

## An Analysis of Persistent Expressions: Examining the Resonance of Words - A Literature Review

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### ABSTRACT

In Julian Barnes' novel "The Sense of an Ending," the author effectively employs the literary technique of repetition to depict a wide range of complex human emotions that elude facile categorization. This provides an additional function, namely, to emphasize the inherent subjectivity and fallibility that are intrinsic to the disciplines of history and memory. Notwithstanding the importance of this literary technique, scholars have yet to fully explore it. The present study aims to address this gap by providing a systematic classification of the literary repetitions identified in the novel and elucidating their role in shaping the narrative's central themes. The study delineates and characterizes three fundamental iterations, namely the reoccurrence of indistinguishable circumstances, the manifestation of sceneries with minor alterations, and the replication of identical lines with varying connotations. The text has various instances of these types of repeats. The fundamental objective of this research is to elucidate the way the motifs of obsession, misunderstanding, and consequences reverberate throughout the narrative, so augmenting the reader's grasp of the central topics of the text.

**Keywords:** *Julian Barnes; Concluding Phrases; Literary Repetition*

### 1. Background

In their monograph on Julian Barnes, Nayeypour and Varghaiyan (2021) emphasized the centrality of ironic comedy and false memory as key themes in the author's body of work. Julian Barnes's acclaimed literary work, "The Sense of an Ending," which was published in 2016, is frequently seen as a tale that delves into the ramifications stemming from individuals' fallible recollections. The utilization of the narrator's self-awareness and the unveiling of truth are two narrative approaches employed to stimulate this process of introspection (Yanting, 2016). Among the several tactics deployed in the work, repetition emerges as a particularly significant and potent literary device. Furthermore, the work has a notable presence of recurring references to discussions and locales, in addition to the repetition of words and sentences. The utilization of repetition within the narrative engenders a perceptible echoing effect, so encouraging readers to engage in a process of revisiting and reevaluating the story. It is important to acknowledge that this effect is not inadvertent; the author purposefully uses repetition to captivate readers and elicit the concept of "memory."

The term "repetition" itself might evoke the concept of "memory" as it is linked to the processes of remembrance and recurrence. Moreover, the discrepancies observed in these iterations can be construed as indicative of the inherent distortion and modification that transpires in human memory as time elapses. The objective of this study is to do a taxonomic examination of repetition patterns to illustrate the way this literary strategy contributes to the overall thematic development of "memory" in the novel.

### **1.1 Aim of the Study**

The primary aim of this study is to elucidate the way the reoccurring motifs of fixation, misinterpretation, and their eventual consequences are pervasive throughout the tale. The primary objective is to furnish readers with a more profound comprehension of the book's most noteworthy components. This study explores the complex network of fixation that engulfs the characters and events depicted in the narrative. This study delves into the way characters' unwavering preoccupation with specific concepts, items, or personalities propels the advancement of the narrative and influences their choices. Moreover, it critically examines the underlying factors contributing to these fixations, providing insight into the psychological intricacies involved.

The analysis of misunderstanding, a recurring element, is undertaken to examine the further ramifications it engenders within the narrative. This study investigates the multifaceted aspects of misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and erroneous ideas that contribute to significant narrative developments and character dynamics. Aligned with these thematic elements, the research examines the cascading consequences, highlighting the way actions motivated by fixation and propelled by misinterpretation resonate throughout the narrative. The text delves into an examination of how these repercussions influence the growth of the characters and the overarching progression of the storyline.

Through the analysis of these recurrent motifs and their interconnections, the objective of this study is to deepen the reader's understanding of the fundamental components of the novel, thereby cultivating a more profound admiration for its complexities and the significant influence of obsession, misinterpretation, and consequences on the narrative's development.

## **2. Literature Review**

The literary work being alluded to is "The Sense of an Ending," authored by Julian Barnes, which was bestowed with the prestigious Man Booker Prize in 2011. The novel garnered much attention due to its examination of memory and its narrative framework.

