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**RESEARCH PAPER****The Deconstruction of Meta Narratives in *The Finkler Question***

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**ABSTRACT**

This research examines the deconstruction of meta-narratives in Howard Jacobson's novel *The Finkler Question* through a postmodern lens. The objective is to explore how the novel subverts grand narratives such as nationalism and religion, employing literary techniques to challenge dominant discourses. The background highlights the novel's focus on Jewish identity and nationalism. Using textual analysis, the methodology involves examining characters who resist or subvert dominant meta-narratives, constructing their own identities and meanings. The results reveal that *The Finkler Question* critiques the notions of a unified Jewish and British national identity, portraying diverse and fragmented communities. The novel employs irony, intertextuality, and ambiguity to create space for alternative perspectives. Recommendations include further research on postmodern critiques in literature and the promotion of inclusive and diverse societal values. The study contributes to discussions on postmodernism and literature by illustrating how the novel deconstructs meta-narratives and fosters individual identity construction.

**KEYWORDS** Deconstruction, Jewish identity, Meta-narrative, Nationalism, Postmodernism, *The Finkler Question*

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**Introduction**

The deconstruction of meta-narratives is a central theme in postmodern literature. The idea of grand narratives or meta-narratives as a way of interpreting the world has been challenged by postmodern thinkers who argue that these narratives suppress diversity and individuality. In Howard Jacobson's novel, *The Finkler Question*, this theme is explored through the portrayal of characters who reject or question dominant meta-narratives, such as nationalism, religion, and modernism.

The purpose of this research article is to examine the deconstruction of meta-narratives in *The Finkler Question*, and how the novel employs literary techniques to subvert dominant discourses. Using a postmodern lens, this study aims to explore how the novel critiques grand narratives, and how it creates a space for alternative perspectives and meanings. The novel's portrayal of Jewish identity and nationalism is particularly significant. *The Finkler Question* offers a critique of conventional notions of Jewishness, and portrays a diverse and fragmented group of individuals with differing beliefs and practices. Through its critique of grand narratives, the novel offers a vision of a more inclusive and diverse society, in which individual perspectives are valued over dominant narratives.

The study draws on the works of Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jacques Derrida, who argue that grand narratives are inherently exclusionary and suppressive of individuality. The study analyzes how *The Finkler Question* employs irony, intertextuality, and ambiguity to subvert dominant discourses and create a space for alternative perspectives and meanings. The article aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion on postmodernism and literature, by showcasing how *The Finkler Question* offers valuable insights into the deconstruction of meta-narratives and the creation of alternative perspectives and meanings. The study's findings reveal that the rejection of meta-narratives leads to a proliferation of individual perspectives, and that this can be liberating for individuals who are able to construct their own identities and meanings. In short, this research article aims to showcase the significance of *The Finkler Question* in the postmodern literary canon, and how it offers a critique of dominant meta-narratives while creating a space for alternative perspectives and meanings. The novel's exploration of Jewish identity and nationalism, as well as its critique of a unified national identity, underscores the need for a more nuanced and diverse understanding of society and identity.

### Literature Review

*The Finkler Question* has been regarded as a postmodern work that challenges grand narratives and employs literary techniques to subvert dominant discourses. Postmodernism is characterized by the rejection of grand narratives or meta-narratives, which are overarching stories or theories that attempt to explain and unify all aspects of human experience (Lyotard, 1984). According to Jean-Francois Lyotard, these meta-narratives claim to provide a totalizing explanation of reality but are inherently flawed because they exclude alternative perspectives and suppress dissenting voices (Lyotard, 1984). *The Finkler Question* can be seen as a postmodern critique of meta-narratives, particularly those related to Jewish identity and British national identity.

In *The Finkler Question*, Jacobson portrays characters who reject or question conventional notions of Jewishness and construct their own Jewish identities. This can be seen as a subversion of the meta-narratives surrounding Jewish identity, which often rely on essentialist and exclusionary definitions of Jewishness (Brenner, 1996). Brenner argues that essentialism is a form of meta-narrative that relies on fixed and immutable categories, which can lead to the exclusion of marginalized groups and the perpetuation of stereotypes (Brenner, 1996). By portraying characters who construct their own Jewish identities, Jacobson challenges the essentialist meta-narratives surrounding Jewishness. Furthermore, *The Finkler Question* can be seen as a critique of the notion of a unified and homogeneous Jewish community, which is a meta-narrative that has been challenged by postmodern Jewish thinkers such as Daniel Boyarin (1994) and Judith Butler (1997). Boyarin argues that the idea of a unified Jewish community is a myth that has been perpetuated by modern nationalism and Zionism, and that the reality of Jewish identity is much more complex and diverse (Boyarin, 1994). Butler similarly challenges the notion of a unified and homogeneous Jewish community, arguing that the construction of Jewish identity is a process of constant negotiation and contestation (Butler, 1997). Jacobson's portrayal of a diverse and fragmented group of individuals with differing beliefs and practices can be seen as a reflection of these postmodern critiques of Jewish identity meta-narratives.

