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Narrative Techniques in Julian Barnes' The Sense of an Ending^(*)

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Abstract

This paper aims at exploring and analysing the narrative techniques in Julian Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending* (2011). Barnes employs some modern narrative tools in the novel which have contributed to the success and popularity of the novel. This paper offers an analysis of these narrative tools and how they echo the themes of the novel. The first tool is the narrator's control of the narrative; he uses elision and omission of the event, letting the reader doubt his truthfulness as he himself becomes suspicious of what he is narrating. The second technique is the memory distortion in which the narrator divides his memory into two important phases that match the divisions of the text. The third narrative technique is the use of stream of consciousness together with the "I" person point of view. This gives the narrator an important space to travel inside the complicated corners of his memories. The last technique is the concept of time which is considered an important pillar in providing the story with the ideas of vividness and reasoning, especially with the reality of the story. This paper offers an analysis of these narrative tools and how they are connected to shape the development of the themes and structure of the novel. They are occupied to explore the importance of memories in human life and how humans should manage their time adequately, or else their life will be full of darkness and ambiguities.

Key words: The Sense of an Ending, time accumulation, memory distortion, Julian Barnes, stream of consciousness



دراسة تقنيات السرد في كتاب الإحساس بالنهاية (2011) للكاتب جوليان بارنز

بلعيد طه شمسان سعيد

أستاذ مشارك في الأدب الإنجليزي
قسم اللغة الإنجليزية - كلية الآداب والتربية والعلوم
جامعة تعز - الجمهورية اليمنية

الملخص بالعربي

يهدف هذا البحث إلى استكشاف وتحليل تقنيات السرد في كتاب جوليان بارنز الإحساس بالنهاية (2011) حيث يستخدم الروائي جوليان بارنز بعض أدوات السرد الحديثة في الرواية والتي ساهمت في نجاح الرواية واكتسابها أصالة هائلة في عالم الأدب. فهذا البحث يقدم تحليلاً لهذه الأدوات السردية وكيف أنها تعكس موضوعات الرواية. تتجلى الأداة الأولى في سيطرة الراوي على السرد القصصي وذلك باستخدام طريقة الحذف والإغفال لبعض الأحداث، مما يجعل القارئ يشك في صدقه لأنه يشكك فيما يروي. أما الأسلوب الثاني فهو تشويه الذاكرة، حيث يقسم الراوي ذاكرته إلى مرحلتين مهمتين تتطابقان مع أقسام النص. أما بالنسبة لأسلوب السرد الثالث فهو استخدام تيار الوعي مع وجهة نظر الشخص "أنا". يمنح هذا الراوي مساحة مهمة للسفر داخل الزوايا المعقدة لذكرياته. أما بالنسبة للأداة الأخيرة فهي الزمن والتي تعد مصدر غني للجلاء والعقلانية في الرواية. تقدم هذه الورقة تحليلاً لهذه الأدوات السردية وكيفية ارتباطها لتشكيل تطور موضوعات وهيكل الرواية وذلك لأثبت أهمية الذكريات في حياة الإنسان وكيف يجب على البشر إدارة وقتهم بشكل مناسب، وإلا فإن حياتهم ستكون مليئة بالظلام والغموض.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإحساس بالنهاية، تراكم الوقت، تشويه الذاكرة، جوليان بارنز، تيار الوعي.



Introduction

The Sense of an Ending (2011) is a novel written by Julian Barnes, a British novelist. It is divided into two parts reflecting the life of a man of sixties called Tony, the main narrator and the most important character at the same time. The first part of the novel portrays the narrator's memories at school with his classmates and the second part reports the memories of his university life and their influences on his present time.

The story is rich in the narrative techniques such as the role of the protagonist as an unreliable narrator, the protagonist's type of life, the concept of time and its importance in the narration, the use of stream of consciousness and the use of first person point of view "I" in which all together help to adjust the depth of the story of the novel with its theme within the use of these narrative techniques.

The novelists use the narrative techniques to narrate their stories so it is important to analyse these techniques in order to reveal the ways they are functioned. By using these techniques, the novelists do not have to narrate every piece of information in their stories. Instead, there are many ideas left by the novelists for the readers who have to dig into the text and find them out.

These narrative techniques are considered the bridges between the novelists and their texts from one hand, and between the novelists and their readers, on the other hand. In this regard, Wayne Booth (1976:200) states that there is an implied communication among the author, narrator, characters, and readers who are always in relation with each other within the axis of narrative techniques.

Thus, through these techniques, the readers foresees how and why such events take place in narration.

Written in the first point of view, Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending* traces the life of the central character and the main narrator, Tony. Tony is now in his sixties and he begins his narration by going into the past to narrates how his life with is Veronica, Adrian and Sara. Trying to disclose some secrets that affect his present time, the novelist chooses the "I" person point of view which is very appropriate to the nature of Tony's life which reflects both the certainty and uncertainty of his own past.

Using the point of view "I" together with the technique of stream of consciousness builds a kind of mystery which revolves around Tony's life from the beginning to the end. A sense of illusions accompanies the narrator as well as the readers in their journey inside Tony's memories of the past.

Tony's life at school was normal and peaceful and the coming of Adrian, one of his classmates, adds a sense of seriousness to Tony's life. He starts comparing



himself with classmate and friend, Adrian. The readers are informed that Adrian is more intelligent and more matured than other classmates:

"At morning prayers, he could be heard joining in the responses while Alex and I merely mimed the words- and Colin preferred the satirical play of the pseudo-zealot's enthusiastic bellow. The three of us considered school sports a crypto-fascist plan for repressing our sex-drive; Adrian joined the fencing club and did the high jump. We were belligerently tone-deaf; he came to school with his clarinet. When Colin denounced the family, I mocked the political system, and Alex made philosophical objections to the perceived nature of reality, Adrian kept his counsel."

(2011,8)

Adrian's attitude towards his family is also different from the rest of the group. He never shows any kind of vengeance as in the case of Tony or Collin or Alex. Although Adrian suffers the absence of his family, he always shows respect. And this reveals another significant difference between Adrian and the other. Tony says:

"This was long before the term 'single-parent family' came into 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 of 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." (2011,9)

It is clear that the narrative technique in the first stage of Tony's life is authentic and Julian Barnes has successfully used a manner of logic within. He hardly tries not to reflect any kind of confusion in the memories of Tony.

The second stage of Tony's life is devoted narratively to his desires. His relationship with Veronica takes the whole pivot of this stage narration. While he is at Bristol, Tony falls in love with Veronica who instigates his sexual intimacy later but Tony is still cool towards this instinct. He feels that something prevents him from going onwards in this relationship:

"Something in me was attracted to women who said no" (2011,23)

Even after he visits Veronica's family, Tony keeps himself away, especially after finding that the rest family members behave strangely with him. In addition, Veronica does not help Tony in this relationship, particularly after being introduced to Adrian. She feels attractive to Adrian and later Adrian asks Tony's permission to go out with Veronica:

"About half way through my final year, I got a letter from Adrian" to get my permission to go out with Veronica." He continued: "what he said was that he and Veronica were already going out together, a state of affairs that would doubtless come to my attention." (2011,39:40)

Julian Barnes uses the tool of flashback as Tony, the main narrator goes back to his school days and university life and narrates what happened there. The



flashback is the narrative instrument that helps the narrator to drive inside his past memories. However, flashback does not help the narrator to remember everything, and this is why the narrator keeps travelling from the past into the present and vice versa.

