287

POSTSTRUCTURALISM, POSTMODERNISM AND BRITISH ACADEMIC ATTITUDES, with special reference to David Lodge, Malcolm Bradbury and Gabriel Josipovici.

by

Paddy Bostock

This thesis is submitted to The Council for National Academic Awards in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Sponsoring establishment: The Polytechnic of North London, School of Literature and Media Studies.

Date: January 1989

CONTENTS

Synopsis	page iii
Abbreviations	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
Epigraph	1
Introduction	2
Chapter One: David Lodge: Works of Criticism	7
Chapter Two: David Lodge: Works of Fiction	40
Chapter Three: Malcolm Bradbury: Works of Criticism	90
Chapter Four: Malcolm Bradbury: Works of Fiction	121
Chapter Five: Gabriel Josipovici: Works of Criticism	156
Chapter Six: Gabriel Josipovici: Works of Fiction	190
Conclusion	220
Appendix One	
Appendix Two	
Bibliography	

POSTSTRUCTURALISM, POSTMODERNISM AND BRITISH ACADEMIC ATTITUDES, with special reference to David Lodge, Malcolm Bradbury and Gabriel Josipovici.

by

Paddy Bostock

SYNOPSIS

The central sections of this thesis examine the critical and fictional writing of three British academics, David Lodge, Malcolm Bradbury and Gabriel Josipovici, in order to elucidate their attitudes towards poststructuralist and postmodernist thinking in the quarter century roughly between the mid-nineteen sixties and the late nineteen eighties.

Chapter One explores David Lodge's approach to literary criticism with particular reference to his interest in the Formalist version of Structuralism, his concern with the development of a critical language with which to analyse the novel and his use of metaphor and metonymy in this process. It also points to his concern at the encroachment of continental theory into Anglo-American critical practice. The related Chapter Two traces the development of Lodge's fictional writing, showing how his critical activity interrelates with his fiction and indicating a native preference for realism.

Chapter Three focuses on Malcolm Bradbury's critical work, highlighting its concern with matters of a sociological rather than linguistic nature and indicating the shifts in his thought from a defence of liberalism in the face of determinism to increasing interest in American postmodernism. Chapter Four shows how his major works of fiction contextualize these concerns, particularly in regard to the liberal humanist's relationship with different versions of historical determinism.

Chapter Five elucidates Gabriel Josipovici's 'lessons of modernism' as they are outlined in his critical writing and explores his reference to the Middle Ages and Renaissance in his understanding of both modernism and realism. Chapter Six shows how Josipovici incorporates his views of modernism in his experimental works of fiction and the ways in which this activity may coincide with the postmodern agenda.

There are two appendices. The first describes statistically the degree to which poststructuralism has penetrated the teaching of English in British Higher Education. The second surveys the Methuen New Accents series.

ABBREVIATIONS

As there are multiple references to the works of Lodge, Bradbury and Josipovici in this thesis and occasionally title abbreviations coincide (eg. Bradbury *SW* and Lodge *SW*), the following abbreviations will be accompanied by the author's name, except in the case of a sequence of quotations unseparated by text. In such an instance, the author's name will be given for the first citation only.

David Lodge: Works of Criticism

LF: *The Language of Fiction*

NAC: *The Novelist at The Crossroads*

MMW: *The Modes of Modern Writing*

WWS: *Working With Structuralism*

Works of Fiction

P: *The Picturegoers*

GYB: *Ginger, You're Barmy*

BM: *The British Museum Is Falling Down*

OS: *Out of The Shelter*

CP: *Changing Places*

HFCYG? *How Far Can You Go?*

SW *Small World*

Malcolm Bradbury: Works of Criticism

SCMEL:	The Social Context of Modern English Literature
PS:	Possibilities
NT:	The Novel Today
MAN:	The Modern American Novel
SUAS:	Stratford Upon Avon Studies

Works of Fiction

EPIW:	Eating People Is Wrong
SW:	Stepping Westward
HM:	The History Man
ROE:	Rates of Exchange

Gabriel Josipovici: Works of Criticism

TWATB:	The World and The Book
LM:	The Lessons of Modernism
WATB:	Writing and The Body
MOC:	The Mirror of Criticism

Works of Fiction

M:	Migrations
EC:	The Echo Chamber
AWB:	The Air We Breathe
C-J:	Contre-Jour

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The thanks that follow are gratefully extended, in chronological order, to:

Maud Tyler, Keith Richards and Roger Bell at The Polytechnic of Central London for their encouragement with this project and help in making time available for it.

Donald Hawes at The Polytechnic of North London for his initial acceptance of the scheme, continuing support as second supervisor and kindness over a number of years.

David Jarrett, who acted as first supervisor and whose friendship, forbearance and whispered wisdoms made the process of this research both educative and humane.

Daniella Cavallaro for being the uncomplaining victim of more tedious conversations than can be reasonably expected of anyone.

Although it may sound trite to say so, there is a distinct possibility that the following pages, whatever their worth, would not have been written without the peculiar confluence of these people's support, for which I remain in their debt.

"Pragmatically speaking...we know that there has been, over the last 15 to 20 years, a strong interest in something called literary theory...and that this interest has at times coincided with the importation of foreign, mostly but not always continental, influences. We also know that this wave of interest now seems to be receding as some satiation or disappointment sets in after the initial enthusiasm. Such an ebb and flow is natural enough, but it remains interesting, in this case, because it makes the depth of resistance to literary theory so manifest. It is a recurrent strategy of any anxiety to defuse what it considers threatening by magnification or minimalization, by attributing to it claims of power of which it is bound to fall short. If a cat is called a tiger it can be easily dismissed as a paper tiger; the question remains, however, why one was so scared of the cat in the first place. The same tactic works in reverse: calling the cat a mouse and then deriding it for its pretense to be mighty. Rather than being drawn into this polemical whirlpool, it might be better to call the cat a cat...." (Paul de Man, The Resistance To Theory, Theory and History of Literature, Vol. 33 (Manchester: Manchester U.P., 1986), p. 5.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis does not draw upon a single literary or theoretical position from which to analyse the critical and fictional works of Lodge, Bradbury and Josipovici, but instead offers a combination of structuralist, historicist and psychoanalytical approaches that are both akin to the methods adopted by the writers themselves and felt to be consonant with the poststructuralist and postmodernist positions that lie in the background of their work.

The purpose behind this kind of analysis is partly to show how these writers' critical positions may be used to describe their works of fiction and partly to examine the ways in which these same positions relate to broader debates about poststructuralist theory and postmodernist fiction. Except for the survey of literature-teaching practices in British Higher Education (see Appendix One), no claims are made for the objectivity of these readings for, as Stanley Fish has noted: "There are no moves that are not moves in the game."[1] However, the collapsing of the categories 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity' notwithstanding, the readings of Lodge, Bradbury and Josipovici presented here are informed, even if distantly,

[1] Stanley Fish, Is There A Text In This Class? : The Authority of Interpretative Communities (Camb. Mass: Harvard U.P., 1980), p. 355.

by Susan Sontag's essay of the same title in Against Interpretation[2] and Ian MacGilchrist's book Against Criticism,[3] both of which argue against critical reductionism and for a brand of criticism that allows texts to articulate themselves.

It should also be stressed that this is not a thesis about poststructuralism or postmodernism but about reactions to these movements, although certain assumptions are made about these terms which may lead to them being used with some flexibility in the following chapters. Poststructuralism is understood as a range of rhetorical, psychoanalytical and ideological theories which threaten the notion of a 'finished product' and emphasize the idea of process, particularly in linguistic terms. Given its foregrounding of the rhetorical rather than referential power of language, this implies a notion of constant deferral beyond any faith in universal structures articulated around the binary opposition model. It also posits a version of literary theory that does not aim at interpretation but, by highlighting the deceptive nature of language, rather at showing how the text has always

[2] Susan Sontag, Against Interpretation (New York: Delta, 1966).

[3] Ian MacGilchrist, Against Criticism (London: Faber, 1982).

already dismantled itself. Similarly, postmodernism is understood as a radical departure from a tradition which found its inception in the Enlightenment and the encyclopaedic project and its culmination in the aesthetics of modernism, a departure signalled primarily by a loss of faith in the mastery of the world by a self-identical subject and in the unfolding of history according to linear, evolutionary rhythms. Instead, emphasis is placed on openendedness and psychological/historical displacements as indicators of the pre-eminently fictional nature of both human subjectivity and historical rationalization. Although there is an association between postmodernism and cultural phenomena, whereas poststructuralism is more normally seen as a part of philosophy, the two terms are used with some degree of synonymity in this thesis because both encompass the notion of the decentred human individual, which seems to pose a threat to commonly accepted understandings of Western intellectual development.[4]

The original object of this research was to write about the ways in which academic life, literary criticism and the making of fictions related to each other in the work of only Lodge and Bradbury, and indeed it is this material that informs the first four chapters of the thesis. What

[4] See, for example: Ihab Hassan, Modernism in the Plural: Challenges and Perspectives (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985) and Hilary Lawson, Reflexivity: the Postmodern Predicament (London: Hutchinson, 1985).

became rapidly evident, however, when reading these writers, was the case they were making for liberalism in the face of what they perceived to be the determinism of continental theory. So all-pervasive did this defence seem to become that the question then arose of how typical they were of the literary academy as a whole. It was decided that an appropriate figure against whom to compare them and to extend the thesis would be Gabriel Josipovici, whose criticism and fiction are discussed in chapters five and six. All of these three writers are then placed against the wider backdrop of current academic and publishing practice in the UK. In the spring of 1988, a survey was carried out to investigate the degree to which poststructuralism had penetrated the teaching of English in British Higher Education and the attitudes of staff and students to it. The responses are described in Appendix One. The scope of the thesis was further widened by a second appendix reviewing the Methuen New Accents series, which was used as a benchmark for the survey and also marks another area in which academic responses to poststructuralism and postmodernism can be observed.

From Lodge and Bradbury, then, to Josipovici and further into the literary academy and the publishing industry. In this sense, the thesis has been organic and descriptive rather than hypothetical and conclusive. Unlike a number of literary critical writings, it does not advance a theory and proceed to test it on literary texts; instead it offers readings and data concerning

contemporary attitudes to critical theory that are open to interpretation.

Although not exactly a 'shuffle-thesis', the chapters that follow do not necessarily have to be read sequentially and can be read for a number of different purposes, micro and macro. The reader wishing some overview of the works of Lodge, Bradbury and Josipovici, none of which has yet been much examined critically, may read only the chapters referring to these writers. Another reading route would be chapters one, three and five, which offer a comparative study of critical approaches only. Another would be chapters two, four and six, which focus on fiction. The sociologist of literature may wish to read Appendix One and no more. The macro-reading, however, would involve comparing the criticism and fiction of Lodge, Bradbury and Josipovici, and reading them against each other or in combination. In this sense, Lodge and Bradbury differ from each other but then both differ from Josipovici. On another level of generalization, all three writers may be set against the academic establishment as a whole or against some trends in academic publishing. From this exercise, it may be possible to draw conclusions about the wider literary picture of Britain in the 1980s.

CHAPTER ONE

David Lodge: Works of Criticism

David Lodge's overriding concern as a critic of the novel is with language and the development of an apparatus that will allow of an answer to Gertrude Stein's question: "What does literature do and how does it do it? And what does English literature do and how does it do it? And what ways does it use to do what it does?"[1] The stance that Lodge takes places him in the mainstream of twentieth century English criticism in the sense that he is concerned both to evaluate and account for literature. Equally it distances him from recent continental and American poststructuralist strategies, whose aim appears to be to disrupt the notion of literature as a set of structures that can be closely scrutinized and thus tamed. A frequently recurring word in Lodge's critical writing is 'domesticate', a term, when used in relation to literature, with which the poststructuralist would quarrel. Lodge defines his position in the introduction to *The Modes of Modern Writing*:

> I have always been a formalist critic, interested in the kind of question posed by Gertrude Stein in the epigraph to this book, and drawn to the study of the

[1] David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), epigraph.

> novel partly because of the challenging resistance it seems to offer to formalist criticism. In _The Language of Fiction_, I took my stand on the axiom that novels are made of words, and argued that since language is self-authenticating in literary discourse, all critical questions about novels must ultimately be reducible to questions about language. Though I think it is irrefutable in theory, this argument entailed certain methodological difficulties and disadvantages. In particular, it seemed to entail abstaining from discussing a lot of interesting aspects of novels because they had been pre-empted by content-oriented criticism - or discussing them at the risk of seeming inconsistent. In the working out of the argument, language or style became opposed to such categories as plot or character. The great attraction of the structuralist variety of formalism, it seems to me, is that within its terms of reference this kind of antithesis is dissolved in a more comprehensive theory of literary forms. _Everything_ is form, from the individual phrase or sentence up to the structure of plot or plot type; and there is homology between the smallest structural unit and the largest, because all involve the same basic processes of selection and combination, substitution and deletion. Wherever we cut into the literary text, and in whatever direction, we expose not content but a systematic structure of signs in which content is made apprehensible. (Lodge, _MMW_, p. xi)

This passage is actually paving the way for the metonymy and metaphor axes that Lodge will go on to construct in the remainder of the book, but the emphasis on a theoretical and highly structured approach to his subject is clear. David Lodge is not concerned with biography, with the social or historical backdrop to novels or their implications for the wider perspective of human life; he is interested in how they are constructed.

The construction of his own critical books follows a pattern which Lodge seems to have favoured over the years he has been writing criticism. There is a methodical pattern, which consists of a preliminary section in which a theoretical position or procedure is worked out,

followed by further chapters in which the theory is put into practice on selected texts. This pattern holds true from The Language of Fiction[2] to Working With Structuralism,[3] although the connections between the sections become tenuous or even ironic in his later writing. This is particularly true of Working With Structuralism, which might have been more appropriately titled: 'Working In Spite Of Structuralism', so uncertain is the link between Lodge's virtuoso demonstration of structuralist techniques in the first part of the book and his selection of texts in the second. For the purposes of this chapter, it is convenient to separate out the theoretical aspects of Lodge's critical books from the authors he chooses to examine and to consider these two aspects of his writing in isolation. Furthermore, the texts will not be examined in chronological order, for there are logical connections between The Language of Fiction and The Modes of Modern Writing, which imply a unity of thought, whereas The Novelist at the Crossroads[4] and Working With Structuralism may be taken separately.

Lodge's formalist position is established in his first critical book, The Language of Fiction, in which his aim

[2] David Lodge, The Language of Fiction (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).

[3] David Lodge, Working With Structuralism (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).

[4] David Lodge, The Novelist at the Crossroads (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971).

is to build a critical discourse for the novel mirroring that which already exists for poetry. He says:

> What I hope to have shown is that, if we are right to regard the art of poetry as essentially an art of language, then so is the art of the novel; and that the critic of the novel has no special dispensation from the close and sensitive engagement with language which we naturally expect from the critic of poetry. (Lodge, LF, p. 47)

He comes to this notion after examining the views of both critics and writers on the differences between poetry and prose, beginning with Auden who thought it was a waste of time to look for such differences, moving on to I.A.Richards, who distinguished between the scientific and emotive uses of language, Coleridge, who felt that the definition of good prose involved putting the proper words in their proper places, and Christopher Caudwell, whom Lodge quotes as follows:

> The poem and the story both use sounds which awake images of outer reality and effective reverberations; but in poetry the effective reverberations are organised by the structure of the language, while in the novel they are organised by the structure of the outer reality portrayed. (Lodge, LF, p. 15)

It is the assumed separation of poetry and prose in terms of critical examination that concerns Lodge, who goes on to say:

> ...it is the notion of a radical discontinuity between the language of poetry and the language of other kinds of discourse which has inhibited the study of the language of the novel. Once we conceive of language as a continuum in which the proportion of 'emotive' to 'referential' varies, but in which neither element is ever entirely absent, we may begin to see the novelist's medium as language rather than life. (Lodge, LF, p. 17)

His point is that it is no longer justifiable to use the critical machinery developed for poetry to examine novels,

even novels as allegorical as those of James Joyce, and that therefore a discourse must be created that will be as distinctive as the novel itself. He insists on the illusory nature of the novel and its necessary separation from either history or real life, arguing that the novelist cannot escape the need to select and emphasize, for otherwise his or her structure would disintegrate and aesthetic objectives would be lost. The novel is not life, then; it can only be a distillation of life, and its only means of expression is the written word:

> Modern realistic fiction, however concerned to imitate a world in which the public language is imaginatively impoverished, will tend to compensate by loading its direct representation of consciousness with a more sensitive and complicated verbalisation of experience. (Lodge, LF, p. 47)

What Lodge then sets out to do is to construct a means of examining this language. The immediate temptations in this quest would be the disciplines of stylistics and linguistics but, although he acknowledges that both have contributions to make, Lodge is wary of accepting either as a panacea, largely because of their over-emphasis of the scientific and their elimination of value. As far as stylistics is concerned, he is particularly sceptical about the use to British academics of insights that are mainly European in provenance. He notes that:

> Continental stylistics...generally yields up thinner results in terms of interpretation and evaluation of individual texts than the best Anglo/American criticism. It has not really asked itself the fundamental questions about the nature of literary discourse...which are the commonplaces of literary theorizing in England and America. It remains blandly convinced of a success which is not altogether apparent to the outsider. (Lodge, LF, p. 52)

He is equally dismissive of Leo Spitzer's version of stylistics because of his reliance on psychological explanations for an interpretation of the artist and on: "the formulation of those grand schematic theories about cultural change and the history of ideas so dear to the German scholarly mind " (Lodge, LF, p. 54). What he ultimately finds unsatisfactory, however, in the stylistician's approach to language is the exclusion of value from the debate and the insistence on language *per se* rather than on its relationship to the text:

> ...the stylistician seems obliged to rely upon an implied or accepted scale of values, or to put aside questions of value altogether; whereas the literary critic undertakes to combine analysis with *evaluation*. (Lodge, LF, p. 56)

Similar objections are raised to linguistics, which Lodge appears to see more as a threat to literary studies than a help. Again it is the insistence on science to the exclusion of value that is the sticking point and Lodge is firm when he says:

> ...one feels obliged to assert that the discipline of linguistics will never REPLACE literary criticism or radically change the bases of its claims to be a useful and meaningful form of human enquiry. It is the essential characteristic of modern linguistics that it claims to be a science. It is the essential characteristic of literature that it concerns values. And most values are not answerable to scientific method. Most linguists would recognize that literary criticism has its own province in which conclusions are not scientifically verifiable, even if at the time they rather look down upon it; but there are recurrent attempts to import the 'scientific' methods of linguistics into literary criticism via stylistics. (Lodge, LF, p. 57)

This smacks of a defensive attitude by Lodge, which has further echoes in his often Leavisite selection of ideas

and texts suitable for study. It is as if he were setting out to protect the English critic and reader from continental ideas, while none the less demonstrating his own awareness and mastery of them. In this way, Lodge can keep abreast of European developments while at the same time treading a path that is quite consistent with the history of critical activity in this country.

Having disposed of stylistics and linguistics as unduly foreign and scientific, therefore, he returns to the central question of how a text can be described and concludes that this can best be achieved through an admixture of language study, even of the traditional grammatical kind, and the evaluative processes of literary criticism:

> In the reading of literature...the expressive, the cognitive and the affective are inextricably mingled...The medium of this process is language. Language - the particular selection and arrangement of words of which the work of literature is composed - is the only objective and fixed datum. The expressive origin of the work, and its effective consequences, exist, but the former is irrecoverable and the latter variable. From this I conclude that, while a literary structure has an objective existence which can be objectively (or 'scientifically') described, such a description has little value in literary criticism which is not amenable to objective criticism. The language of the novel, therefore, will be the most satisfactorily and completely studied by the methods, not of linguistics and stylistics...but of literary criticism, which seeks to define the meaning and value of literary artefacts by relating subjective response to objective text. (Lodge, LF, p. 65)

Lodge preempts the criticism that in saying this, he may be setting himself up as the re-incarnation of Dr. Leavis by asserting that he does not place 'moral intensity' or 'peculiar interest in life' at the centre of his critical

thinking:

> In the last analysis, literary critics can claim special authority not as witnesses to the moral value of works of literature, but as explicators and judges of effective communication, of realization. (Lodge, LF, p. 68)

It is noticeable in most of Lodge's critical writing that he is an adept assimilator of existing ideas rather than an original thinker. This is shown in the conclusion to the theoretical section of The Language of Fiction in which, having put stylistics and linguistics to one side, Lodge then offers in their place a synthesis of the strategies of W.K.Wimsatt and Walter J.Ong. The blend is between Wimsatt's three categories of critical vocabulary: valuing, technical description and spatial valuation terms, and Ong's emphasis on the necessity of humanism. Although Lodge is impressed by Wimsatt's descriptive categories, he is less taken with the latter's notion of the separation of the text from both writer ('the intentional fallacy') and reader ('the affective fallacy'). Ong, in other words, provides the necessary additive of individualism.

What Lodge arrives at is a strategy that relies heavily on the tracing of repetitions within the text which may signify extra levels of meaning or imagery. This activity he divides into two potential areas: textural and structural, the former operating through the selection of representative passages of a text for close analysis, the latter tracing significant language threads through the whole text. Lodge notes that the textural approach is

useful for teaching purposes but cannot be representative of the whole text, while the structural strategy can illuminate an entire novel, although containing the covert danger of doing justice to only one aspect. He says:

> But that is what we seek, the pattern: some significantly recurring thread, which, however deeply hidden in the dense texture and brilliance of local colouring, accounts for our impression of a unique identity in the whole.
>
> It is my experience that the moment of perceiving the pattern is sudden and unexpected. (Lodge, LF, p. 80)

And further:

> It will be clear from the preceding pages that, in my own view, the perception of repetition is the first step towards offering an account of the way language works in extended literary texts, such as novels. (Lodge, LF, p. 82)

This type of conclusion, based on close analysis of the lexis of novels, was to prove, however, on Lodge's own admission, too restrictive a method of analysis and by 1977 Lodge was seeking for something more inclusive. This he found in the work of Roman Jakobson and more particularly in the final chapter of Fundamentals of Language,[5] in which Jakobson discusses the twin poles of metonymy and metaphor in connection with aphasia, a disturbance resulting in the impairment "either of the faculty for selection or substitution or for combination and contexture " (Jakobson, p. 90). In literary terms, the former is represented by metonym and the latter by metaphor, and although Jakobson's work is aimed

[5] Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, Fundamentals of Language (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1956).

primarily at the description of a condition in children and adults that can lead to speechlessness, he also alludes to its significance for disciplines other than his own:

> The bi-polar structure of language (or other semiotic systems) and, in aphasia, the fixation on one of these poles to the exclusion of the other require systematic comparative study. The retention of either of these alternatives in the two types of aphasia must be confronted with the predominance of the same pole in certain styles, personal habits, current fashions, etc. A careful analysis and comparison of these phenomena with the whole syndrome of the corresponding type of aphasia is an imperative task for joint research by experts in psychopathology, psychology, linguistics, poetics, and SEMIOTICS, the general science of signs. The dichotomy discussed here appears to be of primal significance and consequence for all verbal behaviour and for human behaviour in general. (Jakobson, p. 93)

In *The Modes of Modern Writing*, Lodge takes and extends this idea so that it can be used as a means of describing the main currents in twentieth century English writing, namely realism and modernism, although it is important ot realize that his is not the only use to which the notion has been put. Some of the American deconstructionists, notably Paul de Man in *Allegories of Reading*,[6] have also been interested in Jakobson's distinction, although they use it for very different purposes to Lodge's. As Christopher Norris notes:

> The importance of Jakobson's distinction - as David Lodge argues in *The Modes of Modern Writing* - is that it treats metaphor and metonymy as equally resourceful but organized according to opposite schemes of production. Thus Lodge proposes a new kind of literary history, based on Jakobson's bi-polar model and tracing the periodic shifts of emphasis from the strongly metaphorical (modernist), to the

[6] Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven and London: Yale U.P., 1979).

markedly metonymic (or 'realistic') writing.

> Lodge is perfectly at ease within the broad structuralist limits of applied theory or description. He is not concerned to deconstruct either his own working concepts or the texts that provide their testing ground and justification. De Man's reflections on metaphor and metonymy follow a very different path. Where Lodge treats the two devices as mapping out the field of modern writing - as if in a kind of amiable rivalry - de Man finds them everywhere locked in rhetorical combat. For him it is not enough to challenge traditional prejudices by placing metonymy on an equal footing with the claim of metaphor. Their relationship needs to be totally reversed, so that metaphor displays a delusory, at times almost furtive attempt to cover its own textual workings.[7]

The Modes of Modern Writing is an attempt to provide a framework within which the novel can be judged, certainly a more sophisticated apparatus than The Language of Fiction, although equally dependent on pre-existing theories. Lodge acknowledges the spur given him by the nouvelle critique, even though he profoundly disagrees with its conclusions:

> The ideas were there under my nose, and yet I did not see them because I was not looking for them. It needed the provocation of the nouvelle critique to make them visible to me some years later - and I think my experience has been shared by other English and American critics in the last decade. (Lodge, MMW, p. xi)

Lodge begins the book with the question : what is literature? He then considers various contributions to the debates surrounding the issue, focusing initially on the Prague School of the 1930s, particularly on their views relating to the centrality of 'foregrounding' and the ways in which specific vocabulary is used in novels to separate

[7] Christopher Norris, Deconstruction: Theory and Practice (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 102.

non-fiction from fiction. He also touches on the Russian Formalist Shklovsky's analysis of retardation and defamiliarization as hallmarks of the literary text and contextualizes the problems by means of examples from a common theme - hanging - as described by a range of styles from journalism to postmodernism. Lodge's concern is to differentiate not only between fiction and non-fiction, however, but also between different kinds of fiction, in particular modernist and realist. Realism, he says:

> ...is a mode of writing derived from consciousness rather than the unconscious, the daylight rather than the night-time world, the ego rather than the id; that is why it is such an excellent mode of depicting repression. (Lodge, MMW, p. 32)

This is one side of the polarity. Its countervailing force is modernism, which Lodge describes as "the dissolution of the external world, in favour of introspection, reflection, reverie, etc." (Lodge, MMW, p. 45). He proceeds by considering some of the prominent features of the modernist stance as it appears in writers as diverse as Henry James and B.S.Johnson, thus providing one end of a literary spectrum that will range from the dominant realism of the nineteenth century to modernist and postmodernist tendencies in the twentieth. But what Lodge is constantly in search of is "a single way of talking about novels, a critical methodology, a poetics or aesthetics of fiction, which can embrace descriptively all the varieties of this kind of writing." (Lodge, MMW, p. 52).

The 'single way' that Lodge will propose is the

metonymy and metaphor polarity, but before embarking on a description of this, he skirts around Roland Barthes and the *nouvelle critique*, taking from them what he wants to bolster his point, and firmly rejecting what he finds threatening. He agrees with Barthes as far as the primacy of language in the creation and criticism of prose fiction are concerned but parts company with him when he begins to tear down the structures that surround realism. This polemic against realism Lodge sees as simply one more example of the kind of dichotomy with which literature is confronted and which Lodge wishes to remove, at least from a critical standpoint. The first part of his argument is thus concluded with the observation that the literary world has divided into two camps: those who see art as imitating life, the realists; and those who believe that life imitates art, the modernists. Lodge pleads for a unity that will be able to embrace both sides of the argument in a non-partisan fashion:

> But the synthesis must be catholic; it must account for and be responsive to the kind of writing normally approached via content, via the concept of imitation, as well as to the kind of writing normally approached via form, via the concept of autonomy. (Lodge, *MMW*, p. 67)

Having shown how divided the literary world is, Lodge then steps forward with a solution which, he claims, will allow critics to speak about books of both the realist and modernist types in a neutral fashion. The central assertion that he takes from Jakobson and keeps returning to is: "The poetic function (of language) projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into

the axis of combination."[8] In other words, the more language tends away from the syntagmatic, metonymic axis to the paradigmatic, metaphorical one, the more poetic that language becomes, although the metaphorical superstructure can never fully escape a metonymic infrastructure. As Jakobson says:

> The primacy of the metaphoric process in the literary schools of Romanticism and Symbolism has been repeatedly acknowledged, but it is still insufficiently realized that it is the predominance of metonymy which underlies and actually predetermines the so-called realistic trend... (Jakobson, Fundamentals of Language, pp. 91-92)

This picture, however, is by no means crystal clear as there is a complex way in which poetry is metonymic, ie. it is a radical selection from the whole that is available to it, and prose can be metaphorical, ie. it replaces fully another set of written texts. If one adds de Man's notions of rhetorical and grammatical readings of texts and his assertion that rhetoric can be 'grammatized' and grammar 'rhetoricized', then the relationship becomes multi-layered and potentially chiasmatic, producing a reverse parallelism that deconstructs the text.[9]

David Lodge, however, takes a simpler and less radical route than this, using metonymy and metaphor as a kind of literary litmus paper, testing to see where texts belong

[8] Roman Jakobson, "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," in Style and Language, ed. Thomas Sebeok (The Hague: Mouton, 1969), p. 358.

[9] Paul de Man, 1979, Chapter 1.

on the scale he has devised, always in pursuit of an answer to the question that has dogged him all along: what is literature? Equipped with this apparatus, he is better equipped to judge without having recourse to partisan argument. When a piece of prose is totally metonymic in character, it is not literature and there is nothing for the literary critic to say about it. When, however, it veers towards the paradigmatic, metaphorical axis, it can be recognized as literature and furthermore ascribed a category in terms of realism or modernism, depending on the balance of metonym and metaphor in its structure. What fascinates Lodge is the literary metonymic text, in which the signs and symbols are that much harder to discover. In this regard, he points to Wordsworth as a poet who consciously attempted to shift the balance within poetry from the metaphorical to the metonymic axis. He also draws a parallel between fiction and cinema, noting that a heavily metaphorical text would be practically impossible to convey on the screen, while a more metonymic one would be easier to translate into the visual medium.

In essence, Lodge offers a system with which to approach literary texts so that their places in the canon can be identified and labelled without the need for attachment to partisan positions, and the book has had some impact on critical thinking. Brian MacHale acknowledges Lodge's influence in his book <u>Postmodernist</u>

Fiction,[10] for example.

The Language of Fiction and The Modes of Modern Writing constitute Lodge's central contribution to the debate about language and were written before the influence of continental theory became widespread. Working With Structuralism, which Lodge himself subtitles 'Working ALONGSIDE Structuralism', shows some of the nervousness that English critics seem to feel in the face of thinkers like Jacques Derrida:

> I have always been more interested in formalist than in ideological criticism because as a novelist I would prefer to be on the sharp end of the former: and I am not at all sure that poststructuralist discourse is susceptible of being assimilated and domesticated in a critical vernacular. To open a book or article by, for instance, Derrida or one of his disciples is to feel that the mystification and intimidation of the reader is the ultimate aim of the exercise. (Lodge, WWS, p. vii)

The book is a curious mixture. Lodge reviews the movements that followed realism, ie. modernism, antimodernism and postmodernism and then proceeds to offer three approaches for the analysis and interpretation of the realist text. The first is based on narratology and narrative grammar, and outlines the patterns of thought deriving essentially from Saussure's division of language into langue and parole, which, in narrative terms, are the sub-systems of rules on the one hand and the surface text on the other. He shows how Barthes developed this idea by breaking up narrative into sequences that alternately open and close

[10] Brian MacHale, Postmodernist Fiction (London: Methuen, 1987), Foreword.

possibilities for the reader and establishing a set of units called nuclei (structural units that cannot be deleted without altering the story) and catalyzers (units that fill the spaces between the nuclei and expand them).

A second approach is seen by Lodge to be offered by the Russian Formalists' distinction between _fabula_, the story, a set of contiguous events, lines of action (metonymy in the terms of _The Modes of Modern Writing_) and _sjuzet_, which is the way of telling the story, the gaps in the narrative, elisions, emphases and distortions.

It is, however, the third approach that is most significant in connection with Lodge's suspicions about continental theory, because it is here that he does his best to assimilate and domesticate its burgeoning influence. Lodge returns to a rhetorical analysis, which turns out to be little more than a summary of his strategies in _The Language of Fiction_ and _The Modes of Modern Writing_. In other words, he iterates his belief in patterns of repeated motifs and the verbal texture of novels and then returns to his Jakobsonian distinction between metonym and metaphor, this time with the semiotic additives of 'signifier' and 'signified'. Lodge keeps up to date, takes what he needs, shows that he is aware of what is happening in the critical world around him and then produces a synthesis that will allow him to continue working as he has always worked - without structuralism.

Before he proceeds, in the rest of the book, to look at a variety of writers in a variety of ways, he does however

offer two very coherent examples of structuralist methodology. One is an analysis of the Hemingway story The Cat in the Rain and the other a similar exercise with one of his own short stories, also about a cat. These were both developed by Lodge in seminars with students and demonstrate that he could be a proficient structuralist if he so chose. Not that he will admit it:

> ... the exercise vindicates Roman Jakobson's assertion that literariness - that which makes a text literary - is the projection of 'the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination.' Stated less abstractly, this means that literary discourse is characterized by symmetry, parallelism, repetition of every kind and on every level. (Lodge, WWS, p. 55)

The subtext to this is perhaps that Lodge feels he has been working this way all along and that structuralism is merely a rose by another name. Throughout Working With Structuralism, there is a pervasive sense of defensiveness. At one point he says:

> I should make it clear that I am a novelist as well as a critic, a novelist who has written several books of the kind that Roland Barthes says it is no longer possible to write, ie. novels that are continuous in technique with 'classic realism'. One reason for this, no doubt, is that I came of age in the 1950s, which happened to be a dominantly anti-modernist phase in modern literary history. (Lodge, WWS, p. 72)

This feeling of manning the barricades is most evident in the second of Lodge's critical books, The Novelist at the Crossroads, the title of the first essay in the collection, a piece which has been reproduced elsewhere, notably by Malcolm Bradbury in The Novel Today.[11] The book

[11] Malcolm Bradbury, The Novel Today (Manchester: Manchester U.P., 1977).

is different from his others in so far as it is not concerned as much with the proposal of critical strategies as with the whole state of the novel, particularly the realist novel, in England. Essentially it is a plea for eclecticism and liberalism in the face of radical changes in the nature of the novel in the United States, although Lodge says in his preface that he is still as interested in language as ever and that he demonstrates this interest in several of the essays in the book. In particular he points to two books by the American critics Scholes and Kellog, The Nature of Narrative[12] and The Fabulators,[13] both of which spell out the demise of the realist novel as we know it, suggesting that realism should be left to the cinema while literature concerns itself with the stimulation of the imagination. They refer to writers such as Kurt Vonnegut and John Barth in this respect. Lodge's reaction is perhaps predictable:

> In considering this point of view it behoves the English reader to proceed carefully, and with a certain self-awareness. There is s good deal of evidence that the English literary mind is peculiarly committed to realism, and resistant to non-realistic novels to an extent that might be described as prejudice. (Lodge, NAC, p. 7)

On the other hand, Lodge, although stung by criticism from abroad, is still a liberal and cannot deny the truth

12 Robert Scholes and Robert Kellog, The Nature of Narrative (New York: O.U.P., 1966).

13 Robert Scholes, The Fabulators (New York: O.U.P., 1967).

of some of it. He quotes from Rubin Rabinovitz,[14] who complains that English writers are too enmeshed in the traditional novel, too frightened to experiment with new forms and too quickly absorbed into the literary establishment with the result that their books, although technically competent, remain mediocre. One of Rabinovitz's comments must have particularly struck Lodge:

> All too often he [the successful novelist in England: author's note] uses his position to endorse the type of fiction he himself is writing and he attacks those whose approach is different. (Lodge, _NAC_, p. 8)

However, what seems to concern Lodge more than anything is the notion running through a lot of contemporary literature, especially American, that our universe may not be amenable to the taken-for-granted sort of reading favoured by realist critics and writers. He is particularly scornful of Gore Vidal:

> _Myra Breckinridge_ is a brilliant but somehow deeply sterile work: as if Vidal, deeply contemptuous of the contemporary _avant garde_ and the cultural climate of post-Gutenberg, pre-Apocalypse that fosters it, has abandoned hope of positively resisting either, and cynically set himself to match their wildest excesses. (Lodge, _NAC_, p. 22)

It is this 'excess' that seems to disturb Lodge so much. As a liberal and a realist, he is committed to a different agenda altogether, one that includes principles of compromise and pluralism for the writer of both fiction and criticism. It is as if Lodge saw the world threatened

[14] Rubin Rabinovitz, _The Reaction Against Experiment In The English Novel 1950-60_ (New York: Columbia U.P., 1968).

by hostile forces, which bring him face to face with questions about the nature of reality that are difficult to answer from within the commonsense British attitude to life.

Having crossed swords with the Americans, Lodge then proceeds to trace a sort of literary roadmap, showing the development of the English novel from the eighteenth and nineteenth century periods of predominant realism, being diverted through the modernism of Forster, Woolf, Lawrence and Joyce in the early part of the twentieth century, returning to realism in the 1930s, becoming somewhat more 'fabulatory' in the 1940s, swinging back to realism in the 1950s and then facing what seems like an impossible choice, a fork in the road. One way leads to the _nouveau roman_ of Robbe-Grillet and the other to the fabulation of the Americans. Lodge says:

> The situation of the novelist today may be compared to a man standing at a crossroads. The road on which he stands (I am thinking primarily of the English novelist) is the realist novel, the compromise between the fictional and empirical modes. (Lodge, _NAC_, p. 18)

and further:

> Realistic novels continue to be written - it is easy to forget that most novels published in England still fall in this category - but the pressure of scepticism on the aesthetic and epistemological premises of literary criticism is now so intense that many novelists, instead of marching confidently ahead, are at least considering the two routes that branch off in opposite directions from the crossroads. (Lodge, _NAC_, P. 19)

It should perhaps be noted at this point how the fiction of both Lodge and Malcolm Bradbury has altered since these words were written in 1969.

What Lodge is advocating for both critic and novelist is pluralism and he insists that, although radical alternatives to realism may have appeared on the horizon, there is still room for compromise. He points to British writers like Doris Lessing, Flann O'Brien, Kingsley Amis and Evelyn Waugh, who foreground within their texts the problematic of writing and who yet remain within the broad scope of realism. In other words, although the British novelist may feel some anxiety when confronted by writers like Robbe-Grillet or Burroughs, he or she does not have to be faced with a straight choice. There remains the possibility of retaining the best of the realist tradition, while weaving into it as much or as little of the postmodernist stance as is considered desirable. Lodge says:

> I like realistic novels, and I tend to write realistic fiction myself. The elaborate code of literary decorum that governs the composition of realistic fiction - consistency with history, solidarity of specification and so on - ...is to my mind a valuable discipline and a source of strength. (Lodge, NAC, p. 32)

Perhaps this is just another way of repeating the power of the metonym, although Lodge cannot deny the new forms of fiction being written in both France and America any more than he can deny the influence of critics like Barthes or Derrida. As an academic, critic and novelist himself, he has to take them into account. What is significant is the avuncular way he does so, filtering away the most radical elements in their thought to leave only that which will not rock the realist boat too violently. His attitude to

the situation may be best summed up by two quotations from the end of the essay entitled 'The Novelist at the Crossroads':

> If the case for realism has any ideological content it is that of liberalism. The aesthetics of compromise go naturally with the ideology of compromise, and it is no coincidence that both are under pressure at the present time. The non-fiction novel and fabulation are RADICAL forms which take their impetus from an extreme reaction to the world we live in....(Lodge, NAC, p. 33)

and further:

> The realist and liberal answer to this case [the radical one: author's note] must be that while many aspects of contemporary experience encourage an extreme, apocalyptic response, most of us continue to live most of our lives on the assumption that the reality which realism imitates actually exists. (Lodge, NAC, p. 33)

So far, this chapter has concentrated exclusively on David Lodge's theoretical positions as far as both critical activity and the status of the novel are concerned, by examining the preliminary sections of his critical books. What remains is to look in some representative detail at the works he chooses to focus on in the subsequent chapters of these books and to consider the overall impetus of his critical thought.

Lodge writes mainly about British novelists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, who tend to fall into three categories: those who provide a suitable testing ground for his theoretical stances, some of the Catholic writers who inspired his doctoral thesis and those who can be used to demonstrate that the novel in England is still alive and well even though some people, mainly Americans,

say it is not. These categories tend to repeat themselves and a reading of Lodge's critical books reveals a proclivity for returning to previously trodden paths; many of the essays have been re-printed elsewhere and often, it seems, have been added to the critical books in a somewhat random manner.

One of the most striking pieces from The Language of Fiction and a good example of the theoretical method proposed by the book is called 'Fire and Eyre: Charlotte Brontë's War of Earthly Elements'. What Lodge wishes to show in this essay is the way in which Jane Eyre's life is balanced between the two poles of cold and warmth and how this sense of polarity is produced by Bronte not only overtly but also covertly through a series of objective correlatives. These are earth, water, air and fire used as both parts of the physical environment and indicators of emotion. The essay was written prior to his thoughts about metonymy and metaphor, yet it is a clear precursor of this method in the sense that it traces throughout the whole text lexical items posing as metonyms when in fact they are acting metaphorically. Lodge notes that Jane Eyre contains eighy-five references to domestic fires, forty-three figurative allusions to fires, ten references to conflagrations and four to hell-fire. He also traces the kinds of word used in the text: 'glowed', 'kindled', 'shone', 'blazed', etc., which he takes as a series of symbolic offerings. Proceeding through the text, he examines aspects of Jane's character, which he finds

connected to a volcano-image as far as her relationship with Mr. Rochester is concerned, and related to fire also in her marriage to St. John Rivers, who is taken as an earth/water symbol. What Lodge is suggesting here is that there are additional referential layers of meaning contained in lexical selection and, consistent with the theoretical position at the beginning of the book, he works these through to conclusions about meaning that are based exclusively in language.

In the same book he uses this method, sometimes working through the whole of a text, sometimes taking representative passages, to examine a series of writers: Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, Henry James, H.G.Wells and Kingsley Amis. In Mansfield Park he notes the tone set by the predominance of words concerning principle, morality, justice and manners. He remarks that the success or failure of Hard Times depends critically on Dickens's use of rhetoric, which he traces through the first chapter of the book. He examines Hardy's use of different voices and consequently different R.P. and dialectal styles by selecting from the whole of Tess of the D'Urbervilles and showing how Hardy's control of language allows him to describe characters from within and without. The Ambassadors, because James was such a 'self-conscious' artist, can be treated from a microcosmic point of view, which means taking only two paragraphs and subjecting them to what amounts to a version of practical criticism that involves counting the number of words in

sentences, checking verb forms, noting the frequency of abstract nouns and so on. Lodge re-assesses H. G. Wells's Tone-Bungay and finds, in terms of variety of style, especially that concerning architecture, that it is not as bad a book as critics have said. Finally Kingsley Amis is considered in the light of four of his novels and elevated to serious literary status by virtue of his stylistic virtuosity.