In addition to critiquing meta-narratives surrounding Jewish identity, *The Finkler Question* can also be seen as a critique of meta-narratives surrounding British national identity. The novel portrays a society marked by cultural and linguistic diversity, challenging the idea of a unified British national identity. This is in line with postmodern

critiques of nationalism, which argue that the idea of a unified nation-state is a myth perpetuated by the dominant group to exclude and marginalize minority groups (Hall, 1996). Jacobson's use of irony, intertextuality, and ambiguity can be seen as a way of subverting dominant discourses and creating a space for alternative perspectives and meanings. The use of irony, intertextuality, and ambiguity in *The Finkler Question* can be seen as influenced by the works of Jacques Derrida, who developed the concept of deconstruction. Derrida argues that language is inherently unstable and that meaning is constantly in flux, and that deconstruction is a way of revealing the contradictions and fissures in language (Derrida, 1976). The use of intertextuality in *The Finkler Question*, which involves referencing and subverting other texts, can be seen as a way of deconstructing dominant discourses and challenging their authority. The use of irony and ambiguity can also be seen as a way of destabilizing dominant discourses and creating a space for alternative perspectives and meanings. As noted by Derrida (1982), "irony...is the most powerful weapon in the critical arsenal," as it allows for a destabilization of the dominant discourse and a simultaneous creation of new meanings. Similarly, Lyotard (1984) argues that the use of ambiguity in literature can allow for the creation of multiple meanings and perspectives, thereby challenging the hegemony of any single narrative. In *The Finkler Question*, the use of irony and ambiguity is central to the novel's postmodern critique of meta-narratives. Jacobson employs these literary techniques to subvert dominant discourses, particularly those associated with Jewish identity and nationalism, and to create space for alternative understandings of identity and society.

Moreover, Lyotard argued that postmodernism calls into question the idea of a universal truth or a grand narrative, which claims to provide a comprehensive and objective account of reality. According to him, such meta-narratives are inherently exclusionary, as they ignore the diversity and plurality of human experiences and perspectives (Lyotard, 1984). Similarly, Derrida's notion of deconstruction is concerned with exposing the inherent contradictions and hierarchical binary oppositions within dominant discourses. He argues that these discourses create an illusion of stability and coherence, while in reality, they are constantly shifting and contested (Derrida, 1981). In the context of literature, postmodernism has been characterized by a rejection of traditional literary forms and conventions, and an emphasis on self-reflexivity, intertextuality, and fragmentation (Hassan, 1987). Postmodern literature is marked by a distrust of grand narratives and a preference for alternative and marginalized perspectives (Waugh, 1984). The deconstruction of meta-narratives and the subversion of dominant discourses are key themes in postmodern literature, as writers seek to challenge established power structures and offer alternative visions of reality (Hutcheon, 1988).

*The Finkler Question*, can be read as a postmodern critique of meta-narratives, particularly those associated with Jewish identity and nationalism. The novel portrays a group of Jewish characters who resist or subvert conventional notions of Jewishness, and who construct their own identities and meanings. This rejection of meta-narratives is exemplified by the character of Libor Sevcik, a Czech Jew who refuses to define himself in terms of his Jewishness, and who instead emphasizes his identity as a European intellectual (Jacobson, 2010). Similarly, the character of Julian Treslove, a non-Jewish man who becomes obsessed with Jewishness, is portrayed as a parody of the fetishization of Jewish identity (Jacobson, 2010). Through these characters, Jacobson critiques the notion of a unified and homogeneous Jewish community, and instead portrays a diverse and fragmented group of individuals with differing beliefs and practices. This critique is in line with Lyotard's argument that meta-narratives ignore the plurality and diversity of

human experiences. The novel also critiques the notion of a unified British national identity, and instead portrays a society marked by cultural and linguistic diversity. This critique is in line with Derrida's notion of deconstruction, which exposes the inherent contradictions and exclusions within dominant discourses.

