The different concepts of postmodernist British dystopian novel in Martin Amis's London Fields and Julian Barnes's England, England

Diploma Thesis

Author: Tomáš Ficza (AJ – ČJ)

Supervisor: PhDr. Petr Chalupský, PhD.

Acknowledgement

I wish to thank PhDr. Petr Chalupský, PhD., the supervisor of my diploma thesis, for his patience, guidance and pieces of advice that I received during the writing. Without his support and help this thesis would have not existed.

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine the poetics of postmodernism and explore to what extend were the dystopian novels *London Fields* (1989) by Martin Amis and *England, England* (1998) by Julian Barnes influenced by this concept. The first part of the work deals with the biographies of the authors, dystopian features of both books and the theory of postmodernism. The second part focuses on practical analyses of both novels. In the second part, the thesis theoretically introduces various concepts of postmodernism and then practically illustrates them on the works.

Abstrakt

Cílem této práce je prozkoumat poetiku postmodernismu a zjistit, do jaké míry byly dystopické romány *Londýnská pole* (1989) od Martina Amise a *England, England* (1998) od Juliana Barnse ovlivněny tímto konceptem. První část práce se zabývá biografiemi autorů, dystopickými rysy obou knih a teorií postmodernismu. Druhá část je zaměřena na praktickou analýzu obou románů. V druhé části jsou teoreticky představeny různé koncepty postmodernismu a poté jsou prakticky ilustrovány na zmíněných pracích.

Key Words

Postmodernism, dystopia, historiographic metafiction, intertextuality, parody, replica

Klíčová slova

Postmodernismus, dystopie, historiografická metafikce, intertextualita, parodie, replika

Prohlášení o autorství

Předkládám k posouzení a obhajobě diplomovou práci. Prohlašuji tímto, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracoval samostatně, s použitím odborné literatury a pramenů, uvedených v seznamu, který je součástí této diplomové práce.

V Praze dne: …… Podpis autora: ……..

Table of contents

I. Introduction

Postmodernism is a concept that, not only in fiction, mainly challenges the logic and validity of what modernism established. It is important to deal with the notion of postmodernism because it shows us that many concepts related to our social reality are artificial human constructs[1]. Those artificial constructs were imposed on the society mainly by the intellectuals of the modernist era. The thinkers of postmodernist era try to question these notions that are taken for granted and attempt to challenge the boundaries that were established by the preceding movement.

The two books that are analysed in this thesis represent a fictionalization of many thoughts that were brought forward by postmodernist thinkers. Both books can be seen as typical postmodernist works, even though each of them represents different approach to postmodernism. I chose these two particular novels precisely because they represent different approach to postmodernism and therefore one can better elucidate on what the term postmodernism means. There is a structured plot in both of the novels as well as an intellectual depth. The two mentioned aspects were the main reasons behind the choice of the books. Moreover, after analysing both books in depth one really appreciates that he or she can be exposed to such pieces of art.

The thesis deals mainly with *England, England* (1998) by Julian Barnes and *London Fields* (1989) by Martin Amis. It examines how the various concepts of postmodernism influenced these books and what aspects of this poetics can be traced in both of them. At the beginning of the thesis, both authors are briefly introduced. The introduction is followed by a theory of postmodernism as well as with clarification what dystopian literature is and what signs of dystopia can be found in the above mentioned works. Various concepts of postmodernism are scrutinized and applied on the books. It proved useful to study the books separately because the authors introduce different notions of postmodernism. However, in some parts of the thesis some aspects of the books are compared to show that they still both emerged within postmodernism and that they possess some common features. The main ambition of the thesis is to list and clarify typical postmodernist features and apply

[1] Khalidi, Manzoor. *An Exploration into the Concept of Postmodernism* (2008). http://www.pafkiet.edu.pk/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=dd7p1RlnprQ%3D&tabid=161&mid=1557.

them on the discussed books.

After the analysis of dystopic features of both books the thesis deals with the scrutiny of *England, England*. First of all, it explores how the concept of intertextuality, and the postmodernist view that texts can no longer be seen as original, influences this work. After a brief theoretical background, the notion of intertextuality in the book is analysed mainly when Julian Barnes introduces a cameo, but very important, character of a French intellectual. This chapter is followed by the postmodernist problematizing of the view of history. It is discussed how postmodernism, and Julian Barnes in *England, England,* questions the reliability of historical facts and memory. Through an introduction to historiographic metafcition and its projection in the book, the work introduces the chapter that deals with the problematic relationship between reality and fiction - which is one of the main themes of *England, England.* This then leads to the chapter that clarifies the term hyperreality and what the relationship of this term to the studied work of Julian Barnes is.

The second part of the thesis deals with postmodernist narrative strategies, more precisely with those that occur in *London Fields.* It comments on the postmodernist projection of the real author into his or her fictional characters and this projection is illustrated on the concrete example of Martin Amis and his narrator Samson Young. The metafictional part of the book is also mentioned and after that the thesis deals with a writer's problem to create characters. In other words, through Martin Amis and Samson Young, the process of writing and the genesis of a book are discussed. Later on, the multiplicity of genres is presented. The final chapter ends with a scrutiny of the characters in the work, and it comments on the importance of the names of the characters as well.

To sum it up, the main aims of the thesis are: to clarify what postmodernism is, to define its poetics and represent it on the above mentioned works. The ambition of the work also is to point out that the concept of postmodernism is a useful one because it forces the readers to challenge the set boundaries and to analyse what we take for granted. The thesis also shows that both *England, England* and *London Fields* are masterpieces of postmodernist fiction and can be treated as guides to the poetics of postmodernism.

II. Julian Barnes (born 19th January, 1946)

Author of novels, essays, detective and short stories is the second son of Albert Leonard and Kaye Barnes – both French teachers which had an immense influence on Julian Barnes. He studied French and Russian at Magdalen College, Oxford. After the studies he taught English at a school in Rennes and then he worked as "a lexicographer for the *Oxford English Dictionary Supplement*, and was in charge of the rude words and sport words." (Guignery, 2). Both the relationship to France and the job as a lexicographer had an impact on *England, England* especially when the part with a French intellectual is introduced. Barnes belongs to a prolific and artistically successful generation alongside with other postmodernist writers as for example Kazuo Ishiguro, Salman Rushdie, Ian McEwan or Martin Amis.

The starting point of his literary career was in 1975 when he published his first short story *A Self-Possessed Woman*. His first novel came to existence in 1980 – it was *Metroland* and it won the Somerset Maugham Award for a debut novel. It was the second novel that was particularly striking and caused mixed reviews and surprised reactions. The novel was *Before She Met Me* (1982) and surprised the readers mainly because of the mixture of comedy and horror. The difference between the first two novels foreshadowed Barnes's career. Guignery points out that "[t]he distinctive feature of Barnes's work taken as a whole is its diversity of topics and techniques, which confounds some readers and critics, but enchants others." (1). In other words, the versatility and unpredictability of Barnes's works causes pleasure and excitement among some readers while some might be discouraged by this fact. However, his philosophy is that "[i]n 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" (Barnes in Guignery, 1). The hybridity of the texts that Barnes produces causes that every new publication has been anticipated with great expectations. If one wants to find some common ground among all the Barnes's novels it would be themes like love, the relationship between the real and the fictional, memory or the questioning of past and its objectivity. These themes are projected in *England, England,* a book which was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize.

III. Martin Amis (born 25th August, 1949)

One of the most world-wide known British writer was born in Swansea to Hilary Bardwell and Sir Kingsley Amis. Even though his father was a successful writer Martin Amis as a child read almost exclusively comic books. Surprisingly enough, it was his step-mother Elizabeth Jane Howard who introduces him to high literature, namely to Jane Austen. Martin Amis then attended Exeter College at Oxford University and graduated with first-class honours in literature. He worked in *Observer, Times Literary Supplement* or *New Statement* until 1979 when he resigned and decided for full-time writing.

However, Martin Amis started to publish earlier and his first novel *The Rachel Papers* (1973) won the Somerset Maugham Prize for the best debut. From this moment on, Amis fell deeply in love with producing and writing and "had a huge amount of intellectual energy." (Amis in Diedrick, 8). He became highly prolific and from 1975 (*Dead Babies*) until 1991 (*Time's Arrow: Or the Nature of the Offence*) published 6 novels. During this era several significant novels came to existence. He published for example *Money* (1984) which alongside *London Fields* and *The Information* (1995) forms an informal "London trilogy"[2]. The books share a little as far as the plot is concerned, however, they all introduce middle-aged men that can be characterised as anti-heroes. They depict the undercurrents of live in late 20th century in Britain. It is *London Fields* that goes a bit further since its plot is set in future (in 1999 precisely). Martin Amis's writing is unique, daring and is full of unpleasantness, anxiety, vivid description of horrific images and sexual material. He deals with the sexual revolution that gone too far and resulted to pornography or with the notion of media that presents the simulation as reality. His characters go deep down into the reader's mind and it is almost impossible to get rid of them. Diedrick states that "his men are typically colossal in their absurdity, while his women are absurdly diminished." (20). As well as Barnes in some works, Amis likes to equivocate the boundaries between Martin Amis, sitting at the desk writing the story, and the narrator in the book. His books are rather provocative, very intelligent, full of shocking material and are, as well as Barnes's works, gems and page-turners.

[2] http://www.martinamisweb.com/works.shtml, accessed 26th March 2012.

IV. Postmodernism

This chapter deals with the theory of postmodernism. It serves as a theoretical background on which the practical analyses of the books are based. The main features of postmodernism are mentioned in this chapter and it is made clear what the term "postmodernism" stands for. Also, it explores how postmodernism contributes to the beauty of art and what possible flaws postmodernism can have. Postmodernism is discussed in the historical context in this chapter as well.

First of all it is important to analyse the word "postmodernism". The suffix –ism announces that "the referent here is not merely a chronological division but an organized system – a poetics." (McHale, 5). It also stresses that all the art that emerges within this poetics is postmodernist and not postmodern. Postmodernism does not want to be futuristic or after modernity. Postmodernism is a reaction to, mainly, early twentieth-century literature – modernism. However, it cannot be seen as only a contradiction of modernism or a pure reaction against it, it is merely a successor of modernism. Since postmodernist writers and theorists are aware that even if they react against the former poetics they "cannot totally reject modernism" (Hutcheon, 29). Postmodernism reacts to the past poetics, to historical movements – mainly modernism but Victorian era or realism as well, it questions them but it never denies them or mocks them artlessly.

Nevertheless, if one desires to trace the very beginning of postmodernism and would like to find the reason why this poetics emerged, it will all come down to modernism. In other words, the reaction against modernism and its "dogmatic reductionism, its inability to deal with ambiguity and irony, and its denial of the validity of the past." (Hutcheon, 30) really is the moving force of postmodernism, at least in its beginnings. The conclusion is that this poetics is a reaction to modernism since it came to existence after the modernist era. This brings us to the prefix post- that *seems* no less problematic than the above mentioned suffix. However, the prefix suggests only a historical consequence. In other words, literary history is full of labels and terms that start either with post- or pre- (pre-romanticism, post-structuralism etc.). McHale argues that "[e]very literary-historical moment is *post* some other moment." (5). Therefore, it only shows the historicity. However, it is the absence of an independent term that seems to be the problem. McHale quotes Charles Newman who, wittily, comments on the term, and says that "it inevitably calls to mind a band of

vainglorious contemporary artists following the circus elephants of Modernism with snow shovels." (3). Even though postmodernism is far from plundering from modernism, the term itself might suggest so. Moreover, the need of independent terms is stressed when we look in the future. It would be absurd if the follower of postmodernism is called post-postmodernism.

Ihab Hassan in his work *Toward a Concept of Postmodernism* (in *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture* (1987)) calls the term "awkward and uncouth" (3) mainly because it still contains "its enemy within" (ibid.). It is noticeable that there could be a constant comparison with the preceding movement. Postmodernism, therefore, is the first distinctive movement that actually lacks distinctive label. This fact has an inevitable impact on the whole viewing of the poetics. If, hypothetically, Romanticism had been called postclassicism the perception of this era would have been inevitably different. On the other hand, Hassan himself admits that there are probably not better terms for this poetics and asks the reader to consider whether it would really be better to call it for example "The Atomic" (3) or "The Age of Indetermanence – indeterminacy and immanence" (ibid.). It does not matter how much controversy the term can strike, we cannot deny that it has been settled by now and there is no possibility of changing. McHale therefore proposes that "[s]ince we seem to be saddled with the term, whether we like it or not . . . why not see if we can make the term itself work for us, rather than against us?" (5).

Before defining what main features postmodernism possesses it is worth taking into account that postmodernism does not cover all the contemporary writing, in the words of Hutcheon, "postmodernism cannot simply be used as a synonym for the contemporary" (4). However, it is the most significant poetics in our era – era that Fredric Jameson calls "late capitalism" (*Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991)). Jameson uses this term as a synonym to postmodernism, or even "a literal translation" (XXI). Postmodernism tries to test the boundaries and limits, "limits of language, subjectivity, of sexual identity, and we might also add: of systematization and uniformization." (Hutcheon, 8). I work with the theme of pushing the boundaries and testing the limits later in this work. What seems to be the problem is that postmodernism is, above all, a reaction. Therefore, there is no clear, significant, postmodernist feature that strictly belongs only to this poetics. What we can name as typically postmodernist is, among others, intertextuality, mixing of

genres, historiographic metafiction (which might be considered as a hyperonym to some of the terms), new narrative forms, etc. (all those terms are scrutinized in separate chapters). The problem is that all these concepts and notions are mainly based on questioning or parodizing of the existing. Postmodernism, therefore, can be seen only as a new mixture of what has already been introduced and it is no wonder that for example Jameson argues that "[t]he problem of postmodernism-how its fundamental characteristics are to be described, whether it even exists in the first place, whether the very concept is of any use." (55). On the other hand, it is the ability of authors to critically approach the existing that makes postmodernism useful. Postmodernism is a concept that reacts on the given, objective and stated. It tries to shake the certainty that had surrounded some notions. Postmodernism is "above all illusion-breaking art." (McHale 221).

By mixing and contradicting, postmodernism tries to break the uniformization and tendency to label and categorize everything. Hutcheon points out that "[i]t refuses to posit any structure." (6). Because of the absence of any clear structure that would be typical for postmodernist art Jameson accuses the artist of "replicating within themselves." (XII) and even calls postmodernism "failure of a whole new culture." (ibid.) Postmodernism tries to subvert the dominant discourses. Postmodernist authors are also aware of the fact in what era they produce their works. They know that they are the members of the society that is called consumer and that to a certain degree they create this society. However, Jameson calls it "gesture of populism." (64). From the other point of view, this self-reflexivity and mainly parodic intertextuality serves as a brilliant means of breaking of illusions.

To sum it up, postmodernism is a poetics or construct that bases its works of art on already existing and proved conceptions. However, it tries to test these given conceptions and tries to subvert all the myths that surround them. On the one hand, it may look unoriginal and too marketable, on the other hand, it does not separate or discriminate the low genres from the high ones. As an example can be seen that the postmodernist authors include the low art into novels or novelettes which was unimaginable in previous eras.

Now I would like to examine some typical features of postmodernism more thoroughly and I will show how they are represented in the two books. Firstly, I will analyse intertextuality, the postmodernist view of history, historiographic metafiction and the notion of replica, simulacrum and hyperreality in *England, England.* Then I

would like to explore the boundaries between reality and fiction, the problematic of narration and the author and the multiplicity of genres in *London Fields.* It is also important to present that both books can be seen as dystopian. The next chapter shows the dystopian features of both works.

V. Dystopic worlds in *England, England* and *London Fields*

First of all, it is necessary to specify what dystopia and dystopian literature is. Dystopia is a world that is contrasted to the utopian one. While utopian literature portrays an ideal place or society where human beings live in perfect conditions, dystopian literature depicts the flaws and failures of imaginative societies. Dystopia is set usually in unspecified future. McHale says that "[m]ost postmodernist futures . . . are grim dystopias." (67). Therefore, whenever a postmodernist author decides to set his novel in the future, he or she usually also creates a dystopic future where the reader feels unsafe and anxious.

What can also be seen as typical for dystopian literature is the fact that the authors are "projecting a future time but without making any particular provision for bridging the temporal gap between present and future; that bridge is left for the reader to build." (McHale, 67). Dystopian literature is often connected with politics (Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) or Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* (1940)). However, as we see in the two focused on books or in Ian McEwan's *The Child in Time* (1987), dystopia does not have to be purely political. Whereas Barnes in *England, England* depicts a world where people completely abandoned the need of reality and are obsessed with replicas and simulacra, Amis in *London Fields* shows the dystopian features mainly on climatic changes and a disturbing growth of criminality. It is important to state that the dystopian features that are listed in this chapter are not the only ones. Other such features are mentioned in different chapters where they feel more appropriate and can be scrutinized more thoroughly.

