

Tribhuvan University

Politics of Memory in Julian Barnes's

*The Sense of an Ending*

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Hari Prasad Dhungana has completed his thesis entitled "Politics of Memory in Julian Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending*". Under my supervision, he carried out this research from July 2021 to December 2021. I hereby recommend his thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "Politics of Memory in Julian Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Mr. Hari Prasad Dhungana, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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## Politics of Memory in Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending*

### *Abstract*

*This research project explores Julian Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending* as a contextual document from the perspective of New Historicism. The narrator, Tony Webster narrates each and every event and related his memories and experiences in non-linear plot memoir. The self-reflexive narration by Tony is questioned by installing and subverting at the same time as which bears no objective presentations. For Tony, history is written by the survivors what they remember in the present. On this light, it is proved that Tony's memory is imperfect and is not in chronological order. In this way, the choice of documentation is subjective and makes differences between the world of himself and reality which seeks the readers to read his each and every memories critically situated on the context of 1960s Britain. To read this text, new historicism has been used as a methodology, especially the concept of Louis Montrose and Michel Foucault as a tool, this research claims that Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending* is a contextual document and an alternative history from the perspective of Tony that reflects the socio-economic and politico-cultural situation of Britain as well as the real scenarios of human relationship, marriage, separation, notion of family and friends after Post World War II, 1960s.*

Key Words: Contextual, New historicism, Memory, Marriage, Politico-cultural, Socio-economic, Relationship

This research paper investigates the politics of memory in Julian Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending*. This text is about political-cultural scenario of contemporary Britain, based on human relationships, marriage, divorce and separation, notion of family and friends and factual truth of 1960s. It is a fictional text based on the scenario of 1960s. Anthony Tony Webster, the narrator and central protagonist begins

the novel with a set of random memories all of which relate in some way or other to make connection later in the novel. It is the collection of memories based on human relationship and effects of after Post-World War II, 1960s Britain.

The novel is really the product of narrator's mind, Tony Webster. The narrator, Tony talks about society and life style of late 20<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Being a narrator's memoir, it directs readers to the scenario of after Post World war II, Britain. The term 'politics of memory' denotes the collection of past memories that could be recorded or discarded according to time frames. Politics of memories could determine how history is written and passed on from one generation to another. Memories may be influenced by contemporary time frames and socio-political history of that time who and how the persons remembered events. Julian Barnes constructs his memories of 1960s in first person point of view through the fictional character Tony Webster, the protagonist and narrator of Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending*.

It is a novel based on the scenario of contemporary Britain Post-World War II. The novel is a product of the narrator and protagonist, Tony Webster's past memories and experiences. The narrative goes backward and forward, that is it has a non-linear plot. Tony talks about each and every incident, and past experiences of his life. The novel is a kind of Tony's personal views to the contemporary time and situation of Post- World War II, Britain.

Every text is a product of contemporary time and changing concepts of social norms and values. Unlike traditional history, new notion of history believes in subjectivity of the text and writer when the text is written. To understand the thematic views of text, readers have to dig out history of the author.

The literary text is both fictional as well as factual. In this regard, fiction is

history and history is fiction. Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending* reflects facts of contemporary world of Post-World War II and changing concepts of marriage, human relationship, separation, and concept of family and friends.

The human relationship with each other goes changing, with the context of time and situation. After 1960s, people have dreamt to live in their own ways independently. The novel based on time and situation Post- World War II, Britain. Barnes's protagonist, Tony Webster travels over his 60 years back and reveals each and every personal relation and time frames. Tony recalls the time and events in his life such as school days, marriage, sex, divorce, his relation with his friends and relatives. He also creates his personal kind of history.

Official history believes in totality of objectivity and facts of every product of the society. It is believed that history is factual based on real objective truths. Only official and authorized kind of history is believable. However, after 1960s people change their view of objectivity to subjectivity. People create their ideas according to their thoughts and intelligences. This is the beginning point for new historicism. The author situates in imaginative world. However, after Post-World War II, the concept of factual history and human relations changed all over. New Historicists study every text with relation to author's contemporary time when the text is written.

Here, the researcher's main concern is to answer how the concepts of factual truth, human relationships, marriage, separation, notion of family and friends are shown in the text and related with certain phenomena of Post- World War II. And, the researcher also shows how the novel reflects factual events and imagination of the author, connecting with context of 1960s Britain. The researcher reads Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending*, connecting it with social, cultural and historical context of the 1960s, Britain with the help of theoretical insight of New Historicism.

After 1960s, the concept of factual truth and human relationships are drastically changed. The concept of objective truth of any historical and literary text changes to subjectivity of the author's historical time and situation when a text is written. Literary text like memoir is interpreted on the basis of factual truth and fiction or imagination of the author. Literary texts also give the sense of factual truth of historical time and imagination of the author.

The author explores Tony's self-memory in a fictional way. The concepts of human relationship and perceptions are changed after 1960s. Tony also at first is in relation with Veronica. After breaking up with Veronica, he marries Margaret. He is not concerned to improve relationship with Veronica. But Tony rejects Veronica as his life partner. And he chooses another woman named Margaret and divorces her too after Susie is born to Margaret. This shows people's awareness about their freedom to live in their own ways. The concept of marriage also changed.