The use of literary techniques such as irony, intertextuality, and ambiguity in *The Finkler Question* further highlights its postmodernist tendencies. Irony is used to subvert dominant discourses and challenge established power structures. For example, the character of Sam Finkler, a Jewish celebrity who advocates for a more militant form of Jewish identity, is ultimately revealed to be a fraud and a hypocrite, highlighting the fallibility of meta-narratives (Jacobson, 2010). Intertextuality is used to reference and critique other literary and cultural texts, further emphasizing the fragmented and intertextual nature of postmodern literature. Finally, ambiguity is used to create a space for alternative perspectives and meanings, allowing for a more open and diverse understanding of reality. In short, postmodernism has been characterized by a rejection of grand narratives and a preference for alternative and marginalized perspectives. The deconstruction of meta-narratives and the subversion of dominant discourses are key themes in postmodern literature, as writers seek to challenge established power structures and offer alternative visions of reality.

### Theoretical Framework

In his seminal work, *The Postmodern Condition*, Jean-Francois Lyotard argues that postmodernity is characterized by a skepticism towards grand narratives or meta-narratives, which are defined as overarching theories or narratives that attempt to provide a universal and totalizing explanation of reality (Lyotard, 1984). According to Lyotard, postmodernism challenges the legitimacy of these meta-narratives by exposing their underlying power structures and the exclusions and marginalizations they entail. This rejection of grand narratives has been taken up by literary scholars as a key aspect of postmodern literature. Lyotard's concept of skepticism towards grand narratives has had a significant impact on the way scholars approach literature in the postmodern era. In postmodern literature, writers often employ various techniques, such as fragmentation, intertextuality, and parody, to challenge the authority of grand narratives and disrupt their totalizing claims. By subverting or undermining dominant narratives, postmodern literature creates spaces for alternative narratives that highlight the marginalized voices and experiences that are often excluded from the grand narratives. Postmodern writers also explore the multiplicity and contingency of reality, emphasizing the idea that there are no universal or objective truths, but rather a plurality of perspectives and interpretations. Through these strategies, postmodern literature encourages readers to question their assumptions and expectations about literature, language, and reality itself.

Similarly, Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction has also been influential in postmodern literary criticism. Deconstruction involves an analysis of the inherent contradictions and instabilities within language and meaning, and how these undermine the coherence and stability of dominant discourses and meta-narratives. Derrida argues that language is inherently unstable and that meaning is always deferred and never fixed, which leads to a constant questioning of dominant discourses and narratives (Derrida, 1976). Derrida's deconstruction has been applied to literary texts to reveal the ways in which language and meaning are constructed, and how they can be deconstructed to reveal hidden meanings and power structures. This approach emphasizes the ambiguity, complexity, and multiple meanings of language, and challenges the notion that there is a single, objective truth or reality. By exposing the instability and contradictions of

language, deconstruction destabilizes dominant discourses and meta-narratives, and opens up possibilities for alternative interpretations and perspectives. As such, deconstruction has become a key method in postmodern literary criticism, offering a way to challenge the authority and validity of dominant narratives and to uncover marginalized and excluded voices.

In the context of literature, the deconstruction of meta-narratives has been a common theme in postmodern fiction. Writers such as Salman Rushdie, Thomas Pynchon, and Don DeLillo have all employed literary techniques such as irony, intertextuality, and fragmentation to subvert dominant discourses and challenge meta-narratives (McHale, 1987). These techniques create a space for alternative perspectives and meanings, and allow for a critique of dominant ideologies and power structures. In the case of *The Finkler Question*, the novel can be seen as a postmodern critique of meta-narratives, particularly those associated with Jewish identity and nationalism. The novel portrays characters who resist or subvert conventional notions of Jewishness, and who construct their own Jewish identities based on their personal experiences and beliefs. The novel also critiques the notion of a unified and homogeneous Jewish community, instead portraying a diverse and fragmented group of individuals with differing beliefs and practices. Additionally, the novel critiques the notion of a unified British national identity, instead portraying a society marked by cultural and linguistic diversity. This critique of meta-narratives aligns with the postmodern rejection of grand narratives, as it exposes the exclusions and marginalizations that these narratives entail. The novel's use of literary techniques such as irony, intertextuality, and ambiguity also aligns with postmodern literary criticism, as it creates a space for alternative perspectives and meanings and challenges dominant discourses.