V. 1. Dystopian features in *England, England*

After the reader comes to know that "[f]rom now on, only those with an active love of discomfort or necrophiliac taste for the antique need venture there [to Old England]" (*England, England* 185), it is clear that the old England is going to turn into a dystopian world. Even though Martha says about the village in Anglia, where she moved after she had been fired from the position of CEO on the island, that it was "neither idyllic nor dystopic" (256); it is arguable that it possesses signs of dystopia. The Old England serves as a bad example for other countries. Some symbolic punishments were introduced and for example the English Channel became the French Sleeve. Also a mass depopulation took place. English pound was introduced

again and the Old English army tried to regain the territories in north, however, since the US Army and continental Europe backed the Scottish Army, that protected the bought territories, the Old England lost the Battle of Rombalds Moor and it "led to the humiliating Treaty of Weeton." (252). These events are, probably, going to be replicated on the Island in a few years. These incidents lead to the fact that Old England shuts itself completely and suspends almost all the communication and business with other countries. As Barnes states, "[s]ome historians asserted that at this point the country simply gave up; others that it found new strength in adversity." (*England, England* 253). Old England also banned tourism except for groups numbering two or less, changed its name to Anglia, communication technologies were forbidden and mass transit systems were abandoned. According to the author himself, Anglia is "about the question of to what extent a country can begin again, and what that beginning means." (Guignery, 113).

It is, however, not only the Old England that possesses signs of a dystopia world. What we can see as dystopian is the fact that in the fictional world of *England, England* the official currency is euro. English people are known – sometimes it is perceived as a national stereotype though – for traditionalism and one can hardly imagine that they would voluntarily replace euro for pound. Through the change of currency Barnes wanted to show that England in his book is so cosmopolitan and so succumbed to the market that it even accepted euro as the official currency. The reader comes across even more absurd deviations from our reality, for example when Sir Jack Pitman is about to visit his favourite restaurant (where his chauffer prepaid the bartender to make it available for Pitman to drink on the house) he ponders about his clothing and mentions that "[t]here had been a motion before the Ramblers'Association a few years ago proposing that walkers be obliged to wear colours which blended with the landscape." (42). Especially through Sir Jack Pitman (as far as the main characters are concerned) the reader can detect all the aspects that differentiate our world from the fictional one. He, for example, comments on the journalism and indirectly mentions that there are only journalists that he employs or that are employed by his rivals. The absence of freedom of the press is a typical dystopian feature.

V. 2. Dystopian features in *London Fields.*

London (more precisely its West part) in *London Fields* is a place where you can be robbed (and will be robbed) on every corner and everyone tries to cheat you. The world that is depicted in the book is scary, dark, empty and full of danger and anxiety that leaks from every description of the setting. The constant presence of crime is even more stressed by the fact that one of the main characters Keith Talent is a professional cheat. Through his adventures the reader comes to know what actually happens in the fictional London. Almost everyone cheats, everything has already been robbed and burgling "was clearly approaching a crisis . . . Burglars were forever bumping into one another." (*London Fields* 248). It is no wonder that in such a world all the good manners are gone. Amis depicts this comically and describes that everyone was swearing publicly: "they're all doing it – nippers, vicars, grannies." (*London Fields* 234).

The world in *London Fields* is not scary and disturbing only because of the characters that appear in it. Amis strengthens the apocalyptical vision by depicting serious climatic changes. There is consistent raining in California or Morocco, cyclones in Italy and Yugoslavia and the planet spins slower. Moreover, the forests are constantly on fire, meteorite is about to hit the Earth and winds kill nineteen people in one day in England. All the dystopian features in the book make the vision of London apocalyptical. It is not unusual for postmodernist dystopia to show such apocalyptical image of the future. McEwan in *The Child in Time* also describes an unpleasant world where the two thirds of eleven-year-olds are illiterate and where there is thirty degrees in England in May, in early morning. The main dystopian feature is the behaviour of children in *London Fields.* This thesis deals with childhood and the loss of innocence in the fictional world later on.

The world in *London Fields* is in climatic, ecological and nuclear crisis. The thread of a disaster is so intense that it is actually referred to as Crisis. When Kath calls Keith that something is wrong with the TV because on every channel there was a message that they are testing an Emergency Broadcast System Keith ignores the fact that the media are preparing for some danger that is near and he replies: "You scared the life out of me then. Thought the TV was down." (359). The reader can see what priorities the inhabitants of the fictional world have. We know right from the beginning that England and whole Europe is in a crisis because when the narrator

flies to London he remarks that “I had the airplane to myself because nobody in their right mind wants to come to Europe.” (2). We can find a similarity with Anglia from *England, England* here. It is a land that we all know but the severe changes make it a scary place.

In the world of *London Fields* some typical traits of Englishness disappear. There are no pedestrian crossings, no clean bathrooms and, unimaginably for English people, there are no normal queues, everyone skips the lines and you have to box your way to the start. Moreover, “[y]ou seldom see a black London taxi any more.” (99). The pubs are opened non-stop which is highly improbable in London as well. Whereas in *England, England* the most typical signs of England and Englishness are reduplicated, in *London Fields* the aspects of English and London culture seem to disappear and they are replaced with absurdities as for example vending machines that offer hairpieces and prostate-kits, or that when they needed more flats in London they divided the existing ones into halves.

The world is in constant danger of nuclear war; Germany, Japan and China send money to encourage the military research in the field of nuclear weapons. The world is in *superwar.* When the fighting countries wanted to declare some policy about how to present the war to media they agreed on “killing all journalists.” (142). There is an Indian journalist who survived this ravaging and he describes what happening as “read an account of what the Khmer Rouge did in the Seventies and multiply everything by ten. Body count. Area involved. No. Square it. Cube it.” (142). This macabre depiction of what is happening in the world is sharply contrasted with Guy’s gradual happiness. Right after the paragraph with the simile to Khmer Rouge, Samson Young writes that Guy “had never felt happier” (142).

VI. Intertextuality

Intertextuality is one of the seven main features of each text; of textuality[3]. Every text is directly (the connection is visible, the other texts are mentioned) or remotely (the relationship with other texts is unclear) connected to some other texts. The term was first used by Julia Kristeva in her work of the late-1960s, notably her essay of 1969, translated as "Word, Dialogue and the Novel"[4] . It is worth pointing out that by coining the term, Kristeva did not "invent" the feature of intertextuality, however, she was the first one to directly point out that it is an inevitable constituent of every text, which applies to literature even more than to non-literary texts. Intertextuality is one of the key features for postmodernist writers; one can say that some postmodernist works are intertextuality itself (Burgess, Anthony: *Nothing Like the Sun* (1964) or Stoppard, Tom: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967)). It is a complete change of perspective as far as art of literature is concerned, and as far as the construction of the text, work or novel is concerned. It provides us with a new view of the author and the process of writing. Hutcheon quotes Barthes and Riffaterre arguing that "[i]ntertextuality replaces the challenged author-text relationship with one between reader and text, one that situates the locus of textual meaning within the history of discourse itself." (126). Postmodernist writers, influenced by such thoughts, therefore have ceased to try to come up with ground-breaking ideas and rather openly admit the relation of their texts to other texts, thoughts and persons. They have adopted the thought that "[a] literary work can actually no longer be considered original; if it were, it could have no meaning for its reader. It is only as part of prior discourses that any text derives meaning and significance." (Hutcheon, 126). I would like to trace intertextuality in both books, starting with *England, England.*

---

[3] "textuality" *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Baldick, Chris. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. Central Queensland University. http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t56.e1136, accessed 16th March 2012

[4] Allen, Graham. "Intertextuality". *The Literary Encyclopedia* (2005). http://www.litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=1229, accessed 14 February 2012.

VI. 1. Intertextuality in *England, England* and the speech of the French intellectual

Intertextuality can be found in *England, England* as well, moreover, it is one of the main features of the whole book. The first clear sign of intertextuality, or here a fictional text within a fictional text, is when the reader comes across “A Brief History of Sexuality in the Case of Martha Cochrane.” This is a narrative strategy that shows the reader one of the sides of the multidimensional character Martha Cochrane and explains the motivation for her behaviour throughout the novel, especially when she has to deal with men. Another fictional document, that is crucial for the whole story, is A Brief History of Sexuality in the Case of Paul Harrison. One could argue that a relation between two fictional texts within one fictional framework is not an instance of intertextuality since it is still a part of one text, however, I would suggest that in this case the documents are clearly distinguishable from the continuous narration, that they create a whole new, separate level of narrating. McHale argues that “[f]or readers it [intertextuality] is whenever we recognize the relations among two or more texts, between specific texts and larger categories.” (57). McHale supports my view by using the word “readers”, thus pointing out that intertextuality is a subjective notion that we can perceive somewhere, where other readers may not.

We can find another occurrence of intertextuality when Pitman invites a French intellectual who gives a lecture on the Project of replicated England and supports its idea. When the lecture starts he speaks of some important authors, linguists and thinkers that influenced postmodernism (without mentioning the name of the movement, ideology). He mentions de Saussure, Baudrillard or Sterne which is not a coincidence because all three of them had massive influence on postmodernism be it in the field of linguistics, philosophy or experimental narration in novels. However, the French intellectual also mentions Jerry Lewis, Dexter Gordon or Bernard Hinault who did not have any essential impact on postmodernism. Since those real persons are an actor, a musician and a sportsman it just proves that postmodernism incorporates in the work of art aspects that were not previously associated with artistic creation.

However, we cannot see the lecturer as a representative of postmodernism. He only provides an intertextual connection with intellectuals outside the fictional world, he is “caricatured figure of the academic” (Guignery, 111) through which

Barnes “mischievously mocks the jargon and abstract doctrines of French intellectuals.” (ibid.). The fact that the intellectual remains unnamed and is still referred to as a French intellectual only proves that Barnes really wanted to achieve what Guignery (through Pateman) calls “a reasonable pastiche of a sort of postmodern theory.” (111). Barnes is able to reflect on the thinkers that has inspired him (and on himself as well) and through typically postmodern self-consciousness and parody problematize the view of theory.

Even though the French intellectual is not a representative of postmodernism he is a provider of certain concepts of postmodernism. Despite the fact that his appearance is rather cameo his importance is immense because through him Barnes shows his allegiance to postmodernism. I will try to show what Barnes – on the few pages where the character occurs – achieved by introducing him and I will try to demonstrate that “[b]orrowed characters abound postmodernism.” (McHale, 58). Moreover, I will try to show that it is not only characters (as in above mentioned novel and play) that occur in various works but it is, and I would say that this is even more typical for postmodernism, real life persons, that interact (directly or remotely) with fictional characters.

Through this character and therefore through intertextuality Barnes openly admits and shows one of the main inspirations for the whole novel showing that in postmodernism “[t]he frontiers of a book are never clear-cut … it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentence, it is a node within a network.” (Foucault in Hutcheon, 127). Barnes exploits the possibilities of postmodernism and shows through witty parody where the basic thoughts of the story lie. Foucault’s thought that texts create a network supports my view that each text consists of various componential chains within one text (thus creating intertextuality on, let us say, a first level) as well as relations to other texts (a second level) and, above all, contexts (a third level). Hutcheon stresses the importance of situating interpretations in the context by arguing that “[w]hat is unavoidable and unignorable for any attempt to trace a postmodern poetics of the parodic self-reflexive art (as well as theory) of today is this concept of meaning existing only in relation to a significant context … situated discourse which does not ignore the social, historical or ideological dimensions of understanding.” (82). Therefore, to correctly decode the speech that the French intellectual gives we must trace all its intertextual inspiration that can be found outside the fictional world, whilst treat it as a self-reflexive insight to

the poetics of postmodernism.

The key figure mentioned in the speech is Baudrillard who is a main source of inspiration for the whole novel as far as his work *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) is concerned. In the mentioned work, Baudrillard deals with representation and simulacrum. He argues that representation originates from the equivalence between the sign and the real (even though he admits that this equality is utopian, it is, nevertheless, a basic relation, an axiom). Simulation, on the other hand, comes directly from this utopian axiom and negates the sign as value. So whereas representation tries to incorporate simulation by interpreting it as a false representation, simulation embraces the whole concept of representation itself as a simulacrum. Baudrillard shows that the simulation consists of the same images and signs as the real object, therefore erasing any clear line between the authentic and the copy. Whereas representation of the real is a first-order simulation, a second-order simulation is seen as a principle that blurs the boundaries between reality and representation, and the third-order simulation, called hyperreality, is a state when the replica dominates, is superior to the real. These thoughts about replica, simulation, and their relation to reality had huge impact on *England, England*.

Baudrillard states that our culture has become inescapably reliant on representations and models. Among others, he presents this vision on the example of maps. Maps are supposed to describe a territory, therefore, the territory should precede the maps. However, it is vice versa, a map is no longer an abstraction, the model; it precedes the territory the “precession of simulacra” (Baudrillard, 3). The maps are created without the origin of reality. Through this example, Baudrillard suggests that we know the world almost exclusively through models and simulations. We know where the deserts, rivers, countries or lakes lie but we have never been there. The society (ours and the one in *England, England*) is obsessed with creating replicas. It is more convenient for us to create a model of reality and, firstly, pretend that we know that the model is just a simulacrum of reality and, secondly, our knowledge of the difference gradually disappears. In other words, we are so dependent on artificial descriptions and models that we have lost our touch with reality. We are exposed to generated models without origin of reality. This is what he calls hyperreality – a simulation of the third order. It is when the replica is so strong and catching that it embraces its origin. Thus, it prevents us from recognizing that it is not real. The hyperreal simulacrum is so powerful that even if we recognize the

absence of reality we still prefer the replica because it is more convenient and marketable.

So, when the real becomes hyperreal “the commodity becomes hypercommodity, and culture hyperculture.” (Badrillard, 47). In order to sufficiently clarify what hypercommodification means it is useful to quote Jameson who states that it is a “process in which commodification reaches new and second-degree levels and seems to propagate itself upon its earlier stages.” (386). The problem with the hyperreal is that it is no longer an imitation or parody it “is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real.” (Baudrillard, 4). In the third order we face the precession which means that the representation precedes the reality. Barnes’s book is in fact a fictionalization of Baudrillard’s thoughts. The work *Simulation and Simulacra* was a crucial influence for the book and it is referred to several times later in this thesis as well.

The speech of the French intellectual, which is crucial for the whole understanding of the book, is, as I suggested, vastly influenced by the mentioned philosopher and his work. However, as Guignery points out,” [i]t is another French philosopher and sociologist, Guy Debord, the author of *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), who, though never named, is directly quoted: “All that was once directly lived”, he wrote, “has become mere representation.” (110). Hutcheon shapes her opinion on the phenomenon of representation and simulation and basically agrees, she glosses that “[i]t is a contemporary critical truism that realism is a set of conventions, that representation of the real is not the same as the real itself” (125). The character of the French intellectual recycles thoughts of other thinkers with self-centred pathos and does not have the dignity to admit that all these thoughts are not his. Moreover, while Baudrillard sees replica with disdain, the French intellectual openly celebrates it saying that “[w]e must demand the replica” (55). So while he draws the ideas from Baudrillard and Debord he completely deviates from their conclusions and adopts a contrary stance on simulation and replica saying that his “fellow-countrymen” (54), meaning Debord, is someone from whose mistakes and errors they should learn.

The French intellectual, after quoting Debord, remarks on the thoughts of the real philosopher: “[h]e intended it, astonishingly, as criticism not praise” (55).The character then, admittedly and cleverly, mixes Debord’s thoughts with the ones of Baudrillard and articulates that “[o]nce there was only the world, directly lived. Now

there is the representation – let me fracture that word, the re-presentation – of the world. It is not a substitute for that plain and primitive world, but an enhancement and enrichment" (55). By separating and stressing the prefix in the world representation and by the whole speech of the French intellectual, "Barnes satirizes both the world of hyperreality and that of critical theory, in effect creating a parody of a parody" (Miracky in *The Fiction of Julian* Barnes, 111).

As argued earlier, what Barnes achieved is typical postmodernist self-awareness. Even though Jameson says that "[a]n inquiry into this or that feature of the postmodern will end up telling us little of value about postmodernism itself." (66), I will argue that postmodernism and postmodernist writers approach critically not only the discursive past, truth, seemingly objective texts, etc. but also, and *above all*, their own works, mainly through parody and paradoxes. Hutcheon argues that "[p]ostmodernism is a fundamentally contradictory enterprise, its art forms (and its theory) at once use and abuse, install and then destabilize convention in parodic ways, self-consciously pointing both to their own inherent paradoxes and provisionality…" (23). It is important to point out that parody is not mocking of any co-artists or artists in the past, it is "repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signalling of difference at the very heart of similarity." (Hutcheon, 26). Moreover, McHale takes the same stand saying that "[p]arody, of course, is a form of self-reflection and self-critique, a genre's way of thinking critically about itself." (145).

In this part of the story the Project is in its theoretical phase, even though it has already become *"the thing itself*" (59) for Pitman, the progress is getting unstoppable and the Project goes through all the Baudrillardian orders from blurring the boundaries between the authentic and the simulation at first up to eventually replacing the original with the replica completely. The French intellectual completely reverses the thoughts of the philosophers by stating that there is "*rivalization* of reality." (54), which is the main idea of the whole project. The simulacra should not be viewed as a competition for the reality; it should completely blur with reality and eventually make it to the third order of simulation.

Pitman supports this view by stating that even if we think that, for example, there is nothing more real and untouched that the nature in the countryside "[t]he hill was an Iron Age burial mound, the undulating field a vestige of Saxon agriculture, the copse was a copse only because a thousand other trees had been cut down, the river was a canal and the pheasant had been hand-reared by a gamekeeper." (60).

