CHAPTER-I

Introduction
Introduction:

Bainbridge began her career as an actress and has been an entertainer ever since. Her multifaceted personality rests on her identity as a well known actress, novelist, scriptwriter, short-story writer, travel writer, an editor, a presenter and in recent years an accomplished theatre critic. She has tried to present the dark reality of post-modern world, when life is neither a tragedy nor a comedy but perhaps, a cosmic joke.

Beryl Bainbridge has emerged as a versatile genius with multi-dimensional traits based on the fabric of working-class life in Liverpool; she is notable for her lively portrayals of family life among the have-nots. Bainbridge’s early life experiences have a profound impact on her sensibility and craft as a novelist. She is almost omniscient narrator who has successfully penned many genres of the novels like autobiographical, black comedies, historical, war and suspense novels. She is known for her economical and elegant craft to present oddly angled and shockingly funny portraits of people caught in a world that is unpredictable and full of alarms.

1.0 Problem to be investigated:

It may not be exaggeration to claim that the time has come to give justice to the work of Beryl Bainbridge who has remarkably captured the spirit of our age and produced unforgettable images of our time. But an immediate difficulty that stands in the way of a full understanding and a proper assessment is critics’ attitude towards her novels. Martin Seymour-Smith writer and editor of the book Guide to Modern World Literature, criticizes her novels for lack of humour, originality, imagination and any kind of controlling intelligence. He further claims her as having less talented and less interesting and states that “her work depends on a very sympathetic
editor, who greatly helped her to put her books into shape.” (Guide to Modern World Literature, 1976: 315) the very odd statement about Bainbridge has given us perspective to consider her qualities as a novelist. So the present study undertakes the task to make critical estimate of Beryl Bainbridge’s seventeen novels to assess her as a novelist in the great tradition of the British novel.

1.1 Review of Literature:

Having nominated to Booker Prize for six times Bainbridge has attracted critic’s attention. Many eminent critics have criticized her novels, the chief among them are Elisabeth Wenno, who has written Ironic Formula in the Novels of Beryl Bainbridge in 1993. Gloria Valverde has criticized two novels of Beryl Bainbridge in her book A Textual Study of Beryl Bainbridge’s Another Part of Wood and A Weekend With Claude in 1985, and Grubisic Brett has written Understanding Beryl Bainbridge in 2004.

Much of the criticism, reviews, and essays on separate novels have been attempted by critics like Anita Brookner, Valarie Brooks, Terence Davies, Emma Fisher, Judith Gies, Frank Kermode, Michiko Kakutani, Francine Prose, Dorothy Rabinowitz, Lorna Sage, and Valentina Yakovleva and they are published in renowned magazines. Her novels received more serious critical attention for their wit, humour and originality and for presenting the brooding sense of danger under the surface of calm and quiet life. Bainbridge’s interviews are available on web; in 1998 Christopher Cook has interviewed her four times for BBC. Melvin Bragg a friend and broadcaster of BBC interviewed Bainbridge in 2007. In 2008 Writer’s Digest interviewed Bainbridge on her historical novels. She has been interviewed by critics like Lynn Barber 2001, Sarah Kinson 2007, and Laurie Taylor.
The reviews, essays on her each novel appeared in well-known magazines like Listener, Sunday Telegraph, Time out, Times Literary Supplement and New statesmen, etc.

Margo Jefferson in her article ‘Violence under Glass’ admires her as a, “wonderful observer of human folly and self-deception,” she remarks her as a “master of detail and atmosphere, superb at conveying the doggedness of Liverpool life.” (News Week, 12/8/74: 75-6). Bainbridge is admired for her capacity to present the portrayals of middle class life and her ability to evoke historical incidents in her novels. In the words of Peter Straub “She is a formidable writer with a great skill for suggesting acres of complicated matter within a few paragraphs.” (The New Statesman.1/11/74: 627) Her most of the novels end with unexpected incidents, about the outrageous ends Valarie Brooks in her essay ‘Beryl Bainbridge and Her Tenth Novel.’ remarks that “In her novels Bainbridge leaves one on the tantalizing edge of understanding.” (The New-York Times Book Review, 1/3/81: 27, 28) Lynne Sharon Schwartz calls her novels as a quest, according to her “she is asking far more questions than she answers, in our dogmatic age of assertion, this is refreshing.” (The New Republic, 24/5/75: 27)

