's constitution. I am convinced of this, and therefore experience the greatest joy. Now we are apart; how I miss you, would that together we could rejoice at the victories of the Red Army led by its Great Commander, Comrade Stalin. (qtd. in Wilson 202)

Since speaking of truth became impossible (Barnes, *Noise* 85), in this example, it can be seen how he used verbal irony as a survival tool. Nevertheless, Shostakovich knew that masses of people died because of the war, so irony could never help him fight against the authorities and ease the pain. As the novel puts it, "this was not an ideal world, and so irony grew in sudden and strange ways. Overnight, like a mushroom; disastrously, like a cancer" (Barnes, *Noise* 86). The expectations of politicians never came to an end throughout Shostakovich's life. Nonetheless, he did not give up on reflecting his own thoughts and feelings on his works. About the

victory of the Red Army, he was expected to write a symphony that glorifies the deeds of Stalin and the Red Army, but Shostakovich only reflected his sorrow about the war. Dmitry Feofanov argues:

The war ended, and the “Soviet Beethoven” was supposed to offer up a Ninth Symphony –something with cannons, chorus and a balalaika orchestra. The chorus was to sing about the Great Leader, who single-handedly won the war. Instead, Shostakovich gave the leader none of the above –no cannons, no chorus, no balalaika orchestra, just a little paranoid hype. (33)

From this example, it could be understood that, just like the novel portrays, Shostakovich refused to obey the expectations of the Soviet authorities once again by reflecting the destructive effect of the war instead of celebrating it.

“Muddle Instead of Music”, a repeating trouble in Shostakovich’s life, kept haunting him even after 12 years. Zhdanov, who was delegated as the authority of ideology and culture by Stalin, published a decree that put many composers on the blacklist of formalism including Shostakovich, reminding “the nation’s composers yet again that the criticisms embodied in the 1936 *Pravda* editorial were still valid: Music – harmonious, graceful music– was required, not Muddle” (Barnes, *Noise* 77). Since Shostakovich was on the blacklist as a formalist one more time, many musicians and musicologists who were also on the list tried to save their career by casting the blame on Shostakovich. Muradeli stated that he had been deceived into taking the wrong path, specifically by Dmitri Dmitrievich Shostakovich, and Levitin, who wrote a book about Shostakovich declared with a clear conscience that he had never once breathed the contaminated air of the formalist’s dwelling (Barnes, *Noise* 77), making himself “something diminished and reduced” (Barnes, *Noise* 87). There were also the ones on the list who avoided blaming Shostakovich and denying their formalism, but it was hard for them to resist such a world of tyranny. Furthermore, Shebalin, one of the best friends of Shostakovich, had a stroke because of the Decree, Khachaturian suffered from a loss of position and Prokofiev suffered financially (Wilson 249-250).

All those events show how the authoritarian system led people to corruption and despair; and thereby to the replacement of truths with alternative facts. The novel presents the search for Red Beethoven as an example of how easy it was to spread

misinformation and slander when there was only one authority in matters of the truth who controlled everything:

The search for the Red Beethoven might have been a comedy; except that nothing around Stalin was ever a comedy. The Great Leader and Helmsman could easily have decided that the Red Beethoven's failure to emerge had nothing to do with the organization of musical life in the Soviet Union, and everything to do with the activities of wreckers and saboteurs. And who might want to sabotage the quest for the Red Beethoven? Why, formalist musicologists, of course! Give the NKVD enough time, and they would surely unearth the musicologists' plot. And that would be no joke either. (Barnes, *Noise* 94)

Giving the example of a situational irony by manifesting a chain of tragicomic events and reminding us of how freedom was limited to only a certain group of people, the novel displays a skeptical and critical perspective towards historical narratives that are written under such an autocratic regime.

Another life-changing event that was added to Shostakovich's tragedy came with the Second Conversation he had with Power. Expecting to be blamed and arrested after Zhdanov's Decree, Shostakovich took a call from Stalin and learnt that he was asked to be the representative of the Soviet Union in a Peace Conference in the U.S. The tragicomic detail here is, he was asked to be the representative of a country in which his works had been banned:

Shostakovich: The fact is, you see, that I am in a very difficult position. Over there, in America, my music is often played, whereas over here it is not played. They would ask me about it. So how am I to behave in such a situation?

Stalin: What do you mean, Dmitri Dmitrievich, that your music is not played?

Shostakovich: It is forbidden. As is the music of many of my colleagues in the Union of Composers.

Stalin: Forbidden? Forbidden by whom?

Shostakovich: By the State Commission for Repertoire. From the 14<sup>th</sup> of February last year. There is a long list of works which cannot be played. But the consequence, as you can imagine, Iosif Vissarionovich, is that concert managers are unwilling to programme any of my other compositions as well. And musicians are afraid to play them. So I am in effect blacklisted. As are my colleagues. (Barnes, *Noise* 80-81)

Consequently, asserting that there must have been a mistake, Stalin gives an order to cancel the Decree's validity and then, Shostakovich goes to the U.S. to give a speech on behalf of the Soviet Union. Through flashbacks, the novel reflects Shostakovich's

regret to have made such a speech in which “he explained to Americans how the Soviet music system was superior to any other on the face of the earth” (Barnes, *Noise* 99). This speech, which was handed over to him by the Soviet authorities, was the second massive humiliation that he had been through. Out of fear, when he was asked if he subscribed to the views expressed about his music and that of other composers by Minister Zhdanov, Shostakovich stated that he subscribed to everything that he said (Barnes, *Noise* 103) which made him ashamed for the rest of his life. Telling the truth, talking about the oppression he had been through was impossible because truth was a threat to survival, but he wanted to write performable music and he still wanted to tell the truth through his music. At this point, how the novel employs irony differently from postmodern fiction could be argued. As the reader already knows what is going to happen when Shostakovich goes to America, such a historical vantage point of the reader creates dramatic irony by invoking feelings of empathy and pity. In this tragic example, in which Shostakovich has to subscribe to the things he does not want to, dramatic irony is used to increase the narrative’s effect in terms of conveying Shostakovich’s tragedy. Therefore, such employment of irony is different from using irony to distance the reader from truth, but instead, it makes the reader feel empathetic towards the main character.

Shostakovich, who was silenced, whose works had been banned, became more and more pessimistic because of all the things he went through. The novel shows how hard it must have been for him to soothe the anxiety he felt along these lines:

But Dmitri Dmitrievich, you are being pessimistic. Music is immortal, music will always last and always be needed, music can say anything, music ... and so on. He stopped his ears while [idealists] explained to him the nature of his own art. He applauded their idealism. And yes, music might be immortal, but composers alas are not. They are easily silenced, and even more easily killed. (Barnes, *Noise* 109)

Indeed, Shostakovich had no chance to speak of truth in his own country; that is why, he was critical of people who were free to express themselves like Picasso “who sat like a rich man in Paris and the south of France painting his revolting dove of peace time and time again” (Barnes, *Noise* 132) while defending communism. The critical tone in the novel clearly shows under what conditions he was trying to compose: constantly fearing death and being silenced. Indeed, the novel explicitly emphasizes



the fact that tyrants and their atrocious acts do not change although the world seems to progress, which turns artists like Shostakovich into cowards:

The world had moved on, become more scientific, more practical, less under the sway of the superstitions. And tyrants had moved on as well. Perhaps conscience no longer had an evolutionary function, and so had been bred out. Penetrate beneath the modern tyrant's skin, go down layer after layer, and you will find the texture does not change, the granite encloses yet more granite; and there is no cave of conscience to be found. (Barnes, *Noise* 164-165)

Confronting readers with Shostakovich's life whose tragedy in hindsight looks like farce (Barnes, *Noise* 164), Barnes manifests the historical oppressions through using life-writing sources which makes us question what happened in the past by voicing Shostakovich's inner thoughts and feelings at that time.