Tony indulges into his memories through the use of flashback and by using the stream of consciousness, he is able to move back into the present and then into the past. The readers do not always get clear narration because of the flaws Tony leaves while he is moving from one period of time into another. This process helps creating both suspense and interest at the same time.

Here, Julian Barnes manifests the idea of human natural desires by going into the past which also displays a difference between man and other creatures. To support this manifestation, Salmon (2009) quotes from Leonard Meyer's *The End of the Renaissance* that human:

"has been measured and found to be an undistinguishable bit of matter different in no essential way from bacteria, stones, and trees. His goals and purposes; his egocentric notions of the past, present, and future; his faith in his power to predict and, through prediction, to control his destiny all these are called into question, considered irrelevant, or deemed trivial."

In the second part of the novel, the readers know some new details of Tony's life in the USA. He marries Margret and has now a daughter named Suzie. He has a job and later Tony divorces Margret but remain friends. Margret becomes a kind of advisor for Tony and she never fails him either before or after divorce. All of a sudden, Tony receives a message which says that he has a will of 500 pounds and some papers left by Veronica's mother, Sara'a. Tony cannot believe this because he has just met Sara'a for a short time. The other papers are Adrian's diaries that are kept with Veronica who does not want to give them to Tony. Tony keeps asking these papers that ironically become the main clue of Tony to find out that his memories fail him. In other words, Tony always thinks proudly of himself, a man of morals but after getting the original copy of his letter sent to Adrian, he discovers how malicious and ugly he is. He now realizes that his memories fail him and admits that he has betrayed his friend, Adrian, and "Then I thought about Adrian. My old friend who had killed himself. And this had been the last communication he had ever received from me. A libel on his character and an attempt to destroy the first and last come affair of his life." (2011,92)

Tony is astonished at the content: "I could scarcely deny its authorship or its ugliness. All I could plead was that I had been its author then, but was not its author now. Indeed, I did not recognize that part of myself from which the letter came. But perhaps this was simply further self-deception." (2011,91)

He cannot recognize himself in this letter. He could not believe that he has been full of dirty thoughts: "At first, I thought mainly about me, and how-what- I'd been chippy, jealous and malign." (2011,91)



At this point, the use of stream of consciousness reaches its climax where that past has a clash with the present:

"My younger self had come back to shock my elder self with what that self had been, or was, or was something capable of being." (2011,92)

When comparing present with the past, Tony starts denying his past being. He can't believe that he is the same person of the past, are now," I had some all too unwelcome corporation of what I was, or had been" (2011,92)

That letter has crushed all his memories upside down. Besides, Tony's present time is sunk with dark memories, which crushes out any kind of coincidence and replaces it with remorse:

"And not, it wasn't shame I now felt, or guilt, but something rare in my life and stronger than both: remorse. feeling which is more complicated, cradled, and primeval whose chief characteristic is that nothing can be done about it: too much time has passed, too much damage has been done, for amends to be made." (2011,93)

That feeling in Tony's memories continues to harshly damage any self-attitude, and all this self-realisation is substituted with pity and remorse:

"I began to feel a more general remorse-a feeling somewhere between self-pity and self-hatred- about my whole life. All of it, I had lost the friends of my youth. I had lost the love of my wife. I had abandoned the ambition I had entertained. I had wanted life not to bother me too much, and had succeeded- and how pitiful that was." (2011,94)

Obviously, memories can contain a bundle of crisis and holding them or erase them is something impossible. Frank Kermode (2011) supports this by saying:

"And of course, we have it now, the sense of an ending. It has not diminished, and is as endemic to what we call modernism as apocalyptic utopianism is to political revolution. When we live in the mood of end-dominated crisis, certain now-familiar patterns of assumption become evident.

Crumbling inside his past memories has succeeded to erase everything that might be beautiful in his present life, and has manipulated to turn Tony into a ghost or a skeleton without human flesh.

Later, he meets Veronica and tells her everything about himself. However, during this meeting Veronica keeps silent listening to Tony and does not tell him anything about herself. Here, Tony still has hope that he can change the past:

"I thought I could overcome contempt and turn remorse back into guilt, then be forgiven. I had been tempted, somehow, by the notion that we could excise most of our separate existence, could cut and splice the magnetic tape on which our lives are recorded, go back to that fork in the path and take the road less travelled, or rather not travelled at all. Instead, I had just left common sense behind." (2011,124)

Tony is haunted with his memories as they have perplexed him and he does not know that past is past, it cannot be amended. Thus, he is forced to do so:

"he is forced to track down a part of his life that he had left at the back of his mind a long time ago" (Piqueras, 2014).



According to Tony, time has been accumulated without being aware of it and this leads to the failure of his memories, it runs fast and does not give a chance for any kind of redemption. At the same time, it is connected with Tony's memories as they are divided into time stages: school days and university time, and each time is functionally employed either at school or university. The time in the first phase is not well-managed as Tony did not think of its consequences and such failure of time management causes some tragic influence into the second stage. Here, Tony switches his art of narration within these two stages of life. He is astounded how he cannot get rid of the negative influence of time accumulation. In this regard, Veronica says to him: "You still don't get it. You never did and you never will. Stop even trying." (2011,137)

It is clear that the three common divisions of time, past, present and future, have been tackled in this previous passage (don't, did and will) in which Tony's memories fail him at either.

Before getting the letter from Veronica, Tony could not understand why Veronica is indifferent to him. He accuses her of the inability to judge people and "by simplifying Veronica's character as selfish and domineering and erasing her from his... life narrative... he had manipulated both his memory and his life story" (Piqueras, 2014).

He said that she is unemotional. However, when he reads the letter, he finds that he himself is incapable of understanding others. He feels ashamed of what he has written in that letter. He is really shocked how ignominious he is. The letter is watered with a deep sense of hostility and dispersible poison that changes the whole universe into a damage:

"I hope you get so involved that the mutual damage will be permanent. I hope you regret the day I introduced you. And I hope that when you break up...you are left with a lifetime of bitterness that will poison your subsequent relationships. Part of me hopes you'll have a child, because I'm a great believer in time's revenge, yea unto the next generation and the next."

(2011,89:90)

Tony's words above caused chaos and destruction in his friend's life and they destroyed the whole family of Veronica.

Later, Tony tries to meet Veronica again to discuss with her the impact of his letter. He knows that Veronica will be there in a pub where he meets a retarded man called Adrian. Tony's memory fails him again as he has mistaken the retarded of being Veronica's son while he is actually her brother and Adrian's son and his mother is Veronica's mother.