Surprisingly enough, Pitman can be used here to support one of the underlying thoughts of postmodernism, and that is that we are surrounded by infinite chains of human constructs, while still valuing what we call natural and authentic, without studying whether it really *is* natural and authentic. In the words of Hutcheon: "the postmodern argues that what we so valued is a construct, not a given, and, in addition, a construct that occupies a relation of power in our culture." (203).

When Pitman tries to explain to his colleagues the relation between the reality and the replica he uses the currencies to do so, Mark catches the drift and makes it clear to the reader that "[p]ounds being the real thing, and dollars the replica, but after a while the real thing becomes the replica." (61). This perplexing blurring of replica and reality is, above all, done by the media. Hutcheon quotes Baudrillard who remarks that "[m]ass media has neutralized reality for us and it has done so in stages: first reflecting, then masking reality, and then masking the absence of reality, and finally, bearing no relation to reality at all." (223). Hutcheon then continues by adding that "[t]his is the simulacrum, the final destruction of meaning. What I would want to argue is that postmodernism art works to contest the "simulacrization" process of mass culture – not by denying it or lamenting it – but by problematizing the entire notion of the representation of reality." (ibid). This shows the need of studying works like *England, England* because after reading them we can interpret our reality with critical distance. Moreover, it is important to ask the questions that postmodernism tries to arise and that are represented, for example, in *England, England.* On the other hand, postmodernism teaches that "[w]e are not witnessing a degeneration into the hyperreal without origin or reality, but a questioning of what real can mean and how we can *know* it." (Hutcheon, 223). Despite the fact that Jameson does not believe that postmodernism is a peculiar and independent movement, he says that [t]he problem of postmodernism – how its fundamental characteristics are to be described, whether it even exists in the first place, whether the very concept is of any use, or is, on the contrary, a mystification…" (55), postmodernism is a vital and important movement, ideology, grouping, forming of intellectuals that centres around basic ideas that are presented in this thesis.

There is one more postmodernist feature in the studied speech that I would like to mention. It is the relatively frequent usage of French words. Let us neglect the fact that the character is a *French* intellectual and focus on the formal part and on the relationship between Barnes and France. As is written earlier, both parents of Julian

Barnes were French teachers and Barnes "developed a passion for France." (Guignery, 2). However, by choosing a *French* intellectual to mock the empty doctrines of some postmodernist intellectuals Barnes shows that despite his passion he still has the ability of critical distance. This fact, nevertheless, does not undermine his love for this country[5]. Majority of those French words can be easily decoded, such as 'eritage', 'grands projets' and 'frisson'. However, it is the compound "soixante-huitards" (54) that would probably need an explanation: it is a term that is used for participants in the students and workers protest movement in France in May 1968[6].

Postmodernist writers like what McHale terms "lexical exhibitionism" (151), which means introducing "rare, pedantic, archaic, neologistic, technical, foreign words. Words, in short, which many readers will need to look up." (ibid.). The term "lexical exhibitionism" has slightly negative connotations. It seems as if postmodernist writers like to show off that they have huge vocabulary and know foreign terms. However, it is not a desire to boast that makes them put such words into their books. They want the reader to be even more involved in their works. When the reader has to look such words up he or she inevitably invests more emotions into the book and is even more bonded with the fictional world.

[5] http://www.julianbarnes.com. accessed14th February 2012.

[6] http://dictionary.reverso.net/french-english/soixante-huitard. accessed 14th February 2012.

VII. History

The key feature of postmodernism is its perception of history and the past as a human construct. It is an object that has been created by people. Since every human is different subject the history as we know it (through documents basically) is subjective, not objective. In the words of Hutcheon: " Thanks to the pioneering work of Marxists, feminists, gays, black and ethnic theorists, there is a new awareness in these fields that history cannot be written without ideological and institutional analysis, including analysis of the act of writing itself." (91). It is important to state, however, that postmodernism by no means attempts to view history as something obsolete or even useless. It aims to make the readers see that "[h]istory does not exist except as text, it does not stupidly and "gleefully" deny that the *past* existed, but only that its accessibility to us now is entirely conditioned by textuality. We cannot know the past except through its texts: its documents, its evidence, even its eye-witness accounts are *texts.*" (Hutcheon, 16). Therefore the accusations of postmodernism of ahistoricism, "loss of historicity" (Jameson, X) or "historical deafness" (Jameson, XI) must be confronted as well as the objectivity of history itself. Postmodernism stresses the fact that the past really did exist, however, it raises the questions of how we can know the past today or what gives us the certainty, the right to claim that the past as we know it in the present is objective.

We have to bear in mind that history was recorded by individuals who had their own vision of the events that really did happen. What postmodernism challenges is the *recording* of the events, not the events itself. Some thinkers (Gerald Graff for example) view this questioning of history as an immoral act of not valuing what really happens and points to the suffering of all those who "wrote" history[7]. McHale, however, defends the postmodernist view suggesting that "[f]rom this point of view, history is the record of real human action and suffering, and is not be tampered with lightly; inventing apocryphal or fantastic or deliberately anachronistic versions of history is a betrayal of that record. This would be unassailably true, if only we could be sure that the historical record reliably captured the experience of the human

[7] Graff, Gerald: *The Myth of the Postmodernist Breakthroug*h (1973) in: Bradbury, Malcolm: *The Novel Today: Contemporary Writers on Modern Fiction*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997.

beings who really suffered and enacted history." (96). Hence postmodernism does not hold history in scorn, it merely stresses that "we know the past (which really did exist) only through its textualized remains." (Hutcheon, 119).

History is to postmodernist writers a depiction of memory through documents and texts. It is already mentioned that each text possesses the feature intertextuality. Hutcheon glosses that "[p]ostmodern intertextuality is a formal manifestation of both a desire to close the gap between past and present of the reader and a desire to rewrite the past in a new context… It is not an attempt to void or avoid history. Instead it directly confronts the past of literature – and of historiography, for it too derives from other texts (documents)." (118). In other words, postmodernist writers try to incorporate *the real history* in their works and try to blur it with fictional history. They try to erase the boundaries between history and fiction, they call the official history into question, they "fictionalize history, but by doing so they imply that history itself may be a form of fiction." (McHale, 96). The scepticism that can be found in the postmodernist novels, texts and art is a result of amalgamation of history and fiction. The previous boundaries and separation of both notions is what is challenged and "both history and fiction have focused more on what the two modes of writing share than on how they differ." (Hutcheon, 105). There is no clear distinction between fictional writing and historical writing. Historians are also interpreters. When they wrote something about the events that occurred in a certain time they had to make their own choice of words that would best (according to their subjective view) describe what they wanted to describe. Postmodernism also aims its attention to the fact that historians have to make their own choices about what they consider important and what is worth putting down.

We must also be aware of the fact that it was not postmodernism which actually started to question the objectivity of history, and not giving postmodernism too much credit because it would not be that deserved. Postmodernism really did raise a lot of questions about history but: "The provisional indeterminate nature of historical knowledge is certainly not a discovery of postmodernism. Nor is the questioning of the ontological and epistemological status of historical "fact" or the distrust of seeming neutrality and objectivity of recounting. But the concentration of these problematizations in postmodern art is not something we can ignore." (Hutcheon, 88). So postmodernists were not the first ones who put the official history under scrutiny. The chief contribution is in the frequency and quality of the questions.

Therefore, thanks to postmodernism, whoever deals with literature had to ask these questions. The postmodernist playfulness with the view of history reaches one of its peak in *England, England.*

VII. 1. The view of history in *England, England*

From the very beginning the reader knows that this novel is going to deal with the theme of the elusiveness of memory which is seen as an enormously unstable tool that is worth exploring. The very first line of *England, England* is "What is your first memory?" (3), but Martha is not able to remember and through her thoughts we come to know that the very image of one's first memory is blurred and that memory itself is unreliable and that "[a] memory was by definition not a thing, it was… a memory." (3) What is needed to be added here is that postmodernism implies that history is only perceived through documents that are based on memory of human individuals.

Therefore, from the first line of *England, England* the reader should bear in mind that he or she deals with a novel that questions the reliability of history and memory and puts these two notions under scrutiny. The memory of Martha as a child, as she was trying to solve the jigsaw and her father always hid one piece and gave it to her later, is important for the view of history and memory as well. "This was a true memory, but Martha was still suspicious… [as a child] when you woke all you had was a memory of having been abandoned, or betrayed, caught in a trap" (6). Through the character of Martha the reader is forced to reflect upon his or her own view of memory and consequently upon the validity and trustworthiness of history. Martha later on contradicts herself when she says that she remembers that three days after the Agricultural Show she was sitting on the floor and that is a fact. By stating that it was a fact Martha assumes that she is sure about it, however, since this passage comes after the part where she admits that memory is not a reliable source of history we know that Martha only reassures herself while not being completely confident that it really is a fact.

Barnes then shapes his attitude towards the objective vision of memory when Martha ponders "If a memory wasn't a thing but a memory of a memory of a memory, mirrors set in parallel, then what the brain told you now about what it claimed had happened then would be coloured by what had happened in between. It was like a country remembering its history: the past was never just the past, it was what made

the present able to live with itself." (6 *England, England*) Martha here, more or less, articulates the view and attitude of most postmodern thinkers, philosophers and writers who want to explore and test the objectivity of the history we know, try to create new meanings by problematizing the view and show that we know the past only through present-time interpretations. As Hutcheon remarks: Postmodernism "self-consciously reminds us that, while events did occur in the real empirical past, we name and constitute those events a s historical facts by selection and narrative positioning. And, even more basically, we only know of those past events through their discursive inscription, through their traces in the present." (97)

A metaphor that is present throughout the opening part of the book is the missing piece in Martha's jigsaw. This piece was taken by Martha's father when he left the family and will be always missing from the jigsaw which mirrors the fact that Martha has always felt incomplete. Martha says that she blamed herself when she was a child for losing Nottinghamshire (the piece) which stands for her blaming herself for the fact that her father abandoned the family. When she meets her father again she asks for the missing bit but her father does not even remember that she liked jigsaw. Martha is then devastated because she realizes that her father probably does not know that his leaving made such a huge impact on Martha and therefore "Neither the jigsaw, nor England, nor Martha's heart can be made whole again." (Guignery, 106). What we can see here is that some events are simply of different importance to different individuals, therefore we can make a parallel between this scene and the postmodernist obsession with "the question of *whose* history gets written and survives." (Hutcheon, 120). Barnes, through Martha, introduces this theme on the first pages of the book, thus giving the reader an ideological ground for later on when "The malleability of history and the unreliability of collective and individual memory are what enable the creators of the theme park on the Isle of Wight to rewrite, simplify and caricature national history so as to meet the expectations of tourists."(Guignery, 106). Through this passage Barnes prepares his readers for what will come next. The reader knows that the book deals with the unreliability of memory and the project is the peak of it.

The character of Martha shows us on the one hand that we have to challenge and question memory, history and the past, its credibility and validity. The theoretical works on postmodernism point out, on the other hand, that we must not confuse it for not respecting it and denying it. We need to look on the past and on history and its

recordings from multiple points of view. Barnes illustrates the need of multiplicity of perspectives when Martha unsuccessfully tries to recall her first memory. She introduces a short anecdote, a small talk that she had with her Spanish friend Cristina. They were talking about the history of their countries (which Martha calls "contentious"), and Cristina mentioned that "Francis Drake was a pirate."(7). Martha had to disagree with this appellation because in her eyes he naturally was an "English hero and a Sir and an Admiral and therefore a Gentleman." (7) Later on when Martha looked Francis Drake up in a British encyclopaedia she found that he was a "privateer and plunder" and she admits that "she could quite see that one person's plundering privateer might be another person's pirate." (7). This short story is an artistic description of postmodernist view of history and it problematizes the objective view of it. This, however, is not desired by Jameson who wants in art "genuine historicity – our social, historical and existential present and the past as 'referent' or as ultimate objects." (67)**.** Guignery quotes the author himself who reflects on the history of nations by saying that "[a]fter I had written it [the book], I came across a wonderful quotation from [Ernest] Renan: 'Getting its history wrong is part of being a nation.' It would have made a perfect epigraph of the book … You have to build up those myths of liberation, myths of fighting the oppressor, myths of bravery." (109). This statement is represented by the character of Miss Mason (Martha's history teacher), who "would tell them tales of chivalry and glory, plague and famine, tyranny and democracy; of royal glamour and the sturdy virtues of modest individualism…" (11). Another gloss on this subject can be found when Dr. Max interviews the person who represents a typical visitor of the replica island and he asks about the Battle of Hastings and the subject replies that apart from remembering some dates and rough progress of the battle he also "knows" that Harold was hit by an arrow in the eye and says that: "It's pretty unlucky when you think about it. I suppose the course of English history might have been different if he hadn't looked up at the moment." (81).

The subjectivity of history and historical facts is what makes postmodernist thinkers wonder whether there is a possibility of really knowing the past. Postmodernism teaches us that the possibility is rather confined since "[postmodernism] enacts the recognition of the fact that the social, historical, and existential "reality" of the past is *discursive* reality when it is used as the referent of art."(Hutcheon, 24) and therefore "the past as referent is incorporated and modified,

given new and different life and meaning." (ibid.). Postmodernist writers do not only show that the objectivity of history (the one that is known from the educational processes in educational institutions) is rather ambiguous or blurred, they also want to present why they think so. The multiplicity of views on Francis Drake is a perfect example that serves as a valid proof of such questioning. Moreover Martha shows that the attitude to history (and I would argue that the attitude of historians towards the events and "facts" that they perceived and recorded) and reality is hard to be changed since it is usually based on emotional attitudes and stereotypes, therefore even if one is confronted with some new facts (however objective they may be presented) he or she seldom changes the attitude and his or her view. "… but even so Sir Francis Drake remained for her an English hero, untainted by this knowledge."(7).

The reader's attention is drawn to the objectivity of historical facts again when Martha introduces the happy part of her childhood and she recalls that when she used to go to school her history teacher made the pupils sing chants that included historical facts: "55BC (clap clap) Roman Invasion, 1066 (clap clap) Battle of Hastings, 1215 (clap clap) Magna Carta, 1512 (clap clap) Henry the Eighth (clap clap) Defender of Faith … 1940 (clap clap) Battle of Britain, 1973 (clap clap) Treaty of Rome." (Barnes, 11). Ignoring the obvious fact that this teaching method would be devastatingly unsuccessful, the reader should focus on two particular dates. The first one is 1512 Henry the Eighth – Defender of Faith and second 1973 Treaty of Rome. Henry the Eighth was born in 1491, became a King of England in 1509 and obtained the title Defender of the Faith in 1521, the year 1512 is not of any significant importance (judging from the point of view of our "official" history)[8]. Treaty of Rome was signed in 1957[9]. I used the controversial term "official" deliberately because this is precisely what postmodernism tackles - the definite, unambiguous attributes that are given to the noun history. Postmodernism challenges it "by violating the constraints on "classic" historical fiction: by visibly contradicting the public record of "official" history; by flaunting anachronisms; and by integrating history and the

[8] Tytler, Patrick Fraser, *Life of King Henry the Eighth* (1837). http://books.google.cz/books?id=qIbSAAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Henry+the+Eighth&hl=cs&sa=X&ei=vK82T_C1DcP0-gaC29WkAg&ved=0CGEQ6AEwCQ#v=onepage&q=1512&f=false accessed 15th February 2012.

[9] http://europa.eu/abc/treaties/index_en.htm accessed 15th February 2012.

fantastic" (McHale, 90). Apocryphal history, creative anachronism or historical fantasy are typical strategies of postmodernist revisionist novels.

This applies to *England, England* as well. The novel revises the content of the historical record, changes the historical record, thus creating "alternative history." (McHale,90). So whereas later in the book Sir Jack Pitman tries to merge the history of the Project with the history of the fictional world (through his Official Historian Dr. Max), Barnes through Martha manages to blur the boundaries between the history that we take as official and the history in the novel.

The mistakes in dates could be interpreted in two ways. Either the teaching method really was that poor and Martha did not remember the dates correctly and yet she still thinks that she did. Or, most likely, the fictional world where the plot of the book takes place has different official history from the one of our real world. The question that arises now is where we find the certainty that our history is the correct one and really reflects what has happened. McHale at first, states the non-postmodernist view by saying that: "[p]ersons, events, specific objects, and so on – can only be introduced on condition that the properties and actions attributed to them in the text do not actually contradict the "official" historical record." (87). He then contradicts this statement by introducing the postmodernist point of view which is the one that is indirectly given to the reader through Martha. McHale reacts to the above mentioned quote: "This, of course, is a question-begging formulation: it leaves open questions of *which* version of history is to be regarded as the "official" one." (ibid.). Compared to historical fiction outside postmodernism which "[u]sually incorporates and assimilates data in order to lend a feeling of verifiability." (Hutcheon, 114) Historiographic metafiction, or postmodernist historical novel, "incorporates, but rarely assimilates such data … and known historical details are deliberately falsified in order to foreground the possible mnemonic failures of recorded history." (ibid.). Therefore, Martha's alternation of the dates is not striking if we consider the fact that she is a character in a postmodernist novel.

