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**SYMBOLISM 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 Overs* (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 letters* 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 letters 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

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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 symbolism in Barnes' five novels :- Talking it Over, The Porcupine, England England, Love, etc. Arthur & George

#### SYMBOLISM IN THE NOVEL TALKING IT OVER (1991)

Talking It Over is novel novel written in dramatic form using the monologues of the three major characters. These characters including Stuart, Oliver and Gillian have symbolic significance in the novel, Stuart is a straight forward, educated baker fails in love with Gillian an attractive woman. They spend their premarriage and post-marriage life satisfactorily. There is no uncommon event takes in their life as Stuart has not been romantic and a consisten womanizer. Oliver, on the other hand, Stuart's best friend enters in their lives, makes diehard efforts and takes away Gillian from Stuart.

In this way, Stuart becomes a symbol of defeated and wounded husband who is ashamed of facing the world. He is aware of Oliver's spying on them but helplessly he bears him for his wife. The divorce from Gillian makes him obsessed and he starts spying them. In this way, Stuart is also a symbol of frustration. He is conscious that the world may question his masculinity and sexual potential. His visits to the brothels for sex are symbolically not for pleasure but himself that he has the sexual potential to satisfy a woman.

Oliver who tries to tempt Gillian who is wife of his best friend is a symbol of betrayer. He breaks the norms and bonds of friendship and gatecrashes in the life of Gillian who does her job by staying at home. Intentionally, he spies the couple and senses the vacuum in their life. He makes consistent calls to Gillian in Stuart's absence. Not only this, he also visits her consistently. At last he wins her from Stuart.

Oliver is known for his ability to win the hearts of girls since his adolescence. Stuart is less attractive and less popular among the girls. Oliver can not believe and accept that Gillian has preferred to settle with Stuart. He is jealous of him. He becomes the symbol of jealousy. It is due to his obsession to pull away Gillian from Stuart's life, Oliver makes consistent calls and visits Gillian. His ego gets hurt when Stuart is chosen as the husband. Due to this, Oliver takes revenge upon Stuart, it is only to satisfy his own ego. In this way Oliver is the symbol of betrayal, jealousy, ego and revenge.

Gillian is the source of splitting the emotional worlds of her two lovers Stuart and Oliver. She is aware and practical enough to choose Stuart instead of Oliver. Like any ordinary woman, she expects a pleasant, happy and romantic married life without the financial tensions. Stuart is financially stable while Oliver is an unsuccessful teacher of English to foreign students. Their married life is peaceful and satisfactory until Oliver enters in their life. It is Gillian who neither opposes nor curses Oliver for his phone calls and visits in the absentia of Stuart. She indirectly encourages Oliver for this affair. In other words, she intentionally hides Oliver's activities from Stuart. Their affair flourishes immediately. Gillian is a symbol of infidelity. Interestingly, she says that she loves Stuart as well as Oliver. It is a sign of her dual nature to defend her immorality. By keeping relation with Oliver she betrays a caring and loving husband who loves her, even though he is aware of her affair with Oliver, Gillian is also a symbol of betrayer.

After divorcing Stuart and getting married to Oliver, Gillian and Oliver expect Stuart to remain their friend. It is a sign of their selfishness and it also denotes that they want Stuart to burn until they are together. They decide to settle in a village in France, this decision is a symbol of their excuse to hide their acts of immorality and betrayal. Their consciences do not forgive them, that is why they decide to alienate from their past and to cover their past they settle in France.

The title of the novel, Talking It Over, has also symbolic value. The novel has been written in the form of dialogues of the three major characters Stuart, Oliver and Gillian. They confess their past and present and bring the inner as well as outer conflicts to the surface level. They are seen delivering monologues without the physical presence of the other characters like a theatre play. But the novelist has woven their monologues harmoniously to incorporate the important events and themes. Talking It Over means the outer as well as inner talk of the characters and through these talks the story and conflicts are revealed systematically.