The last chapter, "In the Car", mainly focuses on what happens after the death of Stalin and how it changed Shostakovich's life. Although the threatening atmosphere that came along with Stalin's rule was over, the change of Power did not have a positive effect on Shostakovich's life; on the contrary, it made it worse by leading Shostakovich to become a member of the Communist Party which he had had no intention of joining. To analyze how it became any worse, we must first look at a previous event which clearly shows how tired Shostakovich had been by all the sanctions during Stalin's rule. A sociologist named Comrade Troshin had been appointed to teach Shostakovich Marxism before the death of Stalin. Constantly praising Stalin during the meetings, Comrade Troshin became one of the farcical characters in Shostakovich's life by the comparisons and deductions he made. Completely shocked by the fact that Stalin rang Shostakovich in person and spared some time for him, he said: "I am aware that you are a well-known composer, but who are you in comparison with our Great Leader?" (Barnes, *Noise* 126) and Shostakovich answered that question by saying: "I am a worm in comparison with His Excellency. I am a worm" (Barnes, *Noise* 126). At this point, the novel manifests how Shostakovich uses verbal irony to escape from the authoritative sanctions of Power. In this first example, Shostakovich diminishes himself to a "worm" to mock Comrade Troshin; however, when he describes himself as "worm" again to decline the offer made by Pospelov, who is a member of the Central Committee bureau of

the RSFSR, to join the Communist Party, he ends up joining the party which, indeed, makes him feel like a “worm”. Such example is how the novel reflects ironic twists turn into tragedy from farce, and it shows that it is impossible to use irony to be able to mock what is happening; the authoritative sanctions of Power beat Shostakovich repeatedly and tragically. Shostakovich never wanted to be a part of the party, “because he could not join a party which killed” (Barnes, *Noise* 52), but he ended up accepting to be a member because “he was afraid for his family, his friends and himself” (Wilson 345). He suffered once again because of doing things he did not want to do because of the Power’s sanction over him. Therefore, it could be said that every Power asserted their authority according to their own perspectives, and another ironic twist was added to Shostakovich’s story:

Lenin found music depressing.

Stalin thought he understood and appreciated music.

Khrushchev despised music.

Which is the worst for a composer? (Barnes, *Noise* 115)

Although Power dominated his music in its own ways, the novel shows that Shostakovich does not give up on fighting. As Shostakovich believes that the music is more powerful than Power, he keeps on composing despite all the Powers’ sanctions on him.

Despite the fact that this is not the first time Barnes uses biography in his fiction (*Flaubert’s Parrot* 1984), *The Noise of Time* singles itself out by reflecting the horror of the period through its unique style and content. The novel, unlike a postmodern novel, has a serious tone in which it neither deconstructs historical events nor does it suggest alternative plots; instead, it makes us face the horror of the period by integrating the power of fiction and life-writing. Therefore, its aim is not to point out the fictitiousness and relativity of historical narratives like postmodern novels do; its aim is to present historical narratives and teachings as guides to analyze present events through collaborating with fiction.

A lot of biographies and memoirs have been written on Shostakovich since his death, but it is important to revive these memories today because historicity has gained

utmost significance. The Post-Truth Era, which is the era of amnesia about past deeds, and alternative facts that manipulate people according to their emotions, needs cures that could replace irrationality and ennui with critical thinking and works that could provide credibility. Because the historical teachings have been outrooted because of the effects of the Post-Truth Era, *The Noise of Time* could be seen as the product of a writer's attempt to provide a cure to the sense of oblivion came along with this age. The novel invites us to remember how an authoritative system led Shostakovich to feel like a worm and silenced his voice. Therefore, it could be argued that the novel presents a revision of past teachings by providing critical perspectives and interrogations. Such revision reflects that the novel is a metamodern fiction that oscillates between hope and skepticism, which raises our historical consciousness and empathy. This oscillation could be exemplified by manifesting both musicians' and politicians' perspectives as follows:

Power: 'Look, we have made the Revolution!'

Citizen Second Oboe: 'Yes, it's a wonderful revolution, of course. And a great improvement on what was there before. It really is a tremendous achievement. But I just wonder from time to time... I might be completely wrong, of course, but was it absolutely necessary to shoot all those engineers, generals, scientists, musicologists? To send millions to the camps, to use slave labour and work it to death, to make everyone terrified, slave labour and work it to death, to make everyone terrified, to extort false confessions in the name of the Revolution? To set up a system where, even at the edge of it, there are hundreds of men waiting each night to be dragged from their beds and taken to the Big House or the Lubyanka, to be tortured and made to sign their names to complete fabrications, then shot in the back of the head? I am just wondering, you understand.'

Power: 'Yes, yes, I see your point. I'm sure you're right. But let's leave it for now. We'll make that change next time round.' (Barnes, *Noise* 83)

As it can be seen in the fictional dialogue, the novel questions the executions of political authorities through reflecting the deeds of Power and reflects the distressing and frightening reality of the period in a sincere attitude. In fact, it confronts readers with the effects of corrupted power by reflecting Shostakovich's tragedy and lets them interrogate the period and totalitarian ideologies, while suggesting art as a solution to find hope to survive. Exploring and questioning personal and historical themes, the novel asks crucial questions that could lead to new questions and provides critical distancing to grand narratives and their effects, but it is also loaded

with enthusiasm to revise past teachings to strive for a better world, which increases the novel's efficiency in the Post-Truth Era. Therefore, it could be argued that the novel offers historical insights as an antidote for ennui that dwells in the Post-Truth Era. Cunningham also argues that the novel is successful in terms of raising important questions and exploring historical themes:

The real project of biographical fiction is to explore the ambiguities and lacunae of a given life story, to raise resonant questions rather than propose answers or state biographical theses. Shostakovich –beleagured, cloaked, and controversial in real life, and endlessly self-interrogating in Barnes's depiction– serves this project extremely well. The various questions in *The Noise of Time*, questions about the nature of power, courage and cowardice, personal and artistic honesty, history and destiny, have an immediate resonance today. (11)

Indeed, as the novel is an example of biographical fiction that reflects the past by raising critical questions related to historical teachings and presenting real life memories, it can be said that it is effective in terms of countering the negative effects of the Post-Truth Era.

Besides presenting past teachings with critical thinking and distancing, which provides a solution to irrationality and indifference in the Post-Truth Era, the way *The Noise of Time* makes use of irony also reflects that it is a metamodern novel. In fact, unlike postmodern novels such as *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* which deconstruct historical narratives through irony to construct alternative historical narratives, the novel manifests the irony of fate through giving examples from the agonies of the past and questions the past through integrating life-writing forms, and creates a sense of empathy, making us understand how Shostakovich was affected by the authoritarian regime. The memories of Shostakovich suggest that historical injustices are transnational and his struggle is universal, and the struggle itself creates irony as Wallace also stated. That is why, irony is used to highlight the historical injustices, instead of functioning mainly as distancing or assailing (Hutcheon, *Irony* 47-49) like a postmodern tool. Therefore, with the help of the manifestation of irony, the novel provides reconciliation with the transnational nature of historical injustices by making us remember historical facts that affected masses of people and reflecting on these injustices on a universal scale. Given the fact that

Shostakovich himself was a historical character who tried to use irony to defy the oppression of the era he lived in, the novel emphasizes that his life was actually an embodiment of irony which brings out an immense tragedy. In other words, the novel shows how the ironic twists that turned Shostakovich's life into a tragedy surpassed his attempts to use irony as a way to escape from the terror of the sanctions of Power:

Irony, he had come to realize, was as vulnerable to the accidents of life and time as any other sense. You woke up one morning and no longer knew if your tongue was in your cheek; and even if it was, whether that mattered any more, whether anyone noticed [...] And irony had its limits. For instance, you could not be an ironic torturer; or an ironic victim of torture. Equally, you couldn't join the Party ironically. You could join the Party honestly, or you could join it cynically: those were the only two possibilities. And to an outsider, it might not matter which was the case, because both might seem contemptible. (Barnes, *Noise* 174-175)