The book is frequently employed in scholarly discourse and analyses to examine the issue of memory and its historical significance. The concept that memory is not a fixed, objective record but rather a dynamic and imperfect construct is a prominent motif within the novel, and it has been extensively examined within diverse scholarly frameworks (Wei, 2023). The scholarly and reader communities engage in ongoing discussions and debates on the narrative structure employed in "The Sense of an Ending." Academic analysis has centred on the examination of the unreliable narrator, Tony Webster, and the presence of contradictions and errors within his tale. There exists a perspective among certain individuals that Tony Webster can be perceived as an anonymous narrator who engages in deception, as previously indicated (Carstens, 2020; Leskelä-Kärki, 2018).

Looking at the book's references to memory and use of repetition are also important parts of the analysis because they bring out the difficulties and complexities of Tony Webster's story. The scholarly examination and discourse surrounding "The Sense of an Ending" are to be expected, given its capacity to stimulate contemplation, particularly in relation to its portrayal of memory and narrative framework. The scholarly citations in this book persist in making valuable contributions to the wider discourse surrounding the subjects explored in the realms of literature and history (Saeid, 2022; Webster, 2019).

The introductory paragraph of the book presents the initial form of repetition, characterized by the repetition of identical scenes. The book commences with a comprehensive and specific enumeration of many commodities, which are subsequently reintroduced in future scenarios. While the list may seem devoid of significance when taken out of its original context, each assertion is thoroughly elucidated in the ensuing chapters. People who follow Tony Webster's tradition wear watches with the face on the inside of their wrist. Phrases like "a lustrous inner wrist," "vaporous emanations ascending from a moistened basin," and "a watercourse flowing in a perplexing upstream direction" allude to this. Additionally, the phrase "a river rushing irrationally downstream" alludes to the Severn Bore, an extraordinary natural phenomenon that Tony Webster witnessed on a memorable evening.

The theme of recurrence is seen in various occurrences and notable episodes in the life of young Webster. These include his encounter with Adrian, his association with Veronica, their distressing visit to her family, and the unusual conduct exhibited by Veronica's mother. The presence of these recurring components suggests underlying implications regarding the intricate dynamics among Adrian, Veronica, and her mother. Furthermore, through the compilation of fragmented recollections presented in the introductory section of the book, it becomes apparent that the primary focus of the narrative revolves around the concept of "memory." The portrayal of an individual's existence, as depicted in the literary work, lacks comprehensive and definitive narrative structure, and is characterized by ambiguous affections and aversions. Conversely, it might be described as a series of fragmented impressions characterized by significant gaps and inherent ambiguity.

According to Leskelä-Kärki (2018), literature has a purpose beyond the mere documentation of memories and the acts of remembering and forgetting. It imparts order and meaning to these experiences. The book contains a vast assortment of recollections that are replete with vibrant visual depictions ("a lustrous inner wrist"), profound sensory encounters ("a scorching frying pan"), and dynamic physical perceptions ("a forceful torrent moving against the current"). The incorporation of these emotional experiences into the narrative structure of the work engenders a succession of episodes that possess a universal resonance, fostering a sense of personal identification for readers and imbuing the story with a sense of individual ownership. The recurrent incidents function as clues and indicators; however, readers face a similar challenge in recalling the narrative as Webster does. As a result, the recurrence of occurrences serves to accentuate the thematic element of "memory," reinforce the primary message of the novel, and facilitate readers' comprehension of the protagonist's viewpoint and the key issue of memory inside the book.

