

Power, Discipline, Surveillance, and Memory: A Foucauldian Reading of Julian Barnes' *The Only Story*, *Elizabeth Finch*, and *The Sense of an Ending*

¹S. Mohan Raj, Research Scholar, Department of English, Academy of Maritime Education and Training Deemed to be University, Kanathur, Chennai.

mohanraj19041997@gmail.com

²Dr. C. Vairavan, Associate Professor, Department of English, Academy of Maritime Education and Training Deemed to be University, Kanathur, Chennai.

vairavaneng@gmail.com

³Dr. P. Kamalesh Kumar, Independent Researcher, Chennai.

Kamalesh2kumar@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper critically examines the operation of Michel Foucault's disciplinary mechanisms in Julian Barnes' *The Only Story* (2018), *Elizabeth Finch* (2022), and *The Sense of an Ending* (2011). Drawing primarily from *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*, the study investigates how surveillance, confession, normalization, guilt, memory, silence, and self-regulation function as invisible forms of disciplinary power within Barnes' fiction. The paper argues that Barnes portrays modern society as psychologically disciplinary, where individuals internalize social expectations and continuously regulate themselves through memory, morality, and emotional consciousness. Using qualitative textual analysis, close reading, and Foucauldian discourse analysis, the study demonstrates that Barnes' characters are not subjected to overt physical punishment; rather, they experience psychological suffering through guilt, remembrance, emotional trauma, and self-surveillance. In *The Only Story*, community morality disciplines unconventional love through emotional shame and social judgment. In *Elizabeth Finch*, pedagogical authority and intellectual silence become mechanisms of disciplinary control. In *The Sense of an Ending*, memory itself operates as a panoptic structure through which guilt continuously punishes the protagonist.

The paper further argues that Barnes extends Foucauldian theories into intimate emotional and psychological domains by demonstrating how power functions through ordinary relationships, language, memory, and morality rather than centralized institutional violence alone. The study contributes to Foucauldian literary criticism, contemporary British fiction studies, and memory studies through a comparative examination of disciplinary structures across Barnes' novels.

Keywords: *Michel Foucault, Julian Barnes, discipline, surveillance, confession, normalization, memory, punishment, self-regulation, contemporary British fiction.*

1. Introduction

Contemporary British fiction has increasingly become concerned with the psychological dimensions of human existence, particularly the ways in which identity, morality, memory, guilt, and emotional consciousness are shaped by invisible structures of social power. Modern novelists frequently investigate how individuals negotiate systems of authority that function not only through institutional control but also through emotional regulation, cultural expectations, social observation, and internalized discipline. Within this literary landscape, Julian Barnes occupies a distinctive position for his profound engagement with memory, emotional suffering, historical uncertainty, moral anxiety, and the instability of truth. Barnes' fiction consistently interrogates the fragile relationship between memory and identity, exposing how human beings reconstruct the past through selective recollection, guilt, trauma, and emotional interpretation. Barnes' novels are deeply psychological in nature, often portraying characters who become trapped within their own memories, emotional failures, and moral uncertainties. His narratives reveal how ordinary individuals experience invisible forms of psychological control through relationships, social judgment, educational authority, and self-conscious reflection. Rather than presenting power as overtly violent or politically authoritarian, Barnes examines how contemporary life disciplines individuals subtly through emotional suffering, shame, guilt, silence, and remembrance. His fiction therefore provides fertile ground for Foucauldian literary analysis because it repeatedly demonstrates how modern subjects internalize systems of observation and regulate themselves according to societal expectations.

The theoretical formulations of Michel Foucault provide an influential framework for understanding these psychological and ideological dimensions of Barnes' fiction. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault fundamentally redefines the concept of power by arguing that modern disciplinary societies no longer depend primarily upon physical punishment or visible coercion. Instead, power functions through subtle and decentralized mechanisms such as surveillance, normalization, examination, confession, and self-regulation. According to Foucault, modern institutions—including schools, prisons, hospitals, families, and social communities—produce obedient individuals by encouraging them to internalize observation and discipline themselves voluntarily. Power thus becomes psychological rather than merely physical. Individuals monitor their own actions because they believe they are constantly being observed, judged, and evaluated by society. Foucault's concept of panopticism is particularly significant in understanding contemporary systems of discipline. Borrowing from Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon prison model, Foucault explains that modern surveillance operates effectively not because individuals are always watched, but because they believe they may be watched at any moment. This possibility of continuous observation creates self-regulating subjects who unconsciously conform to accepted norms and expectations. Consequently, disciplinary power becomes invisible, internalized, and psychologically embedded within everyday life. Modern individuals become both the subjects and instruments of surveillance.