Bainbridge has a universal vision to perceive the world; she presents the most controversial matters with ease. About her global vision Judith Gies rightly remarks that “Her vision is as glittering and as narrow as a needle. Reading Bainbridge is like being given a geodetic map of a place that doesn’t exist.” (The New York Times Book Review, 21/3/82: 10-25). There is no doubt that each novel of Bainbridge closely examines social ethnicity. She touches several social issues with great potentiality, Grubisic Brett in his book asserts that “Bainbridge’s social novels depict over and again what is wrong with the world, a term that includes individuality, family dynamics, gender role limitations, British social restrictions and even
the malign indifference of the cosmos.” (Understanding Beryl Bainbridge, 2004:13) The New Pelican Guide to English Literature (Vol-8 1998) (Women Novelists) appreciates Bainbridge’s original fictional modes and her style of integrating sensational newspaper stories in a calm, economic style, with gothic horror, mixing tragic, comic together. Bainbridge is admired by Professor Lisa Jardine, chair of the Booker judges, she remarks,

I hate the way she's damned with faint praise and treated like a delinquent child. There is no doubt she is a major writer. Wearing my hat as chair of the Booker I'm faced with 100-odd authors …And in that 100 you have to go a long way before you reach writing of Bainbridge's quality. (Web: 2002)

1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Study:

It seems the time demands to give justice to the novelist, who has captured the very heart beats of this era with her pen, so it is necessary to bring in to the notice of the readers, students, scholars and critics, the various positive aspects of Beryl Bainbridge’s novels. The present research work undertaken by the researcher aims to place Bainbridge to the right positions of scenario for which she really deserves.

The search intends to study Beryl Bainbridge’s art, elegant craft as a novelist, her journey from budding artist to mature serious novelist through evaluating various aspects of her novels like structure, characterization, themes, techniques, setting, symbolism, imaginary and her world vision. The study proposes to put together the aspects of her biographical background, social, economic, philosophical and literary influences which shaped the author under scrutiny. It is attempted to reach conclusion after all rounded
study, careful scrutiny and scientific examination with the help of primary and secondary sources.

So the present study aims to make a thorough critical estimate of Bainbridge’s seventeen novels for there is unavailability of book length study on her novels. The present critical enquiry therefore intends to make the works of Beryl Bainbridge known to the students, scholars, readers and critics of literature. It also aims at considering the development of Beryl Bainbridge as a novelist and the framework in the novels with reference to the contemporary British novelists in general and Beryl Bainbridge in particular.

1.3 Hypothesis:

Bainbridge’s novels which began rooted in autobiography, later developed to encompass historical subjects are highly original with their innovative structure. The contemporary and global themes are usually incorporated in her novels. Her novels are concerned to bring out human imperfection, the catastrophic war and its impact on society especially on children, an ironic condition of post war England, the common people’s struggle to exist and the depressed realism. She has presented an entertaining and insightful observation of the human frailty and foolishness. Her novels are discernible with contradictory features like violence and humour. She has brilliantly tied up the culture of post modern life with her novels. She deserves a unique place among the contemporary novelists as most popular novelist and a versatile genius.

She has an innovative, creative and distinguished style to deal with any matter and has a capacity to touch the incredible aspects of human life. She has been writing with enormous potentiality and genuine style,
contributing to enrich British literature; she has created a place for herself in English literature. She is one of the greatest serious novelists of post modern period.

1.4 Research design and Methodology:

The research work reaches the conclusion through detailed outline of the thesis; the thesis has been divided into five chapters. The chapter first opens with an introduction where section I studies the problem to be investigated, reviews of literature on Beryl Bainbridge’s novels, aims and objectives of the study, hypothesis, research design and methodology, limitations of the study and scope are discussed. The section II of chapter I studies life and biography, Bainbridge’s chief work, the influences like literary and philosophical and its background, further it focuses on Bainbridge’s theory of novels, Bainbridge’s views on art, literature and novel.

The seventeen novels are grouped in three chapters; the novels of early phase, the novels of middle phase and the novels of later phase. These novels are grouped for convenience and there is no any specific philosophy behind the grouping. As mentioned above, the first chapter is an introductory chapter, the chapter second, third, and fourth examine the novels of Beryl Bainbridge in detail referring to the various aspects of plot construction, characters, themes, techniques, settings, imagery and symbolism. Each section would end up with overall estimation of a novel.

The chapter II presents novels of early phase. They are divided in six sections allowing a section to each novel. They are A Weekend with Claude (1967), Another Part of Wood (1968), Harriet Said (1972), Sweet Williams (1973), The Dressmaker (1973), The Bottle Factory Outing (1974).


The chapter V is conclusion, which ends up with overall evaluation of Bainbridge’s novels. Bainbridge’s art as a potential writer and her innovative writing that proves her as one of the genuine novelists of the present period. It also presents comparison with other contemporary writers.