New Historicism holds that literature is the product of author's time and contemporary context of the time when a text is written. In this sense, New Historicism advocates for subjectivity in history. It challenges the notion of objectivity of traditional history. Tony's past experiences and incidents also reflect the factual and fictional contemporary time and situation of Post- World War II. Tony's personal kind of history mirrors the changing concepts of marriage, sex, divorce, human relationship with each other and the concept of society and family.

Different critics have analysed Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending* in their own perspectives and have found out various themes. The novel also shows time frames and changes in Britain after 1960. Some critics have shown thematic analysis of the novel. For example Tom Wilhelms views, "Told in the first person, *The Sense of an Ending* recounts the life of Anthony Webster, especially his life in the 1960s, his

group of schoolmates, and a brief affair he once had with a woman named Veronica Ford” (705). Here, Wilhelmus argues that Barnes’s *The Sense of an Ending* is the reflections of 1960s, the life style of Tony Webster. In this sense, *The Sense of an Ending* reflects the contemporary society of Post-World War II, Britain.

Similarly, Andrew Martino in his book review “*The Sense of an Ending* by Julian Barnes” writes that, “The rest of the book slowly reveals secrets and self-deceptions kept hidden by the weight of buried memories” (56-7). The protagonist and the narrator, Tony seems to live in past events and memories. He has already divorced Margaret, but he knowingly or unknowingly searches a connection to meet her and talks about his latest affair with Veronica. His memories also seem to be incomplete. He travels 40 years back. Martino writes, “Webster finds himself ‘on his own’ as he attempts awkwardly and shamefully, through the mystery of the last forty years of his life” (57). It is only memories for Tony. There is no connection between his past and the present. However, he tries to connect those past experiences with present time and situation.

In this regard literary critic, Liesel Schillinger, in his new essay entitled “Barnes and the Emotions of English man” writes, “The new book is a memory and missed opportunity. Tony Webster, a cautious, divorced man in his 60s who “had wanted life not to bother me too much, and had succeeded,” received an unexpected bequest from a woman he’d met only once, 40 years earlier”(163). Schillinger focuses more on the past experiences about Tony’s personal memory. Tony meets a woman named Veronica 40 years ago and he relates those incidents in the present.

Similarly, another critic, Corinna Lothar in her essay on “Washington Post”, opines that:

Tony fell in love with the elusive and enigmatic Veronica Ford. He explains

that this is what used to happen: you met a girl, you were attracted to her, you tried to ingratiate yourself, you would invite her to a couple of social events, for instance, the pub, then ask her out her own, then again and after a good-night kiss of variable heat, you were somehow officially going out with her.

(4)

Lothar commented on the novel regarding its male female relationship. It is Tony's past memory that is related to the present too. It represents the freedom of individuals to express desire and live as they like.

These critics have focused on the creative issues and political aspects of the text. They have more concentrated on the different aspect of the memoir but none of them has sufficiently focused on its contextual reading from new historical perspectives. They have related the text with Tony's collection of individual memory that may or may not be factual. They argue that the memory of Tony is based on 1960s. Their argument is that Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending* is a collection of experiences and events in Tony's life. They only situate themselves in the sense of memoir based on 1960s Britain. What their criticism fails to unearth is why Julian Barnes writes *The Sense of an Ending* and how it reflects the then society of 1960s. Therefore, this project gives emphasis on the context of the 1960s Britain and highlights how the text shows factual and fictional 1960s Britain from the perspective of new historicism in a critical way.

Barnes's protagonist and narrator, Tony Webster is guided from the changing time and notion of social human relationship. It is the story of the current situation after Post- World war II. Before 1960, people believed in stable relationship and objectivity of everything surrounding the society. There is a drastic change that people change their relation with other people as they wish. There is no boundary to

stay with same norms and values. Tony is single at the beginning of novel. However, later he meets Veronica as his first girlfriend and has sex with her. He breaks up with Veronica and marries another new woman named Margaret. He also divorces Margaret and stays as a single as in the beginning of the novel. He changes himself after that he begins to understand human relationship in relation to his friends and relatives. Later, he seems to go away from family and friends. So, human relationship keeps on changing according to time and situation.

This research work primarily aims to dig out the real scenario of human relationship after Post- World War II, Britain. This research only focuses on the human relationship and the consequences of historical events on human relationship with each other after 1945, Britain. And this research paper studies this text with highlighting the concepts of New Historicism.

Julian Barnes is contemporary fiction writer. Tony and his three friends Robson, Colin, Alex enjoy the school days. Tony describes the arrival of Adrian Finn to his boys in London high school, where he forms a close-knit group of friends with Colin and Alex. Adrian will become the fourth, “There were three of us and he now made the fourth. We hadn’t expected to add to our tight number: cliques and pairings had happened long before, and we were already beginning to imagine our escape from school in to life. His name was Adrian Finn a tall, shy boy who initially kept his eyes down and his mind to himself”(5). Adrian Finn, who is more intelligent and philosophical than them, is seen in the story after some years. His answers to the questions of teachers are more logical and clear. Philosophy is regarded as the root of their behavior. Their behaviors and work are more guided from the changing British society after 1960s. The events of 1960s affect their life style.