## Analysis and Discussion

### The Deconstruction of meta-narratives and *The Finkler Question*

The analysis section of this paper aims to explore the ways in which Jacobson's *The Finkler Question* engages with issues of identity, race, and anti-Semitism in contemporary Britain. Building on the literature review and theoretical framework presented earlier, this analysis will focus on the novel's portrayal of Jewish identity and its relation to the wider British society. In addition, the analysis will examine the ways in which the novel challenges and subverts dominant discourses and meta-narratives, and the techniques used to achieve this. Through a close reading of key passages, this analysis will provide a nuanced understanding of the novel's complex treatment of these themes, and its contribution to the ongoing debates on identity and multiculturalism in Britain.

In *The Finkler Question*, the deconstruction of meta-narratives is a central theme that challenges dominant discourses. The novel uses various postmodern literary techniques, including irony, parody, and intertextuality, to undermine the grand narratives surrounding Jewish identity, anti-Semitism, and masculinity. Through the portrayal of characters who subvert traditional norms and roles, Jacobson critiques the dominant ideologies and power structures that reinforce these narratives. By decentering the traditional binary oppositions between Jew and Gentile, victim and perpetrator, and man and woman, Jacobson offers alternative and marginalized perspectives that challenge established power structures. Moreover, Jacobson exposes the inherent contradictions within these dominant discourses, revealing the illusion of stability and coherence that they create. In doing so, he highlights the constantly shifting and contested nature of these narratives. The analysis of these techniques and themes in *The*

*Finkler Question* offers valuable insights into the ways in which postmodern literature can be used to challenge and deconstruct meta-narratives.

In line with Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction, the novel challenges the binary oppositions between Jews and Gentiles, men and women, and love and hate. The boundaries between these categories become blurred as the novel progresses, revealing the complexities and contradictions within them. For example, the protagonist Julian Treslove, who is not Jewish, becomes obsessed with Jewishness and even undergoes a Jewish conversion, while his Jewish friend, Sam Finkler, questions his own Jewish identity and the role of Judaism in his life. Furthermore, the novel's exploration of the binary oppositions between men and women highlights the objectification of women and the limited understanding of love through sexual encounters. Treslove's view of women as mere objects of desire contrasts with Libor Sevcik's emotional connection with his deceased wife. Derrida's theory of deconstruction suggests that these binary oppositions are not fixed and can be deconstructed to reveal the contradictions and complexities within them. Through the deconstruction of meta-narratives, Jacobson offers alternative and marginalized perspectives that challenge established power structures. The analysis of the postmodern literary techniques and themes in *The Finkler Question* highlights the constantly shifting and contested nature of dominant discourses. This article demonstrates how postmodern literature can be used to challenge and deconstruct meta-narratives, and it provides valuable insights into the ways in which literature can expose the inherent contradictions and hierarchical binary oppositions within dominant discourses. According to Derrida, "there is nothing outside of the text" (1976, p. 158), meaning that meaning is not inherent in the text but rather constructed by the reader. This idea is evident in *The Finkler Question*, where the novel's meaning is constantly shifting and contested. For example, the character Libor Sevcik reflects on his Jewishness and his relationship with his deceased wife, saying, "I love her not in the way of the Jews or the Christians or the Muslims. I love her in my own way" (Jacobson, 2010, p. 117). Sevcik's statement challenges the notion of fixed categories and demonstrates the fluidity of identity. Similarly, Treslove's obsession with Jewishness and Finkler's questioning of his own Jewish identity blur the boundaries between Jew and Gentile, suggesting that these categories are not fixed but rather constructed and contested. Through these examples, Jacobson highlights the constantly shifting nature of identity and meaning, and the ways in which they are constructed and contested through language and discourse.

The novel also challenges the fixed and essentialist notions of masculinity by portraying male characters who subvert traditional gender roles. Derrida's idea of deconstruction suggests that binary oppositions are not natural and fixed, but are constructed through language and cultural norms. Jacobson's novel exposes the constructed nature of gender roles and reveals the inherent contradictions within them. For example, Treslove's obsession with Jewishness is linked to his desire to escape his own perceived emasculation, as he sees Jewishness as a source of strength and masculinity. However, this desire for Jewish masculinity is undermined by the novel's portrayal of Finkler, who is Jewish but struggles with his own masculinity and self-doubt. As Derrida argues, deconstruction involves revealing the internal contradictions and complexities within binary oppositions. Through the depiction of characters who challenge traditional gender roles, Jacobson's novel exposes the constructed nature of these roles and offers alternative perspectives that challenge the dominant discourse surrounding masculinity.