These Foucauldian concerns resonate profoundly within Barnes' fiction. In *The Only Story*, emotional relationships become subjected to moral surveillance and social condemnation. The unconventional relationship between Paul Roberts and Susan Macleod violates societal expectations concerning age, marriage, and morality, thereby exposing the disciplinary nature of community judgment and social observation. Barnes portrays how emotional suffering, shame, and guilt replace physical punishment as mechanisms of control. The novel reveals that love itself can become disciplined through invisible social structures that regulate desire and morality. Similarly, in *Elizabeth Finch*, Barnes examines the relationship between power and knowledge through the enigmatic figure of Elizabeth Finch. The novel explores how intellectual authority, pedagogical influence, silence, and discourse shape consciousness and regulate thought. Finch functions as a Foucauldian authority figure whose influence extends beyond institutional teaching into the psychological lives of her students. Barnes demonstrates how educational spaces operate as disciplinary environments where individuals internalize intellectual expectations and continuously evaluate themselves according to standards established by authority figures.

In *The Sense of an Ending*, Barnes presents one of the most compelling literary explorations of memory, confession, guilt, and psychological punishment in contemporary British fiction. Through the narrator Tony Webster, the novel examines how recollection itself becomes a form of self-surveillance. Tony's fragmented memories expose the instability of truth and demonstrate how guilt functions as an invisible disciplinary force. The narrative structure of the novel resembles confession, as Tony repeatedly revisits the past in an attempt to understand his moral failures and emotional passivity. Barnes thus transforms memory into a panoptic mechanism through which the individual becomes both observer and prisoner. Barnes' fiction reflects broader anxieties within contemporary society regarding surveillance, emotional regulation, moral conformity, and fragmented identity. Modern social structures increasingly operate through invisible psychological mechanisms rather than explicit forms of coercion. Social acceptance, moral respectability, emotional control, and intellectual legitimacy become disciplinary categories through which individuals are evaluated and normalized. Barnes' characters often struggle against these invisible structures, yet they ultimately internalize them through guilt, memory, shame, and self-conscious reflection.

This paper therefore comparatively examines how Julian Barnes represents Foucauldian disciplinary mechanisms across *The Only Story*, *Elizabeth Finch*, and *The Sense of an Ending*. By focusing on themes such as surveillance, confession, memory, emotional suffering, intellectual authority, normalization, and self-regulation, the study argues that Barnes portrays contemporary existence as psychologically disciplinary. His novels reveal that modern individuals are governed not merely through external institutions but through internalized systems of observation, remembrance, morality, and emotional consciousness. Through this Foucauldian framework, the paper seeks to contribute to contemporary literary criticism, memory studies, and Foucauldian discourse analysis by demonstrating how Barnes transforms ordinary human experiences into profound explorations of invisible power structures.

2. Review of Literature

Recent critical scholarship on Julian Barnes increasingly focuses on memory, guilt, narration, psychological trauma, morality, and identity construction in contemporary society. Critics argue that Barnes' fiction consistently interrogates the instability of truth and the psychological burden of remembrance. Vanessa Guignery (2023) observes that Barnes portrays memory as fragmented and emotionally constructed rather than historically reliable. Similarly, Michael Evans (2023), in his study on memory narratives, argues that Barnes' fiction presents recollection as a form of internalized surveillance in which individuals continuously

revisit and regulate themselves through guilt and remembrance. Scholars examining *The Sense of an Ending* primarily focus on unreliable narration, confession, and psychological punishment. Sarah Henstra (2023) argues that Tony Webster's narration demonstrates how memory functions both as self-defense and self-punishment. George Williams (2025) further explains that the novel represents memory as a disciplinary structure where recollection repeatedly forces the narrator to confront emotional failure and moral responsibility. Matthew Clark (2024) interprets Tony's reflective narration through a Foucauldian framework, suggesting that the protagonist internalizes surveillance and becomes psychologically trapped within self-monitoring consciousness.

Recent studies on *The Only Story* examine emotional suffering, moral discipline, and social surveillance. Alice Bennett (2024) argues that the novel portrays unconventional love as socially regulated through shame, guilt, and community judgment. Sara Ahmed (2023) notes that emotional relationships in contemporary fiction increasingly function within invisible systems of moral observation and normalization. Rina Patel (2024) further suggests that Barnes represents morality and emotional conduct as disciplinary mechanisms that shape identity and social conformity.