In The Modes of Modern Writing, Lodge uses his metonym/metaphor polarity to explore the sort of literary history he had outlined in The Novelist at the Crossroads and to show how the different phases of realism and modernism in the twentieth century can be identified by using Jakobson's axes. Mainly he is concerned with modernism, however, focusing in particular on Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Hemingway, Lawrence and Woolf. On Joyce, he argues that Dubliners is largely metonymic, that Finnegans Wake is metaphorical and the Ulysses is half and half, with a metaphorical structure but a metonymic mode. He says that the tendency of modernist writing in general is towards this metaphorical structure and texture, within a metonymic context, which it can never entirely escape. He notes the way in which Virginia Woolf tried to break with the accepted patterning of sentences and used the device of switching time perspectives to break the metonymic continuity of linked events in chronological order, so as to disrupt conventional wisdom about narrative forwarding.

Having measured modernism with his metonym/metaphor test, Lodge then moves on through the 1930s, looking at the political realism of Orwell, Greene and Spender, notes the swing back to metaphor in the 1940s in writers such as Thomas and Larkin, and identifies the anti-metaphor position of the kitchen-sink school of the 1950s. This survey brings him back to his old adversary from The Novelist at the Crossroads: the postmodernist, who, he says, is trying to be neither modernist nor realist and thus spoiling the whole show. He offers readings of Beckett, Fowles, Vonnegut, Pynchon, Robbe-Grillet, Vidal, Borges, Brautigan and B. S. Johnson, whose works he is able to comprehend within categories such as contradiction, permutation, discontinuity, randomness, excess and what he calls 'short circuit'. As ever Lodge is adept at reducing movements to structural components, so that they can be systematically examined.

In both The Language of Fiction and The Modes of Modern Writing, Lodge is essentially using texts to illustrate a critical method. However within these books and elsewhere in his critical writing, he also selects authors for looser academic reasons, often simply because he likes them. In The Novelist at the Crossroads, for example, he includes a whole section entitled 'Fiction and Catholicism', in which he examines the works of Graham Greene, Muriel Spark, Hillaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton. In this section he says:

In seeking to convey to his non-Catholic audience a

> technical and emotional understanding of Catholic experience, the Catholic novelist risks rousing in this audience whatever extraliterary objections and suspicions it entertains about the Catholic Church as an active, proselytizing institution; while on his own part he has to grapple with the problem of the Church which has never accepted the individual's right to pursue intellectual and artistic truth in absolute freedom. (Lodge, NAC, p. 88)

He also quotes this passage by T. S. Eliot from his essay on Baudelaire:

> So far as we are human, what we do must be either evil or good; so far as we do evil or good we are human; and it is better, in a paradoxical way, to do evil than to do nothing: at least we exist. It is true to say that the glory of man is his capacity for salvation; it is also true to say that his glory is his capacity for damnation. The worst that can be said for most of our malefactors, from statesmen to thieves, is that they are not man enough to be damned. (Lodge, NAC, p. 95)

As will be seen in the next chapter on Lodge's fiction, he well understands the tensions that exist between human impulses and religious authority. Of Greene, however, he notes tellingly that, although he was influenced by Catholic writers, such as Mauriac, he has never allowed himself to become subject to them: "He draws on it [the Catholic tradition: author's note] for ideas, but domesticates these in fiction that owes more to his native literary tradition" (Lodge, NAC, p. 108).

In Working With Structuralism Lodge also considers the Catholic dimension to his criticism by including two essays about Evelyn Waugh, presumably to show that contemporary ideologies from overseas cannot be expected to eradicate the influence of a much longer tradition. Both essays are largely biographical, which betrays some of the knowingness at the centre of the book, as if Lodge

were being contrary on purpose by including the oldest of literary strategies in a book which purports to be about some of the most recent. Not that he remains unaware of the contradiction:

> Other essays here show little or no trace of structuralist ideas, and some, like the mainly biographical studies of Evelyn Waugh, ...run directly counter to the spirit of the movement. I make no apology for this... The eclecticism of this book is its point - and, I hope, its justification. (Lodge, WWS, p. x)

However pluralistic he tries to be in his approach to criticism, Lodge cannot help foregrounding the sorts of writer he considers health-giving for English fiction. He returns repeatedly to Jane Austen, of whom he writes:

> She was...perhaps the first novelist to master the judicious blend of authorial omniscience and limited view-point, sliding subtly between direct narrative and free indirect speech, that permits the novelist to command the simultaneous double perspective of public and private experience. (Lodge, MMW, p. 39)

In her work, as in that of Muriel Spark, about whom he also writes in praise, Lodge sees the possibility of the English novel not having to give way to the caprices of its continental and American rivals. When he is not using texts as testing grounds, he returns to authors who reassure him of the vitality of the novel in England - writers of realism, who are able to contain and domesticate the excesses of postmodernism. In John Fowles too, the author as 'impresario' as Lodge calls him, he can detect enough basic realism to merit salvation. At the same time, he is constantly directing the reader away from the likes of Vonnegut, Vidal or Burroughs, in whose work he senses the seeds of an attitude to life and history

which are fundamentally antipathetic to the British cultural heritage. Of William Burroughs he says:

> It [praise of Burroughs: author's note] seems to illustrate very well what Lionel Trilling has described as the institutionalisation of the 'adversary culture' of modernism; and like him, I do not see this process as a symptom of cultural health. The Naked Lunch, whatever else it may be, is a very indecent book, and Nova Express, whatever else it may be, is a very tedious book. These novels' pretensions to serious literary significance which, if realized, would justify this indecency or tedium (or rather force us to re-define these qualities) need to be examined rather more rigorously than our present litarary climate encourages. (Lodge, MMW, p. 161)

On the other hand, talking about Kingsley Amis he says:

> I Like It Here is not so much about the importance of being Amis as about the difficulty of being Amis - the difficulty of being committed to aesthetic, philosophical and moral principles which seem more reliable but drabber than the principles on which most great 'modern' art was based. There must be few practising writers in England today who do not feel the pressure of this situation. Amis's awareness of the situation, his sardonic sense of the literary tradition and the limitations of his own stance towards it and above all his success in finding a language which articulates very exactly the temper of his generation, make him, I think, a writer of genuine literary 'importance'. (Lodge, LF, p. 261)

For a professional critic, these are loose and emotional statements, based on little more than personal preference and an intuitive sense of what is good and bad. There is cause here to think that the pluralist critical approach Lodge proposes is to some extent a smoke-screen, behind which he can carry on being prescriptive about the future of British fiction.

The American critic Rabinovitz noted the way in which English novelists could promote certain types of fiction they themselves preferred and the same point could perhaps

be made here about Lodge. After all, he holds a prestigious position within English society as an Honorary Professor of English at Birmingham University, a novelist twice short-listed for the Booker Prize (1984 & 1988), a television writer and an critic with a solid reputation. He is in the sort of position that would allow him to clear the ground through his criticism and journalism for the sort of comic realist fiction he prefers to write. Furthermore, he will have played his part in the institutionalizing of notions of literary criticism through his university teaching over the years.

Other objections have also been raised to some of Lodge's critical procedures. Peter Widdowson has drawn attention to the difficulties entailed by the liberal humanist stances adopted by both David Lodge and Malcolm Bradbury in the face of determinist ideologies and he sees both writers as fighting desperately to cling on to the values of a vanished or vanishing world in a manner which is both compromising and anti-historical. Of Lodge's critical writing he says:

> Lodge's project then, like Bradbury's, is to reaffirm the importance of realism because of its concern with values...but to admit the innovations of modernism and postmodernism, American and European, and to combine formalist, especially structuralist, critical theory with the evaluative, content-centred empiricism of native practice. His four major books of criticism, therefore, are full of exhortations to what he calls, in the preface to The Novelist at the Crossroads, 'the critical pluralism I am defining and

defending'.[15]

Widdowson sees Lodge's metonym/metaphor dichotomy as a tool for avoiding the partisan infighting that takes place between vying ideologies and is concerned at the implied need to 'assimilate' and 'domesticate' that runs through Lodge's critical work but is particularly evident in Working With Structuralism, in which Lodge makes it clear that he is not an ideological but rather a formalist structuralist. Widdowson notes:

> But Lodge's pluralism is part, like Bradbury's, of a larger scheme. It is, of course, opposed to its natural enemy, what he calls in The Modes of Modern Writing the 'polemical or factional spirit' which gives rise to 'a literary politics of confrontation (in France, lately, of terrorism).' (Widdowson, 'AHM', p. 14)

Widdowson goes on to note Lodge's battle for realism and points up the disparity between his critical theory and practice, emanating from his stated desire to see evaluation included in any critical exercise but his apparent inability to stick to these principles himself when he writes about texts:

> What is...striking are the number of passing evaluations of literary works made without any critical criteria adduced at all, (for example, 'my opinion is that it is a work of genuine, though not outstanding, literary merit.') (Widowson, 'AHM', p. 16)

However what interests Widdowson most about Lodge and Bradbury as novelists and critics is their political

[15] Peter Widdowson, 'The Anti-History Men: Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge,' Critical Quarterly, 26, No. 4 (Autumn 1984), p. 13. Hereafter cited as 'AHM'.

position, or lack of one. Because, he claims, they refuse to take a stand on political issues, preferring the liberal path of compromise and obfuscation, they are necessarily reinforcing the powers of reaction in this country. Remarking that Lodge agrees with Orwell in the view that ideological commitment is inimical to literary creation, Widdowson goes on to say:

> Now these are not, of course, reactionary positions in themselves, but they indicate...an unacceptable ingenuousness or disingenuousness which can only reinforce reactionary tendencies in our society. (Widdowson, 'AHM', p. 16)

Whether Widdowson is right or not, what has become clear in this review of Lodge's main works of criticism is that many of his attitudes, particularly with regard to poststructuralism and postmodernism, are peculiarly hostile to radical change, especially if that change appears to embrace an approach that is, in Lodge's view, unnecessarily ideological. That said, it is also clear that he keeps abreast of the latest trends in the field - if for no other reason than to keep them in check.

CHAPTER TWO

David Lodge: Works of Fiction

Catherine Belsey's book Critical Practice[1] opens with a long quotation from David Lodge's Changing Places,[2] in which Philip Swallow, Visiting Professor at an American university, is engaged in conversation with Wily Smith, a student eager to follow Swallow's course on creative writing and to write a novel of his own about racial prejudice and black children growing up in the ghetto. The novel is to be autobiographical, although Swallow has reservations about Wily Smith's racial credentials, on the grounds that he looks too white. What interests Belsey though, is that both Swallow and Smith assume that, given the correct degree of blackness, such books are possible to write. She says:

> Whatever difficulties of inter-cultural communication are involved, professor and student share an assumption that novels are about life, that they are written from personal experience and that this is the source of their authenticity. They share, in other words, the commonsense view of literature, which proposes a practice of reading in quest of expressive realism, and the only alternative offered in Changing Places is the literary imperialism of the encyclopaedic Morris Zapp, entrepreneurial descendant

1 Catherine Belsey, Critical Practice (London: Methuen, 1980).

2 David Lodge, Changing Places (1975; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978).

of Northrop Frye. Common sense assumes that valuable literary texts, those which are in a special way worth reading, tell truths - about the period which produced them, about the world in general or about human nature - and that in doing so they express the particular perceptions, the individual insights, of their authors. (Belsey, p. 2)

Given the ironic distancing that David Lodge employs for most of his fiction, any assumption that he is Philip Swallow would be open to denial and yet there is evidence that many of Lodge's novels do tend towards this realistic view of the world, however many postmodern games he may play to disguise the fact. Patricia Waugh describes one of these games:

> David Lodge in How Far Can You Go?...flaunts this convention. [of the omniscient author: author's note] The author steps into the text and refers to himself in a list of characters, nervously reminding the reader that he has labelled each character with a recognizable trait, so that their fortunes might more easily be followed. This reverses the effect of heightened credibility and authority usually attributed to the convention, and expresses formally some of the doubts and concerns expressed thematically, in the text, about sexual morality and finally the Catholic Church itself.[3]

Yet though Lodge is acknowledged by Ms. Waugh as a helper with her book, little further reference is made to the metafictionality of either Lodge or many other British novelists. Her work, after establishing some of the criteria for the metafictional novel, moves on to outline a scale of postmodernist trickery which reaches Barthelme, Pynchon and Brautigan at its furthest extreme but includes British novelists only at its least radical end. She says:

[3] Patricia Waugh, Metafiction: The theory and practice of self-conscious fiction (London: Methuen, 1984), p. 74.

> It is dangerous, of course, to make simple distinctions between British and American fiction, but many British writers seem to fit comfortably into the first half of the scale and many American writers into the second. Even a cursory examination, in fact, would reveal the earlier sensitivity of American fiction to the concept of reality as a construct. (Waugh, p. 115)

What both Belsey and Waugh seem to be signalling is the tendency of British fiction in general and David Lodge in particular to deviate little from the tradition of realism that has pervaded British writing, as Lodge has noted in his critical writing, for two centuries. To employ his own critical tools in The Modes of Modern Writing, it might be argued that Lodge's novels tend more towards the metonymic than the metaphorical pole, although the balance between metonymy and metaphor varies from the early works to the later, when Lodge begins to use more of the postmodernist jouissance he has gleaned from his critical reading and writing, if only to satirize it ironically.

In spite of the difficulty of deciding upon the position that Lodge ultimately takes in regard to the relationship between realism and postmodernism in the construction of his fictions, it is still possible to outline certain tendencies. Reviewing seven of Lodge's novels on his own Jakobsonian scale, it might be argued that three (The Picturegoers,[4] Ginger, You're Barmy,[5] and

[4] David Lodge, The Picturegoers (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1960).

[5] David Lodge, Ginger, You're Barmy (1962; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin 1984).

Out of The Shelter[6]) are essentially realistic works, operating well within the bounds of Catherine Belsey's remarks about the commonsense view of literature and tending towards the metonymic end of Lodge's scale in The Modes of Modern Writing, while the other four move away from strict realism towards something of a more metafictional and metaphorical nature. These are the later novels: The British Museum Is Falling Down,[7] Changing Places, How Far Can You Go?[8] and Small World,[9] in which Lodge begins to experiment with the structural tricks and devices associated with postmodernism, although never moving away completely from realism to embrace the radical versions of metafiction in which reality, as Ms. Waugh notes, becomes a construct. Domestication is as much a feature of Lodge's fiction as it is of his criticism and reality is something which is never seriously questioned.

It is clear from a reading of Lodge's novels that, although he can be inventive within his own felt and known world, he is not given to creative activity without it. Writers such as Pynchon at the radical end of Ms. Waugh's scale invent a universe within which events occur and

[6] David Lodge, Out of The Shelter (1970; rpt. London: Secker and Warburg, 1985).

[7] David Lodge, The British Museum Is Falling Down (1965; rpt. Harmonsworth: Penguin, 1985).

[8] David Lodge, How Far Can You Go? (1980; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985).

[9] David Lodge, Small World (1984; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985).

comments are made about the nature of reality and irreality, but they depend on a reinterpretation of what can be taken for granted and what cannot. Lodge is not prepared to make this adjustment and so his novels tend to be rooted not only in the recognizable universe but also in his own 'small world'.

Born in South-East London in the 1930s, of lower middle-class origins, Lodge was a child during the war, a teenager in the late forties and early fifties and already grown up by the sixties. These socio-psychological factors show in his writing, not only in so far as the subject matter is concerned but also in his attitude to both literature and life. Peter Widdowson has noted that: "there is a kind of nose-against-the-window fascination with sex - voyeuristic, one might say - about all of Lodge's fiction " (Widdowson, 'AHM', p. 26). It may be that this is the product of a personality formed before the sexual revolutions of the sixties and seventies and exposed also to the strictures of Catholicism. It is also clear that his novels follow the progress of his own life, as a sensitive adolescent in *Out of The Shelter*, an undergraduate Catholic in *How Far Can You Go?*, a postgraduate student in *The Picturegoers* and *The British Museum Is Falling Down*, a postgraduate conscript in *Ginger, You're Barmy*, a young visiting lecturer in *Changing Places* and a successful, internationally recognized professor in *Small World*.

What distinguishes Lodge from strict realism, however,

apart from the metafictional games he plays in his later novels, is the absence in his work of much description of either background or character. Just as in his critical writing, Lodge is more concerned with matters of structure and language than he is with content, so in his novels he focuses more on the formal counterbalancing of characters and places than detailed description of either. Again there are differences to be noted in this regard between the more metonymic and more metaphorical texts. _The Picturegoers_ offers a concrete view of the wet streets of South London in the 1950s; _Ginger, You're Barmy_, although without much overt description, gives a realistic account of national service at Catterick and _Out of The Shelter_ produces clear images of Heidelberg in the immediate post-war era. Whereas the later novels still have realistic settings, and _Changing Places_ leaves a strong aftertaste of California for example, there is none the less a tendency away from physical description as Lodge begins to rely more heavily on the ironic displacement of people and places, and a movement towards a purely representational backdrop to a narrative which is more concerned with structural devices and the ironic juxtapositions of the unreliable author than it is with purist realism.

It is true of his later works also that they lack much rounding of character and people tend to become representatives of ideas or types rather than whole personalities. Morris Zapp is such a character, as are Persse MacGarrigle and the Papst twins. Given that _Small_

World is subtitled 'an academic romance', it is perhaps legitimate for characters to behave in symbolic ways and to bear names that attest to a metaphorical function in the narrative, and yet it is significant that Philip Swallow, the 'Lodge character', remains distinctly real. However, many of these later characters, such as those in *How Far Can You Go?*, whose function it is to represent elements in the problem of being Catholic in a sexually permissive age, are radically different from those in the early novels. Perhaps one of Lodge's most 'real' characters is the young Catholic misfit, Percy, who finally commits suicide or dies by accident in *Ginger, You're Barmy*. Lodge handles the horrors of his existence with unmediated compassion and does not dodge the inevitability of the tragedy that follows. In his later writing, however, Lodge fudges the issue of tragic death by subsuming it to the self-awareness of the intervening author. In *How Far Can You Go?*, a child called Anne is knocked down by a van and killed. She is the daughter of Dennis and Angela, whose youngest child suffers from Down's syndrome as the result of faulty birth control. In other words, the situation is replete with tragic potential. Lodge deals with it in this fashion:

> Two years after Nicole was born, Dennis and Angela's next youngest child, Anne, was knocked down by a van outside their house and died in hospital a few hours later. I have avoided a direct presentation of this incident because frankly I find it too painful to contemplate. Of course, Dennis and Angela and Anne are fictional characters, they cannot bleed or weep, but they stand here for all the real people to whom such disasters happen with no apparent reason or justice. One does not kill off characters lightly, I assure you, even ones like Anne, evoked solely for

that purpose. (Lodge, HFCYG?, p. 125)

Here the self-consciousness of the author distances the reader from the 'event' and ensures that nothing is felt for Anne by insisting that it is only a story after all and thus drawing as much attention to the text as to the character.

In Ginger, You're Barmy, by contrast, Lodge has yet to assimilate the lessons of postmodernism and is still firmly wedded to the realism of the English novel. When Percy dies, the reader is there watching as the gun he has been failing to aim accurately enough goes off unexpectedly and kills him. This time Lodge avoids all irony and allows unmitigated pain to appear on one of his pages. Previously in the novel, Percy is seen crying on parade, which Lodge describes thus: "I have a picture of Percy, white-faced and writhing with impotent anger, while Norman held him effortlessly at arm's length by his lapel" (Lodge, GYB, p. 83). On the same occasion, Lodge comments: "...Percy had already degenerated. A furtive, haunted look had come to fill the vacuum of innocent wonder in his eyes" (Lodge, GYB, p. 83). These are not the associations, with compassion for naked tragedy, that might normally be made with David Lodge, yet they point to an almost sentimental realism that is later discarded.

Another of the early, realist characters is Harry, the teddy boy in The Picturegoers, which works structurally on the counterbalancing of a number of characters linked by the habit of Saturday night at the pictures. Harry dreams

of vicious attacks on young girls and is aroused to a form of sexual excitement by the images he sometimes sees at the cinema. His mother is a small-time whore and he has no father; Harry is lonely, angry and potentially dangerous. However, on this occasion Lodge ducks out of the tragic climax he had been building for the character and when Harry finally decides to rape a girl at knifepoint, she gets the better of him and runs away. In the end Harry is saved by going to see 'Rock Around The Clock', which persuades him to dance rather than kill. In Lodge's terms, Harry is domesticated by a willed conclusion.

It seems reasonable to suggest that David Lodge has not only a critical preference for realism but also a creative talent for it which he has adapted in favour of writing novels that still rely on a metonymic infrastructure of realism while at the same time admitting a metaphorical superstructure of self-conscious, postmodernist game-playing. As in his critical writing, where he argues for the British tradition of realism while at the same time demonstrating an awareness of poststructuralism and postmodernism, so in his fiction, David Lodge writes from an essentially realistic perspective tempered by an anodyne version of metafiction.

If there emerges a discrepancy in Lodge's novels between 'real' and 'symbolic' characters as his fiction becomes more self-conscious, then there remains one group who are cardboard throughout: women. Lodge's is a male world, in which male academics daydream in the British

Museum while their wives look after the children or male academics have adventures overseas while their wives stay at home. Lodge's women are, in the main, either passive or domineering; there seems to be little in between. Often the male hero finds himself caught between duty to the submissive wife and attraction to the sexually desirable mistress - Hilary Swallow and Joy Simpson in Small World for example - and although the man tends to do the 'right' thing in the end and return to the safety of home, there remains the spectre of desire unsatiated. If a woman is not a wife, in Lodge's books, she is a temptress or an impossible dream, like Angelica/Lily Papst in Small World, who offers a wider reality that the male character both desires and fears. What is significant about this is that Lodge seems not to be able to present the female character as other than these two types and that, in all cases, the novels return the erring husband to his wife, in apparent admission that desire is either morally wrong or simply impractical. In any case, the impossible dream remains impossible and the Lodge male ultimately keeps his id firmly repressed beneath the veneer of conventional marriage. How the wife figure feels about this is not divulged.

There is little to suggest humour in any of this and yet Lodge's reputation is as a comic novelist and indeed the progression in the corpus of his novels is towards more comedy rather than less as Lodge himself is aware:

> My first books, The Picturegoers and Ginger, You're Barmy, had their moments of humour, but both were essentially works of scrupulous realism. Through the

> experience of working on Between These Four Walls (a review written with Malcolm Bradbury in 1963), I discovered in myself a zest for satirical, farcical and parodic writing that I had not known I possessed; and this liberated me, I found, from the restrictive decorum of the well-made realist novel. The British Museum Is Falling Down was the first of my novels that could be described as in any way experimental. Comedy, it seemed, offered a way of reconciling a contradiction of which I had long been aware, between my critical admiration for the great modernist writers, and my creative practice, formed by the neo-realist, anti-modernist writing of the 1950s. (Lodge, BM, afterword, p. 169)

Comedy, then, became the vehicle for Lodge's 'liberation' from the strictly realist novel and it seems that his work since The British Museum Is Falling Down has taken him even further into the field of entertainment, although there remains a seriousness once the comedy is stripped away and a commitment to realism which seem unlikely to have disappeared completely. After all, the same writer who produced Small World was also able to say of Ginger, You're Barmy, in retrospect:

> In the interests of authenticity (and whatever weaknesses the novel may have, I do not think it can be faulted on that score) Ginger...cleaves very closely to the contours of my own military service. Although the story of the three main characters is fictional, there is scarcely a minor character or illustrative incident or detail of setting that is not drawn from life. (Lodge, GYB, afterword, p. 213)

What seems to emerge from these general considerations of Lodge's fiction is the sense of a curious, almost opportunist admixture of mutually opposing forces, which has its echoes in the way his critical writing appeals so frequently to eclecticism, liberalism and catholicism of critical practice. There is a crucial indecision, masked by irony, which prevents Lodge from fully embracing the

postmodernist agenda and keeps him bound to the requirements of realism. It is rare to find actions leading to logical consequences, which would however disturb the _status quo_, and common to find backtracking from commitment to ideological decision making. Swallow cannot stay with Joy Simpson in _Small World_ any more than he can become an activist on the Euphoric State campus in _Changing Places_. He remains, in both cases, the tentative liberal:

> 'Motherfucking liberal,' Kroop muttered. [Of another character: author's note]
> 'Well, I'm a liberal,' Philip demurred.
> 'Then I wish,' said Kroop, patting Philip on the back, that there were more liberals like you, Philip, prepared to lay their liberalism on the line, to go to jail for their liberalism. You're coming to the vigil?'
> 'Oh yes,' said Philip, blushing. (Lodge, _CP_, p. 183)

Lodge's irony is clear in this passage but it is none the less equally clear that Philip is not only a failed liberal but also aware of his failure and incapable of offering anything other than compromise as an answer. Fortunately for him, his time in California is limited by the fixed arrangement of a one-year contract, otherwise the sorts of decision that American life would force on him might finally engulf a character as equivocal as his. Later in the same novel, Philip comes clean:

> 'All I'm saying is that there is this generation gap, and I think it revolves around this public/private thing. Our generation - we subscribe to the old liberal doctrine of the inviolate self. It's the great tradition of realistic fiction, it's what novels are all about. The private life in the foreground, history a distant rumble of gunfire, somewhere offstage. In Jane Austen, not even a rumble.' (Lodge, _CP_, p. 250)

The foregoing represents a general consideration of Lodge's fiction and the assumptions that underlie it. What follows will examine in more detail the structural devices he prefers in the construction of his texts, which is appropriate given his own predilection for formal rather than thematic concerns in his critical writing.

Lodge is above all else an ironist, which has implications for both authorial reliabilty and the response of the reader. He adopts the ironic stance in all of his books except _Ginger, You're Barmy_ and _Out of The Shelter_, in which the traditional role of the reliable narrator is preferred, although even here the notion of juxtaposition remains clear. _Out of The Shelter_ is about the trip an adolescent boy makes to Heidelberg to visit his sister, who has moved to Germany after the Second World War to work for the American forces. The novel follows the boy through the war years of deprivation and his earnest passing of school examinations to the holiday he takes, during which his eyes are opened to some of the less innocent delights of the wider world. In this sense it is a _bildungsroman_ and Lodge himself sees its origins in Joyce's _A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man_ (Lodge, _OS_, afterword, p. ix). The book allows Lodge to indulge in one of the activities he will develop in later writing, namely putting British and American characters together and making jokes out of their difference. It is also an

exploration of the problems of adolescent sexuality and it is significant that some of the problems that the boy, Timothy, faces are similar to those experienced by Philip Swallow in later novels. However, the novel remains essentially realistic, using irony in the sense of juxtaposing characters through the switching focus of different episodes, but not employing the ironic distancing that comes with the later fiction. Lodge himself says of the book:

> Out of The Shelter...was the fourth of my novels to be published, coming between The British Museum Is Falling Down and Changing Places, but it was conceived before the earlier of these books, and in tone and technique has much more in common with my first two books, The Picturegoers and Ginger, You're Barmy. That is to say, it is a 'serious' realistic novel in which comedy is an incidental rather than a structural element, and metafictional games and stylistic experiment are not allowed to disturb the illusion of life. (Lodge, OS, afterword, p. xii)

In all of his other work, however, including The Picturegoers, Lodge moves away from the centre of events, adopting the stance practically of a god. Good examples of this are the first section of Part Two of Small World and the first part of Changing Places, in which Lodge looks down from the clouds on the people travelling beneath him. His characters are seen as parts of the human comedy more than as real people living lives that involve 'truths' in Belsey's sense. An essential element in The Picturegoers, Changing Places, How Far Can You Go? and Small World is the employment of a large cast of characters, which allows Lodge not only to adopt the god-like stance looking down on all of them but also to produce episodic texts that are

carefully contrived to permit characters to rub against each other ironically. One minute the reader sees a problem through the eyes of one character, the next through those of another and so on until firm ground is lost. Essentially this is a Socratic use of irony, which produces necessarily more questions than answers and thus distances the reader from the possibilities of closure or the satisfaction of the desire the text creates. The author becomes unreliable because the burden of proof has been shifted away from him to the reader. Not that Lodge lets go of the reins altogether. He is not in the business of unleashing a *texte scriptible* of the kind that Roland Barthes describes.[10]

There is perhaps a distinction to be made between *The Picturegoers* and *How Far Can You Go?* on the one hand, and *Changing Places* and *Small World* on the other and this rests on the number of characters employed. *The Picturegoers* and *How Far Can You Go?* employ a cast of thousands and characters are necessarily representational more than fully rounded human beings. Lodge's craft here is in producing a masterplan which enables these characters to come into play with each other in a series of ironic episodes. In both books too, there is a central linking institution - the cinema in *The Picturegoers*, the Church in *How Far Can You Go?*. *Changing Places* and *Small World*, although including many people, operate in terms of

[10] Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), trans. Richard Miller (London: Cape, 1975), p. 4.

pairs in opposition to each other, but they too allow Lodge to glide elusively between the skeins of the text.

Such ironic elusiveness is clearly a valuable tool for the writer of satire and it may be that Lodge, once liberated from the confines of strict realism, was able, through comedy and irony, to claim immunity from the impulse to commitment and to write his fiction in the same spirit of liberal eclecticism as his criticism. The ironist's stance makes it necessary for there to be at least two opposing notions in play but for the manipulator of them to make no firm decision about their relative merits. It becomes then incumbent upon the reader or audience to make commitments while the author escapes scrutiny. What matters in all of this is the formulation of the questions and the nature of the problematic they address. Clearly Socratic irony can be seen as the bedrock of a number of educational strategies and holds the potential for philosophical maturity of a high order but given the fact that Lodge is more interested in formal textual manipulation than in content in his novels, it may be that his version of irony leads to obfuscation rather than education.

Part of this technique, the reverse of the 'author-as-god' stance and coincidentally much a part of postmodern writing, is the question of the intrusive author. Patricia Waugh noted the way in which Lodge intrudes into the text as author and this phenomenon, which is not restricted to _How Far Can You Go?_, although it is most clearly

observable there, provides a counter-tension to authorial omniscience. It is as if Lodge can stand aloof from his text one minute, in the guise of the self-conscious realist, and then descend from the clouds the next to make direct observations to the reader, thus alternately destroying and re-constructing his own credibility as author and unsettling the reader's propensity to suspend his or her disbelief. This 'now you see me, now you don't' attitude is itself ironic for it creates for the reader a further problem about the nature of the text and of authorship. It is only in his early 'realistic' fiction that Lodge embeds himself in the text, yet even in these works there is evidence of the irony of episodic juxtapostion. By stressing the fictionality of fiction, although tending towards the less radical end of Patricia Waugh's scale, Lodge is perhaps emulating the view taken by Frank Kermode in _The Sense of an Ending_,[11] to which he refers in his critical writing, that fiction is never anything but an hypothesis, a means of testing reality.

The following passage from _How Far Can You Go?_ illustrates Lodge's version of such hypothetical activity:

> Looking, as it were, over his shoulder, at the congregation, you can remind yourselves who they are. Ten characters is a lot to take in all at once, and soon there will be more, because we are going to follow their fortunes, in a manner of speaking, up to the present, and obviously they are not going to pair off with each other, that would be too neat, too implausible, so there will be other characters not yet invented, husbands and wives and lovers, not to mention parents and children, so it is important to

[11] Frank Kermode, _The Sense of an Ending_ (London: O.U.P., 1966).

> get these ten straight now. Each character, for instance, has already been associated with some detail of dress or appearance which should help you to distinguish one from another. Such details also carry connotations which symbolize certain qualities or attributes of the character. (Lodge, *HFCYG?*, p. 14)

This writing is within and without the text simultaneously, as Lodge plays both omniscient and intrusive author, the implication being both that he knows what is going to happen and does not because some characters have not been invented yet, although they will be soon - by him. This paternalism is echoed later in the novel when Lodge prefaces a long digression into the history of the papacy with these words: "Let me explain. (Patience, the story will resume shortly)" (Lodge, *HFCYG?*, p. 115). And when the lecture is over: "But enough of this philosophizing" (Lodge, *HFCYG?*, p. 121). It is important to recognize that it is not only this type of comment made to the reader that can be seen as authorial intervention. The lengthy excursion into Catholic history is itself a departure from the traditional form of the novel and in some ways reminiscent of Umberto Eco's long asides about the history of the mediaeval Church in *The Name of the Rose*.[12]

Later in *How Far Can You Go?* Lodge intrudes into his text with some considerations of the novelist's own difficulties in describing certain activities and takes

[12] Umberto Eco, *The Name of The Rose* (*Il Nome Della Rosa*, Milan: Fabbri-Bompiani, 1980), trans. William Weaver (London: Picador, 1984)

the reader back to the drawing board to see how it is done:

> It is difficult to do justice to ordinary married sex in a novel. There are too many acts for them all to be described, and usually no particular reason to describe one act rather than another; so the novelist falls back on summary, which sounds dismissive. As a contemporary French critic has pointed out in a treatise on narrative, a novelist can (a) narrate once what happened once, or (b) narrate n times what happened once, or (c) narrate n times what happened n times, or (d) narrate once what happened n times... Married love in fiction tends to be narrated according to mode (d). (Lodge, HFCYG?, p. 150)

Perhaps these intrusions give flavour enough of Lodge's patterns of intrusion, although he does appear again at the end of the book, disguised as a VOICE OVER on the documentary film made by the New Catholics of their Festival of Joy, and finally admits, when he is running down an inventory of all the characters to see what is happening to them now: "I teach English literature at a redbrick university and write novels in my spare time, slowly, and hustled by history" (Lodge, HFCYG?, p. 243).

The fact that David Lodge can appear in his texts in a variety of guises also has implications for the ways in which he handles chronology and, like his use of irony, the games he plays with time are not necessarily just the hallmark of his later writing, although it is here that they feature most clearly. In a strict sense, the only one of Lodge's novels to run according to realistic chronology is Out of The Shelter, which moves sequentially through a narrative in the traditions of realism. All the others, in one way and another, play tricks with time which, like the structured uses of irony and authorial stance, have the

effect of scrambling the reader's sense of the reliable text.

The Picturegoers provides the simplest example. Here Lodge focuses his novel on two Saturday nights at the pictures and the two Sundays that follow, allowing the story to reveal itself discretely between these sets of time references. In Ginger, You're Barmy, the prologue and epilogue take place in present time, while the central sections of the book move backwards in time from the point of demobbing to the beginning of national service, so that the reader knows what has happened early in the text but does not know how. The technique is partly flashback and partly flash-further-back before returning to the present, and it is also to be seen at work in a much more complex fashion in How Far Can You Go?, whose structure depends to a large extent on a series of flashforwards that are presented in the early part of the text and realized as flashbacks as the book draws towards the present. Lodge is here operating two time perspectives simultaneously by presenting the past in the light of the present and the present in the light of the past, foreshadowing what will happen to characters from the viewpoint of the omniscient author and then offering a resolution through the events that intervene in the characters' lives.

An example of this method begins on page six of the novel:

> (twenty-one years later he learned from a magazine article about the making of pornographic films in Los Angeles that the producers of such films employed

special stand-in studs in case the male lead couldn't manage an erection...and he thought, ruefully, that would have been the job for me when I was young - ruefully, because he was having trouble himself getting it up then...) But in 1952... (Lodge, HFCYG?, p. 6)

It is resolved on page one hundred and sixty:

> He skimmed an article on the pornographic movie industry in California. 'Standby studs are often used for penetration shots', he read. Would have been the job for me once, he thought with rueful irony, remembering how he used to walk about London with an almost permanent erection. (Lodge, HFCYG?, p. 160)[13]

Techniques of this kind emphasize the nature of the text, if not of reality, as a construct and serve further to undermine the reader's sense of security. They also point to the amount of detailed structuring that goes into the preparation of Lodge's fiction and underline the intentionality of writing of this kind, for there is little here that is spontaneous. Lodge's house of fiction is crafted with care, brick by brick.

In Changing Places and Small World, the time games become yet more complex in the sense that they retain the flashback device while adding new tricks with parallelism and simultaneity. Flashbacks abound in Changing Places, particularly in the section entitled 'Changing', in which Philip Swallow, while he is inextricably caught up with the making of history at Euphoric State, is simultaneously raking back through his mind to his relationships with both his wife and Morris Zapp's, as he tries to compose an explanatory letter to Hilary. But then, at the end of a

[13] Further pairings of this kind can be found on pp. 31/198, 62/216, 79/126.

complex series of memories, Lodge coyly introduces a passage from a book called Let's Write A Novel that Hilary has sent Philip to give him some ideas for his course on creative writing. The piece that catches Philip's eye as he riffles through the pages says: "Flashbacks should be used sparingly, if at all. They slow down the progress of the story and confuse the reader. Life, after all, goes forwards not backwards " (Lodge, CP, p. 186). Whatever else may be said of Lodge's fiction, it could not be said to be innocent.

However, perhaps more radical than the flashback is the adoption of simultaneity, which is in a sense logically implied by the structure of Changing Places but is also a feature of Small World. Essentially the technique involves selecting an instant of time and seeing what a range of characters are doing at it. In Changing Places, the first chapter operates specifically in this fashion, but the whole text also progresses according to a series of parallels, if not at exactly the same time, then at least on the assumption of approximate simultaneity. As a structural device, this is a convenient way of moving a story along, particularly for the ironist, because it fits neatly into an episodic structure and allows the same events to be viewed logically from a number of different standpoints. How Far Can You Go? also functions in this way, the book being full of apparent coincidences.

It is Small World, however, that offers the best example of this type of game with synchronicity. In the

first section of Part Two, Lodge reviews the situations of an international set of academics around the world at precisely the same time, although with the added refinement of differing times in the various zones because of the global nature of the book. In practice this means that, although the thirteen characters treated in this section are in fact acting simultaneously, the time checks that Lodge scrupulously includes vary from 5 a.m. in Rummidge to 3 p.m. in Australia. However that is not all because time is also seen to run chronologically through these pages as Morris Zapp makes his way from Rummidge to London, awaking at 5 a.m. and arriving at Heathrow as Big Ben is striking 9 a.m. precisely. Thus Lodge here is playing with the concept of synchronicity within chronology.

Lodge also experiments with tenses. The first chapter of How Far Can You Go? is written entirely in the present tense to give the sense of immediacy required by the context and by the authorial stance. The book moves to the simple past in Chapter Two and reverts to the present for the final chapter. Necessarily the global view of itinerant academics in Small World is given by the present tense, while other parts of the book vacillate between past and present, according to the need for immediacy or generalization and the requirement for background narrative. The first chapter of Changing Places employs the present tense, adding a structural sense of 'nowness' to the events taking place over the Atlantic. Clearly

these tense switches are used by Lodge in relation to his presence or absence from the text and specifically relate to his role as author, for the present tense is linked to the intrusive and omniscient authorial stances, while the past tenses indicate a return to the infrastructure of realism that underlies all these games with time. The British Museum Is Falling Down is not as ambitious as some of the other novels in this regard, although it still contains a structure with a temporal significance, namely that the events of the story all take place on one day, Lodge claiming in the afterword to the novel that his model for this was Joyce in Ulysses (Lodge, BM, afterword, p. 171).

However it is not time that matters from a structural point of view in The British Museum Is Falling Down as much as the twin devices of parody and pastiche. In Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction, Patricia Waugh defines parody as:

> ...a kind of literary mimicry which retains the form or stylistic character of the primary work, but substitutes alien subject matter or content. The parodist proceeds by imitating as closely as possible the formal conventions of the work being parodied in matters of style, diction, metre, rhythm, vocabulary. (Waugh, p. 68)

Significantly, considering Lodge's critical interests in the formalist version of structuralism, she then explores connections between this literary activity and some of the theories of the Russian Formalists, notably Shklovsky, who claimed that laying bare the device helped to achieve defamiliarization, which in turn led to a more dynamic

role for the literary text. In this light, the conscious parodying of previous texts and the recognition by writer and reader that this is happening is not seen as a deconstructive device but rather as one that breaks into new creative possibilities and adds contemporary layers of meaning to existing works.

Waugh goes on to quote Jakobson's dictum that the poetic function: "projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination" (Waugh, p. 69) and proceeds to suggest that through parody "a metaphoric substitution is forced into an ongoing metonymic plane" (Ibid., p. 69). She concludes that: "This dislocates both past and present texts: the rearrangement of the original text or genre reveals the potential rearrangements of the present one" (Ibid., p. 69).