As it is manifested in this reasoning, irony could not help resist the injustices of the period. Despite the fact that Shostakovich tried to use it as a tool to escape from the horrifying reality, irony literally took over his life through the repetitive troubles happening to him. Although the things Shostakovich had been through look like jokes, as the novel also suggests, they do not make us laugh; they only make us face the horrors of that period. For that reason, it could be argued that the novel is able to mirror past injustices in a sincere way because fiction is collaborating with life-writing works to show historical teachings with a critical attitude. In fact, portraying Shostakovich as a pessimist composer, the novel manifests Shostakovich's skeptical attitude about reaching "Utopia" through reflecting the effects of the totalitarian regime as follows:

Did any part of him believe in Communism? Certainly, if the alternative was Fascism. But he did not believe in Utopia, in the perfectibility of mankind, in the engineering of the human soul. After five years of Lenin's New Economic Policy, he had written to a friend that 'Heaven on Earth will come in 200,000,000,000 years.' But that, he now thought, might have been over-optimistic. (Barnes, *Noise* 53)

The novel asserts believing in the engineering of the soul was impossible when truth was disguised because of totalitarian ideologies. By looking at this interrogation, it might be argued that the novel's sincere reflections on the analysis of the period along with Shostakovich's memories bring out feelings of empathy and unity, because the novel combines the reasons with the reasonings to make us face

historical injustices through the lens of a real artist's sufferings through merging fiction and life-writing sources.

As a metamodern text, the novel reflects the impossibility of reaching utopia, but it also presents the hope to strive for a better world through portraying Shostakovich's struggle to survive as a composer. Although the novel's main tone is pessimistic and skeptical, the examples of Shostakovich's musical achievements and struggle for survival create an oscillation between hope and skepticism. Throughout the novel, Shostakovich is portrayed while questioning and justifying his cowardice, as he did not choose to commit suicide in such a gloomy period. The novel relates his choice to survive to his fight for not letting the Soviet authorities write alternative stories about his death after his suicide. His justification to choose living is described as follows:

He was saying to the Union of Composers, to the cats who sharpened their claws on his soul, to Tikhon Nikolayevich Khrenikov, and to Stalin himself: Look what you have reduced me to, soon you will have my death on your hands and on your conscience. But he realized it was an empty threat, and Power's response hardly needed articulation. It would be this: Fine, go ahead, then we shall tell the world your story: The story of how you were up to your neck in the Tukhachevsky assassination plot, how for decades you schemed to undermine Soviet music, how you corrupted younger composers, sought to restore capitalism in the USSR, and were a leading element in the musicologists' plot which will soon be disclosed to the world. All of which is made plain in your suicide note. And that was why he could not kill himself: because then they would steal his story and rewrite it. He needed, if only in his own hopeless, hysterical way, to have some charge of his life, of his story. (Barnes, *Noise* 97)

Therefore, the novel interrogates why Shostakovich decided to keep on living and gives examples of his achievements despite all the humiliations and oppression that he had experienced. In fact, it could be argued that Shostakovich is portrayed as a metamodern historical character who could inspire readers to hope through his honesty and struggle to survive without giving up on critical thinking. As a result of his decision, Shostakovich did not give up on fighting for music because he believed music was the only thing that could beat the noise of time:

What he hoped was death would liberate his music: liberate it from his life. Time would pass, and though musicologists would continue their debates, his work would begin to stand for itself. History, as well as biography, would fade: perhaps one day Fascism and Communism would be merely words in textbooks. And then, if it still

had value –if there were still ears to hear– his music would be ... just music. That was all a composer could hope for. (Barnes, *Noise* 179)

At this point, it could be claimed that this aspect of the novel, which manifests Shostakovich's attempts to create music, reflects Shostakovich's modern enthusiasm despite the horrors of the era, because he hoped that his voice would endure time through his music. Therefore, it could be argued, instead of falling into despair and letting his music be dominated by Power, Shostakovich held onto the idea that music could "drown out the noise of time" (Barnes, *Noise* 125), and accepted being a coward for the sake of composing music that could be "transformed into the whisper of history" (Barnes, *Noise* 125). Thus, in terms of reminding of the historical injustices and conveying the idea of surviving for the sake of ideals, *The Noise of Time* is a metamodern novel that could help counter the catastrophic effects of the Post-Truth Era, in which ideals and reasoning are about to be forgotten.

To conclude, *The Noise of Time* is a metamodern novel that manifests Shostakovich's survival over the ironic twists of life for the perpetuity of his music. By sharing the historical agonies and triumphs with a sincere attitude, the novel both presents a critical stance towards historical narratives and promotes universality and hope, which could function as an antidote to the destructive effects of the Post-Truth Era.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This thesis has analyzed Barnes's two novels: *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* and *The Noise of Time* in terms of their changing perspectives towards irony and metanarratives. While these two novels' different attitudes and styles are being discussed, postmodernism and metamodernism have been two main aesthetics and cultural paradigms that have helped in their analysis. It has been observed that *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* has a parodic style while emphasizing the fictitiousness and arbitrariness of historical narratives, whereas *The Noise of Time* has a very serious tone which integrates fiction and biography. In the beginning of this study, it was aimed to discuss the postmodern aspects of *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters*; however, surprisingly, it turned out that it also has some chapters which foresee the aftermath of postmodernism. That is why while analyzing *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters*, its relation to metamodernism and the Post-Truth Era has also been discussed. Another interesting point which connects these two novels is that both novels employ Marx's statement on historic recurrence from *Eighteenth Brumaire*. While *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* uses it to parody past events, *The Noise of Time* uses the reversal of the statement by making it: "History was repeating itself; the first time as farce, the second time as tragedy" (Barnes 41) to manifest the tragedy of the repetitive events in Shostakovich's life.

The first part of the theoretical framework of this study has tried to elaborate on what postmodernism has taught us so far. Postmodernism, through employing irony, parody and intertextuality, has emphasized the self-reflexivity in narratives by blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction. Irony, one of the main modes of postmodernism, is used as an effective tool as long as it manifests and counters the



hegemonic and totalitarian sides of historical narratives, which, thus, prevents these narratives from being dogmatic and conclusive. The other two modes which are strongly connected to irony are parody and intertextuality. Parody makes it possible to embrace the opposition of the natural and artificial by presenting alternative plots to historical narratives and giving voice to marginal characters. To highlight the fact that every narrative is a human construct, postmodern fiction writers employ intertextuality in their works. Historiographic metafiction, which has been a thriving genre in postmodern fiction, uses all these modes to draw attention to the construction process of historical narratives. By countering official histories, historiographic metafiction has a ground-clearing effect on the credibility of such records. It has been observed that although postmodern modes and practices have manifested different sides of the historical facts, they do not work efficiently anymore to interrogate such facts in the Post-Truth Era.

In the second part of the theoretical chapter, the reasons why postmodernism has come to an end are discussed. Although postmodern practices have deconstructed grand narratives to counter their totalized and institutionalized forms by employing irony and parody, it has become self-institutionalized itself (Hutcheon, "Afterthoughts" 5). In addition to turning into an aesthetic which it avoids to become, it has taken away the possibility to believe in any narratives. Indeed, the playful attitude in postmodern practices has asserted alternative facts and subjectivity; however, in time, such an attitude has resulted in over-relativism and disbelief. It has been observed that such effects have contributed to the emergence of the Post-Truth Era.

The Post-Truth Era, which is the period in which emotions are more influential than objective facts in shaping public opinion, has been identified with confusion, oblivion, ambiguity and ennui. This study has emphasized that such destructive characteristics of this period are getting even more powerful by social media's effects and postmodern practices. When social media's immediacy on spreading false information has been combined with postmodern over-relativism and incredulity, searching for credible sources to be able to believe again has become a need in the

Post-Truth Era. That is why this study has elaborated on looking for solutions which could be helpful in terms of fulfilling such a need.