Barnes’s *The Sense of an Ending* starts immediately and there is no systematic

organization and specific plot line. Tony narrates his life story from his school days. Tony says, “This last isn’t something I actually saw, but what you end up remembering isn’t always the same as what you have witnessed” (4). Tony’s memory may or may not be true. He assumes that everything we witness in the past cannot be remembered as if all events happen in chronological order. So, the history also highlights the subjectivity of the individuals. The novel is divided into two parts. The first part begins in the 1960s with Tony and his other three friends. Robson hangs himself after a romantic love affair with a girl and makes her pregnant. Here, Robson lives in his philosophies and dies in his own wishes. Their life is oriented from a philosophy of living and dying on their own wishes. The second part immediately starts when Tony receives a letter from Veronica’s mother informing him that she has left 500 pounds and a diary of Adrian to him. Tony remembers his experiences and events in his sixties. This second part is based on contemporary events of the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He is shocked that their philosophical and intelligent friend, Adrian, kills himself after starting a love affair with Tony’s ex-girlfriend, Veronica. Tony regrets about his letter responding to Adrian’s request about dating Veronica. Tony feels sad and humiliated to his answer to Adrian’s letter that Adrian asks Tony to give permission to date his girlfriend Veronica.

Barnes’s *The Sense of an Ending* poses the past and present socio-political status of Britain in a genuine way. In this regard, Louis A. Montrose in his essay *Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture*, argues, “the writing and reading of texts, as well as the processes by which they are circulated and categorized, analyzed and taught are being reconstructed as historically determined and determining modes of cultural works” (15). It means even the text and context are interrelated where text refers to the present and context refers to the past. The novel presents

the factual truth of then society in a fictional way. To understand, Britain's socio-economic and politico-cultural history, we have to go back to 1960 when the effects and consequences of Post-World War II can be seen clearly in the text. Tony has examined the family status of his friend Adrian Finn and finds out that:

His mother had walked out years before, leaving his dad to cope with Adrian and his sister. This was long before the term 'single parent family' came in to use; back then it was 'a broken home' and Adrian was the only person we knew who came from one. This ought to have given him a whole store tank existential rage, but somehow it didn't; he said he loved his mother and respected his father. Privately, the three of us examined his case and came up with a theory: that the key to a happy family life was for there not to be a family- or at least, not one living together. Having made this analysis, we envied Adrian the more.

(9)

The concept of joint family changed to single parent family. Adrian is from a single parent family. Adrian's mother left her home and he was only one person that Tony knew who was from single parent family. The time of 1960s is totally guided from theoretical notion of living. People live with their own analysis of relationship between family members and relatives. There is no single truth but there are multiple one according to persons and their thought and belief. Here, Tony Webster and his friends assume what the reality of Adrian Finn is but they do not know exactly who Adrian Finn is and his family status. The narrator Tony Webster and his other three friends along with Adrian have queries as to why Adrian's mother leaves his father and is living separately. This shows the concept of single parent family during 1960s.

In addition, Barnes picks up the contemporary issues of Britain and shows the factual truth after Post World War II. The novel speaks real suffering and situation of

British people. A closer examination suggests that the official history does not record such marginalized issue. Montrose assumes, “By such descriptive means, versions of the real, of history, are experienced, deployed, reproduced, and by such means they may also be appropriated, contested, transformed” (415). To assess the statement, it highlights that version of reality can be reproduced and transformed. The history may not be factual rather the new history can project reality. The investigation of Montrose’s claim suggests that the new text questions the previous text as does the new history to the history of past. The memoir of Tony can be other version of reality of Britain revealing more factual knowledge of 1960s.

Divorce rate increased drastically after 1960. Women also chose to live single or stay with their children. This is the changing notion of big joint family to small broken family. It does not matter if people live in joint family or single parent broken family. In this regard, Christopher writes, “With in the domestic sphere, divorce rates have continued to rise and in 1994, some 40 per cent of marriages ended in divorce, leaving many women in single parents households” (19).

If we analyze the data of 1990s of Britain, 40 percent of marriage ended in divorce and increased the concept of single parent family. In this text, Adrian is the only one person who is from single parent family. His parents are divorced which is rare in their environment but Adrian keeps much about his personal life to himself. Adrian is the only one of them who seems to have a slightly more novelistic life. What Tony remembers most about him is his stunning intellect. These lines show the concept and practice of single parent family as well as divorce. It is the time of changing social norms and values.

New historicism reads every text with relation to the contemporary time and changing time frames. To read New Historicism, Rob Pope writes, “Do this

systematically with attention to every major aspect of the text in context and every moment of production and reception” (111). New Historicism focuses on the central ideas of any text that is found in the context of the text. The researchers or readers have to go deep to analyze from the context of the text. The readers have to go back up that time when a text is written to understand its events and consequences. The readers focus on how the events are presented in the documents like newspaper, historical books and other literary and non-literary works. So, new historicism focuses more on contemporary time when the text is written. Furthermore, Lois Tyson writes, takes an example of Revolutionary war of 1776:

New historical interest in the battle itself would produce such questions as, At the time in which it was fought, how was this battle represented (in newspapers, magazines, tracts government documents, stories, speeches, drawings and photographs) by the American colonies or by Britain (or by European countries), and what do these representation tell us about how the American Revolution shaped and was shaped by the culture that represented it? (282)

New historicism connects every text with contemporary time frame and the events happen at that time. To analyze every text, the readers have to know historical events and how they are represented in literary text.

