From the Department of English, Faculty of Humanities, University of Umeå, Sweden.

CAMPUS CLOWNS AND THE CANON
DAVID LODGE'S CAMPUS FICTION

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University of Umeå
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ABSTRACT

This is a study of David Lodge's campus novels: The British Museum is Falling Down, Changing Places, Small World and Nice Work. Unlike most previous studies of Lodge's work, which have focussed on literary-theoretical issues, this dissertation aims at unravelling some of the ideological impulses that inform his campus fiction. A basic assumption of this study is that literature is never disinterested; it is always an ideological statement about the world. Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the dialogical relationship between self and other provides a means of investigating the interaction between author and reader; central to this project is Bakhtin's notion of how to reach an independent, ideological consciousness through the active scrutiny of the authoritative discourses surrounding us.

First, a brief historical outline of the campus novel is presented, together with analyses of three representative works. Lodge's novels are thereafter discussed in relation to his own literary-theoretical work, and also in relation to his attempts at bridging the gap between the academy and the world outside. The chapter demonstrates how, as a result of this bridging posture, Lodge's works, critical and fictional, become increasingly intertwined. Yet, despite Lodge's avowed intentions, for readers without prior access to the literary canon his elaborate intertextual games fail to bridge the gap.

The discussion of Lodge's first three campus novels shows how the authority of the Church, the literary canon, and established societal norms, is seemingly challenged in these texts. Lodge has himself invited a Bakhtinian reading of his novels, but this study demonstrates that his fiction, allegedly both dialogical and carnivalesque, to a large extent advocates an ideology that is diametrically opposed to such an activity. Reigning over these novels is a mood of gloom and passive resignation—a mood which is the very antithesis of Bakhtin's insistence on activity and the carnivalesque positive attitude to change and renewal. In the discussion of the last novel, it is furthermore demonstrated that Lodge's use of stereotypes wrecks any dialogical potential, and that the extended intertextual play evinces clear anti-feminist and elitist patterns.

Lodge's campus fiction confirms the myth of the isolated Ivory Tower. The attempted bridging of the gap between the academy and the outside world is not accomplished. For most readers his texts remain one-dimensional portrayals of irrelevant campus clowns.

Keywords: campus; ideology; authoritative discourse; internally persuasive discourse; intertext; canon; church; status quo; stereotype.
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to
Andrew
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Abbreviations

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Introduction

The myth of the Ivory Tower dies hard. This reads like a paradox at a time when academia is ever present on stage, film, television and in fiction. Ready access to the university world is provided by a whole crop of campus novels. The truth is, however, that they do little or nothing to alter the image of the university as an isolated community peopled mainly by pathetic clowns.

David Lodge is one of the most prolific writers in the campus genre in Britain today, and he has contributed substantially to its popularity. For better or for worse, some of his readers may in fact base their concept of the British academic world partly on views gathered from his bestsellers. My decision to focus this thesis on Lodge's works, however, has been prompted by other factors as well. Not only is Lodge very popular, but one critic claims that he is "the brightest and the best of British university novelists still writing." But other critics are not the only ones to evaluate his novels. As professor of literature, literary theorist and critic, Lodge himself has played the problematic role of assessing his own fiction, thereby trying to ensure its validity.

The step may seem short from assessing and validating one's own fiction to writing an academic thesis about campus novels which are written by an academic author. This thesis would then only serve to confirm the myth of the isolated and narcissistic Ivory Tower. Hopefully this is not so. The popularity of

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1 *Educating Rita, Porterhouse Blue, Small World, The History Man, Nice Work*: the list of films, TV serials and stage productions on the campus theme could be extended indefinitely.

2 "University novels," "Campus novels," "Academic novels": there are several labels for the type of literature that has taken the university as its subject. I will throughout this thesis use "campus novel" to account for the genre, regardless of any political, geographical or temporal aspects. For a discussion of the label "genre" for this type of literature, see Malcolm Bradbury, "Campus Fictions," *University Fiction*, ed. David Bevan (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990) 50.

3 This is well documented by the sales figures for his latest campus novel, *Nice Work*. Although I lack sales figures for the Secker and Warburg edition, information is available about the Penguin edition. The first Penguin edition has sold about 200,000 copies. The Viking hardback has sold 12,000 copies and the TV tie-in Penguin edition has sold more than 130,000. (Janice Brent, Penguin Books Ltd, personal communication, August 1992). By January 1991 it had also been translated into nine languages; the sales figures for these translations are not, of course, included in the above-mentioned statistics.

campus fiction\textsuperscript{5} testifies to a huge interest in reading about the academy, and campus novels are largely read and appreciated off campus. Between 1945 and 1979, nearly 200 works of campus fiction were published in Britain alone, not to mention an American output of well over 400 titles.\textsuperscript{6} Successful television serials and film adaptations of campus novels have reached even further beyond the "Ivory Tower." Keith Wilson has recently drawn attention to the enormous popularity of this type of fiction despite the fact that few people have access to higher education in Britain:

The array of disillusioned, idle, incompetent, drunken, or morally turpitudinous junior lecturers, senior lecturers, and professors . . . have achieved, with the aid of television and the cinema, a surprisingly widespread following, particularly for a country that still sends fewer than 20\% of its population on to any kind of higher education.\textsuperscript{7}

What are the reasons for this "widespread following"? For the academic reader the intertextual self-consciousness of most of these works (ranging from excessive quotation from Shakespeare to more subtle strategies, such as parodies of whole underlying texts) provides an extra bonus. Academics certainly enjoy reading about themselves and their own world, perhaps even recognizing one or two characters from their own circle of acquaintances. But in view of the limited number of readers with first-hand experience of university life, an insider's knowledge cannot constitute a prerequisite for reading and enjoying campus novels. For the readers outside the "Tower" the reasons must be sought elsewhere. Perhaps part of the fascination lies in a curiosity about the university world, a world sealed off from the hustle and bustle of "ordinary" life. The novels' blurbs stress the parallels between the authors' lives and those of their various fictional characters, thereby inviting the reader to open a behind-the-scenes novel, a "true" account of life inside the walls. The image of a narrow and confined world is constantly underlined by the clear-cut social and spatial division featured in this genre, thus reinforcing the tensions between the "inner"

\textsuperscript{5} This is by no means a contemporary phenomenon, as will be discussed later; the genre has been popular for a very long time.

\textsuperscript{6} In his appendix Carter lists 196 British works, and he refers to a listing of American works since 1945 that includes 439 works (203).

\textsuperscript{7} Keith Wilson, "Academic Fictions and the Place of Liberal Studies: A Leavis Inheritance," \textit{University Fiction} 58.
world of academia and outside society. Terry Eagleton suggests that the attraction of the genre may lie in the pure exoticism that a university setting provides: "As a place set somewhat apart, the university has the glamour of the deviant and untypical, providing the novelist with a conveniently closed worlds [sic] marked by intellectual wrangling, political infighting and sexual intrigue." But not all readers of campus fiction will find the university glamorous or deviant. An obvious point is that in reading about the university world some people read about themselves (or at least their own world) while others read about "others." The self/other, inside/outside point of view is a recurring feature in the actual novels, and will form the core of my thesis.

My discussion will be based on the dialogical definition of self and other provided by Mikhail Bakhtin. In his works various aspects of the relationship between self and other recur, and throughout he stresses the fact that neither of these can constitute a self-sufficient entity. Self and other "always enact a drama containing more than one actor." Dialogue is therefore a prerequisite that is fundamental to existence. "Dialogue is an obvious master key to the assumptions that guided Bakhtin's work," Michael Holquist points out. It is only in the dialogue with the other that it is possible for a self to emerge. Bakhtin contends: "Discourse lives, as it were, on the boundary between its own context and another, alien, context." It is evident that for the image of the university as an Ivory Tower to emerge at all, it is in need of an "other" to relate to. The alternative would be to view the world as a global campus. The most interesting aspects of the self/other dialogue in the campus novels may be found where the academic community and the outside world connect, on the border


9 That Bakhtin's theories should be relevant for Lodge's work is made clear by Lodge himself in a volume with the elegiac title After Bakhtin, where he invites a Bakhtinian analysis of his novels: "As for my own contribution to contemporary British fiction, I must leave the Bakhtinian reading of that to others" (David Lodge, After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism [London: Routledge, 1990] 24).


11 Holquist 15.


13 This is the view suggested in Lodge's Small World: An Academic Romance, which will be discussed in chapter four.
where attitudes converge or clash, and, eventually, where there is a potential for new meanings to arise. Obviously this dialogue may also have a darker side to it, human nature being what it is: "Instead of the generous mutual attentiveness that a dialogue is supposed to foster," Michael André Bernstein contends, "what we find just as often are speakers stalking one another with the edgy wariness of fighters ready to erupt into lethal violence the moment one of them senses an opening." While some may appreciate the academy as supportive and sustaining, it is equally true that many find it a threatening and hostile community.

How is it that a community may generate such diverse feelings? Francis Mulhern offers an answer in his definition of "community" as "the effect of any identification that positions individuals as members of a group of comparables or counterparts; it is the work of a process of collective identification." The process of collective identification that occurs within a professional group as the academic community may be smooth and unproblematic but, of course, the case may also be the reverse. It may never occur. The identification is firmly linked to an assimilation of the ideologies of the community. Bakhtin argues that "the ideological becoming of a human being . . . is the process of selectively assimilating the words of others." The immense importance of being aware of these discourses of others that we assimilate or reject is evident. As Robyn Penrose says in Nice Work, "the truly determined subject is he who is not aware of the discursive formations that determine him. Or her" (NW 40). Although Lodge turns this against his protagonist, devoting most of the novel to demonstrating to what enormous extent she is unwittingly determined by a crude version of feminism, it seems that he does not refute the basic truth of this

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16 Ideology is here used with the wide definition provided by Lennard Davis: "Ideology constitutes the sum of that which a culture needs to believe about itself and its aspirations as opposed to what really is." Lennard J. Davis, Resisting Novels: Ideology and Fiction (New York: Methuen, 1987) 24.

17 Bakhtin 341.

18 This issue will be dealt with in chapter five.
argument. Mulhem suggests that "'communities' are notoriously hard to find . . . because they are everywhere—not places but practices of collective identification whose variable order largely defines the culture of any social formation." In the context of this thesis it is more accurate to argue that academic communities are both places and practices. Universities are certainly "places" in one very literal sense of the word, but they also represent a set of attitudes and values that can rightly be described as "practices of collective identification."

These practices hold a unique authoritative position in the community, and in Lodge's fiction the relationship between self and other more often than not involves the question of how to relate to authority in various forms. Bakhtin discusses how, in an individual's ideological formation, the discourse of the other seeks "to determine the very bases of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behavior; it performs here as authoritative discourse, and an internally persuasive discourse." These discourses are usually diametrically opposed, and rarely merge. The authoritative discourse, Bakhtin explains, "demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it." The internally persuasive discourse, on the other hand, is assimilated and thus becomes closely interwoven with "'one's own word.'" But Bakhtin points out that "purely authoritative discourse may, in another epoch, be internally persuasive; this is especially true where ethics are concerned." There is, however, no need to relegate the fusing of authoritative and internally persuasive discourses to the past. As I will show, it holds true also for many modern authoritative discourses.

19 Mulhem 86.
20 Bakhtin 342.
21 Bakhtin 342.
22 Bakhtin 345.
23 Bakhtin 344, note 30.
The history of the campus genre stretches back into a distant past. I shall not give a comprehensive overview of the genre, restricting myself, instead, to three seminal works: *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green* (1853-1857), *Sinister Street* (1913-1914), and *Lucky Jim* (1954). All fulfil three important criteria. First, they were all extremely popular at the time of their publication (and still are to some extent). Second, they brought something new to the campus tradition, or, as in the case of *Sinister Street*, epitomized a trend already started. Third, they highlight in different ways the potentially dialogical and mutually rewarding relationship between self and other. During the time separating the publication of *Mr. Verdant Green* and *Lucky Jim*, a time span of a hundred years, Britain experienced massive disruptions and changes. This is clearly discernable in the novels. The outspoken optimism and belief in the values of Oxbridge and the Empire expressed by Michael Fane in *Sinister Street* have by 1954 been replaced by "Lucky" Jim Dixon's pessimism and basic hostility to his university and all that it represents.

These campus novels reflect certain world views, views that were current in each respective society. At the same time the novels help to reinforce the attitudes they present to their readership. This reciprocatory influence of culture and art has been discussed by Harriett Hawkins, who argues that "art not only tends to give its patrons what they want: from generation to generation it also shapes the romantic, sexual and ideological fantasies by which it was shaped and can therefore be described as a creator of the culture by which it was created." The popular campus novels are precisely this, creators of the culture by which they themselves have been created. *Mr. Verdant Green* and *Sinister Street* both subscribe to a belief in the university as the forming agent of a ruling class, thus mirroring contemporary practice and at the same time perpetuating the views they endorse. *Lucky Jim* reverses the pattern by denouncing the university's role in society, voicing a contemporary feeling of resignation and despondency, and thus simultaneously enhancing this feeling in its readers.


To what extent does David Lodge's campus fiction connect to the dialogical relationship outlined above? Lodge's double role as scholar and creative writer is something that critics rarely omit from their reviews, and his success in catering to both academic and non-academic readers is usually favourably commented upon. Lodge has met with very positive reviews from literary critics. His novels are invariably published in hardback, reviewed and discussed in literary magazines and read in university courses. Furthermore, he has been awarded several literary prizes for his novels: the Hawthornden Prize, the *Yorkshire Post* Fiction Prize, the *Sunday Express* Book of the Year Award, and both his novels *Small World* and *Nice Work* have been shortlisted for the prestigious Booker Prize. At the same time the sales of his novels testify to his popularity among a wide circle of readers. The paperback market as well as the medium of television ensure Lodge large audiences. He has received the Royal Television Society's Award for the best drama serial of the year, and a Silver Nymph at the International Television Festival in Monte Carlo. But in addition to this spectacular success as a creative writer, Lodge is also a well-known critic. How does his own criticism affect our interpretation of his novels? This is the issue that I will discuss in chapter two. I will show that the influence between his criticism and fiction is reciprocal, and that his entire oeuvre may be seen as a constantly overlapping continuum.

It is true that Lodge states that most of his academic criticism attempts "to ground historical, evaluative and interpretative criticism of the novel in its form, rather than its content or context." But elsewhere Lodge also asserts that "the essential characteristic of literature [is] that it concerns values" and, later, that

26 In order to form an impression of Lodge's impact through university teaching in Europe, I made a random inquiry to a number of universities to ask if they were presently using or had previously used Lodge's novels in their teaching. It turned out that quite a few use his novels as text books in various courses. Among those were the University of Amsterdam, the Christian Albrechts University of Kiel, the University of Cologne, the University of Kent, the University of Manchester, the University of Oslo, the University of Oviedo, the Sorbonne, as well as the University of Umeå.

27 The Royal Television Society's Award was for the TV adaptation of *Nice Work*, for the screen play of which he also received the Silver Nymph.

28 Here, as elsewhere, my discussion of Lodge's fiction is restricted to his campus novels.


we read fiction "to enlarge our knowledge and understanding of the world." Consequently, the discourse(s) of a novel cannot be judged by form alone. There is no such thing as an "innocent" discourse and campus novels are no exception to this rule, as they indeed often are highly polemical. In a discussion of "the literary field," Pierre Bourdieu points to the significant power that the producers of culture exercise:

[they] hold a specific power, the properly symbolic power of showing things and making people believe in them, of revealing, in an explicit, objectified way the more or less confused, vague, unformulated, even unformulable experiences of the natural world and the social world, and of thereby bringing them into existence.

This symbolic power, Bourdieu contends, can be used for different purposes. The artist, as interpreter of reality, can choose to endorse authority and dominant practices in society, but the power may also be used to protest and revolt against such practices.

A simplistic view of literature as an objective mirror of reality must, of course, be refuted. As Lodge says, the novel "is not reality but an imitation of it, not a slice of life but a statement about it." But he nevertheless elsewhere claims that his fiction "is in some significant sense a representation of the real world." He informs the reader that he would feel as if he had failed if his readership did not recognize "some truths about the real behaviour" of academics in his novels. In Bourdieu's terms it seems that Lodge readily accepts the view of the writer as one who reveals the experiences of the world to the readers. This revelation is, however, fraught with problems. What does a writer choose to bring into focus and why? Lennard Davis claims convincingly that "novels do not depict life, they depict life as it is represented by ideology." He


34 Lodge, *After Bakhtin* 15, my emphasis.

35 Lodge, *After Bakhtin* 15, my emphasis.
also asserts that "fiction becomes . . . one of the ways in which the culture teaches itself about itself, and thus novels become agents inculcating ideology." From this it follows that we as readers need to be wary of what novels actually try to "teach" us. This will be the issue of the three last chapters. Analysing each specific novel, I intend to discuss ideologies informing Lodge's campus fiction as they appear in the "dialogue" between the texts and one particular reader, myself. First of all, however, the tradition in which Lodge writes will be presented. He argues himself that "novelists need a tradition. You cannot begin to write novels without having read at least one, and probably hundreds; without defining yourself in relationships of apprenticeship, discipleship, rivalry, and antagonism with precursors and peers." Consequently, a brief presentation of the campus genre will be an appropriate start for my discussion of Lodge's campus novels.

36 Davis 24.

37 Davis 25.


39 Lodge, After Bakhtin 12.
1 Campus Fiction in Brief

Growth of a Rowdy Tradition

Academia is "the nearest thing English fiction has had to a new subject since 1945," George Watson claims. Yet there is nothing new in writing about the academy. Literary portraits of scholars can be found well back in the Middle Ages. In The General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales Chaucer portrays a Clerk of Oxford:

Of studie took he moost cure and most heede.
Noght o word spak he moore than was neede,
And that was seyd in forme and reverence,
And short and quik and ful of hy sentence;
Sowninge in moral vertu was his speche,
And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.2

This paragon of scholarly virtue is hardly representative of campus fiction. As Mortimer Proctor has demonstrated, the truth is rather that the academic was invariably portrayed negatively up till the middle of the last century. The university man "became tainted with such an odious representation that the first novels about him could only allow him to continue his long existence as either villain or fool."4 This view of the scholar mirrored contemporary views of the university man: "Crude, and often vulgar, the tales seem to have been something more than scandalous exaggerations; they were, in fact, popularizations of a prevailing attitude which from time to time received more dignified literary

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3 For a discussion of the character of the Clerk, see Samuel F. Hulton, The Clerk of Oxford in Fiction (London: Methuen, 1909). In the preface Hulton states that fiction about academic life has chiefly concerned itself with more rowdy elements than the Clerk (viii). See also Mortimer R. Proctor, The English University Novel (Berkeley: U of California P, 1957). Proctor argues that the Clerk was the first and the last of his kind in fiction for more than 400 years (13).
4 Proctor 12.
expression." But the Clerk of Oxford has to a large extent taken his leave of campus fiction. It seems that only two less flattering qualities of the good Clerk have survived in the subsequent portraits of the scholar. First, the scholar's aloofness from the "real" world. Jill Mann points out how perfect the Clerk is as a representative of the life of academic studies, and how well the phrase "the eternal student" describes him, incorporating his suitability for studies but also indicating his remoteness from the world outside the "Ivory Tower." Chaucer already stresses a clear division between two worlds, by pointing to the otherness of academia in relation to the realm of ordinary people. This remoteness from the world, implying a self-willed alienation, or perhaps a social deficiency, has been readily detected in campus fiction ever since.