It has been argued that metamodernism, which integrates teachings from postmodernism and modernism, is an aesthetic that has an optimistic agenda that could challenge the subversive effects of the Post-Truth Era. Indeed, metamodern practices give us a chance to have a “sense of moving on” with a critical perspective. As metamodernism suggests oscillation between modern enthusiasm and postmodern irony, it balances empathy and apathy, unity and fragmentation, and scepticism and credibility by problematizing and surpassing modernist and postmodern practices. Offering sincerity and openness while handling real-life problems, metamodern practices are able to manifest why we need to search for a better world, even if it is impossible to get better.

To elaborate more on metamodern practices in terms of fiction, it has been discussed that they draw attention to the connections between past and present narratives by using both irony and a serious tone. In this way, they remind us the transnational aspect of the historical events and injustices which helps shed light on present events. Therefore, the aim is not to mock or deconstruct the narratives, or to be too hopeful to reach an objective truth, but to recognize what happened in the past and what can be done to make a change today with an honest and critical perspective. Indeed, metamodern practices accept that fact and fiction are already blurred, so they employ fiction and fact collaboratively to be able to tackle real-life problems. That is why metamodern practices are helpful in terms of reversing the confusion and ambiguity by leading our focus to find solutions for the destructive effects of the Post-Truth Era such as oblivion and ennui.

It has been observed that life-writing is a thriving metamodern genre because it is one of the practices that could focus on reaching credibility and unity of the past by saving it from fragmentation and ambiguity in the Post-Truth Era. As metamodern life-writing integrates fiction and non-fiction, but it draws attention to the most possible scenarios in the past, it fulfils people’s need to believe in past narratives, which explains why there has been a dramatic increase in these years. Among these

life-writing practices, this study has mainly focused on metamodern biofiction which is a helpful tool that utilizes fiction and facts to counter the subversive effects of the Post-Truth Era. It has been observed that metamodern biofiction is a helpful subgenre in terms of presenting new insights and possibilities related to past events which could help us handle the ambiguity and ennui in the Post-Truth Era. Instead of drawing attention to irony and self-reflexivity like in postmodern biofiction, metamodern biofiction employs fiction which collaborates with non-fiction; such collaboration enriches the historical narratives and gives hope to readers, which is why biofiction as a metamodern practice has positive effects such as bringing back unity and sincerity in the Post-Truth Era.

In the second chapter of this thesis, *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* has been analysed as an example of historiographic metafiction. As it could be inferred from its title, the novel subverts the idea of totalizing history with its mocking half chapter and by using “a” instead of making history a definite unity by using “the”. Indeed, the novel celebrates many diverse forms while drawing inspiration from some historical events. Instead of asserting conclusive narratives, the novel employs such forms to deconstruct historical narratives, and it creates alternative plots while undermining metanarratives. The study has found out that the novel uses parody through turning tragedies into ironic repetitions and returns to subvert the linearity of the events. In many chapters, such repetitions are manifested; however, they are not employed as the main mode of the novel because such practice would lead to another linearity. Besides countering linearity, the novel also subverts causality and rationality by manifesting arbitrariness in some of the alternative plots it narrates. It has been observed that Hegelian concept of history as a dialectical process is problematized in the novel by challenging the historicism which compresses past events into deductive narratives. That is why in some chapters, the mass murders or accidents are narrated without rationalizing or justifying them; the novel emphasizes that such events could happen for absurd reasons or for no reason at all. This study has also found out that Noah’s Ark as a theme is employed in the novel to undermine metanarratives such as deconstructing Darwin’s natural selection theory or biblical

teachings. Indeed, the novel subverts one-sided perspectives of realist historicism by mocking “major” historical characters and giving voice to marginal characters. That is why the novel employs characters such as woodworms, nuclear war victims and impostures as the main characters of some chapters which makes us interrogate historical narratives which mostly present historical leaders’ or winners’ perspectives. Therefore, the novel points out that historical narratives are highlighted or subordinated “emplotments” (White 84), and it blurs the lines between fiction and fact by distorting the idea that asserts history as a unity through emphasizing chaos, arbitrariness and repetitions instead of progress, causality and rationality.

While analysing *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters*, two chapters “Parenthesis” and “Dream” are found to be bridging chapters which are foreseeing what could happen after postmodernity. In “Parenthesis”, the narrator talks about love as the most subjective feeling which could help us understand other perspectives. Therefore, love is helpful in terms of presenting empathy and hope. This study argues that love is a metamodern tool which could counter the subversive effects of the Post-Truth Era. Indeed, in this chapter, love does not assert subjectivity that leads to overrelativism, but instead, love is a humanistic tool which oscillates between modern hope and postmodern scepticism. The other chapter that has metamodern characteristics is “Dream” as it reminds past injustices in a heavenly setting which could show transnational aspects of such injustices; therefore, it gives us a chance to have an idea about the big picture instead of only focusing on little narratives. In other words, this chapter interrogates the postmodern “anything-that-goes” understanding, and it presents an interrogating attitude towards the fact that oppressive deeds could be forgotten without being questioned. Indeed, the heavenly setting, in which the narrator is expected to be happy, turns out to be an apocalyptic place that nobody is judged, and everything is forgotten. Such a setting makes a parallelism between the Post-Truth Era in terms of suggesting an ominous heaven which dooms people to an eternity full of oblivion and detachment. That is why this chapter is foreshadowing what could happen if there is nothing to be remembered or cared about, and it leads us to revise past teachings by offering a sceptical scope.

In the third chapter of this thesis, *The Noise of Time* has been analysed as a metamodern novel. As an example of metamodern biofiction, the novel reflects on Shostakovich's life through narrating a story integrated with historical narratives such as biography and memoir, but it does not try to correct or mock historical narratives while narrating, which distinguishes it from postmodern biofiction. Since *The Noise of Time* is a novel which draws attention to historical injustices by raising consciousness, it could be counted as a helpful work to counter the negative effects of the Post-Truth Era. Indeed, the novel helps eliminate overskepticism and overrelativism which have led to detachment from historical narratives. Therefore, this study argues that the novel plays a significant role in this age in terms of reminding us of past injustices by using a sincere and earnest tone. When the novel's content is analysed, it has been observed that the novel oscillates between the gloomy and oppressive atmosphere of Soviet Russia and Shostakovich's hope for a better world. Although what Shostakovich had been through looks like an accumulation of farces, the novel does not reflect it with a humorous tone, instead, it manifests how all ironic events he experienced turn out to be an immense tragedy. Therefore, irony helps the narration emphasize the tragedy Shostakovich lived. However, the novel does not focus on a never-ending tragedy and fear, it presents a hopeful agenda by manifesting Shostakovich's attempts to create a better world through good music. Since Shostakovich believed that good music could change the world, he is portrayed as a survivor who believes in a better future even though he is oppressed and isolated by the authorities at that time. Thus, this study points out that the novel is a metamodern practice which engages with the revival of sincerity, hope and possible universal truths that could save us from ennui and oblivion in the Post-Truth Era.

As a result, when the two novels are compared, it has been found out that their agendas and styles are quite different from each other. Instead of emphasizing the fictitiousness and arbitrariness of historical narratives and creating alternative facts by employing parody and intertextuality like *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* does, *The Noise of Time* uses biographical sources and fiction to enhance

the narration of a tragedy based on a true story. Therefore, irony and humor are not the main modes in *The Noise of Time*, instead, they are employed to collaborate with the biographical information to present the most possible scenarios related to the past. While in *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* irony and arbitrariness are used to save the past from deductions and conclusions, in *The Noise of Time* the events that Shostakovich experience are ironic, but these events do not create humorous, arbitrary alternative plots. Instead, they lead us to revise past teachings by manifesting the oppressive and manipulative sanctions of the Soviet Union authorities on a well-known composer. Another point that comes to the fore is that causality and linearity are deliberately mocked in *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* by drawing attention to form; however, *The Noise of Time* brings back reasoning and questioning through reflecting on past narratives and life-writing with a serious and sincere tone. Therefore, it could be argued that the focus and style have changed from a postmodern scope to a metamodern outlook when Barnes's two novels are compared, but foreshadowing elements which connect postmodernism with metamodernism are also found out in his earlier work.