This shows an extreme degree of losing control of memories and their consequences. Tony has lost everything because of the unreliability of his memories. He becomes an unreliable person and he is now looking at his memory when it is falling into pieces of deception because he has realized that



he is the main cause behind Adrian's illegal relationship with Sara's which caused all these destructions. In this regard, Schacter (1991,7) writes:

"Memory, as complex and usually reliable asset, can sometimes deceive us badly. Yet even though memory can be highly elusive in some situations and dead wrong in others, it still forms the foundation for our most strongly held beliefs about ourselves"

The unreliable narrator is a postmodern technique in which there are some possibilities of showing clear explanations of what happened in the past. According to Wayne Booth (1995), the reliable narrator, "speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say), the implied authors' norms), unreliable when he does not." On the other hand, David Lodge (1992) says that "unreliable narrators are invariable invented characters who are part of the stories they tell", and these characters can "reveal in an interesting way the gap between appearance and reality, and show how human beings distort or conceal the latter."

The Sense of an Ending reflects how humans can be victims to their deceptive memories. Julian Barnes shows the importance of using the first person narrator to form suspense, interest and confusion in the side of readers. The readers are travelling insides Tony's memories where they learn the importance of time and how they should be careful of time accumulation which may cause destruction, failure and lose. Time accumulation may bring with it good experience or delusion. And in the case of Tony, delusion has replaced experience. It fails Tony as he transfers from one-time stage of life into another because it carries with it the failure of years that has been accumulated.

In fact, Julian Barnes has successfully shown that his novel does more than presenting Tony's memories and their failure. He reflects how literature can reflect owns life and its consequences. According to Brockmeir (2015):

"literature does more than merely represent memories and processes of remembering and forgetting; it gives shape and meaning to them."

Tony's memories include everyday scenes that reflect humanity which is often under some pressures shatter and cannot be easily remembered. Many scenes in Tony's memories repeat themselves which helps to establish the concept of memory, indicates the theme of the story, and then the readers may get some clues to Tony's mindset and then understand the story of the novel.

In this paper, the narrative techniques used by Barnes to produce this magnificent novel will be analysed. The role of Tony as the main narrator and the main character, the memory distortion, the use of "I" point of view, and the concept of time are the most dominant techniques that take Barnes' **The Sense of an Ending** to the highest rank in the world of literature.



Literature Review

Julian Barnes' **The Sense of an Ending**, a winner of the Man Booker Prize 2011, portrays the opportunity to go to the past depending on memories. Human memories are often reflected as fallible that may lead to human psychological and social destruction. The novel has attracted the attention of many scholars in many fields of studies such as literature, psychology and sociology.

The novelist irrigates his novel with a lot of contradictions because of the unreliability of the narrator. In this regard, Nie (2013:16) says that Tony Webster is thought to be an unreliable narrator who deceives the readers of his narration. It is full of contradictions and ambiguities that are scattered throughout the whole novel.

Tony confuses his readers by the way he narrates the events, and he surrounds them by a number of unsolved mysteries. Mohammed Tariq (2014:2) writes:

"**The sense of an Ending** appears to be a bundle of mysteries in itself, the novel is all about self-deception. Actually, the while I read the novel, I started thinking about the events of my past and started wondering that whether I can remember accurately enough or not, or I have modified my memory by which I could live without guilt and embarrassment."

Tony has nothing to depend upon to unveil his past but only to follow his memory which itself turns him down. His memory becomes a mystery not only for him but also for the readers, and as a result he has no opportunity to catch up what he has destroyed. Mohammed Tariq (2014:4) continues:

"In the novel, Barnes has engaged the untidy collisions of the human struggle more directly than ever made. This novel is a mystery of memory and missed opportunity, as Tony looks getting back to certain unreserved mysterious questions.... Barnes' unreliable narrator is a mystery to himself which makes the novel one unbroken sizzling and satisfying fuse. In the novel the puzzles of past have been decoded by a man who himself is a puzzle."

Such confusion accompanies Tony from the beginning of the story, and he starts his narration with a sense of bewilderment as he declares that he cannot understand time as a result of his uncontrollable memory.

The novel is rich in some narrative skills such as the use of the "I" person point of view, stream of consciousness and the concept of time that all together work to enhance the novel with a sense of variable attractiveness. In this regard, Maricel Oro Piqueras (2014:48) writes: "By Using the first person, Webster rewrites his life narrative speaking directly to the readers....he reflects on the deceitfulness of memory driven by human beings' need to go on with their lives despite having gone through negative episode.....the protagonist also rediscovers a remorse that was hidden deep inside himself..."

The novel is also a record of history and memory as Booth (2013:11) argues that **The Sense of an Ending** is where the "Memory has emerged as a key



concept in history. It is not an objective, static record to be called. It is always fragmentary and provision, dynamic and ongoing."

In addition, Arka Chattopadhyay (2015:3) states that "Barnes' narrator consistently preoccupied with the historical dimensions of time and aware of the slippages in it. This is a private history of individuals, enmeshed in a social network of relations."

Moreover, Arka Chattopadhyay (2015:3) thinks that by going into the past Tony is able to discover the secret of that affects his present: "**The Sense of an Ending** has been remembrance arrive at a moment when the secret is finally disclosed."

Thus, by going into the past, Tony finds that his memory has deceived, and what he knows about his past is not certain, He then decides to go back to the present and then to the past, and this process continues in order to reach a degree of certainty. This helps to create a kind of suspense for the readers. Here, Jeff Turrentine (2011) in the Washington Post writes about the story of **The Sense of an Ending** from the point of view of suspense which sunshades the story events. He also confirms that Tony is unable to understand people around him because of his own implications in the miseries inflicted on the people around him.

Tony starts narrating his story during the sixties and his memory is shown to be fable may be because of the aging and this is why Justine Jorden (2015) in the Guardian says that "**The Sense of an Ending** is a highly wrought mediation on ageing, memory and regret."

Meanwhile, Jonathan Cape (2011) in a review for the Bookerprizes.com writes:

"**The Sense of an Ending** is the story of one man coming to terms with the mutable past. Laced with trademark precision, dexterity and insight, it is the work of one of world's most distinguished writers."

Julian Barnes has shown himself as a man of précising insight, and dexterous skills. Michiko Kakutani (2011) in a review for New York Times sates:

"**The Sense of an Ending** "is dense with philosophical ideas. Still, it manages to create genuine suspense as a sort of psychological detective story.....Mr Barnes does an agile job of unpeeling the onion layers of his hen's life while showing how Tony has sliced and diced his past in order to create a self he can live with. In doing so, Mr. Barnes underscores the ways people try to erase or edit their youthful follies and disappointments, converting actual events into anecdotes, and those anecdotes into a narrative."

