

## The Sense of Feminism in Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending*

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### Abstract

This paper aims at investigating Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending* as a feminist novel by proving that Julian Barnes has surrounded his female characters with traits such as persistence, decisiveness, consultancy and intelligence. These traits help promote the female characters as more powerful and independent than the male figures, namely two characters of Veronica Ford and Margaret. In order to achieve the research objective. The theory of feminism is used as an analytical framework to demonstrate that the females in this novel are developed within these traits into different new constructions that represent the twentieth century women. On the other hand, the male characters are shown to be weak and hesitant lacking reasoning, judgments and power of the females who have the determination and ability to change and lead the males. The paper considers how a feminist novel constructs an alternative version of reality and what features a woman should have to be feminist.

Key terms: *The Sense of an Ending*, feminism, independence, female dominance, decisiveness, good consultancy, persistence

### الملخص باللغة العربية

يهدف هذه البحث إلى تسليط الضوء على رواية جوليان بارنز "الإحساس بالنهاية" كرواية "نسوية" وكيف أن جوليان بارنز زود الشخصيات النسوية في الرواية ببعض السمات مثل المثابرة والقدرة على اتخاذ الرأي والحكمة والفهم والادراك من أجل رفع مستوى هذه الشخصيات النسوية لتكون أكثر قوة واستقلالية من الشخصيات الذكورية، وتم الاستشهاد بشخصيتين: فيرونیکا فورد ومارجريت وذلك باستخدام النظرية "النسوية" لإثبات أن هذه الشخصيات النسوية ذو طبيعة متغيرة وديناميكية وتتغير ضمن هذه السمات إلى صور جديدة مختلفة ميزت المرأة في القرن العشرين. وبالمقابل تظهر الشخصيات الذكورية ضعيفة ومتردة وتفقر إلى الإحساس بالأفكار والأحكام وقوة الإناث اللواتي لديهن العزم والقدرة على التغيير

والقيادة. يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على إمكانية تصوير الرواية النوية للواقع وماهي السمات التي يجب أن تتحلى بها المرأة لكي تكون مميزة تحت مظلة هذه النظرية النسوية.

## Introduction

Feminism is a theory of literary criticism in which the author invests how the female characters are questing for self-independence, which leads to a traditional conflict with male-dominance thoughts. This leads to radical changes for females in different fields of life as the female characters rebel against the traditional role of feminine conformance. The female characters are now provided with the ability to stand up for their rights, express their opinions freely and strive to be dominant figures in their society. They become important pillars in shaping not only an identity of themselves but for the whole society. Rosenstand (2006:566) states that "*Women and men should have equal opportunities, that women should not be discriminated against based on their gender, and that women and men should get equal pay for equal work.*" Thus, feminism and individualism become inseparable parts of their personality. Edgar and Sedgwick (2008:124) believe that "*the core of feminism is the belief that women are subordinated to men [...] Feminism seeks to liberate women from this subordination and to reconstruct society in such a way that patriarchy is eliminated and a culture created that is fully inclusive of women's desires and purposes.*"

Feminism meant that women and their contributions in any social domain should be taken into consideration. It is a kind of philosophy which demonstrates that women have the right to share in the development of their societies and that there must not be any boundaries in the way of women's contribution.

Feminism is a common approach which focuses on the study of women's situation in literary works. It traces their endless sufferings and endeavours to change their attitudes in life especially in a world which is mostly dominated by males. This approach foregrounds the inequality between men and women in the social, political and economic domains. As Freedman (2004:24) states, "*feminism is a social movement that tried to achieve political equality between women and men, with the understanding that gender always intersects with other social hierarchies*".

Thus, the favoring of males over the females is no more viable under the umbrella of feminism. Women are now more thoughtful and deep than men. They have these potential traits which come from self-independence and power to engrave their identity and function in their society. The women's role is effective and heroic while males are linked with trivial ideas. Simon de Beauvoir (1949:23) states "*women are females in the human species; today, as in the past, they make up about half of humanity; and yet we are told that 'femininity is in jeopardy'; we are urged, 'Be women, stay women, become women.'*"... "*She must take part in this mysterious and endangered reality known as femininity.*"

This paper focuses on the female characters in Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending* and how the novelist portrays women within their society, and their condition, role and place using feminist literary criticism. The characteristics of female characters such as persistence, decisiveness, consultancy and intelligence are discussed. Consequently, this paper investigates many related issues such as feminism, how Julian Barnes employs the feminist qualities in his characters, and how the female characters react to these feminist qualities.

Julian Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending* is a distinguished literary work about a man reconciling with his fluctuating past. Tony Webster is the protagonist and the main narrator decides to settle down away from any emotional commotion. But he cannot as the feminist waves stand against his stability. Barnes employs strong female characters who become the most dominants in the novel. The female characters swap away the male influence and they become the most powerful figures in the world of men.

Tony Webster wants to stay in peace in his sixties away from any influence of female characters. Tony says:

*"I had abandoned the ambitions I had entertained. I had wanted life not to bother me too much, and had succeeded".* (Barnes: 49) He adds *"And that's a life, isn't it? Some achievements and some disappointments. It's been interesting to me, though I wouldn't complain or be amazed if others found it less so."*

(Barnes: 45:55)

He is retired now and feels comfortable and satisfied with his present life. However, his past life is now carried on into his present. He is interrupted by a paper from a solicitor informing him that he gets a bequest from Sarah Ford, the mother of his ex-girlfriend Veronica. Consequently, he is driven into his past and unfolds his relationship with Veronica who left him and married his friend, Adrian. This transition to the past shocks Tony with some unexpected memories of depressions and frustrations, and Tony discovers that he has been an easy prey for females.