The author portrays the changing life style of fictional characters for example Tony Webster, relating 1960s Britain. In this regard John Brannigan writes, “A text’s meaning could only be seen in the context of definite historical situation, when in fact that text had already participated in shaping and defining those historical situations” (60). Here, Brannigan argues that the meaning of the past is related to the study of that time. To clearly understand any text, readers have to dig out those historical

situations presented in the text. From this argument, if we read the context of 1960s Britain, people are dreaming of more luxurious life style.

The effects of post-World War II could be seen in the text easily. Britain faces a harsh economic crisis. The economic status of people was really gone down. Tony narrates:

Back then, things were plainer: less money, no electric devices, little fashion tyranny, no girlfriends. There was nothing to distract us from our human and filial duty which was to study, pass exams, use those qualifications to find a job, and then put together a way of life unthreateningly fuller than that of our parents, who would approve while privately comparing it to their own earlier lives which had been simpler therefore superior. (8)

The process of developing things like electric devices is going on and people are waiting for those electric devices. People assume that the high development of everything will make their life easier. Britain faced drastic economic problems during Post World War II. There is nothing in order. People wanted to forget revolutionary war and had become more materialistic.

Christopher writes, “In 1945 Britain was ready for change” (2). It was the time that the Post-World War II just ended and Britain is improving and rising from loses of the devastating and horrible war. He further adds that “The generation which had won the war also wanted fun and consumerism which the government had failed to deliver, and in 1951 Labor lost the election to the Conservatives led by Harold Macmillan” (2). The people who win war want more freedom and luxurious things. It is the notion of changing from one era to another. To overcome from pain of war, people have dreamt of more luxurious life style and fun for each other.

Identity is constructed from perspective of the society where the persons live. The

personals interact with society and its norms and values at the time. In this sense, the identity of the individual is constructed from the society where they live. Here, Brannigan writes, “The self is constructed in relation to society and is fashioned in the interaction between social norms and self-invention” (74).

Our identity is totally dependent on social norms and values of our society. In context of the novel, Tony narrates:

In the meantime, we were book-hungry, sex-hungry, meritocratic, anarchistic. All political and social system appeared to us corrupt, yet we declined to consider an alternative other than hedonistic chaos. Adrian however pushed us to believe in the application of thought to life in the notion that principles should guide actions. (10)

Tony narrates that the time is guided from philosophical notions of life. Adrian assumes that people should live with their thought. In this respect, Adrian is more philosophical than his other friends. He commits suicide proving that he is practically philosophical individual. In the same manner, people in 1960s are more guided from philosophy in their life style. People want to live and pass time with notion of philosophy and imaginary pleasure in their life style. They enjoy with the power of imagination and images created in their mind. People live with their philosophy and thought in 1960s.

New Historicism is a fascinating new critical practice which shows a resurgence of interest in history. It is a reconstruction of the past from a present perspective, and highlights the role of present in remaking the past and making it more useable to the present. The text has historicity as it is embedded in the social and cultural context, and history has a claim textuality as we have no access to the full lived authentic past and only traces of it are preserved. It treats a work of literature not as a story worthy

of analysis but as a representation of historical forces. This modern school of literary criticism considers the social, cultural, historical, economic and political implications of the text. For this purpose, Tony doubts that their parents do not believe in their behaviors and their actions. Their parents warn them for their behavior and their action. They are teenagers. They may do wrong things against social norms and values in his parents' view point. In this sense, Tony writes:

Our parents thought we might be corrupted by one another into becoming whatever it was they most feared: an incorrigible masturbator, a winsome homosexual, a recklessly impregnatory libertine. On our behalf they dreaded the close ness of adolescent friendship, the predatory behavior of strangers on trains, their lure of the wrong kind of girl. (11)

The parents and relatives of the children and teenagers are worried about the career and life style of their children. People live with their philosophy and thought. In the same manner, Tony assumes that people want more freedom after the devastating effects of war in daily life style. Tony admires more Adrian for his philosophical lifestyle and brilliance. Parents are more worried about wrong behaviors of the children. Students like Tony and his other friends like to live in cooperation and enjoy in their life. They search for the sources of freedom but the parents are worried about the behaviors of their children.

New historicism believes in subjectivity. The text is the product of our social and cultural values. What we do in the society is to be the history of us and our society. New historicism reads text from subjective point of view. In this regard, the extracted line from Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending* clarifies the point that history is the lines of subjective interpretation, "The question of subjective versus objective interpretation, the fact that we needed to know the history of historian in order to

understand the version that is being put in front of us” (12-13). The narrator, Tony says that there are certain differences between subjective and objective interpretation. To understand the nature of interpretation, we have to go deep the time puts in front of us. For this purpose, Barnes’s *The Sense of an Ending* claims that the subjective interpretation of the text should be based on contextual reading of that time. The time of 1960s, is based on subjectivity. Everything can be interpreted from individual perspectives. There are multiple truths and no factual truth anywhere. Truth is based on subjective interpretation of the individuals.

New Historicism questions that it is impossible to write history from objective point of view. The history is written from people’s memories and past experience. It is the concept of new historicism that every text and context also shows the history of that time. The historicists have to connect experience and memory of people with past action and experience. Tony explores, “So how might anyone write Robson’s story in fifty years’ time, when his parents are dead and his girlfriend has disappeared and doesn’t want to remember him anyway?” (18). Tony writes what he remembers about his friend, Robson. It is the memoir of Tony. Memory may or may not be true. It is totally based on the person who narrates the story. So, history is written from the memory of the survivor what he/she remembers at the time.