Writing in Stratford Upon Avon Studies,[14] Robert Burden has distinguished between parody and pastiche by suggesting that the former is a subversive form of literary criticism within the text which pre-empts the activity of the would-be critic and points up the obsolescence of the previous style, whereas the latter is non-subversive and consists of a set of borrowings that indicate either the novelist's 'anxiety of influence' or an ironic awareness that all literature comes to us in second-hand form. He goes on to say that there are now

[14] Robert Burden, 'The Novel Interrogates Itself: Parody As Self-Consciousness in Contemporary English Fiction', ed. Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer, Stratford Upon Avon Studies: The Contemporary English Novel, No. 18 (London: Edward Arnold, 1979).

many novelists writing in Britain who are combining literature and criticism for the knowing reader and that parody is to be seen as a mode of aesthetic foregrounding indicating the need for contemporary writers to interrogate their texts against significant precedents. He goes on to examine the works of three writers: Angus Wilson (No Laughing Matter), John Fowles (The French Lieutenant's Woman) and David Lodge (The British Museum Is Falling Down). Of the latter he says:

> Lodge's parodies are generally highly specific and local; and they are made intelligible through the character and consciousness of a comic protagonist with his literary and academic aspirations. (Burden, p. 137)

He notes, therefore, that Lodge's parodies tend to be highly conventional:

> Usually they take the form of direct imitation of the style and language of a writer to explore a plausible but faintly absurd situation. The result is burlesque, the most orthodox form of parody, combining both comic and critical intention, simultaneously adding to literature of the past and advancing the plot. (Ibid., p. 141)

Of the three contemporary novelists he studies, Burden concludes that Lodge's use of parody is the feeblest and that which will least undermine the essential realism of the text. Still speaking of The British Museum Is Falling Down, he observes:

> ...there is a taste for salvaging realism. For this reason, one may question the rationale behind the parodies. For they do tend generally to serve the realistic intent; they are, that is, caused by plot situations, and are part of the protagonist's plausible response to life - hence they are contained. Parody does not subvert the novel's realism; it becomes a function of its comic impact. (Ibid., p. 143)

In his afterword to The British Museum Is Falling Down, David Lodge is somewhat more enthusiastic about the project, not to say somewhat miffed that so many newspaper reviewers of the day failed even to notice that the text contained parodies, or else complained that the novel was derivative. To correct this situation, he tells us exactly what the parodies are, although preferring not to present them in their sequence in the novel for fear of spoiling the game of literary I-Spy. He also concurs with one of the points made by Burden:

> No doubt the use of parody in this book was also, for me, a way of coping with what the American critic Harold Bloom has called 'The Anxiety of Influence' - the sense every young writer must have of the daunting weight of the literary tradition he has inherited, the necessity and yet seeming impossibility of doing something in writing that has not been done before. (Lodge, BM, afterword, p. 168)

About the relationship between realism and parody, however, he is silent, except in so far as he states that comedy has liberated him from realism. He does, on the other hand, offer a defence against the criticism that the inclusion of literary parodies in fiction may not be as attractive to the common reader as to the initiated:

> ...I was well aware that the extensive use of parody and pastiche was a risky device. There was, in particular, the danger of puzzling and alienating the reader who would not recognize the allusions. My aim was to make the narrative and its frequent shifts of style fully intelligible and satisfying to such a reader, while offering the more literary reader the extra entertainment of spotting the parodies. (Lodge, BM, afterword, p. 170)

To this list of textual instruments there must now be added peripeteia and what Frank Kermode calls 'the sense of an ending'. As a literary term, peripeteia is defined

as: "a reversal of fortune, a fall",[15] although there is some debate about whether it can simply be interpreted as an unexpected departure from the logical outcome or whether some form of ruin is implied. Frank Kermode, however, in The Sense of an Ending, uses it to imply the postponement of the expected end in the interests of reality. He argues that human beings need fictions to give meaning to their lives from their perspective in medias res and shows that all literature is in some senses involved in apocalyptic prediction of an ending, which leads to a commonly-felt sensation of always living at a turning point in time. Even when we die, we are still 'in the middest'. He says, however, that:

> Men in the middest make considerable imaginative investments in coherent patterns which, by the provision of an end, make possible a satisfying consonance with the origins and the middle. That is why the image of the end can never be permanently falsified. But they also, when awake and sane, feel the need to show a marked respect for things as they are; so that there is a recurring need for adjustments in the interests of reality as well as control. (Kermode, p. 17)

The significant literary device that Kermode sees as meeting this need is peripeteia, of which he remarks:

> The story that proceeded very simply to its obviously predestined end would be nearer myth than novel or drama. Peripeteia...is present in every story of the least structural sophistication. Now peripeteia depends on our confidence in the end; it is a disconfirmation followed by a consonance; the interest of having our expectations falsified is obviously related to our wish to reach the discovery or recognition by an unexpected and instructive route.(Ibid., p. 18)

[15] J. A. Cuddon, A Dictionary of Literary Terms (1977; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982).

He also says:

> The more daring the peripeteia, the more we may feel that the work respects our sense of reality; and the more certainly we shall feel that the fiction under consideration is one of those which, by upsetting the balance of our native expectations, is finding something out for us, something real. (Kermode, p. 18)

These are important statements for Lodge and he can use them in a curiously ambivalent way. What Kermode is suggesting here is that it is more 'real', in terms of how humankind views life from its position _in medias res_, for novels to arrive at their endings in unexpected rather than expected ways because they then more closely resemble the anarchic flux of existence. The apocalypses of the Bible, for instance, are simplistic and willed ways, according to Kermode, of seeing the future. We sense that there must be an ending but we do not think daily in those terms and so our ending is always unexpected. So, in adopting the device of peripeteia, Lodge can claim to be adding an extra layer of realism to what is already his preferred form.

On the other hand, however, by projecting the end of his text beyond its final page, as well as by using peripeteia to arrive at endings in unexpected ways, he can also claim to be in tune with the exigencies of poststructuralism with its emphasis on non-closure, circularity and projection into countless other stories beyond the one being narrated. In a sense, by removing or deferring his endings, Lodge may be seen to be threatening the totality of the structure and thus demonstrating

awareness of Derrida's notions of '_différance_' and 'de-centring'.[16] This is perhaps another instance of Lodge having it both ways at the same time, showing awareness of radical thought and yet finding a way to domesticate it in the traditions of native realism.

Kermode also notes in _The Sense of an Ending_ that:

> ...the End itself, in modern literary plotting, loses its downbeat tonic-and-dominant finality, and we think of it, as the theologians think of the Apocalypse, as immanent rather than imminent. (Kermode, p. 30)

Four of David Lodge's novels have non-traditional endings, in other words endings that do not admit of closure in the accepted realist sense. These are _The British Museum Is Falling Down_, _Changing Places_, _How far Can You Go?_ and _Small World_, the last of which uses peripeteia more consistently than the others as the feckless Persse McGarrigle pursues Angelica Papst across continents, suffering reversal after reversal, and then finishes up pursuing Cheryl Summerbee, the airport stewardess, right off the end of the text into another tale altogether.

As the first 'experimental' novel, _The British Museum Is Falling Down_ involves perhaps the least contrived ending in terms of the story that precedes it, the book finishing with a parody of Molly Bloom's monologue at the end of _Ulysses_. What is significant is not just that Lodge

[16] Jacques Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play' in _Writing and Difference_ (_L'Écriture et la Différence_, Paris: Seuil, 1967), trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

should end a novel in that way but rather the replacement of Molly's words: "Yes I said yes I will yes",[17] which are commonly taken as implying affirmation and hope, by Barbara Appleby's less certain: "'it'll be wonderful you'll see perhaps it will be wonderful you'll see perhaps it will I said perhaps it will be wonderful perhaps even though it won't be like you think perhaps that won't matter perhaps'" (Lodge, BM, p. 161). Apart from the inclusion of the 'perverted commas' Joyce so detested, the ending is not affirmative but suggestive of an unknown future.

It is the endings of How Far Can You Go? and Changing Places, however, that combine Kermode's contribution to realism and Derrida's to poststructuralism to greater effect. The end of How Far Can You Go? is a typescript of the film that is made for television of the Roman Catholic festival celebrating the emergence of the Church into a new era. In his critical work, Lodge has frequently made use of the idea that, whereas the reader of a novel always knows when the book is going to end simply by counting the number of pages, the cinema audience never does. The end, like death, just comes. Turning the end of his novel into a film is therefore, in a sense, Lodge's revenge on the cinema, for he is able to contrive an ending that is as sudden as that of film. However before the words THE END appear on the page, the unattributed VOICE OVER says:

17 James Joyce, Ulysses: The Corrected Text (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p. 644

> But Christian belief will be different from what it used to be, what it used to be for Catholics anyway. We must not only believe but know that we believe, live our belief and yet see it from outside, aware that in another time, another place, we would have believed something different...without feeling that this invalidates belief. Just as when reading a novel, or writing one for that matter, we maintain a double consciousness of the characters as both, as it were, real and fictitious, free and determined, and know that however absorbing or convincing we may find it, it is not the only story we shall want to read (or, as the case may be, write) but part of an endless sequence of stories by which man has sought and will always seek to make sense of life. And death. (Lodge, HFCYG?, pp. 239-240)

This passage reverberates with the words of not only Frank Kermode but also those of the poststructuralists, for whom deferral of this kind is symptomatic of the generally unproven link between signifier and signified.

Changing Places also moves from novel to film for its ending, this time taking the form of a shooting script for the final scene of the Swallows and the Zapps flying from London and California to New York, Philip with Mrs. Zapp and Morris with Mrs. Swallow, where they hope to disentangle their snarled-up relationships. In the hotel room in New York, they wonder where it will all end and, being literary scholars, naturally begin to speculate on endings in literature generally. So they finish up discussing their own ending, moving from Jane Austen to the endings of novels generally. It is Philip Swallow who gets the final lines of the script:

> 'I mean, mentally you brace yourself for the ending of a novel. As you're reading, you're aware of the fact that there's only a page or two left in the book, and you're ready to close it. But with a film there's no way of telling, especially nowadays, when films are much more loosely structured... The film is

> going along, just as life goes along, people are behaving...and we are watching them, and at any point the director chooses, without warning, without anything being resolved, or explained, or wound up, it can just...end.'
> PHILIP shrugs. The camera stops, freezing him in mid-gesture. (Lodge, CP, p. 251)

Again Lodge can have it both ways, by claiming both that the ending is realistic because it imitates life (and death) in Kermode's terms and that it is postmodernist in the sense that it plays games with narrative closure.

Peter Widdowson is particularly severe with Lodge as far as endings are concerned, arguing that, although the conclusions to How Far Can You Go?, Changing Places and Small World are apparently open and postmodernist, in fact there are what he calls 'willed' closures that precede the last page of the text and that these are closures of marriage. Philip Swallow returns to Hilary at the end of Changing Places, although there is no necessary reason for this except for Lodge's belief that: "The marriage knot is the primary symbol of happiness, of the optimistic idea that the nice and the good are one and shall inherit the earth" (Lodge, WWS, pp. 71-72). Dennis returns to Angela, in spite of defying bourgeois morality for three weeks with his secretary Lynn at the end of How Far Can You Go? and Philip Swallow returns to Hilary (again) at the end of Small World instead of staying with Joy Simpson, with whom he had previously been having something of a satisfying time. Widdowson says:

> The endings of Lodge's novels - despite their ostensible openness, their postmodernist bravura (in two they are done as film or TV screenplays)

> apparently ending with no ending, their use of what Lodge calls the 'short circuit' - are very definitely <u>endings</u> in which...the conventional <u>nostos</u> of the return to marriage is the closure. (Widdowson, 'AHM', p. 24)

With particular reference to the end of <u>Small World</u>, Widdowson says:

> Philip is sad but safe. This ending, realistic and yet infinitely contrived, is just another peripeteia in the postmodernist funfare. But nevertheless marriage has repossessed him, at once denying and protecting him from the world of 'Romance'. (Widdowson, 'AHM', p. 29)

So again, however 'experimental' Lodge may think he is being in novels as crammed with tricks as <u>Small World</u>, he has his detractors and it becomes difficult to think of his fiction as anything but realism larded with knowing doses of postmodernism.

The devices described in the last few pages are not the only structural techniques that Lodge uses but they are repeated often enough in his work to suggest their centrality. In <u>Changing Places</u>, he also uses pastiches of newspaper cuttings in California and Birmingham as means of counterbalancing events ironically. The section in the book is called 'Reading' and it provides a means of filling in background detail and current political happenings on the two campuses. In the same book, in the preceding section entitled 'Corresponding', he employs the format of the epistolary novel to provide information on the state of play between Philip and his wife in England, and Morris and his wife in the U.S.A.. As ever, though, Lodge pre-empts criticism for, as he did with the flashback device, he produces a self-conscious comment to

accompany this section. This appears in one of the letters from Hilary to Philip:

> Do you still want me to send on Let's Write a Novel? What a funny little book it is. There's a whole chapter on how to write an epistolary novel, but surely nobody's done that since the eighteenth century? (Lodge, CP, p. 130)

There is a sense in which Lodge's fiction is as much about the writing of fiction as anything else for the devices he operates often predominate over the fairly commonplace, if often very funny, goings-on in and around the universities he knows so well. There is one area of concern, however, that stands out and that is Catholicism and questions relating to sex and birth control and it is these matters that this chapter will now turn.

There are Catholic characters in all of Lodge's novels, which lends a pervasive sense of religiosity to the core of his work. The problems of Catholic sex are dealt with as exclusive subject matter in How Far Can You Go?, although they are also structurally vital to The British Museum is Falling Down. Timothy in Out of The Shelter is a Catholic and there are descriptions in the early part of the book of Catholic boarding and state schools, whose teachings are responsible for the boy's indignation at the liberal ways of Heidelberg and the American army. Guilt and sexual repression are common to many of Lodge's male characters.

Both Mike and the unfortunate Percy in Ginger, You're Barmy are Catholics, although the question of religion

does not surface until the scenes that follow Percy's death, when the matter of suicide has to be faced. Mike's response is:

> 'My reasons for believing it was an accident probably won't mean much to you. It's simply that Percy was a Catholic. A convinced, practising Catholic. He knew that suicide is the ultimate sin of despair, that he would be risking his immortal soul. But I don't expect you to understand that.' (Lodge, GYB, p. 99)

It is for largely theological reasons that both Mike and Jonathan fight so hard to make sure that Percy's death is not seen as suicide by the army. The open verdict that is returned, with the covert implication of an attempt by Percy to blow off his finger in a bid to be invalided out of the army, leaves Mike full of guilt as it was he who had suggested the ploy to Percy in the first place. It might be argued that it is this sense of guilt, layered over by Catholic teaching on suicide, that drives Mike into the arms of the I.R.A.

Lodge splits himself in two for this book by making Mike the Catholic and Jonathan the postgraduate English literature student with the first-class degree. In his afterword to the novel, he also admits to the influence of another Catholic, Graham Greene, noting that Jonathan Browne's surname is not dissimilar, acknowledging that the limiting of the time-span to three months and the flashback techniques were borrowed from The Quiet American and saying:

> There is a sentence in the first paragraph of Ginger which strikes me as quintessentially Greenian in its relishing of the paradoxes of modern life, its cadenced syntax and resonant abstractions: 'I could never again write so unflattering an account of

> myself as the following, because it would open up so many awful possibilities of amendment.' (Lodge, GYB, afterword, p. 215)

Lodge is clearly not one to shirk comparison with great writers, even when he makes it himself.

The Picturegoers is also a pervasively Catholic book, presenting the reader with the figure of the lapsed Catholic intellectual, Mark Underwood, being nursed back to orthodoxy by the Catholic family with whom he boards, to such an extent that he gives up his chance of marrying their daughter, Clare, to become a priest. Meanwhile, Father Kipling, the local priest, is at loggerheads with the neighbourhood cinema on account of the pornographic films it shows, one of which he accidentally sees himself, causing a crisis of conscience and sexual repression. The book underlines how difficult it is for the Church to compete with Hollywood and the demands of modern life. Lodge's Catholics, however, are always to some extent at war with their faith. As Clare says of Mark Underwood towards the end of the book: "Religion had ruined him. Religion had ruined them all. Making them think there was nothing they couldn't do with their own life and other people's " (Lodge, P, p. 208).

These early novels are realistic and relatively ponderous in their treatment of Catholicism, but when Lodge moves on to his more 'experimental' writing, the subject grows in structural importance to become the basis for one book and an essential part of another, while losing much of the earnestness with which it is handled.

This is because of Lodge's conversion to comedy and his growing awareness of postmodernist games which, when taken in tandem with literary allusion, parody, pastiche and irony, make it difficult for the reader to take Catholic problems with sex very seriously. Lodge's own equivocal stance, however knowingly, reinforces the dilemma. He himself says of The British Museum Is Falling Down:

> ...I had lighted upon a subject of considerable topical interest and concern, especially (but not exclusively) to Roman Catholics; and one that had not been treated substantively as far as I was aware - certainly not in the comic mode in which I proposed to treat it. That subject was the effect of the Catholic Church's teaching about birth control on the lives of married Catholics, and the questioning of that teaching which had very recently begun within the Church itself. (Lodge, BM, afterword, p. 163)

He also points to the connection between The British Museum Is Falling Down and How Far Can You Go?, explaining that the former came before the papal bull Humanae Vitae in 1969, while the latter came after and was, in Lodge's view, therefore a much more disturbing and less comic work. He says of the former:

> ...the story has a 'happy ending'. But this resolution of the characters' problems is of a very provisional short-term kind. For both of them, the long-term solution to their sexual frustration is assumed to lie in the prospect of some change in the Church's teaching. (Lodge, BM, afterword, p. 166)

However the Pope's refusal to change his mind over the birth control pill changed this mood of optimism, with the result that How Far Can You Go? became a more serious work. Clearly it is the personal suffering caused by the Church's decision that forces the book's characters into a re-assessment of their faith and the organization of COC -

Catholics for an Open Church - although, as the acronym shows, Lodge does not seem to be able to decide even here when to be funny and when to be serious. He says:

> Any intelligent, educated Catholic of that generation who had remained a practising Catholic through adolescence and early childhood had made an existential contract: in return for the reassurance and stability afforded by the Catholic metaphysical system, one accepted the moral imperatives that went with it, even if they were in practice sometimes inhumanly difficult and demanding. (Lodge, BM, afterword, pp. 164-165)

The ironic and postmodernist strategies adopted by Lodge in the novel, though, seem to belie this seriousness, with the result that the inhumanly demanding moral imperatives become trivialized and the sexual frustrations mere titillation. Furthermore the inconvenience of temperature charts and the like are seen predominantly from the perspective of the male characters, although it is the women who have to bear so many, sometimes malformed, children. Lodge's attempt to marry a theme of profundity with a sophisticated narrative strategy based on comic realism with postmodernist additives produces an ironic juxtaposition which many would find flawed. It is as if his religious concerns had been intertwined with his intellectual and literary ones in an uneasy relationship that disallows readerly credibility. Perhaps Lodge performs more in character when he avoids this mix and concentrates on a virtually content-free form that relies exclusively on structural pyrotechnics, such as are to be found in Small World, to which this chapter will nowturn in some detail.

The novel is subtitled 'An Academic Romance' and a convenient starting point for this analysis is therefore a consideration of the nature of romance conventions to see how Lodge uses and abuses them.[18]

1) There is little use of foreshadowing or anticipation of events and the author is generally of the omniscient kind. There is little background description, except for clothes and furniture.

In Small World, Lodge uses peripeteia throughout and adopts the stance of the god-like author. There is little background description, although Angelica's clothes and Fulvia's room are treated.

2) Kidnapping is frequent. Usually it is the wife who is kidnapped by an evil fairy only to be rescued by her husband.

Morris Zapp is kidnapped but his wife claims he is not worth the ransom money.

3) Spring is the accepted time of year. This is when crucial encounters take place.

At Rummidge, spring is when Persse first spies Angelica. Ironically there is still snow on the ground.

4) Instructors or helpers are common. They help or direct the hero in his quest.

[18] Lodge cites as a central influence: Jessie Weston, From Ritual To Romance (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1920). Also useful for what follows is: Gillian Beer, The Romance (1970; rpt. London: Methuen, 1982).

Persse has many helpers - Zapp, Frobisher, Miss Maiden,Cheryl Summerbee

5) Women characters have the typical forwardness of fairy mistresses.

There is little backward about Angelica Papst and Fulvia Morgana.

6) The hero tends to be superior in degree to other men in his environment, although he is not superhuman. He tends to resemble Rousseau's 'noble savage' in so far as he generally comes from a primitive or unrefined background. He is innocent and yet supremely self-assured because he does not question his moral purpose.

Persse is from Limerick, is Catholic, young, idealistic and in no doubt about the correctness of his quest. He turns out to be the intellectual superior of many of the academics with big reputations.

7) Boats appear frequently to carry people safely to shore in the face of tremendous difficulties.

In _Small World_ a rowing boat full of tourists sinks and a Thames pleasure boat full of _literati_ is set adrift in the river.

8) Foundlings and twins abound.

Angelica and Lily Papst are both.

9) There is a tendency for one twin to represent the life of the spirit and the other the life of the flesh. Sometimes they are the product of an illicit or unexpected liaison and are abandoned for their own safety.

This fits the case of Miss Maiden, who turns out to be

Angelica's and Lily's mother. The latter are clearly divided into the cerebral and the sexual.

10) Many of the names in Small World are lifted directly from romance tales. Angelica is common. Sometimes she gets bound naked to a tree. Fulvia Morgana is probably based on Morgan le Foy in Sir Gawain and The Green Knight.

11) Central characters are frequently tempted by hostesses.

Zapp is tempted by Fulvia in Milan. Persse is by Lily. Generally romance heroes had to remain chaste and it may be that by succumbing to Lily, Persse loses his chance of Angelica.

12) The romance tends to have a rambling, circular structure in which the hero ends up where he started from.

Persse spends his time in endless pursuit.

13) The concept of doubles, as representatives of the extreme edges of the hero's personality, is common.

Angelica and Lily can be seen to fulfil this function for Persse.

14) The hero's quest often takes him to the 'chapel perilous' where he will learn crucial information.

Persse gets messages about both Angelica and his cousin Bernadette (the Catholic/sex interest) from the chapel at Heathrow.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of the coincidences between Small World and romance tradition but merely to point up some of the ways in which Lodge seems to have adapted romance themes for his own purposes. What

remains is to look beyond the question of recurring thematic features to their underlying structure. Sarah F. Barrow[19] plots five main stages in the development of a romance structure:

> I. Beginning: i) Opening situation: an opportunity for love with some barrier to union; ii) inciting force: falling in love,
> II. Development: Initial struggle, i) against fear of repulse, and ii) against pride or indifference,
> III. Culmination: Temporary success: betrothal,
> IV. Reversal: Separation or estrangement. (Period of complication or trial)
> V. Denouement: i) Decisive victory over the last obstacle to union, or a final defeat; ii) union and the assurance of permanent happiness, or the death of the lovers. (Barrow, p. 68)

She also notes:

> The treatment of character in the society romances is even more conventional than the treatment of plot. Despite the emphasis on psychological and social interests, in a large measure because of it, the man and woman responsible for what happens in the stories are hardly more than the personification of social ideals and prejudices. The important characters are models or warnings, illustrating psychological theory and certain principles of fashionable sentiment. (Ibid., p. 85)

It will be seen from both of these quotations that *Small World* fits roughly into the romance structure, although Stage V is only very generally adhered to, and that the question of character delineation, or its absence, suits Lodge's preference for symbolic characters. Following the tradition, he uses his people to warn us, not against psychological problems so much as against the false allure of certain kinds of literary theory.

19 Sarah F. Barrow, *The Medieval Society Romances* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1924).

Northrop Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism*[20] also has a good deal to say about the romance tradition and its subversion, much of which is relevant to this consideration of *Small World*. For example he says: "The romance is the nearest of all literary forms to the wish fulfilment dream..." (Frye, p. 186) and:

> The essential element of plot in romance is adventure, which means that romance is naturally a 'sequential' and processional form, hence we know it better from fiction, than from drama. At its most naive it is an endless form in which a central character who never develops or ages goes through one adventure after another until the author himself collapses. (Ibid., p. 186)

This sounds uncannily like a direct description of *Small World*, although it predates Lodge's book by some years. Frye goes on to outline the same general sort of structure as Ms. Barrow, involving journeys, struggles and eventual success for the hero. He notes that there is not much sublety or complexity of characterization, as people in romances tend to fall into the simple categories of those who are for the quest and those who are against it, the former being seen to be gallant and pure, the latter evil and cowardly. He, like Ms. Barrow, provides a list of essential stages:

> 1. Birth of the hero,
> 2. Innocent youth of the hero,
> 3. Quest theme,
> 4. Emergence of a happier society as vision,
> 5. Withdrawal to contemplation of experience,
> 6. Cosy, fireside isolation, or isolated tower.
>
> (Ibid., p. 196)

20 Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1957).

It will be seen that this pattern is fuller than Ms. Barrow's and much more rounded than anything attempted in Small World, which tells us nothing of Persse's birth or youth, makes no reference to more contented societies and does not end in cosy isolation. In other words, what is beginning to emerge is a picture, not of a fully developed romance but an appropriately intertextual set of borrowings from as much of the tradition as suits Lodge's purpose.

The important clue to this purpose, however, is not to be found in Frye's thoughts about romance but rather in those concerning irony. Frye says:

> As structure, the central principle of ironic myth is best approached as a parody of romance: the application of romantic, mythical forms to a more realistic content which fits them in unexpected ways. (Frye, p. 223)

and further:

> ...satire is irony which is structurally close to the comic: the comic struggle of two societies, one normal and the other absurd, is reflected in its double focus on morality and fantasy. (Ibid., p. 224)

He also notes that: "...the satirist may employ a plain, commonsense, conventional person as a foil for the various alazons of society " (Ibid., p. 226). Taken together, these statements contribute to the production of a quite different image of Small World as a text which is not a romance except in name and one which subverts the romance into satire by parodying it, as Frye suggests, with irony. After all, parody and irony are Lodge's stock in trade, so it is perhaps not all that surprising to witness them re-appearing here. Persse, although he can be viewed as the

noble savage pursuing a moral (or in his case immoral) quest, can also be seen in Frye's terms as the 'commonsense, conventional person', while the likes of Zapp, Von Turpitz, Tardieu, Kingfisher *et al* are the 'alazons', or blocking humours, of society whom he must overcome. It is Persse's commonsense question at the final conference that floors everybody, the question that asks, after all the representatives of the sharp-edged theories have spoken: "What follows if everybody agrees with you?" (Lodge, *SW*, p. 319).

If *Small World* is not a true romance, then it has to be seen as a satire and a pretty ferocious one at that. Again it is worth returning to Frye for a view on the focus required for the success of this form:

> To attack anything, writer and audience must agree on its undesirability, which means that the content of a great deal of satire founded on national hatreds, snobbery, prejudice and personal pique goes out of date very quickly. (Frye, p. 224)

It is questionable that many readers know enough about literary theory to find it undesirable and likely, therefore, that *Small World* will be the ephemeral text of Frye's analysis.

It is, however, literary theory that is at the heart of Lodge's satire, for *Small World* is not just a parody of the romance tradition; it is also a parody of poststructuralism. Conveniently for Lodge, there are a number of ways in which poststructuralist thought and romance coincide. Both tend towards open-endedness, *différance* and circularity; and neither foregrounds the

univocality of meaning. There is also a sense in which the romance, like the postmodernist text, is peculiarly resilient to deconstruction because it is already the text of _jouissance_ and peripeteia, working openly in the schisms that Derrida would wish to prise apart. Perhaps the romance is less knowing than this, but to Lodge it hardly matters. What is crucial to his strategy is that the romance appears to parallel many of the postmodernist tricks he writes about in his critical books and thus offers him the chance of both playing ironic games with the romance and taking a sideswipe at brands of theory with which he does not agree. By producing a romantic game-text between whose fissures he can slip and slide, he can defend himself against potential critical assaults from adherents to some versions of literary theory.

Lodge, however, borrows not just from romance tradition and postmodernism but also from T. S. Eliot: there is a performance of _The Waste Land_ in the streets of Lausanne; the opening line of the novel reads : "April is the cruellest month."; Persse's dissertation is about Eliot; Miss Maiden is an ex-pupil of Jessie Weston. _The Waste Land_ is also based on the Grail legend, bringing Lodge conveniently back in a circle to romance, although aware too that intertextuality is all part of the postmodernist funhouse.

He also borrows from literary theory. The first of the following passages is spoken by Angelica Papst; the second is by Derrida:

> 'Jacques Derrida has coined the term 'invagination' to describe relationships between inside and outside in discursive practices. What we think of as the meaning or 'inside' of a text is in fact nothing more than its externality folded in to create a pocket which is both secret and therefore desired and at the same time empty and therefore impossible to possess. I want to appropriate this term and apply it, in a very specific sense of my own, to romance...there is no doubt that romance is a supremely invaginated mode of narrative.' (Lodge, SW, p. 322)

> Invagination is the inward refolding of la gaine (sheath, girdle), the inverted reapplication of the outer edge to the inside of a form where the outside then opens a pocket.[21]

Lodge appropriates what he needs, distorts it for the purposes of his narrative and, by making us laugh at what is taken seriously by many scholars, 'domesticates' what he does not like. At one point Zapp is heard to opine: "Well, I'm a bit of a deconstructionist myself. It's kind of exciting - the last intellectual thrill left. Like sawing through the branch you're sitting on" (Lodge, SM, p, 118). And indeed his own lecture entitled 'Textuality as Striptease' is riddled with comically altered liftings from poststructuralism.

Perhaps this does not matter. After all, the lecture is very funny and Derrida is hard to understand and all is fair in satire, romance and postmodernism. What is significant is the way Lodge, in his critical writing, makes comments about Derrida which are by no means anodyne or humorously intended. In a sense, he is luckier than most critics because he can come at his target from two

[21] Jacques Derrida, 'Living On: Borderlines' quoted in Harold Bloom et al, Deconstruction and Criticism (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 83.

different directions at the same time, complaining in his criticism and satirizing in his fiction.

In Small World Lodge can hide behind the very devices his critical writing tends to dismiss. By combining and juxtaposing the techniques of the romance and postmodernist fiction, and adding to them the ironic stance that is second nature to him, he is enabled to play the game of creating the endlessly self-duplicating text, which allows him the luxury of satirizing the very art he is himself practising. This is a tenuous position to sustain, until it is seen in the light of his frequently stated liberal stance towards the practice of literary criticism and the eclecticism he preaches in his critical books. It is also a highly elitist position that requires of the reader access to often esoteric knowledge without which Small World begins to look like a novel about globe-trotting academics and their sexual adventures, a view taken by some reviewers of the TV version - with which Lodge himself would clearly disagree. [22]

Michel Foucault's views on the role of the author are perhaps germane here:

> ...[the author] is a certain functional principle by which in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition and recomposition of fiction.[23]

[22] David Lodge, 'The Celluloid Collar,' The Listener, 7 April 1988, pp. 14-15.

[23] Michel Foucault, 'What Is An Author?' ed. J.V.Harrari, Textual Strategies: Perspectives In Poststructuralist Criticism (London: Methuen, 1980), pp. 158-9.

Speaking of Foucault, J. V. Harrari says:

> The author is yet another, more subtle precautionary measure whose function is to control, censure and police the excesses of the polysemic discourse of fiction. That fiction will go on speaking, will continue to disturb the order of the world. (Harrari, p. 44)

Doubtless David Lodge would deny that he was an author of this sort and assert that far from restricting fiction he is setting it free. If a reading of Small World is posited that takes Persse as reader pursuing Angelica, as signified, through an endless progression of deferred signifiers, including the différance of the Angelica/Lily dichotomy, until he runs straight off the edge of the text and into another, then David Lodge can claim he is fully in tune with the poststructuralist agenda. In this case it is he who has the last laugh and the critic who is left without a firm Lodgian line to hold on to.

CHAPTER THREE

Malcolm Bradbury: Works of Criticism

Malcolm Bradbury's project as a critic is to set literature against its historical context and to deduce from this process conclusions of a largely social nature. What is problematic for him in this activity is its very definition, for he is systematically at pains to point out that he is not a sociologist or any other form of historical determinist. Throughout his writing, in both the critical and fictional modes, there runs a scepticism about historicism and prescription which suggests that his whole purpose could be defined as attempting to erect a bulwark against the flow of structuralist thought that has underpinned much of twentieth – century philosophy. Necessarily, in doing so, he makes certain rules of his own.

The following might be said to typify the position that will influence much of his writing:

> This[the switching of critical focus away from language: author's note] enables us to think of literary study as part of the general science of man... In a time of increased uncertainty about literary or any values, it also enables us to see some forms of writing, 'serious' or otherwise, as in some sense linked. On the other hand, since it tends towards taking written texts as phenomena determined by forces beyond the control of the artist, it readily leads us away from directly literary questions towards various forms of historicist *a priorism*. Many of its questions are determined not by an interest in responding empirically to particular

> texts, nor even by broad responses to writing generally, but by the desire to locate literature as an aspect of some larger entity. In many respects my own sympathies are with this tendency, but where it becomes dangerous is when it becomes 'axiomatic' that a poetics of fiction should be derived in the first instance from outside literature....[1]

This passage is imbued with Bradbury's central concerns and sets out the guidelines of a battle he will wage with some ferocity throughout his critical writing. He underlines his fear of pre-figured structures in a footnote to the essay:

> By 'historicism', I mean the desire to 'unmask' ideas or forms of consciousness by showing their external determinants. Men may think themselves free individuals, but they are 'really' the subjects of the roles they perform.... (Bradbury, <u>SUAS</u>(12), footnote 17, p. 33)

These words might well have found their way onto the title page of his novel <u>The History Man</u>,[2] for they demonstrate clearly that Bradbury's underlying anxiety revolves around the question of human free will and the restrictions he feels have been set upon it by twentieth-century versions of determinism. His attitude will lead to the suggestion that certain periods of the past were somehow more civilized, indeed qualitatively better.

He further refines his 'historical' but not 'historicist' approach as follows:

> ...I do assume that literature derives from a society...from a tradition, a stock of language, a

[1] Malcolm Bradbury, 'The State of Criticism Today,' ed. Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer, <u>Stratford Upon Avon Studies: Contemporary Criticism</u>, No.12 (London: Edward Arnold, 1970), p. 33.

[2] Malcolm Bradbury, <u>The History Man</u> (1975; rpt. London: Arena, 1984).

> social frame, an offered sense of the realities of life which is part of the meaning, literary and sociological, of the word 'culture'...as well as being a structure of language or the creative act of the single man.[3]

Art, then, reflects life, or put slightly differently, the world articulates language rather than the reverse. Running in the face of not only modernism but also Saussure and many later accounts of the relationship between meaning and language, Bradbury will suggest that meaning precedes language and can be codified by it. In doing so, he is re-awakening a pre-linguistics world, in which there can be realities that are accepted without question and a social frame that is commonly understood. He also seems to be suggesting that meaning inheres in language and that culture is singular rather than plural, ideas at odds with those of some European critics:

> A text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author....A text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination....The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.[4]

Clearly there are many emphases in the Barthesian approach that differ fundamentally from Bradbury's, not least the idea that it is the destination of literature that matters more than its origin. However of particular interest in the present context is Barthes' reference to

[3] Malcolm Bradbury, The Social Context of Modern English Literature (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), p. xxiv.

[4] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', Image-Music-Text (Image-Musique-Texte, Paris: Seuil, 1968), trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), p. 148.

'cultures' rather than 'culture'. Not only does Bradbury attest to the essentiality of the author ('the creative act of the single man'), which points towards the notion of artist as genius and must come as painful reading to the creative woman, but he also seems to limit the provenance of this act to one culture, probably English. In short, Bradbury's is very much the nineteenth-century view of the gifted artist located within a stable culture and this carries with it none of the intertextual vibrations of poststructuralism. There remains a yearning for a golden age, a less dangerous age, in which society is fixed, the citizen knows his or her place and the role of the literary critic is to show how the text develops from this stable culture. Books speak for human free will and do not threaten our security. A far cry from Umberto Eco's words in _The Name of the Rose_:

> The library...was then the place of a centuries-old murmuring, an imperceptible dialogue between one parchment and another, a living thing, a receptacle of powers not ruled by the human mind, a treasure of secrets emanated by many minds, surviving the death of those who had produced them or had been their conveyors. (Eco, p. 286)

In both Barthes and Eco, there is a sense of literary pluralism and the power that books have to transcend both environment and origin so that they become free-standing, yet inter-related entities which may confound analysis of any kind.

After this cursory outline of what Bradbury's position _is_, it becomes important to see what it is _not_, for it could be argued that Bradbury spends a lot more time in

his critical books attacking what he does not like than he does proposing a set of coherent critical strategies he does. It is perhaps this attitude that underlies a generally defensive position in the face of the more radical aspects of literary theory and a desire to create a literary territory that will hold them at bay.

One of his major concerns is to separate literature from sociology. He states what he sees as the difference between the two activities thus:

> ...I have assumed that sociology and literature are different ways of seeing the world. Sociology is a conceptual discipline devoted to the study of society with particular reference to the institutions and structures within it. It studies not absolute reality, but a delimited point of reference which it defines as subject-matter. Literature is a body of usually written (but also orally or dramatically transmitted) works linked into a tradition of practice and forms, which itself 'interprets' society. Of course it may be studied by sociology but in a sense it also competes with it. It is of course a much more personal, subjective and imaginative way of knowing and it inwardly contains its own methods and ends. Its language does not denote and describe, as sociology's seeks to, but evokes and values, strategically using its inbuilt ambiguities not to give a neutral denotation of the extant universe but to persuade men into a fictive or verbally created universe. We would be mistaken to suppose that we could transliterate the insights of literature into sociological terms; we would also be mistaken if we were to assume that literature was in the position of gesturing towards the realities which the sociologist can state authoritatively. (Bradbury, SCMEL, p. xxii)

This distinction of activities is clear enough and stated with a degree of objectivity, although it does contain its own ambiguities when seen in the light of statements made by Bradbury only a few pages later in the same book, when he seems to suggest that both literary and sociological meanings of the word 'culture' derive from a

self-evident sense of the 'realities of life'. In many respects _The Social Context of Modern English Literature_ does observe these 'realities of life' from within the literary category that Bradbury proposes, although it is sometimes difficult to keep his distinction from sociology clearly in focus and there is a sense in which Janet Wolff's _The Social Production of Art_,[5] albeit different in its conclusions, actually treads ground similar to Bradbury's. The problem he has with sociology is its political and psychological implications, which he perceives as a menace to free will. Were sociology to remain as bland an exercise as Bradbury describes it above, it might be assumed he would have little quarrel with it. What he cannot accept is the undertow of determinism that it conceals and it is against this hidden agenda that he rails most fiercely. In an essay on Angus Wilson, he says:

> It is to the point to say that we live now in a time when the analogy with theatre has itself become very compelling for us, in a time of extravagant event and extravagant self-display, coupled with an uncertainty about selfhood, in which the idea of life as a theatre has both a vigorous and a disturbing multi-significance. In sociology the 'dramaturgical analogy'...has become very telling and part of the essential basis of sociological imperialism; _homo sociologicus_ is the role-player, his task ascribed to him by the total and already written social theatre in which we must take up parts, his degree of individual interpretation small, his nature made manifest in interaction with others. In psychology the theatre is social and mental; it arises in the play of early relationships and is manifest in all

[5] Janet Wolff, _The Social Production of Art_ (London: MacMillan, 1982).

later ones.[6]

The essential Bradbury is Western liberal man struggling against the forces of _a priorism_ as evidenced in the influence of thinkers like Marx and Freud. Although 'literature derives from society', it has to be mediated by 'the creative act of the single man' and any notion that society may shape that man is anathema. It may provide something of an ironic counterbalance to compare Bradbury's view with that of one of the French neo-Marxists:

> 'Man' is a myth of bourgeois ideology: Marxism-Leninism cannot _start_ from 'man'. It starts from 'the economically given social period'; and, at the end of its analysis, when it arrives, _it may find real men_. These men are thus the _point of arrival_ of an analysis which starts from the social relations of the existing mode of production, from class relations, and from the class struggle. These men are quite different from the 'man' of bourgeois ideology.[7]

Bradbury's dislike of prescriptive modes of analysis also spills over onto the study of language and how this can be used to criticize the literary text. For him the study of literature, in his case primarily the novel, implies the need to enter sympathetically into texts and to appreciate all their aspects: referential, rhetorical, social, psychological, philosophical, stylistic and mythic. To extract one aspect, language for example, is to distort the nature of literary criticism and to miss

6 Malcolm Bradbury, _Possibilities: Essays on The State of The Novel_ (London: O.U.P., 1973), p. 224.

7 Louis Althusser, 'Reply to John Lewis,' _Essays in Self-Criticism_ (London: New Left Books, 1976), pp. 52-53.

the manifold riches of the text. He is therefore critical of the tendency in contemporary literary studies to move towards analyses that attempt single explanations of the nature of the text:

> ...there has been a sharp inclination to diverge from the long term concern in English literary discussion with the humanistic and humane aspects as a moral medium, a 'storehouse of recorded values', in I. A. Richards's phrase. In short, there has been an increase in critical neutrality and objectivity, an obsession with procedural and methodological logic, a desire for a more inclusive but also a more descriptive poetics. (Bradbury, SUAS(12), pp. 30-31)

The concept that a text can be studied by its use of language alone is therefore unpalatable to Bradbury and it is on this question that he takes issue with David Lodge. In Bradbury's terms, the attempt to tie literature down to a set of linguistic codes, be they metonymy and metaphor or any other, is fundamentally ill-conceived and will lead to a view of the novel that is not only lop-sided but also potentially determinist. He says:

> ...a just object of attention - assuming the task of criticism is an adequate and full response to the text, not the creation of an outward typology which is then applied to it...is, not the projection of some matter or action prior to the writing, which the writing either copies or fleshes out, but a steady appreciation of the way in which a writer has shaped and been shaped by his undertaking. (Bradbury, PS, p. 284)

However, Bradbury's objections to linguistics do not stop at that point; they also have important implications for how the novel should be written. Although in his later critical writing his attitude to postmodernism is modified to some extent, there remains a lingering hostility to the idea that meaning can be no more than a series of self-

perpetuating references. Wittgenstein's or Heidegger's conclusions that language can be no more than a game of chess generating an infinite number of moves or Nietzsche's concept of always being on the verge of meaning but never arriving, will find no favour with Bradbury. Even the idea that language itself should have moved centre stage in the debate about literature is something he finds hard to tolerate.

It is at this point that a certain xenophobia creeps into Bradbury's writing, because the sorts of determinist idea about both language and history that he so dislikes tend to have their origins largely in continental Europe and to have been taken more seriously in the United States than in Britain. Postmodern fiction in Europe and the Americas has questioned sacred liberal values and projected a re-interpretation of literature and it is this that Bradbury will oppose. His mentor in this project is Bernard Bergonzi whose book The Situation of the Novel[8] is quoted frequently in Possibilities. Talking about postmodernist writing, Bradbury first quotes Bergonzi, who calls it 'a literature minimalizing itself and manifesting its own disorder' and then goes on to say:

> So fiction seemed; and then it was noticed that the British had adopted a particularly nasty subterfuge, and were writing novels as if there was no predicament at all. Their writers, the critics claimed, were refusing experiment, the strains and pains of form and perception; they were reinstating

[8] Bernard Bergonzi, The Situation of the Novel, (London: MacMillan, 1970).