In further studies, how irony and metanarratives are employed in contemporary fiction could be analysed. Also, whether other metamodern practices are helping to cope with the subversive effects of the Post-Truth Era could be studied. How will the comeback of metanarratives affect literary works in the future? How could writers make use of postmodern teachings while countering the destructive effects of the Post-Truth Age? What are the other ways of fighting back against such effects? Do life-writing works help us deal with ennui and oblivion in the long run? Further research could be carried out on such questions.

As the world gets more chaotic day by day, it is only hope and sincerity that could save us from despair. The changing perspectives in Barnes's fiction can be helpful in terms of focusing on sharing feelings and creating sincerity and empathy. Such shift of interest in Barnes's fiction, along with the teachings from his postmodern fiction that enable us to be sceptical enough not to be too naïve or optimistic, can make us see the big picture by recognizing older pains without getting lost in this age full of

misinformation and illusion. Therefore, transnational recognition of past injustices manifested in Barnes's and other contemporary writers' fictional works can help us find answers to ethical and pragmatic questions by presenting a chance of understanding and communication.

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## APPENDICES

### A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Mevcut tez, Barnes'ın *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* (1989) ve *The Noise of Time* (2016) romanlarını ironi ve üst-anlatılara yönelik değişen bakış açıları açısından incelemiştir. Bu iki romanın farklı tutumları ve stilleri tartışılırken, postmodernizm ve metamodernizm bu analizlerde yardımcı olan iki ana estetik ve kültürel hareket olmuştur. *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters*'in tarihsel anlatıların kurgusallığını ve keyfi olduğunu vurgularken parodik bir tarza sahip olduğu, *The Noise of Time*'in ise kurgu ve biyografiyi birleştiren daha ciddi bir tonu olduğu görülmüştür. Bu çalışmanın başında, *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters*'in postmodern yönlerini tartışmak amaçlandı; bununla birlikte, şaşırtıcı bir şekilde, postmodernizmin sonrasını öngören bazı bölümlere de sahip olduğu ortaya çıktı. Bu nedenle, *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* analiz edilirken, metamodernizm ve Hakikat Sonrası Çağ ile ilişkisi de tartışıldı. Bu iki romanı birbirine bağlayan bir başka ilginç nokta, her iki romanın da Marx'ın Onsekizinci Brumaire'deki tarihi tekrarlarla ilgili ifadesini kullanmasıdır. *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* bu ifadeyi geçmiş olayların tekrarı için birebir kullanırken, *The Noise of Time*'de ise bu ifade tersine çevrilerek kullanılır. Yani, "Tarihin kendisi tekrar ediyordu; ilk olarak komedi şeklinde, ikinci kez trajedi olarak" ifadesi Shostakovich'in hayatındaki tekrarlayan olayların yarattığı trajediyi vurgulamak adına tersine alıntılanır.

Bu çalışmanın kuramsal çerçevesinin ilk kısmında, postmodernizmin bize bugüne kadar neler öğrettiği üzerine yoğunlaşmaya çalışıldı. Postmodernizmde, ironi, parodi ve metinlerarasılık kullanılarak, gerçeklerle kurgu arasındaki sınırları bulanıklaştırarak eserlerdeki kendini yansıtıcılık vurgulanmıştır. Postmodernistlerin geçmişteki anlatıları günümüzde konuşabilmek için kullandıkları en etkili



uygulamalardan biri, geçmişe ampirik bir şekilde muamele etme olasılığı hakkındaki varsayımlara karşı eğlenceli, hatta anarşik bir tavır vererek onları yapılandırmaktır. Bu nedenle, dilin mecazi bir şekilde kullanımı olan ironi, yani söylenilen ile kast edilenin (kasti veya farkında olmadan) çeliştiği, ya da anlatılanın anlatılan bağlam içerisinde alt üst edildiği durumu yaratan araç (Nicol 13), esas olarak postmodernizmin eğlenceli tarzını tezahür ettirmek için kullanılır ve postmodern eserlerde geçmişin katılığını kırmak ve komik bir şekilde geriye dönük olasılıklar göstermek için kullanılır. Bu iki hedefe ulaşmak için postmodernistler, çeşitliliği kutlamayı ve dünyanın parçalanmışlığına odaklanmak yerine gerçeğin göreliliğini benimsemeyi seçmişlerdir. Böylelikle postmodernizmin ana biçimlerinden biri olan ironi, tarihsel anlatıların hegemonik ve totaliter yönlerini yansıtan ve engelleyen, böylece bu anlatıların dogmatik ve kesin olmalarını önleyen etkili bir araç olarak kullanılır.

İroniye kuvvetlice bağlı olan diğer iki mod parodi ve metinlerarasılıktır. Parodi, doğal ve yapayın karşıtlığını, tarihi anlatılara alternatif anlatılar sunarak ve marjinal karakterlere ses vererek onları kucaklamayı mümkün kılar. Her anlatının insan yapısı olduğu gerçeğini vurgulamak için, postmodern kurgu yazarları eserlerinde metinlerarasılık kullanırlar. Postmodern kurguda gelişen bir tür olan tarihî üstkurmaca, tüm bu modları tarihsel anlatıların yapım sürecine dikkat çekmek için kullanır. Resmi tarihçelere karşı koyan tarihi üstkurmancanın bu tür anlatıların güvenilirliğini yok edici bir etkisi vardır. Postmodern modlar ve uygulamaların, tarihsel gerçeklerin farklı yönlerini ortaya koymalarına rağmen bu yok edici etkileri yüzünden Hakikat Sonrası Çağ'da gerçekleri sorgulamak için artık verimli çalışmadıkları görülmüştür.

Kuramsal bölümün ikinci kısmında, postmodernizmin sona ermesinin nedenleri tartışılmaktadır. Postmodern uygulamalar, ironi ve parodi kullanarak, indirgenmiş ve kurumsallaşmış tarihi anlatılara karşı koymak için büyük anlatıları yeniden yapılandırırsa da, kendi kendisini kurumsallaştırmıştır. Hutcheon bu durumu "Postmodern Afterthoughts"da şöyle ifade eder:

Postmodern gerçekten de yirminci yüzyıl olgusuna dönüşmüş, yani geçmişte kalmıştır. Şimdi tamamen kurumsallaşmış, kutsanmış metinleri, antolojileri, el kitapları ve okurları, sözlükleri ve tarihçeleri var. Hatta kendi yayınevlerinin olduğunu söyleyebiliriz. Artık *Yeni Başlayanlar İçin Bir Postmodernizm* kitabı bile var; öğretmenlerin rehberleri çoğalıyor. Son on ya da on beş yılda tanık olduğumuz şey sadece postmodernin kurumsallaşması değil, aynı zamanda [...] bir karşı söylem haline dönüşmesi ve hatta daha da net olmak gerekirse, belki de yüzyılın son yıllarının genel karşı söylemine dönüşmesidir. (5)

Postmodernizm, olmaktan kaçındığı bir estetiğe dönüşmenin yanı sıra, herhangi bir anlatıya inanma olasılığını ortadan kaldırmıştır. Gerçekten de, postmodern uygulamaların alternatif gerçekleri ve öznelliği öne sürdüğü neşeli tutum, zaman içinde, görecelilik ve inançsızlıkla sonuçlanmıştır. Bu tür etkilerin Hakikat Sonrası Dönem'in ortaya çıkmasına katkıda bulunduğu görülmüştür.

Duyguların, kamuoyunu şekillendirmedeki nesnel gerçeklerden daha etkili olduğu dönem olan Hakikat Sonrası Dönem, kafa karışıklığı, unutkanlık, belirsizlik ve usança tanımlanmıştır. Bu çalışma, bu dönemin bu tür yıkıcı özelliklerinin sosyal medyanın etkileri ve postmodern uygulamalar ile daha da güçlendiğini vurgulamıştır. Sosyal medyanın yanlış bilgiyi yayma konusundaki hızı, postmodernizmin getirdiği aşırı görelilik ve inançsızlık ile birleştiğinde, tekrar inanabilmek için güvenilir kaynaklar aramak, Hakikat Sonrası Çağ'da bir ihtiyaç haline gelmiştir. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma, böyle bir ihtiyacı gidermede yardımcı olabilecek çözümler aramaya odaklanmıştır.

