Introduction

This book addresses the social and sexual *evolution* of gender stereotypes in Julian Barnes' postmodern novels *England, England* (1998) and *A History of the World in 10 and ½ Chapters*[1] (1989). Through a detailed analysis of both male and female characters in each novel, I look at how mnemonic experiences shape the individual features, attributes and skills, which constitute the major underlying support of such unbalanced stereotypes. By addressing each novel, I attempt to reveal that such imprisoning gender stereotypes can be transcended, and thus patriarchy's iron claws can be escaped, though not destroyed. To this end I apply Bertold Brecht's alienation effect and Umberto Eco's trespassing of confines as conceptual tools.

The first part of the book investigates postmodernism through the lens of two divergent theories, Frederic Jameson's and Linda Hutcheon's. By pitting one against the other, their clash sparks a better understanding of the widely contested phenomenon of postmodernism. Subsequently, it also reviews various feminist theories, with a special interest in the measures and solutions, i.e. liberal, socialist and radical, which have been proposed in order for women to be able to have the same rights and liberties as men.

The focus of the second part is on two main issues pervading Barnes' *England, England*: the relation between postmodernism and gender-biased consumerism and how such a strong connection

---

[1] Henceforth *AH*.

could influence the architecture of cultural stereotypes and enhance it; and on the strong interrelation between gender stereotypes and sexual stereotypes whose fusion, through individual positive and negative experiences, could re-create reality and produce changes in the rigid gender pattern. The endless levelling of re-presentation constitutes the main focal point in Julian Barnes' postmodern novel, which is a living (de)valued copy of the actual England, not created as a mockery, but as a purely capitalist realm. Unlike the usual theme parks, Sir Jack's 'Project' is built not only with architectural landmarks, but also with human mechanisms, with actors who are supposed to represent emblematic historical personalities and characters.

My argument, which is based on the divergent, yet complementary theoretical cognitions of Umberto Eco, Jean Baudrillard, Gilles Deleuze and Bertold Brecht seeks to ratify the existence of second and even third-degree reality within *England, England*, instead of hyperreality, which vehemently denies the substance and identity within (re)presentation. I aim my attention at the presence and manifestations of the *simulacrum*, with regard to the actors and attempt to show that, by means of the Deleuzian internalisation and filtering of the cultural icon, the stereotype they embody becomes real and even independent, instead of a perpetual identical copy of the original and previous re-presentations. Moreover, not only the employees are affected by the addictive simulacrum, but also the visitors and the employers; every single stereotype undergoes improvement, both in an active and a passive manner. On the other hand, what is too much is not necessarily better and the only way out of this vicious and hooking time loop is by being subjected to the alienation offered within the authenticity found in the attempt of faking historical reality.

The third part investigates the patriarchal mechanisms, i.e. social, religious and health institutions, which constantly aim at the

mental and physical extinction of women's individuality. Such institutions are also responsible for the subjugation and poisoning of nature, in all her (*sic*) various incarnations. The focus is specifically on the unreliability of (pre)determined gender roles in the fourth chapter of Julian Barnes' postmodern novel *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, 'The Survivor'. The analysis highlights the overly-assumptive and masculinist air of patriarchy, which constantly seeks to mentally and physically overpower the feminine counterpart, and I make use of the iron scissors of ecofeminist and feminist theories, so as to reveal what has been unjustly balanced in terms of gender stereotypes throughout the ages.

Despite this constant injustice being supported both by anthropological theories and biblical teachings, as far as gender stereotypes are concerned, they may surely be hooked in mentalities, but this certainly does not make them immutable and irrefutable. I think over how, in the extremely distorted viewpoint of patriarchy, due to a constant wish of oppression and of fitting the *norm*, women are placed at the very bottom in the religious, as well as social hierarchy. The feminine counterpart has wrongfully and cruelly undergone active gender discrimination, most certainly, as the result of male auto-designation as the only physical and intellectual master, forcefully governing the human laws, as well as the realm of nature. I also address the male line of reasoning, according to which women have been, are and *will* be regarded with the same apathetic eyes, just as animals and vice versa and therefore, treated as such in the field of domestic relations.

Julian Barnes has a subtle way of re-enacting the socially challenging issue of patriarchal oppression, which is at the heart of the historical *vignettes* comprised in *A History of The World in 10 ½ Chapters*, reflecting present-day toxic social and environmental issues, effected by the *superior* gender, and how they almost *succeed* in enslaving and subsequently killing both women and

animals. Meticulously portrayed throughout the chapter, the mentally and physically abused Kathleen Ferris,[2] who manages to transcend the strong and unbending men-made systems of oppression, by means of self-motivation and detachment, is quite inspiring. In what follows, I concentrate on each of the male-invented, as well as male-perpetrated and invasive structures and on how they negatively affected Kath's life and her surroundings.