> materialist and liberal realism, avoiding the meaning of Beckett, Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and reaching to Wells, Bennett and even back to Henry Fielding. They restored an anciently liberal and humane universe; they celebrated their own provincialism. This could have been exciting news, suggesting that history, both real and fictional, was better than everyone said; better that there were historical lacunae, that there was an appeal against the beast. (Bradbury, _PS_, p. 170)

This is a curious piece of writing, not least because of its implied refusal to live in the present. Its central impetus, the defence of British realism against encroachment from without, will be dealt with later in this chapter, but what is of interest here is the use of 'beast', as if readers and writers of postmodernist and even modernist texts were exposing themselves to some eccentric form of savagery. England, we are told, is not like that and furthermore should never become so. The grand schemes of philosophic apocalypse live in continental Europe and America; the British critic's job is to make certain they do not blight our shores:

> ...many of the new energies in the novel - the French _nouveau roman_, the American black humour novel - are energies arising from a sense of absolute historical apocalypse; moreover, they grow from and involve an explicit attack on the idea of character, free action, and the rights and capacities of persons to mediate with a substantial world. (Bradbury, _PS_, p. 26)

There is a sense here of somebody burying his head in the sand while warfare rages all around in the hope that, when he finally emerges, the battle will have moved on and left his world unscathed. It is as if there were some universal plot to unseat the forces of good and replace them with the power of evil. Sociology, linguistics and postmodern

writing become part of a contemporary strategy designed to drain modern people of their sense of moral values. In an essay about the comic novel of the twenties, Bradbury says:

> ...we can, I think, fairly readily recognize that the process visible in art has, dismayingly, its parallels in history and society - that the withdrawal from a sympathetic portrait of the rounded human person has something in common with the dehumanization of a modernizing world. Nor, indeed, has that dehumanization been something outside ourselves which art and humanism have fought to resist. It is a presence close to the modern will and modern thought, of a piece with the growing subscription to environmentalist, determinist and historicist theories, which have tended to give man over to his circumstantial conditions, his place in larger plots. (Bradbury, PS, p. 140)

It becomes clear, then, that the almost ghostly 'presence' of behaviourist thought is something that Bradbury is deeply suspicious of and which he feels the need to repel at all costs. The question that remains to be answered is: how?

Put simply, Bradbury appears to be advocating a return to the bourgeois summer of the nineteenth century and to the decorums of civility that were its hallmark. Bradbury's ideal world is marked by liberal humanism, geniality, coherence and decency. Its essential feature is a form of cultural pluralism which precludes political involvement but includes objectives of a higher moral and qualitative nature than those of the mass-culture of the twentieth century. In the preface to Possibilities he notes:

> Criticism is, I presume, a _post facto_ activity, and its task to produce a working discourse which does not - by terminological limitation, or through historicist or other determinist theories of form or literary action - foreclose options, or suppose the art we are concerned with complete or over. (Bradbury, _PS_, p. ix)

About politics, Bradbury says:

> ...the only real commitment that good art can have finally is to itself. Writers, of course, may commit themselves politically; but their literary motivation must, if they are serious writers, finally predominate over the political one when it comes to a declaration of interest. (Bradbury, _SCMEL_, p. 256)

and:

> Today writers are constantly urged towards commitment, which usually means direct identification with some prevailing political ideological system, more often than not on the left. Such systems are often the selfish vulgate myths...of sectors in the society who, seeing the historical process as the only thing that matters, seek in the long or short run to monopolize it. (Bradbury, _SCMEL_, p. 255)

This signals an anxiety about the politics of the left and seems to propose a non-alignment that would allow the artist to continue working without the need for commitment. Bradbury's favoured environment is essentially that of Matthew Arnold or Dr. Leavis, a world which appeals to moral standards and values, in which those who study literature are inevitably concerned with 'life' rather than politics or theoretical activity. He has a number of strategies to operate against determinism.

The first of these is comedy and it is significant that Bradbury should devote so much of his critical writing to considerations of comic writers, because he is one himself and much of his own fiction is aimed at the domestication of the submerged forces of history by means of satire and

laughter. What he sees in comedy is a means of accommodating the feared apocalypse, although he admits that the types of comic writing fired by this intention must be bleaker and cooler than the sorts he himself prefers. On his own admission, he owes a considerable debt to Evelyn Waugh and, in his eclectic way, has been the interpreter of Tom Sharpe for television. Of comedy, he says:

> Comedy...appears to have become a very possible language for addressing a sense we have of ourselves in a world such as ours - a world of chaos, transitory experience, divided nature and confused hope; above all, a world in which the processes of social modernization have created the instability of identity and society, those possibilities of disfiguration and deception, which are habitual parts of the comic universe. This chaotic, Dionysian type of the comic, which has long been recognized as a part of the species, but which has usually existed within structures which are restorative, which contain its forces and reassert a final order, and especially its potential for abstracting and dehumanizing a supposedly human world, have been central to contemporary comic writing. And in this form it has been much a part of other experiments in abstraction and detachment which are part of the stylistic character of modern art. (Bradbury, <u>PS</u>, p. 144)

The comic concept, then, is a means of combatting the chaos of the modern world, a formalized desire for order, and Bradbury will look back nostalgically to the 'genial' laws that govern Sterne's <u>Tristram Shandy</u> and talk longingly of the 'gaiety' that his universe is founded on.

What Bradbury likes least in the modern world is its apparent incoherence, the potential it holds for anarchy. The following quotation from an essay about Jane Austen is

extremely long but demonstrates both Bradbury's desire for coherence and his tendency to over-write:

> What I want to propose for this essay is that her fiction is best considered as one in which nothing is given - that, as a conscious artist, her society, her moral world, her compositional form are made, and made as in all good novels for the purpose of persuading us into a total, coherent impression in which arrangement and authorial management are of the essense. In a sense I am saying something I believe to be true of all interesting novels; something that, because we have become much disposed towards symbolist and aesthetic notions of fictional creation, we are apt to forget. For not only are they verbal constructs, so that the society they create and body out, the shape they make, must be a fiction, a fleshing out of a world whose existence and coherence is made, by and of which we are persuaded by the novelist alone, but their creation is self-evidently 'compositional'. Because nearly all novels are explorations of persons in possible milieux living out relationships that are probable to experience and guided by shared norms and expectations, social and psychological laws and customs, they create society: the making of a novel is the making of a world - a persistently developing, changing world - in language and the persuasion of the reader into the practices and principles by which it supports itself remains coherent. Our means of engagement with that world is through a running act of persuasion which may be stabilized as a 'tone', a rhetorical wholeness or narrative posture devoted not only to convincing us that there is here a whole world operational and worth attention but that it is assessable and comprehensible only if a certain attitude is taken. The society of a novel emerges coherently from a developing action which brings it into existence; it is not there before the novel begins, though by the time we put the book down the effect of verisimilitude may be such that we feel it has always been there. What _is_ there before the novel begins is the social character of all our experience and discourse, the common web of language which means that the reader does share a sense of the probable and the coherent, a knowledge of the likely forms of human conduct, of moral dilemmas, of the form of the imperative of social institutions, codes, roles, and duties. (Bradbury, _PS_, pp. 56-57)

This is typical of Bradbury's style, in many respects rambling and repetitive, but none the less making the point about coherence very firmly - by repeating it five

times. The passage iterates the old yearnings for stability, shared experience and a 'common web of language' and represents a sort of manifesto for the realistic novel. Bradbury makes concessions to the modernist notion of the art work as 'made' but it is only made in the image of an empirically known universe.

Bradbury's world is also 'decent' and he is frank about admiring writers for this quality. E. M. Forster is one such, who, according to Bradbury, is neither masked and impersonal nor a prophet of anguish and extremity but rather: "the kind who compel us as men, by virtue of the centrality, decency and humanity of their values, their capacity to embody the moral best of culture" (Bradbury, PS, p. 91).

The liberal humanist utopia that Bradbury is proposing as the natural home for 'good' literature is equally foregrounded by Bernard Bergonzi, who shares the same longing for the liberal past and the same need to disparage continental Europeans for being too committed and too earnest. Bergonzi says of being English:

> As an English writer and teacher who, in general, likes it here, I am naturally conscious of the positive qualities of the English ideology. Looked at from inside, the society, and its culture and literature, can seem a happy enclave of tradition and liberalism, a living fragment of the nineteenth century which, given the minimum amount of intelligent adjustment, might go on existing indefinitely. (Bergonzi, The Situation of The Novel, p. 62)

About foreigners, he says: "On the Continent literature is taken with the kind of seriousness that means that writers are on occasion persecuted, imprisoned, or even shot, a

state of affairs inconceivable in England" (Bergonzi, p. 47). 'Beast', it will be recalled, was the word Bradbury used in relation to postmodernist writing, most of which is 'foreign'.

What Bradbury seems to be hoping is that the re-building of a decent, genial, coherent society along liberal lines will act as a deterrent against the visions of nihilism and alienation associated with some European literature. Yet, although there is much in Bradbury's thinking that seems to coincide with the Victorianism of 1980s' Toryism, he is adamant that art and politics cannot mix:

> But the liberal-critical function has held its place against the claims either of a more outright nihilism or outright politicism.... And even in that art of accelerated modern consciousness, with its vision of chaos, of a civilisation in Yeats's phrase 'much divided', the liberal-artistic ideal of redeeming the culture through the transcendence of art runs deep. In short, the marks of alienation on modern English writing are less those of a retreat into 'unreality' of neurosis or the over-reality of a revolutionary politics but more commonly an expression of the possibilities of artistic independence and a desire to use it to reach towards metaphors of desirable wholeness. (Bradbury, SCMEL, p. 124)

This passage is illuminating not only because it contains the title of Bradbury's next book Possibilities, but also because of its apparent fear of 'politicism'. Bradbury's accustomed reaction to political life is to imply that it, like other forms of commitment, is somehow dangerous and antipathetic to the general good. Peter Widdowson is particularly scathing about Bradbury's stance:

> ...what Bradbury fails to see - because of his fear

> of the threat to liberalism from the left - is that his denial of politics _is_ politics; that his reaffirmation of the old elitist liberal culturalism is just as much a part of capitalism as Mrs. Thatcher's monetarism; that individualism is the central tenet of both capitalist economics and liberal humanism; that bourgeois liberalism _is_ the ideology of capitalism; that it is _that ideology_ (and 'realism' is complicit with it) _which_ obscures the real social relations of the notional 'free individual's' life; that late twentieth century capitalist society and culture is exposing its contradictions more and more sharply; and that even a liberalism of despair helps to disguise them. No wonder he is opposed to history. (Widdowson, 'AHM', p. 12)

By insisting on the virtues of liberal humanism, Bradbury also reinforces the notions of elitism that underpin such a society. Large sections of _The Social Context of Modern English Literature_, while ostensibly devoted to a study of the social conditions that underlie the production of art works in Britain, are also quite clear in their condemnation of the mass culture of the twentieth century by comparison with the high culture of the nineteenth. The regret that permeates these pages is that high culture should have lost its position of prestige, filtering down wisdom and moral values from its place at the top of the societal triangle, and have been replaced by a more equalizing form of mass culture. Indeed the triangle itself seems to have been inverted and Bradbury's fear is that the higher values may have gone forever, swept away on a tide of mass-communication. It is perhaps something of a paradox that Bradbury himself should work so gladly for television, although he would doubtless argue that the best way to defeat it is to join it. In _The Social Context of Modern English Literature_ he

says:

> ...what is clear is that literary culture in our society has been under social and historical pressure from various sources - from the degree to which other forms of knowledge of a more rationalistic, scientific and neutral kind have power with us; from the lessening influence of those communities in the society for whom a literary view of life has a fundamental value; and from the rise to dominance of much more homogenized and less personal and elitist forms of cultural expression which carry many of the functions of art without being so - which is to say mass-culture. (Bradbury, SCMEL, p. 175)

In a purely historical sense this is no doubt accurate; what makes it significant as far as Bradbury's thought is concerned is the attribution of value to the situation, in other words the implication that this shift has been culturally detrimental. Others, such as Umberto Eco and Raymond Williams, have been prepared to collapse the categories 'mass' and 'high' culture and suggest that our patterns of understanding and transmitting culture, indeed the whole structure of higher education, are in need of reconsideration in the light of this. Terry Eagleton[9] shows himself willing to reformulate the notions of 'value' and 'greatness' as they apply to literary texts, suggesting that these terms are restricted to time and place. Bradbury's formulation, however, remains essentially reactionary:

> ...from a social order in which there was a marked cultural stratification and a marked elitism at work, that elitism having a great deal to do with the validation of an humanistic art, we have moved towards a social order in which there is a new form

[9] Terry Eagleton, 'Political Conclusion', Literary Theory (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

> of cultural stratification. In this new form high or serious literature persists, but has something of the character of a survival from the past.... (Bradbury, SCMEL, p. 245)

It is not that Bradbury is unaware of Raymond Williams's views, for example; it is simply that he puts them into a perspective that relies heavily on the personal freedom of the individual writer:

> As Raymond Williams has pointed out, the new arts are in some sense a human expansion and we may suppose that their world will remain in part a human world. But precisely because they are not entirely a human world, they are less than arts. It is the selectivity, the complexity, the personalization of genuine art that carries the essentially human aspect of culture. (Bradbury, SCMEL, p. 252)

Bradbury, then, believes in the mystery of the creative process and is given to revere the writer as a special, almost god-like figure in society with natural insights that allow peculiar privileges. Necessarily he will be less than enchanted with some contemporary critical views that hold literature to be only one more product amongst many in society and will complain that equality has become more fashionable than excellence. He will argue too that what is written for the mass-media is ephemeral and shallow. So, although "writing...is a very individualized activity indeed: an outright example of our humanism and freedom" (Bradbury, SCMEL, p. 171) and it is "psychologically mysterious and in many ways unbidden" (SCMEL, p. 171), the writer these days finds him/herself in competition with massive, dehumanizing forces that threaten the annihilation of such individualisms. The following passages represent an amalgam of Bradbury's

views on the quandary of the serious writer today:

> ...the evidence is clear that the centrality of imaginative literature - that is, in other than its most popular forms - has declined, becoming just one factor in the vastly growing output of communications, rather than representing a central association of the very idea of the book. (Bradbury, SCMEL, p. 225)

> The writer tends to see himself part of a pattern of established relations between a variety of media at a variety of levels, to which pattern he may attach himself. Dealing with a much more personal situation, his gift is more of professional efficiency than personal distinction. He attaches himself to forms and media which have already charted the market, in the hope of extending them further. Amid the abundance and variety of modern provision, his own imaginative acts become dwarfed. (SCMEL, p. 228)

> The writer today faces an audience enfranchised by communications, exposed to more scenes, more events, more information, more knowledge and more changeability than ever before. This limits his imaginative power: the world itself becomes sensational literature. (SCMEL, p. 229)

Clearly, in Bradbury's view, this 'enfranchisement' and the concomitant revelation of what used to be esoteric militates against serious literature. Democracy itself has an undesirable levelling effect:

> ...there is every sign that literature in the present culture is being reshaped, as the writer in egalitarian democracy becomes - as De Tocqueville predicted he would (Democracy in America: 1835-40) - the ordinary man. (Bradbury, SCMEL, p. 127)

Bradbury's writer is very much the romantic 'man of genius', the separatist located far away from the whirlpools of daily life, who hands down masterworks to the ordinary mortals below. However, it is perhaps salutary to remember an opposing view. In Marx's terms:

> Consumption produces production...because a product becomes a real product only by being consumed. For example, a garment becomes a real garment only in the act of being worn; a house where no one lives is in fact not a real house; thus the product, unlike a

> mere natural object, proves itself to be, becomes, a product only through consumption. Only by decomposing the product does the consumption give the product the finishing touch.[10]

Perhaps it is not surprising that Bradbury should so dislike the determinist analysis of social relations.

This chapter has concentrated so far on questions concerning society and history because these are the themes that dominate Bradbury's two major works of criticism The Social Context of Modern English Literature and Possibilities. What emerges is a picture that contains paradoxes and contradictions but which none the less portrays quite insistently an idealized nineteenth-century liberal humanistic world which Bradbury sees as under attack from all quarters and whose preservation is a sine qua non for the continuance of serious literature in Britain. What remains is to identify what Bradbury means by 'serious' literature by examining the critical focus of his work, including at this point collections of essays edited by him, and to trace the way in which he perceives the novel in Britain defending itself from without.

Although having written or edited a considerable amount of material about modernism, largely of a guidebook kind,[11] outlining important writers and social background rather than theoretical aspects, Bradbury, like David

[10] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, On Literature and Art (New York: International General, 1973), p. 91.

[11] Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, eds., Modernism 1890-1930 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976).

Lodge, is an ardent defender of the British tradition of realism and indeed Possibilities compares with The Novelist at The Crossroads as a sort of marshalling point for arguments in defence of British writers. In effect, the writers selected for inclusion in Possibilities are all examples of individual English voices continuing to struggle to be heard against the general background of European and American experimentalism. Essentially the book is organized chronologically, taking a broad sweep from the eighteenth century through to contemporary novelists, including some of the modernists and the comic writers of the twenties on the way and thus describing writers as diverse in their work as Henry Fielding, Laurence Sterne, Jane Austen, E. M. Forster, Evelyn Waugh, Malcolm Lowry and John Fowles. Significantly, however, in the essay on Fanny Hill, Bradbury says:

> Criticism now is clearly baffled by the anti-humanist character of many works that seem important; we have developed a large modern literature of dehumanization and resuscitated a whole tradition in the past; from Swift, Voltaire and de Sade to Nathaniel West, Burroughs, and Genet, we can find significant lines running which lead us further into that universe of fantasy (if fantasy is the right word for a process also recognizable in history) in which the human self is dwarfed, violated, perhaps destroyed, physiological functions dominate, man (or woman) is put into thing-status in often an apocalyptically surreal universe, and in which both social protest and a patent emotional perversity can coincide. We cannot take such works as part of the humanist canon of literature, but, by a transitional fiction of our times, one we ought to examine more than we do, for we can find qualities of literary and emotional merit in them. (Bradbury, PS, p. 41)

The guidelines are clear. There is no question of

accepting the writers of 'fantasy' into the humanist canon, although Bradbury makes the significant shift of indicating that there is reason to pay some further attention to them. The writers Bradbury tends to favour, however, like E. M. Forster for his decency, Sterne for his gaiety or Waugh for his comedy, are those who are essentially realistic. In the face of criticism from overseas that the English novel has remained rigid and unchanging when confronted with developing theories of fiction and linguistics, Bradbury argues that in fact the English novel _is_ experimental in ways that some observers have not been perceptive enough to notice. So in _The Novel Today_, he says:

> If it is reasonable enough to note, in contemporary English fiction, a certain persistance of the liberal novel, an attempt to sustain the idea of character and to redeem elements of realism, this has been done in the context of a climate of anxious experiment, and a deep working curiosity has grown up in English fiction, among some of the best practitioners, about the fictional constituents of the novel. (Bradbury, _NT_, p. 18)

The examples he cites of this tendency are Angus Wilson, Iris Murdoch, Muriel Spark, David Storey, B. S. Johnson and John Fowles, stressing, with the exception of Johnson, that in their work there is evidence of modest experimentalism if not radical change. He makes similar points elsewhere:

> Its [the modern period's: author's note] sense of experiment has been held against a sense of tradition, a continuity; its novelties have been

> remarkably assimilated towards the centre. It is a literature that has been lit by lights from modernism, rather than modernist literature; and it has been considerably rooted in familiar, national, provincial experience, rather than in arcane worlds of its own making. In this sense it has conducted a liberal dialogue with reality and with its social audience, its writers functioning as humanist speakers in a society while drawn beyond it both to artistic transcendence and historical desperation. That taste for anarchy that has been so important an aspect of certain stages of modernism in other countries has been felt, but it has been mitigated, reduced from a state of outright nihilism or desperation. (Bradbury, _SCMEL_, p. 34)

and:

> In short, I think one can sense in the postwar period a new literary milieu and a new set of preoccupations emerging, as David Lodge suggests, as we pass from the cultural and political climate of the first two decades after the war to something else. Neither milieu nor preoccupations seem startlingly novel in their basic elements; both, I think, involve a change of emphasis with regard to the felt possibilities of the novel form. In that general enterprise I think the important English novelists have been significant participants. (Bradbury, _PS_, p. 175)

In other words English realist writers have experienced existential _angst_ too but, in British liberal fashion, have been able to assimilate and accommodate it, so that it is no longer a threat. It is not the case that the contemporary novel in Britain rejects experiment; rather it has been experimenting more gently, while attempting at the same time to preserve coherence with its realistic traditions. In this sense we may talk of 'experimental realism':

> The art of extremes may now be undergoing a revival; but there is nothing on the record of the modern century to say it is the only true art. And the art which still asserts the reality of language or recognizableness of human character is not therefore a provenly outmoded form. To persist, of course,

> literature of this temper has necessarily found much change in the world it treats and, in finding that, it has changed the forms and structures by which the writer communicates with our changing structures of perception; but it has done so with a degree of linguistic and structural community foreign to much art in the modernist sense. (Bradbury, SCMEL, p. 102)

This is presumably the sort of argument Bradbury would use to explain the changes in his own fiction, bending as it has done to include some of our altered modes of perception. In effect, by pointing out the experimental nature of English writing, in its own peculiar fashion, Bradbury is answering a plea made by Robert Nye some years ago when he said:

> The truth is that we have a tradition of 'experimental' writing in English, but this commonly being referred to as a series of isolated eccentric works, the continuity of that traditon is lost. English criticism has not yet caught up with the English imagination....[12]

Nye and Bradbury are probably talking about different texts altogether in their understanding of what experiment is and is not. Bradbury's answer to the question of how the English novel has coped with a changed environment is that traditional realism needs little adaptation in order to accommodate new influences, whereas Nye is pointing towards a much more radical version of literary experiment. That aside, both Possibilities and The Social Context of Modern English Literature, in their different ways, emphasize the resilience of the British tradition to the incursions of modernism and postmodernism, either by

[12] Robert Nye, in ed. Giles Gordon, Beyond The Words (London: Hutchinson, 1975), p. 203.

redefining that tradition as experimental in any case or by outlining the social changes the novel has undergone and then affirming the power of the British writer to resist the powers of determinism. Anthony Burgess has summed up what must be a fairly typical British attitude:

> Experimental fiction is supposed to be a monopoly of the French, who, in my view, generally take to experiment because they lack talent. Michel Butor, Nathalie Sarraute, Robbe-Grillet and the rest have more intellectual than solid interest in the current of life as it is lived; none of them has been able to create, as Johnson did and Sterne before him, a credible major character. (Burgess, Beyond The Words, p. 20)

However, from about 1977 onwards, in other words since The Novel Today, a series of essays edited by Bradbury, he seems to have shifted his ground somewhat. In the introduction to the book, Bradbury repeats his familiar notion that English realism can be simultaneously experimental but shows an increased willingness to be flexible, as if the pressures of a changing literary world had finally begun to penetrate:

> These notions [of modern criticism: author's note] clearly affect what contemporary novelists are doing, though they do not precisely mesh with it; it is important to remember that the obligations of the critic and the writer are very different and the critic's task is to explore the history of a form, the character of its cultural existence, the typologies of creation; the novelist's obligation is to make himself a stylist and experimental citizen of a world he sees as not yet fully named. He does this both within a convention, the convention of the novel, and against it; he repeats but also remakes the form; he exercises options in a particular historical and cultural situation, but keeps attempting, afresh, to distil this as a signed and personal authenticity. (Bradbury, NT, pp. 11-12)

The Novel Today includes Iris Murdoch's 'Against Dryness' and David Lodge's 'The Novelist at the

Crossroads', which in their different ways affirm Bradbury's old position, but then there are also pieces by B. S. Johnson, John Barth, Michel Butor, Doris Lessing, who savages the whole business of literary criticism, and Philip Stevick, who is sympathetic to and informative about postmodernism, that tend to counterbalance the traditional view. It is perhaps not surprising that the book's final essay should be entitled 'The Myth of the Postmodernist Breakthrough', but even so there is an openness in the collection that points to an increased awareness of postmodernism and a reduction in active opposition to it. It is not that Bradbury gives up the struggle altogether, but there is a greater tolerance and even a grudging admission that there may be something of interest here after all. It is perhaps significant that _Rates of Exchange_,[13] written after 1977, should bear some of the hallmarks of a shift in the direction of postmodernism, partly to parody it but partly also as the result of poststructuralist messages.

By 1983 and the publication of _The Modern American Novel_[14] Bradbury seems to have moved even further towards acceptance of metafictional strategies. In the final section of the book which, like much of Bradbury's other writing about modernism, consists largely of an historical

[13] Malcolm Bradbury, _Rates of Exchange_ (1983; rpt. London: Arena, 1984).

[14] Malcolm Bradbury, _The Modern American Novel_ (London: O.U.P., 1983).

analysis of important writers, he comes to what had in the past been his apparent enemy and yet there is less hostility to the American postmodernists than might have been expected. There is, instead, an objectivity and indeed even a degree of enthusiasm for their work:

> Much of the experimental Sixties fiction is concerned with the enormous powers at work in the modern world, the impact of war and the coming era of 'nothingness', the presence of imposed plots and patterns conditioning and containing all discourse, making man as language user a programmed instrument of the system. For, where earlier writers might respond to the powers of the world with a victimized neutralism, these writers tended to find this victimization present in the very explanatory structure they used, language itself. In some sense this disabled the form and structure of novels; at the same time it could generate new imaginative fusions, as the novel sought not just to re-invent itself but to display the nature of its inventive process, offering itself as a form of meaning, a form of decreation leading to recreation. If it displayed the defeat of the text by the weight of the past and the domination of fixed systems, it might also produce a new reality - 'open-ended, provisional, characterized by suspended judgements, disbelief in hierarchies, by mistrust of solutions, dénouements and completions, by self-consciousness issuing in tremendous earnestness, but also in far-reaching mockery'...said one critic. (Bradbury, MAN, p. 161)

This is a crucial piece of writing for Bradbury because, although it retains elements of past anxieties about 'plots' and 'patterns of conditioning', it also shows an awareness that decreation (or deconstruction) may also lead to re-creation (or reconstruction) and perhaps therefore an appreciation that Derrida might not be a total nihilist. However, if he has begun to accept postmodern writers, it may be for the same reason that he selected his authors for Possibilities, in other words because they symbolize forces of resistance against

totalitarianism. By decreating a reality that Bradbury may himself dislike, they are proposing a new and possibly more acceptable model which, appropriately for Bradbury, is frequently characterized by comedy. It is almost as if he does not fully understand the implications of poststructuralism until fairly late on, but when he begins to, he perceives categories that coincide with his own project. Later in the same section of the book, he says:

> Whether or not postmodernism is the dominant or 'appropriate' style of the age may be questionable; what is certain is that formal and epistemological questions crucial to fiction's nature are being articulated in writers who have extended certain fundamental preoccupations of modernism - notably with fiction as play, game, parody, forgery and fantasy - and added new challenges to the notion that art is referential and formerly coherent. In their works the stable text disappears; the fiction becomes meta-fictional; the reader is invited into novels in novel ways. (Bradbury, MAN, p. 163)

and:

> ...in part because the works of postmodernism have been popular as well as avant garde, and belong as much to the new media as the new bohemia, the transformation from older realism into newer systems of creative notation has been of the largest importance, and has had the deepest implications for the novel internationally, because it has questioned the act of imaginative writing at its heart. (Bradbury, MAN, p. 164)

Both of these passages signal a much more enthusiastic attitude to what previously seemed to be practically proscribed texts written by 'beasts'. Perhaps Bradbury can see links between the concerns of the American postmodernists and Laurence Sterne. Perhaps he is digging back into his own past to remember why it was that the novel was called 'novel'. Whatever the cause of the change of mind, the new stance is plain. At the end of The Modern

American Novel, Bradbury offers these two thoughts, which indicate a different set of possibilities:

> ...at its best, the novel is not simply an infinitely repeatable type, a body of habitual and therefore apparently innocent styles and modes of expression, a set of fixed sub-genres open to modernization by fresh authors; it is an ever-changing act of apprehension, belonging in the world of our changing thought, our changing history, our changing ways of naming experience, and it cannot stand still. (Bradbury, MAN, p. 186)

and:

> If the novel is, at best, a deep apprehension of what it means, in a changing world, to utter ourselves, structure our experience, name our world into being, then over the course of the century the best American fiction has become a literature of primary enquiries into the means of doing exactly that. (Bradbury, MAN, p. 186)

What is important about these extracts is not only the tacit acceptance that new structures are needed to describe new experiences in life, but also the evidence they betray of an increased awareness of the vocabulary of literary theory. Bradbury has come a long way from the days when he held meaning to precede language if he can use a phrase such as 'name our world into being'. The apparent acceptance that postmodernism can achieve something valid in Bradbury's eyes is also the potential acceptance that poststructuralist analyses of language and their use for both critical and fictional writing are not necessarily at odds with the nature of literary practice in Britain. Perhaps, however, Bradbury's flirtation with postmodernism was no more than that, merely a matter of convenience that allows his fiction some theoretical underpinning of a more up-to-date kind. Such would

certainly be the conclusion of Terry Eagleton, writing about Bradbury's 1987 collection of essays called No, Not Bloomsbury:[15]

> A post-Leavisian liberal humanism may trick itself out in modernist dress and even dip the odd delicate toe into the swamps of post-structuralism; but it cannot go the whole theoretical hog, whatever the critic in Bradbury might like to think he is doing, since what such theory has to deliver is the bad news that modernist anti-humanism is not after all compatible with English empiricism. The strategy, then, is to hover sardonically in a rapidly shrinking middle, implicitly equating a commodified mass culture with Marxist, feminist and post-structuralist theory, so as to ward off the unsettling insight that the latter might after all have something useful to say about how to dismantle the former.[16]

[15] Malcolm Bradbury, No,Not Bloomsbury (London: Deutsch, 1987).

[16] Terry Eagleton, 'Undistributed Middle,' The Times Literary Supplement, 12 June 1987, p. 627.

CHAPTER FOUR

Malcolm Bradbury: Works of Fiction

Paradoxically, in the light of Malcolm Bradbury's pleading for liberalism in his critical writing, the 'liberal' characters in his fiction are, by and large, losers, men whose voices, never assured to begin with, are eventually forced into virtual silence by the 'history men' who surround them, 'absent centres' in a world of personal and architectural aggression which dominates and crushes them. Articulation becomes a problem in the face of increasingly determinist twentieth-century values that are the obverse of the nineteenth-century golden age that Bradbury eulogizes in his critical writing. What is interesting about this process is that it is evident in the first of his novels and is then developed through the remainder, covering a span of almost twenty-five years (1959-1983), although changing in emphasis across the period. The fate of liberalism could be said to have become something of an obsession for Bradbury, therefore, as book by book its values are increasingly threatened by the forces of determinism in the form of monsters like Howard Kirk in *The History Man* or whole socialist states like Slaka in

Rates of Exchange, which function as metaphors for not only political but also linguistic and literary theoretical determinism.

Much of what is to come is already evident in Eating People Is Wrong,[1] a tale of the uncertainties in love and other relationships of a middle-aged professor facing male menopausal ennui at a northern provincial university in the fifties. Then, perhaps, it was more the threat of Russian communism that British liberalism had to face than the menace of working-class heroes or the encroachment of continental literary theory, yet the same uncertainty in the light of ineluctable change is to be found in its pages as in either The History Man or Rates of Exchange. Bradbury himself, in the afterword to Eating People Is Wrong waxes nostalgic about not only the age in which the book was written but also the liberal idealism that he feels to have vanished in the meantime:

> The liberalism that makes Treece virtuous also makes him inert.... Treece sits with his failed romanticism, his reaching backwards and forwards, in an ironic world, a world without real deliverances....It is well, he says to himself, that I am a liberal and can love all men; for if he were not, he doubts if he could. He senses change, the greater alienations, the psychic threats to stable personality, but he accepts his values, in their limitation, and their loss. In all this he represents both the absurdity and the virtue of liberalism, a disposition or philosophy given in its later manifestations to engaging with its own inconsistency and anticipating its own destruction. Given that, an ironic self-knowledge seems the only tone that is left.... (Bradbury, EPIW, afterword, pp. 296-297)

[1] Malcolm Bradbury, Eating People Is Wrong (1959; rpt. London: Arena, 1984).

This passage is emblematic of Bradbury's enterprise, representing his felt need for the individual struggle to retain the values of decency and love in the face of the growing onslaught of pressures from within and without. However this crusade often seems doomed to failure for, try as Bradbury's heroes will to inculcate and promulgate these values, they are ridiculed from all sides and ultimately silenced. Bradbury may argue that the comic superstructure to his novels provides an irony that attenuates tragedy but there lingers the sense of a profound failure to cope with the likes of Kirk or his prototype in *Stepping Westward*,[2] Bernard Froelich, who always succeed, although morally in the wrong, while the liberals, like Treece, always fail, although morally right.

Eating People Is Wrong is full of references to liberalism and it is this preoccupation that reveals a text of a different order to the comedy it purports to be; indeed the same can be said of all Bradbury's fictions, which are much more earnest than their paperback jackets might suggest. Professor Treece might seem to be merely the amusing archetype of academic bemusement and a figure of fun. However, Bradbury's project is deeper than this because he repeatedly wanders away from the surface structure of a *comédie de moeurs* into the realms of philosophy and universality. Treece is forever baffled

[2] Malcolm Bradbury, *Stepping Westward* (1965; rpt. London: Arena, 1984).

at the existential crossroads of action and inaction:

> ...he expected a thoughtful evaluation of all men by all men. It worried him that he very rarely got it. He himself was perfectly responsive to all influences, and took experience as it came, registering it, analysing it, but not coming to immediate decisive judgements about it; after all, experience was what it was, and it came out of the void. You didn't make up your mind just like THAT.... He soul was not, alas, wide enough to encompass the whole world, but at least he _wished_ that it was. With Treece you felt that the world was his fault; by existing himself, he _made_ it, and he wanted to apologize for it. (Bradbury, _EPIW_, p. 74)

Treece indeed is the 'hollow man' who is aware but cannot act, whose own _ennui_ forbids engagement. Bradbury's writing is underlaid by these concerns but he never dwells on them long enough for them to become anything more than a set of hints and whispers. Observed through the corpus of his fiction, however, they point to a moral seriousness that belies Bradbury's reputation as a comic novelist. So Treece can say:

> One was a humanist, neither Christian nor communist any more, but in some vague, unstable central place, a humanist, yes, but not one of those who supposes that man is good or progress attractive. One has no firm affiliations, political, religious or moral, but lies outside it all (Bradbury, _EPIW_, p. 56)

and:

> 'I suffer from this shameful and useless boredom, this complete exhaustion of personality.... I lack the energy to carry through any process I conceive. And when I look at all the people in the modern world, and the way things are moving - then I trust nothing. I simply have no trust or response anywhere. All is change for the worse.' (Bradbury, _EPIW_, p. 207)

The only real conclusion that Treece is able to come to is that "anguished and critical doubt is really more fruitful for the soul" [than religion or communism: author's note] (Bradbury, _EPIW_, p. 207) and yet this is not a form of

existential thought that is going to lead to salvation for him. Treece cannot come to terms with his condition and does not therefore become the sort of 'outsider hero' that Colin Wilson describes.[3]

The locus of this apathetic struggle is the university, which institution features in varying forms in all of Bradbury's novels except _Rates of Exchange_, although even here Petworth is a lecturer on tour. To an extent Stuart Treece's northern provincial university (Leicester) _is_ Treece as much as Watermouth (Essex) is Howard Kirk and Benedict Arnold is Froelich in terms of both architecture and prevailing ideology, but the university itself is also central to Bradbury's general defence of British culture:

> The world was a cheap commercial product, run by profiteers, which disseminated bad taste, poor values, shoddy goods and cowboy films on television among a society held up to ransom by these active rogues. Against this in his vision he was inclined to set the academic world, which seemed to him, though decreasingly so, the one stronghold of values, the one centre from which the world was resisted. (Bradbury, _EPIW_, p. 108)

This is reminiscent of Bradbury's comments on mass culture in _The Social Context of Modern English Literature_ and it is perhaps as well for Treece that he has his university to hide in, otherwise his chances of surviving the outside world would look distinctly bleak. Treece looks back to a lost golden age but has no idea how it might be retrieved. He knows he is a failure and other characters in the book,

[3] Colin Wilson, _The Outsider in Literature_ (London: Gollancz, 1956).

notably the women, do too. The saving graces that Bradbury emphasizes are awareness of failure and the dim memory of virtue and grace.

In the intervening period between Eating People Is Wrong and Stepping Westward, Treece has ceased to be a don and become James Walker, a minor writer with a reputation for 'angry young man' novels similar to that which Bradbury himself had achieved, in the wake of Kingsley Amis and John Wain, for writing Eating People Is Wrong. Walker, however, is sucked into universities anyway by becoming writer in residence at a college in the mid-West of the United States, and the book handles the same liberal dilemmas, although changing the backdrop from northern England, where nothing happens, to America, where history is made - daily. In Benedict Arnold University, it is made by Bernard Froelich, the ur-History Man, who also becomes the author of Walker's life abroad.

Froelich visualizes Walker before he arrives as: "a man poised between an old order and a new one, looking forward, looking back, hung between revolution and restoration" (Bradbury, SW, p.25), an ironic vision given the way things turn out for Walker, who is merely Treece by another name and as incapable of commitment or radical change. Julie Snowflake wants to make him her 'knight of infinity' as much as Froelich wants to exorcize his past and write a new American script for him to speak for himself but neither succeeds and Walker remains the page on which history gets written.

Even as he leaves England, Walker is aware of the pain change will cause him:

> Since the world wasn't safe and secure, and since Walker knew he was a voyager into insecurity, he felt troubled. It only postponed the moment when the difficulties would begin, when he would start to suffer and be hurt. (Bradbury, SW, p. 48)

Change, in Bradbury's terms, means challenge and suffering, and there is none of the searching spirit in Walker that would be needed to match the pioneers of the new American mid-West he is about to meet. Like Treece, though, he is aware of his many limitations:

> 'But the truth is I shouldn't have postured at being a hero, I wanted to work in with the wheels of history. And I should have left history alone, passed by on the other side. That's the truth. I'm a people man. The myths of history, these new faiths, they're all myths of dispossession. Take something away from someone and give it to someone else. But I'm for people keeping what they've struggled to have. I don't think we can yield up what exists for the possibility of what might. That's my idea of liberalism: kindness to what is, to those who now exist.' (Bradbury, SW, p. 387)

Walker is the inheritor of a liberal belief that proposes compromise not revolution and, although Stepping Westward extracts much ironic humour from the superstructure of a clash of transatlantic cultures, there remains an infrastructure of liberal anxiety that will not go away. Bradbury, the ironist, makes no overt value judgements about Walker and Froelich, and indulges in the sort of ambivalence that makes decision for the reader impossible yet, at the end of the novel, when Froelich is looking back on his experience with Walker, Bradbury does have him think: "that he, since he was human, was missing Walker very, very much" (Bradbury, SW, p. 415). Perhaps English

liberal values of decency and geniality have infected Froelich with a sense of his own humanity. Perhaps.

What happens to Bradbury's liberal in his two later novels, _The History Man_ and _Rates of Exchange_, is that he virtually vanishes from the agenda. Whereas _Eating People Is Wrong_ and _Stepping Westward_ examine the liberal stance in either a purely English context or that of the varying English and American interpretations of the same phenomenon, Bradbury's subsequent novels turn the subject _volte face_ to focus on the world left vacant by the departed liberal. These novels concern what steps into the vacuum, Kirk and the state of Slaka, as if Bradbury were switching the lens to observe liberalism in its absence rather than its presence. The Treeces and Walkers are removed from centre stage and given walk-on parts instead - Beamish or Zachery in _The History Man_ and the 'absent centre' that is Petworth in _Rates of Exchange_. These people are acted upon in the same ways as Treece or Walker but no longer expect any other type of treatment because the liberal centre ground has given way to the historicists, and the havens of quietude, even mother England, have themselves been transmuted by the times.

In _The History Man_, Henry Beamish represents the shrunken figures of Treece and Walker and, although constantly ridiculed by Kirk, is heard occasionally trying to define the now hopeless liberal position:

> 'I'll do my bit for betterment. But I'm divided. I'm not wild about this radical zeal that's about now, all these explosive bursts of demand...I can't see what's wrong with a bit of separateness and

> withrawal from the fray...I'm trying to give my life a little dignity without robbing anybody else of theirs. I'm trying to define an intelligent, liveable, unharming culture, Howard.' (Bradbury, HM, p. 40)

Here again are the echoes of a voice that is fair, non-political and individualistic, a longing for gentleness and morality instead of sixties' radicalism. At one point Beamish is heard to remark: "politics were fair in the fifties" (Bradbury, HM, p.163), which would come as something of a shock to Stuart Treece. Like Dr. Jochum in Stepping Westward, there is in The History Man the figure of the persecuted Jewish liberal, Dr. Zachery, who knows what suffering is and whose plea for liberalism is therefore of a different order to the British liberals':

> 'Fascism is...an elegant sociological construct, a one-system world. Its opposite is contingency or pluralism or liberalism. That means a chaos of opinion and ideology; there are people who find that hard to endure. But in the interest of it, I think we must ask Prof. Mangel to come here to lecture.' (Bradbury, HM, p. 158)

Neither Zachery nor Jochum is however much developed and both function as brief reminders of European concerns.

In Rates of Exchange, however, the liberal character has more or less lost his voice altogether and has a name, Petworth, that cannot, in Slaka, be uttered the same way twice. Because he seldom speaks, Petworth is practically unquotable, although he is described as seeing himself as:

> ...an open-minded man, a voter for modest improvement, only political when roused...[who] has no urgent views, merely a mild irony at the expense of all societies, each with its own fiction of having improved human history. (Bradbury, REO, p. 37)

although:

> The objects of will have deteriorated...he has trouble summoning up enough substance to be, to stir, to feel, to say. He has come to feel contentless, wordless, not there, grown more used to inner absence than presence. (Bradbury, ROE, p. 206)

So, in spite of the changed *milieu*, Petworth is still facing the same liberal dilemma as his predecessors. What has happened in the interval is that history, Slaka, has overtaken him so completely that he is no longer even able to articulate his anguish and, just as Walker fails to become Julie Snowflake's 'knight of infinity', so the hapless Petworth fails abjectly to become Katja Prinzip's 'character in a world-historical sense'. The figure is the same, but silent; the determinist environment is now so overwhelming, so much more threatening than even the concrete jungle of Watermouth, that its dominance of the human character goes without question. The novel has Petworth as its protagonist but he exists on the borderlines of reality and is, in Derridean terms, the 'absent centre'. Wearing his critic's hat, Bradbury notes:

> In naturalism the free-standing character is displaced, ironized, set against or engulfed by a dark world of system and process. He becomes less the agent of the plot, than a tragic case or victim.[4]

If Bradbury's liberals are led from self-searching *weltschmerz* to silence in the course of his four novels, so his working-class heroes and historicists become increasingly voluble and the architectural backdrop more ominous. Although Treece is Bradbury's central concern in

[4] Malcolm Bradbury, 'Putting In The Person: Character and Abstraction in Current Writing and Painting,' *SUAS* (18), p. 191.