Barnes employs Veronica and Margret as strong female characters with personal talents to retain their femininity easily while the male characters such as Tony and Adrian are presented as weak figures as they can do nothing without the females.

The novel is divided into two parts and each part is mostly dominated by the influence of females. When Tony reaches his sixties, he thinks that he is secured but he does not expect that the feminist power will track him even in the last part of his life. The males live peace but for a short temporary period since the females are empowered with unavoidable sharp weapons.

Julian Barnes is interested in the ideas of feminism and he introduces it very skillfully. He opens his novel with only male characters at school. He presents them with strong ideas as they are discussing interesting topics of highly importance such as philosophy and history. The readers expect that the boys are mature enough and they will defeat their future life easily. For Instance, Tony describes Adrian by saying:

*"The masters were more interested in him than we were. They had to work out his intelligence and sense of discipline, calculate how well he'd previously been taught, and if he might prove "scholarship material"* (Barnes: 5)

The boys are introduced with strong qualities that dominate the whole scenes in the beginning. However, this tone of dominance soon changes as soon as the female characters are coming to the scene.

When Tony and his friends discuss the term history at school, they neglect the influence of females in their lives. However, later they realize that the female is an important part of their history and life. The females become the history itself. Tony recalls his history to check whether what individual thinks of his history is true or *"isn't something I actually saw, but what you end up remembering isn't always the same as what you have witnessed."*

(Barnes: 4)

In his past life, Tony was psychologically affected by females and consequently such effect shocked him as if he was driven into comma, and he could not believe what happened to him. This is why he tries to neglect them thinking that he could easily live without its negative effect. However, when he reaches his sixties, he is unexpectedly driven into his past, and then he tries to let his past follies and frustrations out in order to create a normal balanced identity he can live with.

When they discussed why their classmate Robson committed suicide, they didn't realize that the main reason behind that was the female's negative influence on Robson. Ironically, Tony describes himself with his friends as "pretentious" and their master tells them that "*Historians are always been faced with the lack of direct evidence for things. That's what they're used to*" (Barnes: 18)

Adrian who fascinates everybody with his intelligence replies, "*History is that certainty produced at the point where the imperfections of memory meet the inadequacies of documentations.*" (Barnes: 56)

In other words, Barnes wants to demonstrate that humans' past cannot be real because of the difficulty in accumulating evidence. Tony tries to apply this definition but he fails due to the presence of females in his wagon of life. He fails and he is acknowledged later in his life by his mistakes and he loses his balance as he causes agony in others' life. His life and the belief of himself turns out to be deceitful.

Although Tony is the main character, his role becomes passive compared Veronica or Margaret. For instance, Veronica turns to be a complicated woman whose character Tony is not able to grasp. He is absorbed and astonished that his intelligence is not working now as he is absorbed within Veronica's personal grid. He fails to understand the nature of her personality as she emerges to be far away from his understanding. When they live together, she is the only one who has the right to decide, while Tony only has to wait. She is stronger than him, and Tony cannot stand against her mysterious and strong waves of supremacy. Her presence adds to the weakness of Tony.

Later she decides to leave Tony as she tells him that he is weak, and then she marries Adrian. So even Adrian with his supremacy among the others fails with Veronica as he resorts to killing himself after being confused about how to deal with his new life.

Earlier, during Tony's visit to Veronica's family, Veronica's mother Sarah Ford tries to have an emotional opportunity with him but he cannot understand. Sarah notices that Tony is weak, and she is now afraid that her daughter Veronica will destroy him. So she warns him against Veronica. This is why Tony feels unpleasant because he cannot believe that he is such a weak person.

Feminist theory is used here to show Barnes' representation of female figures and how they are characterized as more dominant than the males. He gives woman the whole power as he enthrone men from their traditional control over the female characters. In Barnes' philosophy, the male characters suffer and struggle to find a place for them in the world of women. The male characters are marginalized since they turn to be dolls for women. In this sense, Edgar & Sedgwick (2008:124) believe that "*the core of feminism is the belief that women are subordinated to men [...] Feminism seeks to liberate women from this subordination and to reconstruct society in such a way that patriarchy is eliminated and a culture created that is fully inclusive of women's desires and purposes*"

Due to the strong and mysterious character of Veronica, her relationship with Tony is accompanied with a sense of lowliness from Tony. Veronica thinks that Tony is cool and cowardly as he does not want to face the life reality. So they break up, and then Veronica and Adrian fall in love with each other. Consequently, Tony feels angry and writes a letter full of vicious moral impulses:

*"Dear Adrian-or rather, Dear Adrian and Veronica (hello, Bitch, and welcome to this letter), Well you certainly deserve one another and I wish you much joy. I hope you get so involved that the mutual damage will be permanent. I hope you regret the day I introduced you. And I hope that when you break up, as you inevitably will – I give you six months, which your shared pride will extend to a year, all the better for fucking you up, says I – you are left with a lifetime of bitterness that will poison your subsequent relationships. Part of me hopes you'll have a child, because I'm a great believer in time's revenge, yea unto the next generation and the next"* (Barnes: 89)

The above letter shows that feminism is a sharp weapon which suppresses the male characters. Tony writes this letter which is full of redundant abusive language. It shows that Tony is hurt, and Veronica's behavior lets him discover how weak he is, and this is why he cannot believe that Veronica will leave him. Because of the deep agony, Tony warns his friend Adrian against Veronica. He also asks him to consult her mother, but he does not realize that he is sending Adrian another dangerous ambush which later becomes another reason behind Adrian's suicide:

*“Adrian: you already know she’s a cockteaser, of course – though I expect you told yourself she was engaged in a Struggle with Her Principles, which you as a philosopher would employ your grey cells to help her overcome. If she hasn’t let you Go All The Way yet, I suggest you break up with her, and she’ll be round your place with sodden knickers and a three-pack, eager to give it away. But cockteasing is also a metaphor: she is someone who will manipulate your inner self while holding hers back from you. I leave a precise diagnosis to the headshrinkers – which might vary according to the day of the week – and merely note her inability to imagine anyone else’s feelings or emotional life. Even her own mother warned me against her. If I were you, I’d check things out with Mum – ask her about damage a long way back. Of course, you’ll have to do this behind Veronica’s back, because boy is that girl a control freak.”*

*(Barnes: 90)*

In this paper, we try to show how Julian Barnes used this theory of feminism to represent women with strong traits such as independence, power, thoughts, and freedom. Meanwhile, Barnes dethrones the male characters from such qualities. Then, the women have the advantages of being more powerful, independent, thoughtful, and free than the males. They become recognizable members of their society. In this regard, Linda Gorden (2002:6) states that feminism means endowing women with the power and freedom to establish their own existence in the world of men. The control of men should be stopped by the strength of females. Moreover Gundy (2017:1) writes: *“feminist theory is a broad, generalized system of ideas about society; social life, and humanity that was developed from the standpoint of women. It focus on the social, emotional, biological, and psychological experiences of women and society and is female-centered in three primary ways: its investigation starts with the experiences of women in society, women are the central focus of the theory, and it is critical to producing a better world for women”*

When Tony reaches his sixties, he realizes the strong impact of feminism in his life. He gets his letter written to Adrian and cannot believe that he is the real writer as it is full of such malicious content. Veronica's behavior drives Tony to the unknown which shocks his memory. Before getting that letter, he believes that his past is full of innocence, but soon realizes that his letter to Adrian is the real reason behind Adrian and Sarah's suicide.

Tony decides to marry Margaret and he thinks that by marrying Margaret he will find peace. On the contrary, Margaret is embodied as more intelligent and powerful than Tony. Similarly, Tony fails with her, and she decides to leave him and marry someone else. However, even after divorce, Tony cannot live without Margaret. He becomes dependent on her as he always consults her regarding anything related to his life matters. Margaret is reflected as a strong character with balanced judgments.

Julian Barnes is interested in granting the female characters with more authority. On the other hand, the males are presented as weak figures with hesitant ideas. The novel is full of many examples where the females utilise this aspect of authority as they are always seeking self-realisation and independence. For instance, Veronica and Margaret rebel against the weak attitudes of the male characters. Their behavior constantly reflects their strong

presence and resolution in struggling for self-independence. Consequently, within this powerful presence of females the men are crushed and cannot be trusted.

The main narrator is Tony who suffers from the impact influence of feminists. He becomes an unreliable narrator as he cannot grasp his ideas fully to interpret what happens. *The Sense of an Ending* is a true evidence and an important formula for self-deception, and history is imperfect because it is misinterpreted. Unfortunately, Adrian's definition for history is understood by Tony lately now, "*History is that certainty... documentation.*" (Barnes: 17) Because of the tremendous effect of the female figures on Tony's life, he is not confident now of what history means.

Finally, the domain of feminism in *The Sense of an Ending* is new and has not studies before. It is a new aspect in which Julian Barnes has presented how women start to control over the world of men. Now men are in the real struggle to accept this harsh reality because it turns to be difficult to find a place for them in the world of women. The female characters become a true reflection of the new independent women who are holding for the spirit of strength and freedom. They are shown as tenacious creatures who are always digging for their happiness and stability. They are not only looking for equal and fair treatment in their society but for more power and independence over the authority of men. In other words, they portray feminism through their quest for opportunity by developing themselves in the way they like.

### **Literature Review**

*The Sense of an Ending* is a novel written by Julian Barnes which touches many universal topics such as time, gender, sex, and feminism. The concept of females where the power of females over the males is the most fundamental theme in the novel which is worth discussing. While reading the novel, the readers get the impression that Barnes is very anxious to employ the female characters as predominant over the males. He has manifested his novel as a rich text which highlights many different issues.

*The Sense of an Ending* is the eleventh novel of Julian Barnes in which he retells his past in his own ordinary way but he does not expect that his coming to the past will meet an unexpected explosion full of many unpredicted events. Hossein Aliakbari et al (2019:272) write "*The Sense of an Ending, which is divided into two parts, portrays a man in his sixties who is remembering or rather, constructing memories from his youth in the first part, and deconstructing the very same memories in the second part.*" The novel particularly underlines how our memories can be misleading and thus creates false images of ourselves as well as of the people around us. As far as memory is concerned in the realm of narrative, Chen, Bo (2018) believes that "*with episodic memory as both the form and content of its narrative, Julian Barnes's The Sense of an Ending displays the dynamics of memory process through a heterogeneous repetition in narration*"

Moreover, Booth (2013) notices that in *The Sense of an Ending*, Barnes has revealed the importance of memory to history, "*Memory has emerged as a key concept in history. It is not an objective, static record to be called. It is always fragmentary and provisional, dynamic and ongoing*" And this is why Barnes finds it difficult to come with the past as he says, "*We thought we were being mature when we were only being safe. We imagined we were being responsible but were only being cowardly. What we called realism turned out to be a way of avoiding things rather than facing them.*" (Barnes: 87)

The novel published in 2007 and it has a great influence on the modern world society. It represents a new image of woman's position in society as she becomes the main axis in the whole narration. She becomes the dominant part of the past, present and future.