Postmodernist theorists and philosophers have always questioned the traditional understandings of history and the concept of truth. How can we know the past? Can we ever do so on objective grounds? Is it really possible to understand history in any way? Is it not always subjective, partial and relative? The history is and has always been a subject to interpretation, one which is known in the present only through its textualized remains, it has always been planted in discourse. Hutcheon

summarizes Foucault's and Derrida's thoughts on this subject and points out that "[p]ostmodern rethinking of the relation between the past and our writing of it, be it in fiction or historiography. In both domains, there are overt attempts to point to the past as already 'semioticized' or encoded, that is, already inscribed in discourse and therefore always already interpreted." (96 – 97).

Barnes's approach reflects the approach of postmodernist thinkers, hence Martha's diversion from the dates that we treat as official, should definitely not result in a pitiful smile from the reader. Martha, therefore, should not be treated as someone who lacks historical knowledge; it should make the reader think about the documents on which we rely and which we treat as objective and true-based.

Barnes's demand to treat historical documents with critical distance is reflected in the character of Sir Jack Pitman as well. This character longs to be remembered by humankind and to be put down in history. His idea-catcher Paul has to record what Sir Jack says when he thinks aloud in his office. He wants to produce memoirs that will be here for the future generations, something that would truly describe what he has done. However, when he dictates, or ponders he sometimes adds remarks like "Do not record this, Paul, I am not certain it is for the archive."(Barnes, 33). Paul is also responsible for rewriting all that was dictated so that it will better suit to the traits that Jack believes he possesses. Barnes wisely shows how it is possible to record history and how the history and past, as we know it, might have come to existence. History is here presented as a human construct, as a discourse, text, document, system, which shares certain attributes with fiction. Hutcheon says that "[t]he meaning and shape are not *in the events*, but *in the systems* which make those past events into present historical facts. This is not a dishonest refuge from truth but an acknowledgement of the meaning-making function of human constructs." (89). What Barnes shows through Jack Pitman and what Hutcheon articulates in her theoretical work is that history is a human construct consisting of texts that were made by historians who inscribed subjective meaning to these constructs. The memoirs of Pitman would be seen as an unbiased work. Postmodernism teaches us that such works (or constructs) that call themselves (are called by their producers) unbiased, objective should be questioned and studied.

The earlier note that the year 1512 was not important in the life of Henry the Eighth is based on the premises that history is a true reflection of the events that took place at the same time and place as written in the texts through which we know these

events. What if this year was of an utmost importance for the history and for Henry the Eighth. No one knows (or it is at least highly improbable) whether the history in *England, England* is closer to what really happened (as far as the dates connected with Henry the Eighth are concerned). This is typical for postmodernist writers and historiographic metaficiton as they “remain fundamentally contradictory, offering only questions, never final answers.” (Hutcheon, 42). In *Poetics of Postmodernism*, Hutcheon quotes Bradbury saying that “in fiction, it combines argument by poetics (metafiction) with argument by historicism (historiographic) in such a way as to inscribe a mutual interrogation with the texts themselves.” (ibid). So the fact that the history is altered in fictional works is one of the main features of postmodernism. The word “altered” that is used suggests again that history as we know it is a hundred per cent truth-based system.

The works of postmodernism try to avoid such claiming and try to make readers question the validity of history through historiographic metafiction which “refutes the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction. It refuses the view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discoruses, human constructs, signifying system, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity. “ (Hutcheon, 93). The approach, or method “historiographic metafiction” is also a key feature of postmodernism and I would like to elaborate on it further.

VIII. Historiographic metafiction

This short chapter serves to conclude and sum up what is mentioned earlier in chapters *History* and *Intertextuality.* I used the term "historiographic metafiction" and quoted thinkers without actually explaining what part this term plays in the whole poetics of postmodernism. This term was coined by Hutcheon in her works *Poetics of Postmodernism* and *Historiographic Metafiction: Parody and the Itertextuality of History*. Before anything else, it is necessary to explain both terms separately. Historiography is the study of the writing of history and of written histories[10]. The word metafiction consists of two words – fiction - which is literature in the form of prose, especially novels, that describes imaginary events and people[11] and the prefix meta which is self-referential[12]. Given these definitions, it is deducible that historiographic metaficion deals with self-reflexive questioning, re-writing of history or historical facts. Postmodern novels often try to blur the boundaries between history and fiction and historiographic metafiction "[t]herefore , represents a challenging of the (related) conventional forms of fiction and history through its acknowledgment of their inescapable textuality." (Hutcheon, 11).

As we can see, both genres interact with each other and complement one another. It is important to stress that it is mutual; hence not only fiction gets inspired by history but, as postmodernism teaches, the other way round as well. They are not the same, but they share some conventions and some traits. Hutcheon paraphrases Hough to point out that "[t]hey are different, though they share social, cultural, and ideological contexts, as well as formal techniques. Novels incorporate social and political history to some extent … historiography, in turn, is as structured, coherent, and teleological as any narrative fiction." (Hutcheon, 111). The relation is of mutual implication. Historiographic metafiction works try to plant the plot into a historical discourse without giving up their fictional autonomy.

---

[10] http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/historiography?q=historiography; acessed15th February.

[11] http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/fiction?q=fiction; accessed 15th February 2012.

[12] http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/meta?q=meta; accessed 15th February 2012.

The whole argumentation brings us back to the basic questions of "how we can and do come to have knowledge of the past." (Gottschalk in Hutcheon, 92), how we can know the continuity of the past and how we can "unmask it through the historiographic metafiction" (Hutcheon, 98). Postmodernist writers try it through self-consciousness (metafiction) about the writing process, through paradoxes that are a crucial part of historiographic metafiction since it "installs totalizing order, only to contest it, by its radical provisionality, intertextuality, and, often, fragmentation." (Hutcheon, 116), or through parody, self-parody, and parody of history which serves "not to destroy the past; in fact, to parody is both to enshrine the past and to question it. And this is the postmodern paradox." (Hutcheon, 6.). Since historiographich metaficiton is one of the main devices of postmodernism we can clearly see that postmodernism is above all a paradoxical concept that works through many other disciplines. Through intertextuality it tries to blend such genres and notions that have never been fused before. On the other hand, it tries trough fragmentation to separate what has always been glued together. For instance, in detective stories the reader (with the fictional detective) usually tries to figure out who the killer is, in *London Fields* the narrator states right in the opening passage that he knows who the murderer is.

McHale argues that "[i]n postmodernist revisionist historical fiction, history and fiction exchange places, history becoming fictional and fiction becoming "true" history – and the real world seems to get lost in the shuffle. Yet of course this is precisely the question postmodernist fiction is designed to raise: real, compared to what?" (96). This is what I would like to elaborate on now – how reality, objectivity, truth, replica and other question-begging terms are challenged in postmodernism and in the novels with reference to what has already been said. There is an immense room for arguing and scrutiny when one works with characters like Sir Jack Pitman who provides us with lines such as: "What is real? … Are *you* real, for instance – you and you? … I could have you replaced with substitutes, with simulacra."(31) or "The world began to forget that "England" had ever meant anything except England, England, a false memory which the Island worked to reinforce." (253). The line between reality and fiction seems to disappear, not only in the books but in reality as well. Barnes is aware of this fact and he is able to transform this problem into the main theme of his work.

IX. Reality and Fiction - Disneyfication

The main sources of inspiration for this chapter are the earlier mentioned quote from McHale ("real, compared to what?") and Baudrillard's work *Simulacra and Simulation.* Postmodernism shows us that the boundaries between reality and fiction are sometimes quite indistinct. Postmodernist thinkers, again, strive to tackle the objectivity of reality and try to propose that the perception of the *real* must be subjected to scrutiny. The era of postmodernism warns that what we actually perceive as truth and real might just be a replica, reproduction, simulation or hyperreality. What is more, the society tends to prefer replica over the reality. Umberto Eco in his essay *Fortress of Solitude* (published in *Travels in Hyperreality* (1986)) illustrates the preference of replica on the example of Disneyland. He uses it as a typical representation of a duplicated world, but he points out that when the visitor goes out of Disneyland he or she thinks that he or she is in the absolute, indisputable reality. However, the visitor is still surrounded by human constructs, by mass-media, and especially television that provide us with obviously replicated information but present them as real. As Baudrillard notes, "[w]e live in a world where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning" (55). Neil Postman in *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985) remarks that "[t]elevision is our culture's principal mode of knowing about itself. Therefore – and this is the critical point – how television stages the world becomes the model for how the world is properly to be stage. It is not merely that on the television screen entertainment is the metaphor for all discourse. It is that off the screen the same metaphor prevails." (92). In other words, Postman, Baudrillard or Eco try to warn that we fail to recognize real from fictional. We tend to believe that what is presented to us by media is unquestionable true. The adopted information that was presented to us is passed to others who treat them as real as well. Thus, we find ourselves in vicious circle.

So these "Chinese-box worlds" (McHale,112) create an illusion that if we pop out of one, unequivocally replicated, we are found in a real one. After the exit of Disneyland one should feel the comeback to absolute reality, bud Baudrillard warns that "Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but belong to the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation (10). Baudrillard adds that Disneyland is, actually, the most real place in USA because it is not pretending

to be anything more but a theme park.

What postmodernism tries to highlight is that we tend to prefer replica over the reality because, even though it calls itself replica, it usually tries to improve the reality, thus creating a world that is more desirable than the real one. Eco provides us once more with an illustration on Disneyland. In comparison with Disneyland, he implies, reality can be disappointing. When he travelled down the artificial river in Disneyland, for example, he saw animatronic imitations of animals. But, on a trip down the real Mississippi, the river failed to reveal its alligators. "You risk feeling homesick for Disneyland," (24) he concludes, "where the wild animals don't have to be coaxed. Disneyland tells us that technology can give us more reality than nature can." (ibid.). This is precisely what is reflected in *England, England.* It is more convenient to see the replica that gives us all we need. To search for the real thing costs time and it is not that glittering as the simulacra.

Here we can see that postmodernism is a paradoxical concept. It draws the attention to the above mentioned danger of preferring replica over the original (let the studied novel *England, England* be a self-explanatory evidence) on the one hand, while creating replicas, parodies and new meanings on the other hand. Since postmodernism is an ideology that is constructed within the consumer society it “does not attempt to hide its relationship to consumer society, but rather exploits it to new critical and politicized ends.” (Hutcheon, 46). Jameson does not approve of this and argues that “[i]t is too involved in the economic system of late capitalism, too institutionalized.” (50).

The Project in *England, England* is a version of Disneyland, even though Pitman denies it: “We are not talking Disneyland.” (59). Pitman here goes further than Disneyland because he wants the replica to embrace completely the reality and gradually *become* the real. He shows that everything can be turned into entertainment, especially through mass media – television and advertising. He advertises all the traits and things that appeared in the survey, which really shows us that there is a possibility of advertising whatever you want and whatever you think might bring you profit. Zygmunt Bauman says that “[t]he commercial exploitation of everything that is understood as a human need does not surprise since we live in the society where human needs are mediated by the goods market.” (working translation, 260). Sir Jack Pitman is not afraid to commercialize anything that would

make his project flourish. The mind of Pitman is so market-oriented that he even states that “art had become the entertainment business. If Beethoven lived today he would be rich and famous.” (41). Striking as it may be, the reader, after absorbing these lines, must admit that there are really only few things that are not goods and that cannot be marketed. Postman points out that “[t]here is no subject of public interest – politics, news, education, religion, science, sports – that does not find its way to television. Which means that all public understanding of these subjects is shaped by the biases of television.” (78). With the help of Baudrillard I would extend Postman’s list with history because “today it is history that invades the cinema.” (31). *England, England* is a transfer of these thoughts from the thinkers into literature. The project is an exaggeration of what is actually happening, of the fact that people prefer replica over the real thing or that they are even unable to recognize replica from reality.

I tried to state the basics of the perspective of Postmodernism on the complicated relationship between (not only) reality, simulation, replica and fiction. Being backed up by the thoughts of postmodern thinkers I would like to examine the above mentioned intricate relationship on Sir Jack Pitman’s Project in *England, England.*

IX. 1. Sir Jack Pitman

It is the character of the tycoon-capitalist Sir Jack Pitman that is responsible for the development of the novel and for turning the Isle of Wight into a theme park named “England, England□. The Disneyland-like park is a sort of Baudriallardian simulation of the authentic English civilization, which by the end of the novel eradicates the basic reality of England itself. Pitman mentions simulacrum and replica for the first time when the reader meets him when he is questioning his employees whether they are real and that he could replace them with simulacra. To understand the project completely we have to scrutinize Sir Jack Pitman as well. The question that is firstly asked by Sir Jack Pitman (that is “What is real?” (31)) is a question that runs through the whole novel. Typically for postmodernism we find only these questions not direct answers. Even though some options are presented to us towards the end of the book “Some said you were only real if someone had seen you; some that you were only real if you were in a book; some that you were real if enough people believe in you.” (264).

Sir Jack Pitman is a self-centred person who likes to see himself as one of the most important persons on the planet – in monetary terms. Actually, by creating such a successful, frequently visited, and money-making enterprise he manages it. He is an assertive visionary who has an enormous influence on whoever he meets, be it in a good or bad way. He is also well respected, as we can see when Martha ponders, lying in bed with her lover Paul: "Why, even in bed, they still referred to Sir Jack by his title." (96). On the one hand, the reader has to give Sir Jack Pitman credit because he is hard-working. On the other hand he is really manipulative and he can even manipulate the media. When the tabloid journalist is shot down, during the arrival of the Queen and the King to the opening ceremony, all the newspapers refer to it as "a sudden loss of control" (168). It is clear how the journalist's death would be remembered. He will be put down in the history as a victim of a bad coincidence.

What makes Sir Jack Pitman a postmodernist figure are the character paradoxes that we can find in him. Pitman constantly reminds the reader that he views the genders equally and that he is always as fair and politically correct as it is possible. However, the constant mentioning and reminding of this fact has a contradictory impact on the reader. One is then aware of Jack's state of mind, as if Jack was persuading himself that the thoughts expressed aloud are really true. But even in these perpetually reassuring statements he fails to treat the men and women equally. When Martha leaves the interview Jack says that "Gentlemen – I speak metaphorically, of course, since in my grammar the masculine always embraces the feminine – gentlemen, I think I'm in love."(48). What Jack, supposedly, tries to say is that he treats the sexes equally. However, he fails to do so because the utterance reads that masculine includes feminine. Even more radically, it is almost as if he treats the masculine as a hyperonym. My suggestion that Jack probably does not treat people equally is supported by the fact that he calls all his secretaries Susie, ignoring their actual name. Moreover, with one Susie he cannot recall why he hired her and then he realizes that it was partly because of her "ductile sexuality he suspected beneath those crisp outfits." (112).

Many of postmodernist authors are what Hutcheon calls "ex-centric" (35), that means "black, ethnic, gay and feminist artists that try to come to terms with and to respond, critically and creatively, to the still predominantly white, heterosexual, male culture in which they find themselves." (35). It is not only ex-centric authors that enter the canon, there is a growing number of ex-centric characters as well. Barnes reflects

on that and creates a character that deliberately subverts all those traits promoted by postmodernism. However, what makes Pitman an off-centre character is his sexual deviation. This respected tycoon likes to visit a disturbing institution called Auntie May where he devotes himself into perverted sexual practices that include pretending that he is a baby and doing everything that babies do. Barnes thus creates another paradox within this character, when an "entrepreneur, innovator, ideas man, visionary" (158) has such a sexual deviation. This revolting scene is, however, typical for postmodernism from the point of view that the authors like "the realistic representation of hair-raising material." (McHale 117). So without Baron Pitman of Fortuibus (as he titles himself when the Project achieves its first successes), the whole simulacra-celebrating project would not exist. I would like to analyse the Island more thoroughly now.

IX. 2. England, England as the simulation of third order – hyperreality

England, England is a replicated theme park that lies on The Isle of Wight and it consists of the most typical aspects of Englishness. The park, an ultimate replica is the central theme of the whole novel. All the sites and typical English traits and figures are located on the above mentioned island so that the tourists would not have to travel through the whole country of England; they will have everything within the reach of the hand. "The Island Experience is everything you imagined England to be, but more convenient, cleaner, friendlier, and more efficient." (*England, England* 184). The sights and figures that are part of the amusement park are chosen according to "Fifty Quintessences of Englishness" (83) which is a document that consists of fifty stereotypes about England. Because the survey was carried out among the potential tourists the list contains such incongruent items as Manchester United Football Club, class system or a robin in the snow.

Through the Project, Barnes shows that the replica, the simulation is dominant today, all those sites are worth seeing but are not worth going to see. Today's obsession with replica, or, in other words, the ignoring of seeing an obvious replica is stressed by Eco as well. He represents it on the example of Lascaux caves where one cannot see the original sight but there is "an exact replica that was constructed five hundred meters from it, so that everyone could see them (one glances through a peephole at the authentic cave, and then one visits the reconstituted whole)." (8).