Furthermore, Barnes has celebrated his past with self-realisation using realistic strategies. Regarding this, Guingney (2016) describes the novel as a novel which "evinces all major cornerstones of his writing- resorting to and subverting realistic strategies, self-reflectiveness, and celebrating the literary past while at the same time considering it with irony"



Finally, Robert Fulford (2011) writes that Barnes is one of the world's best writers who has not only devised the details of Tony's life and his way of telling them, but also made him a character with whom we can identify. At the end we'll decide we are all unreliable narrators of our own lives, evaders, perjurers, false witness, every one of us.

Analysis

A) The main Narrator and the main Character

Tony is the main character and the main narrator at the same time in Barnes' *The sense of and Ending*. Barnes furnishes his hero with multiple effective weapons to achieve his narrative purpose. He wants to convey that the past may become a part of hell when humans grow up. However, humans have sometimes to go there and see what they have done. This is exactly what Tony has experienced in *The Sense of an Ending*.

The novelist has succeeded in showing that human memories are part of hell as they include catacombs of mysteries, and they should be dug to reveal what is inside. Travelling through these catacombs needs strong memory in itself so that it can go back and forward but this becomes impossible without interruption. In this regard, Tony passes through a cyclical process which starts from the past, moves to present, and this process continues without being hold into one special time in the past or at present. The novelist gives his narrator Tony spacious capacity so that he can leave his memory and comes to the present whenever he feels bored or annoyed. It is a symbolical journey which shows that human past includes a lot of annoying memories that may cause a lot of despair or emotional collapse. This is why the narrator has been armed with some skills to achieve that.

The ability to comment on each episode is one of these skills that Tony has in his journey into his memory. Tony keeps commenting but he also never loses the rope of connecting events. Comparing himself with what Veronica said:

"But I think I have an instinct for survival, for self-preservation. Perhaps this is what Veronica called cowardice and I called being peaceable." (2011,41)

In the same regard, Tony continues saying that Adrian also "took his own life' is the phrase; but Adrian also took charge of his own life, he took command of it, he took it in his hands – and then out of them. How few of us – we that remain – can say that we have done the same? We muddle along, we let life happen to us, we gradually build up a store of memories." (2011,82)

The ability to narrate and comment is spread within the pages of the novel and this helps the narrator to get some relief from what he does not expect to see inside his memories. Dr. Dillip Barad (2012:14) comments on how useful human memories are, but they should be well-constructed otherwise they can cause some unexpected remorse:



"Memory that is individual, accounts for who we are and what we have become. Early memory is particularly valuable, though it can be misconstrued. Its influence can persist throughout adult life, though what is cause and what effect may be difficult to judge"

In the same way, Tony does not also forget to provide his readers with the reasons of his journey into the past:

"I'm not very interested in my schooldays, and don't feel any nostalgia for them. But school is where it all began, so I need to return briefly to a few incidents that have grown into anecdotes, to some approximate memories which time has deformed into certainty. If I can't be sure of the actual events any more, I can at least be true to the impressions those facts left. That's the best I can manage." (Barnes:2011:4:5)

It is clear that Tony is desperate and regretful of what his memories include. He will try to find any justification of what he did in his past. When he gets the letter from Veronica, he concludes at the beginning that Adrian has a son and Veronica is the mother. He could be satisfied to read that conclusion. However, he is still not satisfied. Therefore, he continues his journey that he may unravel any new mysteries but he gets shocked to know that he knows nothing. To his surprise, Tony finds out that his letter causes all that damage to the whole family of Veronica including his friend Adrian. He describes his feeling using intense, harsh and deep words:

"Why had I reacted by going nuclear? Hurt pride, pre-exam stress, isolation? Excuses, all of them. And no, it wasn't shame I now felt, or guilt, but something rarer in my life and stronger than both: remorse. A feeling which is more complicated, curdled, and primeval" (2011,93)

A moral lesson is revealed through Tony's description of his attitude being the real cause of the whole problems. He states that humans are ugly if they look back into their past and see what their memories hide.

In addition of being a commentator, Tony is also provided with the freedom to analyse the characters including himself. In describing Veronica's brother, he says:

"He behaved towards me as if I were an object of mild curiosity, and by no means the first to be exhibited for his appreciation." (2011,27)

And on Veronica, he says:

"She didn't look much like Veronica: a broader face, hair tied off her high forehead with a ribbon, a bit more than average height. She had a somewhat artistic air, though precisely how this expressed itself – colourful scarves, a distraught manner, the humming of opera arias, or all three – I couldn't at this distance testify." (2011,27)

He blames himself for being unable to get on with life matters:

"I had just left common sense behind. Old fool, I said to myself. And there's no fool like an old fool: that's what my long-dead mother used to mutter when reading stories in the papers about older men falling for younger women" (2011,124)



As for Tony's way of analysis of other characters, it is ranged between the description of their intelligence, romance and their way of thinking. The following extracts show that:

"Marshal was cautious know-nothing who locked the inventiveness of true ignorance."
(2011,6)

"That wasn't what he was supposed to say." (2011,6)

"This was one of the differences between the three of us and our new friend. We were essentially taking the piss, except when we were serious, except when he was taking the piss." (2011,7)

"Adrian, however, pushed us to believe in the application of thought to life, in the notion that principles should guide action." (2011,10)

Moreover, Tony has also classified the characters depending on his way of understanding. For instance, he comments on how the coming of Adrian has brought new ideas to their group:

"Colin and I would consider this idea in silence for a while, then grin and carry on talking. But now Adrian's arrival dislodged Alex from his position – or rather, gave us another choice of philosopher. If Alex had read Russell and Wittgenstein, Adrian had read Camus and Nietzsche. I had read George Orwell and Aldous Huxley; Colin had read Baudelaire and Dostoevsky."

(2011,10)

Despite all these descriptions, the readers are not left with clear judgments on the characters. There are some ambiguous spots in the story that perplexed the readers. For instance, it is not clear why Veronica left Tony. Is it because of Tony's passiveness or Veronica's coolness? However, the readers have no other choice but only to trace Tony's journey inside his memories. However, Tony has provided the readers with the feeling that he himself cannot decide and he could blame neither himself nor Veronica. This generates the interest and gives Tony a sense of reliability.

Likewise, Tony is also equipped with the gift of being a scrutinized seer. At school, he discovers that Adrian has strong abilities of thinking, and he could quickly make a clear comparison of Adrian with his friends. Tony is very interested in others' details and this skill provides him with self-realisation. He lacks others' qualities and therefore, he tries to compensate them with the interest of observing others. This becomes clear from the beginning of the story when he compares himself with others. In other words, Tony can find himself in others' details and this is one of many other reasons behind his coming back to the past.

To illustrate, when Adrian asks his permission to go out with Veronica, Tony keeps asking himself many details about this, and this proves how curious he is in others:

"Yes, why her, and why then; furthermore, why ask? Actually, to be true to my own memory, as far as that's ever possible (and I didn't keep this letter either), what he said



was that he and Veronica were already going out together, a state of affairs that would doubtless come to my attention sooner or later; and so it seemed better that I heard about it from him. Also, that while this news might come as a surprise, he hoped that I could understand and accept it, because if I couldn't, then he owed it to our friendship to reconsider his actions and decisions. And finally, that Veronica had agreed he should write this letter – indeed, it had been partly her suggestion."