In PenguinRandomhouse (2012) it is written that *The Sense of an Ending* touches analytical depth and has "the psychological and emotional depth and sophistication of Henry James at his best, and is stunning achievement in Julian Barnes' oeuvre."

Amit Charles (2018) writes: "*The Sense of an Ending* follows a sexagenarian man as he contends with a past he never much thought about- until his closest childhood friend return with a vengeance, one of them from the grave, another maddeningly present." Moreover, *The Sense of an Ending* is different from other novels, as Amit Charles says: "It is absorbing and makes the reader think. Unlike other memoirs or novels based on nostalgia."

On the other hand, U.R. Bowie (2017), author of Gogol's Head: *The Misadventure of a Purloined Skull* writes that the novel has a brilliant composed, "as a melodrama, however, I suppose that all of this stuff works. Furthermore, given that the novel is so well composed, I suppose that these melodramatic effects were what the author was working toward all along."

Bowie adds, "I don't think I've ever read a book with so many good suggestions for its title in the text of the narrative. *The Sense of an Ending* is teeming with good titles."

Julian Barnes uses the female character as dominant weapons against the males. In this regard, Jeff Turrentine (2012) writes, "With his characteristic grace and skill, Barnes manages to turn this cat-and-mouse game into something genuinely suspenseful, as Veronica reveals just enough information to make Tony desperate for more. A single page from the diary, which suggests as highly unusual suicide note structured along the lines of Wittgenstein's "Tractatus Logico-philosophicus" is all Veronica will allow him to see."

With his masterpiece *The Sense of an Ending*, Julian Barnes has successfully climbed the ladder of being different and distinguished. Liesel Schillinger (2011) writes that Barnes takes a brave author to mine this dynamic for pathos instead of sniggers. Evelyn Waugh did it in "Brideshead Revisted", as did Philip Larkin in "Jill."... And Kazuo Ishinguro did it in "The Remains of the Day"...Now with his powerfully compact new novel, "*The Sense of an Ending*" which has just won the 2011 Booker Prize-Julian Barnes takes his place among the subtly assertive practitioners of this quiet art."

Liesel Schillinger(2011) adds that, "*The Sense of an Ending*", is a short book but not a slight one. In it, Julian Barnes reveals crystalline truths that have taken a lifetime to harden. He has bored their edges, and polished them to a high gleam."

Regarding these differences and oddness, Greaney (2014) states that "Barnes is a connoisseur of eccentricity: the figure of the oddball—the crank, hobbyist, or obsessive—frequently takes centre stage in his fiction, often in the guise of a distinctly unreliable narrator. And odd numbers, especially triptychs of inter-related stories and triangular romantic relations, seems to dominant his narrative structure". Greaney (2014: 239)) also believes that Tony does everything to make his readers believe every word and incident he tells. It is a kind of ambush as Greaney describes that the way of Tony's narration "has an 'ambush' in place for any naive reader who takes Webster at his word as a decent if dull narrating voice"

Furthermore, Pier Paolo Piciucco (2018:43) writes: "*The confessional novel is an odd literary genre that, in recent times, has experienced a remarkable revival. Basically it works on the splitting of the self, with a persona staging two distinct roles and identities in strict reaction with the flow of time.*"

The novel ends in a remorseful philosophy in which its hero is so perplexed with his time. Urmi Satyan (2017:125) writes, "*The author wins our philosophical vote for proving that 'Time' either mislead or misjudged may fill one's life with nothing but remorse. The Layers of revelations about Veronica's lifelong struggle as a widow and a single parent to two kids leaves Tony shattered.*"

### **Analysis**

Characters are the most important elements in the novel. Evaluating how the characters' personality is presented by actions, thoughts and words is achieved through the process of characterization. The characters are analysed by using their role in the text. Their behavior helps to develop the other elements of the story such as plot, narrative and setting. In literary texts, the readers evaluate the characters through many ways such as how they behave, what they say and what other characters say about them. Whatever they say or does is an important concept to his/her characterization. The characters' personality is depicted through these elements. Moreover, the characters' traits such as their quest for independence, power and individuality are also used to describe their personality by how they feel, say, think and behave. Their behavior foregrounds their traits which help in establishing meaning and purpose for the story, and therefore, the reader becomes interested in what happens.

In this paper, we will analyse the characters' traits of feminism that represent the crucial point of understanding the feminist approach and how it is used in the novel. Each character will be examined individually through his/her behavior, words or how other characters think of him/her. So we will reach a better understanding of the characters' personality. In this regard, Karen Bernardo (2001:48) says that characterization "*allows us to empathize with the protagonist and secondary characters, and thus feel that what is happening to these people in the story is vicariously happening to us: and it also gives as a sense of verisimilitude, or the semblance of living reality.*" He adds that dialogue or the characters' words help us to "*see into the characters' hearts and examine their motivations.*"

In fact, the novelist should have adequate abilities to create the characters appropriateness for the acting performance. The novelist's success lies on the characters' power that can present what he/she wants to share with his/her readers. The novels become consistent and brilliant if the characters are well-shaped with many traits. So the reader's job is to dive into the text to comprehend a suitable picture of these traits. And these traits should be taken very cautiously because they become the tools that help in drawing a final conclusion of the nature of the characters. In *The Sense of an Ending*, Julian Barnes uses some female traits that accompany the female characters of Veronica and Margaret. Acunio (1976:112) believes that the development of the characters' personality helps the readers to infer his/her personal traits. Veronica and Margaret's traits of feminism are interesting since they break the traditional view of the males' role in controlling the females and their female traits prevail over the weakness of the males.