Mevcut tezde, postmodernizmin hala etkileri devam eden bir estetik olmasıyla beraber, aynı zamanda ondan sonra gelen estetiklerin neler olduğu, ve bu estetiklerin ne gibi bakış açılarına sahip olduğu tartışılmıştır. Neo-realizm, post-postmodernizm ve metamodernizm gibi postmodernizm sonrası tartışılan estetiklerin ortak özelliklerinin gerçeklik ve kurgu arasındaki farkı göstermek ve vurgulamaktan çok, iletişime ve paylaşmaya odaklandıkları, aynı zamanda da daha pozitif bir bakış açısı sundukları gözlemlenmiştir. Bu yeni estetiklerde postmodernist teknikler hala kullanılmaktadır, ancak bu edebi estetiklerdeki odak noktası “askıya alınmış bir inancı” iddia eden yapıda değildir (Huber 32), bunun yerine bu yeni estetiklerdeki bakış açılarının gündemi inanmaya istekli olmayı içermektedir.

Postmodernizmin devamında ortaya çıkan bu estetiklerden biri olan metamodernizmin, postmodernizm ve modernizmden gelen öğretileri birleştirip, Hakikat Sonrası Dönemi'nin yıkıcı etkilerine meydan okuyabilecek iyimser bir gündeme sahip olan bir estetik olduğu tartışılmıştır. Gerçekten de, metamodern uygulamalar bize eleştirel bir bakış açısıyla “devam edebilme hissi” vermektedir. Metamodernizm, modern coşku ve postmodern ironi arasında gidip gelmeyi öne sürdüğü için, modernist ve postmodern uygulamaları sorunsallaştırarak ve aşarak empati ve ilgisizliği, birlik ve parçalanmayı, şüpheciliği ve güvenilirliği dengeler. Yousef metamodernizmi şöyle açıklar:

Post-postmodernizm ve neomodernizm, [...] postmodernizm ile birlikte gelen ya da postmodernizm sonrası ortaya çıkan gelişmeleri tanımlamak için metamodernizmle eş anlamlı olarak kullanılan terimlerdir. Metamodernizm genellikle, postmodernist kuşkuçuluğu reddederek ve aslında modernist iyimserliğe karşı bir tepki olarak, hem modernizmin hem de postmodernizmin yönleri arasındaki aracı olarak görülür. [...] Modernizmi ve postmodernizmi aşarak mevcut kültürel duruma cevap vermek için çalışır. Temel dayanağı, inanç, güven, diyalog ve samimiyetin, postmodern ironi ve ayrılmayı aşmak için çalışabileceğidir. Modernizm temelde epistemolojik (bilginin doğası ile ilgili) ve postmodernizm esasen ontolojik (varlığın doğası ile ilgili) iken, 21. yüzyılın ilk on yılında ortaya çıkan metamodernizm, eski modernizmin evrenselliği ve doğruluğunu, aynı zamanda postmodernizmin parçalayıcılığını ve şüpheciliğini sorgular. (37)

Bu yüzden gerçek hayattaki problemleri ele alırken samimiyet ve açıklık sunan metamodern uygulamalar, daha iyiye gitmek imkansız olsa bile, neden daha iyi bir dünya aramak zorunda olduğumuzu ortaya koyar.

Hakikat Sonrası Dönem'in getirdiği olumsuz etkilerle savaşmak adına, özellikle geçmiş ve gelecek anlatılar arasındaki bağlantılar bulunarak, bu bağlantıların ulusötesi yönlerinin vurgulanarak geçmiş haksızlıkların tekrar konuşulması ve gözden geçirilmesi önem kazanmıştır. Khoury şunu belirtir:

Diğer tarihsel adaletsizliklerle ilgili olarak bu tarihsel adaletsizliklerin kabul edilmesine ihtiyaç vardır, böylece İrlandalı ve Maori'nin yaşadığı geçmiş kötülükler, diğerleri arasında, daha büyük bir dinamiğin farklı olarak tecrübe edilmiş suçları olarak ele alınır. Bu bağlantılar, belirli anlatıların müzakere edilip gözden geçirilebileceği ve kültürlerarası yollarla bağlanabileceği küresel bir belleğin temelini oluşturacaktır. (253)

Metamodern uygulamaların hem ironi hem de ciddi bir ton kullanarak ve geçmiş ve şimdiki anlatılar arasındaki bağlantılara dikkat çekerek geçmiş haksızlıkları gözden

geçirmemize yardımcı olduğu ve bu küresel belleğin oluşumuna katkı sağladığı gözlemlenmiştir. Böylelikle, bu uygulamalar bize tarihi olayların ulusötesi yönünü ve mevcut olaylara ışık tutmaya yardımcı olan haksızlıkları hatırlatırlar. Bu nedenle amaç, anlatılarla alay etmek ya da yeniden yapılandırmak veya nesnel bir gerçeğe ulaşmak için fazla umutlu olmak değil, geçmişte olanları tanımak ve bugün dürüst ve eleştirel bir bakış açısıyla değişiklik yapmak için neler yapılabileceğini tartışmaktır. Nitekim metamodern uygulamalar gerçeğin ve kurgunun zaten bulanık olduğu gerçeğini kabul eder, bu yüzden gerçek hayat problemlerini çözebilmek için kurgu ve gerçeği birlikte kullanırlar. Bu nedenle metamodern uygulamalar, şaşkınlık ve usanç gibi Hakikat Sonrası Dönemi'nin yıkıcı etkileri için çözümler bulmaya odaklanarak, kafa karışıklığını ve belirsizliği tersine çevirme konusunda yardımcı olur.

Yaşam yazımının, Hakikat Sonrası Dönem'de parçalanmadan ve belirsizlikten kurtararak, geçmişin güvenilirliğine ve birliğine ulaşmaya odaklanabilecek uygulamalardan biri olduğu için gelişen bir metamodern tür olduğu görülmüştür. Metamodern hayat yazarlığı kurmaca ile gerçeği birleştirdiğinden ve geçmişte en olası senaryolara dikkat çektiğinden, insanların geçmiş yıllardaki anlatılara inanma ihtiyacını karşılar ve bu da günümüzde neden çarpıcı bir artış olduğunu açıklar. Mevcut çalışma, bu yaşam yazımı çalışmaları arasında, Hakikat Sonrası Çağı'nın yıkıcı etkilerini gidermek için kurgu ve gerçekleri kullanan yardımcı bir araç olan metamodern biyo-kurgu üzerine odaklanmıştır. Metamodern biyo-kurgunun, Hakikat Sonrası Dönem'de belirsizlik ve gizliliği ele almamıza yardımcı olabilecek geçmiş olaylarla ilgili yeni anlayışlar ve olasılıklar sunma konusunda yararlı bir alt tür olduğu görülmüştür. Metamodern biyo-kurgu, postmodern biyo-kurguda olduğu gibi ironi ve öz-yansıma özelliğine dikkat çekmek yerine, kurguyla işbirliği yapar. Bu tür bir işbirliği tarihsel anlatıları zenginleştirir ve okurlara umut verir; bu nedenle metamodern bir uygulama olarak biyo-kurgu, Hakikat Sonrası Dönem'de birlik ve samimiyeti geri getirme gibi olumlu etkilere sahiptir.

