CHAPTER I:
INTRODUCTION

Julian Barnes
1.1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the discussion of post-war British fiction and significant patterns and themes in the literary texts of postmodern era.

At the very outset it is necessary to understand the changing role of fiction in contemporary era. Malcolm Bradbury articulates his views: We live in an age in which fiction has conspicuously grown more provisional, more anxious, more self-questioning, than it was a few years ago.¹ Contemporary novelists systematically and self-consciously elaborated the referential character of the novel, using the modes of reportage, documentary and journalism, as in the non-fictional novel; they emphasized the one-dimensionality of character and the flattening of plot by aping popular forms or inventing the technetronic novel; they insisted on the elusiveness or the unreliability of text, creating novels where the dominant narrator asserting the truth of his tale either disappeared from sight into text or reappeared in the overt guise of the game player or impresario, displaying the lie he had made, the fictionality he commanded. These developments appeared to occur, at roughly the same rhythm, on an international scale; and even in England, where the realistic and the liberal tradition in fiction has been notably strong. The novel in Britain from 1950-2000 yields a special insight into the most important areas of social and cultural history. Steven Connor says about post-war British fiction: The novel since 1950 not just as passively marked with the imprint of history, but also as one of the ways in which history is made and remade. Both Gasiork and Connor discover creative impulses that reinvigorate the immediate social function of the post-war novel.
In 1950, however, with the end of rationing, and developing consumer boom, a new public mood emerged in Britain. The year 1950 is considered as a dividing line that separated the war and its aftermath from the distinctive nature of post-war British society, governed by new economic and social energies. In 1950, serious writers were already finding faults with the celebrating mood associated with a new beginning. In *The World My Wilderness* (1950), for instance, Rose Macaulay established a critical view on the project of social reconstruction, choosing to place emphasis on a breakdown of the social order. Macaulay stresses that the visible collapse of civilization signifies an inner dearth that is both spiritual and intellectual. The decade in which post-war social change is felt in Britain is the 1960. One of the key social changes of the 1960 is the emergence of ‘youth culture’. The sense of a newly empowered sector of society is conveyed principally by the spending power of young people, and the emergence of main stream youth-related culture forms, especially pop-music, that quickly become significant components of the economy. This change even had an effect on the public perception of the novelist; the received wisdom that novelists produce their best work after the age of forty is challenged by the new trend of youthful achievers.

The most memorable fictional treatment of youth culture in the 1960 is Anthony Burgess’s *A Clockwork Orange* puts a very different construction of the changing balance of power. The conclusion that the novel provides is that youthful excess is a necessary phase in the process of growing up, though this is an uncomfortable and unwilling conclusion given the novel’s evocation of violence, and the clear warning about a society that produces a cult of
youth. The election of Margaret Thatcher as prime minister in 1979 signaled the definite end of the post-war consensus. Her government stood for privatization and a free market economy, and for the reform of trade union law. Post-war novelists tended to take the later view, lamenting the collapse of the welfare state and new era of inequality and social division. Martin Amis’s *Money* (1984) is a satirical presentation of the emerging Reagan-Thatcher era and its mood of acquisitiveness. The protagonist Self is an addict of the urban money culture from which he sometimes longs to escape. Another famous novelist of this period is Margaret Drabble. Her *The Radiant Way* (1987) treats major themes—poverty, education, crime and punishment—as well as more sharply focused topics: the breakup of the traditional nuclear family; the violence of modern society; the problem of psychological disorder; and the possible consequences of satellite broadcasting. This is a vision of post-war society in which hopes and aspirations are partially fulfilled. Unquestionably the most significant novel about the effects of Thatcherism is Jonathan Coe’s *What a Crave Up* (1994), a meaningful commentary on a fragmented society.

It is often argued that the Second World War marked a watershed in British class relation. In 1950, the post-war labor government enacted policies that ‘in general …favored the working class’. Despite this, however, class in British culture was fraught with contradiction and confusion, especially where persistent class loyalties are shaken or even rendered irrelevant, by social and economic change, and yet are not abandoned. Narrative fiction has played its part in this changing perception, and the dominant schools of writing in the 1950 and 1960 were overtly populist: The movement and anger and working class fiction. Two poets (Donald Davie and Thomas Gunn) and
three novelists (Kingsley Amis, Irish Murdoch and John Wain) were named as leading figures. Movements writers appeared to ride a tide of class change, standing in opposition to the working class elite of previous generations. The contradictions that accompany class transformation are particularly marked in the working class fiction of the 1950 and 1960. This body of writing is often associated with ‘Angry young men’, John Braine and Alan Sillitoe. Such kind of novels seems to reinforce class distinction, or an ‘us’ and ‘them’ view of society. John Braine’s Room at the top (1975) is probably the most famous post-war novel of class mobility, charting the material success of its working-class protagonist Joe Lampton. Lampton’s experiences belong to the immediate post-war years of rationing and austerity. David Storey’s This Sporting Life (1960), undergoes the circular viciousness of a world of brutal commodification. In Sid Chaplin’s The day of the Sardine (1961), the protagonist Haggerston’s elder co-worker George Flack insists that there is no such thing as ‘class’, that society is governed by ‘caste’ instead.