(2011,40)

The above passage also demonstrates that when Tony and Veronica leave each other, Tony's curiosity does not stop. Not only this, but he also gives his impressions on unnecessary details and this leaves the readers with the feeling that he is a neat observer, and in return it helps to restore the sense of reliability. For instance, he comments on Mr. Ford while she is cooking him some eggs:

"She paused, poured herself a cup of tea, broke another egg into the pan, leant back against a dresser stacked with plates." (2011,28)

He adds some other comments on how she deals with the rest of the eggs:

"The remnants of the broken one were still in the pan; she flipped them casually into the swingbin, then half-threw the hot frying pan into the wet sink." (2011,29)

Frank Kermode writes in his own book *The Sense of an Ending*, that history is very important and when humans write it "everything is relevant if its relevance can be invented" ((2011,56) In other words, that some comments are unnecessary to the plot of the story but they help adding to the element of the venerability of the narrative. Here Tony uses his detective eyes to diagnose each detail and he ascribes meaning to them. This is how unnecessary details of history can be relevant.

In addition, the language used helps to provide absurd occurrences and grotesque scenes in the ladder of the narrative. The readers feel the absurdities of the past when humans go there: "in those days, we imagined ourselves as being kept in some kind of holding pen, waiting to be released into our lives." (2011, 9:10)

The image "holding pen" describes how narrow and sophisticated the time is, the word "released" generates a kind of dark poison and gloomy atmosphere that discombobulated people are eager to get off, and the word "holding" also refers to the difficulty of getting rid of such time. The past becomes a narrow prison full of false conception, especially when humans go the second phase of their lives. They discover later that they have spent their early life stages embracing false lies:

"What had Old Goe Hunt answered when I knowingly claimed that history was the lies of the victors? A long as you remembered that it also the self-delusions of the defeated." (2011,115)

With such feelings, Tony's present is negatively affected by his past. Now, he wishes he could live his present without remorse, and he therefore, digs into his past hoping he could reach that change. However, that digging inside his past



memories cause him a denial for his whole life: past and present. Regarding this, Tony says:

"I thought – at some level of my being, I actually thought – that I could go back to the beginning and change things. That I could make the blood flow backwards. I had the vanity to imagine – even if I didn't put it more strongly than this – that I could make Veronica like me again, and that it was important to do so." (2011,123)

As far as the past memories are concerned, Dr. Dillip Barad (March 2015) writes:

"One cannot rely on the Past memories as it comes in fragments. The narrator has always made that same reasonable assumption, but act of revisiting his past in later life challenges his care beliefs about causation, responsibility and the very chain of events that make up his sense of self."

Therefore, any visiting of past memories is dangerous and jeopardize to humans on the level of causation or responsibility because it may cause a distraction to the whole truth. This is why Tony has made a mistake by going into his past memories. He could live his life safely if he just sticks into present and forgets his past.

B) The Memory Distortion

It is scientifically known that human memories do not have any stable form as they keep changing because of some unknown factors. Memories are not accurate records of events. Instead, they are reconstructed in many different ways after the events have occurred, which means that they can be distorted by many factors such as the loss of source memory, the effect of misinformation, delayed perception of time, the effect of overconfidence, and confusion. This refers to what is called the memory distortion. In Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending* this memory distortion is clearly reflected in the way Tony lives. Tony tries to shake his memory so he can remember his past life but his memory fails him and the shortcomings often reappears. To validate the authenticity of his narration, Tony tries to remind the readers of his memory distortion. He never forgets to tell his readers that his only source of narration is his memory, and his memory often fails him. Memory distortion is manifested by Tony to enforce the element of reliability to the power of story. The following quotations by Tony shows this kind of reliability:

"If I can't be sure of the actual events anymore, I can at least be true to the impressions those facts left. That's the best I can manage" (2011,5) However, even this impression will not be true later in Tony's life:

"later that day-or perhaps another day" (2011,7)

"I couldn't at this distance testify" (2011,27)

"I don't think I can properly convey the effect the moment had on me" (2011,36)

"As far as I remember....." (2011,42)



The Sense of an Ending lies its power in what it says and what it does not. Tony, the main narrator is elliptical and this creates a gap between what the readers know and what they want to know. In order to show the memory distortion, the narrator jumps from one place into another inside his memories. This jumping process generates distortions and a sort of confusion for the readers but at the same time, it helps to form a source of power and suspense. The memory distortions are of a particular importance for the narrator's consciousness as he wants to leave some details unsaid. This is called elision which becomes an essential part in the narrative techniques.

Obviously, there is no chronological order in the narration as Tony dives into his memories. He starts his narration by going into the past, particularly to the school days. He then describes how he gets acquainted with Veronica and how this relationship comes to an end but with its consequences that follows. The narrator does not follow a clear chronological order as he keeps travelling from one period of time into another. And instead he follows his special way of narration which produces some elliptical details. The events do not set the story in motion rather than what Tony says. Daniel L.Schacter states:

"We extract key elements from our experience and store them. We, then, recreate or reconstruct our experiences rather than retrieve copies of them... In other words, we bias our memories of the past by attributing to them emotions or knowledge we acquired after the event" (2011, 9)

Thus, the readers are confused unless Tony speaks but when he speaks, the readers get confused, and they have no other option but only to continue listening to Tony in order to erase that narrative confusion. For instance, in the beginning the readers think that Tony admires Adrian's way of studying life matters. However, when he changes his opinion of that, the readers have to accept this distortion in the narratives:

"Adrian Finn, a tall shy boy who initially kept his eyes down and his mind to himself."

(2011,5)

He also says: "Adrian wouldn't just have accepted things as they are put to him."

(2011,16)

And later he says: "The original three wrote less than often and less enthusiastically to one another we did to Adrian. We wanted his attention, his approval, we courted him and told him our best stories first; we each thought we were – and deserved to be – closest to him." (2011,19)

However, later he contracted his opinion on Adrian:

"The trauma of his suicide had affected the child in her womb, she has given a birth to a son who had at some stage been diagnosed as...what? As not being able to function independently in society; as needing constant support, emotional and financial." (2011,132)



Tony makes use of his memory distortion to enforce his narration authenticity in the readers' minds. He says that Adrian considers Robson's case of suicide a matter of history. Presumably enough Adrian commits suicide with the same details of Robson's. The readers understand Tony as sometimes stupid and some other silly, and Adrian's case of suicide here helps the readers to erase such stupidity. He warns Adrian in the letter from Veronica's poison of life as Tony thinks but Adrian does.

From the beginning of the novel, Tony prepares the readers for the memory distortion. He keeps himself as being fooled by the time as he can't understand it:

"We live in time-it holds us and mould us but I have never felt I understand it very well." (2011,4)

Because of such memory distortion, the readers get confused on how Tony thinks. He moves from one place into another which causes some kind of ambiguity and suspense at the same time, and this provokes the readers to keep on to track Tony's journey inside his memories.