The second surviving flaw in the Clerk's character concerns his irrelevant eloquence. The presentation of the Clerk in the General Prologue as taciturn, never uttering a word more than necessary, a brief and correct speaker, corresponds ill with his actual performance in the Canterbury Tales. James Winny points out that there is a large discrepancy between ideal and actual achievement: "Neither the form nor the manner of the tale suggests intellectual quickness in the narrator." Whatever the reason for this disparity, it heralds the seventeenth-century view of the scholar as "an intelligible Asse who can speak longer than any man can listen to him." The scholar is thus characterized as deviating from normal men, who are far too intelligent to bother about the oratures of the performing ass. Disturbing, or embarrassing perhaps, to the contemporary academic, is the fact that the "intelligible Asse" is still at large in fiction. In Lodge's Small World he is found lecturing to the wall, appropriately enough on Chaucerian metrics, evidently too much of a bore even to his own colleagues who are "disengaged from the discourse" (SW 15). The question of whether Lodge is still mirroring a contemporary view will perhaps remain a moot

5 Proctor 20.


8 As quoted in Proctor 25.
point. It is clear, however, that the academic ass remains a stock character in most campus fiction.9

The negative portrayal of the academic world is firmly rooted. There can be little doubt that Proctor is correct in his analysis of the very disapproving representation of the university in literature lasting up to the middle of the last century. What Richard Sheppard terms "the defamation of the learnèd" formed the basic framework, for several centuries, when portraying the university world.10 Eagleton also discusses the portrayal of the academy in fiction and concludes that:

Intellectuals are seen as faintly sinister figures, bohemian and nonconformist, treasonable clerks whose heartless celebrations pose a threat to the unreflective pieties of ordinary life. But they are also pathetically ineffectual characters—crumpled figures of fun pursuing their ludicrous abstractions at a remote distance from the bustle of daily life. The anxiety and resentment they inspire can thus be conveniently defused by a sense of their farcical irrelevance.11

The rowdy tradition portraying the scholar as "villain or fool," giving rise to some very crude stories centring on violence and sex,12 began to ebb around the middle of the nineteenth century. One of the last novels of the "fool" type, and also one of the most popular, was The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green (1853-
1857) by "Cuthbert Bede," pen-name for the Reverend Edward Bradley. It was published as a railway library paperback at one shilling an issue, and became hugely popular. With a sales of 107,000 copies in twenty years it was yesteryear's blockbuster. Alone of the Oxford novels of the period, it has never been out of print since then. Bradley's novel does not wallow in academic debauchery, as did its predecessors, but offers farcical comedy in the narration about the protagonist, Mr Green, who is indeed "green," innocent and ignorant. Consequently, he is an easy prey for more cunning undergraduates. Yet, on the whole, the novel gives a largely innocent portrayal of university life, filled with practical jokes. Dacre Balsdon contends that the novel presents a "high-spirited, rumbustious undergraduate life, with no damage done and wedding bells and a degree."

Although quite obviously part of the "fool" type of campus novel, Mr. Verdant Green borders on something new. A closer look at the novel reveals an underlying assumption of class allegiance and a widespread notion of Oxbridge as the formative centre of a ruling class. Raymond Williams claims that a major

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13 The work was published in three parts; The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green: An Oxford Freshman (1853), The Further Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green: An Oxford Undergraduate (1854), and Mr. Verdant Green Married and Done For (1857).


15 See Proctor 80.

16 Or at least it had not been out of print up to 1970. See Dacre Balsdon, Oxford Now and Then (London: Duckworth, 1970) 26.

17 The comic university fiction with time became more subtle, and less dependent on slapstick and violence. The change can be readily traced in a novel by George Calderon, The Adventures of Downy V. Green: Rhodes Scholar at Oxford (1902), a sequel of sorts to The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green. Downy, the alleged grandson of Verdant, prepares himself for Oxford by reading Bradley's novel, only to find that times have changed and so has Oxford. He concludes that the advice gathered from his study of his grandfather's adventures can be discarded, and consequently takes up his studies seriously. This novel, Proctor argues, "deliberately resurrected Verdant's antics for the purpose of consigning them once and for all to the realm of outmoded jokes" (86).

18 Balsdon 26. This is a dénouement that can be found in much contemporary academic fiction. David Lodge usually ends his novels on the same, happy note—family reconciliation and the end of financial and occupational problems.
general purpose in the educational system is to train the members of a group to "the social character" which is dominant in that particular group.\textsuperscript{19} This training or formation of character is the main reason for Verdant Green's university studies. Initially his parents are reluctant to send him to college. They fear for his safety, and they are also quite convinced that the education provided for Verdant at home by a governess-aunt will prove satisfactory when he eventually settles down as the squire of the parish. But the rector convinces them that there are other things to gain from Oxford than mere formal training:

[Verdant] would gain by mixing with a large body of young men of his own age, who represent the best classes of a mixed society, and who may justly be taken as fair samples of its feelings and talents. It is formation of character that I regard as one of the greatest of the many great ends of a university system; and it is for this reason alone, I should advise you to send your future country squire to college. (VG 16)

Williams argues that this social character consists of habits of civility and behaviour, but, more importantly, it includes "also the transmission of a particular system of values, in the field of group loyalty, authority, justice, and living purposes."\textsuperscript{20} Williams's "system of values" has clear affinities with Bakhtin's "authoritative word," which Bakhtin argues that we meet already fused with its authority. It is "organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. It is . . . the word of the fathers. Its authority was already acknowledged in the past."\textsuperscript{21} There is therefore no question of being able to choose this particular discourse from a whole set of equally powerful discourses, Bakhtin contends. The hierarchically higher, authoritative discourse in \textit{Mr. Verdant Green} consists of a system of values that is firmly linked to Oxford and its place in contemporary British class society.

Verdant is eventually sent to college, partly because his father realizes the social benefits, and partly also because the somewhat effeminate young man must be influenced by others than the women who surround him. Most of the novel focusses on Verdant's initiation into an adolescent, male world. As a

\textsuperscript{19} Raymond Williams, \textit{The Long Revolution} (London: Chatto, 1961) 126.

\textsuperscript{20} Williams 126.

freshman Verdant is the victim of quite a few hoaxes, but as a quick learner he soon adapts himself to his new environment. His freshman days and his undergraduate days are filled with smoking and drinking. Home for the long vacation, Verdant is in a position to inform his admiring family about what he has learned: to think for himself and not to believe everything that he hears and to fight his way in the world. Furthermore, he has learned to row (after a fashion), to make shandy-gaff and sherry-cobbler, brew bishop and egg-flip. The narrator, echoing the rector's initial argumentation, comments ironically: "And thus the young gentleman astonished his family with the extent of his learning, and proved how a youth of ordinary natural attainments may acquire other knowledge in his University career than what simply pertains to classical literature" (VG 122). As for classical literature, it is safe to conclude that very little discussion is devoted to Verdant's more scholarly achievements. He spends very little time on his studies, but at the end, somewhat surprisingly perhaps, he finally passes his degree examinations "with flying colours" (VG 309).

On the whole, Mr. Verdant Green portrays a closed society, inside as well as outside the academic walls. The tight net of connections Verdant establishes during his college days will sustain him throughout life. His training to social character is finally crowned by his entry to an even more closed society, freemasonry. Oxford has given him exactly what the good rector once prophesied: "Where else will he be able to meet with so great a number of those of his own class, with whom he will have to mix in the after changes of life, and for whose feelings and tone a college-course will give him the proper key-note?" (VG 16). Verdant has indeed been given "the proper key-note," and completely assimilated the authoritative discourse.

In Mr. Verdant Green the attitude to the undergraduate practical jokes and activities is mildly ironic, but the most devastating jokes are on the others, the lower social classes, when they are allowed to enter the narrative at all. An illustrative example can be picked from the chapter in which Verdant learns, as indicated by its title, "the difference between Town and Gown" (VG 145). The narrator presents a fight between Town and Gown, fights that in earlier literature (as well as in real life) often ended in veritable bloodshed. This time the townsmen are beaten, mainly due to the amazing skills of one hired boxer, Pet, who has been fighting for the gownsmen. At first glance the description of the fight may appear straightforward enough. But a closer scrutiny reveals a heavily biased rendering of the two groups. The reader is informed that the townsmen, as usual, have initiated the fight, a clear implication of how notorious these
troublemakers are. The Town are referred to throughout as "the mob" (VG 147, 149, 151, 152 [three times]), while the gownsmen, in the same situation, "charge *en masse*" (VG 148). Furthermore it seems to be necessary to stress the fact that the townsmen fight fair (for once?); they "discarded bludgeons and stones, and fought . . . with their fists" (VG 153).

There is no need to comment on the gownsmen's methods of fighting. It can be safely assumed that they will not resort to stone-throwing. Not only are the townsmen revealed as dirty fighters, they are denied the language of civilized society. In the street, a huge bargeman is fighting and swearing. His language "would have to be expressed in proper print chiefly by blanks" (VG 147), the narrator informs us, and proceeds to censor the bargeman's language: "I wouldn't give a blank for such a blank blank. I'm blank if he don't look as though he'd swaller'd a blank codfish, and had bust out into blank barnacles!" (VG 147). Denied access to language, the marginalization of the townsmen is further accentuated. Other characters are provided with revealing names: Mr Filcher, the lazy and dishonest scout, Mrs Tester, the drunken and dishonest bedmaker, and Mr Filthy Lucre, a dishonest "well-known dog-fancier and proprietor" (VG 88). Their way of talking marks them, as well as the dishonesty and dirt that seem indispensable attributes of these others. In Mr Filthy Lucre's case, the reader is also provided with a specimen of writing when Verdant receives a letter from this man intriguingly addressed to "Virdon grene esqre braisenface collidge Oxford" (VG 180).

The role of the "others" is to act as picturesque contrasts to the main characters; they have no real influence on our heroes' and heroines' lives. A potential dialogue between these opposing discourses is never hinted at. While the novel mainly dwells on the undergraduate exploits of Verdant, and his irresponsible life at Oxford is ironically portrayed, it suggests only the immaturity of the protagonist. The underlying discourse of the status of Oxford in British society is never questioned. As a matter of course Verdant will be installed as the squire of the parish, with a Bachelor's degree and a suitable wife.

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22 Although a few lines further on one of the townsmen is revealed kicking a half-unconscious undergraduate with his heavy boots (VG 154).

23 Sometimes, though, the contrast is described as more of an aesthetic one. But that, of course, depends on whose view you take. The beloved of Verdant, Miss Patty, wants to draw portraits of two gipsy children: "These little brownies of children, with their Italian faces and hair, are very picturesque in their rags" (VG 266).
The Cult of Oxford

An underlying authoritative discourse of the academy and British class society informs the new type of campus fiction that emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century. The slow upgrading in fiction coincided with contemporary reformative University Acts. The role of the universities changed during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Young men trained in the classics, history and English became ambassadors, pro-consuls in the Empire, and Members of Parliament at home. To be well-read and have a cultured intellect was the sine qua non of British administration. The universities became valued as institutions of utmost value for the Empire. Indeed, they became in many ways indistinguishable from the Imperial project:

It can be argued that the study of English and the growth of Empire proceeded from a single ideological climate and that the development of the one is intrinsically bound up with the development of the other, both at the level of simple utility (as propaganda for instance) and at the unconscious level, where it leads to the naturalizing of constructed values (e.g. civilization, humanity, etc.) which, conversely, established "savagery," "native," "primitive," as their antitheses and as the object of a reforming zeal.

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24 John Gibson Lockhart's *Reginald Dalton: A Story of English University Life* (1823) is one of the first novels of this type. Even though it shows less admirable qualities of university life, it expresses respect, admiration and also affection for the Alma Mater of the author, Oxford (Proctor 63). The upgrading trend was continued by, for example, Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown at Oxford* (1861), a novel that advocated Christian manliness and a strong belief in Oxbridge as the standard bearer of Old England values. Several novels were subsequently published on the same theme. Max Beerbohm's *Zuleika Dobson* (1911) is partly a witty and ironic reaction to the campus fiction of the latter part of the preceding century, but it also expresses a profound affection for Oxford.

25 For an excellent discussion of this see the article by Sheppard, "From Narragonia to Elysium."

26 Although Britain's first institution for the higher education of women, Queens College, Harley Street, was opened in 1848, and Bedford College the year after, this is still a men's world.

The combination of reforming zeal and self-righteousness is clearly discernible in the type of campus fiction which reintroduced an already familiar character, the Clerk of Oxford. This new type of campus novel "depended on a common social knowingness, bore the romance of the powerful social institution which one whole part of the culture, the dominant part, knew in common."28 Here is a dramatic shift of focus. The university man who for centuries has been diabolized, lampooned and laughed at, now enters centre stage without even the slightest trace of ridicule; valuable to the Empire he is no longer conspicuously other. This changing role of the academy, already implicitly suggested in Mr. Verdant Green, is now fully developed. The Oxford man is the epitome of normality and sociability; his is the task of reforming the alien others, those who have not been among the happy few to benefit from Oxford's Dreaming Spires.

On the eve of the First World War, the work that epitomizes what Proctor terms "The Cult of Oxford" was published: Compton Mackenzie's Sinister Street (1913-14). Ford Madox Ford called it "a work of real genius,"29 and the novel was a tremendous success, "partly assisted by the well-publicized intention of the libraries to ban it on account of its low-life scenes."30 Up to the Second World War it was still selling at least 1,000 copies per year.31

The protagonist, Michael Fane, finds his true self at Oxford. After an unstable childhood (the illegitimate son of a Lord), at Oxford he gains confidence as the bearer of British Culture. In Bakhtin's terms this authoritative discourse also acts as an internally persuasive discourse. Fane is completely immersed in the Cult of Oxford and burning with enthusiasm to pass on his newly gained wisdom by reforming the less fortunate others:

Once I used to want passionately to be like everybody else. I thought that was the goal of social happiness. Then I wanted to be violently and conspicuously different from everybody else. Now I seem to be getting near the right mean between the two extremes. I'm enjoying Oxford enormously. I can't tell you how happy I am here, how many people I like. And I appreciate it so much the more because to a certain extent at first it

28 Malcolm Bradbury, "Campus Fictions," University Fiction 51.


30 Young 14.

31 According to the author, Compton Mackenzie, himself (SS xi).
was a struggle to find that wide normal road on which I'm strolling along now. I'm so positive that the best of Oxford is the best of England, and that the best of England is the best of humanity that I long to apply to the world the same standards we tacitly respect—we undergraduates. (SS 558; my emphasis)

Not only do Oxford norms imply the "best," they are also the "normal." Everything deviating from the norm set within the citadel will remain alien and threateningly other. This attitude is in Bakhtinian terms truly monologic. It purports to be the last word, and in so doing it "to some extent . . . objectivizes all reality."32

Throughout Sinister Street, this objectivization is supported by the equation of English studies with the growth of Empire, and by the establishment of an unbreakable link between British Literature and Civilized Society. Fane, with a first in history, takes a keen interest in literature, and he explains why:

What was the use of reading history unless the alchemy of literature had transcended the facts by the immortal presentation of them? These charters and acts of parliament, these exchequer-rolls and raked-up records meant nothing. . . . The truth of Ivanhoe, the truth of the Ingoldsby Legends, the truth of Christabel was indeed revealed to the human soul through the power of art to unlock for one convincing moment truth with the same directness of divine exposition as faith itself. (SS 620)

Convinced of the validity of what he has read and learned, Michael Fane finds an "other" worthy of redeeming. A few years earlier he had had a brief, and innocent, affair with a young girl, Lily Haden. Coming down from Oxford he learns that she is now a prostitute. For a long time Fane desperately tries to find her in the underworld of London. He enters another world socially during his searches. He is exposed to people whose standards and ways of living are completely alien to him. But Fane is the standard bearer of Culture, so when he rents a room in a disreputable part of London he brings his own world out into the wilderness. His room soon "came curiously to resemble rooms in remote digs at Oxford" (SS 682). However, his undergraduate training has little prepared him

for what he will meet in this other, strange, society. Fane's concept of prostitution is based on *Manon Lescaut*, while reality turns out to be quite different. When, for the first time in his life, he enters the room of a prostitute he is shocked by the sordidness and filth: "[The room] certainly was untidy. The large bed was ruffled where she had been lying down, and the soiled copy of a novelette gave it a sort of stale slovenry. Over the foot hung an accumulation of pink clothes" (SS 675; my emphasis). The metonymic link between decay, debauchery, prostitution, and trash literature is stressed to the point of becoming metaphoric. As such it stands in sharp contrast to the metonymy that links *Ivanhoe* and *Christabel* with Fane's Civilized Society and the Empire.

When Fane eventually finds Lily he swiftly installs her in a flat with a housekeeper to await their approaching marriage. Whether this is what the curiously passive Lily really wants, there is no way of knowing. When Fane looks blindly at Lily, he sees in her only an object of his desire. Taking her to lunch, he finds it a great success because, "Lily looked exquisite against the bronzy walls" (SS 787). The fact that Lily does not respond to him does not disturb him, although it makes him idly wonder why: "Lily was always outside the conversation; always under a spell of silence and remoteness. Of what was she for ever thinking? There were looking-glasses upon the bronzy walls" (SS 787). Fane looks at Lily, she looks at herself, and is thus doubly objectivized. He has made his attitude explicitly clear at the beginning of their relationship years before: "I talk less to you than to anyone. I really only want to look at you, you lovely thing" (SS 365; my emphasis). Bakhtin provides an explanation for Fane's behaviour:

For a monologic outlook . . . the other remains entirely and only an object of consciousness, and cannot constitute another consciousness. No response capable of altering everything in the world of my consciousness, is expected of this other. The monologue is accomplished and deaf to the other's response; it does not await it and does not grant it any decisive force.33

With marriage approaching, Fane, however, is grimly let down by Lily's promiscuity. By bringing a lover into the house she challenges the discourse of her husband-to-be. Ken Hirschkop argues that when social conflicts or pressures cannot be expressed by a coherent language, they may seek other means of

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33 Bakhtin, as quoted in Todorov 107.
expression, such as retreating into silence or resorting to physical violence. Lily finally takes to action, dumbly but effectively. Suddenly faced with the real Lily, Fane sees no other solution but to ask her lady friend, Silvia, to take her back. Again the unbreakable link between Literature and Civilized Society is made explicit as Fane explains his motives for choosing Silvia as the protector of Lily: "You have a strong personality. You are well-read. You are quite out of the common, and in the life you have chosen . . . you are unique" (SS 849; my emphasis).

