

Vol III Issue I Feb 2013

Impact Factor : 0.2105

ISSN No : 2230-7850

Monthly Multidisciplinary
Research Journal

*Indian Streams
Research Journal*

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IMPACT FACTOR : 0.2105

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RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

ISSN No.2230-7850

Indian Streams Research Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi & Marathi Language. All research papers submitted to the journal will be double - blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial Board readers will include investigator in universities, research institutes government and industry with research interest in the general subjects.

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SETTINGS IN THE NOVELS OF JULIAN BARNES

(With Reference to Talking It Over, The Porcupine, England, England, Love, etc., Arthur & George)

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Abstract:

Julian Barnes was born in Leicester, England's East midland, on January 19, 1946 in the family of a teacher. His father, Albert taught French at St. Clement Danes from 1937 onwards till his retirement in 1971. His mother, Keye, also taught French. His elder brother, Jonathan is now a Professor of Philosophy in Geneva. He married Pat Kavanagh in 1979, and now lives with her in North London.

INTRODUCTION :

Though he was labeled as Francophile, he has been English in analyzing scrupulously and skeptically his own country so that he may have less disappointment when something terrible happens. He loves beef-eating, English science, English uprightness and pragmatism and that is being English in the real sense. He has led the active life of 27 years in the field of writing and published ten mainstream novels, four crime novels under pseudonym of Dan Kavanagh, two collections of short stories, and a book of essays. Besides, he has been a TV critic and produced Television movies. He has also produced cinemas on three of his novels. Barnes is also a well known review and article writer who has commented on various subjects.

Julian Barnes is a living writer whose ten novels have been published until now. Julian Barnes wrote 10 mainstream novels. *Metroland* (1980). *Before She Met Me* (1982) *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984) *Staring at the Sun* (1986). *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (1989). *Talking It Over* (1991). *The Porcupine* (1992) *England, England* (1998) *Love Etc.* (2000) *Arthur & George* (2005).

In addition, to these ten mainstream novels, he has also written four detective novels centered around the central character. Duffy, however, for these novels Mr. Barnes has taken the pseudonym Dan Kavanagh.

There are Duffy (1980) *Fiddle City* (1981), *Putting the Boot In* (1985).

He has also written two collections of short stories entitled *Cross Channel* (1990) and *The Lemon Table* (2004).

In addition, there are three collections of essays based on his life in London.

They are *Letters from London*. (1990-95) *Something to Declare* (2002) *The Pedant in the Kitchen* (2003)

As a writer Julian Barnes has won number of awards in his career like Somerset Maugham Award for *Metroland* in 1981, Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize for *Flaubert's Parrot* in 1985 and Austrian State Prize for European Literature in 2004.

Besides, he has also won the French Awards like Prix Medicis Award for *Flaubert's Parrot* in 1986, Gutenberg Prize in 1987, and Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des lettres in 1988.

His versatility can be seen in his winning of the awards like Prix Femina Etranger Award for *Talking It Over* in 1992 and in 1995, he won Officer de l'Ordre des Arts et des lettres Award. He has also won the Italian Awards like Premio Grinzane Cavour for *Flaubert's Parrot* in 1988.

In this way, Mr. Barnes has been felicitated in his own country and abroad. His greatness can also be proved in his successful attempt to receive the awards and prizes like Shakespeare Prize (Germany) in 1993, Commonwealth Writer's Prize (Eurosia Region, Best Book) for *Arthur and George* in 2006 and E.M.

Forster Award (American Academy of Arts and Letters) in 1986.

He has received the prestigious Man Booker Prize for his novel 'The Sense of an Ending' 19th Oct. 2011 and three of his novels were short-listed for it, this may be regarded as a proof of his writing genius.

The present paper proposes to study the use of Settings in Barnes' five novels :- Talking it Over, The Porcupine, England England, Love, etc. Arthur & George

SETTING IN THE NOVEL TALKING IT OVER (1991)

Talking It Over has been written in conversational form; the three of the major characters reveal their past, present and future course of action in their monologues. The mind of human being is the setting for this innovative and experimentative narrative drama. The characters are the narrators and through their narratives events in their lives are described from their respective point of view.

Oliver, Hi, I'm Oliver, Oliver Russell. Cigarette? No, I didn't think you would. You don't mind if I do? Yes I do know it's bad for my health as a matter of fact, that's why I like it. God we've only just met and you're coming on like some rampant nut-eater. What's got to do with you anyway? (8)

The characters reveal the inner conflicts in their mind through the dialogues and that becomes a surface setting. The story of the novel set in England and France. Stuart and Oliver are the childhood friends; their past, their youth and adulthood take place England :

I remember the sky that day : swirling clouds like marbled end-papers. A little too much wind, and everyone patting his hair back into place inside the door of the register office. A ten minute wait round a low coffee table bearing three London telephone directories and three copies of the yellow pages. Ollie trying to amuse the company by looking up relevant professionals like Divorce Lawyers and Rubber Goods Purveyars. (11)

To the end of the novel, Oliver and Gillian move to France and decide to settle in France. France is an excuse for them as both of them have a sense of guilt for their betrayal.