The concept of love and marriage changes all over. People can have sex without marital status. It is not necessary to marry someone for intercourse. For proving this argument, the researcher picks out these lines from Barnes’s *The Sense of an Ending*:

She was in her second term at University, and had been sleeping with a boy who had – openly, and to her knowledge – been sleeping with several other. What he was doing was auditioning them all before deciding which to ‘go out’ with. The daughter was upset, not so much by the system –though she half-perceived its

injustice- as by the fact that she hadn't been one finally chosen. (21)

Tony talks about his woman friend whose daughter goes out with a boy. The boy does not choose single girl but other girls at the same time, making comparison with each other. In this sense, the male individuals have freedom to choose the female members to marry and intercourse during 1960s.

New Historicism involves a parallel reading or juxtaposition of the literary and the non-literary texts of the same historical period. Both are given equal importance and allowed to work as sources of information or interrogation with each other. This way, the non-literary text becomes not a con-text, but a co-text, along with the literary work. The literary text is placed within the framework of the non-literary text which is closely read. Previous writings about the text are ignored and the text is subjected to fresh scrutiny mainly from the historical point of view.

The concept of sex changed. Females want more sexual liberties in comparison to males. In this regard, Tony and Veronica continue dating during their second year. Veronica lets Tony more sexual liberties with her. This can be seen in the novel clearly:

Veronica wasn't very different from other girls of the time. They were physically comfortable with you took your arms in public, kissed you until the color rose and might consciously press their breast against you as long as there were about five layers of clothing between flesh and flesh. They would be perfectly aware of what was going on in your trousers without ever mentioning it. (22)

Tony is easier to have "full sex" with Veronica who does not let him go that far. Tony assumes Veronica as other girls who make love affairs with the boy whom they want. Tony wants to have girlfriend like his classmate Robson has had. He finds Veronica

whom he describes as nice but he also finds her intimidating with her love for poetry, her sophisticated taste in records and her bemused attitude with respect to his bumbling attempt to be clever. She also asks him where he thinks the relationship is going, a question that makes him uncomfortable: he says he prefers to live in the present.

Michel Foucault opines that any sort of a literary text is the product of the power structure of society. He argues that, “Analysis of literary texts could not be restricted to these texts themselves or to their author’s psychology and background rather the larger contexts and cultural conventions in which texts were produced needed to be considered” (Habib 766). Foucault views power as not the domination by one to other rather it is a productive network functioning horizontally in a society. In this regard, if we analyze the context of the Barnes’s fiction *The Sense of an Ending*, we can find the context of the novel is same as like happening after post World War II. Tony narrates that people do not have clear idea about sex and happy life. Different persons have different opinion. It is subjective view of the people and it obviously differs from each other. Tony does not have clear idea that he definitely confused about the age of his girlfriend, Veronica that, “She was five months older than me and sometimes made it feel like five years.” (25). Sometimes, he feels that he is older than his girlfriend, Veronica in front of her. It is embarrassing moment for him. It is said that wife is younger than husband from social norms and values. It shows, after 1960s age does not determine between husband and wife for their conjugal life, cooperation and sharing in their whole life.

Subjectivity or selfhood is identified by culture that is the product of society. Subjectivity or selfhood is guided by ideology formed in society. Our experience of fiction is more like dreaming than like our normal walking activity. It makes us

physically inert yet exercises our imagination. Subjectivity is shaped by and shapes the culture into which subject is born. Individual identity is not merely a product of society. Neither is it merely a product of individual will and desires. Instead, individual identity and cultural milieu reflect and define each other. Lois Tyson further elucidates this in the following extract:

Is human identity socially determined or are human beings free agents? For new historicism, this question cannot be answered because it involves a choice between two entities that are not wholly separate. Rather, the proper question is, “What are the processes by which individual identity and social formations—such as political, educational, legal, and religious institutions and ideologies—create, promote, or change each other?” For every society con- strains individual thought and action within a network of cultural limitations while it simultaneously enables individuals to think and act. (284)

In this extract, Tyson proves that subjectivity or selfhood of people is constrained by plenty of predictable and unpredictable forces. Identities of people at large are shaped and sustained jointly by social structure, ideologies and political, educational, legal, religious and institutional strains.

Tony narrates that after he and his girlfriend Veronica broke up, Veronica sleeps with him, “After we broke up, she slept with me” (35), an event that Tony describes as happening essentially without him deciding or willing it. After Tony has sex with Veronica, he has decided that he does not want a relationship with Veronica. When Tony tells her this, she gets enormously upset. Tony tries to put her out of his life, “And I told myself I didn’t have anything to feel guilty about: we were both near adults, responsible for our own actions, who had freely entered in to a relationship which hadn’t worked out. No one had got pregnant, no one had got killed” (38). It is

said that all things happens in our life are the consequences of our decisions. Tony also does not feel any guilty to abandon Veronica from his. It's all happened because of their choices. In another context, Tony's friend Robson makes his girlfriend pregnant and kills himself tragically. However, Tony narrates that Veronica is not pregnant. From this evidence from the text, the researcher argues that criminal acts such as making girl pregnant is against of social norms and values. It also shows that Robson kills because of the norms and values of contemporary society of 1960s, Britain. Tony breaks up with Veronica, he finds a girl named Annie. Here, Tony leaves his first girlfriend named Veronica and making love affair with another girl named Annie. This act of Tony proves that male individuals are guided from having multiple girlfriend and love affair. Tony also has affair with Veronica at first, then Annie and marries to Margaret at last.