_Sinister Street_ portrays Fane's life within and without Oxford. However, the vision of the other, the non-academic, vulgar world, is narrow and monologic. Although Fane physically transgresses the established boundaries of his class, it emerges with great clarity that he is ill prepared to understand the other. In his private strivings to redeem Lily he fails to notice that she is also in possession of a self. To him she remains a beautiful object, which he covets, but in the end must reject. When matters come down to a personal level, Fane is as inept and remote from the world as was once his fictional predecessor, the medieval Clerk of Oxford. There is, however, a wide difference between the two. Fane may be remote from the world, but he is certainly not irrelevant in the sphere of power. Fane and his friends for a time ruled, if not the entire world, at least a large part of it. This rule was undoubtedly immensely facilitated by a monologic attitude to otherness.

At the end of the novel Fane travels to Rome and is described walking along a wide street down the Esquiline Hill, imbibing the atmosphere: "There has been nothing like this," he said, "since I walked down the High. There will be nothing like this ever again" (SS 879). With the wisdom of hindsight it is easy to see that he was perfectly right. The First World War was followed by the Second, the Empire was lost and the world view underlying most of the assumptions of the Cult of Oxford became increasingly obsolete. As Bakhtin points out, an authoritative discourse cannot be dissolved from its authority; it is dependent for

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35 It should be mentioned, though, that _Sinister Street_ gave rise to a host of followers, e.g., Gerard Hopkins's _A City in the Foreground_ (1921), and, much later, Dacre Balsdon's _Freshman's Folly: An Oxford Comedy_ (1952). The trend that began with _Reginald Dalton_ has left traces in more recent fiction as well: the writings of J. I. M. Stewart, and to some extent also the works of C. P. Snow.
its existence on that authority, and stands or falls with it. The changing times instead brought with them new discourses, and a new wave of campus novels, the first of which immediately became a cult novel.

The Dreary Campus

*Lucky Jim*, by Kingsley Amis, was originally published in 1954, and had by February 1956 been reprinted 15 times. Since then it has never been out of print. *Lucky Jim* is a pioneering work. John Schellenberger argues that Amis’s novel initiated a new trend in a number of ways. It was the first campus novel set on a dismal, unromantic, provincial campus. He also points out that, in the character of Jim Dixon, Amis established "the junior lecturer as archetype of the frustrated and confused young professional man." Schellenberger develops his argument that at the time of its publication *Lucky Jim* was in a sense mirroring "a growing sense of loss of direction and bitterness against surviving vested interests" and that it again became disturbingly topical in the wake of the expansion of the university system following the Robbins' Report. During the years 1945 to 1970 Britain's higher education opportunities

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36 See Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 343.


39 Patricia Shaw points out that the "demythification" of the university was initially launched by William Cooper and his novel *The Struggles of Albert Woods* (1952). I have no wish to contest this, but the novel lacks the conspicuous popularity of *Lucky Jim*, and is thus not quite relevant to this discussion where popularity is a *sine qua non*. See Shaw, "The Role of the University in Modern English Fiction," *Atlantis* 3.1 (1981): 57.

40 Schellenberger 72.

41 Schellenberger 72.

nearly quadrupled.\textsuperscript{43} Further expansion was expected and public and political opinion agreed that higher education was an undisputed good. There should be a place in higher education for all who were able and willing. But due to lack of funding the projected expansion vanished into thin air. The feelings of pessimism and despondency experienced among academics are well-documented in the campus genre. The trend initiated by \textit{Lucky Jim} had by the middle of the 1970s given rise to a whole crop of campus fictions. Schellenberger correctly points out that these works "though ostensibly comic, expressed the general feeling of pessimism and pointlessness."\textsuperscript{44} He also stresses how fundamentally unsuited their protagonists are to their chosen occupation, teaching. They are hostile to their pupils, and totally inadequate in most instances, professional as well as private.\textsuperscript{45}

Academically inadequate is indeed the best way to describe the character who started it all, Jim Dixon. He is unqualified for and uninterested in his job as a temporary lecturer in medieval history, and once chose his discipline because it was a soft option. Now he is stranded with a temporary job that seems to become more and more insecure as time goes by. He is willing to do everything in his power to secure this position, but only on account of the lack of alternatives. Jim discusses his options with himself, but cannot reach any solution: "Teach in a school? Oh dear no. Go to London and get a job in an office. What job? Whose office? Shut up" (LJ 170).

To be noted is also the shift of focus from the student to the teacher. Balsdon's claim about earlier campus fiction that "Dons appear only when . . . the story cannot do without them"\textsuperscript{46} can be reversed: now students are introduced only when and if necessary. Carter also points out that students "appear . . . to establish dilemmas for staff."\textsuperscript{47} The attitude to students is indifferent at best and openly hostile at worst. Jim lives in constant fear of his incompetence being

\textsuperscript{43} Kogan and Kogan 18.

\textsuperscript{44} Schellenberger 72, here he lists Malcolm Bradbury's \textit{Eating People is Wrong} (1959), David Lodge's \textit{Changing Places} (1975), Simon Gray's play \textit{Butley} (1971), Malcolm Bradbury's \textit{The History Man} (1975), and Tom Sharpe's \textit{Wilt} (1976).

\textsuperscript{45} See Schellenberger 72.

\textsuperscript{46} Balsdon 32.

\textsuperscript{47} Ian Carter, \textit{Ancient Cultures of Conceit: British University Fiction in the Post-War Years} (London: Routledge, 1990) 67.
detected by Michie, a well-read student: "Michie, then, must be kept out, but with smiles and regrets instead of the blows and kicks which were his due" (LJ 29).

Jim Dixon does not burn with any zeal to reform others or to spread the teachings of his Alma Mater. In this context the dreary redbrick institution is the demonized other. Jim, in danger of being engulfed by its authoritative discourse, is the one who repeatedly strikes against the citadel of the sham academic world and its pretensions at culture. He repudiates "high" culture in every form, as when he hears a tune: "The piece was recognizable to Dixon as some skein of untiring facetiousness by filthy Mozart" (LJ 63). This is a far cry from the strong metonymic linking of Culture and Civilized Society in *Sinister Street*.

Jim's internal monologue shows his dumb efforts at resistance. All his efforts at revolt are initially concealed, mute. Bakhtin provides an explanation for the lack of confidence that Jim feels as a lack of authority, the "internally persuasive word . . . is denied all privilege, backed up by no authority at all, and is frequently not even acknowledged in society." In fear of losing his job, Jim has become an expert at creating masks to shield his threatened self from the searching gaze of the other. Talking to his Professor, Jim catches sight of himself in the mirror, and is "surprised to see that it wore an expression of eager friendliness" (LJ 12). This constant cover-up takes its toll though:

> whatever the subject for discussion might be, Dixon knew . . . he'd find his face becoming creased and flabby, like an old bag, with the strain of making it smile and show interest and speak its few permitted words, of steering it between a collapse into helpless fatigue and a tautening with anarchic fury. (LJ 13)

While seemingly listening to Professor Welch, pretending to be interested and attentive, Jim is secretly occupied with wild, angry, fantasies of rebellion:

> He pretended to himself that he'd pick up his professor round the waist, squeeze the furry grey-blue waistcoat against him to expel the breath, run heavily with him up the steps, along the corridor to the Staff Cloak-room, and plunge the too-small feet in the capless shoes into a lavatory basin, pulling the plug once, twice, and again, stuffing the mouth with toilet-paper. (LJ 9-10)

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Ann Jefferson contends that such mixed feelings of despondency and fury are due to the realization that the subject's identity lies in the hands, not of himself, but of the other: "He is, but also is not what the Other reveals him to be, and shame, rage and fear are as much a sign of the subject's alienation from what he is as they are an index of his recognition of what he is."\(^49\)

It is not until Jim fights his intolerable Professor's equally intolerable son that his resistance is at last voiced: "The bloody old towser-faced boot-faced totem-pole on a crap reservation, Dixon thought. 'You bloody old towser-faced boot-faced totem-pole on a crap reservation,' he said" (LJ 209).\(^50\) Later the same evening Jim delivers the notorious, drunken, Merrie England lecture. After impersonating his Professor, the Principal and others, he declares in his own voice, "What, finally, is the practical application of all this?" (LJ 227). He also provides the answer: "Listen and I'll tell you. The point about Merrie England is that it was about the most un-Merrie period in our history" (LJ 227). This declaration of independence has two quite immediate and related effects. It sets Dixon free physically as it resolutely propels him out of the university system, and it also restores his integrity. He has now denounced not only his inept Professor but his entire false discipline, since Welch was the one to propose the title of the fatal lecture, "Merrie England."\(^51\)

Jim Dixon takes control of his life as an internally persuasive discourse overcomes the authoritarian one. He has reached what Bakhtin terms "an individual ideological consciousness,"\(^52\) which is the result of the struggle between these two diametrically opposed discourses. The denouncement of the Welches and what they stand for in Jim's final liberating laughter is, for him, a truly carnivalesque experience. In laughing at them, he also laughs at himself for having taken part in the academic circus. The dreary university with its sham culture is irrevocably left behind. Powerless and irrelevant, the academy lies

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50 Lodge has pointed out that this is the climax of the novel (*Language of Fiction: Essays in Criticism and Verbal Analysis of the English Novel* [London: Routledge, 1966] 255).

51 It is to be noted that Jim by no means repudiates history as a subject of study, as is evident when Gore-Urquhart asks his opinion of the discipline: "Dixon resolved not to mind what he said to this man. 'No. Well taught and sensibly taught, history could do people a hell of a lot of good'" (LJ 214).

52 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 342.
isolated from the outside world. The sound of Welch's car disappearing into the distance, the noise becoming "fainter and fainter as they walked on until it was altogether overlaid by the other noises of the town and by their own voices" (LJ 251), becomes a metaphor for the changing role of the university. The central role of the academy in the society of Michael Fane has here become, at the very best, marginal.

Ground-breaking as Lucky Jim is, there is one ingredient conspicuously lacking that is ever present in the novels following it: sex.53 Subsequent campus novelists introduce a mass of female students in order for them to have sex with their tutors. Howard Kirk in Bradbury's The History Man has joyless sex in his study with his student, Felicity Phee.54 Philip Swallow in Lodge's Small World has to admit that he has had a student on the floor in his office (SW 69). The same student is later involved in a sexual relationship with lecturer Ronald Wainswright on the other side of the world, in Cooktown, Queensland (SW 339). Indeed, one of the more conspicuous features of the post-war campus novel is the massive introduction of sex. In this context Lodge points out that "inside, as outside, the academy, the principal determinants of action are sex and the will to power, and a typology of campus fiction might be based on a consideration of the relative dominance of these two drives in the story."55 This straightforward typology is, however, somewhat complicated by the fact that power and sex are seldom easily separated in the fictional world of the academy. Sex, as explained in Lodge's Small World, is extremely difficult to distinguish from exertion of power. While love is defined in the novel as "pure, selfless pleasure," sex is "an assertion of will, an exercise of power," and "a release of tension" (SW 111). Whether this is an appropriate definition depends, self-evidently, on which side of the sexual relationship is being considered. In a tutor/student relation of the kind described in these novels, the allocation of power is usually quite simple. The student, often insecure and vulnerable, desperate for good grades or help

53 To the extent that David Holbrook has termed the whole genre "screwing-in-academe fictions" (as quoted in Sheppard 29).


with an article, is in no position to exercise power. This tension between teacher and student adds an extra dimension to the question of authority.

To sum up, a new feeling of despondency and pessimism is clearly discernable in the pages of most campus fiction written after 1954. The novels, as Keith Wilson recognizes, have been written in a mood of "quiet desperations" and "self-willed stasis." There seems to be no specific meaning in embarking on a university education. Instead of discussing the advantages of higher education and stressing its importance for society, as did Sinister Street, these novels offer superficially farcical comedy with incompetent scholars with a contemptuous and cynical attitude to students, and a large portion of sex. The otherness of the academy, its isolation and irrelevance, has again come to form the basics of the genre.

David Lodge

Amis paved the way for the dreary campus novel. One of the most successful writers in the campus genre today is undoubtedly David Lodge. He is generally seen as writing in the same vein as Amis, and has himself declared his great debt to him as a writer: "I constantly experience a strange community of feeling with Amis, and find my tastes and career eerily echoing his." Reviews of Lodge's work confirm this source of inspiration, both Changing Places and Small World having been compared to Lucky Jim.

Dreary campuses notwithstanding, Lodge's campus novels are marketed as hilarious comedies. The various paperback blurbs inform the readers that they are about to read "a feast of fun," "a comedy," "a magnificent comic novel," "the funniest novel of the year," and "an exuberant, marvelously funny novel." The comic aspect is also the quality stressed under headings such as "Holiday

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56 One exception to this rule seems to be in Small World, where Lodge introduces the element of blackmail by an attractive female student who has seduced her tutors.

57 Wilson 56. This comment is given with reference to British fiction in general, but seems singularly valid for contemporary campus fiction.


Reading" and "Paperback Choice" in *The Observer*. Sex, comedy and escapism seem basic to Lodge's campus works. It is significant that the campus is still considered so remote from most people's lives that the label "pastoral" is considered appropriate: "Essentially the campus novel is a modern, displaced form of pastoral . . . That is why it belongs to the literature of escape, and why we never tire of it."60 The pastoral was once a literary mode describing simple, rural people, and it was written by sophisticated urban authors. For this modern type of pastoral it holds true that many of the writers are highly sophisticated and, needless to say, urban. They are, however, not portraying a romantic world remote from their own. They profess, rather, to write about their own society, the university. The myth of the Ivory Tower indeed dies hard. Lodge explains that his novels are successful partly because "there is something inherently funny about people committed to excellence and standards making fools of themselves."61 This, he argues, may be the ultimate secret of the campus novel's popularity: "academic conflicts are relatively harmless, safely insulated from the real world and its sombre concerns."62 The aloofness and basic irrelevance of the Clerk of Oxford again springs to mind. The university world is now, as in the Middle Ages, portrayed as another world, an isolated society remote from the lives of ordinary people.

However, fiction about the academy continues to attract a large number of readers, from "inside" as well as from "outside," as it has done for a long time. The tension building on the dichotomies of us and them, inside and outside, self and other, which may be one of the attractions of the genre, is also a recurring trait in David Lodge's literary criticism and theory. He has repeatedly expressed his concern for the "ordinary" reader and his wish to bridge the gap between the camp of the academy and the other camp, the literary world outside. In the following chapter I will discuss Lodge in relation to these two camps, both of which he claims to be part of.

60 Lodge, *Write On* 171, my emphasis.


2 Campus Fiction and Criticism: The Bridging Posture

The Two Camps

I have always regarded myself as having a foot in both camps—the world of academic scholarship and higher education, and the world of literary culture at large, in which books are written, published, discussed and consumed for profit and pleasure in all senses of those words.¹

As we have seen, the authoritative discourse of the academy inspires feelings ranging from intense resentment to admiration and whole-hearted endorsement. This already complex relationship, between the world inside the academic walls and the world outside, is further complicated by the risk of incomprehension. Throughout Lodge's literary criticism the concept of two separate, occasionally antagonistic camps runs like a thread. Antagonism aside, Lodge claims that the camps are mutually dependent for their viability. Yet their potential dialogue, he continues, is threatened by increasingly impenetrable literary theories. Many theories are not only difficult to understand, they are also impossible to apply outside the charmed circle of the academy. With "a foot in both camps" Lodge finds himself in a unique position to remove these obstacles that hinder a constructive and mutually rewarding dialogue.

Discussing Lodge's double role as scholar and creative writer, Bernard Bergonzi suggests that Lodge's "work falls into two distinct kinds, perhaps as a way of conveniently coping with divisions in his own personality."² Daniel Ammann, on the other hand, claims that "such views are largely unfounded and exaggerated."³ He instead thinks that Lodge "has not only modified and elaborated his theoretical approach, but also widened the scope of his fiction."⁴

⁴ Ammann 2.
agree with Ammann's view. Lodge's fiction and criticism may be seen as a continuum in that his campus novels largely coincide and overlap with his scholarly work. The boundaries between the camps become blurred and it is indeed difficult at times to ascertain where his criticism ends and his fiction begins.

But it is not only the boundaries between these two camps that are blurred: so, too, are those between fact and fiction. Lodge claims that some of his acquaintances are determined to read his novels as *romans à clef*. But while he openly refutes in the introductions to his novels any links between his novels and the "real world," he invites such a confusion of reality and fiction in other instances. Is Philip Swallow, or is he not, Lodge's "doppelgänger" as has been claimed? The novels, mockingly, certainly invite such an interpretation. Discussing the work of Kingsley Amis, Lodge writes about "the kind of novel which is not so much turned outwards upon the world as inward upon literary art and upon the literary artist himself." He continues to give the outline of such a novel: "the central figure is himself a writer, often with an autobiographical reference . . . there is a lot of parody, many literary jokes, and much discussion of literary questions." Substitute "academic" for "writer" and the pattern of Lodge's campus novels emerges clearly.

While Lodge the fiction writer gains more and more space in the work of Lodge the critic, his fiction seems to strive in the opposite direction: the campus tales become increasingly pre-occupied with metafictional concerns, theory and intertexts. But as I will show, Lodge eventually shifts his balance and abandons the bridging posture when the double role becomes untenable. From having

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5 Lodge, *After Bakhtin* 16.


9 Although with some modification in *Nice Work*, which explicitly includes also the industrial world and thus a protagonist who has no link to the academy.
leaned heavily on the foot planted inside the walls, the weight finally comes to rest outside the academy, in "the world of literary culture at large."\(^{10}\)

At the beginning of his academic career, in *Language of Fiction: Essays in Criticism and Verbal Analysis of the English Novel* (1966), Lodge argues for the primacy of language in literary matters, claiming that all literary criticism of the novel can be reduced to questions about language, because "the novelist's medium is language: whatever he does, *qua* novelist, he does in and through language."\(^{11}\) This clear-cut solution immediately becomes problematic though, since content and context are not that easily ignored. Lodge admits the impossibility of encountering neutrality in fiction, "nothing in the novel can be wholly neutral,"\(^{12}\) something that is later implicitly linked to the fact that "words come to the writer already . . . impressed with meanings derived from the world of common experience."\(^{13}\) This notion bears a startling resemblance to Bakhtin's argument that "there are no 'neutral' words and forms," which leads to the conclusion that "the word in language is half someone else's."\(^{14}\) Literary criticism cannot be reduced to a pure study of language, and Bakhtin does not mince his words: "To study the word as such, ignoring the impulse that reaches out beyond it, is just as senseless as to study psychological experience outside the context of that real life toward which it was directed and by which it is determined."\(^{15}\)

Lodge, in *Language of Fiction*, seems to admit the untenability of his reductionist theory. He is reluctant to adopt too narrow an attitude, and therefore suggests a compromise: "In trying to find . . . a *via media* between methodical linguistic or stylistic analysis and the freer, more widely-ranging procedures of

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\(^{10}\) I have deliberately chosen to limit my discussion to those aspects of Lodge's theoretical work that are most readily traced in his campus fiction in order to illuminate his bridging project. To discuss other aspects of his very comprehensive theoretical work would be beyond the scope of this thesis.

