

**POSTMODERN LIQUIDATIONS? MARINE METAPHORS, ETHICAL
CONUNDRUMS AND COMPLICITOUS CRITIQUE IN JULIAN BARNES'S
*A HISTORY OF THE WORLD IN 10½ CHAPTERS***

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***Abstract:** This paper examines certain episodes from Julian Barnes's postmodernist novel *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* (1989) to unravel the ethical conundrums which a light-hearted parody of Christian narratives and articles of faith may broach. I apply Willem Schinkel's theorisation, in *Aspects of Violence* (2010), of liquidation as method to suggest that, at least in Barnes's case, exposure of ethical lapse does not ipso facto eradicate that which it critiques, which verifies Linda Hutcheon's postulate about postmodernist complicitous critique (in both theory and practice). Through the slippery metaphorical pairing of voyage/freedom/escape and boat/security/containment against implicit or explicit seascapes, *History* not only re-enacts the biblical Noah's Flood scenario in novel guises, but also suggests that parodic re-visions of tradition and generally of the past cannot liquidate (eradicate) the latter through the deconstruction of premier topoi, but can perhaps liquefy (dilute) conviction regarding the robustness of received wisdom.*

***Keywords:** Julian Barnes, *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*, seascape, voyage, liquidation of theory (Willem Schinkel), ethics, representation, epistemic violence, complicitous critique (Linda Hutcheon)*