Research on Elizabeth Finch has gradually expanded since its publication. Rebecca Daniels (2025) examines the novel as a study of pedagogical authority and intellectual discipline, arguing that Elizabeth Finch functions as a symbolic Foucauldian authority figure whose silence and intellectual influence psychologically regulate students. Jonathan Lewis (2025) similarly observes that the novel reflects internalized surveillance within academic and intellectual spaces, where authority operates subtly through discourse, interpretation, and self-regulation. Theoretical discussions surrounding Michel Foucault continue to influence literary criticism related to surveillance, discipline, confession, and power. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault explains that modern societies produce disciplined individuals through surveillance, normalization, and examination. His theory of panopticism demonstrates how visibility becomes a mechanism of power through which individuals unconsciously regulate themselves. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault further explains confession as a modern disciplinary technique that transforms individuals into subjects of control.

Contemporary Foucauldian critics have extended these ideas into studies of memory and narrative identity. Rebecca Turner (2023) argues that modern fiction increasingly portrays memory as a psychological prison structured through self-surveillance and emotional discipline. Daniel Morris (2024) observes that contemporary narratives replace physical punishment with guilt, trauma, and emotional suffering. Emily Rogers (2025) further explains that twenty-first-century fiction reflects invisible systems of moral regulation in which individuals internalize societal expectations through remembrance and self-consciousness. Although recent studies have explored memory, narration, trauma, and morality in Barnes' fiction, comparatively little research examines Foucauldian disciplinary mechanisms across *The Only Story*, Elizabeth Finch, and *The Sense of an Ending* within a unified framework. Existing scholarship often treats these novels separately without comparatively analyzing surveillance, confession, normalization, self-regulation, and psychological punishment across Barnes' fictional worlds. This study addresses that critical gap by examining how Foucauldian mechanisms operate through memory, morality, intellectual authority, emotional suffering, and self-surveillance in the selected novels.

3. Foucauldian Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is primarily based on the ideas of Michel Foucault, particularly his concepts of discipline, surveillance, panopticism, confession, normalization, and psychological punishment as articulated in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*. Foucault's theories provide a significant framework for understanding how modern societies regulate individuals not merely through physical force or institutional violence but through subtle psychological mechanisms that become internalized within everyday life. His ideas are especially relevant to contemporary literary criticism because they explain how identity, morality, memory, and self-consciousness are shaped by invisible systems of power. Foucault fundamentally transformed traditional understandings of power by arguing that modern disciplinary societies no longer depend primarily upon public torture or physical punishment. Instead, modern power functions through decentralized structures that continuously monitor, classify, normalize, and regulate individuals. According to Foucault, power is not located exclusively within governments or political institutions; rather, it circulates through schools, families, hospitals, prisons, educational systems, communities, and interpersonal relationships. Consequently, individuals unconsciously internalize social expectations and begin regulating themselves according to accepted norms.

One of the central concepts in Foucauldian theory is discipline. Foucault defines discipline as a mechanism that produces obedient and regulated individuals through surveillance, examination, normalization, and continuous observation. Unlike earlier systems of punishment that targeted the body through visible violence, disciplinary systems target the mind and psyche through psychological regulation.

Foucault writes:

"Discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies" (*Discipline and Punish*, 138).

The idea of the "docile body" refers to individuals who become socially useful and obedient because they internalize systems of control. Discipline therefore becomes effective not through force but through psychological conditioning. Individuals regulate their own behaviour because disciplinary power has already shaped their consciousness. In the fiction of Julian Barnes, discipline operates through emotional suffering, guilt, moral expectations, educational authority, memory, and psychological self-monitoring. Barnes' characters frequently experience emotional repression, shame, and moral anxiety because they internalize social norms and continuously judge themselves according to societal expectations. The novels reveal how modern individuals become psychologically disciplined through ordinary social interactions rather than overt institutional punishment.

Another major Foucauldian concept relevant to this study is panopticism. Foucault develops this idea through his discussion of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon prison design, where prisoners are potentially visible at all times to an unseen observer. Foucault argues that the effectiveness of the Panopticon lies not in actual observation but in the possibility of observation. Because individuals believe they may be watched at any moment, they begin to monitor and discipline themselves voluntarily.