The methodology used in the present study is interpretative, analytical and critical. Each novel is interpreted, analyzed and criticized with the reference to the aspects like, title, structure, characterization, themes, techniques, setting, imagery and symbolism. The methodology used in this research work is based on the aspects of novel recommended by E. M. Foster, Rene Wellek and Henry James.

### 1.5 Limitations of the study and Scope:

After the detailed discussion of research design and methodology, it is necessary to note down the limitations of the present research work. Bainbridge through her tragic and comic novels emphasizes the complexity of human motives. She has taught the readers to be compassionate to those who are less fortunate. Not only her novels, but her short stories and non-fiction work also presents ingenuous record of post modern England, but the
present research work is restricted to novels. It tries to focus her qualities as a novelist, when in reality her non-fiction work is also extraordinary.

As mentioned earlier Bainbridge is living novelist who has been writing novels with the same enthusiasm at the age of 75 and may possibly produce more novels supplementary to the list of seventeen novels to enhance English literature. So the present study cannot be considered as an absolute evaluation of Bainbridge’s art as a great novelist because it criticizes novels that are available in print.

Bainbridge’s novels are not mere form of literature but they talk about life and that is why readers are addicted to her novels. The regular readers never miss an opportunity to grab her novel as soon as it enters in the market. The unavailability of full length critical book on her seventeen novels is a scope for the research work.

The present study may help the readers to know Bainbridge’s genuine potentiality as a novelist. It will be supportive for the budding readers of next generation to know the distinctive contribution of Bainbridge as a novelist and her unique place among the contemporary writers. It would be helpful for the readers, scholars, critics and students who wish to do scholarly study of her novels.

1.6 Life:

Bainbridge’s past life has left remarkable impact on her career as a novelist so it is appropriate to consider the biological sketch of a living legend which is responsible for her formation as a novelist. Beryl Bainbridge was born on 21st November, 1934 and brought up in Liverpool, England, the first child of Richard Bainbridge who was a failed businessman turned salesman and a socialist.
But before her birth her parents’ bright days were disappeared, as her father was bankrupt at the age of 30 and her mother used to repent for getting married with a man socially beneath her. The primary source of the family angst was the social discrepancy between her parents. Bainbridge’s mother Winfred Bain had completed her education from finishing school in Belgium; on the other hand, Richard was uneducated, he had left school at the age of ten. Richard’s temperamental disposition made the domestic harmony spoiled. Thus she was raised in a strained family environment and suffered from the feeling of insecurity. The fighting of parents disturbed her childhood; the social gap continually encouraged the couple to fight on trivial matters. Her parents stayed together; however, increasing dispute between them gave frightful experiences to the children. They suffered uncertainty, “My brother and I made a part that we would never be out of house at the same time so there would always one of us around to stop them killing each other.” (Contemporary Literary Criticism, 1991:21-22)

Bainbridge’s anxiety presents that part of her problem with the present is related to her gloomy past. In her interview with Peter Campbell she speaks,

All my parents’ bright days had ended before I was born. They faced backwards. In so doing they created within me so strong a nostalgia for time gone that I have never been able to appreciate the present or look to the future. (London Preview of Books, 1/6/1984: 20-22))

It is these bad experiences of disturbed family life of a disastrous marriage; she has voiced in her novels Watson’s Apology and Quite Life.

Thus the constant quarrels between parents forced them to keep the television on to drive away the sound of their quarrels, so that neighbours should not listen. However, the regular diet of television conversation at early age made her aware of the rhythm and sound of the number of words in a sentence. It was
the time when she found writing diary as the only remedy to triumph over tragic experiences of miserable life, soon she turned into an enthusiastic diarist.

In such a strained circumstance she took her early education from Merchant Taylor’s School in Liverpool 1946. At school she was good at history, art and English, but because of dreadful familial background she became famous by the name ‘Basher Bainbridge’ for her prosperity to knock down other boys and girls. She writes, “I was a terrible fighter at school and the culmination was when I challenged at school.” She further mentions, “…culmination…I pushed one of them in…The name stuck to me all through my schooldays. I have never told it to anyone since.” (A who’s who of Nicknames, 1985:9) Her brother Ian also suffered; he was called ‘Batty’ Bainbridge. She was not very well academically and got expelled from school at the age of 16 for writing rude limerick. Bainbridge’s mother, knowing the outspoken nature of her daughter, sent her to elocution lessons to improve her prospects.