#### SYMBOLISIM IN THE NOVEL THE PORCUPINE (1992)

The Porcupine is novel in which the characters, events and objects are symbolic. The novel set in one of the unknown countries in Eastern Europe. Most probably Bulgaria is the country where the trial of its longest serving dictator takes place. Stoyo Petkanov stands for Zhivkov the dictator who ruled the country

for thirty five years. Zhivkov was the leader of the communist party similarly Petkanov is also the leader of the communist party and serves the country as the Head of state for thirty three years. Ludmilla Zhivkov, a politburo member, a thirty nine year old daughter of Zhivkov, who was suspected of being a political opponent, died mysteriously in 1981 from a brain haemorrhage. Petkanov has also a daughter, Anna Petkanov, Minister of culture, dies of a heart attack on 23 April 1972 despite her good health. Zhivkov is accused of the charges like deception involving documents, abuse of authority and mismanagement. Petkanov has also been accused of the similar charges. Stoyo Petkanov also symbolizes the evil force stick to the power. He is also the symbol of greed of the power. Petkanov represents the socialism which is a system of rigid and permanent principles.

Peter Solinsky is the representative of liberal views. It is Solinsky who risks his own life to take an initiative to try Petkanov. He is the prosecutor who faces the shrewd defense of Petkanov. Solinsky stands for justice and truth. The group of protesters Devinsky Commando symbolizes a reaction against the exploitation. The protests are ironic in the novel the Devinsky Commando is a powerful force, it is symbolically a subtle weapon against totalitarianism. The officer who was ordered to disperse, the demonstration ends up being kissed by a student, and thus becomes a symbol of the revolution without quite understanding his own motives.

The slogans used by the protesters have also symbolic value. In a state where anarchy and exploitation have almost become the routine elements of the system, the slogans, though ironic in their form, express the weakpoints and drawbacks of the system. They also denote that life cannot be run by learning only ideology but it needs the essential commodities like food, shelter, clothing, health and education. The young pioneers chant the slogans like "THANK YOU FOR THE PRICE RISES. THANK YOU FOR THE FOOD SHORTAGES. GIVE US IDEOLOGY NOT BREAD" (46). It is clear that the tone of the slogans is ironic, they symbolize the demands of the masses at the same time they point out the shortcomings of the government. The slogans like 'GIVE US IDEOLOGY NOT BREAD', and 'GIVE US CONVICTIONS NOT JUSTICE' (127) also symbolize what the policies of the government are. It is apparent that the peace-loving harmless protesters are convicted for raising their voices against the mismanagement and injustice. In any totalitarian country, the voice of the opponent is always suppressed in order to take hold of the system.

The trial of the dictator, Stoyo Petkanov, has symbolic significance. Generally, in country where the power is centred around a single person, he is always afraid of everyone in the country. To stick to the power, he commits some serious crimes like kidnapping, murdering, torturing, bribing his opponents. For that corruption becomes an inevitable weapon and the whole system is influenced by the corruption. As a result, the dictator is forced to join hands with the underworld, black marketers, smugglers, and pimps. In this way, he is able to rule the state for a long time. Petkanov of *The Porcupine* is a dictator of this kind. The trial of Petkanov means the end of his era full of mismanagement and wrongdoing. It is symbolically the rise of new era which brings rays of hope in the lives of thousands of people. The trial means bringing the truth to the surface level as the rule of Petkanov is full of lies and the distortion of truth.

The trial is dual battle between two forces, evil and good. Petkanov represents the evil force which is full of crimes, lies, corruption and blunders on the other hand Peter Solinsky, the prosecutor, represents justice, truth, hope, optimism and revolution. The trial is no less than a frontier war, it is the war of two forces fought in a court which decides the destiny of the people. The trial ends the long pending mystery of the dictator and there is a democracy which is a system of the people, for the people and by the people.

The result of the trial is also symbolic, the dictator who once ruled the state is given severe punishment like any ordinary man. This gives a message that justice you get though late.

The title of the novel has also symbolic significance. *The Porcupine* of the title is Petkanov who defends himself against his opponent Solinsky who has wear porcupine gloves. A porcupine is 91 species that has thorny shield to protect itself from the other harmful species. It is always dangerous for more powerful animals to attack porcupine. In the novel, Petkanov has a shield of the system which he uses to defend himself. He won't allow his opponents to get rid of him very easily until Peter Solinsky dares to face him.

#### SYMBOLISM IN THE NOVEL ENGLAND, ENGLAND (1998)

In this novel also, the symbols have been incorporated in the form of objects, characters and events. The title of the novel has a symbolic significance. The novel raises some issues regarding the patriotism of the present generation of England. For the contemporary generation, many important historical events, objects and personalities are quite a few pages described methodically in the history books. There is hardly any attachment of this generation to the historical past. Mr. Barnes has introduced a theme, Englishness, in this novel in order to bring to the notice of the young generation where they are

moving and what they are losing. The repetition of the word England is symbolically an honest cry to emphasise the significance of a country that has a glorious past, a country that led almost three fourth of the world for few centuries.