The visitors of the Island are clearly instructed that what they see is a replica but the simulation is so authentic that there is no reason for the visitors to search for the original. Moreover, since there are historical figures, battles and events they see even more than when they search for the original sights. The Project does not only strive to replicate the existing entities, it desires to incorporate absolutely fictional stories in the Project's hyperreality. They want the complete fiction to merge with the replica to create a perfect simulacrum, where there is no longer clear what used to be real and what not. As an illustration of the fictional story that is incorporated can function the story of a woman who was blown off a cliff but her umbrella served as a parachute and saved her. An actress is hired to perform this as a part of the Breakfast Experience on the island. Thus, Sir Jack wants the Island to surpass the real, in Baudrillard's words he wants *England, England* to be "more real than the real" (56) and "that is how the real is abolished." (ibid). Umberto Eco found a ridiculous and absurd parallel in the non-fictional world. "At Disney World in Orlando, they are even building an identical replica of the Los Angeles Disneyland, as a sort of historical attraction to the second degree, a simulacrum to the second power." 36)

The everyday historical reconstructions that happen on the island (The Trial of Oscar Wilde, Execution of Charles I) remind of what a tourist can actually experience in London, especially at attractions like The London 3D Experience, The London Dungeon, The London Bridge Experience and London Tombs. Actors from all over the world (on The Island there are taxi drivers and, as Kathleen Su, the journalist of the Wall Street Journal points out, many of them, surprisingly, speak English) reconstruct historical events and through interactive shows they try to summarize some bits from the history of London. These shows start with slogans like 'come with me back to the 15th century' offering a well-worked simulation. Especially the program The London 3D Experience which, in 10 minutes, introduces all the sights in London with high-tech effects, is really close the replica in *England, England.* One can here "experience" (through a big screen, with 3D glasses on) for example Camden Town (covered in fog), the view from The London Eye and the building of it (through the rain – there are even drops of water falling on the audience) and the Tower of London (on a wonderful summer afternoon). The need to seek for the real things is, then, suppressed. The Disneyfication of London is apparent, as well as the similarity to the fictional England, England.

The Project is what Baudrillard calls "the hyperreality of culture." (47). The

important word is “culture”, there are not only typical English sights but the actors act typically for an Englishman and they perform historical events, hence the Island really replicates the whole culture of England and recreate everything that is associated with this country and their inhabitants. On the Island, the visitors can experience such absurdities as a Manchester United game that is played on the Island’s replicated Wembley stadium and the fixture is then re-played with the same result in the original England. Or one can participate in a game of throwing a snow ball at the bobby’s helmet, then run away while he slips over on the ice. The image of “a thousand robins that were acclimatising to perpetual snow” (142) is the funniest.

It is also important to present what the characters think of the project. There is quite an interesting dialogue between Dr. Max – the official historian of the Island – and Martha (who is, at this point, still only an appointed cynic, not a CEO). When Martha asks Dr. Max if he thinks that the Project is bogus he replies: “Bogus? No… Vulgar, yes, certainly, in that it is based on a coarsening simplification of pretty well everything. It is horrible, manipulative but not bogus – bogus implies an authenticity which is being betrayed. Is not the very notion of the authentic somehow, in its own way, bogus?” (131).One would expect from the character of Dr. Max that he would be strongly against replication but when Martha asks: ”You like it despite the fact that it’s all constructed?” (133). He offers an answer that this is what the visitors want because reality is like a rabbit. Public wants a bunny that is domesticated and eats lettuce from their hand. Rabbit is a wild animal that bites and people do not know what to do with it except cook it. He also says that even Martha and he himself are constructs. Through Dr. Max, Barnes shows one of the main feature of postmodernism, that is that it tries to show that even people are constructs, constructs of society that shapes them, postmodernism tries to “make the given into the constructed” (Hutcheon,146), tries to problematize the view of the given and objective. Martha later on defends the Project because: “Now the tourists prefer to see the convenient replica to try to find the inconvenient original.” (181).

Jeff is the only one who wants to “keep reality and illusion separate” (111) but is, obviously, not heard. What the creators of the Project failed to anticipate was “the separation – or adhesion – of personality” (197). The actors were happy to be who they had become, and did not want to be themselves. Some actors refuse to sleep in modern facilities and prefer their tumbledown cottages and they also want to be paid in the Island currency. ‘Dr Johnson’ then turns into Dr Johnson with all the flaws that

the historical person had. The Island was “responsible for peeling off the protective quotation marks and leaving him vulnerable.” (217). Robin Hood and his troops start to hunt the animals themselves, the animals that live on the Island, as a part of the replicated nature. Sir Jack Pitman, after terminating the work relation with Martha, installs the demanded order on the island again. He changes Robin Hood and his troops and replaces Dr Johnson with another actor. He “dealt swiftly with the subversive tendency of certain employees to over-identify with the characters they were engaged to represent.” (248). Even though he wants the Island to be a perfect replica and wants the visitors almost to forget that there is an original somewhere he wants the actors only to play the part that is desired for the good progress of the Island.

The Robin Hood myth is changed to suit the homosexual and feminist tourists. Barnes shows here a piece of self-awareness and irony. As stated earlier, postmodernism points the attention to the “ex-centric, the off-center” (Hutcheon, 60). What Barnes achieves here is that even though the concept of “offering of multiple, provisional” (ibid.) is, certainly, great, put in improper contexts the tendency to equalization may appear ridiculous.

The Island gradually becomes a huge success which almost destroys the old England. “Old England had lost its history, and therefore – since memory is identity – had lost all sense of itself.” (251). People no longer visit the original England despite the fact that a visit of the Island is really expensive, Martha explains why:” A vacation here may look expensive, but it’s a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Besides, after you’ve visited us, you don’t need to see Old England. And our costings show that if you attempted to cover the “originals” it would take you three or four times as long” (181). Martha is aware of “the inevitable transformation, distortion and gradual disappearance of original facts” (Guignery, 105) but she also knows that this is what the visitors really want. The reader there witnesses a triumph of the simulacra and of the commodification of culture. Typically for postmodernism, Barnes does not only point to the fact that we are trapped in hyper-consumer society. He is aware that he creates the society as well, and it is the self-parody on the postmodernist replica that makes the book outstanding.

The replica and simulation are also mentioned in *London Fields.* When dealing with simulacrum Martin Amis, typically for postmodernist writer, mocks himself and the art as such. He describes how Nicola Six prepares herself for meeting with Guy

and how she dresses herself and covers herself in make-up and he compares it to art. He says: “but that is art. Always the simulacrum, never the real thing. That’s art.” (131). He openly admits that his work (and all the works and texts) cannot be seen as originals. Through this he supports all the statements and quotes that are incorporated in the chapter “intertextuality.” Moreover, when Guy eventually achieves his goal and has an intercourse with Nicola, the narrator comments on it that “[h]e didn’t know that she was just a weatherwoman, with stick and chart. For him it was the real thing. He didn’t know that it was just an ad.” (413). The comparison to what is typically associated with TV is typical for *London Fields.* I would like to examine what else is typical for *London Fields* and what other aspects of postmodernism can be found in this book.

X. The narrator and the presence of the author in *London Fields*

Postmodernist writers try to incorporate themselves in the fictional story saying that it is really them writing about the fictional characters, the most known example is John Fowles and his admitting that the story is fictional and also his appearance in the fictional world as impresario in *The French Lieutenant's Women* (1969). Amis goes one step further and introduces a fictional character who claims that he lives among the other characters and writes about them. Moreover, there is another character called Mark Asprey who eventually publishes what the fictional writer wrote. Amis here starts to play a game with the reader by introducing multiple layers of narration. This strategy serves as a means of blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction. What Amis successfully tries to achieve is that at the first layer there are fictional characters (Keith Talent, Guy Clinch, Nicola Six etc.). Then there is Samson Young who writes about those fictional characters, which is the second layer. The effect is then that once the reader is pulled out of the first, fictional, layer he or she thinks that the second layer is somehow closer to reality, it is a realer world. In the words of McHale, "[e]ach change of narrative level in a recursive structure also involves a change of ontological level, a change of world." (113)**.** However, the metanarration offered by Samson Young is as fictional as any other act in the book. The third layer here is Mark Asprey (the initials MA are the same as the initials of the real author) who eventually publishes the story. He exchanges letters with Samson Young, he is also a successful writer who is admired by women, famous in the fictional world (the reader comes to know it when Samson Young admits that "everyone was frankly electrified when I let slip my connexion to the great man.") (42), and who might be involved with the femme fatale of the book - Nicola Six.

Samson Young writes the story exclusively in Mark Asprey's house, and there is also a character called Incarnation that is almost constantly present. These clues show that even though the narrator is fictional, Martin Amis wants the reader to realize that he is still projected or present in the fictional world. Even though McHale glosses that "[i]t is never perfectly clear whether we should consider such cases as one of transworld identity between a real-world person and a fictional character" (204), there are above mentioned clues that show that the author really wanted to fictionalize himself to some degree. Kiernan Ryan supports my statement by implying that "[t]he novel's posthumous 'Endpapers' include a letter to Amis's *Doppelgänger,*

Mark Asprey." (214).

If we agree on the fact that Mark Asprey can be seen as an incarnation of Martin Amis, then this is the third layer. By including a representation of himself, Amis did not want the book to be bounded to reality. McHale argues that "[t]o reveal the author's position within the ontological structure is only to introduce the author *into the fiction*; far from abolishing the frame, this gesture merely *widens* it to include the author as a fictional character." (197). Therefore, Amis manages to fictionalize himself and points to the fact that there is someone writing this story. There is someone fictional and there is someone "real", however, the boundaries are again blurred. The pointing to the process of writing is what Ronald Sukenick calls the truth of the page. "The truth of the page is that there's a writer sitting there writing the page . . . If the writer is conceived, both by himself and by the reader, as "someone sitting there writing the page," illusionism becomes impossible." (in McHale, 198). In *London Fields* the truth of the page is doubled since there is fictional Samson Young writing the story, who is almost constantly watched by a character called Incarnation and then there is Mark Asprey who publishes his story. Young himself admits that "[s]omeone watches over us when we write. Mother. Teacher. Shakespeare. God." (397). It is not only a proof that his narration is observed but it also points out to the postmodernist awareness that texts are no longer original.

Samson Young and Mark Asprey operate on the very boundaries between narrative fiction, "auto-bio-graphy" (McHale, 202) and their pastiche. The strategy of the multiplicity of layers has "the effect of interrupting and complicating the ontological "horizon" of the fiction, multiplying its worlds, and laying bare the process of world-construction." (McHale112). Moreover, the fact that Samson Young has to send parts of the story to his publishers leaves the reader in uncertainty about how reliable he is because he could have altered the story in order to fulfill the publisher's expectations. There are several other hints that make the reader ask about how reliable the narrator really is.

One hint can be traced when the reader comes to know the baby-sitter called Auxiliadora who helps Guy and Hope with Marmaduke and gives all the necessary details about the living of Guy and Hope. Sam Young always wants to prove that he does not make things up, he always has to have some source of information, be it a person that is close to those that he writes about, a diary in the case of Nicola, or he says that he is quite often an eye-witness of what is going on, especially if it happens

in Black Cross. Sam himself says “I can’t make anything up. It just isn’t me. Man, am I a reliable narrator.” (78). The diary of Nicola Six is also very interesting since the author of the diary leaves her book on a bench near Sam Young’s (Mark Asprey’s actually) house. This has an impact that the reader knows that the narrator is obsessed by providing him or her with some evidence. However, if he fails to be an eye-witness or he does not have anyone to interrogate he can simply write down some improbable action like the one with Nicola Six leaving her diary. Last hint of the fact that Samson Young’s proofs must be taken with a critical distance is when he himself admits that he is fictional by saying “[t]hen we [with Nicola] did something that people hardly ever do in real life.” (62). The narrator himself knows that he is fictional and he knows that all the world he is describing is fictional. Therefore, one can presume that all the evidence he offers to the reader can actually be made up (despite his constant reminding that it is *real*). Even in one of the most emotional scenes, when he kills Nicola Six, he does not forget to remind the reader that the story of the book is “plagiarized from real life.” (467).

Amis here shows the difficulties of an author when he or she tries to create a story or characters. This metafictional self-awareness shows the reader how hard it is to create a character and to have it under control. Through Samson Young who “maintains a running conversation with us about how the novel is going,” (Ryan, 213) Amis shows how difficult it is to produce a piece of writing. Samson Young here serves as “an agent or carrier of metalepsis, disturber of the ontological hierarchy.” (McHale 121) The word “metalepsis” is a term that refers to “the violation of narrative levels.” (ibid.) Whereas in some postmodernist works the characters realize that they are fictional, for example Caroline Rose in Muriel Spark’s *The Comforters* (1957) who hears her author discussing her own destiny and later on even the typewriter with which Spark writes the story, in *London Fields* the fictional narrator persuades a character that she is real. Nicola Six chats with Samson young and she says that it must be hard for him to pretend that the characters are “vacillating over something you know they’re going to do.” (118). As the conversation unfolds, Nicola compares herself to a person in a story and Samson replies that: “you’re not in a story. This isn’t some hired video, Nicola.” (ibid.) What is even more absurd is the fact that the narrator is trying to persuade the only character that evidently possesses supernatural powers.

As was already mentioned earlier, the narrator in *London Fields* is in constant

contact with the characters he writes about. He even consults the need of some fictional persons with their fellow-characters. Nicola for example asks: “Do you really need Guy? Couldn’t you just edit him out?” (119) and Sam replies that: “I agree it’s a drag in a way but I do need him.” (ibid.). Moreover, he gets told off by a character for how he depicted her. Lizyboo shouts at him: “You made me ridiculous. How did you *dare*? I thought I was meant to be tragic. At least a bit. And all this stuff as if I wasn’t in control.” (455). Another part is when Samson Young sees a madwoman on the street shouting at cars and he complains that “[s]he’s perfect for the book, but I can’t think of any good way of getting her in.” (305). However, only by mentioning that he manages to put her in the book, he just cannot fit her into the story. He mentions the woman only once leaving the reader wondering why he included it in the book in the first place. McHale argues that “[t]he reader’s impulse to cling to such sequence heightens the tension between presence and absence.” (102). Martin Amis here shows that even though the author is bounded by the personalities of the characters he created, it is still the author himself or herself who decides what is going to happen, who is going to “live” in the book. The author thus is, in a way, God.

X. 1. The author as God

The author as a maker and the analogy between the author and God is as old as literature itself: “Authors are gods-a little tiny sometimes, but omnipotent no matter what, and plausible on top of that if they can manage it” (Gass 36). Amis is aware of this analogy and dedicates the beginning of the eighth chapter to it. He provocatively claims that the character of Nicola Six used to go out with God. He states that God wants to go out with her again but she refuses. “God got Shakespeare and Dante working as a team to write poems […] Nicola told him to get lost” (121-122). Amis shows that the characters are out of the hand of the writers, creators and that they actually live their own life. It does not matter if the author knows the Shakespearian characters or Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (1308 – 1321), the characters will always force their own way, almost as if independently from the authors. Amis goes even further and states that God did not only call the two mentioned masters for help, there were also “the great Schwarzenegger and Burton Else” (121) to help God to persuade Nicola. Burton Else is a tabloid celebrity from the novel’s world. Amis here shows the postmodern view that novels cannot be treated as originals anymore that “books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told.”

(Hutcheon, 128). However, it is not only canonical literature that serves as an unquestionable inspiration for postmodernist writers; it is even the television, tabloids and media that have been influencing the authors for past decades. Amis admits this non-literary inspiration by claiming that there was Schwarzenegger and another tabloid celebrity who tried to persuade Nicola Six to go out with God again.

What is needed to be added is that it is obviously not only books that cannot be treated as completely original but also characters. Samson Young says: “I salute your originality.” (119) only to remind Nicola on the same page that she is dying as well as he is. Even such a character as Nicola Six is, from postmodernist point of view, unoriginal. In the postscript in *The Name of the Rose* (1980), Eco claims that he “discovered what writers have always known (and have told us again and again): books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told.” Other postmodernist writers also adopt this view. In the eighth chapter Amis shows that postmodern writers are aware that their characters are inspired not only by other characters in canonical literature but also by modern celebrities. This double inspiration is inevitable since one of the features of postmodernism is that it includes the non-canonical art into the novels. Despite all the help that author begs for, Nicola Six lives her own life, she says that “[t]o my everything, He [God] is *nothing.* What I am I wish to be, and what I wish to be I am. I am beyond God. I am the motionless Cause” (133). Kiernan Ryan says that Amis himself admits that “the deeper springs of fictions are unconscious, and that much of what really matters in one’s writing is out of one’s hands.” (206). Through Samson Young Amis shows what lies beneath the act of writing and how the authors are connected with characters that sometimes behave almost opposite to what the author would have wanted. The life of a character then develops almost uncontrollably but the development is unstoppable. Even Samson Young himself knows that you “can’t stop people once they *start creating.*” (1). Before I get to the fictional author of *London Fields,* Samson Young, in even more detail I would like to scrutinize the mentioned part where Amis presents the relationship between Nicola Six and God.