Julian Barnes' two novels belong in the sphere of metafiction and intertextuality, but the most valuable and fluid postmodern feature of his characters is that they manage to get beyond the hyper-luring and apocalyptic boundaries of the postmodern idiosyncrasies prevalent in consumerism and gender discrimination. To anticipate my conclusion, I suggest that, unlike his well-constructed characters, Julian Barnes himself is not able to transcend the Eurocentric race and class limitation, as the characters he creates are white middle-class individuals with fixed mentalities.

---

[2] Kathleen's surname recalls the Ferris wheel (an observation wheel, such as the London eye), which suggests her panoramic and somewhat synthetic view of the world. This could be suggestive of her socially (pre)imposed wish to get pregnant and resilience in putting up with an idiotic, overly-presumptuous and abusive man for the sake of tradition and appearances: '(...), you were after sex (...), thinking about Greg and the cats and whether I should have got pregnant' (*A History* 98).

Part One: A Theoretical Exploration of Postmodernism and Feminism

Crossing Swords over Postmodernism

> *What is the postmodern scene? Baudrillard's excremental culture? Or a final homecoming to a technoscape where a 'body without organs' (Artaud), a 'negative space' (Rosalind Krauss), a 'pure implosion' (Lyotard), a 'looking away' (Barthes) or an 'aleatory mechanism' (Serres) is now first nature and thus the terrain of a new political refusal?*
>
> Arthur Kroker and David Cook
> (qtd. in Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*[3] 8)

As the concept of postmodernism does not promote any rhetoric of its own, asking the archetypal question, i.e. *What is postmodernism* would further dismantle the concept, acknowledging the existence of various other *Isms*. Linda Hutcheon's avowal in 'Postmodern Afterthoughts', viz. '*What was postmodernism*?' (5), as well as Frederic Jameson's *schizophrenic* viewpoint, only contributed to an additional intrication of the extant literary and visual apprehensions on the concept. As the range of assessments of postmodernism is inexhaustible, referring to the directions stated above would ensure their decipherment far more eloquently, hence

---

[3] Henceforth *AP*.

the decision to review two of the most antithetical literary critics based on their examinations of the knotty phenomenon.

Frederic Jameson's *nihilistic* angle on postmodernism is rather predictable, considering his Marxist inclination. Jameson regards postmodernism as a reaction to the emergence of a purely capitalistic realm, lamenting the erasure of crucial rules and definitions amidst elite culture and the intellectually narrowing setting tyrannized by philistinism, kitsch and schlock. By avowing this disaccord within the term 'theory', he articulates the loss of professional philosophy, such as Wittgenstein's or Sartre's, as it could have been efficiently extricated in distinction to other conjectural subjects, acting as political science, literary criticism and sociology. Jameson focuses on the duplicity conceived by means of the inmost truth residing in the newly arising social stratum, i.e. the capitalistic one, which carves the framework for postmodernism. The duplicity in question is generated by what Jameson labels as *pastiche* and *schizophrenia*.

In his endeavour, in 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society'[4] (1987), to distinguish pastiche from parody, Jameson describes the former as blank parody, binding it to a very far-reaching aspect of postmodernism, i.e. the death of the subject: 'in a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum' (*CS*: 115). Therefore, postmodernist art will establish its midpoint in art itself, simultaneously implicating self-deprecation of the very same art, a constraint of the past, in the scheme of nostalgia, given that historical past cannot truly be reached anymore.

Arguing about postmodernist textuality with reference to the Lacanian theories of schizophrenia, Jameson underscores temporal discontinuity as a ceaseless present with no supposable future

---

[4] Henceforth *CS*.

leading to irrational successiveness. By doing so, he has no other choice but to accept the intoxicatingly inimical: 'the schizophrenic will clearly have a far more intense experience of any given present of the world than we do, since our own present is always part of some larger set of projects which force us selectively to focus our perceptions' (*CS*: 119). Nonetheless, he conceals his reluctance to acknowledge postmodernism in his fairly radical outlook, that it is delineative in many instances as a replica of modernism and high-modernism.

On the other hand, Linda Hutcheon ascribes a divergent connotation to postmodernism: 'I would like to begin by arguing that, for me, postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges' (*AP*: 3). She gradually investigates each of its primary characteristics and their discrepancies, notably those established in the nucleus of Jameson's line of reasoning. Concerning the stigmatization of the concept, Hutcheon upholds the verity of its inclusion in the European and American cultures and challenges the general misconception that postmodernism is an international manifestation, as well as a synonym for *contemporary*. On account of being created on the ashes of the late capitalist society, in Hutcheon's mind, postmodernism encloses the historical past, amending modernism's purist break with history, not as a nostalgic rebound, but more in the sense of a critical adaptation, an ironic colloquy with the past of the art-society binary. The past as denotatum is not under the blue-pencil, it is only converted and assimilated in a distinctive life design.

Although theorists like Jameson regard the loss of modernist uniqueness and individualism of ill omen, Hutcheon considers that, in the eyes of postmodernist writers and artists using pastiche, it testifies to subjectivity and artistry. The incorporation of irony is not to be associated with a random mix up, which prohibits