There is the largest part, England, England in the novel. This part describes the youth of Martha, the protagonist as well as the theme park called England, England on an island. This theme park is a reflection of the mentality of the present generation. There are the replicas of history sites and objects. It becomes a popular tourist destination where thousands of tourist visit. Ironically, the flow of the tourists is much less to the original and real destinations as compared to England, England.

The term England, England have been used by some writers and poets previously in their works. William Ernest Henley included the term in his poem 'Pro Rege Nostro', while D.H. Lawrence used the term in his short-story 'England, my England'. Then a scotting writer A.G. MacDonell used a comic and sparkling tone in his novel England, their England. George Orwell wrote an essay entitled 'England, Your England'. In this way, before Mr. Barnes many people have tried to use terms similar to the title.

The replicas in Island Project have also the symbolic significance. The Isle of Wight where the project takes place is one of the first places in Great Britain to be perverted by becoming a tourist destination. It has a superb stretch of flat downland which the developers think to be converted as an airport.

The replicas on an island symbolically mean the journey of the present world towards artificiality. In the artificial England, England, all unflattering traits of Englishness are discarded, and all the major historical figures and episodes are ridiculed. In this way, the present generation's life style is a mockery of the life style of the past generation. The life of the past generation in the form of memory and history. In this way, the replicas become the symbols of memory and history.

A Wessex village called Anglia where the third part takes place symbolizes life of the pre-industrial, agricultural and pre-technology England. It represents utopia as retrotopia, in other words it is a nostalgic recreation of a pre-industrial world. This place is away from the conflicts and tensions of the present world. It is a kind of paradise full of natural extravaganza and beauty.

The characters in the novel can also be analysed from symbolic point of view. Martha's life is portrayed in the novel. Martha symbolizes an ordinary person whose story of life goes in comparison with the satirical public story of Sir Jack's megalomaniac venture. She is supposed to represent simplicity, honesty and truth. The story of Martha's life witnesses the developments outside. It is narrated covering her teenage, youth and old age to highlight the present world.

Sir Jack Pitman is portrayed as Rupert Murdoch or Robert Maxwell, the media tycoons of the 20th century. The surname of Sir Jack Pitman suggests Englishness and Britain's decrepit mining industry. Sir Jack is a practical person who only thinks from business point of view. According to him the past be sold to other nations as their future very shrewdly, he creates the theme park on an island where he makes the replicas of the historical elements. This make believe world becomes a popular tourist spot.

Dr. Max is symbolical the brain behind the idea of the theme park where history is altered. The actors are hired to represent historical or mythical figures on the Isle of Wight. They are never known by their names but always by those of their roles. Thus these actors have fictional and real identities. For instance, the authentic king of the United Kingdom believes he is meeting the real Queen Victoria even though she is a fake one.

Symbolism in the Novel Love, etc (2001)

Love, etc has also the symbols in the form of its characters, objects and events. Interestingly, Love, etc is a sequel of Julian Barnes's earlier novel Talking It Over, so the characterization in this novel is similar to the earlier novel. Stuart, Oliver, Gillian, Ellie and Mme Wyt have the symbolic significance in the novel. Stuart plays a role of husband and ex. Husband of Gillian in Talking It Over. After the divorce, he goes to USA to check his luck. After earning enough amount of money, he returns back to London. He is still obsessively in love with Gillian. As a man having masculine mentality, Stuart can not bear the fact that he has been betrayed by his best friend and wife. He is jealous of Oliver for being being stolen his lovely wife. He envies Oliver because Oliver has not been successful in his professional life. How can an unsuccessful steal away the wife of a successful man? In this way, Stuart becomes the symbol of jealousy and envy.

Oliver is aware of his guilt; but his failure in his profession makes him frustrated and suspicious. Stuart's return makes him restless, he starts playing the role of Stuart of Talking It Over. He is also jealous of Stuart for being successful in his professional life. In short, Oliver is the symbol of jealousy and frustration. On the other hand, he is, sunk in the love for Gillian. His obsession for Gillian is not reduced; it can be seen in his attempts to spy Stuart and Gillian. Oliver stands for an obsessive lover.