Eating People Is Wrong, there is also the character of Louis Bates, who provides a counterpoint to George Carmody in The History Man for he is hated by Treece for being working-class just as Carmody is by Kirk for wearing a suit. Bates is the first of Bradbury's threats to civilized existence; not only does he rival Treece for the affection of Emma but also has the temerity to question the bedrock of Treece's existence. He says during a tutorial:

> 'We're out-and-out relativists; we can't believe that anyone's right; their rectitude turns to ashes in our hands. And what good is it being an intellectual? This is the time of the common man. You miss everything if you are an intellectual. All you can say, if you are one, is that if we had been invited to the party we should have made it a different kind of do. The pattern of things doesn't come from us and we wish to be as little a part as possible.' (Bradbury, EPIW, p. 84)

The steps from Bates to Froelich and Kirk are not great. Yet, whereas the latter dominate and direct, the former serves merely as a thorn in the side, reminding Treece that there is another world in which people like Bates can have their say and act with a greater determination than Treece himself can muster. At the end of the book, Bradbury kills Bates off by making him commit suicide and yet he cannot help allowing Treece a certain admiration for the student who has haunted him for so long. Treece respects Bates as Walker respects Froelich, for both are resolute defenders of their faiths.

In the same novel, the bohemian Willoughby, outspoken poet and writer, also commands the same ambivalent respect from Treece, even though he steals books and speaks openly

about sex. Both he and Bates are potential catalysts for Treece but the offer remains unaccepted, as Treece contents himself with his own morbid self-analysis and occasional passing insults of a new breed of thinker in the university: the sociologist. As early as 1959, Bradbury saw the danger of this group:

> 'I'm catching up with ephemera,' said the sociologist, whose name was Jenkins (he hated it because it didn't end with 'heim'), noticing that Treece was looking at his reading matter.
> 'You're lucky', said Treece, 'It must be nice to be a sociologist and be able to read anything.' (Bradbury, EPIW, p. 26)

Although Treece's trip with Jenkins on a research tour of local pubs is treated with comic irony, it barely conceals Bradbury's contempt for the 'science' that purports to be able to describe the environment as well as literature can. By the time that Jenkins becomes Froelich or Kirk, the game has become more serious and it is no accident that in subordinating Miss Callendar to his sexual will in The History Man, Howard Kirk is also 'screwing' English literature as a discipline.

Bernard Froelich is a more ominous character than Bates, Jenkins and Willoughby all rolled into one. He is a sort of radical frontiersman, wedded to all the American notions of liberty and individualism, yet determined to chip away at the very system that sustains his livelihood. He does not reflect or procrastinate but acts and the ruthlessness of his design is clear:

> It had to be Walker. It could be no one else. There he stood, dishevelled, panting, his long English hair hanging down; pure poetry. Froelich had one thought

> as he looked at him; it was: he isn't real, he's a toy...Froelich could imagine the feeling, the special foreign shiver, the English nervousness (were there Indians and if so were they friendly?). It was an old experience that the West had always given, felt the sharper now because of the distance this man had come. It was the first lesson, and Froelich lay back and watched while it sank in. It was not cruelty but regard that made him do this; this moment, which he had created, was one that he wanted to be a central one in Walker's life. (Bradbury, SW, pp. 176-177)

There is something essentially predatory about Froelich, a desire to imprint on both people and history his own version of events. He believes in flux and change:

> 'Am I the man I was ten years agao?' asked Froelich. 'I believe, as an American, no. I'm not the man I was last week. Now you...you know what you are. You stay the same, through every situation.... We change our whole psychological and physiological systems when we go from one room to another. Call me Proteus!' (Bradbury, SW, p. 198)

American history, Froelich tells Walker, is a history of men hating their fathers and wanting to burn down everything they ever built, whereas English history is about men loving their fathers and preserving their heritage. Bradbury's favoured decency and kindness have no part in this agenda. Froelich is in tune with history, understands the mechanisms that make it flow, and will therefore survive, while Walker, who cannot adapt, shall perish.

The History Man is prefaced by these words of Günter Grass:

> 'Who's Hegel?'
> 'Someone who sentenced mankind to history.'
> 'Did he know a lot? Did he know everything?'
> (Bradbury, HM)

which set the tone for a novel that will eradicate

liberalism almost totally from the frame, so that Bradbury can concentrate exclusively on sending up sociology in particular and determinism in general. It is not only that Kirk himself is shown to be a monster of inhumanity but also that the environment containing him is equally grotesque. Bradbury says of the book's visual background:

> The History Man is a novel about dehumanization; behind the book is a strong visual analogy, of a flat, hostile landscape not our good old friend, of multi-storey car parks, block buildings, blank walls, treeless spaces, run-down city scapes, a graffiti-scarred new university which could, if events require it, be well converted into a factory, a world in which it is hard to put in the person. (Bradbury, SUAS(18), p. 207)

The environment determines those who live within it and Kirk is a person who is able to organize not only the environments for his house parties and seminars but also the essentially contingent nature of the world he inhabits. Given that he is a sociologist and that he has at his fingertips the necessary jargon to tongue-lash all opposition, Kirk, like Froelich, is the master of his self-created world. In background, he is Louis Bates, working-class and direct; in temperament, he is Froelich, a polished performer on both the academic and political stages. In other words, he is all Bradbury detests and not a detail is wasted in this construction of evil. Typical of Kirk's way with words is the following response to his wife who has accused him of having no character:

> 'How do you define character?' asked Howard. 'How do you define a person? Except in a socio-psychological context. A particular type of relationship to the

> temporal and historical process, culturally conditioned and afforded; that's what human nature is. A particular performance within available role-sets. But with the capacity to innovate through manipulating options among the role-sets.' (Bradbury, HM, p. 33)

For Kirk life is no more than a set of models and the one who knows most of them and can manipulate with the greatest sophistication, wins. There is no room here for liberalism or good manners and the likes of Beamish, who still believes in chance, can play no part. Nor can Carmody or anybody else who wears a suit and is not a sociologist:

> 'It won't do, George,' says Howard.... I'm afraid this is an anal, repressed paper in every way. Your model of society is static.... It's an entity with no internal momentum and no internal conflict. In short, it's not sociologically valid.' A redness comes up in Carmody's neck, and reaches his lower face. He says, insistently, 'I think it's a possible point of view, sir.' 'It may be in conservative circles,' says Howard, 'it isn't in sociological ones.' (Bradbury, HM, p. 134)

Logically enough, given the way in which liberal characters, if not liberalism itself, slip out of the frame as Bradbury's novels are written, in favour of Hegelians and Marxists, his fourth novel, Rates of Exchange, is set entirely within a communist state, the geographically unplaceable Slaka. The person becomes the place as a symbol of repression and the architectural environment becomes nightmarish and claustrophobic. Slaka is historicism with all its paradoxes, primary amongst them the one Bradbury accuses Kirk of, namely the contradiction of contingency co-existing with pre-determined truth. In some ways Rates of Exchange is the

parody of a guide book rather than a novel. Bradbury indulges in an excess of description, of airports, restaurants, hotels and city streets, as Dr. Petworth, on his mission for the British Council, makes his way silently round the country, except for the intermissions in which he delivers his dog-eared lectures. In Slaka, neither Petworth nor anybody else counts for anything because personal relations have been subsumed to the need for material progress. The language changes as the leadership and the money change; revolutionary activity moves the nation on while the individual remains static in the anonymity of 'progress'. It all looks very much like Bradbury's vision of Watermouth writ large: history first, the individual a poor second. Perhaps it is hardly surprising that Petworth should be left speechless and that the only encounters he has are pseudo-sexual and therefore wordless. Petworth is a speck of dust against the panorama of history. He cannot learn the language because it keeps changing and he cannot hold opinions because he does not understand the world he has entered. It is all beyond him. He does not even enter the story until page seventeen because Bradbury has been too busy painting the scenery and even when he does he says little bar the odd 'thank you' and 'I think so'.

In Bradbury's novels, then, there is a discernible shift from a state of affairs in which liberalism still

exists, although the subject of some debate, through a phase in which it is threatened and attenuated, to a final stage in which it is elided altogether, perhaps to show how dreadful the world would be without it.

Whether Bradbury's heroes are liberals or historicists, however, they are always men. Women, like David Lodge's female characters, are either the absent wives of liberals in crisis - Mrs. Walker, the mother-earth figure in Stepping Westward who takes James back after his transgressions in the U.S.A. or Mrs. Petworth, the 'dark wife' to whom Petworth returns after the horrors of Slaka - or the present wives of crazed determinists, such as Barbara Kirk, who criticizes Howard but stays in her place, or Patrice Froelich, who dislikes Bernard's games but plays them anyway. Wives are supporters.

If they are not wives, then Bradbury's women are temptresses or idols. They can be loose lecturers (Viola in Eating People Is Wrong or Flora in The History Man) or women students who are either visions of purity (Emma in Eating People Is Wrong) or easy conquests (Felicity in The History Man). Otherwise thay tend to be 'magical realists', like Julie Snowflake in Stepping Westward or Katja Prinzip in Rates of Exchange, who show itinerant liberals the wider potentials of themselves and the world around them but who are rejected for the wife/mother figure, who offers comfort rather than adventure. James Walker has an adolescent liaison on the boat to America, a brief affair with Mrs. Froelich and a long-lasting but

intermittent relationship with Julie Snowflake, an American realist/determinist with a magical influence over him. Petworth, to whom both Marisja Lubijova and Katja Prinzip present possibilities of breaking the mould, cannot become the world-historical character that he is invited to be by Katja and takes the wimpish route home. The liberal fails at both politics and sex, which for the likes of Katja Prinzip is more than just physical contact:

> 'Of course we have made a very nice exchange, each one gives the other something, all so simple. Oh, such nice touchings and chattings, but they do not last long, not like history. Sex is good, but it is not information.' (Bradbury, ROE, p. 218)

Such is not the safe haven wanted by Bradbury's liberal men, who avoid the problematics of desire and deferral by taking the next available boat or plane home.

Although Bradbury's women are largely stereotypes, they do occasionally function otherwise in plots, even as mouthpieces for Bradbury himself in his criticism of characters he does not like. So Barbara Kirk voices the liberal argument from time to time against Howard, although there is no suggestion she will leave him. Miss Callendar stands up for the virtues of English literature and liberalism but all three are laid low by Howard. Viola and Flora are ironic vehicles for criticism of Treece and Kirk. Emma's purity points up the failings of both Treece and Bates. Women are convenient mirrors in which men see themselves and are seen by Bradbury, adjuncts to action but never the instigators of it. When they threaten to break out of this pattern, like Julie or Katja, they are

toyed with and then discarded for fear they might cause the sorts of change that lead to self-interrogation.

What is curious about the foregoing is that none of it sounds very funny, although it is as a comic novelist that Bradbury is known. One reason for this is that his comedy functions at the level of superstructure, of language games and ironic displacement, rather than at that of infrastructure. The world itself is not seen to be absurd at all and in this sense Bradbury's often solemn novels may be classed as tragi-comedies rather than comedies. He is himself aware of how difficult it is to be funny about an environment that looks to him increasingly harsh and cold:

> Comedy has always been an essential aspect of the novel; it has something to do with its openness, its curiosity about people and society, and it administers precisely to that space between appearance and reality that has so long preoccupied English novelists; it also has another vein, a vein of irony or absurdist farce, a sense of people at a loss in a totally contingent world. Eating People Is Wrong has both these elements, partly because it is an inclusive sort of novel that deals in social observation and satire, farce and ironic self-knowledge; but it tends in the humane direction. Writing more recently, I have found it harder to write in this spirit, because style is indeed a fact of history and changes with it. I have found comedy needs to become more precise, more economical, a harder instrument, if the contradiction between our humanist expectations and our sense of ourselves as exposed historical performers is to be expressed. We live in a harsher world than Treece does; we see ourselves more harshly and nakedly; we are more subject to secular historicism, to fashions of mind, sociological explanations of our needs and desires. (Bradbury, EPIW, afterword, p. 297)

Had the world stayed in place for him, then, Bradbury

might have felt able to carry on writing 'humane' comedies, but it did not and he has felt the consequent need to adapt not only the content but also the form of his comic writing to suit the changes. This is important because it underlines the fact that Bradbury is himself a contingent writer, reliant on the style of the times for his stimulus.

None the less, Bradbury uses a wide range of surface comic devices, which are repeated with variations throughout the novels. Universities, replete as they are with a ready-made cast of eccentrics, provide rich material for his comedy. The committee meeting in The History Man which has to decide whether the tea-lady can vote or not and the professor in Eating People Is Wrong who gets one of his essays muddled up with the students' and is awarded a C- by a colleague are the sorts of humour Bradbury prefers, as is this piece of transatlantic irony from Dr. Bourbon, the head of Walker's department in Stepping Westward:

> 'Well, it's a course in basic essentials of English we teach to all enterin' freshmen. Readin', Writin', Speakin' and Listenin'. How to underline. Use of the comma. Speakin' from the diaphragm. It's a service course to enable them to communicate with one another without sex, that's how I always see it.' (Bradbury, SW, p. 232)

The events of university life, often staff and student parties, provide him with much of his material because it is at such occasions that people with disparate backgrounds can be made to work ironically against each other and produce humour. Frequently these people are

foreigners, particularly Germans, whose inability to speak English properly allows Bradbury to make jokes with funny accents. It is an easily available form of wit for the English, reminiscent of John Cleese's Manuel in Fawlty Towers, reinforcing xenophobia by implying not only that foreigners speak 'bad' English but also that they are 'funny' for doing so. Laughter at the expense of others is also the promotion of the self, and many of the puns and word games that Bradbury employs in his fictions would have connotations other than humour in the hands of the sort of Freudian critic he would strongly dislike. It is, however, the double entendre that underpins much of his comedy, particularly as the effects of postmodernism begin to make themselves felt in his later work and Bradbury begins to foreground the signifier with a freedom he previously lacked. Personal handicaps, like stammering, are also used for purely comic effect. Lines like the following given to Steadiman, the British Consul in Slaka, echo the music-hall days of Ken Dodd or Max Wall:

> 'Good bust, good bust, good bustling manner. Of course she's flat, she's flat, she's flattering...' (Bradbury, ROE, p. 146)
>
> 'Care for a pee a peach brandy? How about a sort of piss a sort of Piesporter?' (ROE, p. 158)
>
> 'I thought you might have had an organ an organ an organizing role in all this.' (ROE, p. 163)

Bradbury is also fond of aphorisms such as:" ...he's polite. The English are polite by telling lies. The Americans are polite by telling the truth " (Bradbury, SW, p. 269). He is aware that language is a multi-edged tool

and that its manipulation can produce both displacement and comedy. In his writing there is a current of linguistic acuity that provides surface entertainment of a kind that can draw attention away from the more earnest agenda beneath. The mainstay of Rates of Exchange is a pastiche of mid-European accents and the invention of a language for the country that could render the book just another funny novel about foreigners unless the concern with historicism is understood. Petworth's name is mis-pronounced so many times that he would be justified in beginning to wonder whether he had a name at all or whether even that vestige of identity had been stolen away from him. The serious question of Petworth's 'nameability' is subsumed, however, to a series of jokes about phonemic difference, which take the rough edge off the situation and guide the reader towards genial comedy and away from tragedy. Katja's English is amusing but it is also syntactically displacing enough for anything she says to be questionable in its serious intent. In some sense, it was fortunate for Bradbury that postmodernism and poststructuralism should have appeared when they did for they lend intellectual precedence and credence to what was previously merely native propensity. If Bradbury can point, however ironically, to those who will argue that signifier and signified are not linked and that image and reality have finally been divorced, then he has an academic carte blanche to obfuscate 'meaning' in his fictions beyond the word-game irony to which he was given

in any case.

However, Bradbury achieves humour not only by means of the ironies of individual words but also through those of situation, more crudely, 'set-pieces'. The party is a favourite ploy and there is at least one in every novel. The History Man, in which party-giving becomes an extremely serious matter for the environment-conscious Kirk, the structure of the novel depends on a sequence of parties. Bradbury also uses tutorials, literary society gatherings, assemblies for visiting lecturers, faculty boards, poetry readings, dinners with vice-chancellors, lectures and so on. He appears to view the world not as integral but as a series of countervailing scenes, which perhaps makes him a fit writer for television and explains the ease with which The History Man will have been adapted for the medium. Bradbury always sets the scene, rather as if giving stage directions, before inserting a character into it, which is in keeping with the objection expressed in his critical writing that the social background of the text has recently tended to be overshadowed by concerns with form and language.

Bradbury, then, is essentially a realist in the English tradition, although Rates of Exchange varies to some extent from this mode as the notions of poststructuralism and postmodernism begin to penetrate both his fiction and his critical writing. Like Lodge, he is aware of what is happening to his writing:

> I write as a novelist who began writing in the

> postwar season of realism, with a decided attachment to that empirical, moral, liberal tendency, but who has since felt - one might say for reasons of personal aesthetic development, but, since this is not a solitary matter, also under the extreme weight of reasons that have affected many modern writers - that the mode of realism is filled with implicit understandings and assumptions that it grows harder to accept. (Bradbury, SUAS (18), p. 181)

This was written in description of the process that led to The History Man, which Bradbury feels is a significant development towards a greater degree of experimentalism in his writing. He draws a comparison between movements in contemporary painting and literature, suggesting that in both areas it is becoming increasingly difficult to represent the individual in terms of traditional realism and also, rather grandly, that there is much in common between The History Man and a painting by Goya called 'A Dog Engulfed in Sand'.

Anthony Burgess does not share Bradbury's view of the novel's experimental nature:

> The History Man: Two small technical innovations have to be mentioned first. The present tense is used throughout and dialogue is not indented. The traditional mode of making each line of dialogue a separate paragraph has always tended to give too much weight to utterances (like 'yes' and 'no') which lack weight. Bradbury's dialogue runs on and on as in real life and, as in real life, everything is immediate and now.[5]

Still, it is Bradbury's view that the world of art has changed and that he must change with it. He feels that the old language of the novel has gone and, though he argues with the Barthesian view that the only acceptable text for

5 Anthony Burgess, Ninety-Nine Novels (London: Allison and Busby, 1984), p. 111.

nowadays is scriptible and longs to retain the traditionally English concept of character, is forced to accept that the contemporary world requires an altered lens and possibly a completely different frame:

> Man became a weak actor on a dangerous stage...dehumanization was thus incorporated into texts or paintings not as a means towards the intensification of art, but as a mode of response to a disfiguring history, which generated a loss of the self, an alienation, a necessary sense of human absurdity. (Bradbury, SUAS (18), p. 199)

The extent to which Bradbury was attached to realism can be measured by Stepping Westward, the tale, told chronologically, of a man leaving England for America, living there for almost a year and then coming back to England again. It takes Bradbury one hundred and forty pages of a four hundred and fifteen page book to get Walker from his front door in northern England to his meeting with Froelich in the mid-West of America. Given the professed shift away from realism, it might have been supposed that Rates of Exchange would operate more economically with space. However, although language takes on the added significance of postmodernist fun in this text, it still takes Petworth a very long time to reach his destination, as detail upon detail of his passage is recorded. It is still Bradbury's practice here to home in on his people from afar, filling in their background with painstaking attention before allowing them to speak. Treece is placed in his milieu, the time frame being trimesters, a common one for Bradbury; Walker is drenched in details of trains, boats, city streets and the Wild

West, all closely observed; Kirk, although his time-frame is distorted through a series of flashbacks, is inseparable from the chronological progression of his university terms or from the increasingly insistent detail of the architecture around him; and finally Petworth, the new 'postmodernist' hero, is submerged in description of the places he visits and trapped in the spatial and temporal limitations of the journey. In terms of the specificity of naming and the collapsing of syntax into lists, the following can perhaps be seen as experimental in provenance, although it seems clear too that Bradbury is altering only marginally the realistic paths he has trodden before:

> And at Heathrow, that city in the desert, the summer's stylistic pluralism has chaos added.... In front of Petworth the automatic doors open, then close on his foot; inside the great sounding terminal, the summer spectacle is held in a state of suspended animation. Some flights are cancelled, yet more are delayed; the crowds are gathering in confusion. Germans and Swedes, French and Dutch, Arabs and Indians, Americans and Japanese, sit on chairs, lie on benches, wheel suitcases round on small fold-up wheels, push airport carts here and there, laden with bags from Lord John and Harrods, Marks and Spencer and Simpson, wear jeans, wear tartan pants, wave tickets, quarrel at check-in counters, wear yashmaks, wear kimonos, buy *Playboy*, buy *La Stampa*, wear beards, wear Afros, wear uncut hair under turbans, buy *Airport*, buy *Ulysses*, request *The History Man* but cannot get it, buy cassette recorders, model guardsmen, Lady Di. pens from W. H. Smith, hold dolls, carry tennis rackets in Adidas bags, struggle with backpacks, hold up wardrobe bags, chatter into red telephones of modern design devised to make conversation impossible, wear safari suits, wear flowing robes, wear headbands, wear tarbooshes, wear cagoules, sit on stools, eye girls, comb curls, tote small babies, hug old ladies, furiously smoke Gauloises or Players, gather in crowds in hallways or on stairs, depart, led by blue stewardesses carrying large clipboards, in the direction of aircraft, and

> then, led by yellow stewardesses carrying small clipboards, back into the lounge again. (Bradbury, ROE, p. 22)

Perhaps this is an example of naming the world into existence, of playing with the prose form even to the extent of making it rhyme in places, creating, through foregrounding the signifier, a contingent world of 'pluralist chaos'. It could be seen to satisfy one of Patricia Waugh's definitions of metafiction, namely that : "The more a text insists on its linguistic condition, the further it is removed from the everyday context of 'common sense' invoked by realist tradition " (Waugh, Metafiction, p. 100). However there is an abiding sense that beneath the games with language and the distorting effect of the cumulative verb and noun forms, there remains a 'real' image of Heathrow airport that is not so different from some of the descriptive passages in Stepping Westward.

None the less Bradbury has gambled more in Rates of Exchange than in any of his earlier books. Although The History Man contains traces of an experimental approach in so far as Bradbury himself features in the text, scribbling in an office at Watermouth, and minor technical changes of the kind noted by Burgess are included, it cannot be seen as a radical revision of the world as it is sensed empirically. As Patricia Waugh says:

> Metafiction suggests not only that writing history is a fictional act, ranging events conceptually through language to form a world model, but that history itself is invested, like fiction, with interrelating plots which appear to interact independently of human beings.
> This is the theme of Malcolm Bradbury's The

> History Man. Like much British self-conscious fiction, however, the novel manages to suggest the fictionality of 'reality' without entirely abandoning realism. (Waugh, p. 48)

It is clear from the Author's Notes to Stepping Westward, The History Man, and Rates of Exchange that Bradbury has long understood the implications of the 'fictionality of fiction'. At the beginning of Stepping Westward, he says:

> The characters in this fiction are total inventions; the university where part of the action takes place is much too improbable to resemble any existing institution; the American state to which the university belongs does not exist, though it has of necessity been set down in an area occupied by other states; and the America of the novel differs in many details of geography, politics, law and customs from the real, as it were original, America. (Bradbury, SW, author's note)

By 1975 and The History Man he is yet more aware of the need to create the ambience of critical awareness:

> This fiction is...a total invention with delusory approximations to historical reality, just as is history itself. Not only does the University of Watermouth...bear no relation to the real University of Watermouth (which does not exist) or to any other university; the year 1972, which also appears, bears no relation to the real 1972, which was a fiction anyway, and so on....(Bradbury, HM, author's note)

By 1983 and Rates of Exchange, the fuller messages of poststructuralism are evident:

> This is a book, and what it says is not true. You will not find Slaka, Glit, or Nogod on any map, and so you will probably never make the trip there.... There is no resemblance at all between the imaginary figures here and any person who chooses to believe that he or she actually exists. So there is no Petworth, no dark Lottie, no Marisja Lubijova...[they] have never existed, and probably never will: except in so far as you and I conspire to bring them into existence, with, as usual, me doing most of the work. Or, as the literary critics say, I'll be your implied author, if you'll be my implied

> reader; and, as they also say, it is our duty to lie together, in the cause, of course, of truth.
> So, like money, this book is a paper fiction, offered for exchange....(Bradbury, ROE, author's note)

In the progression of these passages, there appears to be a growing awareness of a new critical vocabulary, one that Bradbury, as both novelist and critic, had spurned for as long as possible but to which ultimately he had to give way.

There is one sense, however, in which Bradbury, whether he is writing in the realist or 'postmodernist' mode, has always been the elusive or unreliable author of the modernist tradition. Because of the ironic stance he adopts in all his fiction, it is never possible to pin him down to one view. In this sense, the ironic text is always scriptible because the reader is forced to re-write to his or her own specifications. Although presented as demons of determinism, Froelich and Kirk live to fight another day, while Walker, Treece, Beamish and Petworth, though laudable for their liberalism, finish up sadder and wiser but no more. Where the author stands in relation to these characters or the texts that enclose them is questionable and it is for this lack of commitment that Peter Widdowson criticizes Bradbury:

> ...one of the problems [of reading Bradbury's novels: author's note] - no doubt happily countenanced by the author - is how to read them. The tone can shift sharply or be deeply ambiguous; just how does the author stand in relation to this character or that action? Is this mockery or is it not? And as the penetration of post-modernist strategies grows deeper in the last two novels, the authorial disruptions and dislocations of the reading position become

> increasingly sophisticated. Bradbury is a clever and self-conscious writer, and he produces a slippery art - one which, as it were, produces its own self-criticism, so that to look for intention here or contradiction there, author speaking here or improbable plotting there, only invites the response: ah, you fell into the trap; the text is too full of 'play' for you to pin that on it. (Widdowson, 'AHM', p. 17)

Widdowson goes on to accuse Bradbury of political naivety as the result of this 'slippery art', because the lack of commitment in his writing has resulted in not only the potential appropriation of The History Man by the forces of reaction in England but also the overlooking of human rights movements in Eastern Europe around the time when Rates of Exchange was being written, which, if incorporated into the novel, could have added a dimension that Bradbury's comic irony forbids. Bradbury himself would doubtless argue that it is no part of the writer's task to become involved in political argument (see Chapter Three, p. 101), indeed that it is vital to do exactly the opposite and present a text that is open. What is clear is that he has won no friends on the left by applying irony and satire to political issues, on which he himself takes no firm stand.

The apparent open-endedness of Bradbury's position is at its clearest in Rates of Exchange, in which he embraces more Barthesian jouissance than previously to produce an extremely 'slippery' text. In spite of its underpinning of the 'real' situations encountered by many lecturers on British Council tours, the text is awash with references to structuralisms of all sorts and is polysemic enough to

allow of multiple readings. Given that the novel implies a connection between the fiction of money and that of the novel, exchanges of all kinds take place and language itself is allowed, indeed encouraged, to burgeon into any 'meaning' the reader may desire. Reader and author are part of an exchange. Petworth exchanges one country for another, one language for another that keeps changing, one woman for two others, exchanges love with both of them, and so on. The fictional ambiguities of the text are foregrounded from the start, the present tense is used and the least formal of tones adopted, particularly in the first section, in which Bradbury as author/guide offers helpful hints to the would-be tourist/reader:

> Of course, everywhere, even in Slaka, there are the politicians and the priests, the ayatollahs and the economists, who will try to explain that reality is what they say it is. Never trust them; trust only the novelists, those deep bankers who spend their time trying to turn pieces of printed paper into value, but never pretend that the result is anything more than a useful fiction. (Bradbury, ROE, p. 8)

This, of course, can be read in any way the reader desires. On one level, it concerns the collision between political and fictional 'realities', for the novel also makes gestures towards a connection with monetarism; on another, reading 'literary critics' for politicians and priests', it is about the confrontation between literary theory and practice. Indeed, in a reader-response version, the whole text may be taken as a metaphor for the act of reading, in which Petworth becomes 'reader', Slaka becomes 'text' and either Bradbury, Marisja or Katja becomes

'author'. Then the book is 'about' the practical difficulties of reading the polysemic text, in other words it is about itself:

> A man...in a difficult world, a place of false leads and harmful traps, doors that will not open and toiletes that will not flush, needs a guide, severe yet competent, warning yet enlarging, to bring shape to the shapelesss, names to the unnamed, definition to the undefined. (Bradbury, ROE, p. 184)

In the 'real' story, this is Petworth realizing how much he needs Marisja to guide him through Slaka; in the 'other' story, however, it is the reader needing the critic to guide him or her through the literary text.

Rates of Exchange is also about the writing of stories: its own, Petworth's, Katja's and that of Slaka itself, as Bradbury continues the project, hinted at in The History Man, of demonstrating that history is both something written by human beings, and thus a fiction, and something that carries an internal logic of its own, which, unless checked, articulates the human beings themselves. The figure of Katja, who is keen to write Petworth into her story, if only so that he might thereby learn lessons, bears resemblance to the Czech writer Milan Kundera, also a producer of magic realism. In The Unbearable Lightness of Being,[6] as in earlier novels, Kundera makes much of the idea, especially under communist dispensations, of history being perpetually re-written as government succeeds government and both people and events from the

[6] Milan Kundera, The Unbearable Lightness of Being (Nesnesitelná lehkost bytí), trans. Michael Henry Heim (London: Faber and Faber, 1984).

past are forgotten or 'unwritten'. That the language of Slaka should be in the forefront of political campaigning and that it should be continually changing is therefore significant, not only in Kundera's sense but because it defers the day on which Petworth, the linguist, will be able to understand his environment. If language is always being re-written, then meaning is perpetually contingent and the 'story' is constantly in motion.

Katja is crucial to this multi-layered text. Hers is the voice of individualism where none is allowed; she is the authoress whom Bradbury can use to express musings on critical theory; she is, like Miss Callendar, a metaphor for literature in the face of sociology; she is the writer of Bradbury's 'story within a story' which in turn becomes Petworth's (that of Stupid who is bewitched into returning to his sad wife and enabled to see her differently as a result); she is the offer of fantasy in a world of determinism; she is the provider of both romance and realism. In fact, she can be anything you want her to be, like a character in one of the fairy-stories she writes. She is the successor to Julie Snowflake, although now invested with a plurality of signification as a result of the postmodernist context into which she has been transplanted. It is Katja who says:

> 'Reality is what happens if you listen to other people's stories and not your own. The stories become a country, the country becomes a prison, and the prison becomes your mind. And everywhere more of the same story: the people do not steal, they make miracles of production, they all love Karl Marx. Soon

> it is the only story, and that is how comes reality.' (Bradbury, ROE, p. 204)

However much he may enjoy playing postmodernist games, Bradbury never quite loses sight of determinism.

Whatever the book is about though, it is again on the surface level that Bradbury achieves his comedy, although now without even the need to 'mean' anything. He can make airport signs into a language designed by semioticians, dance in and out of the text at will and hand it over to other authors in his absence. Now he transfers it to Katja with her fantasies and magic spells, now to Marisja who plans Petworth's itinerary through the story, now he can grab it back for himself to address the reader either directly or indirectly and thus complete the job of defamiliarization. Even before Petworth's journey begins, Bradbury says:

> The rain falls outside; and the sunshine is not shining in Petworth's heart either. He knows and has read the stories, of frontiers and guardposts, spies and imprisonments, beatings and treacheries, that we delight ourselves with in this dark world; and perhaps if he were a stronger character than he is, or is said to be, he would protest now that he does not really wish to be put in this one. But then he knows he is not being put into one, rather a version of the old and familiar story, the lecturer's tale, with stock theme and minor variations. (Bradbury, ROE, P. 53)

What seems clear is that Bradbury has put aside the exigencies of the realistic mode he grew up with, at least to some extent, in favour of the greater freedoms of the postmodernist funhouse. What is by no means clear is how committed he is to the transformation from one style to the other, if indeed such a change is complete. However

playful Rates of Exchange may be in terms of the devices Bradbury uses, there still remain the traces of a realism that he does not attempt fully to elide. Slaka is a fantasy world of a sort but it is not a re-working of reality so that it takes on new or unrecognizable forms. Bradbury appears to have read the rhetorical versions of poststructuralism and produced from what he has ingested a pastiche, his own version to add to or satirize the others. As always, he is aware of his own position:

> As a writer, I find myself, in relation to contemporary theory, in much the same condition that George Orwell, in Inside The Whale, found the modern writer - raging passive under the power of exterior structures he cannot reproduce and cannot control....The result is ambiguity, an ambiguity that, as a writer, I read on my own page - where, in the end, the theoretics do not so much construct the imagination as become the web from which it must escape.[7]

[7] Malcolm Bradbury, Ideas From France (London: I.C.A., 1985), p. 6.

CHAPTER FIVE

Gabriel Josipovici: Works of Criticism

Gabriel Josipovici's critical writing involves a re-appraisal of the nature of modernism against a longer historical perspective than usually accorded it and an examination of the relationship between art and the human personality, which, he believes, will offer a new liberation to the self and the text. In *Writing and The Body*,[1] he says:

> It is not easy to live abandoning the safety of the Iago-ego, accepting that it is only in a making which is a perpetual breaking of the ego that true fulfilment is possible. (Josipovici, *WATB*, p. 93)

And in the preface to *The Lessons of Modernism*,[2] he notes:

> The crucial insight...is that the self which had seemed so firmly rooted, so much a part of nature, to the men and women of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was in fact a *construction*. It was built up by impulses within us in order to protect us from chaos and destruction. Of course in this it was helped by social institutions, but these too, it became clear, were anything but natural. The issue is thus not simply to shed the self and acquire impersonality; it is rather that it was felt to be destructive to cling to the self and to shed the self.
>
> It is when the matter is viewed in this light that a place is found for art. Art, the making of an artefact, becomes the means whereby the artist frees himself from the shackles of the self without disintegrating into chaos...he is a gymnast, developing his potential with each new exercise

[1] Gabriel Josipovici, *Writing and The Body* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982).

[2] Gabriel Josipovici, *The Lessons of Modernism* (London: MacMillan, 1977).

successfully mastered.... The analogy...suggests an image of human personality not as a stronghold but as a coiled spring. (Josipovici, LM, p. x)

In statements such as these, Josipovici seems to be pointing towards the falsity of both reading and writing positions that begin from stasis and proposing strategies that will free the artistic individual from solipsism and neurosis. It is through art, as construct, that he or she can cope with the socially repressed reality of chaos and re-assess unquestioned prejudice:

> Habit and pride make us take for granted that the tradition justifies us and has a meaning. Kafka and Eliot and Proust and Borges plant dynamite in the stronghold of habit.[3]

On Rabelais, he writes:

> The difference between writing like this [Rabelais': author's note] and writing within the conventions of the traditional novel is rather like the difference between the stand-up comic and the actor in Ibsen or Chekhov. For the comic there is no safety.... Our pleasure derives not from what he says or does, but from the combination of extreme vulnerability - he's out there, all alone, with no script and no one to help him - and extreme control. In that situation he presents us with a true image of ourselves in the wide world and we realise, watching him, how unrealistic the plays of Ibsen and Chekhov in fact are.[4]

Books, then, help us to contemplate the reality of the world we inhabit, not by re-defining its dangers so as to nullify them or by producing false and comforting versions of society but by exploding the self and meeting the chaos

[3] Gabriel Josipovici, The World and The Book, 2nd. ed. (1971; rpt. London: MacMillan, 1979), p. 304.

[4] Gabriel Josipovici, The Mirror of Criticism: Selected Reviews 1977-82 (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1983), p. 60.

head on. In Josipovici's view, there is a sort of heroism available to the free-standing artist, who can face the hostility of the environment without the safety net of the traditional novel. Given this stance, it is not surprising to find that Josipovici disapproves strongly of those he feels most guilty of perpetrating the sins of solipsism that perpetuate false readings and literary blind alleys. He says:

> Perhaps the failure of the English academic world to come to terms with modernism stems from the same source as its failure...to come to terms with the Middle Ages.... Both are the result of taking the traditional novel as the unquestioned norm and trying to assimilate all fiction to it. And this in turn is the result of the implicit acceptance of cultural Darwinism which is directly related to the liberal positivism of the last part of the nineteenth century when the academic study of English was taking root. (Josipovici, LM, p. 97)

It is the liberal humanist position with its insistence on value that Josipovici finds most culpable:

> ...every major critic of the last hundred years has seen himself as in some sense mediating between art and society.... They have all held, consciously or unconsciously, to precisely those views which modernism challenges. And their reaction has been curious and interesting. Either they have ignored the radical nature of modern art and have gone on treating it as no different from the art of the past; or, if they have recognised its radical nature, they have refused to face its implications for themselves, but have instead taken refuge in the notion of cosmic catastrophes.... But such a reading is surely false. It exemplifies what Nietzsche noted...that 'man would rather have the void for his purpose than be devoid of purpose.' Man would rather be a prophet of doom than listen to the still small voice which asks him to rethink the bases of his own life. What I am suggesting is that the liberal humanist tradition has always tended to overvalue the cultural importance of books - that is, the value of books to society rather than to the individual. And I am suggesting that such an overevaluation persists...for the discovery that there may be no links between culture and reading

> seems to imply the end of culture. But if, instead of taking this tempting apocalyptic line...we are prepared to rethink our notion of culture and its relation to books, then we will have learnt one of the fundamental lessons of modernism. (Josipovici, LM, p. 116)

What Josipovici seems to be suggesting is that the liberal humanist stance within English academic life is unable to perceive the central challenges of modernism because it is blinkered by the false links it makes between culture and the novel and by the desire to impose its own value-oriented order on the world. Perhaps this is no more than a re-working of neo-Marxist positions but Josipovici assimilates it as his own. "The teacher," he says, "almost of necessity has to neutralise the power of the object if he is to talk about it year in and year out; to allow it the power of its otherness would create an intolerable situation" (Josipovici, LM, pp. 103-104). Part of the solution to this mistaken practice, in Josipovici's view, is to expose the student to more reading and less talk so that books can speak for themselves outside the restrictive confines of the academic community, undamaged by the liberal humanist agenda of the English university curriculum, which has created its own set of rules for what should be expected from literature. Like Stanley Fish in *Is There A Text In This Class?*, Josipovici recognizes that the reader's assumptions and predispositions concerning the text will determine his or her appreciation of it. He writes: "It is our view of what a book *ought* to be, which comes between us and the understanding of modern

fiction" (Josipovici, TWATB, p. xix). He also says:

> We tame the world around us by slotting everything in it to some prior generalised notion that we have of things; so that to live in the world of habit is to live shut up in a private world, incapable of noticing what goes on around us, since everything that happens is immediately neutralised by being assimilated to what we already know. (Josipovici, TWATB, p. 3)

Within the agenda of the liberal humanist position, therefore, Josipovici notes that the dangers of cultural accretion and inclusion are compounded by pride and habit, which give rise to the sort of smugness that hinders the exercise of reason. It is only when readers and writers can step outside themselves and see that the world is fluid that Josipovici's version of understanding will become available. As with many of his arguments, Josipovici reaches back to antiquity for his evidence:

> St. Augustine...had a name for it; he called the desire to cling to a single vision pride, or *amor sui*, and he regarded it as the primal sin and its extirpation as the primary requisite of conversion to Christianity. For pride, or the love of self, is the belief that the world and my wishes are one, a belief which springs first of all, as Freud saw, from my unwillingness to admit that one day I too must die. (Josipovici, TWATB, p. 297)

Both in his critical writing and his fiction, Josipovici is at pains to point out the necessity of multiple perception and this is perhaps reflected in his own set of eclectic references. He is capable of appealing to Christianity and psychoanalysis within a few lines of each other, while much of the rest of what he says about the self and society sound similar to a number of poststructuralist ideas. Such pluralism is perhaps

slightly ironic given its roots in liberal humanism. Although Josipovici's project echoes with the faint voices of Marx, Freud, Lacan, Barthes and Derrida, he does not choose any of these as a single way forward, preferring to maintain a harsh critical stance towards the humanists, while questioning meaning and language and asserting that to live with mystery rather than attempt to tame it is a possibility. Not for the humanists though:

> For Humanists it is axiomatic that a text (or a person) cleansed of the accretions of false traditions, can and will speak for itself; that if there is a mystery, it will be solved; that for every riddle there is an answer; and that when the answer is found all the doubts, hesitations and anxieties of our present existence will be resolved for once and for all.
>
> Rabelais was more modest in his expectations, and for that reason ultimately more optimistic...he knew, like Hamlet, that it is not possible to pluck out the heart of any man's mystery...he knew that there is no Grail, a final goal which will lead to Utopia here on earth; and he knew, finally, that we cannot return to the 'Fountain and Original Source' of our own or any other story. (Josipovici, MOC, p. 64)

This sounds very much like Roland Barthes' view of the text as an onion with many layers rather than an apricot with a stone at the centre and there are continuing coincidences with poststructuralism as Josipovici proceeds with his thesis:

> ...the will to truth, to interpretation, is not given, but is an aspect of our culture, a culture forged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. 'The attribution of sense is an essential aspect of symbolic development in our culture' is how Sperber puts it. The difficulty with such notions is that the very vocabulary with which we deal with these matters is itself derived from this culture. Our problem is to get behind that and to discover why it came about and what aspects of life it hides or distorts. (Josipovici, WATB, p. 129)

Again this is redolent of both Barthes in Writing Degree Zero,[5] where he argues that the French classical style of the seventeenth century culminated in a nineteenth-century version which secreted aspects of cultural ideology, and Jacques Derrida's attack on Levi-Strauss in 'Structure, Sign and Play' in Writing and Difference, where he points to the unnoticed encrustations of culture in apparently 'natural' language. Josipovici, however, prefers to adduce his conclusions from modernism rather than literary theory and specifically from writers such as Proust, Kafka and Eliot, although with reference also to Chaucer, Shakespeare and Rabelais from earlier periods. In texts by these writers, Josipovici seems to understand the 'lessons of modernism' almost in terms of religious or psychological redemption from the false gods of liberal humanism which can lead only to blindness. Writing on Walter Benjamin, he says:

> What is so important about Benjamin is the way he was able to bring his profound instinctive sympathy with what one might call the great despairers of modernism, with Kafka and Proust, into the orbit of his understanding of the politico-cultural situation. He was able to do this because he understood the critical role played by modern art, and it is this understanding which distinguishes him sharply from dogmatic critics like Lukacs and Leavis.... (Josipovici, LM, p. 59)

Here Josipovici is able to bracket the Marxist, Lukacs, and the liberal humanist, Leavis, in what looks like an

[5] Roland Barthes, Writing Degree Zero (Le Degre Zero de l'Ecriture, Paris: Seuil, 1953), trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (London: Cape, 1967), pp. 61-67.

uneasy alliance born of dogmatism, and propose, tellingly, that the good critic shows 'instinctive sympathy' which somehow obviates the need for sectarianism. In a curious way, this is reminiscent of Bradbury's liberal concerns, when he insists on the individualism inherent in literary writing. However Josipovici continues to insist that modernism can alter human consciousness, if only perhaps for the gifted personality:

> Brecht has put his finger on a very curious but prevalent attitude in modern analysis of culture: that those who are most aware of the breakdown of tradition seem most blind to the fact that modern art, through its radical form, is a vital ally in the attempt to bring this to people's consciousness. (Josipovici, LM, p. 59)

Modernism, then, as Josipovici understands it, becomes not only a means of reading and writing literature, but also a form of psychological insight which will help people to lead their lives less blindly and, because of its 'radical form', interrogate tradition. Throughout his critical writing, Josipovici demonstrates a concern with the therapeutic and redemptive powers of modernism properly comprehended and it is here that there are links with psychoanalysis. It is not so much the Freudian version of the analyst/analysand relationship with its insistence on retrieval and re-formulation that is appropriate, although it is to Freud that Josipovici gestures in his criticism, as the Lacanian account, based on 'misrecognition' and the awareness of the unconscious as 'the discourse of the Other'. Antoine Vergote says:

An essential part of Freudian psychoanalysis is the

> work on resistances and the tracking down of repressed mnemonic representations. Psychoanalytic practice that attempts to be consonant with Lacan's theory will not give these the same importance. The secondary repressions upon which Freud's analytic work has its bearings are no more than occasional events in which the primary repression, in Lacan's sense, is tangibly accomplished: the omnipresent failure of recognition (méconnaissance) inherent in consciousness itself. As soon as man speaks, he has already lost himself....[6]

Lacan's foregrounding of the signifier as the 'voice' of the Other, as opposed to Freud's repeated search for the signified, is also germane to this discussion and related particularly to both modernist and postmodernist positions in regard to the literary text. Vergote says further:

> His [Lacan's: author's note] linguistic inversion of the relationship signifier-signified and his psychoanalytic generalization of metaphor already indicate that his "unconscious" no longer has the same significance as Freud's. (Vergote, p. 212)

It is for this reason that Lacan's work overlaps with other poststructuralist versions of language with their emphasis on the absence of inherent meaning and the relativity of text and context, which imply 'play' in all language events and thus the notion of literature itself as game.