\(^{11}\) Lodge, *Language of Fiction* ix.

\(^{12}\) Lodge, *Language of Fiction* 45.

\(^{13}\) Lodge, *Language of Fiction* 47.


\(^{15}\) Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 292, original italics.
discursive criticism, I have veered nearer one side or the other according to the kind of problems posed by a particular text." Although Lodge still holds the notion that the argument of the primacy of language is "irrefutable in theory," he has later admitted that the approach entailed methodological difficulties. Accordingly he has added to the theory in the second edition of *Language of Fiction*: "the task of the novel critic is not to reduce everything to questions of style or rhetoric, but to unravel the relationship of the rhetorical code to all the other codes at work in the novel." Lodge's literary criticism thus, over the years, has become more inclusive: from having focussed primarily on linguistic features, he gradually concerns himself more and more with novelistic form, and the relationship between fiction and reality.

Lodge's first campus novel, *The British Museum is Falling Down*, was published a few months prior to *Language of Fiction*, and the link between them is obvious. In the introduction to the 1981 reissue of the novel Lodge acknowledges the debt the novel owes both to his personal experience of writing a thesis, and to the research connected with *Language of Fiction*. The British Museum also explores "the way fictional worlds are constructed in language" (BM 4).

The many realistic details from the protagonist Adam Appelby's domestic life and his work at the Museum are minutely and accurately described and contribute to create an illusion of reality. But under the seemingly smooth realistic surface runs an intertextual streak. The many literary allusions together with open parodies of several writers enable Lodge to highlight the linguistic properties of each of the backgrounded discourses, some of which he analyzes in *Language of Fiction*. One of these is Henry James. Discussing his technique of "running together groups of nouns or adjectives, by exploiting alliteration and by


19 *The British Museum is Falling Down* is Lodge’s first campus novel, but actually his third published novel. It was preceded by *The Picturegoers* (1960) and *Ginger, You’re Barmy* (1962).
omitting punctuation," Lodge signals his parody of James in *The British Museum* by using this particular technique: "dim dusty devotional" (BM 115). Through the parodies the informed reader is made aware of the fact that what he or she is reading is not "reality" but fiction. But there are also more direct allusions to the fictionality of the text, as when Adam points out that: "Literature is mostly about having sex and not much about having children. Life is the other way round" (BM 63). Fiction is thus not life; indeed it seems to be quite the opposite. In the 1981 reissue Lodge comments on this, his first comic novel: "Comedy, it seemed, offered a way of reconciling a contradiction . . . between my critical admiration for the great modernist writers, and my creative practice, formed by the neo-realist, antimodernist writing of the 1950s" (BM 6). This reconciliation is, however, also accomplished by the "problematic novel" solution that Lodge offers in his next work of criticism. In *The Novelist at the Crossroads: and Other Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (1971) he argues for a way out for the contemporary novelist, who has been caught standing, as it were, at the crossroads of realism, fabulation and the non-fiction novel. Although realistic novels still get written, he claims that the present pressure of scepticism towards realistic fiction forces novelists to make new considerations and decisions. The solution that Lodge suggests is a new kind of novel, the "problematic novel":

In the kind of novel I am thinking of . . . the reality principle is never allowed to lapse entirely—indeed it is often invoked, in the spirit of the non-fiction novel, to expose the artificiality of conventional realistic illusion . . . the kind of novelist I am talking about retains a loyalty to both [reality and fiction].

Lodge, accordingly, has been writing this type of novel ever since, and his next campus novel, *Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses* (1975), is no exception. Although the novel allows for a straightforward realistic reading,

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23 *Changing Places* was preceded by the largely autobiographical, realistic *Out of the Shelter* (1970).
there are other dimensions to the text. Wenche Ommundsen correctly points out that Lodge's novels contain a "request for a dual reception," and that both the realistic dimension as well as the metafictional one deserve due recognition.24 Early on in *Changing Places* the narrator steps in to take control over the narration with a frame-breaking comment alluding to "our privileged narrative altitude" (CP 8). The chapters of the novel are designed to draw attention to their formal properties, further accentuated by recurring allusions to a small leaflet called *Let's Write a Novel*. The third chapter, entitled "Corresponding," for example, is accordingly epistolary in form. The form of the chapter is further underlined by one of the character's comments on *Let's Write a Novel*: "There's a whole chapter on how to write an epistolary novel, but surely nobody's done that since the eighteenth century?" (CP 130). Well, Lodge, tongue in cheek, partly just did. His playful handling of form draws attention to the fictionality of the text. Philip is even made to hold an elegy over the novel as a genre: "Well, the novel is dying, and us with it" (CP 250). The last chapter—"Ending"—picks up this notion of a dying genre and introduces the motion picture instead. Constructed as a film-script the chapter strives towards an open-ended solution: "PHILIP shrugs. The camera stops, freezing him in mid-gesture" (CP 251). This abrupt ending may seem to mock Lodge's argument in *The Novelist at the Crossroads* that he cannot believe that the camera will make literary realism redundant.25 But set in relation to the conclusion of the discussion which is an "affirmation of faith in the future of realistic fiction,"26 and also to Lodge's actual endeavour in *Changing Places*, where he sets out to revive even the epistolary novel, the opposite must be the case. Lodge strives to assure his readers that the rumours about the death of the novel are very much exaggerated.

Not only are the boundaries between fiction and criticism blurred, but also the boundary between fiction and reality. Autobiographical references are found in both Lodge's criticism and his fiction. In *The Novelist at the Crossroads* Lodge, the critic, comments on the contemporary English novelist: "The nearest he [sic] is likely to come to a really ambitious fictional enterprise is by stringing a

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26 Lodge, *The Novelist at the Crossroads* 32.
number of minor novels together in a *roman à fleuve.*"27 This statement introduces the series of campus novels featuring Philip Swallow and Morris Zapp, and thereby establishes Lodge, the writer, as the creator of a "really ambitious fictional enterprise."28 Furthermore, there are certainly many inviting parallels between Lodge's experience of California as expressed in his criticism, and the experience of his fictional character Philip Swallow in *Changing Places.* Lodge informs us that he has a photograph of himself: "I have a certain coloured snapshot in which I can narcissistically study this euphoria. It portrays me in profile against . . . the California coast. . . . My face is tanned, my attitude relaxed—I exude health and well-being."29 He concludes: "When I looked at that picture later, from out of the shadow of an English winter, pale and jaded . . . it seemed like a snapshot of paradise lost."30 To Philip Swallow California also equals paradise: "Sometimes he came across snapshots of himself and Hilary in Euphoria, tanned and confident and gleeful . . . he would gaze at the figures in envious wonder, as if they were rich, distant relatives whom he had never seen in the flesh" (CP 21). The borderline between reality and fiction is indeed blurred.

Two years later Lodge published *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature* (1977). His aim in this volume is to present "a synthesis of the two traditions of modern formalist criticism, the European and the Anglo-American."31 He proposes a typology of modern English literature based on Roman Jakobson's theories as developed in "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Linguistic Disturbances" (1956) and "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics" (1960). According to Lodge there is a cyclical pattern in literary history, a pattern that can be explained by the relative dominance of either metaphor or metonymy.32 Metaphor and metonymy

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28 Widdowson's observation is acute: "Lodge's critical work represents an attempt to clear a space in which his own kind of fiction can operate; to neutralise and incorporate other more challenging forms of criticism (especially post-structuralist and marxist modes); and to offer, as a practising critic, discrete formalist analyses of particular writers and texts which interest him" (16).


31 Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing* ix.
are both figures of equivalence: metaphor is explained as based on similarity and subsequent substitution, while metonymy is based on contiguity, combination and context. Lodge proceeds to classify the major trends in modern literature accordingly. The basically metonymic realism of Charles Dickens and George Eliot eventually gives way to the modernist, basically metaphoric, writings of Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and Gertrude Stein. Throughout history, literature has oscillated between these extremes of metaphor and metonymy, because "there is nowhere else for discourse to go except between these two poles."33 Again, Lodge's fiction fits the pattern: starting with metonymy in Ginger, You're Barmy and Out of the Shelter, his metaphoric creativity reaches a peak in Small World, only to swing back to a basically metonymic mode in Nice Work. The characters of Morris Zapp and Philip Swallow can also be seen as perfectly embodying the principles of metaphor and metonymy. Pilar Hidalgo points out that "Philip Swallow revolves . . . round the metonymic pole, and is thereby associated with realism," while Morris Zapp is metaphorical, anti-realist and modernist.34

In 1981 followed Working with Structuralism: Essays and Reviews on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Literature. Lodge now claims that literary criticism has fallen into a state of crisis as it has become so completely impenetrable to lay people.35 Furthermore, he contends, the new type of literary criticism is often "counter to empirical observation and common sense."36 Lodge explicitly sets out to bridge this gap between an interested reading public and the academy. His aim is to show a way of working alongside structuralism "without being totally dominated by it."37 Again he is unwilling to commit himself to any

32 See Lodge, The Modes of Modern Writing 220.

33 Lodge, The Modes of Modern Writing 220.


35 David Lodge, Working with Structuralism: Essays and Reviews on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Literature (Boston: Routledge, 1981) vii. This appeared in the year after the novel How Far Can You Go? was published. The latter is a "problematic" novel, but not a campus novel, and will therefore not be considered in this thesis.

36 Lodge, Working with Structuralism vii.

37 Lodge, Working with Structuralism viii.
one school: "The range of questions that may validly be posed about literature and literary texts is very wide, and no single method will answer them all. The eclecticism of this book is its point—and, I hope, its justification."\(^\text{38}\) The book is in fact eclectic to the point of becoming almost self-contradictory, at least with respect to its title. Close structural analysis of Hemingway's *Cat in the Rain* is thus included in the same volume as its methodological opposite, a discussion of a literary biography of Evelyn Waugh.

Lodge also discusses the link between his own type of writing and the major literary trends, modernism, antimodernism and postmodernism. He presents his own fiction as covering the whole spectrum, defining it as "basically antimodernist, but with elements of modernism and postmodernism,"\(^\text{39}\) and proceeds to apply this critical terminology to his campus literature: "Rummidge is certainly a metonymic place name, but Euphoric State is a metaphor, and the ending of *Changing Places* is a short circuit."\(^\text{40}\) So far there is ample evidence that Lodge's criticism and fiction indeed form a continuum, concerned with the same issues and constantly overlapping.

If "eclecticism" is a keyword in connection with *Working with Structuralism*, it is no less appropriate for Lodge's next campus fiction: *Small World: An Academic Romance* (1984). Lodge uses the romance form to discuss most current literary critical practices. As the epigraph from *Finnegans Wake* informs the reader—"Hush! Caution! Echoland!"—the romance is crammed with literary allusions, intertexts, and metafictional strategies. The novel's theoretical sub-plot ends with the doyen of Literary Studies in the U.S.A., Arthur Kingfisher, stating that "what matters in the field of critical practice is not truth but difference" (SW 363). In part this ending is only an extension of the underlying principle of romance as a constant deferral of meaning, but it also echoes the "eclectic" introductory remark from *Working with Structuralism*. No single method will ever be sufficient; what matters is that the discussion of literature and theory continues.

Lodge's choice of the comic mode in *Small World* is significant. Apart from the possibility of reconciling opposite sides of himself, comedy offers "resistance to post-structuralist aesthetics. Things that make us laugh in books rarely happen

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\(^{38}\) Lodge, *Working with Structuralism* x.

\(^{39}\) Lodge, *Working with Structuralism* 16.

\(^{40}\) Lodge, *Working with Structuralism* 16.
by accident, nor are they produced by readers; they are constructed by authors."41 As a practising novelist, Lodge finds theories about the demise of the author unpalatable. Comedy thus serves a double purpose: it reconciles Lodge's criticism with his creative practice, and it consolidates his status as the creator of fiction.

The self-referential tendency continues. Lodge informs his readers that he usually starts a novel when he realizes that some part of his "own experience has a thematic interest and unity which might be expressed through a fictional story."42 The idea of a novel about academic conferences grew slowly out of personal experience of a global campus to which he himself belonged.43 Again the same views and concerns are voiced in fiction and criticism alike. Lodge claims that "it is precisely the tension between professional self-display and erotic opportunity . . . that, among other things, makes the conference such a fascinating human spectacle, and such rich material for fiction."44 Small World certainly testifies to this, even though it focusses on erotic opportunity rather than academic professionalism. Philip Swallow is also made to voice the bafflement of the "ordinary reader," a question of great concern in Working with Structuralism: "[Reading] seems to be some kind of arcane mystery, into which only a small élite have been initiated" (SW 32). Expressing the same concern as Lodge, Swallow argues that a critic needs a genuine love of books: "It was by the demonstration of this enthusiasm in action that the critic forged a bridge between the great writers and the general reader" (SW 360; my emphasis).

In 1986 followed Write On: Occasional Essays 1965-1985. The essays are not meant for "a small élite," but explicitly address "the ordinary reader": "Most of the pieces in this book were written for a wider audience, and although some of those in the second section employ the dreaded jargon of 'structuralism,' they do so, I trust, in a generally accessible manner."45 The essays date from 1965 to 1985, and the subjects vary from how Lodge came to love America in general and California in particular, to D. H. Lawrence and Shakin' Stevens. The reader is introduced to the background of Lodge's fiction, and the development of plots

41 Lodge, Write On 74.
42 Lodge, Write On 72.
43 See Lodge, Write On 71.
44 Lodge, Write On 71.
45 Lodge, Write On ix.
and ideas. On the subject of literary criticism Lodge again argues that: "The most important, trail-blazing criticism now being produced is written in a style that is impenetrable to the layman [sic]."46 "Something loosely called structuralism" is to blame for this state of affairs.47 Furthermore, Lodge later claims that there is a "current overproduction of books of academic literary criticism, combined with . . . [a] shrinking space for, and interest in, reviewing such books in newspapers and magazines."48 This lack of interest and space may then perhaps be interpreted as the result of the increasing barrier of incomprehension between the academy and ordinary readers.

In Nice Work: A Novel, published two years later, Lodge continues to grapple with the problem of how to bridge the gap. In this novel, based on the nineteenth-century industrial novel, Lodge makes university meet industry—clash and reconciliation. The narrator initially intrudes to break the frame of realistic illusion. But subsequently Nice Work proceeds in a realistic, metonymic mode which Lodge found appropriate for the handling of the issue.49 Although the intertexts act for the informed reader as frame-breaking devices, they do not disturb the overall realistic design of the novel. As was later shown by the television version, most of the allusions to backrounded novels were dropped without any major disturbance to the main theme.

The bridging concern is ever present in the novel, as the barrier between the ordinary world and the academy is made explicit. Vic Wilcox, the industrial protagonist of Nice Work, exclaims exasperatedly: "Why can't you people take things at their face value? . . . Highbrows, intellectuals. You're always trying to find hidden meanings in things" (NW 221). Robyn Penrose, the lecturer, answers: "Signs are never innocent. Semiotics teaches us that" (NW 221). This leads into a heated and detailed discussion of metaphor and metonymy in cigarette advertisements which has borrowed considerably from The Modes of Modern Writing. At the end of the novel Vic has to admit that he is constantly made aware of the metaphor/metonymy dichotomy in commercials, and even in "the way people talk" (NW 355). Perhaps the gap can be bridged after all?

46 Lodge, Write On 113.

47 Lodge, Write On 113.

48 Lodge, Write On 205.

Again the reader is openly invited to draw parallels between Lodge and one of his fictional characters. In answer to the question of why he writes, Lodge claims that he does so because it is the only thing he is really good at, and that it is now too late to start over again with something else: "I shall probably never learn, now, to ski or to windsurf or to play a musical instrument or to speak a foreign language fluently." And why does Vic Wilcox work? Because it is the only thing he is good at, he explains to Robyn. Anyhow, it is now too late to change, and there are several things that he has never done: "I've never skied, I've never surfed. I've never learned to play a musical instrument, or speak a foreign language" (NW 255). Disavowals to the contrary, Lodge certainly continues to mix reality and fiction in an inseparable blend.

In After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism (1990), Lodge returns to the problem of the wide gap between the two camps. The situation has not improved: "this bridging posture has become increasingly difficult to maintain as the professionalization of academic criticism has opened up a widening gap between it and 'lay' discussion of literature." Here he proposes an additional typology of modern literature, a typology that covers classic realism and modernism as well as post-modernism. The typology is based on mimesis and diegesis respectively and he relates it to Bakhtin's theories about the dialogic nature of the novel. Lodge claims here that the classic realist text is characterized by a balance of mimesis and diegesis, that the modern novel is biased towards mimesis, and, finally, that post-modernism is "a revival of diegesis: not smoothly dovetailed with mimesis as in the classic realist text, and not subordinated to mimesis as in the modernist text, but foregrounded against mimesis." He implicitly links his own critical, as well as fictional, work to the Bakhtinian tradition. Discussing the title of his early work Language of Fiction, he suggests: "In omitting the definite article before the word Language . . . I was perhaps groping towards Bakhtin's perception that 'it makes no sense to describe "the language of the novel" because the very object of such a description, the novel's unitary language does not exist.'" And he later continues:

50 Lodge, Write On 76.

51 Lodge, After Bakhtin 8.

52 Lodge, After Bakhtin 44.

53 Lodge, After Bakhtin 91.
a novelist, as Bakhtin says, must have a very keen ear for other people's words . . . he [sic] cannot afford to cut himself off from low, vulgar, debased language; . . . nothing linguistic is alien to him, from theological treatises [Lodge's own MA thesis was entitled "Catholic Fiction Since the Oxford Movement: Its Literary Form and Religious Content"] to the backs of cornflakes packets [which Philip Swallow reads], from the language of the barrack room [Ginger, You're Barmy] to the language of, say, academic conferences [Small World].

When Lodge later in After Bakhtin claims to be quoting a well-known authority ("every decoding is another encoding"), the confusion of fact, fiction and criticism becomes complete, as this authority is none other than his own fictional creation, Morris Zapp, who in Small World has had a lapel badge manufactured bearing that very device (SW 220).