After graduating, Tony spends a few months travelling around the United States. He dates a girl named Annie during his time there, reveling in how easy going and thus unlike Veronica, she is, "To be friends and bed companions, to laugh and drink and smoke a little dope together, to see a bit of the world side by side and separate without recrimination or blame. Easy come easy go"(45). It shows the relationship of 1960s is not long lasting. People make relationship only for their benefits. Tony abandons Veronica and Annie after he gets what he expects from them. The concept of relations gets changed to personal benefits and only for self-orientated pleasure and happiness. It also seems that Tony makes relationship with girls only for enjoyment and love affair. He is not dedicated to anyone.

New historicism reads the literature in relation to history of that time. Literary texts like fiction also can be factual and true. The historicists have to connect those events and phenomena with the context of the time. Every literary text somehow is

connected to the certain context and time frame of the text. For this purpose,

Branningan views that:

New historicisms have made the study of literature in relation to history less a matter of supplying incontrovertible historical facts as background information to illuminate the themes, forms and contents of literary texts and more a matter of addressing the role that discourse, including literature, plays in negotiating and making manifest the power relation and structure of a culture.(81)

Literature gives back ground information for the historicist to write the history of that time. In same manner, if we want to dig out the history of Britain during 1960s, we have to connect the text with context and time frames of 1960s, Britain. How the literary texts have been written and what things are represented in the text. In the same way, Tony gets a job in arts administration, where he meets Margaret, marriage her and has a daughter, Susie:

By now I'd left home and started work as a trainee in arts administration. Then I met Margaret; we married, and three years later Susie was born. We bought a small house with a large mortgage; I commuted up to London every day. My traineeship turned in to a long career. Life went by. Some Englishman once said that marriage is a long dull meal with the pudding served first. (53)

Tony explores that he marries Margaret. Susie is burned after three years they got married. It shows that there is the tradition of family planning. They also try to maintain some gap between two children. Women become aware about their career. They make plan for small happy family.

According to Foucault, power is not always repressive. It bears the qualities of productivity and creative potential. It is not the ruthless domination of the weak by strong. For him, power does not move in one direction instead it circulates to all

directions to and from all social levels all time. Power is never ending process and in the way of formation. For this purpose, new historicism has great affinity with Foucault as he states:

Power is everywhere not because it embraces everything but because it comes from everywhere. Power comes from below that is there is no binary and all encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relation serves a general matrix no such duality extending from the top down. There is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives. Where there is power, there is resistance. This resistance is never in position of exteriority in relation to power. One is always inside power. There is no escaping it. There is no absolute outside where it is concerned, or that history is being the rules of reason, power is the rules of history, always emerging the winner. (95)

From this definition of power and its scope, it is obvious that power does not get percolated hierarchically. It subverts the traditional concept of power as only tool for subjection and domination since it turns the negative concept of power upside down. Power is all pervasive and deserves equal weight.

After family planning gets introduced in Britain, Abortion also becomes legal in the context of Britain, “In 1967 the Abortion Act permitted legal terminations for social and health reasons. The same years, the Family Planning Act enabled women to obtain contraceptive known as the Pill’ which become available free of charge from 1974” (Christopher 7). In this context, Tony also explores that they have planned for their first child, “Anyway, Margaret doesn’t like surprises. She was- is – someone who likes to plan things. Before, we had Susie, she used to monitor her fertility cycle and suggest when it might be most propitious to make love” (114). Tony and Margaret make plan for their first child, Susie. It was the time of 1960s that there was

no use of any family planning tools and method. It shows that the concept of family planning is introduced after 1960s. It also shows the beginning for family planning. After 1960s, Britain gets changed in term of family planning and its perspectives.

Christopher writes that:

Before the advance of the 1960s, many women's lives were conditioned by their reproductive abilities. But on taking control of their fertility, they could begin to control their lives. They could decide if they wanted to become wives and mothers, or if they wanted to plan or postpone family life to fit with their job" (7).

Women have right to have children or stay as single in their life time. If they are doing some jobs, they can do their respective jobs and runs family life their family planning. It is the new concept of the time that women try to come out from house old activities to outside world.

New Historicism is the new theoretical insight that it valorizes the contextual reading of any fictional text. The critic Lois defines New Criticism as, "New critical reading usually confined themselves to the analysis of some aspect of work, for example, its imaginary, the role of the narrator or of the minor characters, the function of time in the work, the pattern of light and dark created by setting, or some other formal element" (149). It means New Criticism never gives emphasis on historical and cultural contexts. But contextual reading of New Historicism gives emphasis to historical context. In the text *The Sense of an Ending*, Tony explores his own experience, memory and events relating to the time frames of 1960s. Eventually Margaret meets a restaurant owner and leaves Tony for him, but the man ends up leaving Margaret in turn:

I enjoyed my marriage but was perhaps too quiet, too peaceable, for my own

good. After a dozen years Margaret took up with a fellow who ran a restaurant. I didn't much like him or his food, for that matter, but then I wouldn't, Would I? Custody of Susie was shared. Happily, she didn't seem too affected by the break-up; and as I realize, I never applied to her my theory damage. (53)

The two of them become friends again. Once Margaret suggests, they get back together, but Tony believes that she does not mean it. Tony divorces Margaret after 12 years they get married. They have no worries about the divorce that they have departed each other. They begin their own way of life separately. It shows that the concept of marriage and separation in 1960s. There is no restriction for men and women for joining and breaking the relationship between them. Tony knows that Margaret is not happy with him and restaurant runner also. Tony also develops good relationship with Margaret after they divorce. These all lines show that the concept of family and separation drastically changes all over during 1960s.