### **The characters of Veronica and Margaret**

Veronica and Margaret are two important female characters in Barnes' *The sense of an Ending*. They invest their voice to establish their identity. They are dynamic characters who move on in their life without being hindered by life calamities. Their mature uprightness and vitality makes Tony stumbled and confused. This is why the male characters cannot stand the females' social vigor. Not only this, but in fact the males hesitate and keep looking at how the women behave in a sense of bewilderment. For instance, Tony cannot stand the liveliness of Veronica and decides to step down silently after being accused of cowardliness.

Neither Veronica nor Margret waits for Tony or Adrian to continue living or decide to kill themselves as in the case of Adrian or Robson. However, they develop their characters into courageous people. Unlike the males, the females



never let pessimism and negativity hinder their life. Instead, they successfully show that they have self-independence to struggle life's issues. They prove that they are not only equal to men but they can also be their successful leaders.

### **Traits of feminism**

Based on *The Sense of an Ending*, there are some important female traits that the novelist uses them in drawing the characters of Veronica and Margaret. These traits include independence, decisiveness, persistence, consultancy, and intelligence are analysed using the characters' behavior and words. They are classified and they are used as evidence to support the claim that the novelist depends on the theory of feminism in his novel to show that the female characters are stronger and more independent than the males.

### **Independent modern woman**

In *The Sense of an Ending*, Veronica is an unconventional independent character who challenges and revolts against the 21<sup>st</sup> century typical female presence. Although she is rough in her behavior towards Tony, she has spiritual etiquettes for her age such as her fond of some music, languages and poetry. She also likes reading books. Tony says (Barnes:20) "*My girlfriend was called Veronica Mary Elizabeth Ford, information (by which I mean her middle names) it took me two months to extract. She was reading Spanish, she liked poetry*". Tony also says that even her music record player is better than his which indicates Veronica's modern fashion.

He adds that Veronica "*owned a Black Box record player to my Dansette, and had better musical taste: that's to say, she despised Dvo řák and Tchaikovsky, whom I adored, and owned some choral and lieder LPs. She looked through my record collection with an occasional flickering smile and a more frequent frown*"

(Barnes: 20)

Veronica is also fond of reading which nourishes her mind with some powerful thoughts. He says "*Her own shelves held a lot of poetry, in volume and pamphlet form: Eliot, Auden, MacNeice, Stevie Smith, Thom Gunn, Ted Hughes. There were Left Book Club editions of Orwell and Koestler, some calf-bound nineteenth-century novels, a couple of childhood Arthur Rackhams, and her comfort book, I Capture the Castle. I didn't for a moment doubt that she had read them all, or that they were the right books to own.*" (Barnes:24)

Tony cannot believe that a woman such as Veronica would have a better mind than his. He is astonished by Veronica's character who is able to grasp many dominions of knowledge. It seems that Veronica has armed herself with powerful traits that enable her to be out of Tony's reach of understanding. Tony describes his feeling in this matter when he looks at the books in her shelves, "*they seemed to be an organic continuation of her mind and personality, whereas mine struck me as functionally separate, straining to describe a character I hoped to grow into. This disparity threw me into a slight panic, and as I looked along her poetry shelf I fell back on a line of Phil Dixon's.*" (Barnes:24)

Tony used to wear his watch inside his wrist and he thinks that it is a matter of intellectual improvement since he is at university and his master at school asks him to think of his own. However, as soon as Veronica asks him why he is wearing his watch inside his wrist, he is puzzled and cannot respond. Tony feels that he is so weak whenever he meets Veronica: "*she asked me why I wore my watch on the inside of my wrist. I couldn't justify it, so I turned the face round, and put time on the outside, as normal, grown-up people did*" (Barnes:25) This shows that Tony is not as independent as Veronica. She wants to improve Tony to be independent as she is but Tony cannot. He says, "*She*

*was just trying to improve me – and who was I to object to that?* (Barnes:25) It is a declaration that he has nothing to object Veronica's ideas. She is completely independent and more intellectual than Tony. Later, Tony stopped wearing his watch since he cannot justify why he is doing so. So Veronica's strong trait of independence obliges Tony to fulfill what Veronica wants.

Veronica has also a strong inner power. She has her own independent views in judging others and is not compelled by social formalities. She has determination to resist the indifference of other males and not being a prisoner of others' opinion. She is completely independent and she is ready to express some kind of independence within her own femininity.

On the whole, she is able to speak her mind independently depending on what she can observe. She has a strong ability to evaluate others within her own thoughtful skills. Moreover, Veronica learns to neglect the real dominance and negativity and express her own independence through her own behavior and action. Therefore, she observes that Tony is a passive character and then she decides to leave him.

Julian Barnes has successfully created a very strong independent modern woman who is able to break all the standard accepted traits of her time. She becomes not only independent but also dominant over the males' world. She never shows that she is weak or helpless.

### **Sense of decisiveness**

To be decisive means to have your own decision confidently. It is an important characteristic for women in the field of feminism. Women don't want to stay in their same situation. They should have the courage to move on and not being afraid that they may not succeed. It also means that their decision is not affected anyway by men. They should have the rights to do what it is fair for them.

In *The Sense of an Ending* the female characters such as Veronica or Margaret have the strength to take their decision confidently. They remain far away from the influence of the male characters. They can choose or decide whenever they like.