While After Bakhtin may have been directed at an audience consisting of 'the general academic reader,' if such a creature exists," Lodge's latest work of criticism and theory, The Art of Fiction: Illustrated from Classic and Modern Texts (1992), is his most "popular" to date. First published as a series of articles in The Independent on Sunday, this work has reached a much wider readership than would any articles published in a specialized magazine. As the title of this volume indicates, the scope from 1966 that had been limited to Language of Fiction has expanded considerably to include the entire Art of Fiction. There is, of course, also an echo of Henry James's The Art of Fiction from 1888, in which James argues for the same catholic solutions as Lodge: "Art lives upon discussion, upon experiment, upon curiosity, upon variety of attempt, upon the exchange of views and the comparison of standpoints." James concludes, "the successful application of any art is a delightful spectacle, but the

54 Lodge, After Bakhtin 93.
55 Lodge, After Bakhtin 90.
theory too is interesting. These views have a familiar ring to them, as Lodge has often expressed the same concerns, claiming that the meaning and very existence of literature lies in a continual discussion of it. To provide that meaning for his own fiction, the author granted most space by Lodge the critic in *The Art of Fiction* is Lodge the writer: "more pages are allocated to the end of *Changing Places* than to the entire topic of 'The Comic Novel' . . . There's a feeling of other authors having to flatten themselves against the walls as Lodge holds the floor." Lodge thus openly promotes his own fiction, enhancing its validity in terms of his own definitions. Whatever the reason, Lodge's work, critical as well as fictional, unquestioningly creates a continuum.

His own ideal model for the intellectual life of society is built on precisely the concept of a bridge between two camps:

The intellectual and artistic life of a society requires a constant refreshment by new ideas, which are formulated by the intellectual avant-garde, and then permeate down through educated society by means of the media. In this process they are inevitably simplified, and perhaps vulgarized, but this is better than no ideas getting through at all.

Aware of the risk of "simplification and vulgarization," Lodge tries to spread the new ideas "down through educated society." This suggests a one-way influence, from top to bottom as it were. But Lodge has put it less rigidly elsewhere, implying that the impulses may arise in both "worlds." One of his aims, he states, has been to "encourage the circulation of ideas between the two worlds of discourse." The circulation of ideas points towards a potential dialogic relationship between the two camps. The concern is voiced repeatedly:

my feeling is that literary studies are in a somewhat demoralized state partly because of increasing specialization and the use of a highly

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59 James 376-77.


technical language. . . . Those working at the coal-face are unintelligible to the general public. Those who are intelligible often have nothing valuable to say.64

From this statement, and the host of similar remarks, the following can be deduced: there are valuable insights about literature and literary theory that could and should be shared with a wide audience, but the problem is how to share them. One way for Lodge to achieve this sharing is through instruction by means of accessible literature. This literature is then, of course, constituted partly by his later theoretical works, but with a wide readership in view the main focus will have to be on his widely read and appreciated campus fiction. In a fictional form he is able to present and discuss literary theory and literature in the hope of entering into a dialogue of sorts with the implied reader. This dialogue, however, has certain prerequisites. In a recent survey Lodge, among others, was asked to state his view of a literary canon and whether it is at all desirable to perpetuate such a canon. He answered: "Yes, I do believe that there has to be a canon if civilised discourse about literature is to continue. Literary criticism and literary education depend on the participants having a body of texts in common to refer to—otherwise meaningful discussion cannot take place."65 It is unquestionable that a discussion of literature, as any discussion for that matter, is immensely facilitated by all participants having access to the same material. What is more debatable though, as the recent debate has shown, is whether it is at all possible to establish a literary canon. What works should be included, and why? As Eagleton points out in the same survey, this is a highly controversial issue: "The history of literary value is notoriously contentious; the same work may be valued by different generations for quite different reasons."66 "Meaningful discussion" does evidently also mean different things to different readers. Meaningful for whom, and in relation to what? Literature is one of the ways in which culture—traditions and values—are handed down from generation to generation. The enormous power and responsibility this entails should indeed make us wary of which discourses are included, as well as which discourses are excluded. To enter into a discussion about the pros and cons of a canon's existence is,


66 Griffiths 17.
however, well beyond the scope of this thesis. Lodge's views are clear though. Set in relation to his concern for the ordinary reader, his aim is two-fold: to maintain a canon, and to render possible a discussion of literature between the academy and "the ordinary reader," a discussion based on the canon. Lodge's project is thus to educate and instruct, through criticism and fiction, in order to render "civilised discourse" possible.

Finally, though, the project of creating a dialogue between the academy and the outside literary world collapses. In the end it is Lodge the novelist who by far overshadows Lodge the critic/theorist. Not only do the parallels that can be easily drawn between Lodge's theories and his fictional practice become more frequent and conspicuous, but as the gap between the academy and the ordinary reader widens, the critical/theoretical works of Lodge are increasingly filled with comments on his own work. Interesting as they may be to some readers, they serve more to promote his own fiction than to bridge the gap between academic criticism and a lay readership. They do, however, blur whatever boundaries there might have been between Lodge's own two personal camps, to the extent that he will probably not write any more purely "academic" literary criticism,67 a point that The Art of Fiction illustrates.

Lodge has left the "Ivory Tower" quite literally of course,68 but figuratively as well. In Working with Structuralism he poses the question of the validity of modern literary theory: "Does it enrich our reading. . . . Or does it merely encourage a pointless and self-indulgent academicism, by which the same information is shuffled from one set of categories to another, from one jargon to another, without any real advance in appreciation or understanding?"69 Lodge concludes that he is in favour of the new theoretical approaches. They are enriching, valid and necessary. But ten years later it seems that he does not feel able to endorse these practices explicitly. Although claiming that "contemporary theory has something useful and important to say,"70 he also argues that a vast amount of academic literary criticism and theory is not "a contribution to human knowledge, but the demonstration of a professional mastery by translating known

67 See Lodge, After Bakhtin 8.

68 Having retired from his professorship at Birmingham university.

69 Lodge, Working with Structuralism 18.

70 Lodge, After Bakhtin 14.
facts into more and more arcane metalanguages."\textsuperscript{71} Or, perhaps, as Hazlitt says, as quoted in \textit{Small World} and thus part of Lodge's fictional arena:

\begin{quote}
A critic does nothing nowadays who does not try to torture the most obvious expression into a thousand meanings . . . His object indeed is not to do justice to his author, whom he treats with very little ceremony, but to do himself homage, and to show his acquaintance with all the topics and resources of criticism.\textsuperscript{72}
\end{quote}

To some extent echoing Hazlitt, Lodge thus ends up advocating the view that not only are most current literary critical practices, by and large, incomprehensible to outside society, they are also pointless to all but the academics involved. What he himself says will be his last book of academic criticism ends on a negative note, concluding that America is the place to be if you want to "practise academic literary criticism. If that's what you want to do."\textsuperscript{73} Apparently Lodge has come to doubt the validity of such an endeavour. Although it may be interesting, what matters is creative writing: "Perhaps in the end Bakhtin's greatest contribution to contemporary criticism is . . . to have made a timely reaffirmation of the writer's creative and communicative power."\textsuperscript{74}

What counts is the canon, the authors and their work. The academy and its derivative practices seem conspicuously irrelevant and other, and the model of a circulation of ideas between the two camps is deserted. Lodge plants both his feet firmly outside the walls of the academy, and the efforts at dialogue are abandoned. In retrospect it seems prophetic that Morris Zapp's new theoretical work in \textit{Small World} is published under the title \textit{Beyond Criticism} (SW 103).

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\textsuperscript{71} Lodge, \textit{After Bakhtin} 8.
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\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{72} William Hazlitt, "On Criticism," as quoted by Lodge (SW 183, ellipsis and italics as in SW).
\end{flushright}

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\textsuperscript{73} Lodge, \textit{After Bakhtin} 184. This tone of resignation is echoed in \textit{Nice Work} by Robyn Penrose's mother's exasperated comment on her daughter's way of life: "'There's no reason why you shouldn't still have your own career. If that's what you want.' She managed to imbue this last phrase with a certain pitying incomprehension" (NW 54).
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\textsuperscript{74} Lodge, \textit{After Bakhtin} 7.
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Reception and Response

Before abandoning Lodge's efforts at bridging the gap, it is of interest to consider also the other "side." His attempts at creating a dialogue between the two camps necessarily builds on a response from an audience. To pinpoint this audience is, however, easier said than done. The readers of Lodge's campus fiction are a motley crowd. The popularity of his campus novels stretches from within the academy to readers who have never set foot inside its walls and know little or nothing about literary theory or the canon. In fact, since both *Nice Work* and *Small World* have been adapted for television it is not even necessary to read the actual texts; access to Lodge's academic worlds is provided through the television screen.

What qualities in his works have made this range of popularity possible? Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson contend that "the rigid conceptual barrier between 'high,' or estimable, culture and popular, or representative, culture has broken down." Furthermore, in their definition of popular culture they include "elite cultural forms that have been popularized as well as popular forms that have been elevated to the museum tradition." Lodge's fiction may seem to epitomize this "popularity" since it contains both "elite cultural forms" and "popular forms." It is a mixture of a revival of canonical texts, discussion of modern literary theory, slap-stick and "continuous humping and bumping." Discussing the two layers of Lodge's novels, the realistic dimension and the metafictional one, we have seen that Ommundsen argues for a dual reception of his texts. Although this is a valid and correct claim, it entails certain difficulties. What audience is capable of appreciating both dimensions? As Lodge learned from his disappointing experience with the first edition of *The British Museum is Falling Down*, many readers may not detect anything other

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76 Mukerji and Schudson 3-4.


78 See Ommundsen 125.
than very explicit intertextual allusions. What may be a bonus for the well-educated reader remains an undetected in-joke for the reader who lacks the required inside knowledge. Since the first edition of *The British Museum*, Lodge has changed tactics: "I later came to think that the reader is entitled to a hint about what to look for in the book" (BM 7). Anxious that part of his heterogeneous readership will miss the intertextual play, Lodge becomes increasingly explicit about his sources. His clues become more obvious, and his textual explanations more and more elaborate. I find it doubtful, however, that his texts in effect bridge a gap. Outside a quite narrow circle of well-educated readers much of the intertextual play remains undetected in spite of Lodge's efforts to make it accessible.

The Readers

In the late 1970s Wolfgang Iser argued that "central to the reading of every literary work is the interaction between its structure and its recipient." This interaction is, of course, highly individual. The fact that a text is never identical for two different readers, nor even for the same reader the second time the text is read, is today a commonplace. The reading experience is a joint project between the frame of the text itself and the imaginative faculties of each individual reader. "There is no theory of reading or the reader to be plucked ready-formed from the diverse Bakhtinian legacy," David Shepherd points out. But that the reader and the reception of a work are important is self-evidently inherent in the

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79 About the first edition Lodge says: "Very few reviewers recognised the full extent of the parodies, and a surprising number made no reference to them at all. . . . When an American edition was published later, the blurb carefully drew attention to the parodies, and they were duly noticed and generally approved" (BM 7).

80 There is, perhaps, also an additional reason for this increased metafiction. Lodge contends that: "metafiction makes explicit the implicit problematic of realism. The foregrounding of the act of authorship within the boundaries of the text which is such a common feature of contemporary fiction, is a defensive response . . . to the questioning of the idea of the author and of the mimetic function of fiction by modern critical theory" (*After Bakhtin* 19).


very nature of dialogism. Shepherd contends that according to Bakhtin the reader's role "is one of 'active understanding' enabling the dialogic encounter of historically determinate utterances, each of which not only takes account of what has already been said about its object, but is also always oriented towards and shaped by an anticipated response."84 As Bakhtin explicitly states: "Every utterance always has a receiver . . . whose responsive understanding is sought and anticipated by the author of the verbal work."85 From this follows, inevitably, that in order to cater to a wide, rather than a narrow, readership a writer must provide a wide range of discourses for every reader to find something of interest. In this context Iser argues that when reading a novel:

Different backgrounds are invoked, and they point to different systems from which the various references are taken, and so the reader's image-building will be regulated by his competence and his familiarity with the systems referred to . . . there will be elements of the repertoire that remain inactive as far as his image-building is concerned.86

In the same way the repertoire of Lodge's novels will remain partly inactive for some of his readers, while active for others. "Any adequate reading of a text . . . involves identifying and classifying it in relation to other texts, according to content, genre, mode, period, and so on,"87 Lodge states. How many of Lodge's actual readers may accomplish such an "adequate" reading?

There is always a distance between the actual audience, the persons in the flesh, and the authorial, hypothetical audience for whom the writer designs a novel, Peter Rabinowitz argues. However, most novelists are concerned with reaching their audience, and will consequently try to bridge this gap by not relying on information they suspect the readers will not possess: "The distance between authorial and actual audiences . . . may be inevitable—but it is generally

84 Shepherd 92.


86 Iser, The Act of Reading 145. The comment is made with reference to Fielding's Joseph Andrews, but is equally valid for Lodge's texts.

87 Lodge, Working with Structuralism 4.
undesirable, and authors usually try to keep the gap narrow."^{88} As narrowing a gap is one of Lodge's explicit aims, he agrees with this: "Works of literature . . . are intentional acts, produced by individual writers employing shared codes of signification according to a certain design, weighing and measuring . . . projecting the work against the anticipated response of a hypothetical reader."^{89} Rabinowitz continues by saying that most writers design an authorial audience that is as close as possible to the actual one. But when they do not quite match, "footnotes or other explanations will be required before the text can work."^{90} As Lodge's novels are filled with explicit references to backgrounded works and instructions of how to go about reading the texts it can be safely assumed that Lodge writes, not only for an ideal authorial audience, but also for an actual, broader public.

Let us look at an example from *Small World*. Persse is just setting eyes on the beautiful Angelica for the first time:

At that moment the knots of chatting conferees seemed to loosen and part, as if by some magical impulsion, opening up an avenue between Persse and the doorway . . . . She was tall and graceful, with a full, womanly figure, and a dark, creamy complexion. Black hair fell in shining waves to her shoulders, and black was the colour of her simple woollen dress, scooped out low across her bosom . . . . Over the rim of the glass she looked with eyes dark as peat pools straight into Persse's own, and seemed to smile faintly in greeting . . . "Heavenly God!" Persse breathed, quoting again, this time from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. (SW 9)

A small élite of readers in the actual audience will have no need for the explicit reference to Joyce's novel in order to place the quotation. They will furthermore also recognize the parody^{91} of Stephen Dedalus's epiphany:

A girl stood before him in midstream, alone and still, gazing out to sea. . . . Her bosom was as a bird's, soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast


^{89} Lodge, *After Bakhtin* 158.

^{90} Rabinowitz 98.

^{91} Here, as elsewhere in the thesis, the concept of parody is used as defined by Linda Hutcheon, "repetition with difference." See Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985) 32.
of some dark plumaged dove. But her long fair hair was girlish: and
girlish, and touched with the wonder mortal beauty, her face. . . . her eyes
turned to him in quiet sufferance of his gaze, without shame or
wantonness. . . .—Heavenly God! cried Stephen's soul, in an outburst of
profane joy.92

Other readers will place the quotation only after having been given the reference,
and then perhaps without being able to recognize the parodic quality of Persse's
"epiphany." They might not have read the actual novel but they are cognitively
aware of the existence of the work, and perhaps also know that it was written by
James Joyce. But outside this outer limit of the authorial audience, there will still
be actual readers for whom this reference will be a gap impossible to fill. They
remain unable to judge whether there actually is such a novel as A Portrait of the
Artist as a Young Man. Or why should it be a novel? It might be a poem, or a
song for that matter. Without dwelling on what the loss of the wealth of
connotations that Joyce's work brings to bear on the character of Persse at this
moment of revelation, it goes without saying that the actual reader who has never
heard of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and does not embark upon a
study of the history of literature, will miss all of that dimension and end up with
a poorer text than the author had intended. The actual audience will then, or will
not, as the case may be, be able to detect the parody of Joyce's text, but the
authorial audience is certainly meant to do so, nudged along by the helpful
narrator's explicit reference.

To a very large extent reviews of Lodge's work confirm the success of his
bridging endeavours. Daniel Murtaugh, reviewing Small World, claimed that the
intertextual tissue of the novel is something that "professors in (and out of) the
book will respond to with small spasms of self-congratulation. You can bring the
less learned or the less alert along a few pages later by an explicit reference to the
literary source that you have been playing with."93 He explicitly refutes any
notion that the novel should be accessible only to readers in the know: "the
learned jokes are eventually self-explanatory, and much of the humor is both
broad and precise in a way any intelligent reader can respond to."94 Joel

92 James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916; London: Cape, 1954) 195.

93 Daniel M. Murtaugh, "Of Romance and Mockery," rev. of Small World: An Academic

94 Murtaugh 345.
Conarroe, in a review of *Nice Work*, also pointed to the educational side of the reading experience, arguing that the novel "is also instructive. Mr Lodge . . . wears his learning lightly and shares it generously. One fringe benefit of his campus satires is enrollment in a kind of crash course on structuralism, metafiction and related subjects that interest him." 95 Finally, Lars Gustafsson discusses all of Lodge's campus novels, pointing to the success of the "lesson": "To the initiated this [openly displayed metafiction] contributes immensely to the enjoyment of his novels; discovery becomes part of the reading game. And to the less initiated reader it at least becomes very instructive." 96

These reviewers all agree that Lodge's bridging project is highly successful, with crash courses ranging from the canon to literary theory. The gap between authorial and actual audience seems totally bridged. It is evident that the reviewers make up a kind of ideal audience, although they do not actually seem to need any further instruction. The expressions "less learned," "less initiated," and "less alert" have an elitist ring. Who are these reviewers that so obviously are among the more initiated, and thus able to judge the success of Lodge's course? Murtaugh is ex-English professor, Conarroe is president of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and a member of the board of PEN, while Gustafsson is professor of philosophy, besides being a writer himself. These actual and authorial readers who appreciate Lodge's intertextual webs are all from the "inner" circle of highly reputable and established "literati," and thoroughly familiar with the canon. Rabinowitz provides one possible explanation for their appreciation of Lodge's intertextually dense campus novels: "one of the effects of a literary tradition is that it provides a stock of familiar details, the echoes of which, in subsequent texts, become charged. As a consequence, texts that partake of the academic tradition . . . will seem, to academic readers, richer in their details." 97 The use Lodge makes of canonized texts may thus serve the double purpose of maintaining the canon and at the same time guarantee positive reviews from academic quarters.