After leaving the school, her father managed to get a job for her at provincial repertory company in Liverpool. Her acting career took her to the dizzy heights of playing someone’s girlfriend on Coronation Street. Her father died early when she was only 17 years old. Bainbridge's mother was keen to see her daughter on the stage. However Bainbridge criticizes herself in her interview with Emma Brockes, “I wasn't pretty enough to be a successful actress.” (Web: 2002) But at the same time, one of the co-actresses, Maggie Dickie points out Bainbridge's talent. She writes, “She was very talented and didn't need much rehearsal. She was a very natural actress.” (Web: 2002)

At the age of 20, in 1953 she met and got married with an art student Austin Davis, a stage designer at the playhouse theatre. Before their departure in 1959 they had two children Aaron and Jo-Jo. In 1963, she
moved to London and in 1967, she had another child Rudi with Alan Sharp, to whom she has characterized in her novel *Sweet William*. She gave up her acting career in 1972 and devoted herself entirely to writing. In 1972, Bainbridge met Colin Haycraft, head of publishing firm Duckworth, who supported her by publishing her novel *Harriet Said* and also employed her as a clerk. When Colin went bankrupt, she left her job and started working in bottle factory, which gave material for her novel *The Bottle Factory Outing*.

Bainbridge has been living in the same house in Camden since 1963. Today, at the age of 75, despite of her old and sick health, she has been constantly writing. She wanted to write a novel on Diana, Princess of Wales. However, being the sensitive minded, she gave up the idea of writing this novel on that theme. Right now, she is working on a book called *The Girl in the Polka-dot Dress*, which is about the assassination of Bobby Kennedy. She plans to re-write her first children's book, a kind of melodrama, which she wrote at the age of 11 named the *Tragedy of Andrew Leadbetter*. This book would be a warm gift to her seven grandchildren, based on stories she used to tell them about adventures of a boy named Arthur.

**1.7 Bainbridge’s chief work:**

As a novelist, she has constantly been writing with the same passion and keenness. Her greatness may be judged on the literary output from her pen. She has written 17 novels, 2 travel books, 2 volumes of short stories, 7 non-fiction books, and numerous television plays. Bainbridge has penned following novels,

**Novels:**

1. *A Weekend with Claude* (1967)
2. *Another Part of Wood* (1968)


4. *Sweet Williams* (1973)

5. *The Dressmaker* (1973)


8. *Injury Time* (1977)

9. *Young Adolf* (1978)


Beryl Bainbridge's literary output has added many feathers in her cap, as her novels deeply touched the world of film. In 1990 she was recommended as a screen writer as along with *An Awfully Big Adventure*, her novels *Sweet Williams* and *The Dress Maker* have been adapted for the screen.
Short Stories:

1. *Mum and Mr. Armitage* (1985)


The plot of these stories is marked with contemporary themes and their setting is post war England.

Non-fiction:

*Something Happened Yesterday* (1993), *English Journey; or, The Road to Milton Keynes* it is the journal of her assignment with the British Broadcasting Corporation to follow the path of J. B. Priestley on the fiftieth anniversary of his classic. Other non-fiction works include *Forever England: North and South*, Foreword, *Scott's Last Expedition: The Journals*, she is an editor to New *Stories*.

Anecdotal Essays:


Reviews:

Bainbridge’s reviews published in monthly magazine ‘*The Oldie*’ are collected together into a book entitled as *Front Row: My Life in the Theatre* (2005).
As a presenter:

She has been a successful presenter of *Forever England* (1987) television series. She has written numerous scripts for radio and television, including adaptations of her own work.

1.8 Awards:

Bainbridge's reputation as a creative literary artist has been strengthening year by year. She has been shortlisted for booker prize for five times and won the most prestigious awards like *Guardian Fiction prize* in 1974 and *Whitbread novel award* for two times in 1977 and in 1979. She became *Fellow, Royal Society of Literature* in 1978. She was felicitated with *James Tait Black Memorial prize* and *W.H. Smith Literary award*. She has been honoured with many honorary degrees. She has also received D. Litt. from University of Liverpool in 1986. She has received honorable *Commonwealth Writers Prize* in 1999 and DBE in 2000. She has won *David Cohen British Literature Prize* jointly with Thom Gunn. She was in Queen’s birthday honors list of 2002. She has won *The Heywood Hill Literary Prize* of 2004.

1.9 Literary Influences:

After considering the biography, it will be proper to consider the literary and philosophical influences. It seems her mother Winifred Bainbridge shares a considerable part in bringing out her potentiality as a writer. Her mother was a good reader and there were many books at her home in her interview with Sarah Kinson she replies, “Yes, they were in a bookcase and it was always locked in case you made things untidy. But my
mother went to the library a lot, and I would read her books.” (Interview: 5/3/2007) To develop her art of writing Winifred used to buy exercise books and sharpened her pencils. Because of mother’s constant boost Bainbridge turned herself in to diarist at early age. Her leftist father Richard also encouraged her by reading the stories of Charles Dickens and when she showed an interest in writing, her father bought her the nicest hard-backed exercise books he could find in the market.