The conflicting and contradictory perceptions of the social order, which are often unresolved in discussion of the ‘British Class System’, are particularly evident in the fictional treatment of education and its effects. The post-war novels related to the above trend explain the theme of the ambivalent effects of educational opportunity. In A Kestrel for a Knave (1968) Barry Hines’s theme is the lack of prospects for working-class school leavers, let down by their schooling.

A writer, who attempts a more positive treatment of working-class life, and the dilemma of the working-class scholarship boy, is Raymond William, whose first novel Border Country (1960) is a complex deliberation on
changing class identity and the loss of traditional community values, focused through the experience of a Welsh border village. For Williams the problem was to find a new form for the novel that might encompass the new social experience of class transition. Since the mid 19th century, the meaning of community becomes increasingly uncertain with the rapid social change that accompanies a ‘transforming urban and industrial civilization’. He finds the locus of the formal problem this now poses in Lawrence: in *The Rainbow*, for example, Williams detects ‘the experience of community….and then its breakdown’. Later in his novelistic career Raymond William sought to find ways of responding to this problem. His clearest critical statement in the new social model is *Towards 2000* (1983), in which he describes how ‘a scheme of production for the market has….substituted itself for a society’. The agenda in this book is to determine the grounds from which a generally accepted understanding of common interests can be established, interests to which capitalism is inherently hostile

One of the myths of the 1950s is that this was a decade of social stability, courtesy and traditional family values. At the end of (late) 1950, there was the emergence of youth culture and in 1960 the explosive impact of promiscuous were responsible to shake up the status quo, and begin the process of dismantling the traditional family unit, rooted in marriage, and sustained by the husband’s wage, and the domestic travails of the wife. It shows the drift of change. The war effort had depended upon the toil of women in the workplace so that the gendered pattern of work was drastically altered. This is an era, then, in which the certainties of gender relations are beginning to be questioned a new in serious fiction; in such a context the
glimmerings of feminist assertion are significant. For this change Dominic Head used a outstanding phrase ‘out of bird cage’ in his work Modern British fiction:1950-2000.

Lynne Reid Banks in The L-shaped Room (1950) explains feminist consciousness. The restricting factors are those lingering conventional views of social structure and gender relations that limit both the consciousness of the central character, and the design of the novel. In her early novels Margaret Drabble takes up the problem of the conflict between family and career. It was by virtue of these early works that Drabble came to be viewed as a ‘women’s novelist’. Her first novel A summer Bird Cage (1963) faces a dilemma that is symbolic of women’s changing role, that apparently stark choice between marriage and career after graduation. The novel sets out to test the limits of this female birdcage. To the extent that the British class system is registering change, the crucial question is how quickly that change is seen to make a difference to the poor stratum of society. Nell Dunn’s first two works Up to the Junction (1963) and Poor Cow (1967), finds a way of relating the aspirations and disappointments of working-class women to the broad development in the 1960s of women’s liberation and sexual freedom. The foment for social change, and the distinctiveness of women’s unrest is succinctly conveyed in Jill Neville’s The Love Germ (1969) set in the Latin quarter of Paris in 1968, the novel conveys the revolutionary idealism of May 1968, but also expresses the arrogant mistreatment by male militants of the women that they depended on. Neville uses the metaphor of a sexual transmitted disease both to evoke the dangerous excitement of the times, and to satirize the more earnest revolutionary ambitions. In this novel Neville
discovers the discontent that will fire the organized political feminism in the 1970s.

The year 1970, in fact, witnessed a dramatic change in gender relations-for more significant than the ‘sexual revolution of the 1960s. The writer who perhaps best catches the mood of second wave feminism is Fay Weldon. The characteristic mood of righteous outrage and practical determination is evident in one of Weldon’s best novels, Praxis (1978). The novel is representative of Weldon’s art in depicting the slow process of enlightenment that enables an exploited female character to assert herself, and break free from the shackles of patriarchy. In Weldon’s presentation, patriarchy is a system that exploits biological difference to produce and substantiate social inequality as a ‘natural state’. Another female novelist, Jeanett Winterson has been a key figure in shaking up that conventional mind-set, and in advancing more fluid representations of gender, especially through her treatment of lesbianism and androgyny. Much of Winterson’s works offer a corrective to the extreme feminist position that emerged in the late 1970s, misanthropic in its implications. Her first, autobiographical novel, Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit (1985) established her key exponent of feminist fiction.