97 Rabinowitz 216.
But perhaps his intertexts are not as conducive to dialogue as these reviewers think. Parody of totally unknown sources, codes and conventions, even when introduced together with its models, does not create a very rewarding reading. It is instead a particularly exclusive kind of writing. As Brian Connery has shown, Lodge's work is highly dependent on a competent audience, the readers must be "capable of decoding the parody"98 in order to "get" the whole text. For the well-educated and eager Lodge reader there is even more to be gained. By cross-references between Lodge's novels the initiated is drawn into an even tighter circle of exclusive readers. A character in *Small World*, for example, makes the following comment: "People are surprisingly ignorant about twins. Why, Angelica gave me a novel to read once, that had identical twins of different sexes. I didn't have the patience to go on with it" (SW 318). The novel alluded to is *Changing Places*, in which Lodge made this mistake when constructing the Zapp children, Elizabeth and Darcy: "Not only were they identical twins, but" (CP 171). The keen campus novel reader will perhaps also appreciate the introduction of Lodge himself, together with Malcolm Bradbury, in the last pages of *Small World*:

> a shortish dark-haired man standing nearby with a bottle of champagne in his hand, talking to a tallish dark-haired man smoking a pipe. "If I can have Eastern Europe," the tallish man was saying in an English accent, "you can have the rest of the world." "All right," said the shortish man, "but I daresay people will still get us mixed up." (SW 377)

The novels referred to are *Small World* and Bradbury's *Rates of Exchange*, which takes place in a fictive Eastern bloc country. But this self-conscious cross-referencing has ramifications well beyond Lodge's fictional world. As we have already seen it can also be found in his critical work where Lodge quotes, not only himself, but even his own fictional character.99 For readers who are in on the joke there is no need for a quick glimpse in the notes to identify Morris Zapp, and it might add an extra thrill to realize immediately the true state-of-affairs. But clearly a great number of readers will be "out of the joke," excluded from the privileged set of readers who know the code. They are the others, those not in the


99 Lodge, *After Bakhtin* 90.
know. J. A. Sutherland points out that "all these novels display an ingroup jokiness, a sense of shared jests among a coterie. The British campus novel easily converts to a kind of privileged literature, fully appreciated only by a few in the know." It is doubtful whether this "privileged literature" actually bridges a gap, or deserves the epithet "dialogic."

Sex or Semilogy?

"Substantial critical interest in Lodge is only just awakening," Amman claims. He goes on to point out that most literary criticism, so far, has been focused on literary-theoretical aspects of Lodge's writing, and to a much lesser extent on themes and genre. This is true. It is the narrative strategies, the intertextual play and theoretical implications that underlie the realistic dimension of Lodge's novels that have attracted most critical interest. Discussing Lodge's work, Ommundsen contends that "sex on the one hand, religion on the other, emerge as extended metaphors through which is presented a running commentary on the art of fiction." As for the campus novels, religion plays a major part only in The British Museum is Falling Down and the running metaphor is thereafter reduced to sex alone. Sex is also the issue discussed by many in relation to Small World. Frederick Holmes argues that "Lodge creates a parallel between McGarrigle's unending erotic quest after an ideal of beauty and the reader's futile search for a unifying principle of significance in the book itself." Throughout, a connection between the quest for the Grail and sex is kept uppermost in the reader's mind, he claims, through Lodge's use of the character of Sybil Maiden who provides ample references to the Grail theme. The novel "draws a parallel

101 This heading has been adapted from Ommundsen's article "Sin, Sex and Semiology."
102 Amman 2.
103 Ommundsen 123-24.
104 It is true, of course, that religion plays a large part in Persse McGarrigle's life in Small World, but this does not amount to a theme in the novel.
between romance and sex," he concludes. Siegfried Mews contends that "although some readers and critics may find the sexual exploits of Lodge's figures too vigorous, some of his jokes too banal . . . there is behind the satire and hilarity . . . a serious questioning of the purpose of literary studies and of the institution of academic criticism itself." He furthermore claims that *Small World* "offers both easy readability and the discussion of serious issues in contemporary criticism in highly entertaining fashion." This is a view shared by many and echoed almost verbatim by Robert Morace: "It is a highly readable text that nonetheless does not shy away from matters pertaining to narrative theory, matters that are no longer apart from but that have become a part of the general contemporary culture." Mews and Morace agree that Lodge has succeeded in his bridging project. But just how "general" this culture is, remains to be seen.

These academics are obviously more than capable of detecting and interpreting Lodge's two-dimensional texts, and thus of linking the issue of sex with its structural double. Linking, however, does not necessarily equal liking. Widdowson, for one, is dismissive: "There is a kind of nose-against-the-window fascination with sex . . . about all of Lodge's fiction." Nor is Eagleton impressed, contending that the message of *Nice Work* boils down to that "we are all human under the skin—or perhaps, more accurately for Lodge, under the trousers." And Ommundsen claims to be "uneasy about the blatantly gender-specific portrayal" of sex in *Small World*, but nevertheless argues that "the foregrounding of physiological detail here is . . . justified as a function of the

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106 Holmes 55.


108 Mews 714.


110 Widdowson 26.

book's parodistic and metafictional dimension." What remains for the reader who cannot apply the proper intertextual grid and thus fails to interpret this "parodistic and metafictional dimension?" Roger Rosenblatt hints at the answer in a review of *Small World*, in which he discusses the intertexts:

Maybe Lodge . . . is merely making insider jokes, but it doesn't feel that way; and the jokes are not funny enough to elicit more than smirks of recognition. More likely, Lodge . . . respects fine literature as deeply as he deplores its worst purveyors, and so tosses reminders of value from time to time into a tale that would be *all plot and wit without them*.113

When sex loses its metaphorical dimension, what is left is the realistic dimension's "plot and wit," together with "continuous humping and bumping." If this seems too simplistic a conclusion, let us have a brief look at what happened to the television series of *Small World* and *Nice Work*.

*Small World* was serialised for British television in 1988, and *Nice Work* was shown the following year.114 Certain constraints present themselves in adapting a novel for television, as Stuart Laing points out.115 The amount of time available is one, another is the shape of that time. To adapt a novel of the size of *Small World* to a series inevitably entails reductions in the text.116 Although Laing does not discuss it, certain considerations regarding the audience aimed at must also be of importance. And just as novels depict life from an ideological stand-point, so does the medium of television. Peter Reynolds explains: "Animated images of literature in performance are seldom produced by accident

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112 Ommundsen 140, note 14.


114 The ITV company Granada turned *Small World* into a six-part television series in 1988, four years after its publication in hardback in 1984. It was published in paperback in 1985. *Nice Work* was serialised by the BBC in 1989. This novel went through the same stages, hardback edition in 1988, followed by the paperback edition in 1989.


or chance, nor are they natural and ideologically neutral. They have been
designed and built . . . by their author(s) in order to project a specific agenda and
to encourage a particular set of responses."117 What actually happened to Small World?

Laing argues that "the adaptation resulted in a considerable loss in the range
and depth of implication of the specifically literary issues with which the novel
was concerned."118 Instead the romance elements were stressed:

The use of unusually explicit sexual scenes for prime-time main channel
television . . . emphasised the argument that the link between literary
forms and sexual desire . . . offered one way of seeing how literature did
relate to practical questions of how to live, as well as stressing the
importance of primary sensuous experience.119

Laing concludes his article by arguing that "it would have been a . . . much more
radical project to have taken the novel's underlying issues of representation,
creativity, criticism, and the new international order of academic life."120 Lodge
seems to anticipate and avert any criticism of this fact when he lets old Mr
Wilcox in Nice Work comment upon a television series about the academy:

"What do you know about universities, Dad?" Vic said, amused.
"I seen films on the telly. All sorts of queer folk, carrying on with each
other something chronic."
"You don't want to believe everything you see on television, Dad."
"Aye, you're right there, son," said Mr Wilcox. (NW 244)

Disarming as this may be in context, it cannot conceal the fact that for a great
many readers and viewers the intended metaphorical dimension—the relation
between sex, literature and life—remains undetected. Lodge concedes that the
television adaptation of Nice Work also resulted in a loss of the intertextual
dimension: "it lent itself very easily to adaptation. Any references to the
Victorian novel almost entirely disappeared. But the way the story develops in

118 Laing 328.
119 Laing 330.
120 Laing 330.
space and time is very easy to render in the film."\(^{121}\) There is no mentioning of the intertextual dimension in Lodge's own article about how he adapted *Nice Work* for the television screen. It is perhaps symptomatic that he concentrates instead on "the different status of the writer in the production of the artefact," as compared to the autonomy of the novelist.\(^{122}\)

In order to cater to a television audience it was thus deemed necessary to eliminate or at least reduce the "parodistic and metafictional dimension" of the texts, and focus on romance and sex instead. Several of the romance plot lines in *Small World* are actually not very far from the pulp version found, for example, in the Mills and Boon romance series. Cheryl Summerbee, in *Small World*, claims to have outgrown "Bills and Moon [sic]" romances, because they are "not really romances at all. . . . They're just debased versions of the sentimental novel of courtship and marriage. . . . Titillating but moral" (SW 292). But where do the romance plots of *Small World* and, for that matter, *Nice Work*, fit in? Are they perhaps also only titillating debased versions? Let us compare with a genuine pulp romance.

*The Iron Master*, by Rachel Ford, is a Mills and Boon Romance with obvious affinities with *Nice Work*.\(^{123}\) Both novels portray an initially conflict-ridden relationship between a teacher and an industrial leader, brought about through a "shadow scheme."\(^{124}\) The friendship between Robyn and Vic is, however, substituted for marriage between Carly and Nick in Ford's novel. Whatever the reason for the striking similarities between the two novels, it is here sufficient to note that they offer an opportunity to compare the authorial audience of each respective writer.\(^{125}\) Ford is not aiming at an academic readership, and quite certainly there is a tremendous difference in the scope of these two novels. While

\(^{121}\) Díaz Bild 275.

\(^{122}\) Lodge, "Adapting *Nice Work* for Television" 191.


\(^{124}\) By such "shadow schemes" individuals working in very different occupations are encouraged to spend a regular part of their working-time in each other's working environment.

\(^{125}\) Lodge discussed plagiarism in connection with Ford's novel in an article, see "The Art of Fiction, 36: Plagiarism," *Independent on Sunday* 9 Feb. 1992: 28. This article was not included in the subsequent publication of the series, *The Art of Fiction: Illustrated from Classic and Modern Texts*. Whether *The Iron Master* is a plagiarism is a question that will not be discussed here. It is, however, difficult to see why Lodge for a time felt threatened by Ford's novel. After all, the similarities are basically confined to plot and characterization.
the consistent, intertextual game of *Nice Work* is very elaborate and does expand the pure realistic dimension of the novel, Ford's occasional and random references to the Brontës, Heathcliff and the black locks of the iron master himself, Nick Bradley, are far from constituting an intertext in its own right. But for the actual readers who do not detect that dimension in Lodge's works, the novels are superficially very similar. As Rabinowitz suggests our interpretation of a novel depends on what strategies we use when reading it, "an actual reader's interpretation of a specific text is at least in part a product of the assumptions with which he or she approaches it, including assumptions about the rules appropriate for transforming it." A reader who forms these assumptions on Mills and Boon romances, lacking access to the canon, will evidently not read *Nice Work* in the same way as a professor of English literature. While the professor uses the grid of canonized nineteenth-century texts, the romance reader will use a grid derived from the "debased version" of the sentimental novel. What remains for this reader is then only plot and character, and here the similarities between *The Iron Master* and *Nice Work* are striking. Although Ford's novel ends with marriage, the underlying message of a reconciliation between industry and the world of learning is the same as suggested by the happy dénouement in *Nice Work*.

Neither Ford or Lodge bother about constructing fully-rounded characters. Nick Bradley is certainly a stereotype, strong, authoritative "utterly masculine." But so is the red-headed Robyn Penrose, "tall and womanly in shape" (NW 44). Actually, Lodge "quotes" Robyn in a discussion of the sexual stereotyping in Ford's novel, which he claims is typical of the genre. Although the novel is told from the perspective of the heroine, the erotic scenes are inconsistent with this point of view:

126 Of interest here is that from my own teaching experience I have learned that the intertextual dimension is to a very large extent ignored. I have discussed *Nice Work* with well over a hundred students in various courses but none of them have spotted the intertextual dimension, or the novel's relation to the industrial novel, before actually being shown. María Suárez Lafuente, at the University of Oviedo, Spain, confirms this impression. When reading Lodge's work, her "students did not notice the intertexts in the novels, nor did they care about them (intertexts) as they enjoyed the reading so much at the level of humour and satire" (personal communication).

127 Rabinowitz 174.

128 Ford 154.
As Robyn Penrose might say in one of her seminars, the heroine's subjective consciousness of her body is colonized by the male gaze and she perceives herself as a sexual object, e.g.: "he untied the side thong of her bikini top and it fell away to reveal the lovely full curve of her breasts. She heard him draw a shuddering breath."129

Lodge's own novel makes it explicitly clear that Robyn avoids being perceived as a sexual object: "Robyn generally favours loose dark clothes . . . that do not make her body into an object of sexual attention" (NW 49). But she is objectified too, colonized by an ironic narrator with narrow views of the minds of "liberated" women. Uncertain about what to wear for her first visit to Pringle and Sons Robyn improbably asks herself: "What did a liberated woman wear to visit a factory?" (NW 96; my emphasis), thereby indicating how she stereotypes herself to much the same extent as Carly in Ford's novel. There might be a difference in colonization here, but it is surely only a matter of degree. A blatant example of precisely the male colonizing gaze can be found in Small World. When Philip Swallow remarks, somewhat wryly, upon the age difference between himself and Joy Simpson, she lovingly reassures him: "You make me feel desirable, that's what matters" (SW 256). The colonization is total; Joy's role in this relationship is swiftly and simply reduced to her willing acceptance of being a passive object of male desire. Lodge admits that he found it difficult to portray the allegedly passionate relationship between Philip and Joy.130 This is all too evident from the final result.

Rabinowitz claims that we as readers always look for coherence in a text and that our appreciation of the text is linked to this pattern of coherence that we are able to elicit from it. Again, our assumptions as we approach the texts are of vital concern: "books that are like other canonized texts are deemed coherent by similarity, almost as if they shared a club membership."131 Lodge's campus novels certainly illustrate his point. Although hardly canonized in their own right, they exist, by and large, on account of this "club membership." But the interpretation of a non-member, such as The Iron Master, may be very similar to the interpretation of its more highly connected cousins Small World and Nice Work—that is, if the readers are non-members too. To this extent Lodge has


130 See Haffenden 165.

131 Rabinowitz 227.
managed to bridge the gap, but whether the effect is the intended one remains a moot point.

To sum up: Lodge may have left behind the academy and its irrelevant theoretical practices but, as we have seen, his dedication to the canon remains unaltered. His concern for the literary culture at large has one important prerequisite: knowledge of canonical texts is crucial. In order for "civilised discourse" about fiction to continue, the canon must be maintained. Thus Lodge's fiction and general critical concerns continue their reciprocatory influence, supporting and validating each other. Lodge's success in creating a bridge between these two camps is in this respect more than convincing; more doubtful, however, is the success of his endeavours in relation to a non-academic audience. Of interest here is the drastic reduction of metafictional concerns in the television adaptations of *Small World* and *Nice Work*. The television audience is left with the one-dimensional realistic part of Lodge's novels. Consequently it would be highly misleading to assume that the versions conveyed through the television screen in any way contribute to Lodge's effort to bridge a gap between the academy and the world outside, at least with respect to theoretical issues and the literary canon. Perhaps it was realized by the adaptors that his fiction only creates links for the already initiated. Witty in-jokes and intertextual elegance will, after all, be appreciated only by those in the know. An image of a privileged society inevitably comes to mind. It should be remembered that not all amateur readers act like Cheryl Summerbee in *Small World*, embarking on a literary education and outgrowing pulp romances. In fact, it is not even clear that the one inevitably leads to the other, or, for that matter, that it should.

After having considered Lodge's campus fiction and criticism together, let us now look at the campus novels in more detail. The authority of the canon is actually one of the major themes in his first campus novel, *The British Museum is Falling Down*, which will be the subject of the next chapter.
The dialogue between self and other may take on special significance in a novel. The author may bring a variety of discourses together, turn them into characters, and let them clash within the fictional framework, in order to test their validity and viability. Bakhtin argues for the possibility, even necessity, that an author come to grips with the influence of others' discourses in order to liberate him/herself from them:

This process—experimenting by turning persuasive discourse into speaking persons—becomes especially important in those cases where a struggle against such images has already begun, where someone is striving to liberate himself from the influence of such an image and its discourse by means of objectification, or is striving to expose the limitations of both image and discourse.1

The problem of how to relate to authoritative discourses is of major concern in Lodge's first campus novel, *The British Museum is Falling Down*. Not only is the official discourse of the academy and the literary canon omnipresent, so is the powerful discourse of the Catholic Church; together they permeate the novel. Bakhtin contends that it is impossible to relate freely and flexibly to an authoritative discourse. It must be affirmed or rejected; there is no third alternative: "It is not a free appropriation and assimilation of the word itself that authoritative discourse seeks to elicit from us; rather, it demands our unconditional allegiance."2 This is the problem Lodge as a young Catholic academic writer confronts in *The British Museum* through his protagonist Adam Appelby: to affirm or reject the discourses he exploits in the novel. The problematic issue of authority runs through both levels of the novel: the straightforward realistic text and its intertextual subtext.3 The story is fitted into a scrupulously realistic framework, complete with thermometers, safety-pins and nappies together with detailed topographical descriptions of London and, of

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2 Bakhtin 343.

3 *The British Museum is Falling Down* is Lodge's first "problematic" novel; see chapter two.
course, the British Museum. The elaborate intertextual framebreakers, if detected at all,⁴ can be explained as products of the increasingly disoriented and confused Adam's daydreaming. This is consistent with Lodge's stated double aim, which was to make the narrative satisfying for both the audience who would get only the straightforward realistic story, and for the literary audience who would get both that and the intertextual level. The use of parody, he contends, was also "a way of coping with . . . 'Anxiety of Influence'—the sense every young writer must have of the daunting weight of the literary tradition he [sic] has inherited" (BM 4). For Lodge, and consequently also for Adam Appelby, this discourse of inherited literary influence is closely connected with a literary canon and with the academy. As a method of liberating himself from the weight of literary tradition, Lodge's use of parody here has clear affinities with Bakhtin's views of how to accomplish liberation from persuasive discourses.

In the introduction to the 1981 reissue of *The British Museum* Lodge offers a definition of an authoritative discourse that is very close to Bakhtin's. He talks about the Catholic Church and how, in exchange for acceptance of its imperatives, a place in its metaphysical system was guaranteed:

> It was precisely the strength of the system that it was total, comprehensive and uncompromising, and it seemed to those brought up in the system that to question one part of it was to question all of it, and that to pick and choose among its moral imperatives, flouting those which were inconveniently difficult, was simply hypocritical. (BM 2)

Whether Bakhtin would have agreed with the notion that it is a "strength" of any discourse to be totalitarian is, of course, very doubtful. But the notion that it is impossible to question part of it is familiar from Bakhtin's argument about "unconditional allegiance."⁵ The imperatives described by Lodge as "inconveniently difficult" are all related to the question of artificial birth control in *The British Museum*. The question of how to grapple with the Church's ban on contraception is uppermost in the protagonist's mind.