An expatriate Englishman in his middle thirties, scraping along in provincial France with a wife and baby. They're out of the London property market now, and believe me, once you are out you never get back in. (262)

Talking It Over is a novel played with three major participants who use humourous tone in their respective monologues. The tone of these characters create healthy and transparent environment in the story that is relevant to external as well as internal setting of the novel.

SETTING IN THE NOVEL THE PORCUPINE (1992)

The Porcupine is a political novel which sets in one of the unknown countries in Eastern Europe during 10 January 1991 to 25 February 1991. The novel sets in a communist ruled country where the dictator like ruler does not provide the essential commodities like food, shelter, clothing, education and health to the people. There comes the chaotic situation and after the protests and marches the dictator is brought under trial by his opponents.

The country which is referred to the novel is most probably Bulgaria and the story of the novel is based on some of its recent history. Bulgaria was declared a communist state in 1949 when Todor Zhivkov was the head of the communist party. He was made the head of the communist until 1989. In 1990, he was arrested and charged with fraud, corruption, abuse of power and pornography. He was tried and sentenced to seven years imprisonment.

The Porcupine sets in the background of Cold War, the world was divided into two superpowers – U.S.S.R. and U.S.A. During the late eighties and early nineties, there were the winds of change due to the policies of globalisation, liberalisation and free trade. The communist ruled countries got a set back while the countries led by America have become prosperous. The people of the communist ruled countries realized that they were the victims of mismanagement, corruption and grid of power. The awareness and restlessness brought them on the streets to change the governments and systems.

The steady domestic noise, the sound of national keening and empty stomachs, passed the Sheraton Hotel, where the rich foreigners stayed; some of the guests stood expectantly at their windows, holding the candles they had been advised to bring, candles of a better quality than those in the street below. When they understood the cause of the protest, some drew back into their rooms, reflecting on the food they had idly left on their plates at breakfast. (5)

The tone of the novel is humourous as the villainous dictator is punished and the people of the country are relieved to breathe new hope in their lives. The Porcupine is a comedy which turns dark sometimes due to the character of Petkanov and his cruelty.

SETTING IN THE NOVEL ENGLAND, ENGLAND (1998)

Julian Barnes is a novelist with the influence of the French literature. In his earlier novels like *Metroland*, *Flaubert's Parrot* and *Before She Met Me* the conspicuous interest of the writer in French philosophy can be seen. On the other hand, *England, England* sets in England. It is about the story of life of Martha Cochrane presented in ecliptical manner. The part I, *England*, describes the teenage life of Martha is narrated considering the relevance of the theme. The first part sets in rural England where Martha spends her childhood. The agrarian scene is picturised so minutely to focus the artificiality in the part II.

Her parents took her softly by the wrists and swung her high into the sky, and the clumpy grass was trampoline when she landed. The white marquees with striped porticos, as solidly built as vicarages. A rising hill behind, from which careless, scruffy animals looked down on their pampered, kaltered cousins in the show ring below. The smell from the back entrance to the beer tent as the day's heat rose. (7)

The second part, *England, England* is the largest of the three, has a setting of a theme park, *England, England*. This part has been critically positioned in contrast to the early innocent life of Martha in rural England where the celebration of nature can be seen in every element and act. In this part, the descriptions of the historical elements, events and figures provide an appropriate setting to the story of the novel. The setting of this part so accurate that tourists visiting the park consider the replica as natural objects.

Techno-development, after several personal interventions from Sir Jack, eventually came up with a solution. The props and jumper's harness would remain the same, but instead of a bungee cord there would be the controlled unraveling of a camouflaged cable, while hidden windjet sources would simulate rising air-currents. The result would be guest-safe and all-weather. (123)

The part three, *England*, sets in a Wessex village called Anglia. Mr. Barnes comments, Anglia is the result of old England collapsing and going back to a pre-industrial, agricultural, pre-technology England'. (Guignery, 2006 : 72). The third part tends to be a bit misread by people; it is the answer to the questions raised previously. Anglia is a village to represent the nostalgic recreation of a pre-industrial world. All the inhabitants of Anglia have changed their names, professions and location in an attempt to start a new life. In other words, the setting of the third part is to represent an alternative purer reality.

It was early June, a week before the fete, and the weather was giving a false impression of summer. The wind had dropped, and slow bumblebees nosed through the scent of baked grass. A silver-washed fritillary exchanged carefree flight-paths with a meadow brown. Only a hyperactive chiff-chaff, scavenging for insects, displayed an intrusive work-ethic. The woodland birds were bolder than they had been in her childhood. (241)

The story of the novel has been narrated ironically and satirically. The objective is to arouse the feeling of patriotism among the contemporary generation for the cause of Englishness. These two objectives have been forgotten using humourous tone in the novel. The tone of the novel is relevant to the setting.

