

With His Watch on the Inside of the Wrist – Images and Concepts of Time in Julian Barnes's
The Sense of an Ending

Abstract

In my paper, I analyse time as a central topic, as well as an inherent structural feature in Julian Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending*. Using the recurring images of the river, blood, and pulse as starting points, along with the central character's meditations on the nature of time, I refer to various theories of time. Focusing on the pervading unease due to the inaccessibility of the past, I mention concepts of the past in the philosophies of Aristotle, Saint Augustine of Hippo, and Hegel. Based on the problem of remorse and the irreversibility of time, I reflect on A. S. Eddington's theory of the arrow of time and matters of causality in relation to the plot and the narrative structure of the novel. I show that despite the irreversible linearity of time, repetitions in the narrative result in a circular structure. Finally, expanding on Tony Webster's definition of subjective and objective time, I discuss Henri Bergson's philosophy of time and his concept of duration and provide textual analysis demonstrating the operation of a personal, inner time within the narrative, while presenting the narrator as a heideggerian human being of temporality.

My aim is to illustrate Frank Kermode's claims concerning the lack of proper, comforting endings in current Western culture, as well as the resulting unease and need for narrative order, while defining humanity's attitude towards the past, the nature and the passing of time in the postmodern era, as can be seen in Julian Barnes's novel *The Sense of an Ending*.