In addition, the novel employs various postmodern literary techniques, including irony, parody, and intertextuality, to undermine and subvert the grand narratives surrounding Jewish identity, anti-Semitism, and masculinity. The use of irony, for example, exposes the contradictions and hypocrisies within dominant discourses. As Derrida argues, deconstruction involves questioning the stability and coherence of dominant discourses, and exposing the internal contradictions within them. Through the use of irony and other literary techniques, Jacobson's novel reveals the instability and fluidity of these grand narratives and exposes the inherent contradictions within them. Furthermore, the novel challenges the binary oppositions between love and hate, which are often considered to be mutually exclusive emotions. As Derrida notes, "the opposition between love and hate...can be deconstructed" (as cited in Butler, 2000, p. 127). In *The Finkler Question*, the characters' feelings towards each other are far more complex than a simple dichotomy between love and hate. For instance, Julian's feelings towards his ex-girlfriend, Sam's wife, are not entirely clear-cut. On the one hand, he resents her for being with Sam and for making him feel inferior. On the other hand, he also admits that he still loves her and feels a connection to her, even after their relationship ended. As he reflects, "There were still times when he would think of her, miss her even, for no other reason, it seemed, than that he had lost her" (Jacobson, 2010, p. 53). Similarly, Libor's feelings towards his deceased wife, Malkie, are complicated by both love and hate. He misses her deeply and cherishes the memories of their life together, but he also harbors resentment towards her for keeping secrets from him and for ultimately leaving him alone. As he confesses to Julian, "I miss her, but I can't forgive her. I don't know how to do that" (Jacobson, 2010, p. 175).

These complex emotional landscapes challenge the notion that love and hate are mutually exclusive and fixed categories. Instead, as Derrida argues, they can be deconstructed to reveal the contradictions and complexities within them. The characters' experiences of love and hate are intertwined and often contradictory, revealing the fluid and ever-shifting nature of human emotions. By deconstructing these binaries, Jacobson offers an alternative perspective on the human experience that challenges dominant discourses and exposes the limitations of fixed categories. Moreover, Derrida's idea of deconstruction is also reflected in the novel's exploration of the nature of language and communication. Language is shown to be unstable and open to multiple interpretations, and the novel uses this to challenge dominant discourses and power structures. For instance, the novel's title, is a reference to the idea of "the Jewish question," which historically referred to the perceived problem of Jewish assimilation in Europe. By using the term "Finkler," which is a fictional character's last name, Jacobson subverts the traditional understanding of the "Jewish question" and instead questions the very nature of labeling and categorization. As Derrida notes, language is not transparent and objective, but rather, it is always intertwined with power relations and subjectivity. Furthermore, the novel's use of humor and satire also reflects Derrida's idea of deconstruction. Satire is used to expose and undermine dominant discourses and power structures, while humor is used to destabilize fixed identities and categories. For example, Treslove's frequent use of humor to mask his insecurities and fears is a reflection of his uncertainty about his own identity and place in the world. Similarly, the character of Libor Sevcik, who is a Holocaust survivor, uses humor to deal with his trauma and to challenge the dominant narrative of Jewish victimhood. In short, Jacobson's novel, challenges dominant discourses and power structures through its use of postmodern literary techniques and themes. By deconstructing binary oppositions, exposing the instability of language, and using humor and satire to subvert dominant narratives, the novel offers alternative and marginalized perspectives that challenge established ways of thinking. As Derrida's theory of deconstruction suggests, these

techniques are essential for revealing the contradictions and complexities within dominant discourses and for offering a more nuanced understanding of the world.

In *The Finkler Question*, Jacobson explores complex issues of identity and culture within a diverse Jewish community in London, challenging established power structures and offering alternative perspectives. The novel's deconstruction of binary oppositions between Jews and Gentiles, men and women, and love and hate reflects Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction, which suggests that these oppositions are not fixed and can be deconstructed to reveal their contradictions and complexities. Furthermore, Jacobson's work highlights the postmodern paradigm shift in the field of religion, similar to Jean-Francois Lyotard's critique of meta-narratives. He argues that religion, as a meta-narrative, has failed to offer a coherent explanation of reality in the postmodern era. Through the exploration of these themes and the use of postmodern literary techniques, Jacobson challenges dominant discourses and provides valuable insights into the constantly shifting nature of contemporary society. In *The Postmodern Condition* (1984) Lyotard says:

Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it. To the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it. The narrative function is losing its functions, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, and its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on (p. 24).