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⁴ As pointed out earlier, many reviewers missed the intertextual dimension.

⁵ Bakhtin 343.
A Quest for Ideological Maturity

In this chapter I intend to investigate the potential coming to ideological consciousness of Adam Appelby in relation to the authoritative discourses that vie for his allegiance. To be brought up to a passive affirmation of an authoritative discourse should not be confused with a genuine coming to consciousness which is an active and very demanding process. Does the novel offer such a genuine coming to consciousness and thus either a liberation from, or an active affirmation of established discourses? In an interview Lodge quotes Lionel Trilling: "the passage from innocence to experience is the plot of all novels."6 Is this true? Is it possible to read The British Museum as part of a Bildungsroman tradition, describing Adam's 24-hour journey as a quest for maturity, an ideological coming to consciousness in Bakhtinian terms?

Although lacking many of the necessary traits of a true Bildungsroman, the novel nevertheless possesses a few typical ones.7 According to Franco Moretti the most celebrated theme of this type of literature is compromise.8 And indeed, the major driving force of the novel is a will to compromise. That Lodge should write in this vein is consistent with his statement in 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."9 This philosophy of finding a middle course becomes problematic if linked with Bakhtin's view of how an individual comes to consciousness ideologically. His theories of dialogism and heteroglossia do not imply an openmindedness based on compromise. The process of reaching an ideological consciousness is explicitly described by Bakhtin as a dramatic battle of opposing discourses, not as a compromise of alternatives: "Our ideological development is

7 Jerome Hamilton Buckley gives the broad outlines of a typical Bildungsroman plot, the principal elements of which are: "childhood, the conflict of generations, provinciality, the larger society, self-education, alienation, ordeal by love, the search for a vocation and a working philosophy" (Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding [Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard U P, 1974] 18).
... an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions and values."¹⁰ Michael Holquist accordingly contends that "dialogism is based on the primacy of the social, and the assumption that all meaning is achieved by struggle. It is thus a stern philosophy."¹¹ The case for realism, compromise and liberalism argued for by Lodge becomes even more fraught with problems in connection with Bakhtin's view of the novel as a potential weapon against totalitarian, official discourses. This view is explicitly linked by Lodge with liberalism: "the novel has a kind of democratic function in his [Bakhtin's] theory and its association with liberalism follows on logically from that."¹² This is, however, a logic that is not self-evident. There are, after all, other forms of democratic discourse available to us. Eagleton, for one, contests a liberal appropriation of Bakhtin:

It is very hard to believe that Bakhtin spilt so much ink just to inform us that we should listen attentively to one another, treat each other as whole persons, be prepared to be corrected and interrupted, realise that life is an endless unfinished business, that too much dogma makes you narrow-minded, that nobody has a monopoly of the truth and that life is so much richer than any of our little ideas about it.¹³

Ken Hirschkop points out that "open-mindedness is an entirely desirable feature of intelligent argument, aiding us in a common search for truth."¹⁴ But he warns against confusing this open-mindedness with liberal relativism, a laissez-faire policy that does not provide "any criterion by which to distinguish the false from the true."¹⁵ "Critical discourse is never neutral,"¹⁶ Hirschkop contends, and suggests that neither did Bakhtin intend it to be.

¹⁰ Bakhtin 346, my emphasis.
¹⁵ Hirschkop 83.
¹⁶ Hirschkop 85.
It seems very unlikely that the characters in Lodge's novel of compromise will manifest an intense struggle of coming to consciousness as outlined by Bakhtin. However, there are very powerful authoritative discourses vying for allegiance in *The British Museum*, and Lodge's characters cannot remain unaffected by these. They are all forced to relate to them in one way or another. How is this dialogical relationship expressed in the novel?

Not only does the classical *Bildungsroman*, according to Moretti, celebrate compromise; it is also "a culture of everyday life."17 Within a contemporary British Roman Catholic/academic framework Adam lives a relatively common, everyday life, although some aspects are exaggerated in the interest of comedy. This is also a tradition that Lodge feels comfortable with: "I am basically in the English tradition of realistic fiction, working within a version of the world that will be recognizable to those who share it."18 The everyday character of the novel is further accentuated by the protagonist's personality. The character of Adam Appelby is a typical product of the English tradition of what Moretti labels the "insipid," unmarked hero.19 This vague character's relationship to the two powerful authoritative discourses that he faces is very problematic, and succeeds in making him guilt-ridden, frustrated, and anxious.

The Discourse of the Church

It is not fear of hell nor any problems with accepting *The Holy Trinity* that cause Adam Appelby's sufferings in relation to the Catholic Church of which he is a member. The problem is its teaching on contraception. His domestic life is under strain, the number of his children does not match his humble income. In constant fear of adding to the already numerous Appelby household, Adam and his wife Barbara practise the only permitted form of family planning known to the Church. This is the "safe method," popularly known as "Vatican Roulette" (BM 172), which at the opening of the novel seems to have failed them (for the fourth time). Barbara's period is three days overdue, and they are racked by the fear of conceiving another child. Lodge explores this issue thoroughly, and as his

17 Moretti 35.
18 Haffenden 158.
19 Moretti 11.
protagonists' problems are centred around this question it seems a fruitful point of departure.

Lodge states that he wanted to discuss how the Catholic teaching on contraception affected married Catholics and also the questioning of the validity of this teaching that had recently begun within the Church (BM 1).20 Bakhtin suggests that the testing of an authoritative discourse may be performed through a scrutiny of its boundaries: "A conversation with an internally persuasive word that one has begun to resist may continue, but it takes on another character: it is questioned, it is put in a new situation in order to expose its weak sides, to get a feel for its boundaries, to experience it physically as an object."21

This is the process initiated in *The British Museum*.22 Throughout the novel the discourse of the Catholic Church is scrutinized, turned inside-out, and put in new situations in order to illuminate and test its boundaries. Early on in the novel Adam completely objectifies the Church's teachings by mentally composing an entry for a Martian encyclopedia. Under the heading "Catholicism, Roman" he proposes the following content:

As far as the Western Hemisphere is concerned, it appears to have been characterized by a complex system of sexual taboos and rituals. . . . Some scholars have argued that it was merely a method of limiting the number of offspring; but as . . . the Roman Catholics produced more children on average than any other section of the community, this seems untenable. Other doctrines of the Roman Catholics included a belief in a Divine Redeemer and in a life after death. (BM 16)

The inefficiency of the safe method is made startlingly clear. There is little trace here, as in the rest of the novel, of the reassurance and stability that according to Lodge are offered by the Church in return for total allegiance. Although the Divine Redeemer is mentioned in Adam's entry, it is added more as an afterthought to stress the obsession with the problem of contraception that the

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20 This was in 1965 when there seemed to be a chance of the Catholic Church re-examining its view on contraception. In 1968, however, Pope Paul VI endorsed the total prohibition of artificial birth control.

21 Bakhtin 348. As will be discussed later, there is no doubt that the authoritative discourse here also performs as an internally persuasive one.

22 The process is continued in Lodge's novel of 1980, which has the telling title *How Far Can You Go?*
Church's ban produces, at least in Adam. He makes this explicit himself: "we Catholics expend most of our moral energy on keeping or breaking the Church's teaching on birth control, when there are a lot of much more important moral issues in life" (BM 70). The process of testing this teaching continues in new situations. Adam happens to meet Father Finbar, a parish curate, on his way to work. Will the Church change its attitude to artificial birth control? Adam asks. But the answer is unambiguously negative: "The Church's teaching never changes . . . On that or any other matter" (BM 36). Adam tries to offer counter arguments about new methods and changing circumstances, but in vain. The only advice he is able to draw out of Father Finbar is to practise self-restraint, which is what the curate does himself.

Naturally, the problem weighs heavy on Adam's mind, and he seeks the opinions and support of his friends. A possible solution to the problem of birth control is offered by his friend Camel: to leave the Church—temporarily—until Barbara reaches her menopause. But this is far from safe, since there is always the unexpected accident and subsequent death to consider: "Catholics are brought up to expect sudden extinction . . . and to keep their souls highly polished at all times," as another friend explains (BM 65). Later, Adam suggests in a discussion that perhaps the use of contraceptives could be re-classified as a venial sin, comparable to cheating on the buses (BM 71). But there seems to be no system for re-classification and the discussion dissolves in non-committal laughter. It becomes increasingly evident that it is impossible for a practising Catholic to accept part of the religious discourse while at the same time discarding the too-demanding part through a manipulation of its already-established framework. The system is total and foolproof; it is also perfectly in accordance with Bakhtin's contention that an "authoritative discourse permits no play with the context framing it, no play with its borders, no gradual and flexible transitions, no spontaneously creative stylizing variants on it . . . one must either totally affirm it, or totally reject it."23

The Catholic ban on contraception is explicitly tested when Adam contemplates adultery. In his attempts to secure unpublished material by an obscure Catholic writer, Egbert Merrymarsh, he comes across the tempting Virginia who will let him have the manuscript only on condition that he makes love with her. Already compromised by the planned adultery, Adam makes a feeble, half-hearted attempt to avail himself of contraceptives. Concealed by a

23 Bakhtin 343.
convenient fog he is about to enter a shop dealing in "surgical goods." But on its threshold he is effectively prevented by Father Finbar's unexpected and unwelcome appearance. Adam, apprehensive about his guilt, "froze in the attitude of an arrested thief" (BM 145). Unwittingly, the curate prevents him from committing adultery because in the end the only thing that hinders Adam from succumbing to Virginia's wishes is the fear of making the 17-year old girl pregnant. Virginia indignantly asks him if he believes in all that nonsense about birth control that the Church preaches. Adam answers her truthfully: "I'm not sure I believe it, but I practise it" (BM 123). How is it that Adam feels compelled to practise something that he apparently has come to doubt the validity of? Bakhtin provides an explanation: as Adam has been brought up in the Catholic faith, its unquestionable authority is for him a natural and inseparable part of the Church. This authority, Bakhtin contends, "is a prior discourse."24 For Adam this leads to the paradoxical situation that the guilt-ridden act of "taking precautions" by far outweighs the moral problems of being unfaithful to Barbara. He admits to himself: "There was no doubt . . . that the conditioning of a Catholic upbringing and education entered into the very marrow of a man" (BM 143).

The authoritative discourse is here also internally persuasive. The Church's teachings have been completely assimilated. Even when faced with the economically grim prospect of becoming a father of four, Adam admits meekly: "I don't suppose anyone really wants to use contraceptives, even non-Catholics" (BM 70). This is later echoed in Barbara's final monologue: "there's something a bit offputting about contraceptives even non-Catholics would prefer not to I don't suppose I'd jump for joy if the Pope said it was all right tomorrow" (BM 174; original punctuation). Barbara continues contemplating the subject, "there's something about sex perhaps it's original sin I don't know but we'll never get it neatly tied up . . . you wonder if there's such a thing as a normal sexual relationship" (BM 174; original punctuation). The Catholic conditioning of the Appelbys has rendered sex a frustrating and problem-ridden area. Furthermore, they seem thoroughly convinced of the naturalness and inevitability of this state of affairs, connected as it is with original sin. All they can do is wait for the Church to change. It was "inconceivable that one might in good faith remain a full member of the Church while disobeying," Lodge argues in the introduction (BM 3). The extent to which Adam and Barbara are portrayed as having

24 Bakhtin 342.
assimilated the Catholic metaphysical system, views on family planning and all, testifies to this.

In retrospect we know that the Catholic Church did not change its view on birth control, and consequently Barbara and Adam will wait in vain. This remains a topical issue in the Catholic world, and Lodge returns to it in 1992. Arguing for the abolition of the celibacy of the priesthood, he still finds the question of contraception problematic: "nobody has discovered a perfectly reliable, non-intrusive, medically safe method of contraception. Sex will always remind us that we are fallen creatures—which is why we need religion in some form or another."25 The argument echoes Barbara's views in the novel. Sex is, and apparently always must be, problematic.26 Lodge's testing and scrutinizing of the discourse of the Catholic Church in *The British Museum*, sometimes for comic purposes, do not amount to a rejection of it. The liberation process that was hinted at initially is not accomplished, but ends in passive waiting and thus an affirmation of the Church's authority.

The Discourse of the Academy

The anxiety aroused by the fear of conception is equalled in the novel only by the worry stemming from Adam's pending failure to complete his doctoral thesis. He is hard pressed for time and money. His thesis, which began magnificently as "Language and Ideology in Modern Fiction," has now been reduced to "The Structure of Long Sentences in Three Modern English Novels," although which three novels has yet to be decided, and Adam's final scholarship year is rapidly and inevitably approaching its end. The anxiety and stress created by this fact is constantly on his mind while trying to work at the British Museum. As might be expected, Adam has grave difficulties in concentrating and achieves very little.

While religion controls Adam's domestic life, his professional life is totally independent of his family concerns. "Scholarship and domesticity were opposed worlds, whose common frontier was marked by the Museum railings" (BM 105). The authoritative discourse that Adam has to face at the Museum is that of the academy, closely linked with the literary canon. This is an authority that he


26 The inevitability of this is further stressed by the fact that this is true for the non-Catholic characters in *The British Museum* as well.
deeply wishes to impress: "Ploughing ahead with a thesis that would rock the scholarly world and start a revolution in literary criticism" (BM 23). This, needless to say, is easier said than done. Adam's concentration is constantly threatening to slip away. The description of his arrival at the British Museum in the morning speaks for itself: "Adam pushed listlessly at the revolving doors and crossed the main hall with dogged, unswerving steps" (BM 40). Uninterested and listless as Adam may seem, it becomes evident that his research has had an enormous impact on him. In a nightmarish episode Adam is forced to renew his reading room ticket: "Adam, or A as he would now more vaguely have identified himself, had been all through this before, but could not be sure whether he had dreamed it or actually experienced it" (BM 41). He has, of course, read it before, studying Kafka. Adam is suffering from a common enough disease, as Camel explains: "It's a special form of scholarly neurosis . . . He's no longer able to distinguish between life and literature" (BM 63). This is basically true. Adam has preconceived views picked from the literature he has studied in the course of preparing his thesis. His daydreaming provides the most obvious and elaborate examples of this neurosis, and there are also other instances of how literary discourses have affected him. In order to test the boundaries of the writers that have influenced him, Lodge introduces elaborate parodies of them, conveniently and skilfully developed as the scholarly neurosis that afflicts his protagonist. This neurosis is hardly unique for Adam: most bookworms surely recognize this pattern of confusion of reality and fiction. One of them is Lennard Davis, who in *Resisting Novels* confesses: "My fantasies are novel fantasies. My conversations are shaped from dialogues in novels. My notions of beauty, truth, and reality peel off the pages of these works." Adam suffers from the same disease, and his is a grave case. He always has a literary role handy when needed; the only instance of failure in this role-playing is when it is overcome by the powerful discourse of the Catholic Church. When Adam contemplates buying contraceptives before his rendezvous with the fair Virginia he is at a loss: "All day circumstances had cracked the whip and urged him through a bewildering variety of hoops, but so far he had not been at a loss for a style in which to negotiate them. Now, when he most needed to assume a ready-made role, the knack seemed to have deserted him" (BM 142).

For the first time he has no script to turn to, or rather he has only the Script(ure) to consult and it offers no guidance. Adam does not know how to

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perform his part, and consequently fails. He experiences a feeling of being pushed from one situation to another, caught in patterns established by literary antecedents. He is constantly aware of enacting roles already performed in literature: "I don't see the point of my life at all . . . The only thing about it that seems really mine is sex—literature has annexed the rest" (BM 82). But as sex is annexed by the Church, it seems that Adam has nothing left.

Unable to break free from the intertextual framework in which Lodge has placed him, Adam remains a passive victim. He is, furthermore, a character created in a particular tradition as Lodge brings in the concept of the campus novel, explicitly referring to Kingsley Amis. Incompetence and lack of interest in teaching and research have now become stock themes of campus novels in the post-Lucky Jim era. The British Museum is no exception. Adam daydreams instead of performing any work. After having spent a completely wasted, unproductive morning at the Museum he complains to his friends that his thesis is as far from completion as ever. Shortly afterwards, however, Adam is momentarily forced to focus on his academic work. He has a meeting with his supervisor, Briggs, a kind but vaguely incompetent man who has been working on a history of the English Essay for twenty years. Adam anxiously inquires into the possibility of a university post, but Briggs's only advice is to publish. The human system of old times has vanished, he suggests, implying that it is no longer possible to secure a job through friends in high places. Publishing is the only way to get ahead in the academic world of today. In parallel with Professor Welch's lack of interest in "Lucky" Jim Dixon's work, Briggs's interest in Adam's research is close to non-existent. "With an effort, Briggs dragged his attention away from his private discontents and brought it to bear on mine. But the energy went out of his voice, and he seemed bored," Adam complains (BM 76). This is consistent with the newly re-established tradition in campus literature that academic supervisors should be completely uninterested in their students' work.28

There are clearly discernible echoes of Lucky Jim here, and they become even more obvious when Adam, after leaving Briggs's office, flatters his opponent Bane with a trivial enquiry. Adam leaves the building after having accomplished this ingratiating deed, well in line with Jim Dixon's efforts to flatter Professor Welch. However, on the way out, Adam's thoughts return to the two antagonistic scholars: "I wondered idly which man I disliked most, Briggs or Bane" (BM 77).

28 See chapter one for a discussion of this.
Dislike and contempt are feelings readily recognizable from *Lucky Jim*. Jim Dixon does not, however, contemplate his dislike *idly*. He pours his scorn over the sham academic world, initially only to himself, but eventually in the open. This is one of the major differences between the two characters. Adam is conspicuously passive. His indolence leaves other discourses free to form his life. A violent struggle of coming to ideological consciousness, as described by Bakhtin, is not traceable in Adam. The revolt carried out by Jim has no parallel in Adam Appelby's life; that he would openly contest Briggs is inconceivable. At the departmental postgraduate sherry party Adam is asked about his opinion of the novelist "Kingsley Anus," and he replies: "Oh yes, I like his work. There are times when I think I belong to him more than to any of the others" (BM 129). He develops this argument: "So all of us, you see, are really enacting events that have already been written about in some novel or other" (BM 130). This is of course true in the context of the novel and as a metafictional comment alluding to Lodge's efforts to come to grips with the "daunting weight" of a literary tradition. But that Adam should belong more to "Kingsley Anus" than to any other writer must surely be unwarranted. Between the characters of Jim and Adam there are few similarities. The fact that Adam becomes unmanageably drunk at the sherry party does not make him a rebellious Jim Dixon. His vague joke about contraception is not directed against the academy and clearly has no affinity with the explosive denouncement of Jim's drunken Merrie England lecture.