Through this daring passage Amis does not only comment on the analogy between the author and God, he also mocks the usage of God in some books as the deus ex machina principle. When the author ponders about how to explain a motivation of the character he says: “God did it. It was God: the oldest trick in the book.” (132). All those allusions to God point to Friedrich Nietzsche’s quote that “God

is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers?" (*The Gay Science*, 125, in Pearson, *The Nietzsche Reader* (2006)). God, as a representation of morality and Christian values, is dead and we know it thanks to the mentioned philosopher. However, Baudrillard goes even further saying that "[w]hen God died, there was still Nietzsche to say so – the great nihilist before the Eternal and the cadaver of the Eternal. But before the simulated transparency of all things, before the simulacrum of the materialist or idealist realization of the world in hyperreality (God is not dead, he has become hyper-real), there is no longer a theoretical or critical God to recognize his own." (104). Morality, God and human values are marketable commodities nowadays. Jameson offers a critical point of view by saying that "[t]he market is in human nature." (263) and that the boundaries between what is marketable and what is marketed are unclear. He uses the example of popular TV series and TV advertisements where actors, on the one hand, play characters that possess all the imaginable virtues, and, on the other hand, those same actors then appear in advertisements that promote no virtues whatsoever, he states that "[i]t is sometimes not clear when the narrative segment has ended and the commercial has begun" (275). Therefore, I would argue that when Samson Young states that "the death of God was possibly survivable in the end" (132), he speaks of the marketed, hyperreal, commercialized God that is offered to us by media.

X. 2. Samson Young

In *London Fields,* or in any other postmodernist novel where the genesis of the book is discussed, the artist inevitably becomes a part of the fiction. That includes another ontological level since "the *real* artist always occupies an ontological level superior to that of his projected, fictional self, and therefore *doubly* superior to the fictional world." (McHale, 30). By projecting himself into a fictional character Amis inserts another layer between reality and fiction which results in the fact that the boundaries between reality and fiction are even more blurred. Moreover, the reader is aware of this fact from the very beginning. Even before the actual beginning of the novel there is a note that summarizes how the title *London Fields* came to existence. Alternative titles are presented and the reader realizes that there were possibilities such as *The Death of Love* (which is a crucial theme throughout the novel) or *Time's Arrow* (which is the title of the book which Amis published two years after *London Fields*). What is

worth mentioning is the fact that the note is signed M.A. leaving the reader to wonder whether Amis operates on the superior ontological level and the note is really from him or whether it was Mark Asprey who actually attributes the title to the work of Samson Young. This deliberate discrepancy proves the point that Martin Amis fictionalizes himself and he projects himself into a fictional character. Amis here introduces another layer between absolute reality and fiction, thus "[t]he supposedly absolute reality of the author becomes just another level of fiction, and the *real* world retreats to a further remove." (McHale 197).

It was stated that the narrator Samson Young is under constant scrutiny by the fictionalized author. Moreover, Samson Young behaves as if he was being scrutinized throughout the novel by the reader. He has a constant need to comment upon his writing and he keeps assuring the reader that "this story is *true.*" (240). He also calls himself a reliable narrator several times just to prove that he is not "one of those excitable types who get caught making things up. Who get caught improving on reality. I can embellish, I can take certain liberties. Yet to invent the bald facts of life (for example) would be quite beyond my powers." (39). Whenever he lets himself forget about the fact that he writes about "real" people that actually surround him, Samson Young quickly returns to his ontological level and almost apologizes to the reader that he let him or her read the passages that are purely fictional. His constant desire to have everything proved and real is best described when he creates a hypothetical Pulitzer acceptance speech and then he suddenly composes himself and says "Christ, it's only just occurred to me: people are going to imagine that I actually sat down and made all this stuff up." (302). Diedrick comments on the narrator saying that "Samson is, after all, incapable – not to mention ethically wary – of creating fiction. So he relies on Nicola's darkly satirical plotting." (131). As a result this character can be seen from multiple points of views.

First of all, the reader sees Samson Young as a fictional character who interacts with other characters. However, the role of Samson Young is more important. For example, when he has a conversation with Nicola Six he admits that he is dying and he adds "we all are." (119). Samson Young is the fictional author of *London Fields* and he is dying – this is a direct connection to the essay of Roland Gérard Barthes "The Death of the Author" (1967) where, in short, Barthes disapproves of the approach to literary criticism that relies too much on aspects of the author's identity. He argues that "the modern writer (scriptor) is born simultaneously

with his text." (4), hence he dies with it as well. Hutcheon remarks that "[i]n literary terms, the much-celebrated and lamented death of the author has not meant an end to novelists, as we all know it. It has meant a questioning of authority." (190). In other words, the author is just a place that is filled by the text. The death of Samson Young, hence, has a deeper metaphorical meaning. The narrator kills himself as the story reaches the end. In the above mentioned conversation, Sam tells Nicola that he is not the only one who is dying, that everyone is. This brings us to the earlier passage about the author and God. The author can kill his or her characters, the characters, in a way, die when the story ends. Amis, again, goes a bit further and he lets the narrator kill one of the main characters to show that it is not only the author that dies with the end of the text, it is also all the characters that were created.

Through Samson Young, Amis shows how difficult it is to include such narrative strategy. There were several more or less successful attempts in the history of literature to create an incarnated, projected narrator that witnesses the actions that have impact on the story. What is even more typical for postmodernist writers is to openly project themselves into some characters or to include themselves in the story. One can present two sound examples in two typical postmodernist works: Gabriel García Márquez appears in his *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) and Salman Rushdie introduces himself as a friend of the narrator in *Midnight's Children* (1981). However, it is Martin Amis again who pushes the fictionalization of an author even further. His novel *Money* is all about "[d]oubles and doubling" (Diedrick, 93). The most significant of this doubling includes the main character's Self relationship with the character Martin Amis. Diedrick describes this duplication by saying that "[h]e creates a protagonist named Self whose life parallels his own to a surprising degree; he embodies himself in the novel as a recurring character; and he doubles this character through the American Martina Twain" (94). By including himself in the story (or directly projecting himself into a character) the author "becomes, as it were, a paper-author: his life is no longer the origin of his fictions but a fiction contributing to his work." (Barthes in McHale, 205). The problem is then that "[t]he *I* which writes the text, it too, is never more than paper-*I*" (ibid.).

Even though Mark Asprey is not present when the story of *London Fields* is written his presence is almost constant, either because of the house where Sam constructs the story or because of the letters that both of the authors exchange. There is another aspect of Sam Young that makes him even more difficult to create.

Martin Amis chose Sam Young to be American. Apart from the fact that this feature points out to the Americanization of the society (I elaborate on this theme in another part of this work) Amis had to pay attention to write all the past participles of "get" not "got" but "gotten" which is typical for American English[13].

It is also difficult to have a narrator that must be present to the actions that push the story forward. As it is mentioned earlier in the work, Samson Young wants the reader to realize that he has got everything first hand (or second hand at least). He even helps himself by such improbable actions or characters as a part-time nanny called Auxiliadora who *helps* him with portraying the Clinch family when he was not able to witness what he needs to write about. However, if Samson Young had not helped himself with these actions the narration would have been even less believable. To appreciate what Sam does, it is apt to offer comparison with Joseph Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* (1911) where the narrator is constantly present to all the dialogues and events that create the story. Unfortunately, he fails to provide the reader with a sound argument of how he appeared nearby the characters. This fact ruins the illusion that Conrad wanted to make: that his narrator is so reliable and well-informed because he is always present to all the actions. So when Amis suggests that Sam Young might have made some facts up it only makes the story more interesting.

Samson Young can also be treated as a guide to the craftsmanship of writing. Amis, through Sam, invites the reader to experience the process of writing. One can really imagine that what Samson Young experiences are actual feelings of Martin Amis, especially when Sam reflects on the chapters that were already written or when he admits that he did not write a word in six days and that "the way I feel now I might never write another. But there's another. And another." (238). This is almost a kind of free writing (a method that is used to write one's ideas with no regard to formal and thought structure of the text, the product of free writing is not a material to be published, quite the contrary, it serves to collect initial thoughts and ideas.[14] (working translation)). It is even more apparent when the author tries to recapitulate what he has written and looks back on the story on pages 466-467. On the very last

[13] http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/gotten?q=gotten accessed 9th March 2012.

[14] Srbová, Kateřina, *Rozvoj učebních dovedností*, Projekt Odyssea, 2007, Praha.

page Samson Young realizes that he might not be real as he thinks and he speculates that “someone made me up, for money.” (470). It is as if Amis apologized to his character, with whom he has spent countless hours alone, for using him as a means of profit.

The most significant parallel between the writing of Samson Young and Martin Amis can be seen when Sam says: “Jesus Christ if I could make it into bed and get my eyes just without seeing a mirror.” (238). This sentence provides us with the moment when the distance between Samson Young and Martin Amis is almost none. By this momentary fusion Amis introduces us to the superreality where he for a while almost completely merges with his narrator. Superreality is when “[t]he author occupies an ontological level superior to his world; by breaking the frame around his world, the author foregrounds his own superior reality. The metafictional gesture of frame-breaking is, in other words, a form of superrealism.” (McHale 197). However, Samson does not only usher the reader into the world of the writing he is also a means which Amis uses to comment upon literature. Diedrick argues that “Samson’s twenty-year writer’s block is Amis’s way of saying that literature, too, is suffering from exhaustion.” (130).

Sam is also a parody of a narrator, especially of a narrator of a detective story because he reveals most of the mysterious plot on the very first pages of the novel. He introduces the murderee right at the beginning of the story which is quite striking. Moreover, on page 15, he describes how the actual murder is going to happen. Another parody-like scene is when he confesses to the reader that: “I guess I could just wing it. But all I know for sure is the very last scene.” (117). This sentence certainly does not build up the confidence of the reader in his or her narrator. Moreover, he sometimes involuntarily draws the reader’s attention to the fact that his memory might not be a reliable tool. “And the thing with her (what was it with her?).” (21). The last quote proves that Samson Young really should not be perceived as reliable as he wants to be.

To conclude, the character of Samson Young is a typical postmodernist one. He represents the blurred boundaries between reality and fiction. Through such narrators the reader has to question, to study the “boundaries between the literary and the traditionally extra-literary, between fiction and non-fiction, and ultimately, between art and life.” (Hutcheon, 225). He also shows the typical self-awareness or the metafiction itself by commenting upon the process of writing. He is also a tool

through which the reader should start to ponder about the status of literature. Diderick remarks that “Samson himself is a metafictional device in *London Fields* allowing Amis to pose questions about the status and purpose of fiction.” (131). He also problematizes the objective vision of truth. By constant repeating of the fact that he is a reliable narrator he questions all the narrators that do not claim that, although they act as if there were no doubts about their reliability. He points this out to the reader again when he consults the plot with Nicola Six. In this part he is a bit afraid that she is going to be a flat male fantasy figure, Nicola replies that she actually is and Sam says that “[t]hey don’t know that.” (260). He means the readers and it is another clue for reader to ask what else he or she does not know.

XI. The media in *London Fields*

All the assuring that Samson Young does is more or less about one thing. He wants the reader to believe that what is written is really true (to what extend is this assuring believable is mentioned earlier) and that the reader is not involved in some kind of representation, paraphrasing or simulation. The mentioning and treatment of simulacra in *London Fields* is not that apparent as in *England, England,* it is not its central theme, however, the problem of the earlier mentioned fact that people willingly expose themselves to simulations and prefer them to real things is commented upon in this novel as well. It is especially the television that is examined. More precisely, it is the world that the television offers us - and that is presented as reality - that is mocked and worked with. Even the narrator Samson Young is aware of the possibility that he could be mediated. He knows that if the book is successful and market-friendly he and the characters can be turned into a movie adaptation. He ponders about what kind of actors can play each character and comes to a conclusion that the biggest problem would be with the character of Marmaduke. By such passages and by such characters (as Marmaduke) Amis actually gives up the possibility that the book would be turned into a movie. However, even this little episode shows Amis's awareness of the constant presence of simulacra that is offered by the television.

Before we move to the theme of medialization and television in *London Fields* it is apt to point out that the world of media and especially television is described and studied in the book from Jerry Mander called *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (1978). This book supports the view of postmodernist writers of the fact that the world that is shown on television is only a simulacrum, a representation. There is one particular passage in *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* that should be mentioned. In this passage, Mander offers a number of scenarios and asks the reader to try to imagine them in their own heads. There are things like "life in an Eskimo village," "the Old South," "a preoperation conversation among doctors," or "life in an Eskimo village." He then adds that "[i]t is extremely likely that you have experienced no more than one or two of [those scenarios] personally. Obviously, these images were either out of your own imagination or else they were from the media. Can you identify which was which?" (243). It is very likely that the majority of the readers have not actually experienced anything from the given scenarios.

Therefore, there is a possibility that all the images that Mander wants us to summon come from television. By this he wants to show that because of the media and especially the television we are no longer able to distinguish between reality and fiction. “No longer able” is a bit far-fetched but the media inevitably change our perception of reality and our ability to distinguish between a story and an actual experience.

Amis works with the theme of medialization and with the reliability of the “reality” that is offered to us through the television. Earlier in the work I mentioned that there are no limits in what can be a subject of advertisement, market and commercialization. To bridge these thoughts from the modern thinkers to *London Fields* it is appropriate to use Ryan who argues that “[c]apitalist technology invades our very cells to programme our appetites and fantasies, to install the structures of addiction . . . The pornographic and the cataclysmic waltz arm in arm through the novels of both these writers [Ian McEwan and Martin Amis] who know that they are marketing flesh and fear to feed the habits in themselves and us, habits which are as corrosive as they are compulsive.” (210). What he implies here is that the market and the media blurred and that there is no clear distinction between these two concepts. In Jameson words, “[t]he products sold on the market become the very content of the media image.” (275). The actual physical marketplace has disappeared completely and the customers are exposed only to its representations (logo, slogans). Jameson states that “[a] logo is something like the synthesis of an advertising image and a brand name.” (85). Mander points out as well that television confines everything to slogans and representation. Postmodernist writers are aware of these facts and they try to incorporate these thoughts in some of their works. How is this theme treated in *England, England,* has already been commented on. I would like to analyse *London Fields* as Amis’s fictionalized contribution to this debate.

The reader knows that the book deals with this theme as well especially (but not only) through the character of Keith Talent. From the very beginning the reader knows that Keith Talent “was a bad guy. Keith Talent was a very bad guy. You might even say that he was the worst guy.” (4). Apart from having intercourse with underage girls and cheating on everyone he meets (including the narrator) he is also a big TV-watcher. The reader discovers Keith’s relationship to TV when he is asked to fill a survey for a darts magazine. He has to include what his hobbies are. He struggles with this question because he knows that he cannot include cheating, sex

and drinking and he also knows that activities like growing vegetables will not be believable. He decides that it would be sufficient and appropriate to list TV. Amis wants to point out in Postman's words "[w]hat they [people in USA] watch, and like to watch, are moving pictures--millions of them, of short duration and dynamic variety." (Postman, 90). Reader must be aware of the fact that it is not only a typical trait of the character, the description of the relationship between the television and Keith is deeper. Let us examine the approach of Keith to the television while bearing in mind the fact that Amis does not only want to depict a character's trait but satirises the problem of distorted reality that television brings to all its watchers.

Keith Talent calls the TV 'modern reality' or 'The world'. Even the fact that he gives the television nicknames says a lot. However, Amis explores what impact can TV have on such a person and on modern persons in general. Samson Young states that "TV came at Keith like it came at everybody else; and he had nothing whatever to keep it out. He couldn't grade or filter it. So he thought TV was real." (55). Mander glosses that "TV is entirely second-hand." (38) and that is what Keith Talent fails to recognize. The fact that Amis compares Keith with "everybody else" supports the idea of deeper critique. Mander also points out that the seemingly real conversations (for example political) are still moderated, rehearsed in a way and there are only a few people that are actually given voice. Whereas the fictional Keith Talent believes that everything is real, the absolutely real Mander thinks that everything is replicated. The liminal character of Samson Young does not provide us only with the blurring of boundaries between fiction and reality, he also states an opinion that can be placed between the fictional character and the real thinker. Samson Young backs Keith Talent up in the aspect that he says that "some of it *was* real. Riots in Kazachstan were real, mass suicides in Sun City were real, darts was real" (55), but he also stresses that some of the movies or shows that Keith Talent thinks are real are actually really remote from reality. Amis problematizes the perception of what is real in the TV by the fact that he lets Samson Young list such "real" things that are actually not real in our world.

Through presenting the fictional actions (the riots and suicides) the real Amis raises the question whether the TV actually shows anything real. The reality that is shown must be TV-friendly it must strike the attention within seconds. Therefore, as Postman remarks, "television has achieved the power to define the form in which news must come"(163). Hence, it is no longer what is supposed to be on the screen

but how it is supposed to be presented. This approach is crucial for the critical distance that one should have from the media since “we do not doubt the reality of what we see on television, are largely unaware of the special angle of vision it affords.”(Postman 101). The fact that what is seen on TV is, by many, interpreted as a complete reality is reflected in Keith Talent. It is worth mentioning that Keith Talent, and almost all the other characters, are, above all, caricatures of real human beings.

Amis also shows how TV can distort our view of reality when Keith Talent wins a match in darts and some journalists come to make an interview with him. Nicola helps him to arrange everything for the TV and when they come to make a short program about him he pictures himself as a regular, every-day, normal guy with a wonderful girlfriend (Nicola) and a cosy apartment (Nicola’s flat). When he is presented in the TV, the program starts with these words: “In the elegant West London flat where Keith lives and works, the calls come winging in from Munich and LA” (424). If the reader was to perceive Keith only through the TV, and therefore only through this episode, he or she would think that he really is a law-abiding, satisfied darts enthusiast who lives a regular life. Postman argues that “[o]ur culture's adjustment to the epistemology of television is by now all but complete; we have so thoroughly accepted its definitions of truth, knowledge, and reality.” (105). Every hypothetical character in the book that does not know Keith personally will now think that he is normal and civilized.