Her novels seem influenced by her father’s regular reading of Charles Dickens at an early age. Dickens had entirely devoted his pen to the society and presented the social evils like the real pathetic conditions of poor factory workers, the helpless condition of common people, and the serious condition of prisoners and exploitation of child labourers while growing under the tyranny of factory owners. The early life reading influenced Bainbridge to present novels with social aspects. It seems that she copies the same Dickensian style of narration in her novels. Dickens technique of presenting child character also peeps through her novels. Her novels present child characters, either as a major or minor. Her novels Another Part of the Wood (1968), Harriet Said (1972), A Quiet Life (1976), An Awfully Big Adventure (1989), According to Queeney (2001) are examples of it. Like Dickens, she has also tried to present the factual condition of England’s social life affected by war, the bombings and the inadequate provision of goods, the big queues for rationings, chaos and huddle of modern cities and the difficult condition of the working class, social restrictions, and moral lapses. The motive behind her writing is to share many things with the reader. Gail Godwin also presents the similar view when he comments, “She has much to tell us about those pressure cookers of family life and limited means. And she creates memorable people” (The New York Times Book Review, 15/9/1974: 4)
Bainbridge seems much influenced by the Russian classic and borrowed some incidental motifs and situations from it. For example, her novel *Another Part of the Wood* is based on Russian classic of Dostoevsky. At the age of 14, she first read Dostoevsky who made an amazing impression on her and probably also strengthened her desire to become a writer. Dostoevsky’s novels *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Crime and Punishment* present the mirthless life of common class. His novels usually dealt with the human psychology in the troubled political, social and spiritual context of 19th century Russia. Like him, Bainbridge also presents the condition of man in fast developing post contemporary England. Like Dostoevsky Bainbridge also presents the central themes like loss of spiritual values, suicide, wounded pride, collapsed family values and spiritual regeneration through suffering of ordinary people.

Like Dostoevsky’s characters Bainbridge’s characters are left to develop unevenly in to unbearable climax. It was also under Dostoevsky’s influence that she later used newspaper items as the basis for the plots of her novels for example her novel *Harriet Said* is based on newspaper story. When she was asked by critic Sarah Kinson about her favorite book as a child, she speaks “Stalky and Co. by Rudyard Kipling. It's about a public school and they are all frightfully upper class. There was no reason why I should have liked it because it dealt with things I knew nothing of but when I was 11, I was intrigued by it.” (Interview: 5/3/2007)

### 1.6 Philosophical Influences:

Bainbridge being brought up in a communist family by her leftist father seems much influenced by Marxist philosophy. Her father’s encouragement and support made her to become political voice in the *Young
**Communist League.** She used to attend meetings and concerts and used to lend books from party office. Her father was proud of her painting of Rasputin and Stalin, which he pinned for many years in kitchen. More recently, Bainbridge was a founder member of Charter 88 and spoke at a mayoral rally for Ken Livingstone. She believes in communism and she declares, “I’ll always vote labour.” (Web: 1/6/2001)

Thus this early age impressions of her life tended her to present the true to life picture of working class. The leftist philosophy is voiced in her novel *The Bottle Factory Outing*. She appears to be justifying the common people, the working lower middle-class people in her novels. It seems that some of her characters present the Marxist philosophy, for example her character Norman from *A Weekend with Claude* and the Freda from, *The Bottle Factory Outing* present her vote for communism. Though influenced by Leftist views; presently she finds most of the politics ridiculous.

She declares herself as a catholic but presents pagan attitude and rarely refers God in her novels. She is not fatalistic and never presented supernatural things in her novels. She has true to life approach to see life and considers that man himself is accountable for good or bad things happening around him. About the religion she declares to critic Nicholas Wroe,

I had tried to be Jewish first but they wouldn't have me…I wanted hell fire and all that. I occasionally still go to mass and I like the ritual, but I have read so many medical and scientific books that the idea of God in the bright blue sky is now difficult. (Web: 1/6/2002)

It is striking that though most of her novels deal with female protagonist in them, she does not bear feminist approach. Her views regarding male-female relationship are not feminist. She has created influential images of female protagonists; they are the real soul of her
novels. Through her novels she tries to paint the familial and cultural forces of alienation, deprivation, abuse and rejection that the woman suffers in the society. When she was asked by Nancy Crampton in interview about her views regarding feminist movement, she writes,

I’ve never been drawn to the feminist movement. I was brought up to believe that men had little to do with the home or children except to bring in the money. I’ve never been put down by a man, unless I deserved it, and have never felt inferior. It seems to me that a mutually beneficial relationship between a man and woman requires the man to be dominant. A sensible woman will allow the man to think he is the most important partner.