A writer whose work corresponds to the climate of transition or incompleteness is Anita Brookner. The direction of her work has come to coincide with the post-feminist determination to fly by the nets of gender opposition, and to promote a world-view that is not required to be partisan in gender terms. This challenge is particularly evident in Brookner’s most famous novel Hotel du Lac (1984). In a brave and quietly radical gesture,
Brookner has called for feminists to give up their “sacred cow”, and recognize that the success of feminism, coupled with economic change make the restatement of original feminist goals sometimes inappropriate.

The change is visible in the changing work-place of the 1990s, the ‘feminization’ of the economy, characterized by a huge shift towards part-time or hourly paid work., that found women ‘more prepared’ than men for the casualization of labor . Evidently this developments brought with it different kinds of exploitation, but the gender implications have altered, since these are changes that accompany the loss of traditional male work in the declining heavy industries. This impulse to re-evaluate female experience inspires Nell Dunn’s My silver Shoes (1996). In the late 1990, Fay Weldon became associated with a feminist backlash, the critique of a perceived ‘girls on top’ culture often now being voiced by prominent feminist proponent of earlier decades.

The novel that most clearly conveys this spirit of revisionalism is Weldon’s Big Women (1997). Here Weldon examines elements of contradiction and hypocrisy in the feminist movement. In the Whole Woman (1970) Germaine Greer is confrontational to the point of caricaturing masculinity, suggesting that while ‘women change’, ‘men became very early set in their ways as long Arsenal fans, lager drinkers, burglars, bankers, whatever striking to these ‘chosen tramtracks for the rest of their lives2. From the perspective of serious British fiction it is the shift away form women’s rights and towards human rights seems to be dominant trend of the 1990s, a direction illustrated in the novels of Shena Mackay _The Artist’s Widow (1998)
Since the late 1980s, however, new nationalistic energies have been unleashed—following the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, for instance, or the demise of apartheid and the birth of a new South Africa. The status of nations has begun to seem more volatile, and less easy to interpret. Emerging state can be seen as a relatively open site of political and ideological contestation.

Here, then, are two competing views of nationalism, perceived either as

(i) The false recovery of traditional self interest or
(ii) The route to a more equitable negotiated future.

The treatment of British national identities in post-war fiction has tended to fall somewhere between these two positions, wary of an uncompromising tradition on the one hand, whilst tentatively contemplating the reinvention of nationality on the other hand. A third position emerges as a consequence of this dialect:

(iii) a kind of post-nationalism built on reappraised symbols and traditions that implicitly acknowledges the mongrelized nature of most British identities.

It has not been fashionable in the post-war era to contemplate the more stable elements that might comprise an English national character. Two effects of the end of Empire in particular suggest the reason for this reticence:

(1) The assertion of Englishness is infected with imperialism in some quarters;
(2) The end of empire and the period of post-colonial migration begin a new process of cultural (and biological) hybridity that makes stable national identities problematic.

John Fowles is one writer who has opposed this trend of silence; and interestingly, he has written of reticence as a national characteristics, a sign of ‘ethical sluggishness’. In Daniel Martin (1977) the English trait of reticence or withdrawal is treated ambivalently as an indication of positive potential but also of failure. The novel concerns itself with Martin’s quest for authenticity. The role of contingency in Fowles’s investigation of Englishness reveals a glimpse of the relativity that usually has a more central place in treatments of English identity.

The Empire, perceived as English rather than British, has cultivated a self-conscious arrogance in the national character, but also has displaced English identity, making the relationship between modern England and the construction of Englishness mysterious. A suggestive novel in this connection is Julian Barnes’s England England (1998) which contains both a meta England and an investigation of the manner in which the national identity might be constructed. Here Barnes’ serious purpose is to offer more philosophical consideration on how the culture of replica impact on national identity, where the replica supplants the original. Barnes’ novel is very much in tune with those recent theories of nationalism in which the constructed nature of national feeling is emphasized.

Without doubt the most influential theorist of national identity for critics of the novel is Benedict Anderson, who has persuasively linked the rise of the novel as a form with the emergence of the modern nation-state. There have
been some impressive novelistic attempts to investigate the meaning of that
dissipated English history that happened overseas, and to assess its impact
on the national character. The emphasis in this school of retrospective
colonial fiction is often an uncertain Englishness, strained to breaking point by
the exercise of power. The retrospective colonial fiction of the post-war era is
written in this climate of debate about immigration, but it looks outwards as
well as inwards, its insight on the disappearing empire being of particular
significance to the ongoing domestic reconstruction of Englishness.