New historicism does not believe in linear progression as like traditional historicism. Lois Tyson opines that, "For new historicists, history cannot be understood simply as a linear progression of events" (283). New historicism also focuses on the non-linear plot and New Historicism more focuses on the event and how the events happen. It also accepts the subjectivity of the locality and its situation and context. Tony reflects that history is subjective. It is written according the persons who witness it:

History is that certainty produced at the point where the imperfections of memory meet the inadequacies of documentation. I still read a lot of history and of course I've followed all the official history that's happened in my own lifetime – the fall of Communism, Mrs. Thatcher, 9/11, global warming- with the normal mixture of fear, anxiety and cautious optimism. But I have never felt

the same about it- I've never quite trusted it- as I do events in Greece and Rome, or the British Empire or the Russian Revolution. (56)

Barnes explores that the history is written from non-linear plot. There may or may not be events in chronological order. All official history may not be factual. It may abandon the real suffering of the marginalized people. For writing the history of marginal issues, the insights of new historicism should be used. This is fictional text but it also adds background ideas for writing history of 1960s Britain. Likewise history is written on the background and contextual studies of the time.

Tony wants to visit his daughter, Susie but Susie thinks email works enough for their good relationship. It shows the modern world and its behavior towards human beings. Email is not sufficient in all time. Tony is in his 60s. So he thinks he needs care and family support. Unfortunately, he is divorced single man, "Living alone has its moments of self-pity and paranoia"(58). This line shows the changing concept of human relationship and family life. Before, Tony is married and he is divorced now. In Britain, after World War II, people live single and in family as they wishes.

The diary is the source of record that the people write in their day to day life. Tony's dead friend Adrian also keeps diary himself. After his death, the diary is sent to Tony. Tony also does not keep ant things those will remind him about past memories and relationship with friend.

Traditional historicism holds that the proper aim of literary criticism is to attempt reconstruct the past objectively. However, New Historicism suggests that history is only reconstructed through subjective interpretation. Our understanding of the past is always conducted by our present consciousness. Louis Montrose lays out that as critics, we are historically bound and we may only reconstruct the historical through the filter of our consciousness:

Our analyses and our understanding necessarily proceed from our own historically, socially, and institutionally shaped vantage points; that the histories we reconstruct are the textual constructs of critics who are, ourselves, historical subjects. Identity is fashioned by social institution. Literature is a cultural creation constructed by more than one consciousness. Therefore, social, political, religious and economic factors of a given society determine the literature it produces. (23)

For Montrose, contemporary historicism must recognize the critic exists in history and relating to the present time. The texts are inscriptions of history and representation of those texts. New Historicism also interprets contemporary texts of the past relating with social, cultural and political context of the time. Montrose suggests that this kind of critical practices constitutes a politics of culture.

Tony describes the dress of his girlfriend, Veronica that is simple. It shows the social norms and values about woman dress up in 1960s, “She was wearing a utilitarian tweed skirt and a rather shabby blue mackintosh; her hair, even allowing for the breeze off the river, seemed unkempt. It was the same length as forty years earlier but heavily streaked with grey”(85). The way of dressing is same for forty years. It does not change at all. The dress of Veronica shows that the culture of dressing during 1960s. In the same lines, Tony confuses that if he has to choose between Margaret and Veronica, which one he should choose. One is his girlfriend another is his ex-wife. He is attracted to both, “I’d been attracted to both Veronica and Margaret.” (87). It is the confusion of the people of 1960s that they have multiple ideas for the same ideas. Tony is totally confused between two choices that is between first girlfriend and already divorced wife. It also indicates that after Post World War II, people are confused about the way of life before and after the war time. People seek more

pleasure and enjoyment after war in the context of 1960s, Britain.

New historicism questions the virtue of objectivity and factual truth of history. History is subjective. It is written from the memory of the persons who witness the events. In the context of Barnes's fiction *The Sense of an Ending*, to write a history of Adrian, there is no document, no proof except Veronica who witness everything around Adrian's Life, "And Mrs. Ford was dead. And Brother Jack was off the scene. The only possible witness, the only corroborator, was Veronica." (Barnes 103). This extract shows that the history is written in the perspectives of Veronica who is near Adrian and she also understands him more than other. It also shows that how Adrian's history will be written is totally dependent how Veronica feels it and expresses it. All memories of Veronica could not be true. They may be half true and half false. So, it is New Historicism that focuses the subjectivity of the persons and context of the time.