Regarding Veronica, she is stable enough to reject Tony and starts a new life with Adrian. That decision of Veronica does not come accidentally, but after through considerations. Veronica has her own reasons for rejecting Tony such as his coolness, and indifference. She tries to improve Tony but he cannot do well with her. He fails to grasp what she exactly needs. So this is why she has taken her decision to leave him.

Veronica is fearless regarding her way of taking decisions that even her mother Sarah Ford feels jealous and afraid of her decisive character. She warns Tony of Veronica, "*Don't let Veronica get away with too much.*" Tony is passive and he cannot even understand Sarah's words, and this is why Veronica decides not to have full sex with Tony and limits her relationship with him as "*infra-sex*" as Tony calls it, "*I had what might be called infra-sex*"

(Barnes: 22)

When Tony meets Veronica, he asks for Adrian's diary but she refuses to handle it. Instead, she decides to offer him something else- his letter which has caused the whole damage to her family. He says, "*People shouldn't read other people's diaries. Your mother must have read it. And so must you, to decide which page to send me.*"

(Barnes: 86)

The above quotation shows that Tony knows the nature of Veronica that she is very decisive and will not wait for any to do whenever she sets her mind to.

She answers Tony, *“people shouldn’t read other people’s diaries. She repeated. ‘But you can read this if you like. She pulled an envelope form her raincoat pocket handed it to me, turned, and walked off.”* (Barnes: 68)

It is clear that Veronica is a decisive woman. She does not care of whatever Tony’s reaction is. She trusts her decision and this is why she gives Tony that envelope. She has noticed that Tony does not change and she consequently decides to teach him a lesson.

Furthermore, Veronica chooses to be a woman and a mother, too. Her decision proves her maturity as now she is taking care of the Junior Adrian. She is now a mother and a sister. She has decided to be a dedicated mother and sister and that decision brings her happiness, stability and peace that are not available in Tony’s life dictionary.

Similarly, Margaret is a woman of decision. She does not wait for a long time to take her own decision. Regarding her relationship with Tony, Margaret understands that Tony will not change himself, and her marriage with him is now a mistake. So she quickly takes the decision to leave him and gets engaged to another man. And she does not feel sorry in taking that decision as Tony says, *“she didn’t seem too affected by the break-up; and, as I now realise, I never applied to her my theory of damage.”* (Barnes: 53) However, she does not entirely abandon him as an ex-husband; she still supports him after their divorce, *“She and I remain on good terms; we meet at family events and sometimes have lunch”* (Barnes: 54)

It becomes clear that Margaret is very peculiar about humans and how they must take some decisions in their life so they will not feel sorry later. She says to Tony, *“I didn’t say that, and I don’t mean it either. But I think it’s because I’ve known comparatively few that I know what I think about them. And what I like about them. If I’d known more, I’d be more confused.”* (Barnes:63)

The above quotations shows that Margaret is sure about what she believes in. She never feels regret about any decision she has might taken in her life because she always calculates what might happen to her, *“I’d be more confused”*.

On the other hand, she advices Tony that he is safe without digging into his past and this is why she asks him not to contact Veronica for a meeting, *“Is she back in business after all these years? You were well out of that, Tony.”*(Barnes: 70). This indicates the seriousness of Mrs. Margaret in forgetting the past and never let the past hinder her future life; otherwise, you will get what you do not want. Margaret is very clear in her attitude in life as Tony describes her *“But Margaret can’t do enigma, that first step to Woman of Mystery. If she’d wanted me to spend the money on a holiday for two, she’d have said so.”* (Barnes: 72) She becomes very frank with him and again warns him to leave this matter by saying that *“If your friend had wanted you to have his diary, he could have left it to you forty years ago, and cut out the middleman. Or woman.”* (Barnes: 72)

And when she realizes that Tony is still serious and wants to know the details she again tells him not to hesitate if this will help him, *“Well, you can always find out where the Fruitcake lives. Friends Reunited, telephone directory, private detective. Go round, ring the doorbell, ask for your stuff.”* (Barnes: 72) Margret continues, *“You’re joking.” Then let it go. Unless you have, as they say, issues from your past that you need to confront in order to be able to move on. But that’s hardly you, is it, Tony?”* (Barnes: 72)

It is clear that both Veronica and Margaret are intelligent women of great decision in their life. This decision has changed their life for the better. Unlike the males, the female characters of Barnes are now stronger to take their own decision without being hesitant. They are now stabled in their life and their goals are very clear.

### Traits of persistence

Both Veronica and Margaret are depicted as persistent female characters who demonstrate freedom and power. They both strive for their lives and defend their existence despite the negative effect of the males. The existence of females overdominates the whole atmosphere of the novel. Veronica and Margaret repel persistently for their rights to choose their own life. This undoubtedly reflects their persistence in striving for their rights to rule and to quest for their independence. They have constantly proved that women can have their autonomous life, and the men's rule is not that important in shaping their existence.

Moreover, the female's persistence shows men as reckless, irrational and dependent. The males are expected to be drawn into a new domain controlled by women. And if they don't succumb to the women's principles, they may lose their basic essentials in life. For instance, Tony and Adrian refuse these rules and as a result, they can't grasp their function in life. Consequently, Tony gets lost, and Adrian has killed himself. Tony says, "*I suppose I wanted to do something normal, or at least pretend that something was normal even if it wasn't.*" (Barnes: 104)

Furthermore, Veronica and Margaret are rebellious in refusing all men patriarchal thoughts. They are always in need of power for themselves and they get it. They are true persistent women who are looking for true love but the second partner don't have this power to offer them what they are looking for. However, the females never succumb and continue their persistence by searching for love and more independence.