Paul Scott's *Staying On* (1977), for example, contains a subtle portrait
of imperialism, and the Englishness that accompanies it, in terminal decline.
By the end of the century, the pathology of imperialism was subject to more
story, Adam Thorpe conducts a more extreme analysis of that dynamic of
colonial self-destructiveness.

The contemporary uncertainty about Englishness might then be seen
to fit a postmodern mood that cannot place faith in the contracts of realism
and more stable nationalism is sought to imagine.

In the post-colonial era, the question of identity and national affiliation
becomes complex and indeterminate. This is nowhere more apparent than in
a post war Britain facing the challenges of the end of Empire and the process
of national redefinition it brings with it, both in terms of international status and
demographic composition. The novel has proved to be a fruitful site for
investigating the hybridized cultural forms that might be produced in an
evolving, and so genuinely multicultural Britain. Kazuo Ishiguro’s third novel,
*The Remains of the Day* (1989) is a devastating portrait of repressed
Englishness and an exploration of those national characteristics that must be expunged before an authentic post-nationalism can emerge. Ishiguro’s own position, as someone born in Japan but brought up in Britain, gives him an intriguing ‘semi-detached’ or dual perspective: If reticence, in one form, is a method of repression and concealment, in another form it is the adopted humility that allows exploitation to flourish. Ishiguro put in the picture a post imperial, post industrial world in which the individual must maneuver with ingenuity to retain ownership of those cultural codes that are subject to ‘incorporation’ in the world of multinational enterprise.

This is the contemporary resonance of his observation than an older ideology of ‘Englishness’ served the purpose of Empire as well.

The problem with ‘integration’ is that it often means ‘assimilation’ within a host culture that is insensitive to cultural diversity, and many novelists have been concerned by this new, internal form of cultural imperialism. Salman Rushdie, in an essay from 1982, alerts us to the ingrained problems of understanding race in Britain. The problem of this new internal empire is its failure to stop seeking, whether implicitly or explicitly, to colonize or demonize aspects of racial difference. Rushdie is concerned about the failure of Britain to embrace the inevitable fact of its post colonial future, and sees this as ‘a crisis of the whole culture, of the society’s entire sense of itself’. The misperception of racial and cultural difference extends to those apparently benign attempts at ‘integration, which Rushdie sees as code ‘for nullifying assimilation. It is ‘multiculturalism’ that excites his particular ire, a term too often concealing mere tokenism.
The prosaic and depressing fact of racism is, of course, the primary inhibiting factor to the more dazzling creative flights of multicultural expression. In Pat Barker’s grim *Union Street* (1982) there is dispiriting portrayal of racism among factory workers that is instructive. Beryl Bainbridge’s *The Bottle Factory Outing* (1974) is a tale of this more elusive kind of cultural misrecognition.

Successive novelists have contributed to an ongoing challenge to this culture of denial, gradually expanding the ways in which fiction might treat of migrant experience and the tensions that attend it.

These tensions became visible with the arrival of the ‘Windrush generation’ for West Indian immigrants in the late 1940 and 1950, named after the Empire Windrush which docked at Tilbury in 1948. This is usually taken to denote the beginning of multicultural Britain.

The docking of the Windrush signifies, metonymically a new generation of commonwealth migrant recruited to a labor market in need of workers to fill unskilled vacancies.

The naïve sense of hope that this invitation fosters is caught in the response of Harris in George Lamming’s (west Indian novelist) pioneering work *The Emigrants* (1954), who espies England from a ship’s porthole and reflects: ‘there was life, life, life’. Immigrants from West Indies viewed England not merely as a land of opportunity, but also as a kind of home. The experience of disillusionment is artfully rendered in the technically exuberant fiction of Sam Selvan who migrated with Lanning to England in 1950. His novel *The Lonley London* (1956) presents innovation of Trinidadian dialect with the linking narrative written in standard English.
Another treatment of the settler’s struggle for permanence is Timothy Mo’s *Sour Sweet* (1982), which is the epitome of the tradition of enclave writing. Mo traces the experiences of a family of migrants from Hong Kong, fighting to make their way in 1960 London, despite the restrictive effects of their own cultural heritage, and the controlling influence of the Triads.

A productive cultural hybridity is commonly perceived to go hand-in-glove with overtly experimental forms. In such a view, you either have a startling innovative style and a rapturous presentation of multi cultural energies, or you have neither. Rushdie’s exuberant magic realism is thus sometimes seen to exemplify the kind of formal reinvigoration of the novel in Britain that the post colonial era makes possible. Sometimes experiment and cultural hybridity are presented in opposition to experiment and tradition, that is inappropriate.