Internet is common in modern age. People use it for different purposes. It was recently discovered. People can search everything using internet and its different kind of browsers. World becomes a global village. People can communicate from distance each other like face to face communication. Christopher writes in the book titled *British Culture* that, "Telecommunication and the internet had increasingly become part of people's daily lives and a globalization of news, politics and economy meant that events could be watched as they happened almost anywhere in the world" (18). In this regard, Tony also uses internet to find out the house of Ford Family on Google, "On a whim, I Googled Chislehurst. And discovered that there'd never been a St Michael's church in the town" (106). This extract shows that the uses of internet in the context of Barnes's fiction *The Sense of an Ending*. This also shows the era of science and technology that we can find everything online. Science and technology

make human life easier

History is a construction through power truth nexus. Power creates history and history creates subject position. In fact, Foucault's theories have been useful to in dealing with the challenges to paradigms of body, gender and sexuality, where he asked basic questions and problematizes gender prejudices presented and represented in history through out. He critiques the classical ways of thinking about the subject as a rational, unified being with a fixed core or essence arguing that: "Nothing in man not even his body is sufficiently stable to serve as a basis for self-recognition or for understanding other men"(87-8). There is no natural body or pre-discursive, essential human subject who is "amputated, repressed, altered by our social order. It is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it according to a whole technique of forces and bodies" (217). In fact, Foucault's commentary of how subjectivity is produced calls to mind a critical idea to assess how subjects are subjugated to historical formation. Barnes forms the history of his own with the help of Tony in a non-linear plot line. In this sense, the novel talks about the way of having food in public places is simple and normal. It shows the uses of outdoor food. There is also the level of development is high for business purposes, "While I inspected the menu, she carried on reading. The table looked out over a criss-cross of escalators. People going up, people going down; everyone buying something"(109). People are growing their business to be rich. Tony is in the restaurant. Every people are buying something for them. Britain is improving its situation what it loses in the war.

London is busy for many purposes. People are busy to buy good. People make queue in bank and cash machine. Britain is ready to change that people are doing their daily chores. Barnes conveys that all business areas like restaurants, shopping malls, and banks are overcrowded:

I looked out of the window instead. Convenience stores, cheap restaurants, a betting shop, people queuing at a cash machine, women with bits of flesh spurting from between the joins of their clothes, a slew of litter, a shouting lunatic, an obese mother with three obese children, faces from all races: an all-purpose high street, normal London. (116-117)

This extract proves that it is the real scenario of Britain after World War II. Britain is going to rise again. Britain is getting change and going to improve its economy. Britain had spent most of its economy in World War II. People lost everything in war. They lost their homes and relatives. But now Britain is regaining its economy that it lost during the war. The destruction of high building, business, job and education are slowly going to come in track. Power is needed to do all things. Power is formed by the self. For Greenblatt, power is self-constructed. To clarify the argument, Brannigan writes, “For Greenblatt the idea is a process of self-fashioning by, by which the subjectivity of each individual is constructed with in a heightened awareness of the position of the self with in structure of power” (59). The subjectivity of the individuals is heightened for self- identity and power in the social norms and values. The thought becomes the central idea for the persons to structure themselves in the form of social beings.

In conclusion, the fictional text Julian Barnes’s *The Sense of an Ending* depicts the 1960s chaotic socio-political, cultural and economic conditions of Britain. It presents the condition how people behave each other and social life style of the contemporary society. People are busy to increase their business. People live with philosophy that they practice the concept of philosophy in their life and death too. It also represents the time that is full of romantic love affair and end of that romantic love affair in to tragic death.

Likewise, Julian Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending* portrays real scenario of 1960s Britain. People live with their own life style. Divorce rates have increased. People live with their philosophical ideas. Like Robson and Adrian kills themselves for their philosophy in application. They destroy themselves for proving themselves as practical human beings. A person can have multiple relations with comparison to Tony. The life style of 1960s, Britain is totally based on pleasure seeking nature life style. The researcher takes insights from new historicism to prove the argument presented in the research paper. Louis Montrose and Michael Foucault are taken as central theorists. The researcher also takes other theorists and their ideas in this research paper. The findings of this research is that the concept of factual truth, human relationship, marriage, separation, divorce, sex, notion of family and friends change all over and affected by the certain events of 1960s Britain. Barnes does not situate himself as the fictional narrator Tony Webster but with the help of Tony Webster proves himself as the factual narrator of the time, 1960s Britain.

Moreover, Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending* deals with the fragile socio-economic and politico-cultural situation of Britain, 1960s. Tony reveals each of his experiences about family relation, friends' closeness and attraction to opposite sex very beautifully in non-linear plot. There was the tradition attracting opposite sex and making love affair. In the text, Robson and Adrian kill themselves for running far from the real situation that their misbehaviors lead them to do. Tony reveals that Robson makes his girlfriend pregnant. It is embarrassing moment for Robson. So, he ultimately chooses the path of death. It is the time that is full of expectation and dream. However, Britain is getting relief from drastic war slowly and gradually.

At last, this research paper reads Julian Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending* as a contextual document from the perspective of new historicism. It clearly depicts the

real situation of human relationship, marriage, separation, notion of family and friends at others. The issues of indifference, uncertainty of life, loss of social norms and values, hunger for sex, longing desire for luxurious life style have become a part of life style. Because of Post-World War II, many people lost their happiness and closeness of relatives and friends. The characters in the novel represent the common people of that time. The narrator and protagonist of the novel, Tony's memory is full of ups and downs. His memories are in disorder but those memories depict bitter reality of the people and the then society.

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