Amis shows how the television can skew the reality and truth. However, as Mark Asprey admits in one of the letters to Sam: “The truth doesn’t matter any more and *is not wanted.*” (452). It is another typical feature of postmodernism – to ask who is there to decide what truth is and what is not, Amis shows that the media claim to be able to tell the truth, although they fail to do so. Unfortunately, as the works of for example Mander or Postman show us, majority of the people are not able to realize that the truth presented by media is not truth at all. Postman states that “[t]herefore – and this is the critical point – how television stages the world becomes the model for how the world is properly to be stage. It is not merely that on the television screen entertainment is the metaphor for all discourse. It is that off the screen the same metaphor prevails.” (Postman, 92). Keith is therefore a representation of a modern person who draws all the information and “knowledge” from TV.

Keith Talent goes even further because he is almost addicted to television. This fact is well known by the character of Nicola Six so when she wants to use him

she knows that, for example, stripping in front of him would not have the demanded impact as if she strips alone and tapes herself. Keith has a partiality for three things on TV: money, violence and sex. He likes to stop the screen and analyse the frame to see the three desired notions. So when Nicola plays him the tape of herself, first words that Keith utters are: “Slow it.” (268). Moreover, when he sees the naked body for the first time (*on the screen*) he exclaims: “That . . . that is the real thing.” (ibid.). From that moment on the reader definitely knows that Keith is not able to distinguish between reality and fiction. One would even argue that he switches the two worlds and thinks that what is on TV is more real. Diedrick mentions that such passages are “a significant fact in a novel where the image, the simulacrum, is inexorably supplanting reality.” (122)

What is directly connected with the popularization of TV and internet is pornography. Postmodernist writers are aware of that and they include some pornographic and “hair-rising” material into their works. It is critiques like Jameson who disapproves of including such material in the work of art. These criticisms are mocked by those who support postmodernist writers, McHale mockingly glosses that “[i]f certain critics had their way, postmodernist novels and short stories would come with a warning label along the lines of the warnings on cigarette packs and advertisements.” (219). Through including these passages into their works the authors argue that if it is so easy to find such material in all the media there is no point in hiding it from the world of fiction. It is an inevitable part of our lives, therefore it can become an inevitable part of the fictional worlds.

Amis openly admits that “as an author, he is not ‘free of sadistic impulses’. He enjoys ‘a sort of horrible Dickensian glee’. “ (Ryan, 204). Such passages cause an emotional investment from the reader. He or she can no longer perceive a character that does something twisted or sick as neutral. Amis seeks to “unseat our moral certainties and sap our confidence in knee-jerk judgments by making us recognize our involvement in what we are reading.” (ibid.). As mentioned earlier, love, sex and violence are marketed commodities. One can only imagine what Nietzsche would say if he thought that God is dead one hundred years ago. Moreover, the three above mentioned commodities are sometimes shown all together, Ryan points out that “[v]iolence has been eroticized to a degree even de Sade might be dismayed by.” (210). Some of the critics (Jameson above all) call the postmodernist art morally bad. However, it is not the artists that are to blame for including such material into their

works. They only include what the real world around us has to offer.

Keith Talent is again the character on whom the impact of pornography is described. First of all, Nicola comments on this genre and says that it is interesting that “it [pornography] started as samizdat and ends up as a global industry.” (295). Keith himself knows that he has no resistance to pornography. “He had it on all the time, and even that wasn’t enough for him.” (ibid.). As argued earlier Keith is an exaggerated possessor of the traits of a modern TV-addict. Through him Amis presents his view on how the accessible genre of pornography might influence the society.

The shocking material is also included in *England, England,* although it is not given such space as in *London Fields.* Still there are some passages that make the reader blush, at least. It is, especially, when Barnes depicts the sexual deviation of Sir Jack Pitman. Moreover, it is also the genre of pornography that is commented upon, and Barnes basically holds the same opinion as Amis. It is again the lecture of the French intellectual that provides us with the viewpoint on this genre. In the fictional world of *England, England*, people have gradually found out that the replica is more desirable than the reality and the French intellectual says that “[i]t was like the discovery that masturbation with pornographic material is more fun than sex.” (54). What effect the distribution of pornography can have is reflected upon when the readers acquire with “the brief history of sexuality in the case of Paul Harrison” (98) the lover of Martha. Earlier, in his teen age he “didn’t think he would ever, ever be able to handle being alone with a girl. It was much easier to be alone with magazine woman.” (99). It is not only television that offers such material, it is also the tabloid newspapers that specialize in “commercial information and filled their pages with accounts of sensational events, mostly concerning crime and sex.” (Postman, 46). It is not surprising that one of the main protagonists of *London Fields* is a huge fan and a regular reader of tabloids. Both Barnes and Amis want the reader to realize what impact the usage of pornography can have, especially on children. Children, and especially the loss of innocence, are another crucial theme in *London Fields* and it is lightly mentioned in *England, England* as well.

XII. Children and the loss of innocence in *London Fields*

The term “loss of innocence” is in postmodernism connected with the fact that “we can, indeed, no longer assume that we have the capacity to make value-free statements about history, or suppose that there is some special dispensation whereby the signs that constitute an historical text have reference to events in the world.” (Kermode in Hutcheon, 90-91). The theme of history in *England, England* is elaborated on earlier in the work. However, even in *London Fields* Martin Amis plays with the confident statements about something that *really* happened in the past. He shows it on the fictional text from the fictional dart player Kim Twemlow, *Darts: Master the Discipline.* It is the only book that Keith Talent has ever read and it provides the reader with such astonishing pieces of advice as: “keep calm” or “never ask about opponent. You play the darts not the man”. However, what is more important about this fictional manual is that it unscrupulously claims that the Pilgrim Fathers played darts on Mayflower or that King Arthur “was also said to have played a form of darts” (313). As stated earlier, it is typical for postmodernism that it plays with the historical facts and that it makes the reader think about our certainty that the history and past we know is based on what really happens. In the words of Hutcheon, “[i]t is part of the postmodernist stand to confront the paradoxes of fictive/historical representation, the particular/general, and the present/the past.” (106). We can neither confirm nor disprove that what Kim Twemlow says is true. However, there will always be Keith Talents that will blindly believe everything that is presented to them.

Since we deal with the work of art and fiction the term “loss of innocence” does not have to point exclusively to the view of history. It can be taken more literally. Both Amis and Barnes deal with the theme of and motif of childhood. This fact alone would not be typical only for postmodernism. However, by the fact that these authors in the two books remove the veil of innocence from the childhood they want to show what impact does the era of “late capitalism” (Jameson, IX) can have on children.

In *England, England*, we only find out about the childhood of Martha. As mentioned earlier, here the reader comes to know that what we actually remember from childhood might not be a reflection of what really happened and that the memory is unstable and unreliable. On the other hand, there are some memories that Martha remembers quite vividly. She definitely knows that her father left them and that she really thought that he had only gone shopping. Moreover, she remembers

the precise piece of jigsaw her father had with him when he was leaving.

In *London Fields*, children behave differently and it can be perceived as one of the dystopian features as well because it still, fortunately, does not precisely reflect our reality. The children in *London Fields* are a product of the horrible world where the plot takes place. Even the narrator himself when changing the diaper of Kim (daughter of Keith) asks himself: "What kind of planet is it where you feel relief, where you feel surprise, that a nought-year-old girl is still a virgin?" (388). The narrator also "[s]aw a toddler in the park wearing an earring (pierced), and another with a tattoo (bruised songbird). There are babies tricked out with wigs and eyeglasses and toy dentures." (283). Moreover, Keith Talent has been sleeping with one of his lovers since she was twelve (and he gives money for it to her mother), and also twelve-year-old children rob cars on daily basis. The description of these random and anonymous babies is horrific enough. However, it is definitely not as disturbing as the character of Marmaduke.

Diedrick describes Marmaduke as "the death of the myth of childhood innocence". (121). Marmaduke gives his parents, Guy and Hope, a really tough time. He is constantly awake, he keeps on shouting, screaming and he attacks Guy whenever he is nearby. He has suffered almost all the imaginable child illnesses and "[d]octors now visited him, unasked and unpaid, out of sheer professional curiosity." (31). The married couple pays huge sum of money to any baby-sitter that is able to survive at least some days with their offspring. Apart from representing the loss of innocence Marmaduke also serves as a means of pointing out what effect can pornography have. He constantly pretends to have sex with almost anyone and anything that is in his nearness. "Marmaduke looks as though he is already contemplating a career in child pornography: he know it's out there, and he can tell that there's a quick buck in it." (158). Marmaduke also represents the Oedipal rivalry and when Hope stops loving Guy, the child changes completely and is a well-behaving one. The second child in the book - Kim is a victim of child abuse since Sam finds cigarette marks on the child that, supposedly, were done by Keith. So these two children functions as a warning of what can become from the children that are brought up in a society where sex, crime and violence are (unexceptionally together) marketed commodities that are easy to reach.

It is also interesting to analyse the polarity between the children and their parents. On the one hand, the angel of a child, Kim, is born to a family where she

cannot find almost any love whatsoever and she is constantly tortured by her parents. Keith and Kath are caricatures of parents and they do not deserve to have a child like this. These people do not deserve any child, actually. On the other hand, wealthy and respected couple, Guy and Hope, have a child like Marmaduke who makes a living nightmare out of their lives. It only strengthens the anxiety that radiates from the world of *London Fields* and it shows that no one is safe in the world of Martin Amis.

These characters have one more interesting fact about them. Samson Young mentions that Marmaduke is like Keith, or that he imagines that when Keith was a child he was like that. Moreover, the only time that Marmaduke is calm (when Guy and Hope are still in love) is when Keith is around. As far as Kim is concerned, on the page 239 Kim says “Enlah” which reminds of Enola – the imaginary friend that Nicola created when she was a child. So Amis maybe even offers a possibility that Marmaduke and Kim are a sort of incarnations of Nicola and Keith. This fact has an impact that the novel reads as a kind of science-fiction. That brings us to another postmodernist feature that is included in the books, and that is the multiplicity of genres and the mixture of high and low art.

XIII. Multiplicity of genres

Postmodernism tries to blur another former boundary. It tries to erase the line between the so-called high art and the so-called low art. Before the scrutiny of the multiplicity of genres in postmodernism and in *London Fields* it is necessary to point out that there are critics of the mixture of genres. It is not precisely the mixture that is criticized, it is the fact that since all the genres are in perpetual mingle there is no possibility of grasping the art. In other words, the postmodernist mixture of genres does not enable the theory to label it, to classify and categorize. Therefore, we would have "not art in any older sense, but an interminable conjecture on how it could be possible in the first place." (Jameson, 65). Jameson criticizes the incessant questioning and pushing of the boundaries that postmodernist writers try to do. In other words, the fact that almost every postmodernist novel is, to a certain degree, an experiment might lead to the fact that there will be only experiments and no stable literary grounds. On the other hand, the need for labelling is precisely what postmodernism tries to fight. Postmodernist writers and thinkers want the theory to get rid of the need to categorize and classify everything that is written. Therefore it "is not the books that are harmful, it is the lists of harmful books that are." (Bělohradský – working translation).

Hutcheon unscrupulously states that "[c]ertainly traditionally conservative cultural critics, contemplating the canon from their ivory towers, have made a position for themselves from which, for example, to condemn all non-high art as non-art, as the product of commercial culture." (208). Hence, the fact that the postmodernist writers include the low art in their works is definitely not the case of trying to make it more market-friendly. Quite the contrary, by including such passages as the one when Samson Young ponders who would play the characters in a potential movie, they mock the fact that "[t]/he dominant art form of the twentieth [and twenty-first] century was not literature at all – nor even painting or theater or the symphony – but rather the one new and historically unique art invented in the contemporary period, namely film." (Jameson, 68). Through the novels such as *The French Lieutenant's Woman, The Name of the Rose* or *London Fields* postmodernism manages to produce pieces of writing that are both bestsellers and subjects of academic scrutiny. Hutcheon adds that "I would argue that, as typically postmodernist contradictory texts, novels like these parodically use and abuse the conventions of both popular

and elite literature, and do so in such a way that they can actually *use* the invasive culture industry to challenge its own commodification processes from within." (20). In other words, postmodernist writers are definitely aware of the fact that the art is, as almost everything else, a commodity. However, they do not try to exploit that for their own benefit. On the contrary, they want a non-elitist approach to art and they try to promote that high art can be read by masses and, on the other hand, they want the low art to be part of the academic debate.

Even though "[I]t [postmodernism] has little faith in art's ability to change society *directly,* though it does believe that questioning and problematizing may set up the conditions for possible change." (Hutcheon, 218), postmodernist writers try through the "[d]emocratization of high art." (ibid) to interest the reader, to educate him or her, to entertain, to shock, to excite, and, it cannot be stressed enough, they want the reader to *think.* I already elaborated on the part where the writers want the reader to think; now I would like to scrutinize what other feelings can *London Fields* and *England, England* raise in the reader. I would do so by listing and studying all the genres that appear in the books.

It was already stated that "[p]ostmodern paradox is that this particular kind of fiction enacts is to be found in its bridging of the gap between elite and popular art, a gap which mass culture has no doubt broadened" (Hutcheon, 20). Let us see what genres there are in the books that enable this bridging. The multiplicity and mixing of genres is not that much represented in *England, England* as in the other book. However, the main theme, the building of The Project, happens on the background of a conventional love story between Martha and Paul. Hence, the novel actually perpetually mixes at least two genres. Guignery argues that "[t]he novel plays the satirical public story of Sir Jack's megalomaniac venture against the private story of Martha's development from teenager to elderly lady" (104). In other words, we have got a fictionalized treatment of the problem of simulacra and a story of a lady who confesses to the reader with her sexual life and all the struggles that come with it. The difficulties with including two different plotlines in one book are reflected by Barnes himself in Guignery, he says that "[w]hen I wasn't sure whether it was working or not, I simply extracted from the draft of the book all the sections dealing with Martha's personal life, and then rewrote them as a sort of individual story." (112). The novel can also be read as a satire on all the commodification that happens in our world and that is commented on earlier in this work. The author himself prefers to call

it “semi-farce” (Barnes in Guignery, 105).

It is worth mentioning that for Julian Barnes the structural frame of the novel is surprisingly “normal” or non-experimental compared to *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* and *Flaubert’s Parrot*. However, the non-striking and standard structure is violated by including the lists The District Agricultural and Horticultural Society□s Schedule of Prizes, the Fifty Quintessences of Englishness and the Brief History of Sexuality in the case of Martha Cochrane and Paul Harrison. So, Even though *England, England* is not usually perceived as a typical genre-mixing novel, one can still find out that there actually are higher and lower genres in mingle. However, it is *London Fields* that is usually associated with the mixing of genres. The very first words of the novel suggest it as well: “This is a true story but I can’t believe it’s really happening. It’s a murder story, too. I can’t believe my luck. And a love story (I think).” (London Fields, 1).

As in many other postmodernist works, for example the work of Kazuo Ishiguro *Never Let Me Go* (2005) that can be read as a dystopian novel, science fiction or even campus novel, one cannot simply state that a work can be seen as a one particular genre. The mixture of genres is quite significant for postmodernist works, and therefore it is only useful to trace all the possible genres that can be found within one book. In *London Fields* the reader can spot quite a number of genres, Diedrick tries to clarify it and states that “[t]he novel is a mutant form as well-an unstable mixture of millennial murder mystery, urban satire, apocalyptic jeremiad, and domestic farce.” (119). Even from this description one can easily see that Amis did not only mix genres he also fuses the high and the low art, one would even say ‘previously known as’ low art.

Whereas *London Fields* is full of different genres and the novel can be read from many different perspectives, *England, England* does not operate with genre-mixing. However, Barnes likes to include the genre-mixture into his works, let the book *Before She Met Me* be an adequate example. This novel mixes “horror, wry humour and melodrama.” (Guignery, 17). Postmodernist writers do not only like to mix the genres they also incorporate “copies, intertexts, parodies.” (Hutcheon,192). The latter is then brought to perfection in the Barnes’s book.

XIII. 1. Multidimensional characters – Nicola Six and Keith Talent

It is also the characters themselves that are possessors of genres, especially Keith Talent and Nicola Six. Even the narrator points that out and tells Nicola that "[m]aybe you're a mixture of genres. A mutant." (134) Nicola Six functions as the main mover or initiator of the love story that takes place in the book. However, typically for postmodernism, she provides the reader more with a parody of a love story than with a regular one. Hutcheon supports the view that this fact is typically postmodernist by arguing that "[o]n the surface, postmodernism's main interest might seem to be in the processes of its own production and reception, as well as in its own parodic relation to the art of the past." (22). Jameson presents his opinion on the presence of parody in the postmodernist art by stating that "[i]n postmodernism parody finds itself without a vocation" (64) or that we are witnesses of "the random cannibalization of all the styles of the past." (65). Hutcheon disagrees with Jameson's attitude and points out that "[t]here is absolutely nothing random or without principle." (27). The parody and ironic approach to history, world and art do not mean mocking or absence of seriousness and it certainly does not mean random violation of classics. Moreover, by parodying the art the postmodernist authors expose themselves to the parody. Hence, this approach is more a means of self-awareness than mockery.