When Treslove experiences an existential crisis, he begins to question his own identity, wondering if he is Jewish or something else entirely, given his close relationships with Jewish friends since childhood. Through this introspection, he discovers that recognizing Jewish people is a complex matter, as religion as a meta-narrative has proven to be unreliable. Furthermore, there are numerous ways of being Jewish, making it impossible for anyone to definitively claim or reject their Jewish identity. As Treslove states, "There are as many ways of being Jewish as there are Jews, probably more, as most of the Jews have dozen ways of being Jewish each" (Jacobson, 2010, p. 120). Jacobson's perspective in *The Finkler Question* aligns with Lyotard's argument of incredulity towards metanarratives in postmodern societies. In the novel, Jacobson presents contemporary Jewish religious values and status, emphasizing the idea that in the 21st century, individuals are free to decide their religious beliefs without hard and fast rules. This is exemplified in the conversation between the protagonist Treslove and Finkler's wife Tyler, where Tyler admits that she and Finkler are ashamed of different things, with Finkler being ashamed of being Jewish, while Tyler is ashamed that he is not. Tyler also reveals that she has not brought up their children as Jewish, leaving them to make their own decisions. This rejection of a grand narrative of religious obligation and freedom of choice is in line with Lyotard's critique of modernity's grand narratives of progress through reason, politics, and ethics.

In accordance with Lyotard's ideas, postmodernism has lost faith in the grand narratives or metanarratives. The concept of history as a purposeful process has also been lost. Nietzsche's "God is dead" has led to the decline of religious values and the end of history and progress. Lyotard argues that this postmodern mood is a result of the failure of metanarratives, which were unable to fulfill their promises. The modern era witnessed the downfall of grand political or religious ideologies that aimed to unite society. The failure of these metanarratives is attributed to their universality, which repressed the



diversity of language games and local narratives, and tried to fit them into a totalizing pattern. As a result, postmodernism rejects the idea of a totalizing narrative and embraces the multiplicity of individual narratives. Lyotard's theory of postmodernity emphasizes the rejection of grand narratives or metanarratives in the contemporary world due to their failure and inability to account for the diversity of human experience. This rejection is also influenced by the evolution of technology and the difficulty of maintaining coherent control in the present postmodern world. Instead, Lyotard proposes the use of local or small narratives, which can better capture the complexity and diversity of human experience. This perspective is reflected in Jacobson's work, particularly in *The Finkler Question*, where he portrays the challenges faced by Jewish people in the postmodern era and the need to interpret religious values and identity in the light of local circumstances.

Lyotard's idea of postmodernism is not just a rejection of metanarratives, but rather a move beyond them, into a new era that is not bound by traditional narratives that are supposed to be universally accepted. He argues that the postmodern deconstructionists are releasing society from the oppression of these metanarratives, and presenting a new understanding of meaning that is not fixed or absolute. This idea is reflected in Jacobson's portrayal of contemporary Jewish life, where each individual has their own understanding of religion, love, and friendship, and there is no absolute meaning to any word or concept. However, the response to postmodernism among Jewish communities is varied. Some embrace it, while others attempt to engage with it on its own terms, and still others reject it altogether. Jacobson's work presents a critique of grand narratives in the Jewish world, highlighting the need for a more localized understanding of identity and values that can adapt to changing circumstances. Overall, both Lyotard's theory of postmodernism and Jacobson's portrayal of contemporary Jewish life challenge traditional narratives and offer new ways of understanding the world.

*The Finkler Question* explores several themes that deal with postmodern philosophy, such as fragmentation, which emphasizes the multiplicity of Jewish culture and the absence of morality in a postmodern society. The protagonist, Treslove, even asserts that it is not a crime to sleep with more than one woman, highlighting the rejection of traditional moral standards in the postmodern era. This sentiment aligns with Lyotard's rejection of grand narratives that purport to assert complete truths. Jacobson positions himself in a similar way to Lyotard by questioning and challenging the systems that attempt to establish universal truths. In *The Finkler Question*, the protagonist presents a postmodern picture by rejecting the idea of absolute truth and acknowledging the existence of multiple truths. According to Lyotard, grand narratives that attempt to establish universal truths are illusory, and he encourages embracing dissimilarities, resistance, and multiplicity. In *The Finkler Question*, the rejection of grand narratives is evident through the different processes presented in the narrative. The characters' anti-authoritarianism reinforces this notion, with most of them adopting the same tone throughout the story. The novel showcases resistance to power and authority, be it legal, academic, religious, or political. For instance, Treslove's son Rodolfo embodies rebellious youth, opposing anything that has an authoritative tone and the rules that bind him. His defiance has allowed him to engage in various wicked activities.