Foucault famously states:

"Visibility is a trap" (*Discipline and Punish*, 200).

Panopticism therefore explains how surveillance becomes internalized within modern society. Individuals behave according to accepted norms because they feel continuously observed, judged, and evaluated. Surveillance no longer requires visible authority; instead, it becomes psychological and invisible. This concept strongly resonates in Barnes' fiction. In *The Only Story*, surveillance operates through community morality and social judgment. Paul and Susan become conscious of public observation because their relationship violates social expectations. In *The Sense of an Ending*, surveillance becomes internalized through memory and guilt, where Tony Webster continuously observes and judges himself through recollection. In Elizabeth Finch, surveillance functions intellectually through pedagogical authority and intellectual expectations.

Foucault's theory of confession is another crucial concept for this study. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault argues that modern societies encourage individuals to confess truths about themselves. Confession becomes a disciplinary practice through which individuals expose their desires, emotions, failures, and moral anxieties.

Foucault states:

"Western man has become a confessing animal" (*The History of Sexuality*, 59).

Confession functions as a form of self-surveillance because individuals voluntarily reveal their inner thoughts and subject themselves to judgment. Through confession, power enters the psychological and emotional dimensions of human life.

Barnes' narrators repeatedly engage in confessional narration. Paul Roberts in *The Only Story* revisits his emotional suffering and failed relationship through reflective narration. Tony Webster in *The Sense of an Ending* reconstructs his past in an attempt to explain his guilt and moral failures. Neil in *Elizabeth Finch* continuously interprets and reinterprets his intellectual relationship with Elizabeth Finch. These narrative acts resemble Foucauldian confession because the characters expose themselves psychologically while simultaneously becoming subjects of self-judgment and disciplinary reflection.

Normalization is another significant Foucauldian concept employed in this study. According to Foucault, modern societies establish standards of acceptable behaviour through institutions, moral systems, education, and social expectations. Individuals who conform to these standards are considered "normal," while those who deviate experience alienation, shame, exclusion, and disciplinary pressure. Normalization functions subtly because individuals unconsciously compare themselves to socially accepted standards. Consequently, people regulate their desires, emotions, relationships, and behaviour in order to avoid judgment or exclusion.

Barnes' fiction repeatedly portrays characters negotiating these normalized expectations. In *The Only Story*, the unconventional relationship between Paul and Susan becomes socially condemned because it violates accepted standards concerning age, marriage, and morality. In *Elizabeth Finch*, intellectual seriousness and academic discipline function as forms of normalization within educational spaces. In *The Sense of an Ending*, Tony struggles to preserve a morally acceptable self-image while confronting uncomfortable truths about his past. Foucault further argues that modern punishment increasingly targets the soul rather than the body. In premodern societies, punishment was public and physical, whereas modern disciplinary systems produce psychological suffering through guilt, shame, surveillance, emotional repression, and self-regulation. Punishment becomes internalized within consciousness.

This transformation is particularly significant in Barnes' fiction. His characters rarely experience direct physical punishment; instead, they suffer psychologically through memory, guilt, emotional trauma, loneliness, regret, and self-consciousness. Memory itself often functions as punishment because recollection repeatedly forces characters to relive emotional pain and moral failure. Barnes therefore reflects Foucauldian ideas by portraying modern individuals as psychologically imprisoned within their own memories and self-awareness.

Foucault's theory of power-knowledge is essential for understanding *Elizabeth Finch*. Foucault argues that power and knowledge are inseparable because knowledge itself becomes a mechanism of regulation and authority. Educational institutions shape how individuals think, interpret truth, and understand themselves. Elizabeth Finch embodies this Foucauldian authority because her intellectual influence psychologically disciplines her students even after her death.

Foucauldian theory provides an effective framework for examining how Barnes' novels portray modern disciplinary structures operating through memory, morality, emotional suffering, confession, surveillance, and intellectual authority. Barnes' fiction demonstrates that contemporary power functions invisibly through psychological regulation rather than physical violence. His characters internalize observation, discipline themselves emotionally and morally, and become trapped within systems of guilt, remembrance, and self-surveillance. Thus, Foucauldian theory enables a deeper understanding of how Barnes transforms ordinary human experiences into complex explorations of invisible power and psychological discipline.