(Interview, 3/10/2005)

Bainbridge accepts and believes that there is possibility of harmonious co-existence between men and women.

Her philosophy is pessimistic; it is dark and gloomy. She rarely presents optimism in her novels. Her views about love are dark; she believes that man loves someone who loves someone else. She considers sex as the creative urge. She believes that when man is young, sex is the biggest controlling factor of his life.

Bainbridge dislikes the modern cities she hates the decline of cities in the name of development. She thinks that her home town Liverpool is declined, about it she writes to Guy Davenport,

If I were an historian I could chart the reasons for all this chaos; decline of trade, loss of empire, aeroplanes instead of ships, cars instead of railways, synthetics instead of cotton, the trade unions, the rise of the Japanese. I could blame the conservatives for greed, the liberals for the lack of confidence, the socialist for naivety and jumping on the bandwagon of progress. But it hardly matters now. It’s too
late. Someone’s murdered Liverpool and got away with it. 

She is aware of the modern reality of unemployment and hopelessness. She laughs at the materialistic tendency of people, she points out ironically that though the people have no money to buy tea and bread, they smoke and further she bet that they might have got television and even videos at home.

Like absurd dramatists she presents the absurd philosophy about death in her novels. Her novels are manifest with unavoidable death, which occurs either out of violence, natural calamity, accidents, suicide and war. She believes in human mortality, most of her novels present death as an inevitable part of life, her personal view about death is not so gloomy, like an absurdist she doesn’t feel terror about death, she writes,

Death has never worried me. I wouldn't like to go quickly of a heart attack or something. I’d like a proper goodbye, with lots of words and things said…..I've always been interested in death, she further said, My generations weren't expected to get as old as this; they all died off quite soon. (The Guardian, 25/5/2007:13)

She believes mankind is suffering from spiritual emptiness and in the machine made world violence has became a part of life where inner or outer violence troubles men. About her view she has mentioned that she couldn’t live in present or see hopefully towards future, about the development of city she speaks in her nonfiction book A following in Priestly’s footsteps that, “the huddle of undignified little towns, the drift of smoke, the narrow streets that laid from one dreariness to another,’ were the very things I lamented.” (Times Book Review, 9/9/1984:2) She believes in unpredictability of modern life and the helplessness of entire mankind where anything may happen any time, without giving any coherent clarification.
1.7 Background:

After the discussion of literary and philosophical influences, it becomes appropriate to study the background of contemporary of British novel. If literature is mirror of civilization and the world is reflected in it, then British novel is not exception to it. The major post-war events like the Gulf War, the beginning of the Cold War, the civil rights movement in the United States, the bombing of Iraq and the war against Terrorism has influenced the literature. The post war literature is reaction against modernism in the wake of the Second World War. The society and literature went through rapid changes. The various influences and alters in every sector of life like Economy, Politics, Philosophy, History, Geography, Culture and Literature forced the writers to produce new genres of novels to incorporate with the fast changing world.

1.8 The Postmodern Novels:

Bainbridge’s novels integrate contemporary themes; it is observed that post modern features peer through her novels though the present research work does not intend to prove her as a postmodern novelist.

Before studying the various post modern trends, it is necessary to know the definition of post modern literature. The definition of postmodern literature cannot be put in one complete sentence because there is little agreement on the exact characteristics, scope, and importance of postmodern literature. One thing is clear that it is not an organized movement with leaders or central figures; therefore it is more difficult to say about its birth and when it will end. According to M.H. Abrams
Postmodernism involves not only a continuation, sometimes carried an extreme, of the counter traditional experiments of modernism, but also diverse attempts to break away from modernist forms which had, inevitably, become in their turn conventional,…Many of the works of postmodern literature.…blend literary genres, cultural and stylistic levels, the serious and the playful, that they resist classification according to traditional literary rubrics. (*A glossary of Literary Terms*, 1993:120)

There is a combination of multiple genres to create a unique narrative in post modern literature, which can be observed in Bainbridge’s novels. The multi narration and different point of views techniques can be seen in her novel. In *Birthday Boys* (1991) the incident of Scott’s expedition is written through the point of view of five members of the crew Capt Oates, Taff Evans, Dr. Edward Wilson, Henry Bowers and Scott. Her novel *Master Georgie* (1996) is presented through three narrators Myrtle, Dr. Potter and Pompey Jones. The first person narrative technique is used in her novel *Harriet Said* (1972); the stream of consciousness technique can be seen in *A Weekend with Claude* (1967).