The two central concepts upon which Josipovici bases his understanding of modernism are game and silence. If the world is not logically bound by humanist doctrines of containment, then there must always be some 'play' between human being and environment, between author and text and

6 Antoine Vergote, 'From Freud's "Other Scene" to Lacan's "Other",' eds. Joseph H. Smith and William Kerrigan, Interpreting Lacan, Psychiatry and the Humanities, vol. 6. (New Haven and London: Yale U.P., 1983), p. 211.

between reader and text. The mistake of centuries, according to Josipovici, has been the neurotic refusal to accept and enjoy the game - in silence:

> We should recognise the element of play in all art and seek to release it in the classroom. Now this has of course for a long time been recognised by educationists dealing with the primary school. But there is still a feeling of unease at the notion of art as game. High seriousness and maturity have for too long been the watchwords, with what seems to me a narrowing and stultifying effect. The lesson of modernism is not just the general one that all art is game. It very specifically opens up again areas of the past which have seemed permanently sealed off (eg. Rabelais, Sterne, Beckett's novels, Flann O'Brien). All these works cry out for reading aloud, and they turn the reader into a maker rather than a man of culture or a man of wisdom. By this I mean that they release in us that creative potential which is there in all of us, instead of making us draw back into a view of ourselves as the beleaguered outposts of a declining and threatened civilisation. (Josipovici, _LM_, p. 122)

There are coincidences in this passage with the distinctions Barthes makes between _scripteur_ or _écrivant_ (writer) and _écrivain_ (author) in his essay 'To Write: an Intransitive Verb?'[7] and between the _lisible_ (readerly) and _scriptible_ (writerly) text in _S/Z_ (Barthes, p. 4). There are also echoes of Derrida's notion of 'play' (in his sense, slackness, like a loose bicycle brake), although it is not clear whether Josipovici means the idea in this way. For him, it could equally be interpreted as tennis.

[7] Roland Barthes, 'To Write: an Intransitive Verb?', eds. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato, _The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and The Science of Man_ (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1972), p. 144.

Josipovici goes on to say:

> We will learn to pay less attention to the purity of our responses, the welfare of our souls, and more to the practice of verbal pyrotechnics. This may not make us gentlemen, but it can certainly help our human potential. (Josipovici, _LM_, p. 122)

He is also keen to locate this enthusiasm within the practice of the teaching situation rather than to isolate it as abstraction:

> The teacher of English does inevitably feel himself to be in a privileged position: a hander-down of culture and language, a bulwark against chaos and barbarism. Modern art asks him to relinquish his authority, but, like all authoritarians, he fears that if he does chaos will ensue. The melancholy history of the past half century suggests that if he does not do so chaos will almost certainly ensue. The two lessons of modernism, the lessons of silence and of game, are hard ones for any teacher, in school or university, to learn. But once learned, and applied, they could lead to a renewed enthusiasm and excitement in the study of English. (Josipovici, _LM_, p. 123)

Although Josipovici makes it clear that the relaxing of authority by the teacher is implied by an understanding of modernism and uses this argument to continue his battle with the liberal humanists, there are other voices offstage here, notably those of the French neo-Marxists, whose ideas about power relations are similar if different in provenance.

Crucial to the concept of art as game is the notion, evident in much American postmodernist fiction, of meaning as a volatile medium which cannot be innocent and must not therefore be ingested with the blind assurance of the classical realist or liberal humanist. Literature cannot be a treasure chest of moral values as long as the

messages it purveys are encoded and decoded plurally, and art cannot have a single significance as long as its context is mobile. Josipovici uses the example of Picasso's bull's head made from racing bicycle handlebars to illustrate this point, noting that some observers saw nothing but horns while others only saw handelbars, whereas Picasso himself saw both. He goes on to say:

> It is the play of wit which turns a universe we had taken for granted into a source of infinite possibilities, and therefore wakes us up to the miraculous nature of everything that _is_. (Josipovici, _TWATB_, p. 193)

The point about game is that it is meaningful, not because if offers a single meaning that can be extracted like the juice from a grape but because it can imply multiple meanings simultaneously. The problem for the observer or reader is to be able to liberate him/herself sufficiently from the dogmas of the past to allow this plurality of signification open access. Writing about Nabokov's _Lolita_, Josipovici says:

> ...the true poet has power over words only in so far as he realises that it is only over words that he has power, that this power is only that of bringing them together in new ways, never of creating new meanings. To accept this is the first step to the moulding of a language which can bring into consciousness, articulate and communicate, the mysterious beauty which lies perpetually out of reach. (Josipovici, _TWATB_, p. 219)

This is an odd mixture of ideas, which makes gestures towards romantic notions of idealized beauty somewhere over the horizon and simultaneously implies the notions of infinite regress popular with poststructuralists, as if both could be subsumed to a single statement. It also

bears similarities to Lacanian accounts of the relationship between language and desire. Anike Lemaire says:

> ...Lacan assimilates the transition from lack to desire to the subject's advent to language. In the movement whereby the child in one form or another translates his need he alienates it in the signifier and betrays its primal truth. The real object of lack, of need and of the instinct is lost forever, cast into the unconscious. The subject is divided into two parts: _his unconscious truth and the conscious language which partially reflects that truth_. This is also the reason for man's radical inability to find anything to satisfy him.[8]

Perhaps it is true that both modernism and postmodernism covertly contain many of the understandings that poststructuralism has sought to bring into the open: problems of meaning, of the authority of the text and its author, and questions relating to psychology and ideology. If this is so, then Josipovici's reading of modernism is simply coincidental with the poststructuralist agenda, deriving similar ideas from different sources, although it should be noted that the uses to which he puts them are ultimately more romantic and mystical than those foreseen by much poststructuralist thought, aimed it seems more at the liberation of the special individual than at interrogation of culture generally. At times, too, his views read almost as a re-statement of Barthes. Still on the subject of _Lolita_, he says:

8 Anika Lemaire, _Jacques Lacan_ (Brussels: Charles Denart, 1970), trans. David Macey (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), p. 163.

> For the reader to ask what the novel is 'about', for him to try and extract its 'theme' or 'message' is for him to be guilty of Humbert's initial error: to try and possess carnally what can only be apprehended imaginatively. The novel does not reveal its secret once and for all; the imaginative effort must be renewed each time it is reread. Ultimately the theme is the imaginative effort itself.... (Josipovici, TWATB, p. 220)

And about Saul Bellow's Herzog, he notes: "A piece of fiction is like a man: to ask what it means and expect an answer is to destroy it" (Josipovici, TWATB, p. 235). Both of these comments about the question of meaning and what it is that can and cannot be apprehended from the reading of any text are similar in tone and import to the Lacanian critic Shoshana Felman's analysis of Henry James's novella The Turn of The Screw,[9] in which she suggests that the governess's downfall, like the reader's, lies in trying to extract meaning from the children/text, when in fact, as James himself implies, there is no meaning to be had from either. Josipovici locates this idea, however, not within linguistics or psychoanalysis but centrally to the reading of the modernist text, suggesting that the lessons of modernism comprehend those of literary theory.

If literature is a game and language cannot contain fixed meanings and the reader who pursues them is doomed to blindness rather than insight, then the devices that go to make up the game come into sharper focus and Josipovici devotes much of his critical writing to outlining the

[9] Shoshana Felman, 'Turning The Screw of Interpretation,' ed. Shoshana Felman, Literature and Psychoanalysis, The Question of Reading: Otherwise (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1982).

structures that contribute to the functioning of the modernist text. Fragmentation, discontinuity, repetition and spiralling are central features, according to Josipovici, which do not imply the disintegration of the intellect or the failure of truth, but point rather to a different version of satisfaction - again one reminiscent of Barthesian thought:

> The fragmented or spiralling work denies us the comfort of finding a centre, a single meaning, a speakable truth, either in works of art or in the world. In its stead it gives us back a sense of potential of each moment, each word, each gesture and each event, and acknowledges the centrality of the process of creation and expression in all our lives. (Josipovici, LM, p. 138)

This passage is very close in import to the following extract from Barthes:

> Text of pleasure: the text that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a comfortable practice of reading.
> Text of bliss: the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation to language.[10]

Josipovici makes much of the idea that modernism, unlike the realist text which tries in its blindness to impose singular meanings on a plural universe, can concentrate on the 'nowness' of things and that this can provide a new focus for attention. If meaning exists at all, he argues, then it does so only in the interfaces

[10] Roland Barthes, The Pleasure of The Text (Le Plaisir du Texte, Paris: Seuil, 1975), trans. Richard Miller (London: Cape, 1976), pp. 9-10.

between objects and words and their peculiarly intimate relations. Necessarily, therefore, the modernist writer is aware that not only can his or her work be nothing more than an artefact, but also the elements that contribute to its making become part of the central attention of the work. In this sense the 'foregrounding of the signifier' becomes crucial to the modernist's understanding of form. So Josipovici may say of Chaucer, a writer not normally though of as modernist: "Like Rabelais and Sterne, Chaucer uses rhetoric in order to reveal it as rhetoric, as nothing but rhetoric " (Josipovici, TWATB, p. 86) and "he is conscious of the fact that all language is conventional and artificial, that all fiction is the product of a human and all too fallible author " (Josipovici, TWATB, p. 87). The text, then, is only a construct and the words that go into its making as unreliable as the author who selects them. Furthermore, because the text and its component parts cannot be semantically fixed and are open to various interpretations, the reader is exposed to a necessary irony between the logic of the text and that of the outside world. In his examination of Chaucer, Josipovici highlights the different discourses that Chaucer sets up in his work, between allegorical and literal elements, for example, in order to stress the ironies not only within the text but between it and the outside world. The result is to destabilize the reader and remind us that: "what we are reading is the product only of one man's imagination, and in no sense a transcript of reality" and help us "see

it as the reality it in fact is: the words spoken by one man" (Josipovici, TWATB, p. 116). Although Josipovici would dislike the comparison, these words are reminiscent of Bradbury's 'creative act of the single man' (see p. 92) and tend again towards a romantic view of the gifted individual.

What links writers like Sterne and Chaucer with Kafka and Proust, in Josipovici's opinion, is the concept of text as construct rather than unquestioned mirror of nature and this leads him to build bridges between the centuries:

> ...we may be tempted to argue that it is not modern literature which is in any way unusual, but nineteenth century literature, which moves towards the two poles of extreme objectivity...and extreme subjectivity...in both cases attempting to deny or ignore the fact that art is not primarily imitation but the making of things. Modern literature would be seen as reverting to an older and truer view of the aims and possibilities of art. (Josipovici, TWATB, p. 289)

So it is that the acceptance of fragmentation, irony, paradox and the instability of meaning have necessary implications for form and can lead to a more 'real' portrayal of the world than the apparently realistic novel, particularly of the nineteenth century, which tricks itself and the reader by purporting to imitate reality 'innocently' and 'naturally'. Again Barthes' S/Z lurks behind this argument, as does The Pleasure of The Text. Josipovici goes on to say:

> The novel is the most natural literary form because in a sense it has no form; it is the nearest thing to a conversation, whether between friends or acquaintances. Provided it keeps within the very

> flexible limits of verisimilitude, it is entirely free to do as it pleases, to move in any direction it wants....
>
> For some writers, however, this freedom has been a source not of pleasure but of irritation and anxiety. For if I can really say anything (provided I account for it in some vaguely plausible way) then what is the point of my saying anything? (Josipovici, TWATB, p. 286-287)

and:

> It [the traditional novel: author's note] is the literature of the normal man, who, however much he may revolt against the values of his society, is never in any doubt that value exists, and that it can be found. (Josipovici, TWATB, p. 287)

The traditional novel, then, is for the liberal humanist, Josipovici's 'normal man', who believes in values; presumably the non-traditional novel is therefore the form of the extraordinary man for whom the resolution of mystery is always impossible. According to Josipovici, the modernist's enterprise is to re-examine problems that look as if they have been solved from some new angle, as if they were still unsolved, and to liberate the pleasure of the free text so that paradox, irony and parody can be included in it without threatening its internal structure. Once the reader or writer has accepted this, then the text can yield its own version of the world untrammeled by the blindness of classical realism. That the work of art should be conceived of as game, as construct rather than earnest imitation of unquestioned natural forces does not invalidate it or lead to the breakdown of society. Quite the reverse.

Using these insights, Josipovici is able to make a number of points about Sterne, Shakespeare and Eliot.

About Sterne, he says:

> By exploring the multiple possibilities, their inevitable limitations and final disappearance, Sterne returns us, his readers, to the primal world of polymorphous perversity, and *simultaneously* makes us realise that a condition of such an exploration is that such a world has gone for good and that soon we will be no more. (Josipovici, *WATB*, p. 32)

Writing about *Othello*, Josipovici observes the game that Shakespeare plays of handing over authorship of the plot to the fiendish logic of Iago, so that he can watch himself being a dramatist and, in a piece on *King Lear*, focuses on the barbaric origins of speech devoid of all apparent referent in the scenes on the moor. "In these plays," Josipovici writes, "Shakespeare is careful to show us that the plot turns on chance, not manipulation or psychology " (Josipovici, *WATB*, p. 61). Eliot too is freed from the impulse towards meaning:

> Who is to say where...a work will begin, where end, once you have discarded the rhetorical rules that guided a Milton and have renounced their nineteenth century substitutes, subjective passion and fictional plotting?
>
> These questions hang over Eliot's poetry. The fact that generations of students have pored over the poems has somehow made it necessary that they mean *something*. But what if they exist only as an area of tension, not as repositories of meaning? (Josipovici, *WATB*, p. 81)

Josipovici argues that Eliot (like Picasso and Stravinsky) can only be apprehended by the elimination of the subject and an appreciation of the excitement of artistic re-production.

If game is one important lesson of modernism, the other is silence, implying death and loss. Both lessons have

their provenance in the notion that language is empty of inherent meaning and will therefore tend towards its own destruction rather than towards the erection of concrete structures. Josipovici quotes Nietzsche:

> When Nietzsche says: 'I am afraid we are not rid of God because we still have faith in grammar', this is what he means: that we are not free of God as a kind of transcendental authority, giving meaning to our lives, so long as we imagine the structure of language to correspond to the structure of the world. So long as we imagine that the world has subjects and objects, past, present and future tenses, full stops at the end of sentences. That is why modern art always moves towards silence, away from language, towards the annihilation of language and of the work - ridiculous the waste sad time before and after. (Josipovici, LM, p. 114)

Notions of absence, loss and lack such as these are also central to Lacanian thought. John P. Muller notes:

> Lack is intrinsic to the signifier as signifier. When we speak or read a word, we do not stop at the mere sound or drops of ink (unless we are psychotic). We see through the word to another that is absent. This absent other is, first of all, all the other words as the background against which the word has salience. Second, we see through the word as signifier to all its retrospective and prospective impact on the other words in the sentence. Third, we are given in the word the symbolic presence of what is signified. The word refers, it is never taken simply in itself substantively. It has no substance in itself as a kind of medium that always comports an other, many others; its always slips equivocally and referentially along a polyphonic multiregister that establishes multileveled resonances. The real, on the contrary, is a kind of static whole as well as a kind of black hole void of internal relations. To "live in the real" means then to experience not just "loss of self" but an unbearable plenitude....[11]

Silence, then, may be the logical reaction to the understanding that the signified is absent and always will

11 John P. Muller, 'Language, Psychosis, And The Subject In Lacan,' Interpreting Lacan, p. 28.

be, unless the individual begins to think in terms of unsyntactical or non-grammatical 'language', Lacan's voice of the Other, as not only a release but also as meaningful a contribution as any other. Josipovici seems to be implying this when he says:

> But the desire or rage to speak, to burst out of the shell of silence in which each of us is cocooned, is...allied to the knowledge that nothing I have to say has any authority and so will convey any meaning to another person. Yet once this is recognised and accepted by the writer...he escapes from the privacy and arbitrariness in which he seems to be caught, since the urge to speak, as opposed to anything that is said, is one which is common to all men. And the reader, recognising this as well, will find a new freedom and release from his private silence in letting the author's voice surge up within him. (Josipovici, TWATB, p. 118)

Again it is the therapeutic effect of modernism that Josipovici is stressing here, as if the literary text that operates from game and silence can become a surrogate for the (Lacanian) analyst, releasing new liberties for both writer and reader as joint analysands.

Silence, according to Josipovici then, is the means by which human beings can come to terms with desires that cannot articulate themselves and a world in which language is only ever a potential. It is the response, in other words, to the admission that there can be no 'natural' language and no metalanguage, a concept that Colin MacCabe explores with reference to James Joyce[12] and which has

[12] Colin MacCabe, James Joyce and The Revolution of The Word (London: MacMillan, 1978).

also been discussed by Jean-Francois Lyotard.[13] Josipovici, however, continues to draw his conclusions from a re-consideration of modernism. He says:

> ...in Borges and Eliot and Spark [there is]...a deep desire to express, along with a recognition that it is impossible to express. 'There is a goal but no way', says Kafka.... There is something there, but it can never be spoken, for it is not a hidden object but the ground of all speech. We cannot find it or say it, we can only embody it in action, the action of making, reading. (Josipovici, WATB, p. 92)

Writing and reading become the silent means of exploring the unnameable and, with a passing reference to Freud, Josipovici explains the title of Writing and The Body in terms of a sexually motivated desire to discover the meaning of one's own body through writing. Yet even this is impossible because it is illogical to think that everything can be accounted for; there must always be something left over, something that only silence can perceive and then only in motion. The modernist writer can never falsify by implying that there may be a final truth and must therefore be involved in a constant dialectic within him/herself, between the self and the Other and between imagination and reality, so that: "...the unique self is in permanent exile, forced to flee every refuge, every home; it can only be caught in motion." (Josipovici, MOC, p. 132).

This notion of the ephemeral and intangible is given

[13] Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (La Condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir, Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1979), trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Theory and History of Literature, vol. 10. (Manchester: Manchester U. P., 1987).

by Lyotard when he says:

> The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unpresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unpresentable. (Lyotard, p. 81)

In Josipovici's terms, however, it is the triumph of modern art that it is able to articulate its own failure, frustration and loss. He comes close again to Lacanian psychoanalysis by suggesting that the modernist writer and reader come to terms with this absence in ways that the liberal humanist or classical realist cannot. Writing about Sterne, he says:

> This curiosity, in Sterne, is forever being frustrated. And as this happens, we come to realise that to read 'deeply' and to read 'frivolously' amount to the same thing. Both rest on the assumption that ultimately, either 'beneath' or 'in the end', there is a 'real truth' or 'real centre', which we can reach. But Sterne demonstrates that though this is a perfectly natural mistake to make, it is a mistake nonetheless; there is no Father at the start, disseminating meaning.... There is only an absence, a lack.... (Josipovici, WATB, p. 20)

This is why, according to Josipovici, modernism must concentrate on the here and now, on what is, because beyond and behind there is nothing. This constitutes the distinction he makes between the romantics, for whom there was a reality although always elsewhere, and the modernists, for whom reality meant looking at what already exists but through a different lens, constantly different because the same images are always shifting. So the modernist novel will often proceed from fragmented images

of reality in motion, which finally melt into nothing. Josipovici says of William Golding:

> Golding's first three novels are all fictions which...present us with an action, taken at a point from which there is no turning back and from which the end follows more or less inevitably. That action could in every case be seen as the gradual destruction of what we are first presented with by 'the other'; where, at the very start, there appeared to be nothing but what was present, by the end there is nothing but 'other'. At that point the book ends, for the 'other' is always silent. (Josipovici, TWATB, p. 246)

The point has been made in this chapter that much of what Josipovici has to say about modernism coincides with a number of rhetorical and psychoanalytical strategies within poststructuralism, although he prefers to adduce his conclusions from literary rather than critical texts. This is not to say, however, that he overlooks the latter altogether; he simply keeps them separate from what he has to say about modernism. Although Freud is mentioned from time to time in Josipovici's criticism, he remains a background presence rather than a stated influence. Roland Barthes, however, is considered to some extent in The World and The Book, in tacit recognition perhaps of the contribution he has made to it. Josipovici outlines the debates between the traditionalist critic Picard and Barthes, noting:

> Where Picard takes the work of literature for granted and feels that criticism should devote itself to an elucidation of what is in front of it, Barthes feels that this taking for granted is already a choice of attitude, since he wants to cast doubt on the whole concept of literature. And there is nothing Picard can reply to this. (Josipovici, TWATB, p. 281)

He also says:

> ...to ignore the very real problems with which he [Barthes: author's note] is struggling and condemn his theories at large is not common sense but bigotry. (Josipovici, TWATB, p. 282)

Both of these passages come from a section in the book called 'Surfaces and Structures', in which Josipovici examines some of the debates about content and meaning, and they both betray a sympathy with the Barthesian position. However, what is significant is that Josipovici makes little reference to poststructuralism in the central sections of the book devoted to modernism and the Middle Ages, as if from a conscious desire to keep literature and criticism separate. He spells this out when discussing the function of criticism:

> ...we sense in Kierkegaard, as we do in Nietzsche's later work, a growing despair at the realisation that what is most in need of speech cannot be spoken, that there is a built-in contradiction in the whole enterprise, since if we are persuaded by them and say: 'Ah, so I don't understand!', then we have not understood; but if we do understand - or we think we do - then they have also failed.
>
> More recent critics who start from the same set of insights, such as Derrida, have perhaps been less aware of the difficulties of what they are trying to do. They keep writing philosophy and criticism which insists more and more shrilly that to understand is to misunderstand it. They try to break up the very pattern of rational discourse in order to convey their message - but the problem will not go away. For whatever kind of philosophy you write will always carry with it the implication that it emerges from, and is part of, a system, that it is possible, finally, to pin a sense on things. Even if what finally makes sense is that there is no system, no ultimate authority for sense.
>
> For the truth of the matter is that for criticism to manifest anxiety at its own status is not at all the same thing as for art to do so. For this anxiety itself, in critical discourse, still gives off the feeling of being manipulated, of being yet another device.... Criticism by its very nature...always

> presents us with the finished object, and it is helpless to show how it might well not have been, or at what cost it has come to be what it is. (Josipovici, MOC, p. 7)

This passage reveals an uncertainty about the nature of both philosophy and criticism but it seems to suggest too that neither can express what art can. In any case, the modernist writer already knows what the philosopher suspects, although he perceives it differently:

> Like Derrida and his followers, Kafka senses that as soon as we start to speak, to write, meaning is both made and unmade; that it escapes us even as we try to grasp it. But for him this is not a source of philosophical interest; it is a source of surprise and anguish. (Josipovici, WATB, p. 109)

There appear to be value judgements at work in these statements that demonstrate a desire not only to separate philosophy and criticism from art but also to rank the latter above the former and this gives rise to some questions about the purpose of Josipovici's critical writing.

What is striking in his concentration on individual writers is the degree to which he elevates them above literary theory, which perhaps explains his reluctance to apply Barthesian quotation directly to textual analysis, even though it forms a clear substratum of thought. He can say of Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes, although not within the mainstream of his critical writing, that:

> ...it is certain that the best work of two of the greatest critics of the century, Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes, has sprung from...a desire to unmask the bourgeois ideology behind the 'commonsense' and

the 'taken for granted'.[14]

However there is little in Josipovici's own work to suggest that he himself has such deconstructive ambitions. He attacks the liberal humanist position, taking Benjamin's ideas about art as 'construct' and Barthes' rhetorical strategies, but this may be more because he wishes to re-assert the values of modernism than because he desires change of an ideological kind. It should also be said that few critics on the left would accept the argument that modernism itself is an ideologically reformative mechanism; rather they would tend to view it as a version of bourgeois individualism with a peculiar appeal to the mystical aspects of art. Josipovici, in his criticism, does not adopt a position from which to deconstruct the classical realist text, as Barthes did, but rather takes what he needs from poststructuralism covertly to re-state and reclaim the modernist agenda, a credo which, incidentally, underpins his own fictional practice. It may be that Josipovici criticizes liberal humanism, classical realism and versions of philosophical criticism such as Derrida's because they somehow block or trespass on his own literary projects, which tend towards a rhetorical and psychological rather than an ideological experimentalism.

[14] Gabriel Josipovici, Introduction, ed. Gabriel Josipovici, The Modern English Novel (London: Open Book Publishing, 1976), p. 6.

Such then are Josipovici's lessons of modernism. There is, however, a further element in his strategy and this relates to the historical perspective against which these lessons are viewed.

Josipovici believes that modernism has been largely misunderstood in British academic circles because critics and readers have not only failed to perceive its operative structures but also have measured it against the wrong set of historical criteria, looking no further back than the nineteenth century for their models rather than adopting a wider sweep that would also embrace mediaeval writers. When seen against this broader backdrop, he argues, modernism ceases to look like an isolated and freakish twentieth century phenomenon and begins to take on the features of a common, if submerged, human concern. The thesis is hinted at in most of Josipovici's critical writing but is expounded at its fullest in The World and The Book, in which he says:

> To study the modern novel, as most Anglo-Saxon critics have done, in the very terms of the traditional novel, is to condemn oneself to superficiality from the start. (Josipovici, TWATB, p. xvii)

What we have not done, according to Josipovici, is to take proper note of Eliot and it is only when we do that the modern novel begins to make some sense:

> Once we take Eliot at his word and re-examine literary history in the light of modernism, we have to acknowledge that the old ways of accounting for those works of fiction which do not conform to the 'realist' novel are totally inadequate. (Josipovici, TWATB, p. xviii)

The mistake that too many contemporary critics make is to think that meaning is something that did not vanish until the linguistic and philosophical revolutions of the twentieth century, whereas, according to Josipovici, the rupture between appearance and meaning occurred much earlier. He locates this point in the Middle Ages, in the melting pot of the change from a world of direct revelation of God's word to a humanist world, in which humankind became accountable for both their actions and the interpretation of the universe. As long as religion remained fundamentally unquestioned, then there could be no play between external and internal reality; the world was a book that could be read for meaning and the writer no more than the scribe of God's intentions. In a sense, this was the truly 'realist' novel. The growth of mediaeval humanism, however, with its emphasis on human rather than divine interpretation, put paid to all that and, according to Josipovici, it is from that time that meaning and appearance became divorced and the realistic novel became only the contrivance of a reality that had gone forever. In the beginning was the Word, but somewhat later, there was not. For the early mediaeval artist, however, there was no such problem:

> What guarantees this faith [in the phenomenal: author's note] is the Incarnation, for it is the eruption into time of the eternal, into space of the infinite; it is the justification of man's belief that he is made in God's image; it is proof that everywhere behind the natural order lies the Creator of that order and that there is therefore an assured correspondence between meaning and appearance. (Josipovici, TWATB, p. 29)

In such a world, the writer or the painter did not need to ask questions about meaning because he had been told what the world meant; it was an open book and his job was merely to illustrate it. Writing about Dante, to whom he devotes a lot of space, Josipovici says:

> Dante's poem is meaningful...because it describes - and mimes - an action and a universe that is itself considered meaningful. It imitates not nature but reality. What this reality is, however, cannot, obviously, be derived from the universe itself. It is only because the universe is itself seen as a book, written by God, that the books of men can imitate it. Once the universe ceases to be seen in this way, then the criteria for both understanding it and for understanding the 'real' meaning of books or pictures seem to disappear. (Josipovici, TWATB, p. 46)

As the world shifted in its understandings of direct revelation and human interpretation, so the function of the artist moved from that of a scribe to that of an innovator and it is at that point that the book became separate from the world. Once art ceased to be a means of illustrating God's word, then meaning itself became a man-made commodity and the world and the book became two quite distinct concepts. Necessarily, humankind would wish to replace the ancient certainties in the course of the following centuries and indeed the structures of philosophy and economics would be able to erect certain 'realities' of a logocentric kind to help substitute, but these, according to Josipovici, are only constructs, ways in which society and culture have tricked themselves into believing that the wildness and magic of the ancient world can in fact be civilized. Furthermore it is the supporter of those very constructs who will be most hostile to the

new freedoms that art gains from being released from its role as imitator because it is the artist who will be most critical of them:

> If art means whatever the artist wants it to mean then one could also say that it means nothing at all. Many voices are going to be raised in the following centuries, suggesting something of the sort. With the disappearance of the medieval notion of analogy, inner and outer form no longer seem to reinforce one another, and as the world, instead of manifesting the 'invisible things of God' becomes an enigma without a key, there is the danger that art will be relegated to the status of a mere commodity, a luxury. (Josipovici, TWATB, p. 47)

What is significant about all this is that it allows Josipovici to erect a sort of historical legitimacy for the modernist tendency and to create a temporal continuity between distant past and present. By effectively erasing, if not deconstructing, a few centuries of bourgeois ideology, Josipovici is able to claim a justification for modernism as an ongoing thread in the human mind rather than a bizarre quirk of the twentieth century. There is a sense too in which this strategy could be seen to reinforce his own practice of fiction. He is enabled to say that it is natural and normal for the artist to make multiple meanings from the circumambient universe without reference to some fixed blueprint - either God or the nineteenth-century novel. In this sense, the modern artist who appears to be breaking the mould of the twentieth century, Kafka or Proust for example, can be discussed in the same breath as Chaucer or Rabelais, for all are part of the same related trend. Whereas Dante remains within the guidelines of his Christian world and does not step

outside it to ask questions, Josipovici can say of Chaucer:

> Where Dante tries to break down our prejudices and misreadings to which we are naturally inclined by showing us his progress from our position to the truth, Chaucer presents us with mirrors of our natural reactions and thus frees us from bondage to them. To read a poem like Troilus is to be made aware that our private experience, our imagination and the world are always dangerously at odds. (Josipovici, TWATB, p. 73)

Here Chaucer becomes modernist, working from the same sources that allow twentieth-century writers like Proust to appreciate the pluralism and flux of the world rather than be duped by the false allures of classical realism that speak of certainties and a fixed vision. Josipovici, by pointing to the sixteenth–century reinterpretations of the scriptures, is also able to assert that the mediaeval world was in as much of a muddle over meaning as the twentieth-century inheritors of Saussure and Wittgenstein. So Montaigne was able to say:

> We no longer know what things are really like, for nothing comes to us except falsified and altered by our senses.... The uncertainty of our senses renders uncertain all that they produce. (Josipovici, TWATB, p. 51)

What Josipovici appears to be saying is that, however hard the forces of capitalism, liberal humanism and logocentric reason try to keep the lid on the forces of game and silence, the latter are too instinctive a part of the human spirit to be suppressed for long and indeed are features of the human mind that have endured the centuries. The realistic novels of the nineteenth century, then, begin to look like odd attempts to make the world

into a book again, to coerce meaning and appearance into a false unity by wilfully ignoring the very forces that make such a match impossible. The natural state, in Josipovici's terms, is the modernist one; the unnatural is the realist.

These formulations look persuasive, especially when accompanied by _sotto voce_ references to the rhetorical aspects of poststructuralism, but they rely heavily on a Jungian model of the 'universal unconscious' and appeal, ironically, to a form of individualistic mysticism, which was a feature of romanticism. It would be difficult to imagine a cultural materialist accepting the notion that Kafka's responses to ill-health and a dominant father in turn-of-the-century Austria, which Josipovici describes in some detail in _The Lessons of Modernism_, could be in any way analogous to the circumstances that produced _Hamlet_, for example. If it is accepted that the human mind tends to adapt to its environment, which Josipovici seems to deny (see p. 158), then it is reasonable to suppose that it also adapts to the changing demands of history, which implies that the twentieth-century mind, particularly after the holocaust and the nuclear bomb, could not respond like that of the sixteenth century. What Josipovici seems to be positing is some form of universal tendency of the modern artist's psyche which is able to transcend time and history, as it were looking down on both from a position of superior insight and wisdom. Suffice it to say that there are many literary critics on

the left who would be ill-prepared to accept such an individualized model, although, ironically, it might appeal to some of the very liberal humanists that Josipovici attacks so fiercely. The romantic mysticism inherent in this approach does not suggest the sort of radical questioning of society for which Josipovici admires Benjamin or Barthes, but rather creates a psychological space in which the gifted individual can continue to work without society. It is something of an irony that there should be, in Josipovici's criticism, so many coincidences with poststructuralist thought when his objectives seem so different.

CHAPTER SIX

Gabriel Josipovici: Works of Fiction

Josipovici's novels are not easy to get hold of in either bookshops or libraries in England, which is perhaps some indication of the way in which they interrogate the British proclivity for realism and the nature of the relationship between language, meaning and text. Writing under the influence of the modernist writers that inform his criticism, Kafka and Proust for example, Josipovici implicitly poses the sorts of questions also addressed by Barthes, Derrida and Lacan, whose ideas do not normally have much currency on the shelves of British bookshops either. In this sense, there is a unity of concern between Josipovici's criticism and his fiction.

If Lacan can be read as charting the impossible desire to establish through language the magic unity of a pre-linguistic world, then Josipovici's fiction could be said to foreground a similar desire. His writing overflows with images of reversal, denial, silence and absence that highlight with some insistence a doomed desire for completeness, coherence and reliability. Whereas the realist desires of language and the book that they give continuity to the disorder of experience, Josipovici underlines the very discontinuity that realism seeks to repress. His novels demonstrate a view that language,

because of its own divisive and polysemic nature, can never satisfy the urge to attain some transcendental 'signified' that lies both beyond itself and the text that 'contains' it. All it can do is to focus, however diffusely, on a present that embraces both past and future, and to this extent it is reminiscent of Eliot's views on poetry. Josipovici does this in his novels by means of language that is consciously ontological rather than epistemological and unbound rather than bound in terms of its signification. In the Lacanian or Barthesian sense, he is foregrounding the 'signifier' at the expense of the 'signified'. His narratives are characterized not by linearity, closure and determinate signification but by circularity, disruptive open-endedness and a deferral of meaning of both the signifier and the text as a metaphor of meaning. His fiction is thus one of dissolution rather than solution:

> She closed her eyes. The words were coming between her and the feeling, but the feeling seemed to call forth the words. That was it. First there was the feeling, then there were the words. But the words came between her and the feeling. Yet the feeling without the words was incomplete....
>
> A world without names. A world of light. No more fathers and daughters and grandsons, no more cathedrals and cars and railways. If the cathedral is different at twelve from what it was at ten then there is no such thing as a cathedral. It is just a convenient shorthand. Look, and it dissolves.
>
> When we ran through the garden there were no houses and cathedrals and fathers and mothers. Only light and the nerves around the heart....[1]

[1] Gabriel Josipovici, The Air We Breathe (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1981), p. 104.

What is interesting about this passage is that it fuses some of the central concerns of both modernism and postmodernism, the luminosity and kinesis of the former and the instability of signification of the latter. It is as if Josipovici were demonstrating simultaneously his own 'lessons of modernism' and a concern for versions of contemporary theory that indicate the impossibility of achieving some transcendental 'beyond' to satiate our thirst for completion. His texts repeat themselves continuously as the mirror of a time concept that is circular and immanent rather than linear, undoing themselves as they proceed and ultimately drowning in their own whirlpools of meaning and its lack. That they should have been written at all is evidence only of the writer's desire, through the act of writing, for an ephemeral continuity in the face of fragmentation, by means of a linguistic 'making' that he knows is also an unmaking. Desire itself is constantly splintered and deferred, and yet it remains as a constant in the recognition that only in flux is there stability. Paradoxical as this may seem as a way of making stories, themselves only distant reverberations of reality, Josipovici, in his criticism, points to Kafka, Proust and Shakespeare, whose fictive universes are equally diffuse, ironic and unreal.

There is, in Josipovici's fiction, always a separation between not only the signifier and the signified, between the self and its desire for meaning, but also the self,

the body and the Other. This is made clear in Contre-Jour,[2] which consists of the language statements of a daughter and a mother, the former a monologue into the void, the latter words from beyond the grave, yet the story is 'about' a father, who is central to the text and also absent from it, appearing only briefly at the end and then in the form of a letter. The despair, loss, guilt and separation feelings of the daughter and mother define their selves but they are also constantly illuminating a father who is not there, both because when alive he lived in isolation from those who needed the security of his attention and because he is now dead anyway. He is, as it were, trebly absent: absent from the written text, absent during his life and absent in death. Clearly this lack can be interpreted not only in Freudian or Lacanian terms, but also in the Derridean view of the absent centre that is always located outside the text and remains effectively beyond definition. We are separated from the love of those who might ideally 'complete' us, as we are separated from linguistic meaning that would satisfy our desire for unified sense. Furthermore, we are separated from our own selves. In Migrations,[3] an image of corporeal separation appears three times:

[2] Gabriel Josipovici, Contre-Jour (Manchester: Carcanet, 1986).

[3] Gabriel Josipovici, Migrations (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1977).

> His hands feel like boxing-gloves fastened too tightly at the wrists (Josipovici, M, p. 39)

> His hands hurt. They feel like boxing-gloves clumsily attached to the wrists. (M, p. 51)

> His hands hurt. They feel huge, numb, like boxing-gloves at the ends of his arms. (M, p. 136)

If Josipovici's fictions are about anything, then they are about absence and separation, silence and game, loss and lack, all key-words in the poststructuralist agenda, although Josipovici would doubtless prefer to derive them from modernist tendencies reaching back to the Middle Ages. What is clear, though, is that the word 'between' is of particular importance for Josipovici, for that is where both the human self and the language it strives to make signify are located. This creates irreconcilable difficulties and frustration for the reader encountering the Josipovician text in search of traditional meanings. Although there are human characters who struggle to relate to each other in emotional ways, and although this level of reading may provide a context for recognition, the more persuasive reading position for the novels is one that accepts notions of word pictures and refracted images which, in Lacanian terms, try to give a voice to the Other from which the subject is perpetually separated. In this sense, the reading of Josipovici's fictions may be regarded as the literary equivalent of the psychiatric session, in which the text operates as analyst for both writer and reader. For the writer it is the vehicle for the release of a voice that may otherwise remain blocked; for the reader it is the challenge to defy the norms of

traditional realism and listen empathetically to the often unsyntactical babble of an 'other' voice. What the text cannot do is provide structural meaning or make gestures towards ethics or moral principle. If Josipovici's fiction is read for confirmation of self (Barthes' text of pleasure), there will be disappointment and boredom; when read as a text of 'bliss', to which he points in his critical writing, there may be some form of catharsis. Effectively, the text operates as interrogator of both reader and writer, refusing easy interpretation and working on the level of perpetual disruption.

By a process of ironic transposition, it is the naive reader of the modernist or postmodernist text who becomes the subject/object of much of Josipovici's writing. As the reader questions both him/herself and the text for stable meanings, so the structure of the fiction frequently turns on a character who does not know, desperately trying to extract meaning from another who should but is unable to articulate what is only dimly perceived. The parallel with the psychoanalytic situation is also implied, although in both this analogy and that with the process of reading, there remains the problem of ignorance. Not only does the questioning character not know the questioned, but the latter also fails to understand him/herself, thus deferring all possibility of comprehension. There is, in Josipovici's fiction, a lack of the sort of authority the (Freudian) analyst has for the analysand or the realist text has for the traditional reader, so that no firm

drawing of conclusions is possible.

Such a situation is depicted in Migrations, in which an unidentified 'he' struggles for the duration of the book to explain something to a nameless woman, and consistently fails. Effectively the novel is 'about' the failure of shared experience through language, the impossibility, therefore, of the signifier leading to its signified. 'He' fights to the point of nausea to explain himself but cannot because he does not understand what it is that has to be explained. In a sense, 'he' is both reader and text, trying simultaneously to 'read' himself and be read by the woman. Neither reading yields meaning, for this 'text' cannot be read, although there is a sense in which the external reader is read, or interrogated, by the book:

> -Yes? she says.
> -I don't know, he says. I just-
> -Yes? she says, smiling. You just what?
> -I just- I can't-
> -Can't what?
> -I-
> She waits, swinging her foot a little, smiling up at him.
> -I-
> She waits, smiling. (Josipovici, M, p. 45)

> No, he says. No. I- Please- No. I- Please- No.
> No. Please. I can't- I don't-
> His body thrashes on the bed. His mouth is wide open.
> He appears to be talking or screaming or trying to talk, but because of the double-glazing in the window no sound emerges into the outside world. (M, p. 88)

Apart from the kaleidoscopic interweaving of passages such as these in the book, there are also many overt statements about meaning and its endless frustrations. The clearest of these, which is traced as a repeated story

element, is the persistent allusion to Lazarus stepping from the grave wound in sheets, offering the possibility of wholeness or redemption until the sheets are all unwound to reveal only dust:

> And that is how it is and how it will be, when all can be spoken and we come back at last to our homeland, that is when we will not be there any longer. We live in that grave, in those clothes, in the pressure between nothing and everything, we live by perpetual movement from place to place but we want oh we want so much to escape to say it all to come home at last to the right place our rightful place our rightful space. As if that is possible.
> -It hurts so much, he says. To stay is death and to go on is death. (Josipovici, M, p. 220)

This is the culmination of the Lazarus thread which has been referred to eight times previously in the text.[4] There is always a longing for escape, a homeland and security, ultimate truths and meaning, but these things are unattainable, as intangible as the dusty remains of Lazarus into whom so much hope had been injected. The predicament of Lot's wife produces a similar conjunction of stasis and kinesis:

> But if you go on, if you don't turn, if you try to hold on to it, then you're dead too.... Then you're dead too, he says. If you stop. If you go on. You can't do that. You can't just go forward and never turn round. You have to explain. To yourself. To hold it. Try to hold it. Do you see? Otherwise you're dead. But then it runs away. When you start, it runs away. It can't stop. You run after it, grabbing, or everything stops. You're dead again. (Josipovici, M, p. 138)

Both of these passages are redolent with Josipovician concerns: time, space, death and explanation. Amid the

[4] See also: Migrations, pp. 105, 124, 125, 132, 133, 176, 177, 212.

swirling images of the novel, within the delirium of doubt that gives rise to physical illness and vomiting, 'he' struggles to make speech and language as satisfying as a good meal:

> -What man wants, he says, is to speak in the same way he eats. He wants to cry out, to talk, and then for his words to fill himself and the person he is addressing as substantially as a great big chunk of animal meat. That's what we all want. Not the one, not the other. Both together. (Josipovici, M, p. 213)

However words repeatedly refuse to signify. Desirous though Josipovici's people are of meaning, the more they try to articulate their desire, the farther it slips away from them.