Two novels that offer a corrective to this view are Andrew Cowan’s *Pig* (1994) and Meera Syal’s *Anita and Me* (1996). Both of these first novels won a Betty Trask award for traditional fiction, and both employ the realistic childhood initiation plot to examine questions of ethnicity and identity.

In *Anita and Me* and in *Pig* rootlessness is transformed from an inner lack into a personal strength, enabling the migrant to remain untainted by surrounding social decline. This strength, however, merely denotes the potential for moving on to a more propitious environment, and beginning a new. But does this also imply the impossibility of geographical identity?

A writer who has sought to challenge this apparent divorce between landscape and migrant identity is V.S.Naipaul. His novel *the Enigma of Arrival* (1987) is a compelling, brooding, and complex deliberation on post-colonial
rootlessness that seeks to lay claim to the pastoral in defining a cultural niche for the migrant.

A write who stands in marked contrast to this mode of post colonial writing is Salman Rushdie. He does not participate in the attempt to reclaim a particular geographical place, whether urban or rural, and to rethink national identity in relation to it. He, rather, is the chronicler of the unfettered migrant sensibility, that version of post colonialism that unhooks historical tradition from place, and that creates new, self-conscious kinds of identity from a fragmentary vision. The novel that most clearly demonstrates Rushdie’s inventiveness, but also his short comings, is *The Satanic Verses* (1988), a novel dense with sacred, literary and cultural references, in which apparently conflicting modes-political satire and religious fable; realism and fantasy-are combined.

Another important aspect that some post-war British novelists try to project is country and suburbia. In this category the most eminent novelist is John Fowles. He is interested in the way of life that is brought to an end after the war. *Daniel Martin* (1977) is entirely representative of the treatment of rural themes in the post-war novel, where contemporary analysis frequently does battle with a hankering for the past. In the *Daniel Martin*, the narrator (speaking for Fowles) means the loss of a collective principle of social organization, after which we then broke up into tribes and classes finally into private selves.

There is a perception, in fact, that the ‘nature novel’ in Britain has run its course, and that serious fiction about rural life cannot hope to speak to a predominantly urban readership with sophisticated tastes. In such a view, the
burning social questions are located where the power is and the people are: in the cities, or, increasingly, in suburbia.

The ‘rural’ and ‘urban’ are both in flux, making the relationship between the two intensely problematic.

By a straightforward reckoning, the demise of the Nature novel might seem an established fact of pastoral, making a naïve mode of bucolic expression unthinkable. But Hardy and Lawrence were also playing their part in the ongoing re-evaluation of pastoral, infusing it with a modern social perspective. For both writers’ landscapes is the arena of pressing historical change, rather than a scenic backdrop or a poetic and contemplative retreat.

The question to address is whether or not the social challenge to the Nature novel sounds its death-knell, or its revival. In an excellent study, Glean Cavaliero makes the case for a continuing tradition in the earlier part of the century to 1939. He shows how pre-war rural novelists, both the contemporaries of Lawrence and his successors, were capable of producing something more than pastoral escapism. Cavaliero is still willing to assign a significant place in literary history to a rural tradition in which ‘a love of landscape’ combines with ‘an awareness of the potential in human experience arising from it’.

It is difficult to make the same kind of claim for a post-war rural tradition, either for its optimistic sense of human agency. Rapid social change appears to ranker the pre-war focus obsolete. The changing class-structure, for instance, assists the process of displacing the rural. Other social changes have an impact on the credibility of the pastoral vision. The celebration of
landscape as the source of national identity in the present becomes increasingly suburban.

Since 1950, the breakup of empire makes that connection between identity and place still more problematic: England (in particular) becomes the site for post-colonial contestation, as new identities are negotiated, and new grounds of ‘belonging’ are tentatively forged. The idea of pastoral for post-war writers, it seems, is stretched to breaking point. Dominic Head asserts: As human needs change, so does the function of pastoral evolve. In this light, the anxious post-war treatments of rural experience may represent a degree of continuity with earlier periods—even if the effort of re-evaluating pastoral may seem a more delicate and complicated operation than it had in the past. A novel that yields a helpful overview of the post-war period is Isabel Colegate’s *Winter Journey* (1995) in which a retrospective view of some significant social changes is offered, filtered through the lens of the English landscape. A fine example of post pastoral is Bruce Chatwin’s *On the Black Hill* (1982), which conveys a reverence for, place combined with that ‘anti-pastoral’ awareness of the hardships, psychological as well as economic, that a rural existence can involve.