It becomes clear at the end of the novel that both Veronica and Margaret are more stable and independent than Tony, who loses the meaning of his existence or Adrian, who has killed himself. Tony who is supposed to be the true representative of the male voice in this novel is now looking for help from Margaret and Veronica. He wants to understand where he is. He says, "*After the divorce, I had a few affairs, but nothing serious. I would always tell Margaret about any new girlfriend.*" (Barnes:53). The word "*always*" shows how Tony is entirely dependent and helpless and at the same time, it reflects how persistence helps the females to be powerful. He also describes Margaret as "*She knew me better than anyone else in the world*" which reflects how males are now easily identified in the world of women.

### Good consultant

Margaret is introduced in the novel through Tony's eyes. In the beginning, Tony does not say much about her "*Then I met Margaret; we married, and three years later Susie was born. We bought a small house with a large mortgage.*" He continues, "*After a dozen years Margaret took up with a fellow who ran a restaurant.*" (Barnes:53) Tony says that Margaret never gets affected by the divorce which proves that she is a creative thinker as she knows what to do. Therefore, Tony now is in need of Margaret as she is stable and professional in life matters "*I would always tell Margaret about any new girlfriend*" (Barnes:53)

Tony depends on her in anything related to his life matters. He describes Margaret as she is a philosopher and she knows women's nature in life especially those related to marriage. He says "*Margaret used to say that there were two sorts of women: those with clear edges to them, and those who implied mystery. And that this was the first thing a man sensed, and the first thing that attracted him, or not. Some men are drawn to one type, some to the other.*" (Barnes:62) She is far in her way of either thinking or dealing with life issues and this is why Tony is embarrassed, "*I like you just as you are,*" (Barnes:62)

In this regard, Margaret advises Tony to be patient and forgets the past, however, he does not listen to her and finds himself indulged in complicated problems which lead to the distortion of his memory. He says, "*If I hadn't known her, I might have become involved in a patient exchange of letters with the solicitor. But I didn't want to wait quietly for another envelope with a window.*" (Barnes:63) This proves that Tony is so sad because he did not listen to Margaret's advice, and if he did, he would not become upset and lose his way.

Similarly, Margaret plays the counselor for Tony and he finds her as a shelter to protect him from his unwise ideas and thoughts. She always gives Tony space to express that and she then gives him the right choice:

*“She listened, asked pertinent questions, and she understood. She asked to see the photo – the one taken in Trafalgar Square – examined it, nodded, made no comment. That was fine. I had no right to expect anything, let alone words of praise for my former girlfriend. Which, in any case, I didn’t want. I just wanted to clear off the past, and have Margaret forgive my peculiar lie about it. Which she did.” ( Barnes:66)*

Tony meets Veronica and he directly goes to his counselor Margaret. Margaret knows Tony’s nature exactly and he cannot hide anything, *“I replied. It’s possible that when I finally got around to telling Margaret about Veronica, I’d laid it on a bit, made myself sound more of a dupe.” (Barnes:70)* He says that she is very clear in her attitude and this is why he trusts her, *“But Margaret can’t do enigma, that first step to Woman of Mystery. If she’d wanted me to spend the money on a holiday for two, she’d have said so. Yes, I realise that’s exactly what she did say.”(Barnes:72)*

Regarding Veronica, Margaret advices Tony to make himself clear of the matter, *“Then let it go. Unless you have, as they say, issues from your past that you need to confront in order to be able to move on. But that’s hardly you, is it, Tony?” (Barnes: 72)* She is a true counsellor with very patient and sympathetic ear, *“she quite likes being a sympathetic ear” (Barnes:96)* Tony is now afraid of his risky decision, so she never hesitates to encourage him letting him feel that he can stand again, *“Tony, you’re on your own now.” You can put it another way, of course; you always can.” (Barnes:100)* Tony believes in Margaret and he considers her as his trustee counselor because she is systematic and she knows the rules:

*“Again, my first instinct was to phone Margaret; then I thought better of it. Anyway, Margaret doesn’t like surprises. She was – is – someone who likes to plan things.” (Barnes: 114)*

Consequently, Tony has chosen what his counselor asks him to do, *“There was no one I could tell this to – not for a long while. As Margaret said, I was on my own – and so I should be.” (Barnes: 133)*

### **Intelligent characters**

Both Margaret and Veronica are intelligent characters. They have the ability to grasp complex concepts and understand social behavior and relationships. They always try to create their own room, and they never feel depressed. They always keep trying to accommodate themselves within their life. Their intelligence enables them to organize their life schedule and maintain good social positions. As a result, they develop their individual characteristics such as independence, persistence and decisiveness. Their intelligence proves that they can get their happiness without being attached to men.

At the same time, they are smart and this is clear from their conversation with Tony. Miss. Veronica is also honest as she lets her feeling out to know where she is. She asks Tony *“So do you ever think about where our relationship is heading?” (Barnes: 33)*

*“Look Tony.” She said, “I don’t stagnate.”*

The word *“stagnate”* shows that Veronica expresses her feelings directly and similarly she is instigating Tony to react and show his opinion. However, Tony is perplexed and does not know how to reply. His words *“what does she want me to say?”* reveals the deep confusion he has reached and they also reveal how smart Veronica is. He

asks her again, "why don't you tell me what it is and I'll tell you whether it's mine as well." To this veronica replies, "You're quite cowardly, aren't you, Tony?"