Regarding this, Robin Leggett (2011) writes: "It's a joy to read. Thought provoking, beautifully observed with just enough mystery to keep you turning the pages to find out what happened."

Tony uses direct speech to narrate the character's behavior and words, and the readers are then able to see the characters' motives. However, they cannot have absolute judgements since the art of narration is accompanied by the technique of memory distortion. In this regard, the Old Joe Hunt, a master at school is asking Tony and his other classmates:

"How would you describe Henry V111's reign?"

Tony comments on this question and the reaction of others by saying: "our belief was greater than our curiosity, because Marshall was a cautious know-nothing who locked the inventiveness of true ignorance. He seemed for possible hidden complexities in the question before eventually locating a response." (2011,5:6)

It is notable that Tony does not only describe his inside memory corners but uses the pronoun "we" to show how his other classmates think. This element of knowing others adds to the unreliability of narration.

Tony continues narrating and commenting leaving the readers with a sense of aspiration whether to believe him or not. Meanwhile, the readers learn a lot of Tony's self-description and other characters' motives and words. He sometimes tries to understand his skills and the way he thinks by comparing himself with Adrian, and his comparison reveals a kind of truthfulness to his narration:

"Adrian, however, pushed us to believe in the application of thought of life, in the notion that principles should guide actions." (2011,10)



This process of self-description and underestimating continues for some times, and the memory distortion inserts itself as Tony contradicts with what he has said before. He writes to Adrian regarding his engagement with Veronica:

"I told him much what I thought of their joint moral scruples. I also advised him to be prudent, because in my opinion Veronica has suffered damage a long way back. Then I wished him good luck." (2011,42)

The process of memory distortion is clear when Veronica brings Tony his letter sent to Adrian which is completely different from what Tony says. Tony does not believe that he himself is the writer:

"All I could plead was that I had been its author then, but was not its author now. Indeed, I did not recognize that part of myself from which the letter came. But perhaps this was simply further self-deception." (2011,91)

Here, Tony shocks the reader with his memory distortion. He denies that he is the writer, and this creates ambiguity and suspense that part of Tony is missing and the readers have to keep following what Tony narrates in order to discover that.

Moreover, Tony invests the use of distortion as a part of his narrative techniques on the level of vocabulary. He uses the word "damage" in the beginning of the letter:

"what did I mean by "damage"? It was only a guess; I did not have any real evidence.....I certainly believe we all suffer damage on way or another. How could we not, except in a world of perfect parents, siblings, neighbours, companions?" (2011,42:43)

Later Tony uses different explanations for the same word "damage" as he says:

"I hope you get so involved that the mutual damage will be permanent" (2011,89)

The readers are consequently confused of Tony's purpose behind his memory distortion. Some questions aroused here such as 'Does Tony want to give himself an excuse for what he did?' Or 'Is he really true about his behavior?'. Despite his way of narration, the readers can see how deep their memories are as they cannot sometimes justify properly their past deeds; how humans always regret their behavior, and how they deny their past actions. Jagannathan writes that "memory is inevitably selective... the fallibility and fabrication of memory seem less like a direct source or cause of falseness and more like a further complicating factor" (Jagannathan, 2015, 114).

It is clear that this type of narration reveals Tony's inner world and shows other characters' attitude that are different from what they expect. Julian Barnes in this novel exposes that humans are full of contradictions whether at present or past. By adhering to such type of narration, where memories distortion takes place, the readers get involved with the story easily as their past is already connected with their present.

Therefore, this technique of narration indulges Tony into his past and the more he does so, the more interesting the story is. The narration joints with his



memory to clean out all its mysteries. The readers feel that Tony suffers these mysteries, and by revealing them, he adopts a human natural desire, and it is important that humans become a part of these mysteries. Consequently, Tony establishes an emotional bridge with the readers. This bridge enhances a sense of reality and provides the readers with a sense of stimulation to draw some imaginations in order to reach some possible justifications. As soon as Tony finishes his story, he feels relax but the journey of finding such justifications on the part of the readers has already begun.

C) The use of point of view narration "I"

The narrator is a character within the story who tells the reader what is happening from her or his point of view, using "me", and "myself" to tell the story. This refers to the first-person narrator. As the story develops, the reader learns about the narrator's thoughts, experience and feelings. Interestingly, this type of narrator can be an unreliable person and this helps to create suspense and ambiguity in which the reader is forced to unfold that. In this regard, it is noticed that Tony's memories are the key pivots of the whole event from the beginning to the end of *The Sense of an Ending*. Through these memories, he is not only the only narrator but also the dominant figure. He is the witness of everything happened in the story and this is called "I" or the first person point of view.

By using this device of narrative, Tony has an enough space to comment on the events and evaluate whatever happens in the novel. This technique of narration supports the reality of the novel, and it makes it more reasonable. Consequently, the events of the story are intangible and inseparable, and Tony becomes the main connector of the whole parts of the events. He is everywhere and has multiple positions to achieve: he is Adrian's friend, Veronica's boyfriend, Margret's ex-husband and Suzie's father. He connects the conflict between all the characters and he causes all the troubles happens within the complicated relationship there.

In order to achieve that, Tony is provided with penetrative and curious eyes to witness the characters' actions, and also with the abundant skills of commenting on everything the characters do. The novel is therefore surrounded by spatial effects of narration. Tony also tries to be objective and assumes a calm attitude during the process of evaluation.

It is through Tony's eyes the readers learn how everything happened. However, he does not amplify his comments, and the readers do not get everything they need to have clear judgments. Such way of narrative adds a modern technique to the ladder of the novel, and this is why the readers have always different views each time they read the text.

Moreover, Tony is able to narrate and evaluate what he knows but he cannot get into the other characters' minds and describe their thoughts. These inner



thoughts are not easily revealed, and this rises a kind of ambiguity and the readers have difficulty in judging. It is a kind of specialty where the readers are left with enough space to give their opinions independently.

However, Tony often gets beyond this limitation of narrating as he gives himself some freedom to get into the characters' minds and reveal what they think. For example, at the dinner table, he describes how Veronica's family behave with him and he comments on Veronica's brother, Jack saying:

"Then I caught Jack winking at his father, as if to say "what a creep" (2011,29)

When Veronica is introduced to his friends, Tony describes how Veronica reacts to them, and he could learn indirectly that she likes Adrian, and he hints at that mutual feeling. He says:

"She seemed happy to keep Adrian for last. I told her he was at Cambridge, and she tried out various names on him. At a couple of them he nodded and said, 'Yes, I know the sort of people they are.' This sounded pretty rude to me, but Veronica didn't take offence. Instead she mentioned colleges and dons and tea shops in a way that made me feel left out. " (2011,31)

Here, Tony gives himself some space to read others' thoughts and he forces his readers to believe him. In describing Margret's way of thinking, he says that "she could be envious of those who carried or manufactured an air of mystery." (2011,162)

It is obviously clear that Tony transcends his limitations as a narrator because he can read others inner being such as Jack or Veronica. These steps in the art of narration transcend the value of the story of the novel because they let the readers feel reasonable about the truthfulness of the text.