Post-war Britain has experienced some rapid changes in the designation and articulation of space, so that stable definitions of the urban and rural have become impossible. The interaction of the two then becomes intensely problematic. A particular development of the post pastoral, then, is the attempt to situate rural fantasies (or nightmares) in the context of city experience; and often, this imaginative resisting of the rural speaks directly to a mood of millennial uncertainty. *Arcadia* is a remarkable post-war novel in its
simultaneous critique and celebration of the country in the city, the urbanization of a rural image

Without question suburbia is the most difficult social space to describe adequately. The cliché that everyone comes from suburbia, and no one want to go back, reveals one of the most telling quandaries of post-war social life, in the collective denial of common origins.

In the provisional novel of the 1950’ and 1960’ Suburbia figures as the index of a deadening culture that threatens to absorb more vital energies. This is true of Stan Barstow’s A Kind of Loving (1960) and Alan Sillitoe’s Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (1958). In trying to get beyond the perception of suburbia a dirty word, Arthur Edwards establishes a broad definition that embraces the ‘new build’ of ‘an estate-developer, whether city council, new town corporation, builder or former. 4

The dominant transitional forces of globalization are promoted through developments in science and technology, and this has become an area of human experience that is especially difficult for the novel to register. To engage with rapid technological change, an instantaneous response is demanded, and this is beyond the capabilities of a literary form that is, rather cumulative in its procedures of reflection and commentary.

This sense of relative disengagement, however, can yield an autonomous and longer term perspective on changes that are inadequately examined in more immediate forms of cultural response. This withdrawn or philosophical point of view has often led novelists towards an adverse judgment on the implications or applications of technology.
In Winsterson’s Art and Lies, for example, the technological world in general is alienated world, where a faith in scientific progress is misplaces; ‘the latest laser scan refuses to diagnose’ an enduring ‘nagging pain in the heart’. ‘Health’ is here conceived as a spiritual dimension, requiring the nourishment of art; technology is the direction, offering an illusory salvation.

A still more disturbing meditation on technology is found in J.G Ballard's Crash (1973), a novel that takes the car manufacture’s favorite advertising ploy, the presentation of the car as a commodity imbued with sexuality, to its logical conclusion. The novel thus uncovers the psychological distortion of a commodity culture in which human response is displaced by the machine a ‘technological landscape’ where the human inhabitations….no longer provided its sharpest pointers, its keys to the border zones of identity’.

The most arresting instance of a direct influence from the new physics occurs in Ian McEwan’s The Child in Time (1987). It serves to undermine scientific pretensions to the discovery of absolute truth.

The new science, in The Child in Time might be said simply to reinforce the novel’s unique capacity to unite past, present, and future in the depiction of personal time.

Science, to the novelist, more often supplies the material for a cautionary tale. Zadie Smith’s White Teeth (2000) is an effective instance of how such suspicions can become a sustained compositional principle.

Perhaps the crucial technological issue in this period is the technology of the printed book itself, which has flourished despite perceived threats from film, television, and more recently, the electronic media available via the internet. The notion that the computer age might change the nature of the
book has been an enduring speculation, but one that has proved insubstantial in relation to the novel. However, there are now signs that the electronic book-the ‘e-book’-might being to take off, after several false dawns. The increasing popularity of the palmtop computer, which will eventually be incorporated in the ubiquitous mobile phone,. Suggest a wider audience, since these machines are now equipped to read ‘ebooks’ in the form of electronic files. This has clear implications for the printed book, but for the novel this may not simply a dramatic change of form or structure. The new technology for the ‘ebook’ seeks to imitate the ‘interface’ of the printed book, rather than to replace it by exploiting the ‘Hypertext’ potentialities of the electronic form

Jeanette Winterson’s The Powerbook (2000) is an example of a novel that deliberates on the psychological effect of electronic communication, but without allowing its form to be radically altered. Given the admonitory attitude to new technology that Winterson expresses in Art and Lies, it is surprising to see her conversion to the creative possibilities of the computer. Winterson’s The Powerbook, in its original publication the book is square, in the manner of some computer user manuals, and some of its section titles employ computer terms that supply obvious puns: ‘VIEW AS ICON’, ‘EMPTY TRASH’, and so on. There is on technological advance that has drastically affected its fortunes; the rise of film.

An emerging genre in the field of post-war British fiction is Cyberpunk literature. Cyberpunk is a literary movement, born in the 1980's, that seeks to completely integrate the realms of high tech and of pop culture, both
mainstream and underground, and break down the separation between the organic and the artificial.