This last declaration confirms that Veronica has a clear conclusion that Tony cannot marry her. She now validates her feeling with Tony and comes to realise that he will not marry her. The words "stagnate" and "coward" have elevated her way of thinking and found that Tony does not suit her.

Similarly, Margaret is also associated with intelligence which elevates her own character beyond the expectation of the male figures. She is described as a smart character with highly balanced thoughts. Her intelligence lets her clearly evaluate the characters of Tony as she finds that their relationship as wife and husband will not continue. She realizes that being a wife will not help and better be a friend for Tony. Later, Tony comes to understand that Margaret's decision of divorce is right, "And I never regretted my years with Margaret, even if we did divorce."

(Barnes: 61)

Furthermore, Margaret's intelligence leads her to draw her own evaluation on women as well. In this regard, Tony says that "Margaret used to say that there were two sorts of women: those with clear edges to them, and those who implied mystery. And this was the first thing a man sensed, and the first thing that attracted him or not." (Barnes: 62) This confuses Tony and he says to Margaret "Now, I am not sure whether to be flattered or not."

(Barnes: 63)

In fact, Margaret's above words summarize the women's characters. She wants to help Tony in evaluating the character of Veronica but Tony cannot grasp this profound philosophy. He still does not know what sort of woman Veronica is. And this is why he frequently keeps coming back to Margaret to help him in his evaluation: "I called Margaret and asked for a lunch date." (Barnes:64)

Margaret is a balanced character and she is not rash in her judgments of Veronica, "Margaret listened, asked pertinent questions, and she understood. She asked to see the photo-the one taken in Trafalgar Square-examined it, nodded." (Barnes:66)

Both veronica and Margaret are intelligent characters with deep and complex thoughts that let them trespass the common social attitudes. They are intelligent and they are now able to promote themselves and foreground their existence in the world of men.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

This paper analyses the concept of feminism in *The Sense of an Ending*, by tracing the female traits of Veronica and Margaret such as independence, decisiveness, persistence and good consultancy. It tries to prove that both Veronica and Margaret are strong feminist characters with new images who can live in the world of men as leaders to order and not being subordinates. With all these traits, the female characters have embodied a strong wave of feminism. They have led a strong revolution that does not only demand equal treatments with the males but they have also successfully gained a new social position as being leaders over men. Their characters have multidimensional realms that are always developing, and their qualities open a new discussion to a different modern type of female characters in literature.

This paper has provided discussions on how Julian Barnes grasp attention of the students and researches of the new dimensional wave of feminism. Barnes admires women as he lets the males lose their social contact and hierarchy that dissolved within the women's feminism. He uses some powerful traits that make the women distinctive. They are now enabled to get benefit from their life experiences and they consequently develop their characters professionally. This character development becomes steady and it paves the way for the readers to realize the importance of this technique since it is gradual as it passes from one stage to another.

These female traits according to Virginia Woolf are the essential requirements for women to prove their identity and through them the women can struggle against any patriarchal beliefs. Mary Wollstonecraft also believes that women should be independent because they can create their own independent world without selling themselves to husbands. Similarly, Simon de Beauvoir argues that femininity means women should believe in their existence and that means they are necessary pillars in making communities.

Julian Barnes describes Veronica and Margaret as the most liberal and rebellious characters in the novel. They have some feminine features that make them able to live independently of males. Not only this, but the males become dependent on the females and they cannot live without their support. The women in *The Sense of an Ending* struggle to get their independence away from the male. Their happiness and peace lay on their freedom and being alone from the world of men. Barnes portrays a picture that women can take their own decisions without being confined by the social norms or the men's world. However, their representation is not fully rigid in their choice. They try to look for their happiness in their marriage but they cannot find their stability. In other words, the women have not trespassed the social standards. They try their best to accommodate the social norms but the interference of men handicap these endeavors. Consequently, they try to look for peace and happiness independently by rebelling against these rules and they become different from any traditional women who are obedient to the social rules. So a new woman is born with these new traits of female power.

Both Veronica and Margaret reflect this new image of women. Their experiences in life have developed their characters and they become different. The males lose their own control over them and the females have become entirely professional, as they are now the ideal examples for men. The men now cannot live without being dependent on the women. For instance, Tony who is the only narrator and the supposed protagonist of the story cannot take any decision without consulting Margaret or Veronica.

Moreover, Veronica and Margaret are now distinctive female figures with powerful traits. Their suffering with men helps them develop their characters unlike the males whose characters are deteriorating because they do not get benefit at all from their life experiences. Adrian cannot face reality and he commits suicide and Tony loses his character and memory too. However, the women manage to continue their life successfully better than the males who have entirely failed. They believe in what they are doing as they dare to face their existence as women. Their powerful female traits emerge them to be the crowns over the males' world. It is concluded that Veronica and Margaret with these female traits have become the best representative of new female images. They dare to reform the traditional belief of women as subordinates or dependents and they can create their own new world.

Although Veronica and Margaret suffer from their male companions, they are now able to stand alone and defeat their rights. They can overcome their problems independently, unlike their male partners who are now blind and cannot take any step ahead without consulting the females.

Finally, the female characters in *The Sense of an Ending* reflect the novelist's expectations to fulfil a new sense of feminism. They have proved that they are stronger, more independent and more persistent than the males. They are seen as heroic protagonists who have won the game of life. They replace the males in their social roles in life and at the same time, they develop their characters by learning from life experiences. Unlike men, they do not show any weakness or being sympathetic towards anyone. This analysis has proved that Margaret and Veronica are clear representation of the powerful feminist women that are shown in their words, thoughts and action. Barnes believes that they can be fully independent, strong, intelligent, determined and decisive.

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