The chaos is also one of the important features of post modern novel. The internal chaos as well as external chaos can be seen in her novels. In her novel *Master Georgie* (1996) the external chaos is presented in the shape of Crimean war. In *Birthday Boys* (1991), it is presented through catastrophic expedition of Antarctica, in *Every man for Himself* (1996), it is presented through the sinking of Titanic. The internal chaos is presented in the form of domestic war between the couple. In the novels like *A Quite Life* (1976) and *Watsons Apology* (1984), it is presented through the regular struggle between the couples. Thus postmodern writers, besides presenting the modernist quest for meaning in a disordered world, present the parody of this quest.
There is a perfect blending of irony, playfulness, black humor and the mixing of genres in post modern novels. The different genres are paste together and it is called ‘pastiche’, which is seen in Bainbridge’s novels. The multiple elements like science fiction, detective fiction, autobiographical novel, science novel and war novel are blend together; it is called ‘meta-fiction’. For example Watsons Apology (1984), Young Adolf (1978) and An Awfully Big Adventure (1989) blend different genres collectively where post modern life, theatre, pop songs, the multiple culture references, the fictional history and the detective fiction are mixed. She has fictionalized her autobiography and presented her uneasy childhood, her parents in the novel A Quite Life (1976), and she has presented her true to life experiences of theatre in An Awfully Big Adventure (1989).

The fragmentation of identities and the characters quest for self identity are seen in Bainbridge’s novels. For example, the characters in A Weekend with Claude (1967) and The Dressmaker (1973) are seen struggling for their identities. Apart from the above features, the discontinuity and disintegration may be noted, where the story is narrated in discontinued form. For example, Master Georgie (1996) is narrated by three people making the gap of months and years and the reader has to fill in the gaps and guess what might have happened during the period of break.

The indeterminacy plays vital role in her novels, which is considered as one of the important features of post modern novels. The unpredictability and uncertainty is seen in her novels. Indeterminacy is presented sometimes through characters or through plot. The Dressmaker (1973), Weekend With Claude (1967), An Awfully Big Adventure (1989) and Another Part of Wood (1968) present the uncertainty of life where things take place suddenly without giving any hint.
The psycho-analytical theory is also incorporated in her novels, where her novels try to depict the inner psyche of the characters. Much emphasis is given to present the complexity of human motives, the mental disorder of emotions, prejudices and ambiguous philosophy of men that determines their action. She is more interested to present the motives or the cause behind any action. Her novels deal with psychology of the murderer before taking the severe step, for example, her novels take the reader in to the depth of the psyche of Ann in *Harriet Said* (1972). Her character Mr. Watson in her novel *Watsons Apology* (1984) is presented with the systematic study of inner psyche, who remains unaffected after killing his wife. Watson thinks that he has helped his wife to get rid from the bad traits she had. There is a wide variety of well-known, obscure and fictional cultures and concepts in her novels.

Bainbridge has been pre-occupied with English history since her childhood, as mentioned earlier at school too she was good at history and in her novels she has presented the effects of war. About war she depicts, “I was alive during the war. What happened to the Jews changed me forever.” *(Paris Review, Winter 2000)* Some of the novels of Bainbridge present the aspects of historiographic meta-fiction in terms of Linda Hutcheon where she refers to works that fictionalize actual historical events or figures. In her interview with Elizabeth Wenno, she declares the fact,

I had used up all my personal past. I think because I had spent all my time writing I hadn't really lived. That's when I went back to history, it was a deliberate move. Both Watson's Apology and Young Adolf had historical elements but they were also personal. Even in The Birthday Boys I was still playing around with my father's character, really. *(Acta Universitatis, 1993:29)*
The historically inaccurate or fictional characters and contemporary characters are mixed in her novels to make the novels lively. For example, her novels, *Young Adolf* (1978) *Watsons Apology* (1984), *According to Queeney* (2001), *The Birthday Boys* (1991) and *Every man for Himself* (1996) blend living people like Adolph Hitler, Mr. Watson a Victorian school master, Dr. Samuel Johnson and Sir Walter Scott with fictional characters. The post modern concept of paranoia, the belief that there's an ordering system behind the chaos of the world, but for the postmodernist, no ordering system exists, so a search for order is fruitless. This absurd philosophy has been observed in her novels. She successfully presents the absurdity of human life in her novels, for example *Another Part of Wood* (1968), *Winter Garden* (1980) and *Injury Time* (1977) are good specimen of this aspect.