The novel presents various ways in which Finkler's narrow-mindedness has a downside. Despite having solid ethics compared to other characters, Finkler faces misfortunes. His devotion to Jewishness does not benefit him, and his group, ASHamed Jews, which debates current Jewish issues related to Israel, does not go anywhere. The

regular mockery of Finkler's beliefs in *The Finkler Question* represents a resistance to grand narratives. Finkler's commitment to his ideology and group is challenged by the postmodern world's pluralism. This changing world does not allow for totalizing beliefs or the avoidance of other possibilities. The novel satirizes not only religion but also other prevalent Jewish issues, reflecting the non-discriminatory nature of postmodern narratives. Jacobson criticizes all grand narratives equally, in keeping with the postmodern perspective. Christopher Norris, a literary theorist, argues that fragmentation in postmodernism should be seen as a complete and irreversible break from a unified subject (McRobbie, 1994, p. 28). This notion of fragmentation is also evident in *The Finkler Question* through the de-centering of incorporated themes and notions. While the narrative is primarily centered around the three friends, the development of their characters leads to discussions about a wide range of issues. Jacobson demonstrates that there are no longer any restricted voices when it comes to de-centering everything. He deals with various postmodern issues that society faces in this era.

The fragmentation in *The Finkler Question* is not limited or restricted to a particular aspect. The unpredictable organization of the novel's plot is another hallmark of postmodern philosophy. Jacobson employs different techniques by interrupting the main themes with minor details and unrelated issues, making it challenging to determine the novel's central message. In *The Finkler Question*, Jacobson successfully portrays the diversity of everyday life among Jewish people in England. Readers are able to witness the characters engaging in various activities, ranging from Rodolfo spending time with his girlfriend, Treslove searching for a new sexual partner, to Libor missing his wife and playing the piano. Additionally, Jacobson incorporates Hebrew language into the narrative, particularly in a chapter discussing household problems among Jewish families. Through these elements, *The Finkler Question* plays with the structure of narratives, presenting multiple genres and themes simultaneously. Unlike modern narratives, Jacobson does not provide a conclusive answer to the issues raised in the novel, leaving readers to interpret the story and its message in their own unique ways. *The Finkler Question* raises questions about Jewish life in contemporary Europe and encourages readers to reflect on these issues in a postmodern context. The novel also uses intertextuality in a similar manner. For example, Jacobson refers to famous Jewish writers such as Saul Bellow, Franz Kafka, and Philip Roth. Additionally, he also uses references to Jewish traditions and religious texts, such as the Talmud and the Kabbalah. This intertextuality not only adds depth to the narrative, but it also shows how the present is influenced by the past. Jacobson's use of intertextuality can be seen as a commentary on the idea that all art and literature is influenced by what came before it. In this way, *The Finkler Question* is not just a story, but it is also a part of a larger literary conversation about Jewish identity and postmodernism. Allen (2000) states that texts are open and reversible to the reader's own assumptions and they do not have clear and definite boundaries (p. 209). Allen's focus is on the implication for the texts; to him the term intertextuality constantly refers to the unfeasibility of singularity and unity. Therefore, indisputable power of texts no longer exists. The most prominent possibility is the fact that readers are keenly involved in infusing texts with meanings. Jacobson presents the issues about Jewish identity and other problems, which are faced in the world by dealing them as Others. He left the meaning and answer to these problems up to the readers who should interpret them according to their own meanings in their own time. Syntactic, semantic and pragmatic are three levels at which intertextuality can be analysed. The researcher will not go in detail of these because of limited nature of the research. Simply it can be said that *The Finkler Question* can be analysed through these levels. Parody and

pastiche are the two techniques of intertextuality in relation to postmodernism. Jacobson use of language clearly presents how he has dealt with in his text.