By using the first person point of view "I", Tony is criticizing himself and at the same time he tries to give himself some excuses why he has chosen that path. It is a kind of contradiction but the narrator is aware of presenting this technique of contradiction. It is melted within the art of narration, and then, the readers do not take that as a narrative gap rather than a modern way of narration.

In a nutshell, adopting the "I" pronoun helps the novelist to keep himself away from the scene, and Tony takes his role to comment and play the events. This gives the readers good spacious to feel directly what is happening in the story. Julian Barnes lets his readers have some personal experiences of his novel together with the vividness and persuasiveness which created within the ladder of the narration.

D) The concept of time

Just as time is an essential component of our existence, it has also been a staple of literature throughout almost all of literature's existence. Apparently, all stories happen in time regardless the way the story deals with time (for example, chronological development, real-time narration, flashbacks, foreshadowing, etc.), the concept of time determines the development of plots,



characters and how they are drawn. In Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending*, the time plays a very important role in the narrative techniques. It provides the story with the ideas of vividness and reasoning, especially with the reality of the story. The narrator starts the story from the end, and then he goes back to present. He keeps moving from one area of time into another, and this all happens inside his memories. He does not seclude himself in one area of time in order to highlight the importance of time in framing humanity. In other words, time is connected with humanity whether in its beginning or the end; humanity cannot be repaired easily if it is damaged. In other words, if time runs out it can't come back again.

The novelist arranges the concept of time very skillfully in which the narrator's memories become the crucial pivots of the whole story. It is divided into four life stages: the school days, university time, the time of Adrian's suicide, and the last part is the narrator sixties. His whole life in the story is presented as a seasonal cycle, in which each period is as important as the rest.

In the first stage, Tony gets acquainted with Colin and Adrian as classmates. These three characters will be together for life as they promised each other. Tony says:

"finished school, promised lifelong friendship, and went our separate ways. We swore to meet every time the three of us at university came home for the vacation; yet it didn't always work out." (2011,19)

Adrian is an important character in the second stage of time narration which is the university life. He gets acquainted with Veronica through Tony, and later, both Veronica and Adrian get married which leads to Adrian's suicide. His death would be the end of his story, but it takes, as Tony says, another direction which fuses all the story upside down:

"his death meant that his case was more easily closed. We would remember him all our lives, of course. But his death was exemplary rather than „tragic“ – as the Cambridge newspaper had routinely insisted – and so he retreated from us rather quickly, slotted into time and history." (2011,35)

However, to everybody's surprise and event to Tony himself, the story continues to reappear again after forty years. Forty years is a long time, but it is still an important event if it takes place in the past but its consequences reappear again at present.

In this regard, Tony says:

"This is what I read: The question of accumulation. If life is a wager, what form does the bet take? At the racetrack, an accumulator is a bet which rolls on profits from the success of one horse to engross the stake on the next one." (2011,80)

Tony also shows how humans' life depends on time which has the ability to frame it depending on what accumulation contains:



"We muddle along, we let life happen to us, we gradually build up a store of memories. There is the question of accumulation, adding up and adding of life." (2011,82)

In the above passage, Tony means that humans must be careful about time and how it is important in the development of humans. Time passes very simply in our lives but it may leave out unexpected and unwanted memories:

"But we also learn something else: that the brain doesn't like being typecast. Just when you think everything is a matter of decrease, of subtraction and division, your brain, your memory, may surprise you. As if it's saying: Don't imagine you can rely on some comforting process of gradual decline – life's much more complicated than that. And so the brain will throw you scraps from time to time, even disengage those familiar memory-loops." (2011,105)

Tony means that humans should never feel safe if time passes- by because they may get surprised by " 'scraps', from time to time." (2011,105)

Tony is haunted with the concept of time accumulation but it is too late. He learns that lesson after the time has been accumulated on him and he could not learn its process at the beginning of his life:

"The question of accumulation', Adrian had written. You put money on a horse, it wins, and your winnings go on to the next horse in the next race, and so on. Your winnings accumulate. But do your losses? Not at the racetrack – there, you just lose your original stake. But in life? Perhaps here different rules apply. You bet on a relationship, it fails; you go on to the next relationship, it fails too: and maybe what you lose is not two simple minus sums but the multiple of what you staked. That's what it feels like, anyway. Life isn't just addition and subtraction. There's also the accumulation, the multiplication, of loss, of failure." (2011,97:98)

On the other hand, Tony's journey into his memories is engulfed with the concept of time. It is functionally employed as a wrapper where the readers are always busy running from one period of time into another inside Tony's memories. These periods are full of conscious dots of remorse and unexpected atrocities that shock the readers when they dive into their past, and then discover how imprudent and unpleasant they are because they did not pay attention to the time accumulation.

For Tony, time is not important in the past and this is why he is now surprised by its 'scraps'. In this case, he formats his own theory of time by dividing people into two categories and each category never cares about the importance of time as:

"For some people, the time differentials established in youth never really disappear: the elder remains the elder, even when both are dribbling greybeards. For some people, a gap of, say, five months means that one will perversely always think of himself – herself – as wiser and more knowledgeable than the other, whatever the evidence to the contrary. Or perhaps I should say because of the evidence to the contrary." (2011,57)

It is noticeably a pessimistic view because the two categories do not have other options in the dictionary of Julian Barnes. Time is meaningless and this is considered a factual revelation in the ladder of life. Time does not have any



value since it is irremediable, and whatever people try to change, it ends with remorse.

Consequently, time is sharp and it squeezes human the way it likes. Tony wants peace in his life but he says:

"time ... how time first grounds us and then confounds us. We thought we were being mature when we were only being safe. We imagined we were being responsible but were only being cowardly. What we called realism turned out to be a way of avoiding things rather than facing them. Time ... give us enough time and our best-supported decisions will seem wobbly, our certainties whimsical." (2011,87:88)

Now Tony comes to the conclusion that time runs fast and does not offer any change of remaking, and people at the end discover that they have been living in hallucination which is far away from realism.