Bu tezin ikinci bölümünde, *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* tarihî bir üstkurmaca olarak analiz edilmiştir. Roman, başlığından çıkarılabileceği gibi, öyküyü, alaycı yarım bölümüyle ve tarih yazımını kesinleşmiş bir özetle

yansıtmaktan ziyade, başlıkta “bir” kullanarak bu kesinlik fikrini alaşağı ediyor. Bunun yanı sıra, roman bazı tarihi olaylardan ilham alırken çeşitli yazım şekillerini de kutlar. Kesin anlatılarda bulunmak yerine, roman, tarihsel anlatıların yapısını bozmak için bu tür formlar kullanır ve üst-anlatıları baltalarken alternatif anlatılar oluşturur. Bu çalışmada, romanın trajedileri parodi kullanarak ironik tekrarlara dönüştürdüğü ve olayların doğrusallığını altüst etmek için bu tekrarları kullandığı ortaya çıkmıştır. Birçok bölümde, bu tekrarlar ortaya çıkar; ancak, romanın ana modu olarak kullanılmazlar çünkü bu tür bir uygulama başka bir doğrusallığa yol açacaktır. Roman, doğrusallığa karşı koymanın yanı sıra, gösterdiği alternatif anlatıların bazılarında keyfiliği vurgulayarak nedensellik ve rasyonelliği alt üst ediyor. Romanın, geçmiş olayları tümdengelimli anlatılara sıkıştırılan tarihçiliğe meydan okuyarak, Hegelci diyalektik tarih kavramına karşı çıktığı görülmüştür. Bu nedenle, bazı bölümlerde toplu cinayetler veya kazalar, onları rasyonelleştirmeden veya gerekçelendirmeden anlatılmakta, romanda bu tür olayların saçma nedenlerle veya hiçbir sebep olmadan gerçekleşebileceğini vurgulanmaktadır. Bu çalışma ayrıca, romanda Darwin’in doğal seleksiyon teorisi veya İncil öğretileri gibi üst-anlatıları baltalamak için Nuh’un Gemisi’nin bir tema olarak kullanıldığını ortaya koymuştur. Aslında, roman, “ana” tarihsel karakterlerle alay ederek ve marjinal karakterlere ses vererek, realist tarihçilik hakkındaki tek taraflı bakış açılarını altüst eder. Bu sebepten romanda solucanlar, nükleer savaş kurbanları ve sahtekarlar gibi karakterler bazı bölümlerin ana karakteri olarak kullanılır. Bu nedenle, roman, bazı tarihi anlatıların vurgulandığını ya da ikincilleştirildiğinin (White 84) altını çiziyor ve ilerleme, nedensellik ve rasyonellik yerine kaos, keyfilik ve tekrarlar ile tarihi bir bütünlüğün mümkün olduğu fikrini çarpıtarak kurgu ile gerçeğin arasındaki çizgileri bulanıklaştırıyor. Tarihi anlatıların bütünsel olamayacağı ve onların hikayeleştirmeye ve bağlantılara dayalı olduğu romanın “Parenthesis” kısmında da geçmektedir:

Dünyanın tarihi mi? Sadece karanlıkta yankılanan sesler; birkaç yüzyıl boyunca yanan ve sonra solan görüntüler; hikayeler, bazen kesişen eski hikayeler; garip bağlantılar, belirsiz bağlantılar. Bugün hastane yatağımızda (bugünlerde ne kadar temiz çarşaf alıyoruz) kolumuza damlayan bir günlük haber balonu ile uzanıyoruz. Kim olduğumuzu bildiğimizi sanıyoruz, neden burada olduğumuzu ya da ne kadar

kalmak zorunda kalacağımızı tam olarak bilmiyoruz. Ve endişelenip bandajlı belirsizlikle yazarken - gönüllü bir hasta mıyız? - hikayeler uyduruyoruz. Bilmediğimiz veya kabul edemediğimiz gerçekleri kapsayacak bir hikaye uyduruyoruz; birkaç doğru kabul ettiğimiz gerçeği koruyoruz ve etraflarında yeni bir hikaye döndürüyoruz. Paniğimiz ve acımız sadece yatıştırıcı bir hikayelendirmeyle hafifletiliyor; biz buna tarih diyoruz. (Barnes, *History* 242)

*A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* analiz edilirken, “Parenthesis” ve “Dream” bölümlerinin postmodernite sonrasında neler olabileceğini öngören kısımlar içerdiği görülmüştür. “Parenthesis” de anlatıcı, diğer perspektifleri anlamamıza yardımcı olabilecek en öznel duygu olarak aşk hakkında konuşur. Bu nedenle aşk, empati ve umut sunma açısından faydalıdır. Bu çalışma, aşkın Hakikat Sonrası Dönem’in yıkıcı etkileriyle yüzleşebilecek bir metamodern araç olduğunu savunuyor. Aslında roman, bu bölümde, aşırı göreceliliğe kaçan bir öznelliği öne sürmez, bunun yerine aşkın, modern umut ve postmodern şüphecilik arasında gidip gelen hümanist bir araç olduğunu ortaya koyar. Anlatıcı bu bölümde aynı zamanda nesnel gerçekliğin tamamıyla yok sayılmasının bizi aşırı göreceliliğe itebileceğinden bahseder ve şöyle söyler:

Hepimiz nesnel gerçeğin elde edilemeyeceğini biliyoruz, bazı olaylar gerçekleştiğinde, “gerçekten” olan şeyleri Tanrı’nın gözüne sahipmiş gibi değerlendirdiğimiz ve sonra tarihe karışan çok sayıda öznel gerçeğe sahip olacağız. Bu Tanrı gözlü versiyon sahtedir - büyüleyici, imkansız bir sahtedir [...] Ancak bunu bilmemize rağmen, nesnel gerçeğin elde edilebileceğine hala inanmalıyız; ya da nesnel gerçekliğin yüzde 99 oranında elde edilebilir olduğuna inanmalıyız; veya eğer buna inanamıyorsak, yüzde 43'lük nesnel gerçeğin yüzde 41'den daha iyi olduğuna inanmamız gerekir, çünkü inanmazsak aldatıcı bir görecelilikte kayboluruz, bir yalancının versiyonuna diğer bir yalancınıniki kadar değer vermiş oluruz. (Barnes, *History* 246)

Metamodern özelliklere sahip olan diğer bölüm “Dream” dir; bu bölüm adaletsizliklerin ulusötesi yönlerini cennetteki bir ortamda geçmiş haksızlıkları hatırlatarak gösterir; bu nedenle, bize sadece küçük anlatılara odaklanmak yerine büyük resim hakkında bir fikir edinme şansı verir. Başka bir deyişle, bu bölüm postmodern “her şey kabul” anlayışını sorgulamaktadır ve baskıcı eylemlerin sorgulanmadan unutulabileceği gerçeğine yönelik sorgulayıcı bir tutum sunmaktadır. Gerçekten de, romanda anlatıcıdan mutlu olması beklenen cennet gibi ortam, kimsenin yargılanmadığı ve her şeyin unutulduğu kıyamet benzeri bir yer olarak yansıtılıyor. Hakikat Sonrası Dönemdeki düzen ile, bu romandaki insanları

kayıtsızlık ve unutkanlık dolu bir sonsuzluğa mahkum eden uğursuz bir cennet önermesi arasında bir paralellik olduğu öngörülebilir. Bu bölüm, hatırlanacak veya dikkate alınacak bir şey olmazsa neler olabileceğinin altını çizmektedir ve şüpheli bir kapsam sunarak geçmiş öğretileri gözden geçirmemize fırsat sunmaktadır.