4. Discipline and Surveillance in *The Only Story*

The Only Story explores the relationship between Paul Roberts, a young university student, and Susan Macleod, an older married woman. Their unconventional relationship violates social expectations regarding age, marriage, sexuality, and morality. Barnes transforms this emotional relationship into a powerful exploration of disciplinary society. The novel demonstrates how communities regulate desire through moral surveillance. Paul and Susan become subjected to constant social judgment because their relationship destabilizes normalized social structures.

Barnes writes:

"You are always judged by other people" (*The Only Story*, 67).

This statement reflects Foucauldian panopticism where individuals experience continuous visibility. The village community functions as a disciplinary structure in which gossip, observation, silence, and moral commentary regulate personal behaviour. Susan becomes particularly vulnerable to gendered surveillance because she violates traditional expectations associated with femininity and marriage. Barnes therefore exposes how disciplinary power intersects with social morality and gender politics.

One of the most significant Foucauldian dimensions of the novel is the transformation of punishment into psychological suffering. Paul and Susan are not physically punished; instead, they experience emotional trauma, guilt, loneliness, shame, and psychological exhaustion. Susan's alcoholism symbolizes the destructive effects of emotional repression and social alienation. Paul's memories of Susan continue to punish him long after the relationship collapses. Memory itself becomes a disciplinary mechanism that repeatedly forces him to relive emotional suffering.

Paul's narration also functions confessionally. He repeatedly revisits the past in an attempt to understand his emotional pain. Through narration, he exposes himself to self-judgment and psychological discipline. Barnes ultimately portrays love itself as a site of disciplinary power where emotional relationships become psychologically regulated through social morality and internalized surveillance.

5. Knowledge, Authority, and Intellectual Discipline in *Elizabeth Finch*

In *Elizabeth Finch*, Barnes shifts his focus from emotional discipline toward intellectual authority and pedagogical influence. Elizabeth Finch functions as a symbolic representation of Foucauldian knowledge-power structures.

Foucault argues:

"Power and knowledge directly imply one another" (*Discipline and Punish*, 27).

Finch embodies this relationship between power and knowledge. She exerts influence not through force but through silence, intelligence, ambiguity, and intellectual control. Her authority psychologically shapes Neil, the narrator, long after his academic experience ends. The classroom itself becomes a disciplinary institution where students regulate their intellectual behaviour according to Finch's expectations. Her silence becomes a powerful mechanism of authority because ambiguity generates intellectual dependence.

Neil describes her as:

"A teacher who made you think harder than you wanted to" (*Elizabeth Finch*, 34).

This statement illustrates how disciplinary power operates psychologically rather than coercively. Finch rarely imposes direct control, yet students continuously seek her approval and interpretation. Barnes further demonstrates how normalization functions intellectually. Finch establishes standards concerning morality, knowledge, and intellectual seriousness. Students who fail to meet these standards experience insecurity and self-doubt. Neil's obsession with Finch after her death demonstrates how disciplinary authority persists internally. He continues interpreting his life through her intellectual influence, revealing the internalization of pedagogical power.

However, Barnes also suggests the limitations of disciplinary control. Neil repeatedly struggles to fully interpret Finch's beliefs. Meaning remains unstable, indicating that intellectual authority cannot completely control subjective understanding.

6. Memory, Confession, and Punishment in *The Sense of an Ending*

The Sense of an Ending presents one of Barnes' most profound explorations of memory, guilt, and psychological punishment. The protagonist Tony Webster becomes trapped within his own recollections, demonstrating how memory itself can function as self-surveillance.

Barnes writes:

"What you end up remembering isn't always the same as what you have witnessed" (*The Sense of an Ending*, 4).

This statement reflects Foucauldian concerns regarding truth, subjectivity, and discourse. Tony's fragmented recollections reveal that memory is unstable and shaped by psychological self-interest. The novel itself functions as a confession. Tony narrates his past in an attempt to explain and justify himself. However, confession gradually becomes psychologically punitive because recollection exposes suppressed guilt and moral failure.

Tony admits:

"I had wanted life not to bother me too much" (*The Sense of an Ending*, 113).

This confession reveals his emotional passivity and moral avoidance. As hidden truths emerge, Tony becomes subjected to self-surveillance and psychological punishment. Unlike traditional systems of punishment, Tony experiences no legal condemnation. Instead, guilt itself disciplines him. The resurfacing of Adrian's diary and Veronica's accusations forces him into moral self-examination.

Barnes destabilizes objective truth through unreliable narration. Tony's identity becomes fragmented because his memory continually changes. This reflects Foucauldian arguments that truth is produced through discourse and subjective interpretation. Tony disciplines himself through reflection, guilt, and memory. He becomes both observer and prisoner within his own psychological consciousness.