In addition to the introductory section, other scenarios depicted in the novel exhibit apparent resemblances while simultaneously manifesting fundamental distinctions. For example, Webster, in his youth, regards Veronica as a frivolous and arrogant individual who subjected him to mistreatment throughout their courtship period. The individual posits that Veronica does not engage in dancing, and the sole occasion in which she kissed him in a manner that adhered to societal norms was while he was in a state of slumber at her residence. Nevertheless, the recollection of these scenes varies as the elder Webster contemplates the bygone era. During a particular occurrence, the individual recollects an evening spent in the company of Veronica's family, wherein she engaged in dancing to his popular song and advised him to rest in a manner associated with immoral behavior. This disparity persists in relation to his sexual contact with Veronica and his perceptions of her family. Despite the dissolution of their romantic relationship, Webster believes that Veronica ultimately propositioned him for sexual intercourse. According to his recollection, this occurrence signified the initiation of the deterioration of their relationship. Veronica, conversely, may hold the belief that "following our intimate encounter, I terminated our relationship," and Webster possesses knowledge of this perspective. These conflicts suggest that Webster's recollection cannot be regarded as an unequivocal representation of "truth." It is conceivable that a self-serving hallucination may be the driving force behind someone's act of defaming Veronica if they do so with the intention of defending their morally acceptable position (Branje *et al.*, 2021).

The observed phenomenon of reality distortion seems to serve as a mechanism for Webster to alleviate himself from the accountability that he ought to assume. Through constructing a mental image of

Veronica as an uninteresting and self-absorbed individual who lacks the inclination to engage in dancing or flirtation, he can rationalize that she bears responsibility for the ultimate demise of their romantic relationship. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this does not imply Webster's purposeful intention to deceive the audience. It is possible that he is indulging in self-deception as a means of alleviating his own conscience. According to Carstens' definition of "fabulation," the mental state under consideration might fit this description. In this condition, individuals persuade themselves of a connection between elements that possess significant reality and those that exist solely in their imagination. Insight into the person's inconsistent memory patterns and the root cause of his ongoing dislike for Veronica may be provided by the cognitive change that was observed. By attributing all responsibility to Veronica, he can preserve a position of moral superiority (Carstens, 2020).

According to Branje *et al.* (2021), stories have the potential to exhibit different levels of certainty and objectivity, particularly in the context of focalization. This concept is highly applicable to the present work. The utilization of repetition serves to direct focus towards Webster's fragmented narrative and encourages readers to reflect upon the intricacies of memory. How much of one's memory is a true representation of their experiences, and how much of it is a story they make up to improve how they see themselves? This compels readers to comprehend the core meaning of the work, which posits that memory is susceptible to human fallibility and frequently veiled in ambiguity. Individuals often engage in the practice of modifying their narratives to align with their personal inclinations as a means of finding comfort in a past that is perceived as unchangeable. Therefore, the presence of contradictions in the recurrent scenes serves to emphasize the lack of reliability in Webster's narration and further accentuates the importance of the issue in the work (Nayebpour & Varghaiyan, 2021).

The book exhibits a recurring pattern of sentences and phrases that possess several interpretations. An exemplification that is readily observable pertains to the elucidation of the term "history." When prompted to provide a definition of history within an educational setting, Webster posits that history might be perceived as a narrative constructed by those who have emerged victorious, potentially implying a subjective and biased nature to historical accounts. The instructor further asserts that it represents the self-deception of those who have been defeated. In a subsequent chapter of the literary work, Webster, now in adulthood, sees Veronica and openly acknowledges his lingering resentment towards her stemming from their shared history. The individual acknowledges the possibility that they may have constructed narratives as a means of providing solace to themselves, enabling them to progress in their life and relinquish thoughts of the other person without experiencing remorse or guilt. Ultimately, the individual acknowledges that the interpretation of history, as comprehended by him, might be perceived as a mere manifestation of the subjective perspectives and biases of those who have experienced defeat in historical events. The viewpoint of the concept of "history" can also be extended to the notion of "memory." Through the utilization of "the self-delusion" as an illustrative instance derived from Webster's personal encounter, readers are made cognizant of the inherent fallibility and subjective interpretation associated with memory (Wei, 2023; Yanting, 2016).