The same notions pervade The Air We Breathe, although here the text/analysand/reader has become female rather than male:

> I want to explain to you. You must understand. All those words we use, love and hate and despair and the rest, they don't correspond. Perhaps I was tied to the past but what does that mean? What gives things their meaning? Who says it is just this and not something else? Who decides it means this and not that, who decides the explanation must go 'like this' and not that? I'm trying to be reasonable to be rational I look back at my past at all my life Suddenly I can look back and where does it start who decides where it will start who decides even that an explanation is needed? ...certain things that happened to me I don't understand what they mean but they mean something and unless I talk about them I won't be able to sleep not ever again...if there was a silence if there was a space.... (Josipovici, AWB, p. 92)

Contre-Jour too reverberates with the silences ensuing from the failure of speech:

> ...when you spoke you did not speak (Josipovici, C-J, p. 8)

> My lips do not move. As if it was not myself I was looking at but someone else. As if I had nothing to do with these words I speak to you. As if they were not spoken by me but to me or at me or in me. In my head. In my mouth. Wherever it is that words resound. In some place or space where words resound. (Josipovici, C J, p. 15)

> But perhaps like all children I am asking for too much. Perhaps that is the very condition of speech, that it finds itself to be impossible. So that the perpetual feeling which children have that they cannot speak is not the fault of parents at all but simply one of the conditions of our world. (C-J, p. 36)

The insistent messages of modernism, postmodernism and poststructuralism are iterated in these passages and show Josipovici's awareness that, given the unreliability of language, there can be no metalanguage to which appeal can be made, however much human beings may desire it. There is reason here also to conclude that, if language is so double-edged, then writing about texts of this kind itself becomes a metalinguistic impossibility and it is perhaps in this self-conscious fashion that Josipovici can pre-empt criticism. Perhaps, too, this is an attempt towards Barthes' 'writing degree zero':

> She wanted to talk to him, now, to explain to him, she knew that she would be able to talk so that he would understand, turned, ready to wake him again, but then the futility of it overwhelmed her, the sense of hopelessness in the face of so much material, where was the start, where the finish, it had always been with her, this sense of incompleteness, of excess rather...it went back and back in a never-ending spiral, so that she longed for a moment of clarity, a moment of illumination...but the moment never came...she felt the wind blowing through her she felt full of holes full of spaces, gaps, the wind blowing through nothing to join one part with another to link to bind just moments and gaps...(Josipovici, AWB, p. 70)

Given that the reader cannot expect Josipovici's fiction to 'mean' in the way that the classical realist text claims to and that it overtly warns against secure conclusions because the characters are in the same state of 'becoming' rather than 'being' as the reader, then the question remains as to how these novels can be approached.

Perhaps it is helpful to return to the concept of word-pictures, in which words can be thought of as having attributes similar to paint, producing sensations but not necessarily meaning. Op art pictures that can induce nausea through spirals are relevant here, as are Van Gogh's paintings with their layered insistence on the quintessential 'nowness' of the chair or the sunflower rather than on object as metaphor. There is, in this analysis, a movement away from intellectual to sensual involvement in the art work. Eliot spoke repeatedly of the musicality of poetry and this too may be a category worth applying to Josipovici's novels, which seem often to operate on <u>leitmotivs</u> that create 'tunes' within the fiction. A common experience of reading the Josipovician text is to be confronted early on by an image which is then bound to another, inverted, repeated and re-combined until the reader enters the same dizzying kaleidoscope as is being experienced by the central characters and suffers from the same nausea.

In <u>Migrations</u>, 'he' lies on a bed, cocooned from the outside world in a hot room with double-glazed windows that prevent his words from reaching the outside and the

outside from reaching him. 'He' occasionally vomits:

> It is as though he were two people, one kneeling on his chest, trying to hold him down, gag his mouth, keep him still, silent, while the other tried to hurl him off the bed, to push the words out of his chest, out through his neck, jaws, teeth.
>
> He staggers across the room and only just reaches the basin in time. He stands over it, letting the vomit run out of him, out of every hole in his face, down his neck, over his chest, his legs.
>
> Because of the double-glazing on the windows no noise enters the room; at the same time none of the sounds in the room, if there are any sounds in the room, emerge into the outside world. (Josipovici, M, p. 47)

He paces the room in an absolutely regular pattern; outside the sun is 'metallic', the sky heavy, the clouds low. He remembers a hospital room like the one he is in. A tap drips insistently. There are remembered images from the past: a boy in bed; a youth in a room with a girl and cigarettes; a man on a pavement, spreadeagled; men looking into a deserted shoeshop; a man lying on a deserted night road; a boy on a bed; a man on a bed. And in the room there is heat, silence, stench and the woman to whom he tries to explain but fails. Outside there is a hat-shop run by H. F. Bostock:

> A rat. Shrieking bird. Spider. An empty box. Wood. A piece of wood.
> She waits.
> -Ports of call, he says.
> ...
> Ports of call in my migrations, he says. (Josipovici, M, p. 222)

The single images, combined and re-combined as in nightmares, are interwoven with the heat, silence and reek of vomit to produce a background of sensations to the despair of trying to connect and to explain, until a whirlpool of signification is created, which the reader

cannot interpret in the realist sense and must therefore 'read' otherwise.

The Air We Breathe also teems with single images that roll into each other, interlacing until a complex but not necessarily connected network of pictures is created, weaving backwards and forwards in and out of memory and present time. A train whistling, a river, a narrow room, a house, a garden, a car; and then the old man, children screaming and laughing, an unknown house, a reedy river, a silent old man counterpoised against the shrieking children staring perpetually into the river, hooting trains, railway stations, a hotel room, an old woman in a cottage, the South of France, Paris, London, The West of England, South Wales. As these images flash past the inner eye of the woman in the story, trying to piece together the tragedy of her childhood and death of her father by drowning, her relationships with different men and her journeys in France and England, the reader is exposed at the same accelerated pace to refracted images that paint pictures on the mind but do not construct meanings. But like her, we too have to hold on or else we too shall drown:

> This is life, this is what life is, what it does to you, you want to stop, stand back, get your breath, but it knocks you down and flows and flows and there is no way of escaping but if you let go and float you will drown, dragging at the air.... (Josipovici, AWB, p. 78)

Life is a succession of moments and no more. What is important for a writer like Josipovici is at least to be able to identify these moments even though no necessary

connection may be established between them. They are parts of the woman's life, seen both now and then simultaneously. They could have been re-ordered and shaped into a linear narrative by using a different time-frame, one that begins in the past and works steadily towards the present, explaining and filling the gaps as it goes, but for Josipovici this would constitute irreality. Reality is fragmented and experienced on many different sense planes at the same time; it cannot be packaged into something comforting and easily digested, because to do so would be to distort it, knowingly to lie. In this sense, it is the modernist or postmodernist text that is 'real' and the realist text that is telling stories. Whether or not these revolving images can be interpreted and turned into some truth does not matter; simply to paint them in their incompletion is a sort of success. In Contre-Jour, the father, the painter Pierre Bonnard, is reported as having said:

> ...what excites me as I sit or walk, is the way things are seen out of the corner of my eye, are felt at the edges of consciousness. Art in the West has for too long been victim of a mad idea, the idea that objects and people face you squarely, that you have all the time in the world to gaze at them. But life isn't like that. It slips by. (Josipovici, C-J, p. 20)

It may be that there is no time for interpretation and that Josipovici in his fictions is following precisely the thoughts of his 'character': offering images of life as it seems now. That the daughter in the book may return again and again to the images of her mother washing, of her mother been sketched in the bath by her father, of the way

in which her mother was always "looking down and away" from her (Josipovici, C-J, p. 7) may be interpretable in terms of Freud's 'repetition compulsion' but there remains the possibility that these are just images, pictures that create tensions and sensations as paint or music do. They girl may repeatedly return to them looking for meaning but she is denied. The images hang in the air, or in the water in The Air We Breathe, set alive by their own inner vibrations. The Echo Chamber[5] is also constructed from such images and depends for its effect on their reverberations. Josipovici works almost as a painter might, or a composer, allowing the tensions of colour or sound, the rhythms of visual or auditory images to work subliminally on the reader, pressing towards the 'edges of consciousness' rather than aiming inwards towards the centre he knows to be absent. The potency of these fragmentary images is heightened, however, by the concepts of narrative and of time that underlie them and it is to these that this chapter will now turn.

Josipovici's narratives work rather as the ripples caused by a stone thrown into water, except the movements produced are simultaneously concentric and eccentric. In the same way that particular images are painted quickly onto a canvas where, through a process of accretion, they are sucked into a maelstrom of signification rather like

[5] Gabriel Josipovici, The Echo Chamber (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1980).

that of a Turner painting, so the elements of narrative structure are interwoven and range backwards and forwards in time, rubbing against each other to produce tension if not meaning.

A good example of this is The Echo Chamber, which is a story about a twenty-eight year-old man called Peter who goes to a country house to recover from what appears to be a bout of amnesia caused by some trauma. At the house, Peter is confronted by the questioning girl who prods his memory, much as other of Josipovici's characters are interrogated into excuses for narrative, although in this book there are more characters so that a broader patchwork can be created. There is Miss Lear, who writes poems; Andy, the silent boy; Remus, the naughty boy; George, the cigarette smoker and sage; Yvonne, the kind girl, all of whom seem suspended in time. Peter is the key to the narrative, moving from set to set, having snippets of conversation and completing several circuits of the house, the surrounding fields and his room in an effort to retrieve his past. The book is built of a mosaic of small scenes, reminiscent of a play , in which people say things to each other but are not understood, the failure to connect working at both the level of individual exchange and the counterpoising of the scenes themselves. The following, for example, constitutes a section of the book:

* * *

George met him on the stairs.
'I am glad you have given up thoughts of leaving us,' he said.
Peter shrugged.
'We must have a long talk one of these days,' George said.
'Oh? What about?'
' A talk. Just a long talk. About everything.'
'If you like,' Peter said.
George winked at him.

* * *

(Josipovici, EC, p. 120)

The Echo Chamber is like a patchwork quilt made of scenes stitched together, which function rather as the colours in a painting, pulling and pushing against each other, alternately attracting and repelling the reader and creating an ironic multiple perspective that does not prioritize any one angle. The book is composed of a variety of stories, although many of these are barely started and never finished. Miss Lear, the poetess, clearly has much to say but does not; there are traces of a family going to Australia; there is opposition between Andy, the good boy, and Remus, the bad boy; there is a connection between Isabella, the wild girl, and Peter's own mad mother. The book proliferates with stories unified in place in so far as all the characters are in one way and another connected with the house, yet never closed or finished. Josipovici, as author, indicates that he is aware of countless different stories he could be telling and that the selection of Peter's amnesia is random. The other narratives float behind and around the text as possibilities and potential energy. In Barthes' terms,

this is the text of _jouissance_ rather than _plaisir_; it is _scriptible_ not _lisible_ and its implied reader is an _écrivain_.

Josipovici's narratives, then, tend to be circular rather than linear, multifaceted rather than unified and marked in their internal pro- and regression by language that is reminiscent of Pinter or Beckett in its potential for embedding explosive elements and proceeding in a repetitious, random fashion which is ironically both real and unreal simultaneously, producing the image of the dream within life:

> 'Look,' the little girl called after them. 'Look at my toes. Each one a separate colour.'
> ...
> 'Mummy bought them for me in the morning.'
> 'Yes. I met her in town.
> 'She bought me another pair too.'
> 'Very nice!'
> 'She bought Remus a shotgun.'
> 'Christ!' Yvonne said.
> 'Do you have socks like that?' Caterina asked him.
> 'No.'
> 'Why not?'
> 'No one's thought of buying me any.'
> (Josipovici, _EC_, p. 106)

Characters appear for no reason and vanish without explanation:

> He lay on the bed, staring at the ceiling. Suddenly he got up and opened the door. Andy was standing outside.
> 'What do you want?'
> The little boy looked up at him.
> 'What do you want?'
> Peter held the door open for him.
> 'Do you want to come in?'
> The little boy shook his head.
> 'Well then. Where's your mother?'
> The little boy looked at him.
> Peter knelt and looked into his eyes.
> 'Andy,' he said.
> The little boy did not move.
> Peter stood up. He went into the room again and shut the door. He lay down on the bed and closed his eyes.

> Later he got up and opened the door again. The corridor was empty. (Josipovici, EC, p. 115)

There are echoes here of the combination of disjunction and the quotidian which marks Beckett's writing, leading the reader to speculate whether anything is likely to happen and whether it will matter very much if it does. Much of the book's language operates on the level of phatic communication and circumlocution, thus compounding a mixture of reality and irreality that induce the boredom of Barthes' 'text of bliss'.

Beyond these narrative and language games, however, there is a time concept that works as a potentially infinite set of reversals. Peter's amnesia has set a time frame for the reader indicating a movement backwards to the retrieval of previous experience. The dream he has recurrently is assumed to be the result of a past trauma. However, as the climax of the book approaches, it becomes clear that his dream does not refer to the past but to the future, which itself is being rapidly joined by the present. The dream about the little boy who dies a violent death by falling into a quarry is not memory but prediction and at the same moment as Peter sees this, Andy falls into the pit and is killed, thus connecting past, present and future on one instant of concatenation. Such a concept has as much to do with Josipovici's concept of time as it does with narrative structure, although evidently the two are intimately related. In effect, at the end of the narrative, because of the way in which time has been reversed, the whole story could then be told all

over again, because Peter has now witnessed the event that would produce the trauma that would lead to the recurring dream and amnesia that brought him to the house in the first place.

Although not employing narrative mechanisms quite as complex as these, Contre-Jour, Migrations and The Air We Breathe all defy the notion of a linear narrative that begins in time past and leads to time present. Indeed it is extremely difficult for the reader to find any fixed time location in these novels, as memory, dream and hallucination become intertwined. Contre-Jour, which is subtitled 'A triptych after Pierre Bonnard', uses the technique shown in the title and favoured by Bonnard of lighting an object from the side opposite to that from which it is viewed. It is in fact a series of three time and word pictures, although the third canvas, that on which the father's picture appears, is actually only the mirror of the other two, those of the daughter and mother, for it is his absence that is the centre of the text. The matter of his presence and absence is never stable in the novel, for it does not become clear for several pages that he is in fact dead, the daughter's developing monologue, addressed to her own reflection in her window, indicating initially only the memory of an apparently recent visit. Her narrative is in any case predicated upon the impossibility of her own existence which further erodes the logic of linear time:

> And do you know what that makes me feel? Not just that I was not wanted, but that _I did not exist_. I had never existed and would never exist.... My past is you, that which I did not have.... (Josipovici, _C-J_, p. 28)

This is a Lacanian vision of the impossibility of achieving a whole identification of self when the Other is lost, lacking, absent or silent and has as its consequence the erasure of past and future. It is the girl's attempt to articulate what is _not_ and it represents the same articulation as many of Josipovici's protagonists, who try to give voice and form to that which exists either behind or beyond them but cannot connect because it refuses to be named. Their 'pictures', like that of the daughter in _Contre-Jour_, are not available to concepts of linear narrative, or else they would lose the immanence of the time frame. Her narrative attempts to give some form to all that cannot be said in life and can only be articulated in death. Although both texts and characters may appear insane to the realist reader, in psychoanalytic and postmodernist terms they may be seen, in their struggle to say the unsayable, as landmarks on the way to sanity.

If the daughter's narrative in _Contre-Jour_ is temporally scrambled, the mother's, pleading for understanding of the difficulties of living with her painter husband, requires an even greater stretch of the imagination because it appears to come from beyond the grave, from a point of no time : "This is your mother calling. Help me. I need your help" (Josipovici, _C-J_, p.

75). In another context this could be a simple telephone call and yet the reader is asked to believe that it comes from beyond life. However, in a sense it is the only logical provenance for her voice, given the necessary decision to produce the narrative from a point of retrospection. Be this as it may, the function of her 'picture' on the second screen of the novel is not only to provide ironic juxtaposition to the daughter's but also a further displacement of the reader's view of the father. Indeed it is only through these two diametrically opposed points of view and his words reported in the text that we see him at all.

The word 'between' returns to the debate at this point because the structure of Contre-Jour, implied by the ironic counterbalancing of the three screens of the triptych, relies on the concept, common in Beckett's plays, that we only exist in relation to others and yet remain separate from them. The daughter has always been between her parents, longing to be a part but kept distinct by the artistic demands of the father and the neurotic dependence on him of the mother. Because of this 'betweenness', she has also been divided from the possibility of a unified self. In this sense, she is also 'between' her self. The mother exists between the father and the daughter, aware of the damage she does to her child but unable to act to reverse it because of the oppositions within herself. Perhaps the washing she does throughout the book is a means of cleansing or unifying

but it becomes simply a repetitive neurosis. In life, the father is between his wife and his daughter, but he is also aware, because of his understandings of art, that he also exists, necessarily, between all things in creation and that there can be no true inter-relatedness of anything. It is ironic, then, that the picture the reader gets of him is one produced from the tensions arising between the twin narratives of his daughter and wife. As 'he' says in Migrations:

> We are in the interstices. In the intervals. We are that which moves between the spaces. Which conjures up the spaces.
> He says:- Yes. That is what we are.
> He waits for the silence to swallow up the words.
> He says:- That's all. Nowhere and Everywhere. Here. Now. Saying this. (Josipovici, M, p. 231)

It is also true that the author vanishes in this set of ironies. As the characters fail to articulate and the text fails to 'mean', so the author vanishes from the agenda and becomes the slippery maker of texts who also resides somewhere in the interstices. Josipovici is not the omniscient author of the realist novel.

Central to narrative structures that do not move forward reassuringly from point A to point Z, however, is a certain concept of time, one more ancient than the Western model. When recollecting a rare interview given by the Bonnard character in Contre-Jour, the mother quotes him as having said:

> 'When we think of energy in the modern world, we think of something that rushes forward. When the Greeks thought of it, they thought of it as a condition.' (Josipovici, C-J, p. 119)

Much the same could be said for Josipovici's view of it. The girl in _The Air We Breathe_ says:

> ...The way one learns. Not all smoothly and correctly but swinging wildly from one extreme to the other so that just as I'd forgotten all those years so suddenly all that intervening time had vanished it was as if we had never sold that house. (Josipovici, _AWB_, p. 31)

and reflects:

> And again it came to her that there was no beginning and no end, no way to explain or talk even, no way of stopping everything and looking back, stopping it and seeing where to start again you were plunged in and then you had to swim you looked up you got your head out of the water you tried to make out a direction if only you had a moment of respite to think to breathe but you had to keep going your head beat harder you knew if you stopped you were done for you had to push you had to keep going the waves got bigger you choked and swallowed mouthfuls of water you.... (Josipovici, _AWB_, p. 35)

Although it is tempting to think of water as an element that has forward motion, carried onwards by its currents, in fact rivers and seas are governed by forces of lunar gravity and move according to cycles of progress and regress, flowing eternally in relation to cosmic forces. When the old man in _The Air We Breathe_ drowns in the river he has been contemplating for so long, he is re-joining an element he has come to understand, entering into the infinite peace of flux. In this sense, it is only an understanding of the impossibility of beginnings and endings and fixed locations in time that will lead away from the neurosis of the realist text towards an appreciation of the natural rhythms of the universe offered by the modernist. By conceiving of narrative as both concentric and eccentric, and of time as operating

cyclically rather than linearly, as an eternal 'now' that encompasses both yesterday and tomorrow, Josipovici is perhaps striving towards a re-definition of the traditional Western view of 'progress'.

In Contre-Jour, which is also a book about art, Josipovici is able to draw attention overtly to these ideas about time by means of the painter's notebook in the hands of his daughter. At this point, Bonnard's theories and Josipovici's are close:

> 'You have to find a way through it. A way that will do justice to the passing of time, to the fact that nothing stands still, nothing opens itself to our gaze but always retreats, vanishes, turns into something else. And yet to give that fleeting quality a solidarity without turning it into a monument.... Accept it [time: author's note] and work with it.'(Josipovici, C-J, p. 48)

and:

> ...he was really always concerned with that, with time passing, but also time as a means of conferring reality on the world, time as a necessary and beneficent element, an element of growth, of possibility. He wanted to make us see the miracle of it, of the fact that this one moment would never recur, ever, in quite the same way.... And so...[it] makes us think that we too who look at it may look for a moment and then be no more. That the world is as it is and not otherwise that was the source of his continual surprise.(Josipovici, C-J, p. 49)

Both of these passages say much not only about Josipovici's interest in time but also the ways in which time and art can alert the reader/viewer to their own existence and its limits. They are, in a sense, comments on the way he himself writes fiction, by interrogating the self through the lens of ephemeral time. The texts are not closed but dwell on a myriad of apparently random detail that goes to the making of a wider tapestry. The

introductory page to Contre-Jour reproduces these words of Bonnard's :

> There is a formula that perfectly fits painting: lots of little lies for the sake of one big truth. (Josipovici, C-J, epigraph)

Although Josipovici is constantly alerting the reader to the fact that meaning cannot be spoken through the characters in his books, there are a few occasions when he steps into the text, in the guise of a poet, painter or sage, to make observations about the nature of art and to make specific comments about his own procedure. In The Echo Chamber, for example, the enigmatic George says:

> 'Nevertheless...what Freud has written has had profound repercussions on the art of our day. Profound. For one thing it has made us understand the play element in art much better. Its affinity with sport.'
> ...
> 'Of course I'm only a humble spectator...but I get as much pleasure from watching a good game of tennis as I do from looking at a great painting.'
> ...I believe...that we should all learn to take games more seriously and life more playfully. (Josipovici, EC, p. 29-30)

In his critical writing, Josipovici makes much of the two ideas of game and silence as they relate to an understanding of modernism, yet, although silence can be heard to resound through the elisions and narrative omissions in his texts, the concept of game, in the sense of playfulness, appears to enter little into a world of practically unrelieved angst. There is little humour or light relief in Josipovici's fiction, with the possible exception of the succession of dogs all called Freddy owned by the father in Contre-Jour. However, if play is understood in the Derridean sense, then there is clearly

plenty of slippage of meaning and in the relationship between text, reader and author. The language is spare; commas and Joyce's famous 'perverted' commas are frequently omitted, indeed punctuation of any kind is often consciously written out of the text so that the reader's eye runs along the page unhindered by the metalinguistic additives of the full stop and the colon. Background detail of place and person is almost always absent from texts, which rely on dialogue or monologue, in other words on transcription of the spoken word, as if consciously avoiding the lures of logocentrism. In both _Migrations_ and _The Air We Breathe_, sentences are left unfinished and even individual words like 'but' are left hanging as 'bu-', as Josipovici portrays the difficulties his characters have with language as a signifying code on anything but the level of babble.

In _The Echo Chamber_, too, there is a hint of Josipovici's own thinking about writing, in these words of Miss Lear's:

> '...I found as I walked that those words expressed the rhythm of what I felt and had a beginning and an end and the beginning called out to the end and made the end quiver in a way things had never done in my own life where I had not really known a beginning and could never see an end.' (Josipovici, _EC_, p. 145)

Art, then, is a means of escaping the chaos and anarchy of life and making, however transitorily, a scheme in which a beginning can lead to an end, in which Zeno's arrow can hit its target. However much, therefore, Josipovici's fiction may strive towards the sorts of liberation from traditional realism that he describes in his critical

writing, there is still a residual desire, apparently, for some form of conclusiveness and an almost romantic belief in the magic of art that will make real life go away, at least while we are engaged with it.

According to Brian MacHale in his book Postmodernist Fiction, it is in this area that distinctions can be made between the modernist and postmodernist text, for whereas the former will adhere, however disjunctively, to some form of epistemological understanding of the world, the latter appeals rather to versions of ontology, from which notions of order and connection have been finally erased. If MacHale is right, then Josipovici's texts would, as he would doubtless wish, be classifiable as modernist rather than postmodernist. Although they lend themselves to a number of Lacanian interpretations, their provenance is probably Freudian, in the sense that some search for knowledge of the self is still implied. However much Josipovici's games with language and meaning may coincide with the poststructuralist agenda, the deeper reliance seems to be on the modernist tendency that dominates his critical interests. Although modernism was a reaction to nineteenth century realism, it was not as radical a re-definition as that posited by the poststructuralist or postmodernists and it is perhaps in the interstices between modernism and postmodernism that Josipovici is able to avoid the sort of extreme revisions that acceptance of poststructuralism would imply, while still writing fictions that make gestures towards it. The

Josipovician text, then, contains the potential for various readings. Whereas the modernist will be able to elicit understandings of a retrospective kind and argue that Josipovici is continuing in the modernist tradition, there is also enough indication of an awareness of postmodernist and poststructuralist thought for the reader versed in the latter to wish to make comparisons. 'Between' is indeed an important word for Josipovici.

There is also a sense, once the mysteries of language and the 'unreal' text have been penetrated, in Freudian terms when the dream has been interpreted, in which Josipovici's novels are about very ordinary human concerns. Contre-Jour, amongst other things, is about the desolation created by family ties that do not provide the love and security that human beings want from them. So are Migrations and The Air We Breathe. Although these books lend themselves to Lacanian versions of psychoanalysis with its reliance on the release of the voice of the Other, they could equally be read as Freudian explorations of the subconscious, as analyses of dreams, guilt and repression. The Echo Chamber could be treated similarly, given its insistence on the recurring dream, although this book is also full of very ordinary human desires for connectedness and love. The little boy, Andy, dies because he has followed Peter on his walk towards the deserted quarry. He is drawn by an impulse for relationship that is common in Josipovici's characters. The withholding or unavailability of love is, after all, the stock in trade

of popular romantic fiction as well as that of 'serious' literature. Although the superstructure of Josipovici's novels is fragmented and luminous, and although the reader is invited by them to generate pictures and tunes rather than hunt for meaning, there remains an infrastructure from which the ordinary meanings of ordinary life have not been totally eradicated and a sense that there may be some final 'big truth' available beneath or beyond 'lots of little lies'.

CONCLUSION

There can be little doubt that the influence of poststructuralism and postmodernism has been felt by the writers examined in this thesis, although, in their various ways, they have assimilated these recent challenges in critical and literary activity to extant modes of native practice. The response, then, seems to have been normative rather than revolutionary.

Both David Lodge and Malcolm Bradbury have argued for the domestication of literary radicalism in their critical works and written fiction which, while taking account of both poststructuralism and postmodernism, still tends towards the liberal realism that they see as the bedrock of literary writing in Britain. Indeed there is a sense in which the more they include 'experimental' devices in their fiction, the greater is the satire of those very devices and the more insistent the voice of reaction. This is a slippery art though, for both writers could equally well argue that they are indeed heeding recent critical thought from the continent and that any implied satire is no more than the genial adjunct of the British sense of fun. Irony allows them both to avoid easy categorization.

Of the two, David Lodge perhaps came to language-oriented versions of literary criticism earlier than Malcolm Bradbury, whose initial response was to try to eliminate language from the agenda altogether by concentrating on social analyses of literature. It is

perhaps for this reason that Lodge's writing tends towards linguistic and structural concerns, while Bradbury's remains tied to the social and individual problems of liberalism, although increasingly influenced by poststructuralist criticism. In some senses, it is tempting always to bracket Lodge and Bradbury together, and indeed the overall drive of their work would justify such an analysis; however this thesis shows that, although their pleas for liberalism are similar, their critical stances remain distinct.

Gabriel Josipovici is more elusive than either Lodge or Bradbury, for, by attacking the liberal British position, insisting on the ambiguity of meaning and echoing some versions of poststructuralist analysis, he appears to be charting a path which is at odds with native tradition. Yet both his critical writing and his fiction make it abundantly clear that he is adhering strictly to the tenets of twentieth-century European and British modernism, in other words to another tradition than the liberal and again to the known rather than the unknown. That modernism should so often shade over into postmodernism is perhaps fortuitous for him, as it allows a degree of slippage that permits him to look in two directions simultaneously and offer a challenge to reductive criticism. In terms of realism, Josipovici has experimented more in his novels than Lodge or Bradbury, although, like them, he does not move into areas where knowledge is denied and the unpresentable struggles to

find a voice, in other words into the postmodern zone.

Looking forwards to Appendices One and Two, it can be seen that the academy as a whole adopts a stance which, at its most general, is akin to that of Lodge, Bradbury and Josipovici. Both Higher Education and the publishing industry have taken account of poststructuralism and postmodernism and yet both seem to have assimilated it to native norms. The majority of departments of English literature in universities, polytechnics and colleges have added poststructuralism to their syllabuses and yet only about half of the staff in those institutions are fully conversant with literary theory and the vast majority of students are shown to have no detailed knowledge. Methuen New Accents has made a concerted effort to cover the range of poststructuralist and postmodernist strategies and yet the editor of the series stops short of the sort of politicism claimed for it by some critics and emphasizes the pluralism of the project. Furthermore, Methuen New Accents would seem to have itself become fashionable and thus easily tamed by the establishment.

British culture is marked by a policy of assimilation to the centre as a means of attenuating radical change, while its literature tends towards the social rather than the philosophical, preferring to examine the nature of the quotidian rather than confront the challenge of the unknown and possibly unknowable. This thesis shows that both these proclivities are clear features of the British literary academy in the 1980s.

APPENDIX ONE

Poststructuralist Theory And The Teaching Of English Literature In British Higher Education

This appendix will present and analyse the findings of a survey of sixty-one universities, polytechnics and colleges carried out between January and April 1988, the aim of which was to broaden the scope of this thesis by moving away from considerations of the works of individual academic critics and novelists and into the academy as a whole. Its central purpose was to discover the extent to which the positions taken by Lodge, Bradbury and Josipovici in relation to poststructuralism could be taken as representative of colleagues in institutions similar to theirs throughout the country.

Evidently research of this kind is hindered by some fairly obvious limitations. Although it is possible to obtain a reasonably clear picture of how much poststructuralist theory is being taught in departments of English literature in the HE sector, it becomes more difficult to assess teacher attitude. It was not possible to interview a significant number of individual teachers and students and consequently the survey had to rely on a questionnaire sent to their heads of department. In spite of this 'metonymic' approach, however, the survey did succeed in indicating a number of trends, which are of

interest in themselves apart from the ways in which they illuminate the work of Lodge, Bradbury and Josipovici.

1) AIMS

To elicit answers to two central questions:

i) How much poststructuralist theory is being taught in departments of English literature in the British HE sector?

ii) What attitudes do staff and students in those departments have towards poststructuralist theory?

2) METHODS

i) Administration

A questionnaire was sent to the following universities, polytechnics and colleges, all of which offer undergraduate and/or postgraduate courses in English literature.[1] In the first instance, the questionnaire and accompanying letter were addressed to heads of department by name, as it was thought that the personal approach would be more likely to elicit a response. One month was then allowed to elapse during which time the majority of heads responded. A second letter, this time addressed to an unnmamed Head of Department, was then sent, in order to collect replies from institutions whose head of department might have changed for reasons of retirement, sabbatical

[1] All information taken from: Commonwealth Universities Handbook (London: Association of Commonwealth Universities, 1987) and Higher Education in The United Kingdom 1987-9 (Harlow: Longman, 1987).

leave, illness and so on. This second trawl produced a significant number of further responses.

Universities:

Aberdeen
Buckingham
Belfast
Birmingham
Bristol
Cambridge
Dundee
Durham
East Anglia
Edinburgh
Essex
Exeter
Glasgow
Hull
Keele
Kent At Canterbury
Lancaster
Leeds
Leicester
Liverpool
Goldsmiths College,London
King's College London
Queen Mary College, London
Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, London
Westfield College, London
University College, London
Loughborough University Of Technology
Manchester
Newcastle Upon Tyne
Nottingham
Oxford
Reading
St.Andrew's
Salford
Sheffield
Southampton
Stirling
Strathclyde
Sussex
Ulster
University College Of Wales
University College Of North Wales
University College, Cardiff
University College Of Swansea
UWIST
Warwick
York

Polytechnics and Colleges (CNAA validated):

City Of Birmingham P.
Cambridge CAT
Manchester P.
Middlesex P.
Newcastle Upon Tyne P.
North London P.
North Staffs P.
Sheffield City P.
Sunderland P.
West Sussex P.

N.B. The Polytechnic Of Central London was excluded from the survey because because I felt it inappropriate to fill in my own questionnaire or ask my head of department to do so.

Colleges (University validated):

Edge Hill CHE
Liverpool P.
St.Martin's College, Lancaster
North Cheshire College

It was made clear to respondents that all information was to be confidential, although questionnaires were numbered for administrative purposes. Letters were sent to heads of department only because it was felt that they should have the clearest overview of both academic provision and staff/student attitudes.

The total number of institutions surveyed was sixty-one.

ii) <u>The Questionnaire</u>

The following is the text of the letter sent to institutions:

Dear..........,

I am presently working on the final stages of a D.Phil. thesis, in part of which I am concerned to discover how far poststructuralist theory, by which I mean the range of rhetorical, psychoanalytical and ideological strategies covered by the Methuen New Accents series, has penetrated the teaching of English literature in British universities and colleges. Clearly, from the couple of questions I hope you will find the time to answer, I shall not be able to account for all the variables and reach anything more than a very general conclusion, but I would none the less value your views.

All replies are confidential. As I am only concerned with general trends, there is no need to give either your name or that of your institution. You will notice that your questionnaire has been numbered but this is for administrative purposes only.

Should you wish to add a supporting statement or further comments, would you please do so on the extra sheet attached?

With thanks in advance for your cooperation,

It was felt that Methuen New Accents (see Appendix Two) offered the best general guideline to the sorts of theory the questionnaire aimed to investigate because the series appeared to have a wide circulation and therefore would be familiar to universities and colleges, because it attempted to cover the range of poststructuralist strategies outlined in the letter and because the series celebrated its tenth anniversary, with a certain amount of press coverage, only a short while before the survey was carried out.

The following is the text of the questionnaire:

1) Are the study of poststructuralist theories and their application to literature included in any of the following areas of your department's work? (Please tick and specify)

	YES	NO	
a) Undergraduate courses			....
b) Postgraduate courses			....
c) Special conferences or seminars			....
d) Staff development or research (staff or student)			....

e) Other (Please specify)....................................
....

2) Which of the following statements would, in your view, most accurately describe the attitude of the majority of your staff and students to poststructuralist theory? (Please tick)

	STAFF	STUDENTS
a) Poststructuralist theory subverts tradition and should be resisted.		
b) I am aware of poststructuralism but have no detailed knowledge.		
c) I am conversant with poststructuralist theory and sometimes employ it in class.		
d) I keep up to date with poststructuralist theory and employ it regularly in class.		
e) My contributions to classes are exclusively poststructuralist.		

f) Other (Please specify)....................................
....
....
....

The rationale that underlay the formulation of the questionnaire was that it should be brief and uncomplicated. Heads of department in universities and colleges are busy people who, it was thought, might not take kindly to filling in a long and cluttered form. A potentially low response rate was therefore balanced against the loss of information that a short questionnaire would entail and it was decided that some factual response would be better than none at all. Respondents were invited to contribute lengthier replies on blank sheets attached to the questionnaires if they so desired, but could opt, as the majority did, for five minutes of box-ticking which did not require much reflection and which perhaps prevented the form from being 'filed'.

That said, however, it will be seen that the questionnaire, while limiting itself to two areas, none the less requires specification within the various categories and outlines both types of course and potential staff and student attitudes. In this sense, it is slightly more complex than the simple two-question approach might suggest for it is implicitly asking for more information than might appear at first sight. An example of the sort of information culled in this way was that relating to the compulsory or optional nature of poststructuralist courses within under- and postgraduate programmes. Although the questionnaire did not specifically ask for this information, the majority of respondents provided it in the additional detail requested after the boxes. By and

large, also, respondents seemed to find the form easy to follow and, with the exception of one who appreciated the brevity of the questionnaire but felt that it would not therefore yield much of value and another who thought that to talk of majorities would lead to 'vapid generality', remained largely uncritical of what was being asked and how.

Necessarily, however, with this kind of research, there is the danger of foreclosing the context in which information is being elicited and it had been expected that the 'other' categories would have been more extensively used than was the case. So, although the need for objective questioning was clear, this was much more straightforward in the area of course provision, which tends towards similarity, than in that of teacher and student attitude, which tends towards diffusion. The possible attitudes from which respondents could choose, ranging from hostility to welcome, were therefore necessarily over-simplified. Even so, the majority of respondents made no objection to the inevitable contextual closure.

3) RESULTS.

The response rate to the survey was high. Of the total of sixty-one universities, polytechnics and colleges contacted, fifty-two replied. This gives a percentage response of 85.25%, which was considered a significant enough number from which to draw conclusions.

Although confidentiality shall be respected and neither the names of individual heads nor those of the institutions they represent shall be disclosed in these results, it can be stated that the responses came from a representative sample of universities, polytechnics and colleges in the U.K. in terms of geographical location and type of institution (ancient/provincial/new universities etc.) The minority of institutions that did not respond were equally distributed by geographic location and type of institution. Two of the three universities in which David Lodge, Malcolm Bradbury and Gabriel Josipovici work returned the questionnaire.

TABLE ONE. QUESTION ONE: COURSE PROVISION.

		No.	%
a) Undergraduate	Yes	44	84.62
	No	8	15.38
	Total	52	100
Undergraduate	Compulsory/ structural	10	22.73
	Optional/partial 3rd./4th. yr.only	26	59.09
	No specification	8	18.18
	Total	44	100
b) Postgraduate	Yes	27	51.92
	No/N.A.	25	48.08
	Total	52	100
Component only: /27		10	37.10
c) Conferences	Yes	15	27.78
	No	29	53.70
Seminars	Yes	10	19.23
	No	42	80.77
	Total	52	100
d) Staff developt. Staff/student research	Yes	32	61.54
	No	20	38.46
	Total	52	100

TABLE TWO. QUESTION TWO: STAFF/STUDENT ATTITUDE.

	STAFF No.	%	STUDENT No	%
a) Subverts tradition/ should be resisted	6.18	11.89	0	0
b) Aware but no detailed knowledge	18.84	36.23	35.70	68.65
c) Conversant/ employ sometimes	23.24	44.70	10.30	19.80
d) Up-to-date/ employ regularly	3.66	7.04	0.50	0.96
e) Exclusively poststructuralist	0	0	0	0
f) Other (Students have never heard of it)			5.5	10.58
Total	51.92	99.86	52	99.99

N.B. A number of respondents answered this question by ticking several boxes to indicate the distribution of attitudes among staff and students. This accounts for the decimalization of both raw numbers and percentages.

The (f) category was added into the table because a significant number of heads filled in the form with practically the same words.

RESULTS: TABLE ONE.

What is striking about this table is that 84.62% of respondents indicated that their institution was in some way concerned with the teaching of poststructuralism on undergraduate courses, while 51.92% indicated some form of postgraduate offer. Using these figures alone, it would therefore seem that the majority of universities,

polytechnics and colleges have taken account of poststructuralism at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, with the weighting on the former rather than the latter. 48.08% of institutions make no offer at the higher level.

However, if account is taken of the further information in the 'please specify' part of the questionnaire, it will be seen that of the 84.62% of institutions teaching poststructuralist theory at undergraduate level, only 22.73% make such study compulsory for their students or an integral part of their degree rationale. A further 59.09% of responses indicate that poststructuralist theories are taught only as options or parts of other courses (typically an introductory survey of critical strategies included some time spent on poststructuralism) or as third or fourth year-only courses. Put in terms of raw numbers, while 44 out of 52 institutions teach poststructuralism, only 10 makes its study compulsory. The rest either do not teach it at all (8) or teach it only as part of another course (26). In a further 8 cases, respondents did not specify the teaching mode, although indicating that poststructuralism was taught. A similar picture emerges from the figures relating to postgraduate study, for while slightly more than half of the institutions indicated an offer in poststructuralism (51.92%), in 37.10% of these cases such theories formed only a component of a course and was not perceived of as being structurally important to that course.

Slightly more than half of the respondents (53.70%) said that their institutions did not stage special conferences about the subject, although 27.78% said that they did. If the latter figure is taken in conjunction with the number offering extra seminars (19.23%), then a figure of 47.01% is reached of those offering a mixture of conference and seminar. A number of respondents noted the irregularity of such seminars even when offered. These figures were reversed when it came to staff development and staff/student research (61.54% Yes; 38.46% No), although in many cases the additional information was given that, while research was going on in the department, it was confined to the individual projects of one or two members of staff only or to secondment for special study.

RESULTS: TABLE TWO.

In spite of the reservations mentioned above about the potentially leading nature of the categories in this question, the majority of respondents raised no objection to it and indeed answered with considerable candour. It was perhaps not too surprising to find that no staff and no students were considered as being exclusively involved in poststructuralism in their approach to literature and indeed one respondent opined that such a position was an impossibility. What was surprising was to find that a statistically significant number of staff (11.89%) should find themselves in category (a), thinking that poststructuralism 'subverts tradition and should be

resisted', when numbers in the extreme categories might have been expected to be small. If this number is added to those members of staff who are perceived to have heard of poststructuralism but have no detailed knowledge (36.23%), then a total of 48.12% is reached of staff who either dislike poststructuralism or know little about it. This figure exceeds the number of those who are conversant with poststructuralist theory and employ it sometimes (44.70%) by 3.42%. This leaves a very small percentage of staff who keep up to date with poststructuralism and employ it regularly in their classes (7.04%). If this number is added to the 'conversant' category, however, a figure of 51.74% is reached, which exceeds the 'ignorant/opposed' by 3.62%. Perhaps the simplest conclusion from all of this is that staff are divided roughly 50/50 on the matter.