Bu tezin üçüncü bölümünde, *The Noise of Time* metamodern bir roman olarak analiz edilmiştir. Bir metamodern biyo-kurgu olan roman, Shostakovich'in yaşamını biyografi ve anı gibi tarihsel anlatılarla bütünleşmiş bir öykü halinde sunar, ancak sunarken, tarihsel anlatıları düzeltmeye veya onlarla alay etmeye çalışmaz. Bu da onun postmodern biyo-kurgudan farkını gösterir. Aynı zamanda romanın ironiyi kullanma şekli de postmodern romanlardan oldukça farklıdır; romanın pek çok yerinde sözlü ironi, durum ironisi ve dramatik ironi kullanılmaktadır ve bütün bu kullanımlar anlatılan trajedinin daha etkili yansıtılmasına yardımcı olur. İroni, postmodern romanlarda gerçeklik ve kurgu ayrımında yardımcı olurken, bu romanda yansıtılan olayların kendisi ironiktir ve Shostakovich'in ironi ile acıyı hafifletmesi ve de yaptırımlardan kurtulmasının mümkün olmadığı yansıtılmıştır. *The Noise of Time*, bilinci yükselterek tarihi adaletsizliklere dikkat çeken bir roman olduğu için, Hakikat Sonrası Dönem'in yıkıcı etkilerini engellemek için yararlı bir eser olarak sayılabilir, çünkü tarihsel anlatılardan kopmaya yol açan aşırı görecelilik ve aşırı ilgisizliğin ortadan kaldırılmasına yardımcı olur. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma, romanın bu çağda dürüst ve ciddi bir ton kullanarak haksızlıkları hatırlatmakta önemli bir rol oynadığını savunuyor. Romanın içeriği incelendiğinde, romanın Sovyet Rusya'nın kasvetli ve baskıcı havası ile Shostakovich'in daha iyi bir dünya için çaba gösterme umudunu bir arada yansıttığı görülmüştür. Her ne kadar Shostakovich'in yaşadığı şey komik olayların birikimi gibi görünse de, roman bunu komik bir tonla yansıtmıyor, bunun yerine yaşadığı tüm ironik olayların nasıl büyük bir trajedi olduğunu ortaya koyuyor. Bu nedenle ironi, anlatılanın Shostakovich'in yaşadığı trajediyi vurgulamasına yardımcı oluyor. Ancak, roman hiç bitmeyen bir trajediye ve korkuya odaklanmıyor, Shostakovich'in iyi müzikle daha iyi bir dünya yaratma girişimlerini göstererek umut verici bir gündem sunuyor. Bu umut verici gündem ise trajedi vurgusu ile bir kaçış olmaktan çok, bir direniş olarak yansıtılıyor. Romanda

Shostakovich'in aslında birçok kez hayattan vazgeçme eşiğine gelse de, nasıl hayatta kalmayı seçtiği şöyle yansıtılır:

Besteciler Birliği'ne, ruhundaki pençelerini keskinleştiren kedilere, Tikhon Nikolayevich Khrenikov'a ve Stalin'in kendisine: “Beni nasıl düşürdüğünüzü görün, yakında ellerinizde ve vicdanınızda benim ölümüm olacak.” Ancak bunun boş bir tehdit olduğunu fark etti ve Power'ın cevabının ne olacağı apaçık ortadaydı. Bu şöyle olurdu: Güzel, devam edin, öyleyse dünyaya sizin hikayenizi biz anlatalım: Tukhachevsky suikastinde boğazınıza kadar battığınızı, on yıllardır Sovyet müziğini baltalamak için nasıl planlar yaptığınızı, genç bestecileri nasıl bozduğunuzu ve SSCB'de kapitalizmi restore etmeye çalıştığınızı ve Sovyet müzisyenlerinin dünyaya açıklanacak olan gizli hikayesinde öncü bir unsur olduğunuzu. Bunların hepsi intihar notunuzda açıkça belirtilmiştir. Shostakovich işte bu yüzden kendini öldüremedi: çünkü öyküsünü çalıp tekrar yazacaklardı. Öyleyse, kendi umutsuz, histerik yolunda bile olsa, yaşamının öyküsünden bir miktar sorumlu olması gerekiyordu. (Barnes, *Noise* 97)

Böylece romanda, o zamanki otoriteler tarafından baskı altında tutulup izole edilmesine rağmen, Shostakovich'in, kendi öyküsünü otokratik güç figürlerine teslim etmemek adına ve iyi müziğin dünyayı değiştirebileceğine inandığı için ayakta kaldığı tasvir edilir. Böylelikle roman, hem geçmişteki bir haksızlığın dünyaca ünlü bir müzisyenin hayatına etkilerini, hem de bu müzisyenin bakış açısını ve korkularını ciddi bir tonda yansıtarak, yeniden empati kurup duyguları anlamayı ve yine de daha iyi bir dünya için savaşmanın mümkün olduğunu gösterir. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma, romanın, Hakikat Sonrası Dönem'de bizi usanç ve unutkanlıktan kurtarabilecek, aynı zamanda samimiyet, umut ve olası evrensel gerçeklerin yeniden canlanmasına katkıda bulunabilecek metamodern bir eser olduğunu göstermektedir.

Sonuç olarak, iki roman karşılaştırıldığında, gündemlerinin ve stillerinin birbirinden oldukça farklı olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters* gibi tarihsel anlatıların kurgusallığını ve keyfiyetini vurgulamak için parodi ve metinlerarasılık kullanarak alternatif gerçekler ortaya koymak yerine, *The Noise of Time* biyografik kaynakları ve kurguyu kullanarak bir trajik bir hikâyeye anlatır. Bu nedenle, ironi ve mizah, *The Noise of Time*'daki ana modlar değildir, onlar geçmişle ilgili en olası senaryoları sunmak için biyografi ile işbirliği yapar. *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters*'da ironi ve keyfilik, geçmişti tündengelimden kurtarmak için kullanılırken, *The Noise of Time*'da Shostakovich'in deneyimlediği ironik olayların komikliği ve keyfiyeti vurgulanmaz. Bunun yerine bu ironik olaylar,



Sovyetler Birliđi yetkililerinin iyi bilinen bir besteci üzerindeki baskıcı ve manipölatif yaptırımlarını göstererek geçmiş öđretelerimizi gözden geçirmemize yardımcı olurlar. Ön plana çıkan bir diđer nokta, *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters*'da nedensellik ve doğrusallıkla biçime dikkat çekilerek kasıtlı olarak alay edilmesidir, *The Noise of Time* ise, geçmiş anlatıları ve yaşam yazılarını ciddi ve samimi bir tonda yansıtarak muhakeme ve sorgulamayı geri getirir. Bu nedenle, odak ve tarzın, Barnes'ın iki romanı karşılaştırıldığında, postmodern bir kapsamdan metamodern bir perspektif ve stile geçiş olduđu, ancak postmodernizmi metamodernizm ile birleştiren temel unsurların da Barnes'ın daha önceki bir eserinde görüldüğü söylenebilir.

İleriki çalışmalarda, çağdaş kurguda ironi ve üst-anlatıların nasıl kullanıldığı analiz edilebilir. Ayrıca, diđer metamodern uygulamaların Hakikat Sonrası Dönem'in yıkıcı etkileriyle başa çıkmada yardımcı olup olmadığı araştırılabilir. Üst-anlatıların geri dönüşü gelecekteki edebi eserleri nasıl etkileyecek? Yazarlar, Hakikat Sonrası Çağının yıkıcı etkilerini giderirken postmodern öğretilerden nasıl yararlanabilir? Bu tür etkilere karşı savaşmanın diđer yolları nelerdir? Yaşam yazımı çalışmaları uzun vadede usanç ve unutkanlıkla baş etmemize yardımcı oluyor mu? Bu tür sorular üzerinde daha fazla araştırma yapılabilir.

Dünya gün geçtikçe daha kaotik bir yer haline geldiđi için bizi ancak umut ve dürüstlük kurtarabilir. Barnes'ın kurgusunda deđişen bakış açıları, duyguları paylaşmaya, samimiyet ve empati yaratmaya odaklanmada yardımcı olabilir. Barnes'ın kurgusundaki bu odak deđişimi, postmodern kurgunun çok saf ya da iyimser olmamak için yeterince şüpheli olmamızı sağlayan öğretileriyle birlikte, bu yanlış bilgi ve yanılsama ile dolu çağda, kaybolmadan, eski acıları anımsayarak büyük resmi görmemizi sağlayabilir. Bu nedenle, geçmişteki adaletsizliklerin ulusötesi yönlerinin Barnes'ın ve diđer çağdaş yazarların kurgusal çalışmalarında yansıtılması, bize anlayış ve iletişim şansı sunarak etik ve pragmatik sorulara cevaplar bulmamıza yardımcı olabilir.

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