SETTING IN THE NOVEL LOVE, ETC (2001)

Love, etc has been written in the form of dramatic monologues. The three major characters Stuart, Oliver and Gillian express the inner as well as outer conflicts in their monologue. They are not seen in direct conversation with each other, instead the past, present and future course of action is narrated relevantly in their confessional dialogues. Like *Talking It Over*, the psychological mindset of the characters provides setting to the novel which has been written in dramatic form. The only difference between a drama and this novel is the drama has direct conversations and occasional monologues or soliloquies; but *Love, etc* has only monologues. The characters speak directly to the readers. In other words, the readers are bound psychologically and they are appealed to relate themselves to the lives of the characters.

Terri Mind if I join you? I mean, is this a private thing or what? I could e-mail if you prefer. But I'll tell you one thing, I'm not having five years of my life tossed in the trash like that. I'm not going to be anyone's damn footnote. (33)

The setting of the novel covers the countries like England, France and USA. The novel begins where *Talking It Over* ends. To the end of *Talking It Over*, Oliver and Gillian settle in a small village in France. At the beginning of *Love, etc*, Gillian reminisces their past in that village. They live there for some time but return to London as Oliver can not succeed in his professional life. Gillian remembers this episode as :

So I was standing there like a scarecrow, like a madwoman. The blood was from Oliver hitting me with the car keys in his hand. I knew the village's eyes were on me. I knew we'd have to leave. The French

are much more bourgeois than the British when it comes down to it. The properties matter. Anyway, I'd tell Oliver that being in the village was part of the trouble. (20)

Oliver and Gillian settle in London, they have their family and Gillian resumes her professional life too in London. The rest of the novel takes place in London. As Stuart, one of the major characters, also returns home. Meanwhile, Stuart works as a greengrocer in USA and he has the memories of his life in USA. To the beginning of the novel, in the chapter in the meantime Stuart narrates his life in USA with every detail. He not only provides the descriptions of the outer life but he makes clear what he has felt.

Stuart : Some clichés are true. Like America being the land of opportunity. At least, a land of opportunity. Some clichés aren't true, like Americans having no sense of irony, or America being a melting pot, or America being the home of the brave and the land of free. I lived there for almost ten years and knew lots of Americans and liked them. I even married one of them. (25)

Love, etc is an emotional drama told in serious mood, the tone of the novel turns to be dark. The characters have very complicated relations and feelings for each other. Stuart and Oliver are seen in the exchanged roles unlike *Talking It Over* while Gillian can not understand what relation she has with Stuart. This complexity has influenced the tone of the novel.

SETTING IN THE NOVEL ARTHUR & GEORGE (2005)

Arthur & George describes the stories of the life of the two real life persons. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji. The stories move according to the real life stories of the two protagonists in the novel. The narration alternates between two periods as George was born 18 years after Arthur, and between comparatively static and a peripatetic way of life as George remained in Wyrley in England throughout his childhood and studied in Birmingham, while Arthur moved from Edinburgh to England to Austria and back to Edinburgh. Before qualifying as a doctor, Arthur sails, in the Arctic, near the west coast of Africa and settles in London.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is multi-dimensional person and the story of his life sets on a multi-national and multi-coloured background. The childhood the adolescence and youthful romance have been canvassed to relate it to the story.

That August, Arthur was invited to lecture in Switzerland : Touie was still a little weak from the birth of Kingsley, but naturally accompanied him. They visited the Reichenback falls, splendid yet terrifying, and a worthy tomb for Holmes. The fellow was rapidly turning into an old man of the sea, clinging round his neck. Now, with the help of an arch-villain, he would shrug his burden off. (61)

Arthur & George is a novel in which two different persons' stories have been narrated and very skillfully the stories are moulded in one pattern. The story of George has a limited canvass and it sets in Wyrley and Birmingham. Then the trial comes and major part of the novel describes the trial episode in a court and the matters related to the prosecution of George. The family of George is made a target by sending vicious letters.

The letters and hoaxes continue; Shapurji's plea to the malefactor to examine his conscience seems to have acted as further provocation. Newspapers announce that the vicarage is now a boarding house offering rock-bottom terms; that it has become a slaughter house; that it will dispatch free samples of ladies corsetry on request. George has apparently set up as an oculist, he also offers free legal advice and is qualified to arrange tickets and accommodation for traveler to India and the Far East. (44)

The tone of the novel is humorous when there is the narration of Arthur's life. For George's story, the tone is serious as this part of the novel is about the trial of an innocent and helpless person in a racially prejudiced provice. Both stories have the tones relevant to the settings.

CONCLUSION

Julian Barnes, who has been writing novels in the contemporary vein, has basically highlighted the life in a Metropolitan city. The setting in his novels pictures the urban like which includes the outer setting that is about the inner world of the characters. In the novels of Mr. Barnes the focus is laid on the intricacies of the human relations; the passages describing the psychological states of the characters provide setting to the novel. His first novel, *Metroland* (1980), for instance, symbolically becomes a novel raising problems faced by the people of all Metropolitan cities. In his novel, *England, England*, the setting, plays a significant role as the novel is about the influence of Englishness on a replica of England on an island. His novel *Talking It Over* is set in England. France and America to give the setting a multinational

colour.

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