Cyberpunk is a member of the genre of fiction known as Hard (or Hard Core) Science Fiction. It is called Hard Science Fiction because of its heavy reliance on technology or biology to tell a story. The works of cyberpunk science fiction writers are the birthplace of the concept of "cyberspace". This concept was first introduced to the world by writer William Gibson in his novel *Neuromancer*(1984), probably the most famous cyberpunk book ever. Cyberpunk was in many ways the turning point in science fiction. Past science fiction usually extrapolated from a single idea, while cyberpunk took the larger view that things don't develop in isolation. By considering the many factors that could affect our future, cyberpunk led the way towards a more credible speculation, and more sophisticated writing styles.

After explaining shifting terrain of post-war British fiction, I would like to explain contribution of Julian Barnes among the galaxy of post war novelists.

1.2 Julian Barnes’ contribution to postmodern fiction:

The quality of Julian Barnes’s fiction that attracts the most comment is its technique. Sometimes, particularly in reference to *Falubert’s Parrot* and *A History of the world in 10 ½ chapters*, the comment has amounted to challenging these books ‘right to be called novels at all. Some critics imply that he is an essayist or journalist. The specificity of Julian Barnes’ work taken as a whole is the sense of heterogeneity. While some underlying themes can be identified, such as obsession, the relationship between fact and fiction, or
the irretrievability of the past, it is clear that in each novel, Barnes tries to explore a new area of experience and experiments with different narrative modes. He explains:

In order to write, you have to convince yourself that it's a new departure for you and not only a new departure for you but for the entire history of the novel.

If Julian Barnes has written what may be called traditional novels, particularly *Metroland* (1980), *Before She Met Me* (1982), *Staring At the Sun* (1986), he has also proved very keen on experimenting with form. Thus, most of his novels and short stories show a proclivity for hybridity. Such a subversion of generic conventions is combined with an oscillation between the celebration and the isonisation of the literary past. Julian Barnes fiction is also characterized by an acute historical consciousness.

### 1.3 Career and Overview of Julian Barnes’ major works:

Julian Barnes has been called “the chameleon of British letters”. The future chameleon was born in Leicester, in England on 19 January 1946. His parents Albert Leonard and Kayne Barnes were French teachers, Julian Barnes was born in Leicester on 19 January, 1946. Six weeks later the family moved to Acton, a western suburb of London, and then in 1956 to
Northwood from which Barnes commuted via the Metropolitan Line for seven years to attend the city of London School. It proved the title for the early setting of Barnes’s first novel *Metroland* (1980). From 1956, the family spent their summer holidays driving through different regions of France. From 1964 to 1968, Barnes studied first philosophy and then modern languages (French and Russian) at Magdalen College, Oxford, where he took his BA with Honors; in 1966-7, he taught English at a Catholic school in Rennes, France. From 1969 to 1972, Barnes worked as a lexicographer for the Oxford English dictionary Supplement, and was in charge of the ‘rude words and sports words’. His connoisseurship in language can only have been sharpened by this experience. He then read for the bar and qualified as a barrister in 1974 but he never practiced because at the same time he started working as a freelance journalist, which appealed much more to him. He wrote reviews, articles and columns under his own name as well as under pseudonyms. Thus, from 1976 to 1978, he published satirical pieces as Edward Pygge in the “Greek Street’ column of the New Review and in 1977 became contributing editor under the direction of the poet, critic and literary editor Ian Hamilton (1938-2001). In 1977, Barnes joined the New Statesman as assistant literary editor under Martin Amis. There, he met and made friends with columnist Christopher Hitchens, as well as the poets Craig Raine and James Fenton, and until 1981, reviewed novels and television programs. In 1979, Barnes married literary agent Pat Kavanagh, to whom most of his fiction is dedicated and whose surname he used as a pseudonym for his detective novels. From 1979 to 1982, he was deputy literary editor of the Sunday Times, and from 1982 to 1986, television critic for the Observer.
Metroland: This novel is a triptych, written in three parts called “Metroland (1963), “Paris” (1968) and “Metroland-II (1977)”. This is a bildungsroman novel. The first section focuses on the friendship of Christopher and Toni and their childhood disgust for the bourgeoisie. The second section finds Christopher in Paris during les evenements of 1986, where he misses out on the events because he is too busy having sex. The last section outlines Christopher’s life back in the London suburbs, his marriage, his child, and his stable job. When Toni returns to question Christopher’s lose of their early childhood philosophy, Christopher is faced with the dilemma of turning his back on his wife and child or acknowledging that he has become what he once despised. Winner of the Sommerset Maugham Award for a first novel.