Let us get back to the point of Nicola Six being a parody of typical love story. She starts the love quadrangle, or love cross as the narrator likes to point out, because cross has four points too, and it suits better for this purpose since all of the four characters symbolically tend to meet in the pub called The Black Cross. First of all, the love story that she plays with the narrator is experimental in the way that she knows that he writes about her, Samson Young even consults the continuing of the book with her, and he eventually kills her. However, it is the embodiment of Martin Amis, Mark Asprey, who is, supposedly, loved by Nicola Six, although it is never clearly stated in the book. It is the two relationships with Guy and Keith that are more interesting, though. With Guy, Nicola pretends that she is a virgin and tells Guy that she is in deep love with him, and when the time is right, she wants to have her "first" sex with him. Guy is completely shattered by this and almost cannot think of anything else. It eventually leads to the fact that his family live is destroyed. On the other hand, with Keith Nicola openly admits that she has a way with men but she does not allow Keith to have any physical contact with her and she only tapes herself and lets Keith

watch it. To conclude it in the words of Diedrick “[i]n her [Nicola’s] relationship with Guy she enacts a grotesque parody of love; in her relationship with Keith she performs a grotesque parody of sex; and in her relationship with Samson, she offers a sly parody of Amis’s postmodern narrative habits.” (120).

She is also the possessor of supernatural abilities since she “always knew what was going to happen next.” (15). It is typical for postmodernist authors to include supernaturalism or science fiction (as an examples can, again, serve Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go* or Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*) in their works. However, according to McHale, some authors refuse to admit that their work is similar to science-fiction because of "the low-art stigma attached to it.“ (79). This is not the case of *London Fields*, though. The novel can be partly characterised as science-fiction not because of some unimaginably futuristic inventions that exist in the fictional worlds, but because of the little details that deviates the fictional world from our reality. As an example we can take the fact that in *London Fields* the Earth rotates slowly and therefore the day is longer or that the sun is lower and Britain is much hotter than in our reality.

Nicola Six is a carrier of symbolism in the novel as well. She is the one who represents the death of love, and not even God is able to change her. She also tells the reader that she had an imaginary friend when she was a child. The friend’s name was Enola Gay and Enola gave birth to a child called Little Boy. This is an allusion to the fact that the bomber which dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima was called Enola Gay and the bomb was called Little Boy. She also uses Enola to lure the money out of Guy. As Diedrick suggests “Nicola Six is a heavy symbolic cargo in *London Fields* – a metaphor appropriate to her association with the B-52 bomber.” (126). Since Nicola is compared to a disaster and is described as an embodiment of the death of love Amis suggests that she has the same impact on every character she meets (she destroys love and everything else in them) as the bombs had to the whole world.

Keith Talent, a prototype of an anti-hero, is a typical character of Amis’s books. Ryan says that “[h]is [Amis’s] narratives habitually revolve around insufferable egotists and moronic dupes, heartless bastards and their helpless prey, tangled up in lethal webs of mutual manipulation and psychological torment.” (203). Apart from being an obnoxious person, Keith Talent also serves as the comedy aspect of the book. *London Fields* also possesses a huge comic potential. Diedrick is aware of that

and states that “despite its inner darkness, *London Fields* is often wickedly funny.” (119). For the scene when Keith comes home really drunk, Amis lets his narrator to change the style to enter the mind of drunken Keith and the reader is exposed to sentences like: “Nik siad OK to drink waht felt okay. Dim matter. Siad it dim matter. Man is the hunter.” (322). Later on, as we are told, Keith “in no particular order burped the wife, took baby outside for a pee, and f*** the dog.” (ibid.). Another situation that can summon a smile on reader’s face is when Samson describes his suffering when Keith tries to teach him how to play darts. Moreover, on page 218, Keith tells a joke himself, but this joke is not incorporated to make the reader laugh since is unimaginably awful and disgusting.

I already mentioned that postmodernist authors use shocking or disgusting material to surge the reader’s emotions up. They also incorporate peripheral genres into their books (thrillers, horrors or even pornography) to strengthen the message they try to get across. In *England, England*, Sir Jack Pitman finds pleasure in pretending that he is a baby and that he needs to be taken care of and he is willing to pay a ridiculous sum of money to be treated as a child. Moreover, the state of mind of Pitman is not that of pretending, he is in a completely different world, in a world of his own where finding a pleasure in being a baby is something ordinary. From the moment when reader discovers with Martha and Paul the fact that this noble and futuristic man seeks sexual pleasure in such an unusual act the view of the character is violated, changed. If Barnes wanted to embarrass Jack Pitman in the eyes of a reader he could have done it in more “canon-literature-friendly” way. The vivid description of Pitman’s sexual disorder serves its purpose. Throughout the whole book the reader would not forget what he was a witness of. McHale writes about using pornographic material or open violence in postmodernist works in his book, he argues that “[f]ar from identifying his or her own desires with these events, of course, the reader may very well prefer to evade or suppress them, as too painful to face directly.” (102). Later on he adds that “[w]hat matters is that she or he [the reader] has been duped into a degree of emotional engagement.” (ibid.) From this moment on the reader must have some attitude towards Pitman whether he or she likes it or not.

All the unusual and sick scenes with Keith Talent have the same effect. The reader knows from the beginning that Keith Talent is a bad character because the narrator says so. However, it is through these scenes that the character irretrievably

enters the mind of a reader. When Nicola Six pretends that she is a social worker and visits Talent's family to check on them, she says: "You just haven't got enough money. My God, the smoke. And I can't say I like the look of the dog. Do you abuse your daughter, Mrs Talent?" (258). Keith then loses his temper, stands up and is about to tell Nicola off. The reader is then left in amazement when he or she finds out that Keith's reasons for standing up and shouting were that "[n]obody talked that way about Keith's dog – or about his cigarettes." (ibid.). Moreover, Amis is not afraid to dedicate almost a whole page (245) to Keith's burp.

It is not only peripheral genres and shocking or disgusting material that is included in *London Fields.* One can trace other genres and also intertextuality in this book. There is a description of a real horror movie that the narrator went to see with Lizzyboo. The horror movie is called *The Dorm That Dripped Blood* (1982) and Samson Young describes the plot and gives away who the killer in the movie is. Towards the end, Samson Young leaves an extract of a poem for Kim Talent, the poem is a real one from an English writer called Wilfred Owen. However, Samson Young functions as a literary critic as well. He expects some piece of poetry from Guy and he comments on poetry and comes to a conclusion that "I know what his poetry will be about. What poetry is always about. The cruelty of the poet's mistress." (117). Through Samson Young, Amis manages to find a cliché that can be found in some lyrical works.

Another aspect of some postmodernist books is the banality of the language when something supernatural happens, it is the unexcited tone and behaviour through which some supernatural or unexpected actions and objects are perceived (as an example can be used some stories from Gabriel Garcia Marquez, for example *Strange Pilgrims* (1992), especially *Light Is Like Water*). McHale says that "the characters' failure to be amazed by unexpected happenings serves to heighten our amazement." (69). In *London Fields* Guy's car is robbed once a week and he seems to cope with it very well. Or to be more precise, he stopped considering it as something unusual. McHale, however, applies this more on the supernatural and paranormal aspects of some postmodernist works. On the other hand, *London Fields* is not commonly described as a novel in which the characters possess supernatural abilities but the fact that Nicola Six and the narrator have always known that she is going to be murdered, is definitely something we can call supernatural or maybe a sixth sense. Samson Young, however, tells this to the reader with a banal tone, as if

it was something common.

To sum this chapter up, the multiplicity of genres and the including of the "low art" serve to erase the boundaries that used to separate books into two clear categories. There were books that used to function strictly for academic purposes on the one hand, and there were books that were considered only as a literature for relaxation on the other hand. These two categories were defined by the specific genres that should be either on one side of the barrier or on the other, they should not be interchangeable. Postmodernist writers want the categories from the "low art" to interact with the "high art".

XIII. 2. Names of the characters in *London Fields*

The interpretation of the name of Nicola Six can be seen from the perspective that by naming her like that, Amis wants to suggest for the reader that she might possess a sixth sense. Sticking to the interpretation that the paranormal trait of Nicola Six is encoded in the very name of the character I would like to move to another topic; and that is the names of the characters.

The thesis deals with the names of the characters earlier (Mark Asprey – MA and Incarnation are mentioned). The names are not random and play significant roles in the book. Under scrutiny, we can perceive that the majority of the names points to a postmodernist feature or a feature of the book (thus showing the typical self-awareness). Nicola Six possesses supernatural powers – a sixth sense. Incarnation is almost constantly present when the narrator is creating the story and is able to "haughtily enumerate the achievements of Mark Asprey" (115). When Sam needs to create something about the Clinch's family there is always Auxiliadora to help him. The narrator, Samson Young, knows that he has last days of his life, that he is going to die soon. This is the first paradox, or even antonym, between the name and the character's traits. The other ones are that Keith "just didn't have the talent" (5) and Guy's wife, Hope, has been hopeless since the birth of Marmaduke. To suggest the mixture of high and low Amis introduces two regulars in The Black Cross that are in often interaction with Keith. Their nicknames are Shakespeare and Fucker, and one has to admit that it is hard to find too more contrasting names, or nicknames in this case. Another name worth mentioning is Trish Shirt – Amis here plays with the sound of the language and names a rather cameo character with palindrome. Guy Clinch is

also a symbolical name since he is in constant clinch from Nicola Six from the first day he meets her. Moreover, when Samson Young reveals that Keith Talent is not the murderer he remarks that it was the other guy. The pun can confuse the reader who thinks that the murderer might actually be Guy.

XIV. Conclusion

The main aim of this work was to introduce postmodernism, its poetics and demonstrate it on two selected works, namely *England, England* by Julian Barnes and *London Fields* by Martin Amis. Postmodernism is a complicated concept that surges up emotions and academics take various stands on it. Therefore, it was necessary to show those that support the idea of postmodernism (Linda Hutcheon, Brian McHale) and those who are against it (Fredric Jameson). Whereas Jameson accuses postmodernism of “decadence, loss of historicity, obsessions with calcium and cholesterol, the logics of future shock.” (377), McHale celebrates it and shows us that he “learned to stop worrying and love postmodernism” (217). It was stated that postmodernism can be seen as a morally bad art on the one hand but on the other hand it is not pretentious to the outer reality where the bad morality emerges. It does not deny that it is part of it.

Even though both sides of the perspective were included, the thesis more supports the view of McHale and Hutcheon. By applying the various concepts of postmodernism on *London Fields* and *England, England* it was shown what beauty and intellectual depth lies in those books. Both books can be seen as postmodernist works and therefore prove that the postmodernism really is a useful concept, even though it can sometimes include some shocking and unexpected material.

The thesis offers short biographies of the authors as well as what life events influenced the two books and how the novels fit in the context of other works that these two authors have written. Since both authors can be considered as typically postmodernist the term itself is examined. The thesis presents that the term is quite complicated mainly because it includes its predecessor. However, postmodernism does not only contradict modernism, it is a peculiar movement that does not only parodize artlessly. Even though parody, irony and paradox are one of the main features of postmodernism it is never used only for autotelic mocking. By parodying, postmodernism tests the boundaries that were set mainly by modernism and it subverts the strict limits that were impose in art. The thesis also shows that postmodernism questions the absolute and objective truth and it breaks the illusion of the standard and unquestionable. It is also stressed that we cannot perceive all the contemporary art as postmodernist.

Postmodernist authors find inspiration in various sources; it can be canonical

literature, popular novels or even non-art sphere such as media. The two analysed books, for example, can be seen as dystopian novels and the thesis presents what dystopian literature is and what dystopian features occur in both novels. The second part of *England, England* shows the emerging of the hyperreal Island and its gradual success. In this part of the novel one can find some dystopic features (for example the currency in England is euro) but it is the third part, Anglia, that can be seen as a purely dystopic place. The thesis shows that the world of Old England is a closed, separated and disturbing place which possesses a number of dystopic features. In comparison, the characters of *London Fields* find themselves in an ecological, economic and climatic Crisis and are in the state of super war. London is full of burglars, thieves and cheats and for example children are behaving disturbingly rudely and they start to rob when they are not more than twelve years old.

One of the main concepts of postmodernism is intertextuality. This concept is crucial for interpreting *England, England* especially when analysing the speech of a French intellectual. The thesis explores what were the inspirations for the speech and consequently for the whole novel. The main inspiration for the whole book is Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* where the thinker presents the notion of hyperreality as a state when the replica, the simulation is superior to the real. The philosopher's thoughts are actually fictionalized by Barnes.

A similar approach occurs in *London Fields* as well where the reader can find that texts can no longer be seen as original and that intertextuality is inevitable even when creating such outstanding characters as Nicola Six or Keith Talent. The narrator of *London Fields* acquaints the reader with this fact by stating that someone is always watching during the genesis of a text, it can be God, Shakespeare or other inescapable inspiration. Postmodernism shows us that the inspiration does not have to be that noble and that even the authors of sophisticated fiction are inspired by TV, tabloids or advertisements.

Postmodernism, and therefore the two books as well, questions the objective, the given and everything that seems to be taken for granted. This approach is illustrated on the postmodernist view of history. Postmodernism questions the reliability of history and draws the attention to the fact that the past as we know it might not be as objective as we think it is. The reliability of the recorded history is depicted in *England, England* as well. The thesis presents that in the fictional world the history is slightly different from the history as we know it. However,

postmodernism warns that we do not have any right to claim that our history is the one that reflects the real events more accurately. In other words, postmodernism and *England, England* show that history is a human construct. On the other hand, *London Fields* does not operate with this theme. It rather focuses on the postmodernist relationship between an author and his or her characters and the relationship between reality and fiction. The thesis presents the role of media in the world of *London Fields* especially through the character of Keith Talent. This anti-hero thinks that whatever appears on TV or in his favourite tabloids is without a doubt the absolute reality. This character is also addicted to pornography which is interpreted as a critique of the easy accessibility of this pseudo-genre. The thesis also examines how we are in reality influenced by the media and especially by TV. To analyse this problematic more thoroughly the opinions of such thinkers as Jerry Mander or Neil Postman are presented.

A parallel can be found in *England, England* since the novel focuses on the problematic relationship between reality and fiction as well. To support the thesis's point, thinkers like Eco or Baudrillard are quoted and some parallels between the novel and real world are drawn. The thesis examines the character of Jack Pitman who is responsible for the blurring of boundaries between reality and simulation in the book. It also points to the fact that those boundaries are rather unclear in the real world as well. The chapter ends with the examination of the hyperreal island.

Postmodernist authors tend to include experimental, disturbing or shocking material in their works. *London Fields* especially is not an exception. There is a disturbing depiction of children in the novel, more precisely, it is the character of Marmaduke who is the most terrifying one. Through this child Amis shows that there is no innocence in his book because he is a child of otherwise a satisfied, prospering and rich couple which is gradually destroyed by this monster. In contrast, Barnes in *England, England* does not vividly describe (apart from Pitman's sexual deviation) anything disturbing, although the hyperreal Island itself can be perceived as disturbing enough.

To sum it up, the first part of the work deals with a theory of postmodernism. After that it is clarified what dystopian literature mean. The various concepts of postmodernism are then separately studied and are applied first on *England, England* and then on *London Fields.* Since the books offer different variations of postmodernism it seemed more natural to deal with them individually. Some concepts

of postmodernism are more prominent in *England, England* and some in *London Fields.* Therefore, it was more useful to demonstrate the problematic view of reality, replica and hyperreality on Barnes's book. On the other hand, it seemed better to show the mixture of genres on *London Fields.*

The main aim was to show to what extend are these two books influenced by postmodernism and what concepts of postmodernism are used by the two authors in the two novels. This thesis shows that even though both books can be perceived as postmodernist they differ in many aspects. It only shows what a broad and useful concept postmodernism is.

XV. Works Cited

Amis, Martin. *London Fields.* London: Vintage, 1989.

Barnes, Julian. *England, England.* London: Vintage, 1998.

Barthes, Roland, *The Death of the Author* (1967) http://www.tbook.constantvzw.org/wp-content/death_authorbarthes.pdf accessed 16th March, 2012.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation.* Michigan: University of Michigan Press: 1994.

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Individualizovaná Společnost.* Prague: Mladá Fronta, 2004.

Bělohradský, Václav, *Deset knih, které pokazily svět?.* http://www.multiweb.cz/hawkmoon/10_knih.htm, accessed 10th March 2012.

Diedrick, James. *Understanding Martin Amis.* South Carolina: South Carolina Press, 2004.

Eco, Umberto. *Fortress of Solitude* in *Travels in Hyperreality.* San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986.

Gass, William. *Fiction and the Figures of Life.* New York: Vintage, 1972.

Guignery, Vanessa. *The Fiction of Julian Barnes.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Hassan, Ihab: *Toward a Concept of Postmodernism* in: *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture* (1987) http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/theory/HassanPoMo.pdf, accessed16th March 2012.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism.* Cambridge: University Printing House, 1988.

Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.* London: Verso, 1991.

Mander, Jerry. *Four Arguments for the elimination of Television.* Michigan: Morrow, 1978.

McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction.* London: Methuen, Inc., 1987.

Mengham, Rod. *An Introduction to Contemporary Fiction*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999.

Pearson, Keith Ansell. *The Nietzsche Reader.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2006.

Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death.* New York: Penguin Group, 2006.