Moreover, the arrangement of time is also another crucial technique in the narratives. At school time, the characters are treated scientifically with reference to the ideas they offer in their classes. The readers expect that the characters will develop properly, especially after the suicide of Robson. The school stage is the time of innocence but the students here reflect different attitudes; their opinions and ideas show that they are great masters especially Adrian. Tony says that Adrian's words amaze both his classmates and masters, too. He adds that Adrian's definition of time reflects how mature and skillful Adrian. Adrian defines history as "certainty produced at the point where the impressions of memory meet the inadequacies of documentation." (2011,17)

In this regard, the masters at school are astonished by Adrian's ability of understanding and they always respect him and deal with him differently. It is expected that Adrian will embrace great future especially after winning a scholarship to Cambridge. However, these children fail in their second stage because they are unable to deal properly with their lives. Tony fails with Veronica, and Adrian who is supposed to be the most intelligent student also fails with Veronica and this leads him to commit suicide. Tony claims that such failure happens as a result of time accumulation which shows its negative impact on the behavior of these characters which continues with them till they reach their sixties. For Tony "there the question of accumulation, but not in the sense that Adrian meant, just the simple adding up and adding on of life." (2011,82)

Therefore, the time accumulation has its deep negative effect on them even Tony himself who cannot grasp what is happening around him even when he reaches his sixties. Now Tony is aware that he cannot grasp well the idea of time accumulation but his understanding now is too late because he cannot change anything. He is still under the influence of time accumulation. He is described by Veronica and Margret that he can never understand the world around him. Veronica says to him "you still don't get it" (2011,137)



In this same stream, Margret also says to him: "Tony, you're on your own now" which means he fails to accommodate with others. He feels that he cannot account well the importance of time accumulation and so he describes himself as an old fool:

"Old fool, I said to myself. And there's no fool like an old fool." (2011,124)

To sum up, Julian Barnes did successfully show a remarkable skill in mastering his distinctive narrative techniques to profound the depth of his novel and sharpen his ideas. The ideas of time accumulation are used to grasp the attention of the readers to be aware of their existence in their life and never neglect anything around them, and if they do so, it means a path of endless sorrow. As a main narrator, Tony is engulfed with the concept of time as a negative weapon to destroy his present which becomes chaotic as a result of the ugly crusts of the past. It is an old manifestation to his cyclic journey into the past as "you get towards the end of life-no, but life itself, but of something else: the end of any likelihood of change in that life. You are allowed a long moment of pause, time enough to ask the question: what else have I done wrong?" (2011,142)

With this metaphorical question, Tony, the main narrator and the main character ends his story. It is a question which is full of contradictions, hopelessness and misunderstanding of the real meaning of life. Through his life stages, Tony perceives that his life comes to an end and has nothing to do ever.

Conclusion

Julian Barnes has employed some recognisable themes woven together within remarkable narrative techniques in his novel, **The Sense of an Ending**. Tony Webster, who is the main protagonist and the main narrator as well, is very fond of the past looking at it with proud feelings and he depends on his memory to recollect that sense of pride. However, his memory fails him for he becomes unable to see the truth. He finds out that his memory is unreliable and the past cannot be redeemed at all.

The unreliability of memory makes Tony an unreliable narrator of his past. He tries hardly to be honest with his readers but he cannot justify what he did there. He shows himself as honest but what he did in the past proves the opposite. He loses control of his memory and this is why he keeps himself travelling from one era of his memory into another trying to give himself an excuse for his harmful and shameful actions. He then becomes uncomfortable with the shocking and irritating thoughts that his memories keep sending. He remembers how cynical he was either with Veronica or with her mother. However, he tries to deny all these memories and shows that he is the victim of others' behavior especially Veronica. The reader is left with no enough information to judge properly. Therefore, they have to follow Tony in his journey inside his memories. Because of the unsettled narration, Tony leaves us in his narration unanswered. So that the readers have nothing to do but only to follow Tony to get the answers.



In fact, the narrative techniques used in this novel such as the unreliability of the narrator, the memory distortion or the use of the first point of view "I" work together to describe how ugly the past might be especially if it is not well-managed. The readers therefore, share Tony's past with all its inadequacies and disappointments and they become afraid if they start the same journey. Self-deception is increased when the readers dive deeply into the text, so that they may feel that they are disillusioned by their past memories. Disillusionment accompanies the readers, and as a result, they become like detectives trying to get what is hidden beneath Tony's story.

As a narrator, Tony attempts to form authentic revelation of what he sees in his memory but his memories are always unreliable of their contents. As well, he cannot provide any evidence to solidify his narratives. And this is why Barnes has chosen the "I" person point of view to increase the level of unreliability for the readers. This point of view "I" shows Tony as self-conscious of his unreliable narration, and he seems happy with this narrative power practices over his readers. He consciously and unconsciously changes the reality of his past, reorders the chronological schemes of the story, and forces the readers to suspect the reality of what he narrates. Moreover, the "I" person point of view also serves to prove that time can distort memory and it becomes a source of pain and horror. Thus, Tony acknowledges that his memory is deceptive and his narration of the past experience proves this.

Generally, the narrative techniques in this novel are well-deployed. They do not manifest Tony's situation of memory being unreliable to show that he is exceptional but rather they reflect him as an ordinary human being; that he is liable of getting old and then forgets his past. Thus, even human memories are liable to the fallibility and change but they are still powerful resources for human characters. Tony knows that his past is unreachable and he cannot change anything:

"How often do we tell our life story? How often do we adjust, embellish, make sly cuts? And the longer life goes on, the fewer are those around to challenge our account, to remind us that our life is not our life, merely the story we have told about our life. Told to others, but – mainly – to ourselves." (2011:89)

Now, frustration has secluded Tony at his present life. He has nothing to do either with what he did in his past nor to change the ugly present that has been created in front of his eyes as a result of his poor conducts.

Because of these narrative techniques, the novel is considered as a post-modern literary work. The narrator is capable of deceiving the readers directly or indirectly, and the readers get deluded but they do not stop rather than they follow Tony's deceptive memories till the end.

Tony is also armed with the device of stream of consciousness device to depict his reactions and thoughts in an uninterrupted flow, and this adds to the



unreliability of his narratives. The device of stream of consciousness helps Tony to narrate without any logical sequence of the events. It gives Tony the freedom to move within the memory catacombs without being interrupted, and this in return creates a sense of ambiguity and unreliability which is very important to the theme of the novel. In other words, Barnes' **The Sense of an Ending** depicts life as an experience that is shattered into small pieces from the beginning to the end.

Barnes has successfully written a brilliant piece of literature in which life is recorded to show the way people live it. He has rejected the conventional path of narration and used a new post-modernist technique which implies the unchronological way of narrating the event of the story. He has focused only on one narrator to demonstrate how life can be full of chance, contradictions, surprise, beauty and ugliness. Likewise, Life is not easy to grasp, and humans must go deep beneath what is seen in order to get a sense of comprehension.

These narrative techniques don't put the readers directly into the characters' minds, but these characters have to use their intelligence to organize life anecdotes, so that they may come to life reality. In fact, the novel is a masterpiece of life contradictions which deserves the world cannon of praises. However, the characters are not forced to adopt Tony's same opinions on other characters. They are made to be free to create their own accounts on other characters. Thus, the individuals are more important here than society, and in order to understand the individuals, peaceful relationship must be built among them. Through relationship, individuals will value each other and appreciate their inner lives. This is why the narrator goes into the past to examine the type of individuals and what kind of relationship have gone through. Tony fails because of the failure he practices during his relationship with other characters.

Finally, the novel depicts a greater mastery of the narrative techniques: stream of consciousness, the use of "I" point of view, the unreliable narrator and the concept of time. It presents an effective foundation of time accumulation and memory distortion and their negative influence of the individuals. In fact, Barnes is a great novelist who manipulates these narrative techniques with great success.



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