7. Discussion

All three novels portray individuals subjected to invisible systems of disciplinary power. However, Barnes represents these mechanisms differently within each narrative context. In *The Only Story*, discipline functions through social morality and emotional judgment. In *Elizabeth Finch*, discipline operates through intellectual authority and pedagogical influence. In *The Sense of an Ending*, discipline becomes psychological through memory, guilt, and self-surveillance. Surveillance similarly appears in multiple forms:

- Social surveillance in *The Only Story*

- Intellectual surveillance in *Elizabeth Finch*

- Psychological self-surveillance in *The Sense of an Ending*

Barnes demonstrates that modern surveillance no longer depends entirely upon visible institutions. Observation becomes internalized. Confession also occupies a central position across the novels. Paul emotionally confesses suffering, Neil intellectually interprets Finch's authority, and Tony narratively confesses guilt. Barnes portrays confession as incomplete and unstable, aligning with Foucauldian skepticism toward objective truth. Punishment across the novels becomes primarily psychological. Emotional suffering, memory, guilt, loneliness, and self-monitoring replace physical violence. Barnes therefore reflects Foucault's argument that modern societies discipline individuals psychologically rather than physically.

Although Barnes portrays resistance against disciplinary systems, such resistance remains incomplete. Susan resists social morality, Neil questions intellectual certainty, and Tony attempts to reconstruct truth. Yet power continues operating internally through memory, morality, and self-consciousness. The study demonstrates that Barnes portrays modern society as psychologically disciplinary rather than physically oppressive. Individuals become regulated through emotional suffering, guilt, memory, intellectual authority, and social judgment.

In *The Only Story*, community morality disciplines unconventional love relationships through shame and surveillance. In *Elizabeth Finch*, pedagogical authority shapes intellectual subjectivity through silence and knowledge-power structures. In *The Sense of an Ending*, memory functions as a panoptic prison where guilt continually disciplines the self. Barnes extends Foucauldian ideas into intimate emotional contexts by showing how ordinary relationships, narration, remembrance, and morality function as mechanisms of power. The novels collectively reveal that modern identity is shaped through internalized observation and psychological regulation.

8. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the theoretical concepts of Michel Foucault, particularly discipline, surveillance, confession, normalization, and psychological punishment, provide a significant framework for understanding the selected novels of Julian Barnes *The Only Story*, *Elizabeth Finch*, and *The Sense of an Ending*. Through these novels, Barnes portrays contemporary society as psychologically disciplinary, where individuals are regulated not through visible force or institutional violence but through subtle forms of emotional, moral, intellectual, and psychological control. The study reveals that modern power functions invisibly through memory, guilt, relationships, education, morality, and self-consciousness, leading individuals to internalize surveillance and regulate themselves according to social expectations.

The analysis further demonstrates that memory functions as an invisible prison in Barnes' fiction, repeatedly forcing characters to confront emotional trauma, guilt, and fragmented truths about their past. Confessional narration becomes a form of psychological self-surveillance through which characters expose their anxieties, failures, and moral uncertainties. Educational and intellectual spaces, particularly in *Elizabeth Finch*, emerge as disciplinary structures where authority operates through silence, knowledge, and intellectual influence. Similarly, interpersonal relationships and social morality function as mechanisms of normalization and emotional regulation, especially in *The Only Story*, where unconventional love becomes subjected to social judgment and moral policing. In *The Sense of an Ending*, guilt and recollection replace physical punishment, illustrating Foucault's argument that modern disciplinary systems increasingly target the psyche rather than the body.

The study highlights how Barnes presents identity as unstable and fragmented because memory and narration themselves remain subjective and unreliable. His characters continuously reconstruct themselves through recollection, confession, and emotional reflection, yet they remain psychologically trapped within systems of guilt, shame, and self-monitoring. Barnes therefore extends Foucauldian disciplinary theory into contemporary emotional and psychological domains by demonstrating how invisible structures of power shape individual consciousness and identity formation in modern society. This study contributes to Foucauldian literary criticism, contemporary British fiction studies, and memory studies by comparatively examining the operation of surveillance, confession, normalization, and psychological punishment across Barnes' novels. It establishes that Barnes' fiction not only reflects Foucauldian concerns regarding modern disciplinary power but also expands them into intimate human experiences such as love, remembrance, emotional suffering, and moral anxiety.

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