In addition, the book delves into a mathematical philosophy that Webster and his associates formulated as a reaction to Robson's tragic act of taking his own life. The individuals had the belief that it was their moral obligation to sustain the population of the earth at a consistent magnitude. Nevertheless, Webster subsequently comes to the realization that Adrian was merely a manifestation of Robson, as he uncovers the distressing truth that the individual he held in high regard since his teenage years also took his own life upon learning of his wife's pregnancy. This realization makes him see each person involved in the disaster as a unique person with their own thoughts, feelings, and life experiences, all of which led to different ways of feeling guilty and sad for each of them. At first, Robson and his girlfriend were seen solely as abstract philosophical constructs; however, Webster now perceives them as entities that served the purpose of rescuing Robson and his girlfriend. This shift exemplifies the operational dynamics of "memory" in relation to the philosophical notion of existence. The current study shows a careful examination that gives a full understanding of the main issues in "The Sense of an Ending" that include memory, perception, self-deception, and the inherent unreliability of storytelling. The text emphasizes the complex way the novel uses repetition and narrative strategies to delve into these thematic elements.

### 3. Discussion

The character Adrian succinctly sums up a central theme in the work by saying, "History is the certainty that arises when the flaws of memory intersect with the limitations of documentation," which emphasizes the inherent unreliability of subjective storytelling. This statement underscores the notion that our understanding of "history" is frequently a combination of romanticized memories and verifiable accounts. Differentiating between these factors can present a challenge due to the unattractiveness of the past and the limited availability of tangible proof (Booth, 2013; Leskelä-Kärki, 2018).

The common belief is that everyone has a different view on the same events, which makes the idea of genuine impartiality hard to pin down. This viewpoint is consistent with Carstens' (2020) claim that individual's subjective memories and prejudices have an impact on history. This idea says that historical stories can be affected by the memory and point of view of the person telling them. This means that the historical record can be subjective and can be skewed. The utilization of the humorous remark "there is unrest," which is reiterated both at the commencement and the culmination of the literary work, functions as a shrewd narrative mechanism (Saeid, 2022). The recurrent utilization of this phrase succinctly encapsulates intricate historical occurrences inside a solitary term, emphasizing the underlying subjectivity and ambiguity that pervade historical narratives. This phenomenon facilitates individual interpretation and emphasizes the notion that history is not a static and unbiased fact but rather a multifaceted interplay of various viewpoints and memories (Webster, 2019).

The recurring use of the term "unrest" throughout the text functions as a thematic motif, representing preoccupation, misinterpretation, and the repercussions of calamitous results. This proposition posits that historical occurrences frequently exhibit upheaval and disharmony and that our comprehension of them is influenced by our individual biases and perceptions. In essence, the novel employs Adrian's quotation and the repeated jest over "unrest" to underscore the inherent limitations of first-person narration and the subjective character of historical narratives (Yanting, 2016). The text promotes an inclination among readers to scrutinize the dependability of memory and the impartiality of historical accounts, ultimately emphasizing the intricate and uncertain nature of the past.

### 4. Conclusion

The goal of this study was to show how unreliable human memory is by looking at the taxonomic makeup of the repetitions found in "The Sense of an Ending." The repetitions were put into three separate groups: events happening again, scenes looking a lot alike but with important differences, and lines being repeated in ways that can mean different things. For this purpose, each occurrence serves as an example of how complicated and multifaceted human emotions are, including acting on impulse and then feeling bad about it. These emotional experiences defy easy classification under larger philosophical frameworks. Additionally, they underscore the subjective nature and inherent flaws present in both memory and history.

The skilled implementation of repetition by the author, coupled with their adept utilization of the "wisdom of ambiguity," contributes to the narrative's enhanced depth. The presence of ambiguity within the text provides readers with the opportunity to actively employ their imagination and personal interpretation, reflecting the depiction of memory as presented in the book. Although the narrative does not overtly embody romantic or heroic themes, it effectively encapsulates the ubiquitous human phenomena of obsession and bewilderment.

"The Sense of an Ending" employs repetition as a literary device to examine the constraints inherent in the realms of memory and history. The text encourages readers to engage in contemplation regarding the intricate nature of human emotions and the difficulties associated with precisely documenting and comprehending historical events. The novel's popularity stems from its capacity to evoke a sense of resonance with the reader's personal encounters with memory and the inherent unpredictability of life's

narratives.

## 5. Declarations

**5.1 Conflict of Interests:** The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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