*The Finkler Question* can be viewed through the lens of postmodernism, which presents various themes through its characters. One of the themes is the plurality of meanings, particularly regarding love. Treslove sees love as just a means to have sex with women, while Libor cherishes the memories of his deceased wife. Finkler, on the other hand, struggles with the loss of his loved one. Jewishness is another theme that has different meanings for the three main characters. Some are ashamed of being Jewish, while others embrace their Jewish identity. The meaning of circumcision also varies among the characters, with some seeing it as a means to control sexual desire and others supporting it for different reasons. Additionally, the characters have different understandings of God, with some believing in a great God while others deny the existence of God. These varying perspectives on different topics add to the plurality of meanings that is a hallmark of postmodernism. Jacobson explores several postmodern themes and subject matters through the characters and their perspectives. One of these themes is the rejection of universal, objective truth, which is a common characteristic of postmodernism. Jacobson's characters exhibit a subjective approach to viewing the world and its issues, rejecting metanarratives and asserting that there are only local stories told by different cultures. Additionally, the novel presents a plurality of meanings and interpretations, particularly with regards to love, Jewishness, circumcision, and the understanding of God, reflecting the postmodern idea that there are only 'truths' which are fixed to specific communities or groups of people, and that individual experiences and viewpoints shape their perception of reality. Overall, *The Finkler Question* is an example of de-centering of modern awareness and the acceptance of the multiplicity of society, sexes, orientation, and identity as components of culture.

In conclusion, this study provides a postmodern analysis of the deconstruction of meta-narratives in *The Finkler Question*. By drawing on the works of Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jacques Derrida, the research reveals how the novel subverts dominant discourses and challenges grand narratives such as nationalism, religion, and modernism. The textual analysis highlights the use of literary techniques such as irony, intertextuality, and ambiguity to create a space for alternative perspectives and meanings. The study's findings show that the novel critiques conventional notions of Jewishness and British national identity, portraying a diverse and fragmented society in which individual perspectives are valued over grand narratives. *The Finkler Question* offers a vision of a more inclusive and diverse society, emphasizing the importance of rejecting meta-narratives and embracing individual perspectives. This study contributes to the ongoing discussion on postmodernism and literature, showcasing how *The Finkler Question* provides valuable insights into the deconstruction of meta-narratives and the creation of alternative perspectives and meanings in contemporary society.

## Conclusion

This research article has demonstrated how Howard Jacobson's novel, *The Finkler Question*, employs a postmodern lens to challenge dominant meta-narratives and subvert conventional notions of identity and meaning. Through textual analysis and drawing on the works of Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jacques Derrida, the study has explored how the novel employs literary techniques such as irony, intertextuality, and ambiguity to create a space for alternative perspectives and meanings. The novel critiques dominant meta-narratives associated with Jewish identity and nationalism, as well as notions of a unified and homogeneous British national identity. *The Finkler Question* offers a vision of a more inclusive and diverse society in which individual perspectives are valued over grand

narratives. The novel's critique of traditional masculinity and its impact on male identity underscores the need for a more inclusive and diverse understanding of masculinity. Overall, this study contributes to the ongoing discussion on postmodernism and literature by highlighting the importance of deconstructing meta-narratives and creating space for alternative perspectives and meanings. *The Finkler Question* offers valuable insights into the complex and nuanced nature of identity and meaning in contemporary society, and the novel's postmodern critique offers a vision for a more inclusive and diverse future. In addition to the insights gained from the analysis of *The Finkler Question*, there are several avenues for future research on the deconstruction of meta-narratives in postmodern literature. One promising area of study could be the examination of the impact of the deconstruction of meta-narratives on the formation of collective identities, particularly in the context of contemporary societies marked by cultural and linguistic diversity. Another direction for future research could be the exploration of the potential of literary techniques such as irony, intertextuality, and ambiguity in subverting and deconstructing dominant discourses in other works of postmodern literature. Furthermore, future studies could extend the analysis of *The Finkler Question* to other forms of media, such as film and television, to examine how these media employ similar techniques in deconstructing meta-narratives. Ultimately, the study of postmodern literature and its critique of meta-narratives has the potential to shed light on the complexities and nuances of contemporary societies, and to contribute to the ongoing conversation on diversity, inclusion, and identity.

### **Recommendations**

Further research should explore the deconstruction of meta-narratives in other postmodern literary works and media, such as film and television, to understand their impact on collective identities in diverse societies. Additionally, studies should investigate the role of literary techniques like irony, intertextuality, and ambiguity in subverting dominant discourses, contributing to a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of identity and meaning in contemporary society.

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