Gillian tries to remain faithful to Oliver after committing serious crimes like adultery in her earlier life. But she can not totally deny her past and attachment to Stuart. Stuart's return creates some shivers in her personal as well as family life. She is a mother of two daughters. She doesn't want to reveal her past to her daughters. It means she is acting very carefully and honestly to protect her second marriage. Gillian of

Love, etc, symbolically, is more matured, pragmatic and caring as compared Gillian of Talking It Over in which she bold, spontaneous and careless.

There are quite a few objects that can be interpreted from symbolic point of view in Love, etc. France where Gillian and Oliver decide to settle after getting married is a symbol of new life and new ideology which gives importance to values. America where Stuart goes to try his luck is symbolically a dream unfulfilled for everyone. It is a land of assurance, optimism and freedom. America is also considered as a melting pot in which people of different origins, cultures, nations and languages may find some space.

The title, Love, etc, is symbolic as the story of the novel moves around the theme of love. The major characters Stuart, Oliver and Gillian are seen vying for love. To achieve true love, they are seen to make adjustments and compromises in their personal as well as professional lives. The suffix 'etc' is used to describe more than one element, but the little is deviant and foregrounded. Love is the unique term but there are various types of love interpreted in the novel. For that, probably, the suffix 'etc' is attached to the title.

Some of the events have symbolic significance in the novel. Stuart's American life for ten years is meant to earn money but in reality it is an escape to run away from his failed married life. He tries to settle in America by marrying an American girl but the marriage lasts for five years. It may be seen as a consequence of his obsession for retrieving Gillian's love. Symbolically, he returns to London as a man having sufficient wealth but the real motto is to reenter in the lives of Gillian and Oliver. Gillian becomes cautious after Stuart's arrival from America. She is a mother of two daughters, she likes to protect them. In order to drive away Stuart's attention, she makes efforts so that Ellie, her assistant, and Stuart get marry.

Symbolism in the Novel Arthur & George (1989)

Arthur & George is a novel based on a real life historical event and real life characters; there are the symbols in the form of characters, objects and events in the novel. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is the protagonist of the novel; he plays the real life role. He has become world famous due to his creation of the world famous detective Sherlock Holmes, undoubtedly the greatest protagonist of his thrillers. In Arthur & George, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle plays Sherlock Holmes to investigate the mystery of the George Edalji case. He is assisted by Woods who plays the role of Dr. Watson, an assistant to Sherlock Holmes. George Edalji is an innocent and straightforward solicitor; but he has been convicted on the charges of horse mutilation. He stands for innocence and suffering. Shapurji, father of Edalji, has been vicar after converting to Christianity. As a true Christian, he serves the old and the sick people. Shapurji is the symbol of compassion and humanity.

Jean Leckie patiently waits for Arthur, although she knows that he also can not live without her. Jean stands for love, loyalty, patience and sacrifice, in the novel.

There are few events that too have some symbolic significance. The novel begins with the story of Arthur and the child mentioned in the story sees the scene of a corpse. The event symbolizes the child and he become the creator of the world famous detective Sherlock Holmes. On the other hand, as a child, George Edalji doesn't have a memory like Arthur to remember; he turns out to be a simple straightforward person. The family of George has been sent anonymous letters using venomous language, symbolically; it means the torture of the family.

The title of the novel, Arthur & George, symbolizes the real life stories of the two famous and less famous persons. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle becomes the mentor and plays a real life knight to fight injustice. George who becomes a solicitor has to suffer due to some of the asocial elements who do not want harmony in the society.

#### CONCLUSION :

Thus, In the novel Talking It Over, money becomes a symbol as Stuart uses it repeatedly. Similarly, the credit card becomes the symbol of modern means of trading or using currency. In the novel The Porcupine, Julian Barnes uses the word 'fuck' to symbolise manliness. In the novel of England, England, The Isle of Wight has theme park. It becomes the symbol of England. In the novel Love, etc., the 'Credit Card' becomes the symbol of American society and the Hare and the Tortoise are used as symbols to explain different realism. In the novel Arthur & George, the central symbol is the symbol of the door in the beginning of the novel. The door represents the opening of the novel.

The novels of Mr. Barnes have been given symbolic titles to signify the themes in his novels. England, England for instance signifies the replica of Englishness on an island to mock England in reality. A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters and Talking It Over also symbolic titles, as they denote the content in the story.

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