Before She Met Me: This is the pathological case of retrospective jealousy. The novel, written at times in crude language and mixing horror, wry humor and melodrama, focuses on Graham Hendrick, a history teacher who divorces his first wife Barbara and marries Ann, a former actress, whom his novelist friend Jack had introduced to him. Graham starts watching all the films Ann has made in the past, no matter how bad, becomes obsessed by the relationships she had before he met her, both on and off the screen. His obsession and retrospective jealousy gradually deepen until he becomes convinced that Ann also had an affair with his friend Jack. Deeply wounded and out of his mind, Graham eventually kills Jack and commits suicide in front of Ann.

Flaubert’s Parrot: It is about Flaubert’s Parrot. The book begins and ends with the efforts of the narrator, Geoffrey Braithwiate, to discover what had happened to a parrot Flaubert possessed while he was writing story “Un
Coeur simple”. On a trip to France in search of Falubert scenes and memorabilia, Braithwiate comes across a stuffed parrot in museum, alleged to be the parrot in question; unfortunately he soon sees another one for whom the same claim is made. By the end of the novel, the two birds have multiplied into a roomful of birds, and certainty on this particular question seems ever further away.

- **Staring At the Sun**: *Staring at the sun*. Like *Metroland* the novel is divided into three parts, ranges from 1941 to 2021 and tells the story of Jean Serjeant’s seemingly ordinary life from childhood through adolescence to adulthood and old age. The first part related Jean’s childhood, her fascination with the Royal Air Force pilot Thomas Prosser, grounded and billeted with the Serjeants in 1941, and her unhappy marriage to a dull police man, Michael. The second part deals with the birth of her son Gregory, and her decision to leave her husband and live alone with Gregory. Having stared at the sun with Prosser, Jean is now staring at the son, a paronomasia (pun, play on words) or near homophony (‘sun’ and ‘son’ sound the same) which reflects the evolving focus of the novel. The third part, more speculative and philosophical, proposes an alternative point of view, that of Gregory, who keeps asking the General Purposes Computer questions about God, life and death.

- **History of the world in 10 ½ chapters**: *A History of the world in 10 ½ chapters* is an ambitious tragicomic novel composed of various stories randomly ranging over centuries and involving different characters in each chapter. It is usually considered as Julian Barnes’s second postmodernist masterpiece after *Flaubert’s Parrot*. It presents a revisionist view of Noah’s
Ark, told by the stowaway woodworm: A court case in 16th century France in which the woodworm stand accused. A desperate woman’s attempt to escape radioactive fallout on a raft and several other stories.

**Talking It Over:** The novel presents a fairly conventional triangular relationship but applies an original narrative technique. It was well received by reviewers. The novel contrasts two friends: dull Stuart, an investment banker, and brilliant Oliver, a teacher of English to foreigners, Stuart meets Gillian, a picture restorer, and marries her, but soon afterwards, Oliver falls in love with Gillian, who gets a divorce from Stuart and marries Oliver. Stuart is desperate and leaves for the United States while Gillian and Oliver move to the South of France and have a daughter.

**The Porcupine:** This brief novel or novella, takes place in an unnamed country of Eastern Europe in January and February 1991, and deals with the trial of Stoyo Petkanov, a former Communist Party leader, who is opposed to Prosecutor – General Peter Solinsky, a proponent of democracy and capitalism. The trial is relayed on television and a group of students react to the proceedings. Petkanov is eventually convicted but retains his arrogance and honor, while Solinsky is portrayed as inept, and mocked for his shameless ambition and spitefulness.

**England England:** The novel is divided into three parts. The first part ‘England’ focuses on Martha Cochrane as a teenager, fond of jigsaws, suspicious of religion and of the mechanisms of memory. The second part, ‘England, England’, is set in the near future and presents a fancy: media mogul Sir Jack Pitman and his associates turn the Isle of Wight into a gigantic theme park called England, England, in which one finds replicas of
England’s best known historical buildings, sites and figures. The Island Project is a great success while the mainland suffers a vertiginous decline. The third part ‘Anglia’, takes place decades later when Martha, now an old and wiser woman, has gone back to the former England, which has reverted to a pre-industrial era. The novel plays the satirical story of Sir Jack’s megalomaniac venture against the private story of Martha’s development from teenager to elderly lady.

 Love etc. : This is a sequel to Talking It Over. Ten years later, in Love etc, Gillian and Oliver have moved back to London and have two daughters, but Oliver has had a nervous breakdown and is jobless. Stuart comes back from America where he has made a fortune, remarried and divorced again, and he decides to help Gillian and Oliver financially by having them go back to the house where he and Gillian lived when they were married, and getting a job for Oliver. It appears, however, that Stuart is also here to win Gillian back. The first novel is funny and witty, especially thanks to Oliver’s virtuous interventions, while the sequel is much more bitter, cruel and dark.
References-

4. Ibid., p-54