The picture as far as students are concerned is clearer. The survey indicated that, in the perception of their heads of department, some 68.65% of students were aware of poststructuralism while having no detailed knowledge, while only 19.80% were conversant with the theories and able to employ them. 0.96% kept up to date, while 10.58%, according to category (f) had never even heard of poststructuralism.

RESULTS: TABLES ONE AND TWO.

The composite picture that emerges from these two tables is essentially ironic. What becomes clear is that, although the majority of universities, polytechnics and

colleges in the U.K. teaching English literature at undergraduate and postgraduate levels appear to make a significant offer in terms of poststructuralist theory, in fact this study is often fragmentary or optional and is furthermore conducted by staff whose knowledge of and attitude to the area is ambiguous. In other words, although 84.62% of universities, polytechnics and colleges are teaching poststructuralism in one way or another, only 51.74% of staff are conversant with it. If the students are then added to this picture, it appears that more than three-quarters of them (79.23%) have no knowledge of poststructuralism, which must raise some questions about the nature of their exposure to such theories. Perhaps a sign of change in this regard is the 61.54% of staff research in the field.

RESPONDENTS' COMMENTS - PRESENTED AT RANDOM.

> Students generally come to accept and employ p-s theory after year 2 theory course; the problem is several teaching staff teaching 3rd year courses have little or no knowledge and resist the area generally. This can cause considerable problems with essays, dissertations etc.
>
> Your categories do not exactly cover the situation here. The majority of our staff have limited acqaintance with post-structuralist theory. However this department is pluralist, and none of us would regard theories with which we disagree as 'subversive', or 'resist' them by any other methods than discussion in front of students for their information and interest. It would be fair to say that most of us are aware that there has been an alleged revolution in critical theory, but are content to leave a small number of staff members to pursue this as they think fit within the agreed

departmental teaching patterns.
In general our students are unacquainted with both structuralist and post-structuralist theory, though a small number are actively interested, and seek out the teaching which some members of staff give in that area, usually in 4th year undergraduate seminars.

My sense is that the majority of students (and perhaps staff) simply know nothing about it.

I doubt whether the majority of our students are even aware of it.

I do not encourage my students to study post-structuralist theory, as for undergraduate purposes, I feel it is unduly obscure, abstract and inaccessible. It seems to me to have lost touch with the process of reading as actually experienced by all but the specialist in semiotics and linguistics; and that teachers of English who insist on the post-structuralist approach to the study of literature are assisting an elitist development that will eventually make the study of literature in universities futile and impossible.

I find none of the statements adequately describes the view I hold. I am against Post-Structuralism (as I understand it) not because it 'subverts tradition' but because it seems mistaken (if, that is, it is not concerned with the author's intended meaning.) Without such an aim 'interpretation' runs riot, as has happened recently. Of course I may be wrong about Post-Structuralism.

There should perhaps be a category before (a) for some students: 'I have never heard of post-structuralism...' - 'or structuralism for that matter'.

The answer to each of these questions (Q.1) is probably 'yes', but only minimally and many of our students would go through a single honours English degree ... and never meet post-structuralist theory.

On Q.2, the idea of a 'majority' seems to lead to vapid generality. There's a wide range of familiarity with and tolerance of 'theory'. Our undergraduate students will, under the new syllabus, 1987-88 onwards, all learn about post-structuralist and other theory in their first year. Under the old syllabus, and to some extent under the new, there are options on theoretical concepts and movements, depending on staff initiative from year to year. In sum, the reply about student familiarity with post-structuralist theory is firmer for the present first year, and

subsequent years, under the new syllabus, than it could be under the old.

I should say a large majority of the students are not aware of the subject.

It is, of course, hard to generalise. Some members of staff are fully conversant with recent criticism and eager to use new ideas. Others are ignorant or apathetic or hostile. Students are generally open but ill-informed.

It is difficult to talk about the 'majority'. The best students employ post-structuralist theory almost without exception.
In my view literary criticism which does not involve itself with post-structuralist theory is belle-lettristic and tired and cut off from all that is most exciting in recent debates. On the other hand the political and cultural implications of poststructuralism need to be communicated to a much wider audience in a language more accessible than is customary in most recent books. Hence the change in Critical Quarterly editing team - not yet completely successful in achieving its aims.

(Q.2) Not answerable in the above terms: I would judge that most of our students have only a very slight awareness of P/S: most staff are aware of it, some to a considerable extent and some will draw upon it or draw out its implications. I am not aware that any of us take the first position, except in response to the position that P/S is uniquely right and exclusive of all other positions.
I appreciate your keeping this questionnaire so brief but I doubt, given that brevity, it can yield much of use.But best wishes.

(Q.1, (d)) One staff member has leanings.
The ignorance of students, and their lack of basic reading in literature when they arrive at University makes the idea of teaching more than basic theory laughable until they are far advanced.

(Q.2) This really can't be answered: all my staff have some acquaintance with Post-Structuralism, some very detailed and some aren't much interested. In general those who are most knowledgeable are most sceptical (but there are two who are interested and willing to employ deconstruction theory in the analysis of texts from time to time).

The 'New Accents' series is a pot-pourri of critical approaches, several of which are not 'post-structuralist' - and many of which are of a low

intellectual level.

It is difficult to fill in the boxes with any accuracy, since opinion among staff varies so much. The majority are probably unattached observers, a minority hostile and another minority enthusiastic.

(Q.2) (c) and (d) would apply to some staff and students of course - but if you ask for 'the majority' view, then sadly (a) and (b) have it.

4) CONCLUSIONS.

Taken as a whole, the evidence from the survey suggests very much the picture that might have been expected: a recognition that poststructuralism provides a critique and discipline which has a part in literary studies and must therefore be included in the syllabus, however marginally in many institutions, but considerable disagreement amongst teachers in their attitudes to it. This is shown by the number of institutions teaching the area at undergraduate (84.62%) and postgraduate (51.92%) levels, by contrast with the roughly 50/50 split in teachers' knowledge.

One factor not taken into account by the survey, but which is probably relevant, is the age of staff concerned. It may be that, given the economic pressures on institutions and the general lack of enthusiasm by the Thatcher government for the humanities, many teachers will have been in post for a considerable number of years and that there has been relatively little transfusion of new blood and new thinking in English literature departments. The 61.54% figure for staff/student research in poststructuralist thought perhaps indicates a way in which

this situation is being remedied internally with existing staff.

What is significant about these results is not so much the expected pluralism amongst staff or the comparatively patchy way in which poststructuralism is offered, as the high percentage (79.23%) of students who know nothing or only very little about it, in spite of their 'openness' to the subject noted by some staff. Only 20.76% of students were perceived of as having a working knowledge of poststructuralist theory and of that number a marginal 0.96% kept up to date with the area. What this suggests is that there is an imbalance in the system which is affecting the delivery of the subject. This may occur at the level of indidividual teacher attitudes or at the that of academic planning but what seems fairly clear is that students, in the main, are not being exposed to poststructuralist theory in such a way as that exposure can be translated into knowledge and skills. It appears to be possible for students in many institutions to avoid poststructuralism altogether during their undergraduate course because of systems of options and specialisms. The introductory 'survey of critical method' type of course, in which structuralism and poststructuralism are likely to come chronologically last and thus be only superficially treated, may be another cause of this. It should be remembered that only 22.73% of institutions regarded poststructuralism as a compulsory area for study.

Although what follows must remain speculation, for it

is not backed by the survey, it may be that poststructuralism, as implied by some respondents' comments, is perceived of by staff as too 'hard' for students to grasp at the undergraduate level, particularly in the first couple of years. The mood seems to be that it should either be a third or fourth year option of some kind or should be left until the postgraduate level. Perhaps a re-writing of poststructuralist theory in more accessible language, of the kind noted by the respondent who spoke of the changes at Critical Quarterly, would go some way to correcting this situation. Perhaps also, although there is no evidence of this in the survey and the notion must remain hypothetical, the lecture situation is the wrong context in which to teach poststructuralist thought. Given that most universities still operate a system of expository teaching rather than inductive learning and rely on the lecture format rather than student-oriented seminar groups as standard teaching/learning practice, there may be reason to suppose that the delivery of poststructuralist theory is often ineffective. After all, deconstruction is perhaps something that can be better discussed than formally presented.

These latter notions, it must be stressed, are speculative. Clearly much more research into the principles and practice of teaching in HE would have to be carried out before solid conclusions could be drawn. All this survey can do is to indicate some trends.

APPENDIX TWO

Methuen New Accents

Although, according to the survey described in Appendix One, only seven per cent of staff teaching English literature in higher education establishments in the UK were deemed by their heads of department to be conversant with poststructuralist theory and to employ it regularly in class, this group, or at least some of them, seem to have made a significant contribution to the dissemination of such theory in areas other than the academic institution, namely through the publishing industry. Given the amount of material now to be found on the market, it may therefore be that the influence of many of these academics has been greater via the written word than it has in the classroom. This second appendix will focus on the critical works written for the Methuen New Accents series, because they were the benchmark for the survey and indeed include the ideas of at least two of the respondents to the questionnaire. Although a number of other publishing houses have now added poststructuralist criticism to their lists, Methuen can be seen to have been innovative in the field, having produced over thirty titles since the series was launched in 1977, covering the range of rhetorical, psychoanalytical and ideological concerns that contribute to the poststructuralist agenda.

According to Jennifer Stone, writing in Village Voice,[1] Methuen New Accents grew out of the Althusserian re-assessment of Marxism that followed the student riots in Paris in 1968. In her view, Althusser's analysis, which denied that historical events could be determined by sole causes but were instead the result of a variety of circumstances, found particular favour in the England of the late sixties and early seventies, when British Marxists were keen to re-consider their position. For them, the movement away from a revolutionary situation created only by class struggle and the seizure of the means of production to one dependent on hidden as well as manifest origins and the power of intellectuals to influence consciousness began to look particularly attractive. She says:

> In a rare agreement with Gramsci, Althusser endorsed his idea that the role of intellectuals is to change peoples' consciousness and continually challenge the dominant culture. (Stone, p. 14)

This idea, according to Stone, was an important influence not only in the field of politics but also in the area of English studies, where the environment was ready for a change from the Oxbridge-dominated criticism which had for so long dominated the literary world to a more theoretically based approach couched not in R. P. but the accents of the redbrick universities and the Gaelic fringe.These were particularly appropriate to a changing

[1] Jennifer Stone, 'The End of Literature: Theorists Against Theory,' The Village Voice: Voice Literary Supplement (New York), No. 25 (April 1984).

educational pattern of a more egalitarian kind:

> In the mid-1970s, Althusser's writings, effectively distributed by New Left Books, generated new enthusiasm for alternative education. The Polytechnics, with their working-class student body and unstructured curriculum were first to welcome Althusser's ideas and their proponents. Then came the London Summer Communist Universities, the Birmingham Cultural Studies Centre, and the University of Essex Sociology of Literature Conferences. (Stone, p.14)

What becomes clear from this is that Methuen New Accents is seen by Stone as having an inherently political purpose, which aims to subvert and challenge traditionally held values in the literary critical world. She says the series seeks to show that conventional criticism is a form of oppression and that many of those who practise it are obscurantist and blind to the post-colonialist demands of feminists, blacks and gays. The conservative backlash, she notes, was to be expected and is marked by a determined retreat into nostalgia and the romantic values of professionalism and liberalism. Against this, she says:

> For those of us who hope not to shore up the institution of Literature but subvert it, the New Accents series is invaluable. By decoding the arcane jargon of literary theory, it has cleared a space for the more colloquial tones that are emerging. (Stone, p. 17)

For Stone, then, Methuen New Accents has a very definite political, post-Althusserian purpose. It is a means of fomenting revolution, as re-defined in the post-Marxist analysis. Indeed Methuen's own American publicity material, an example of which is quoted here in full, confirms this objective:

> Terence Hawkes launched the series in 1977. Intended as a political enterprise, the Series took aim at traditional literary criticism in Britain, challenging it as propaganda of white, male and bourgeois authority.
> Ten years and thirty titles later, New Accents is still practicing its own brand of subversive pedagogy. The Series, though under attack by the British government, continues to offer a mouthpiece for the struggling literary voices of the left - including feminist, black, gay and post-colonialist voices, competing with the established canon for an audience.
> Equally dissident textual explications by leading scholars not only demystify and diffuse today's jargon-ridden theoretical debates for the literature student, but, by uncovering the political and racial underpinnings of texts too often ignored by the traditional critic, sharpen his political acumen as well.
> The New Accents Series, though now accepted and highly respected by the American audience, still remains in Britain a decidedly political project - not only because it aids and abets the Left's encroachment on the conservative cultural establishment, but because it brings political discourse into the cultural realm itself.[2]

From this, it can perhaps be seen why the British academic establishment should be hostile to the series and why the authors of some of the books should have had more influence in print than within the curricula of the institutions in which they teach. Jennifer Stone notes the silence with which the establishment at large has greeted Methuen New Accents and takes this as an indication of its subversive impact and the re-invigoration of the British intellectual Left over the past decade.

According to Brian Morton, Terence Hawkes himself, however, is rather more guarded in his attitude to the political background and purpose of the series:

[2] Methuen Publicity Release, 'New Accents Series Challenges British Conservatism' (New York: Methuen, 1987).

> Hawkes himself...would undoubtedly have failed his commisar's exam. Where others have seen a sinister litany and a bid for world domination in the series - semiotics, Marx, gender, Rezeptionsesthetik, deconstruction, metafiction - he emphasises its pluralism, which is a good liberal value.[3]

That the Left, according to Stone, should have adopted Methuen New Accents as a weapon in the Althusserian progress towards constant revolution, while the editor of the series himself stresses its pluralism seems to produce a curious paradox, which ironically allows the apparently subversive intent of the books to be safely domesticated and assimilated in Britain. David Lodge is quoted in Methuen's American publicity as saying:

> A lively series...where structuralism, linguistics, cultural studies and literary criticism intersect and overlap. (Methuen, 1987)

By December 1987, New Accents comprised thirty-one titles covering the spectrum of poststructuralist thought and had found its way onto the reading lists of many British universities and colleges, which, according to the survey described in Appendix One, were becoming increasingly aware of the need to include poststructuralism on the syllabus, however marginally. Although they are linked by an apparent desire to question traditional values and to radicalize the reader, many of these books, for students and teachers alike, must have served the same sort of purpose as DIY texts, providing a

[3] Brian Morton, 'U and non-U accents,' The Times Higher Education Supplement, 18 Dec. 1987, p.11.

bridge between the abstraction of Derrida, for example, and the pragmatism of home-grown criticism. Some people, like one of the survey respondents, would argue that even New Accents are too convoluted and esoteric, in spite of their elucidatory aim. However, it seems likely that more people in higher education have read Christopher Norris's _Deconstruction: Theory and practice_ than raw Derrida and that Catherine Belsey's _Critical Practice_ serves as much as an introduction to critical theory as the attack on classic realism or the substitution of women for Marx's failed historical subject that Jennifer Stone makes it out to be (Stone, p. 16). Perhaps this is part of the problem of the, at least, dual role of the series. Although its publishers claim it to be underpinned by ideological purposes, it also aims to introduce new and complex ideas into a society ill-at-ease with them and intellectually less prepared than their European counterparts, many of whom study philosophy in their high schools. It is as if the influx of continental theory was too sudden and too challenging and that a more gradual introduction might have yielded greater fruits. Although Methuen New Accents cover a wide range of specialist subject areas between Terence Hawkes's _Structuralism and Semiotics_,[4] the first book in the series, and Imre Salusinszky's glamorous _Criticism in Society_,[5] the series does not contain a

4 Terence Hawkes, _Structuralism and Semiotics_ (London: Methuen, 1977).

5 Imre Salusinszky, _Criticism in Society_ (London: Methuen, 1987).

book that has attempted to unify and explain the various underlying threads of poststructuralism in the context of British society. In this sense, the development of the series seems to have been organic rather than predetermined and there are a number of points at which the books overlap with each other because each new author tends to repeat some central aspect of theory before applying it to his or her particular interest. There is then the danger of the series losing the ideologically determined drive noted by Stone and becoming instead fragmented.

Essentially all the books, in their separate ways, propose revised strategies for reading literature or re-definitions of what literature is and is not. The blurb for Alternative Shakespeares,[6] for example, reads:

> Traditional modes of Shakespeare criticism have consistently privileged structural harmony, aesthetic coherence, the study of individual 'characters', and the 'poetry' of the plays. Drawing on new work in the semiotics of drama, poststructuralism, feminism and Marxism, these essays radically challenge many of the conceptual assumptions upon which such forms of criticism rest.... Their shared conviction is that there is no unified subject 'Shakespeare', but a series of alternative 'Shakespeares' each of which is defined oppositionally, and each of which it must be the business of criticism to contest in the face of opposed perspectives. (Drakakis, blurb)

And, as Jennifer Stone notes:

> A number of volumes in the series have been concerned with breaking down the boundaries separating

[6] John Drakakis, ed., Alternative Shakespeares (London: Methuen, 1985)

> literature from other media: Keir Elam's The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama, John Fiske and John Hartley's Reading Television, Rosemary Jackson's Fantasy: The literature of Subversion, which explores the radical possibilities of utopian fiction; Walter J. Ong's Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of The Word, which analyzes how patterns of oral thought are undermined by 'superior' literate cultures. In Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan examines the classic division between fictional and non-fictional narratives and calls into question New Critical notions of genre. (Stone, p. 16)

The series proposes areas for literary criticism which have traditionally remained outside the canon in books such as Science Fiction[7] by Patrick Parrinder and Sexual Fiction[8] by Maurice Charney. With Patricia Waugh's Metafiction, the reader is taken beyond English to American fiction and to literature in translation in an examination of "not only the self-consciousness of the text, but also the way this very self-consciousness poses a challenge to our accepted ways of regarding reality as 'real'" (Methuen catalogue, 1987). In addition, Re-Reading English[9] edited by Peter Widdowson and Re-Writing English[10] by Janet Batsleer, Tony Davies, Rebecca O'Rourke and Chris Weedon, offer essays either challenging the stranglehold of Leavisite ideas on British criticism or retrieving literature - popular romances, women's writing,

[7] Patrick Parrinder, Science Fiction: Its criticism and teaching (London: Methuen, 1980).

[8] Maurice Charney, Sexual Fiction (London: Methuen, 1981).

[9] Peter Widdowson, ed., Re-Reading English (London: Methuen, 1982).

[10] Janet Batsleer et al., Re-Writing English: Cultural politics of gender and class (London: Methuen, 1985).

working-class literature - which has either been devalued or ignored by mainstream criticism.

Central to these re-definitions of literature and its criticism, however, are the revised notions of self, sexuality and society, which underpin what Althusser called 'theoretical practice', or the constant involvement of the intellectual in practical life as persuader and organizer. Such books as Toril Moi's Sexual/Textual Politics[11] and Making A Difference,[12] edited by Gayle Greene and Coppelia Kahn, provide some of the feminist input to this process, while Elizabeth Wright's Psychoanalytic Criticism[13] traces connections between psychoanalysis, discourse and relations of power. The series' bestseller, Dick Hebdige's Subculture: the meaning of style,[14] analyses the way in which radical identities are created in the context of the post-colonial state.

Given that this is an appendix to a thesis rather than a thesis in itself, the foregoing can be no more than a general outline of the sorts of books published in the Methuen New Accents series, an indication of the general motivation that lay behind it and perhaps a hint at why it

[11] Toril Moi, Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist literary theory (London: Methuen, 1985).

[12] Gayle Greene and Coppelia Kahn, eds., Making A Difference: Feminist literary criticism (London: Methuen, 1985).

[13] Elizabeth Wright, Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in practice (London: Methuen, 1984).

[14] Dick Hebdige, Subculture: the meaning of style (London: Methuen, 1979).

may have caused some deep sighs on the campuses of Britain. Some of those sighs will have been uttered in concern at the state of the academy, while others will have come as the result, possibly at an advanced stage of a teacher's career, of having to catch up with a whole new discourse, just when he or she had begun to feel in control of the subject called English. Either way, there can be little doubt that the series has had an important impact and that the authors responsible have contributed significantly towards academic attitudes to literature in the 1980s. It is perhaps necessary, at this point, to look in some more detail at who those authors are.

Like Jennifer Stone, Brian Morton notes the importance of the erstwhile academic periphery in the development of New Accents:

> General editor of the series is Terence Hawkes, professor of English at University College, Cardiff (and occasional jazz drummer). 'I think we happened to catch the tide. The series couldn't have come out of Oxford or Cambridge. It had to be from the periphery, from one of the 'provincial'' - audible inverted commas - 'universities. When you're brought up in England, then English culture is all centre and no edge. If, on the other hand, you're Scottish or Welsh, then it's all periphery; you have this immediate experience of edge, and when people with double-barreled names are coming over from Cambridge to tell you they'll have to close you down, by God, you know you're on the edge of something.'
>
> It's tempting to add that the New Accents series...could just as easily have found root in a polytechnic or college English department, and that the tide it has caught is a politically and socially ambiguous one, against which the series has been running from the start. (Morton, p. 11)

Hawkes, Belsey and Norris are at Cardiff; Patricia

Waugh teaches at Sunderland Polytechnic; Imre Salusinszky is a lecturer at the University of Melbourne; Elizabeth Freund, who wrote _The Return of the Reader: Reader response criticism_,[15] teaches at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Peter Widdowson is a head of department at Middlesex Polytechnic; Richard Harland, who wrote _Superstructuralism: The philosophy of Structuralism and Poststructuralism_,[16] is a teacher of General Studies at the University of New South Wales; Dick Hebdige worked at the Open University, and so on. In other words, many of the authors in the series do not come from the traditional centres of English literary studies. They are from non-traditonal universities like Essex (Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Diana Loxley and Margaret Iverson who edited _Literature, Politics and Theory: Papers from the Essex Conference 1976-1984_)[17] or remote ones like Stirling, where John Drakakis teaches. Other contributors are at Sussex, The Polytechnic of North London and overseas institutions in America, Australia and Israel. Although Toril Moi is at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, she teaches French there and is not from the traditional Eng. lit. background. Given Hawkes's own sense of isolation, it

[15] Elizabeth Freund, _The Return of the Reader: Reader response criticism_ (London: Methuen, 1984).

[16] Richard Harland, _Superstructuralism: The philosophy of Structuralism and Poststructuralism_ (London: Methuen, 1987).

[17] Peter Hulme et al., _Literature, Politics and Theory: Papers from the Essex Conference 1976-1984_ (London: Methuen, 1986).

seems fairly clear that there is, amongst the authors of New Accents, a shared sense of marginalization, even of inferiority, which has contributed to the formulation of their ideas and which, paradoxically in the light of the commercial success of the series, continues to play a role in their oppositional stance towards the establishment. The question remains of how far that stance can be maintained as the series itself becomes part of that establishment.

When approached for details of sales figures for the individual books in the series, Methuen were initially cagey and ultimately unwilling to divulge information, on the grounds that this might be unfair to authors. However Brian Morton says:

> ...it's hard to ignore the bottom line. To date, series sales stand at something over 350,000, averaged over a couple of dozen titles. Allowing for one or two which have (justifiably) bombed, this is a quite extraordinary pick-up suggesting, as Hawkes himself points out, that the books are reaching a wider than academic audience. Indeed, a row of pluralistically multi-coloured New Accents spines is currently de rigueur in some quarters.
>
> There is one quite remarkable success story: Dick Hebdige's excellent _Subculture: the meaning of style_ has grossed - only Hollywoodese will suffice - a staggering 46,000 sales. (Morton, p. 11)

In all probability, world-wide sales are, by 1988, approaching half a million, which is a high figure for academic book publishing and suggests a degree of consumer demand which is perhaps at odds with the series' own declared anti-establishment positon, although it could be that almost a decade of Thatcherism has contributed to the disenchantment of even the soft Left and thus promoted

sales. Where the politics of the parliamentary Left have signally failed to halt the progress of radical Toryism in the House of Commons and in the country, New Accents' brand of post-Marxist iconoclasm may have provided the left-inclined, literary intellectual with something to get excited about. In any case, the series has sold well and that success may have generated a form of cult following. The time almost seems to have come when one can talk of the 'literary conference groupie' and New Accents may have contributed to this. Brian Morton says:

> By the late 1970s and notably in literary studies, charisma, like existentialism, was beginning to look date-expired. The new buzz was 'style', which is its democratiized, mass-market equivalent, and the new criticism was in every way a blow against monopoly and restrictive practice. Ranged against the old, butch, Anglocentric view of 'English' was 'theory', a movement led by critics who were young, non-Axis, often female, occasionally even Welsh. (Morton, p. 11)

David Lodge's book Small World, and the TV spin-off from it, will have done something to increase public awareness of literary theory as a glamorous, even sexy, activity, but ironically even the New Accents series itself seems to have moved in that direction. Speaking of the last addition to the series in 1987, Criticism in Society, a collection of interviews with Jacques Derrida, Northrop Frye, Harold Bloom, Geoffrey Hartman, Frank Kermode, Edward Said, Barbara Johnson, Frank Lentricchia and J. Hillis Miller, Chris Baldick says:

> One lamentable practice...is the increasingly revived trick of medieval rhetoric in which one attempts to substantiate one's theoretical argument not by reference to anything so vulgarly empirical as a fact

> or a text but merely by invoking a name from the sacred pantheon. Derrida, Foucault, Kristeva, Lacan, Barthes: just reeling off their names is...ever so comfy, since it safely defers the issue at hand to nothing less than a transcendental signified; in short, to a star. There are several parallels to be drawn between contemporary literary theory and Hollywood in the 1920s, but the most prominent is the star system: this has not yet reached the stage at which pubescent mobs faint in the aisles, but already Methuen have published literary theory's first hard-cover fan-magazine, informing us, for instance, that Barbara Johnson - the most lucid of the Yale deconstructionists - owns a dog named Nietzsche.[18]

It is perhaps unfortunate for Methuen that New Accents should open itself to this type of irony, and yet it is not hard to see how the establishment works to assimilate the apparently threatening. Much as the vigour of rock 'n' roll could be harnessed for public consumption by presenting The Beatles with M.B.E.s and thus capturing them for the establishment, so the forces of reaction can domesticate literary theory by elevating its luminaries to the status of superstar. In a sense, British society has always worked that way and assimilation is one of the means by which government has kept power for centuries and thus avoided the sorts of violent upheavals experienced in Europe.

Methuen's own description of the book reads:

> The result [of Salusinszky's interviews: author's note] is an immediate, incisive and often hilarious revelation, not only of critical method and the modes of its application, but of individual as well as professional relationships, institutional constraints and personal biography. Salusinszky's perceptive, subtle and remorseless questioning provides a

18 Chris Baldick, 'Talking Among Themselves,' The Times Literary Supplement, Nov. 6-12 1987, p. 1218.

> challenge to which his subjects rise with engaging vigour. The atmosphere is relaxed and informal - this is criticism with a human face. (Methuen catalogue, 1987)

Somebody like Chris Baldick will no doubt be wondering how long it will be before Jacques Derrida appears on the Terry Wogan Show, and for David Lodge and Malcolm Bradbury such wonderings could do nothing but good. The following quotation is the final paragraph of Baldick's piece and brings together a number of strands in the continuing debates about literary theory in Britain, including that mentioned in the Paul de Man extract at the beginning of this thesis:

> With the exception of Frank Kermode, the theorists interviewed in _Criticism in Society_ belong to the North American scene rather than the British, which is just as well when one considers the unedifying spectacle of academic stardom here, where the ideas and books shrink inexorably as the celebrity's profile inflates. Malcolm Bradbury's _Mensonge_, a spoof tribute to a heroic poststructuralist who deconstructs himself into oblivion, is an April folly which has been padded out on brazen garb for the Christmas gift market - presumably for the jaded exegete who has everything.... David Lodge contributes an afterword in which he cannot help letting slip the accurate observation that the book has only one joke in it, endlessly recycled: a very predicatable equation of _la nouvelle critique_ with _la nouvelle cuisine_. Frank Kermode in his interview with Salusinszky remarks that "Cambridge, of course, is exceptionally hostile to any kind of thought at all"; and there are many others who would extend the charge to British intellectual life as a whole, claiming the British are so uncomfortable with ideas that they can only digest them by belittling them amid many a nervous giggle. Such detractors will cherish _Mensonge_ as a prize exhibit in their argument. (Baldick, p. 1218)

METHUEN NEW ACCENTS 1977-1987

N.B. All titles: London: Methuen.

Roger Fowler, *Linguistics and the Novel*, 1977

Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, 1977

E. L. Epstein, *Language and Style*, 1978

John Fiske and John Hartley, *Reading Television*, 1978

Tony Bennett, *Formalism and Marxism*, 1979

Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: the meaning of style*, 1979

Susan Bassnett-MacGuire, *Translation Studies*, 1980

Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice*, 1980

Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, 1980

Patrick Parrinder, *Science Fiction: Its criticism and teaching*, 1980

Maurice Charney, *Sexual Fiction*, 1981

Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The literature of subversion*, 1981

Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction:Theory and practice*, 1982

W. J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The technologizing of the Word*, 1982

Peter Widdowson, *Re-Reading English*, 1982

Anthony Easthope, *Poetry as Discourse*, 1983

A. P. Foulkes, *Literature and Propaganda*, 1983

Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary poetics*, 1983

Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A critical introduction*, 1984

Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The theory and practice of self-conscious fiction*, 1984

Elizabeth Wright, *Psychoanalyic Criticism: Theory in practice*, 1984

Janet Batsleer et al., Re-Writing English: Cultural politics of gender and class, 1985

John Drakakis, ed., Alternative Shakespeares, 1985

Gayle Greene and Coppelia Kahn, eds., Making A Difference: Feminist literary criticism, 1985

Toril Moi, Textual/Sexual Politics, 1985

Francis Barker et al., Literature, Politics and Theory (Papers from the Essex Conference 1976-1984), 1986

Peter Humm, Paul Stigant and Peter Widdowson, Popular Fictions: Essays in literature and history, 1986

Russell J. Reising, The Unusable Past: Theory and study of American literature, 1986

Elizabeth Freund, The Return of the Reader: Reader-response criticism, 1987

Richard Harland, Superstructuralism: The philosophy of Structuralism and Poststructuralism, 1987

Imre Salusinszky, Criticism in Society, 1987

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A) Primary Sources

Works of Criticism

Bradbury, Malcolm. The Social Context of Modern English Literature. Oxford: Blackwell. 1971.

Bradbury, Malcolm. Possibilities: Essays on the State of the Novel. London: O.U.P., 1973.

Bradbury, Malcolm, ed. The Novel Today. Manchester: Manchester U. P., 1977.

Bradbury, Malcolm. The Modern American Novel. London: O.U.P., 1983.

Josipovici, Gabriel. The World and The Book. 2nd. ed., 1971; rpt. London: MacMillan, 1979.

Josipovici, Gabriel. The Lessons of Modernism. London: MacMillan, 1977.

Josipovici, Gabriel. Writing and The Body. Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982.

Josipovici, Gabriel. The Mirror of Criticism: Selected Reviews 1977-1982. Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1983.

Lodge, David. The Language of Fiction. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966.

Lodge, David. The Novelist at the Crossroads. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971.

Lodge, David. The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy and the Typology of Modern Literature. London: Edward Arnold, 1977.

Lodge, David. Working With Structuralism. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981.

Works of Fiction

Bradbury, Malcolm. *Eating People Is Wrong*. 1959; rpt. London: Arena, 1984.

Bradbury, Malcolm. *Stepping Westward*. 1965; rpt. London: Arena, 1984.

Bradbury, Malcolm. *The History Man*. 1975; rpt. London: Arena, 1984.

Bradbury, Malcolm. *Rates of Exchange*. 1983; rpt. London: Arena, 1984.

Josipovici, Gabriel. *Migrations*. Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1977.

Josipovici, Gabriel. *The Echo Chamber*. Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1980.

Josipovici, Gabriel. *The Air We Breathe*. Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1981.

Josipovici, Gabriel. *Contre-Jour*. Manchester: Carcanet, 1986.

Lodge, David. *The Picturegoers*. London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1960.

Lodge, David. *Ginger, You're Barmy*. 1962; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984.

Lodge, David. *The British Museum Is Falling Down*. 1965; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985.

Lodge, David. *Out of the Shelter*. 1970; rpt. London: Secker and Warburg, 1985.

Lodge, David. *Changing Places*. 1975; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978.

Lodge, David. *How Far Can You Go?* 1980; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985.

Lodge, David. *Small World*. 1984; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985.

B) Secondary Sources

Althusser, Louis. 'Reply to John Lewis.' Essays in Self-Criticism. London: New Left Books, 1976.

Baldick, Chris. 'Talking Among Themselves.' The Times Literary Supplement, Nov. 6-12 1987, pp. 1217-1218.

Barker, Francis, et al. Literature, Politics and Theory (Papers from the Essex Conference 1976-1984). London: Methuen, 1984.

Barrow, Sarah F. The Medieval Society Romances. New York: Columbia U.P., 1924.

Barthes, Roland. Writing Degree Zero (Le Degré Zero de l'Écriture). Paris: Seuil, 1953, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith. London: Cape, 1967.

Barthes, Roland. 'The Death of the Author.' Image-Music-Text (Image-Musique-Texte). Paris: Seuil, 1968, trans. Stephen Heath. London: Fontana, 1977.

Barthes, Roland. S/Z. Paris: Seuil, 1970, trans. Richard Miller. London: Cape, 1975.

Barthes, Roland. 'To Write: an Intransitive Verb?' in The Structuralist Controversy: The Language of Criticism and the Science of Man. Eds. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1972.

Barthes, Roland. The Pleasure of the Text (Le Plaisir du Texte). Paris: Seuil, 1975, trans. Richard Miller. London: Cape, 1976.

Bassnett-MacGuire, Susan. Translation Studies. London: Methuen, 1980.

Beer, Gillian. The Romance. 1970; rpt. London: Methuen, 1982.

Belsey, Catherine. Critical Practice. London: Methuen, 1980.

Bennett, Tony. Formalism and Marxism. London: Methuen, 1979.

Bergonzi, Bernard. The Situation of the Novel. London: Methuen, 1970.

Bloom, Harold, et al. Deconstruction and Criticism. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979.

Bradbury, Malcolm. 'The State of Criticism Today.' *Stratford Upon Avon Studies: Contemporary Criticism*. No. 12, eds. Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer. London: Edward Arnold, 1970.

Bradbury, Malcolm, and MacFarlane, James, eds. *Modernism 1890-1930*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976.

Bradbury, Malcolm. 'Putting in the Person: Character and Abstraction in Current Writing and Painting.' *Stratford Upon Avon Studies: The Contemporary English Novel*. No. 18, eds. Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer. London: Edward Arnold, 1979.

Bradbury, Malcolm. In *Ideas from France*. London: I.C.A., 1985.

Bradbury, Malcolm. *No, Not Bloomsbury*. London: Deutsch, 1987.

Burden, Robert. 'The Novel Interrogates Itself: Parody as Self-Consciousness in Contemporary English Fiction.' *Stratford Upon Avon Studies: The Contemporary English Novel*. No. 18, eds. Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer. London: Edward Arnold, 1979.

Burgess, Anthony. *Ninety-Nine Novels*. London: Allison and Busby, 1984.

Commonwealth Universities Handbook. London: Association of Commonwealth Universities, 1987.

Cuddon, J. A. *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*. 1977; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982.

de Man, Paul. *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust*. New Haven and London: Yale U.P., 1979.

de Man, Paul. *The Resistance to Theory*. Theory and History of Literature, vol. 33. Manchester: Manchester U.P., 1986.

Derrida, Jacques. 'Structure, Sign and Play.' *Writing and Difference* (L'Ecriture et la Difference). Paris: Seuil, 1967, trans. Alan Bass. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.

Derrida, Jacques. 'Living On: Borderlines.' Cited in *Deconstruction and Criticism*. Harold Bloom et al. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979.

Drakakis, John, ed. *Alternative Shakespeares*. London: Methuen, 1985.

Eagleton, Terry. Literary Theory. Oxford: Blackwell, 1983.

Eagleton, Terry. 'Undistributed Middle.' The Times Literary Supplement, 12 June 1987, p. 627.

Easthope, Anthony. Poetry As Discourse. London: Methuen, 1980.

Eco, Umberto. The Name of the Rose (Il Nome della Rosa). Milan: Fabbri-Bompiani, 1980, trans. William Weaver. London: Picador, 1984.

Elam, Keir. The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama. London: Methuen, 1980.

Epstein, E. L. Language and Style. London: Methuen, 1978.

Felman, Shoshana, ed. Literature and Psychoanalysis, The Question of Reading: Otherwise. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1982.

Fish, Stanley. Is There A Text In This Class?: The Authority of Interpretative Communities. Camb. Mass.: Harvard U. P., 1980.

Fiske, John, and Hartley, John. Reading Television. London: Methuen, 1978.

Foucault, Michel. 'What is an Author? ' Cited in Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Poststructuralist Criticism. Ed. J. V. Harrari. London: Methuen, 1980.

Foulkes, A. P. Literature and Propaganda. London: Methuen, 1983.

Fowler, Roger. Linguistics and the Novel. London: Methuen, 1977.

Freund, Elizabeth. The Return of the Reader: Reader-response criticism. London: Methuen, 1987.

Frye, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays. Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1957.

Gordon, Giles, ed. Beyond the Words: Eleven Writers in Search of a New Fiction. London: Hutchinson, 1975.

Harland, Richard. Superstructuralism: The philosophy of Structuralism and Poststructuralism. London: Methuen, 1987.

Harrari, J. V., ed. Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Poststructuralist Criticism. London: Methuen, 1980.

Hassan, Ihab. Modernism in the Plural: Challenges and Perspectives. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985.

Hawkes, Terence. Structuralism and Semiotics. London: Methuen, 1977.

Hebdige, Dick. Subculture: The meaning of style. London: Methuen, 1979.

Higher Education in the United Kingdom 1987-1989. Harlow: Longman, 1987.

Holub, Robert C. Reception Theory: A critical introduction. London: Methuen, 1984.

Humm, Peter, Stigant, Paul and Widdowson, Peter. Popular Fiction: Essays in literature and history. London: Methuen, 1986.

Jackson, Rosemary. Fantasy: The literature of subversion. London: Methuen, 1981.

Jakobson, Roman, and Halle, Morris. Fundamentals of Language. Janua Linguarum series Minor, I. The Hague: Mouton, 1956.

Jakobson, Roman. 'Closing Statement: Linguistics and Politics.' Style and Language. Ed. Thomas Sebeok. The Hague: Mouton, 1969.

Josipovici, Gabriel, ed. The Modern English Novel. London: Open Book Publishing, 1976.

Joyce, James. Ulysses: The Corrected Text. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986.

Kermode, Frank. The Sense of an Ending. London: O.U.P., 1966.

Kundera, Milan. The Unbearable Lightness of Being. (Nesnesitelna lehkost byti). Trans. Michael Henry Heim. London: Faber and Faber, 1984.

Lawson, Hilary. Reflexivity: the Postmodern Predicament. London: Hutchinson, 1985.

Lemaire, Anike. Jacques Lacan. Brussels: Charles Denart, 1970, trans. David Macey. London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986.

Lodge, David. 'The Celluloid Collar.' The Listener, 7 April 1988, pp. 14-15.

Lyotard, Jean-Francois. The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (La Condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir). Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1979, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Theory and History of Literature, vol. 10. Manchester: Manchester U.P., 1987.

MacCabe, Colin. James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word. London: MacMillan, 1978.

MacGilchrist, Ian. Against Criticism. London, Faber, 1982.

MacHale, Brian. Postmodernist Fiction. London: Methuen, 1987.

Marx, Karl, and Engels, Friedrich. On Literature and Art. New York: International General, 1973.

Morton, Brian. 'U and non-U accents.' The Times Higher Education Supplement, 18 Dec. 1987, p. 11.

Muller, John P. 'Language, Psychosis And The Subject In Lacan.' Interpreting Lacan. Eds. Joseph H. Smith and William Kerrigan. Psychiatry and the Humanities, vol. 6. New Haven and London: Yale U.P., 1983.

Norris, Christopher. Deconstruction: Theory and practice. London: Methuen, 1982.

Nye, Robert. In Beyond the Words: Eleven Writers in Search of a New Fiction. Ed. Giles Gordon. London: Hutchinson, 1975.

Ong, W. J. Orality and Literacy: The technologizing of the word. London: Methuen, 1982.

Parrinder, Patrick. Science Fiction: Its criticism and teaching. London: Methuen, 1980.

Rabinovitz, Rubin. The Reaction Against Experiment in the English Novel 1950-1960. New York: Columbia U.P., 1968.

Reising, Russell J. The Unusable Past: Theory and study of American literature. London: Methuen, 1986.

Salusinszky, Imre. Criticism in Society. London: Methuen, 1987.

Scholes, Robert, and Kellog, Robert. The Nature of Narrative. New York: O.U.P., 1966.

Scholes, Robert. The Fabulators. New York: O.U.P., 1967.

Sontag, Susan. Against Interpretation. New York: Delta, 1966,

Stone, Jennifer. 'The End of Literature: Theorists Against Theory.' The Village Voice: Voice Literary Supplement. No. 25, April 1984, p. 1 and pp. 14-17.

Vergote, Antoine. 'From Freud's "Other Scene" to Lacan's "Other".' Interpreting Lacan. Eds. Joseph H. Smith and William Kerrigan. Psychiatry and the Humanities, vol. 6. New Haven and London: Yale U.P., 1983.

Waugh, Patricia. Metafiction: The theory and practice of self-conscious fiction. London: Methuen, 1984.

Weston, Jessie. From Ritual to Romance. Cambridge: C.U.P., 1920.

Widdowson, Peter. Re-Reading English. London: Methuen, 1982.

Widdowson, Peter. 'The Anti-History Men: Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge.' Critical Quarterly. 26, no. 4, Autumn 1984, pp. 5-32.

Wilson, Colin. The Outsider In Literature. London: Gollancz, 1956.

Wolff, Janet. The Social Production of Art. London: MacMillan, 1982.

Wright, Elizabeth. Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in practice. London: Methuen, 1984.