Bainbridge, who has been writing with great potentiality and distinguished style is recognized as a writer of thrillers, psychological novels, horror fiction and absurdist or naturalistic writing, she has also written historical novels. Bainbridge’s work comments as a chronicler of modern life. Her novels represent the chaotic, pluralistic or information-drenched aspects of post-modern society. In short the examples given above manifest her status as a novelist of post modern period.

1.9 Bainbridge’s Views on Art, Literature and Novel:

Bainbridge’s view on art, literature and novel has left tremendous impact on her career. For Bainbridge, every art is a media to express the feelings. It is really noteworthy that Bainbridge’s views about novel have not changed from publication of the first novel in 1967. Her views on novels form the theory of her novel. For her, novels are a kind of escape which
would relieve her mind from her uneasy memories. As a novelist she is committed to paper for her own satisfaction. She presents episodes that she has lived through and portrays a canvass revealing the details of life.

Bainbridge is a universal narrator who presents the details of life, especially middle class life to which she belongs. She presents common people’s problems that often result in physical or psychological violence. This violence usually occurs in the dull normality of everyday life, she suggests unpredictability and uncertainty of human life. Her success as a novelist lies in her presentation of characters; her protagonist is a common man with folly and self deception, personal shortcomings, economic hardships, social restrictions and family history. They are representative of the entire human race and their anguish is anguish of entire world, leading different professions and living amidst the chaos of the world. They are shown giving courageous fight constantly for survival and accept the harsh realities of life. About her novels she writes, “I am not very good at fiction it is always me and the experiences I have had.” (Web: 1/6/2002) about the novel writing she confidently asserts that,

I am of the firm belief that everybody could write books and I never understand why they don't. After all, everyone speaks. Once the grammar has been learnt it is simply talking on paper and in time learning what not to say. (Acta Universitatis, 1993: 29)

Her views about novels can be clearly seen through her interviews, where her world vision is truthfully presented. For her, novel is a media to share her personal experiences with the world. She wrote novels as she wanted to tell the people about her uneasy past, about it she mentions to Elizabeth Wennö that, “I think if things had stayed right I don't think I would have written. It was to fill in the gaps. I write about the sort of childhood I had, my parents,
the landscape I grew up in: my writing is an attempt to record the past.” (Acta Universitatis, 1993:29)

It appears if she had camera ready with her, she would not have written. Everything she presents in her novels is autobiographical. For her, writing is a passion and it is a kind of fill in the gap to bring out the reality of her uneasy childhood, which she suffered in post war England. About her novel writing she says, “I think writing is a very indulgent pastime and I would probably do it even if nobody ever read anything.” (Web: 1/6/2001)

She further mentions about her writing as,

I think that if you are with someone, and this is especially true of women, then you can't write. You don't want to. Life is for living, and it was only when I was on my own that I started to write. (Acta Universitatis, 1993:29)

She considers novel as a media to express her mental agony. She firmly believes that even if no one would have read her novels, she would have written. She writes, “People ask me, who you are writing for? Well, anyone who'll pick my books up!”(Interview, 28/3/2003)

Bainbridge prefers novel as a perfect branch of literature compared to poetry, drama, play etc. She never turns up to poetry because she doesn’t consider poetry as easy as novel is. She considers poetry a bit on a higher plane and difficult mode of expression. She believes that poet’s task is difficult as they have to present everything within few lines, about poetry she writes,

I think poetry is much more difficult than prose, particularly the good stuff. This goes back partly to the way I was brought up. Anyone can read books, anyone can write them come to that, but not everyone can write poetry. Not good poetry!
The above examples present Bainbridge as innovative novelist who has invented her own theory of writing. She present novels using different techniques like stream of consciousness, episodic, journal form, biographical form, first person narrative, two ways narrative, and different points of view to present the plot. She rarely left any perception of novel writing untouched.

Apart from her identity as a novelist she is recognized as an artist who prefers painting from her childhood, her paintings are available on web. She loves painting as an expression to the themes of her novels, in her interview with Nicholas Wroe, she declares that she has always painted and in the late 1960s even sold some of her paintings, "I still paint a picture to go with every book, which will be something for the children and grandchildren after I've gone. There are several of Captain Scott and the Titanic [to go with Every Man for Himself], and two Dr. Johnsons." (Web: 1/6/2002) She prefers to painting subsequent to novels, as soon as she completes her novel, she paints a picture based on it. In her childhood she was always encouraged by her parents especially her father. Her father was proud of her painting of Rasputin and Stalin, which he pinned for many years.

To conclude it can be said that chapter I opens with an introduction where the humble efforts have been made to introduce life and works of Bainbridge; it also studies the literary, philosophical influences and her views on art, literature and novel, it states her place in post-modern scenario with a brief account of post-modern theories.