Lodge observes correctly that "if Jim were merely a register of other people's false appearances, Jim might be merely a boorish prig, as many of his literary offspring are; but the saving grace of Amis's novel is that Jim himself is . . . a hypocrite." The only difference between Jim and the others is that he knows he is a sham, and admits it. But "boorish prig" seems too harsh a judgement to pass on the insecure, vague character of Adam Appelby. It is evident, though, that he lacks Jim's honest apperception. Adam's article on Merrymarsh has been rejected by nine periodicals. Rightly so, to judge from the impression of incompetence

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29 To some extent Adam is a forerunner of Lodge's next insipid academic hero, Philip Swallow, who is also curiously passive.

30 This scene is, Lodge states, an acknowledgement of his debt to Malcolm Bradbury, who made him write a comic novel. It echoes the sherry party described in Bradbury's *Eating People is Wrong* (BM 5).

that he gives in research matters. But Adam has, of course, another explanation: "It was no use trying to publish criticism, unless you had a name, or friends" (BM 89). The frank attitude of Jim Dixon towards his unpublished article is a refreshing contrast to this self-pity. Considering the title of his article, Jim concludes that "It was a perfect title, in that it crystallized the article's niggling mindlessness, its funereal parade of yawn-enforcing facts, the pseudo-light it threw upon non-problems" (LJ 14). This self-criticism is all but lacking in Adam Appelby. The only honest revolt he is able to endorse wholeheartedly is imaginary. He has devised an intellectual game together with Camel, "When We Are In Power." In this game the Camel/Appelby team forges an authoritative discourse of their own. Imagining themselves endowed with absolute political power, they are free to impose laws and restrictions on the rest of the population. An important ingredient here is, needless to say, the promotion of themselves at the cost of others. Especially at the cost of the people that they, for one reason or other, have a grudge against. It may well be that this game acts as an outlet for frustration and pent-up anger, but it achieves nothing. Its function is rather the opposite; by stifling emotions of inadequacy and discontent, Adam and Camel are relieved of having to attack the real issues behind their problems. Basically, this is only a sophisticated version of Adam's usual daydreaming.

Eventually, though, Adam's dreams seem to have a chance of being realized. After the sherry party Adam decides to try to retrieve the manuscript from the voluptuous Virginia. He must try to accomplish at least something before the end of this, as yet, completely unproductive day. He fervently dreams of being able to outpower the discourses that corner him: the literary establishment, the academy, Catholicism and fate, all in one fell stroke. Perhaps the manuscript will provide him with the means to do so? Should he then be forced to be unfaithful to Barbara to accomplish this feat, surely this must be a small price to pay? But it is not to happen. In the end it turns out to be no more realizable than "When We Are In Power." In the spontaneous fire of Adam's scooter the precious manuscript is forever lost. Whether this is God's punishment for contemplated sins is not clear. What is clear, however, is that Adam is in dire need of a fairy-godfather in parallel with the deus-ex-machina character Gore-Urquhart in Lucky Jim. Lodge has already made his readers anticipate the intrusion of such a figure through Adam's meeting with the American Bernie Schnitz, as Adam suggests: "If I was the hero of one of these comic novels . . . he would be the fairy-godfather who would turn up at the end" (BM 82). Well, as he actually is a hero in such a novel, his wish may be granted. In The British Museum the final, fairy-
godfather part is played by this Bernie Schnitz, who, passing the site of the fatal scooter fire, beckons Adam into his limousine and offers him a lift home, a huge brandy and a part-time job as a book-agent.

This winds up a neat plot, intertexts and all. But it is important to bear in mind that the resemblance to Lucky Jim is only very superficial. Jim Dixon develops, and reaches an ideological consciousness. "Jim ceases to be a guilty hypocrite and reaps his reward," Lodge observes, and adds that it is only the comic mode that makes this simple solution possible. The reaping of rewards is certainly a wonderfully happy end to the novel. But ceasing to be a guilty hypocrite is a far from simple process, and the fact remains that Jim has no notion of the awaiting rewards when he reaches his decision to speak the plain truth, to cease being evasive and hypocritical. There is no such process detectable in Adam Appelby. He also reaps rewards in the fairy-tale-like ending of The British Museum, but for what reason is not very clear. Although it seems far from certain that Adam will ever be able to finish his thesis, there is in the end no suggestion that he will leave the academy. Nor is it necessary—the money he will earn as a book-agent will enable him to stay on at the British Museum. Unlike Jim Dixon, Adam will even be instrumental in perpetuating the system through helping to build a new college library in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado.

Whether the incompetence and malpractices that are described in a mildly ironical way in The British Museum are acceptable or not is a question that Lodge does not enter into. The extraordinary behaviour of the head of department who completely ignores everything and everybody, turning his back on everyone but his computer technicians, is made into a joke. Many students, on leaving the department, "would only be able to say, with Moses, that they had seen the back parts of their Professor" (BM 135). This is described as perfectly acceptable to Adam. That Camel should obtain a post after having accomplished absolutely nothing for several years is also calmly accepted: "Camel had waited long enough" (BM 167). All is taken in stride. The underlying discourse is taken for granted, as a once-and-for-all given. A critique of the academy is hardly the intention; Lodge claims that he cannot destructively satirize an institution of which he is a part, neither does he see the universities as "wicked or mischievous." After having made his readership laugh at some minor

32 Lodge, "The Modern, the Contemporary, and the Importance of Being Amis" 345.
33 Haffenden 161.
absurdities of the university world, it is left to regain strength and resiliently bounce back. In this respect the title of the novel is a misnomer, The British Museum is far from falling down; it stands as strong as ever, perhaps even stronger.

Robert Morace is under the impression that *The British Museum* "undermines authority at virtually every level." At the same time he states that Lodge "not only undermines the authority of his sources but paradoxically validates and even pays homage to them as well." This "paradox" is readily explained by Linda Hutcheon's theory of contemporary parody. The traditional concept of parody is to a large extent focussed on a definition of ridiculing imitation. Hutcheon argues against such a limited definition. Parody, she claims, has a wide range, it is "repetition with difference. A critical distance is implied between the backgrounded text being parodied and the new incorporating work, a distance usually signaled by irony. But this irony can be playful as well as belittling; it can be critically constructive as well as destructive." In a discussion of modern parody and Bakhtin, Hutcheon develops her argument: "parody's transgressions ultimately remain authorized—authorized by the very norm it seeks to subvert. Even in mocking, parody reinforces; in formal terms, it inscribes the mocked conventions onto itself, thereby guaranteeing their continued existence."

Contrary to Morace's view, Lodge's parody is not mocking the authority of the backgrounded texts. That he does not aim at ridiculing, or belittling, his literary models is made explicitly clear in, for example, his modelling of Barbara's final monologue on Molly Bloom's in *Ulysses*. Through the parody, he pays homage to Joyce. Bakhtin's words are again appropriate: "The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention." Lodge adapts

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35 Morace 139-40.


38 Bakhtin 293.
Joyce's discourse to his own intention as Barbara's monologue ends the novel on a half-resigned note. It is far from the life-celebrating soliloquy of Molly Bloom, and very much in line with the aesthetics of compromise advocated by Lodge. He states that he wanted the novel to end tentatively: "For Molly's keyword, 'yes', I would substitute a more tentative word, as more appropriate to Barbara's character and the mingled notes of optimism and resignation on which I wanted to end the novel" (BM 7). This note seems to be one of resignation. The word "perhaps" appears more than twenty times in the last few pages.

Although hoping that the Church will change in birth control matters, Barbara can and will do nothing but wait. She comes as near as to stating that if she was her friend Mary, for whom the rhythm method does not work, she would not hesitate a moment to use contraceptives. But then, Barbara is not Mary, and the challenging of the Church is left to others. As for Adam's professional life, the ur-mother character of Barbara is apparently prepared to accept anything from her child/husband. Worrying about having him cut his toe-nails, she unquestioningly accepts that he has lost the job at the department, on account of being drunk. Lodge has thus distanced himself from Joyce; although adopting his technique, which he admires, he offers a different ideological content marked by passivity and resignation alike.

Adam wallows in his role of victimized Catholic scholar: "haunted with the fear of an unwanted addition to his family, divided and distracted about his academic work [he] . . . wandered like an outcast through the foggy streets of Bloomsbury" (BM 105). His personal identity is characterized as "uncertain" (BM 97). This is not an overstatement. Neither is it overstating the case to claim that the authoritative discourses surrounding him have proved extremely powerful in shaping whatever identity he has. The discourses of Church and academy meet little resistance in Adam, and succeed in acting as internally persuasive discourses. The potential coming to consciousness of Adam Appelby is never realized. And Bakhtin's verdict is severe: "An independent, responsible and active discourse is the fundamental indicator of an ethical, legal and political human being."41

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39 This portrait points forward to the character of Hilary Swallow, another resigned woman who apparently is prepared to act as a mother to her infantile husband.

40 The quoted passage is, of course, also another instance of how Lodge acknowledges his debt to Joyce.

41 Bakhtin 349-50.
This discourse is not Adam's, Lodge does not allow him to develop and mature. Although he suggests that his protagonist would by 1980 have changed, there is no textual evidence of this potential. The notion that the plot of all novels is a passage from innocence to experience does not hold true for *The British Museum*. It is more than clear that Adam, and Barbara for that matter, do not question the authority and teaching of the Church. Lodge confirms this: "The possibility of making a conscientious decision to ignore that teaching is not raised" (BM 3). An acceptance and assimilation of the Church's imperatives, then, is part of Adam's uncertain personality; the other part is constituted by his "scholarly neurosis" and an acceptance of the academy as basically good. Although there are some obvious drawbacks to the university system, the description of it does not amount to any serious criticism. Lodge himself admits as much: "Like most traditional comedy, *The British Museum is Falling Down* is essentially conservative in its final import, the conflicts and misunderstandings it deals with being resolved without fundamentally disturbing the system which provoked them" (BM 3).

In essence the affinities between *The British Museum is Falling Down* and *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green* are clearer than any relationship with the novel by "Kingsley Anus." Although the system is not easily changed, there is no need for the "hero" to continue to endorse uncritically an institution if he despises and dislikes it, not even within the confines of comedy. But Adam Appelby remains passively cornered by the authoritative discourses of the Church and the academy. Although Lodge's discussion and scrutiny of these discourses reveal an awareness of their inherent weaknesses and even absurdities, they do not result in a rejection of their authority. The character of Adam is not endowed with the capacity for such an intense struggle that a true coming to consciousness entails. His place of study may seem to epitomize his situation: "he was compelled to study in his bedroom, his desk squeezed up beside the double bed, constant reminder of birth, copulation and death" (BM 88). This is the corner in which the reader bids farewell to Adam. No liberation from authority is offered in the novel, nor does *The British Museum is Falling Down* portray a successful quest for maturity. As for Lodge's exorcism of literary influences, the novel displays a way of both paying homage to these authorities and at the same time establishing himself as a technically competent adherent of the canon.

In Lodge's following campus novels the intertextual dimension becomes more explicit, but the tendency is the same. By reviving and appropriating established literary forms and canonical texts, he continues to validate and pay homage to
tradition. Although quests in various forms remain a persistent theme, none of them involves the potential of personal development. The exploration of the protagonists' prolonged mid-life crises results, as in the tale about Adam Appelby, in a withdrawing from responsibility. The novels do not depict passages from innocence to experience, but to resignation.

In the following chapter, I will use Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque in a discussion of how *Changing Places* and *Small World* contribute to an affirmation of established discourses and *status quo*, while seemingly contesting them.
4 Official Feast Dressed as Carnival: *Changing Places* and *Small World*

*Changing Places* and *Small World* are David Lodge's most clear-cut campus novels. *Changing Places* is "a tale of two campuses," and in *Small World* the entire world is portrayed as a global campus. They have both received very favourable reviews. Each, apparently, is the funniest book about academic life since *Lucky Jim*.1

In *After Bakhtin* Lodge claims to be writing carnivalesque novels: "I have found Bakhtin's theory of the novel very useful when challenged to explain how I can write carnivalesque novels about academics while continuing to be one myself."2 Lodge's claim will be the starting-point of the discussion in this chapter. Are these two campus novels really carnivalesque? What are the underlying values of these tales about Morris Zapp and Philip Swallow? How do they relate to the authoritative discourses of society and academia?

In order to clarify the concept of the carnivalesque we evidently, once again, have to turn to Mikhail Bakhtin. In his seminal thesis *Rabelais and His World*,3 Bakhtin classifies the medieval folk carnival as a singularly democratic event, as a spectacle in which the people truly participate. The description Bakhtin gives of carnival is of a world temporarily suspended from society's established hierarchical ranks, norms and prohibitions. Oriented toward the future, the carnival is a world embracing everybody and everything, a mixture, a boundless, enormous hybrid, where everything is mingled, degraded, inverted, changed and renewed. Inherent in the concept of carnival is what Bakhtin terms "the grotesque." It accentuates the material body, a body that is huge, bulging and bulky, with open orifices: "The distinctive character of this body is its open unfinished nature, its interaction with the world."4 Openness to the world,

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1 *The Sunday Times* had the following to say about *Changing Places*, "Not since *Lucky Jim* has such a funny book about academic life come my way" and *Newsweek*’s critic said that *Small World* was "the funniest and nastiest novel of academic satire since *Lucky Jim,*" all according to the blurbs of the paperback editions referred to here.


4 Bakhtin 281.
incompleteness and constant renewal are stressed as essential qualities. "Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal," Bakhtin points out, "It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed." He continues to say that this "carnival spirit offers the chance to have a new outlook on the world, to realize the relative nature of all that exists, and to enter a completely new order of things." Last, but not least, one of the most salient features of the carnival of the people is the carnival laughter, a laughter that is "universal in scope . . . directed at all and everyone, including the carnival's participants." This laughter is contagious, liberating and, furthermore, firmly connected to truth: "The truth of laughter embraced and carried away everyone; nobody could resist it."

Let us now return to Lodge and his being challenged about writing carnivalesque novels. That such a challenge should be needed builds on a grave misconception. In the actual "challenging" lies a notion that a carnivalesque novel about the academy might constitute a threat to that group. This is an unwarranted fear. One of the fundamental principles of carnival is that it is licensed, and that it supports the status quo. In 1444 a circular letter of the Paris School of Theology argued for the preservation of the feast of fools precisely on account of its function as a safety valve. Likening men to wine barrels, the letter states:

All of us men are barrels poorly put together, which would burst from the wine of wisdom, if this wine remains in a state of constant fermentation of piousness and fear of God. We must give it air in order not to let it spoil. That is why we permit folly on certain days so that we may later return with greater zeal to the service of God.

Thus recognizing the potential threat that the people may pose if pressured too hard, the School of Theology argues for the use of carnival as a means to give a temporary, harmless release of pent-up feelings of frustration, discontent, and

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5 Bakhtin 10.
6 Bakhtin 34.
7 Bakhtin 11.
8 Bakhtin 82.
9 As quoted in Bakhtin 75.
anger. The view of carnival as supporter of the establishment is shared by many. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White argue that: "Most politically thoughtful commentators wonder . . . whether the 'licensed release' of carnival is not simply a form of social control of the low by the high and therefore serves the interests of that very official culture which it apparently opposes."10 One of these commentators is Terry Eagleton: "Carnival, after all, is a licensed affair in every sense, a permissible rupture of hegemony, a contained popular blow-off as disturbing and relatively ineffectual as a revolutionary work of art."11

Brian Connery claims that Lodge's novels have been sloppily mislabelled "satiric." Hutcheon's definition of satire lends support to his claim. According to her, satire has a corrective aim in that it is "both moral and social in its focus and ameliorative in its intention."12 Connery rightly contends that Lodge's works are far from satiric. He argues that they are, instead, carnivalesque, that is, they "reify the status quo."13 Lodge does not criticize or challenge the academy. Connery convincingly demonstrates how Lodge's "parody is directed at literary conventions and literary antecedents, neither of which are degraded by the parody, and not directed at academics themselves."14 Whatever there is of potential satire in Lodge's work is muted, Connery argues, because the worlds presented are "inclusive and inescapable, allowing no glimpses of alternative possibilities."15 In a discussion of campus novels John Schellenberger suggests that this "type of satire does not suggest that these characters are seen by their authors as exceptional, pernicious and requiring to be eliminated. On the contrary they are presented as absolutely normal, typical and acceptable."16 Lodge


14 Connery 127.

15 Connery 127.

himself has pointed out the necessity of norms for satire to be successful. In a comment on William Burrough's *The Naked Lunch*, he stresses the fact that no norms have been established: "Deprived of our bearings in empirical reality, plunged into the ethically uncontrolled world of hallucination and dream, we are in no position to apply the episode . . . to the real world and draw an instructive moral."17 This argument can be readily applied to Lodge's own texts. The consequent conclusion must be that his campus novels do not enable his readership to draw "an instructive moral." The texts certainly bear proof of this; no alternatives are given, no serious criticism proposed. Consequently, they cannot be regarded as a threat to the academy. Lodge avoids discussing any potential conflict between the university world and the world outside. In view of the licensed quality of Lodge's work and also its muted satire, it must surely be unnecessary to challenge him to explain how he can continue to be an academic.

However, in this chapter I will argue that the main theme of these two novels is not even carnivalesque. It is instead part of another festive institution which is a tribute to the establishment and the dominant discourses in society. Although these campus novels support the status quo and are in all respects licensed by the academy, they have little in common with true carnival. They share, rather, their licence and their support of the establishment with this other festive activity that Bakhtin discusses, "the official feast," which "sanctioned the existing pattern of things and reinforced it . . . the official feast looked back at the past and used the past to consecrate the present."18 This official feast has, of course, its own discourses. Michael Holquist points out that "official languages . . . are masks for ideologies of many different kinds, but they all privilege oneness; the more powerful the ideology, the more totalitarian (monologic) will be the claims of its language."19 In the following discussion I will show that the world view advocated in these two novels is, contrary to appearances, a monologic view that resists relativity and change. *Changing Places* and *Small World* are, beneath a licentious, euphoric surface, nothing but official feast dressed as carnival.

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18 Bakhtin 9.

The Clandestine Other

The academic conference is a present-day version of carnival, Robert Kroetsch claims. The carnival's role in contemporary society has been trivialized and marginalized, he argues, but "the conference maintains a connection with a tradition that goes back at least to the streets and baths and to the marketplaces of ancient Greece and Rome; from that time forward, into those medieval and Renaissance cities where something like three months of the year might be given over to actual carnival."20 *Small World* is undoubtedly a novel about academic conferences. But it is not portraying carnival. Its description of conference is instead that of a closed, secret celebration. "Academics do amazing things . . . things their spouses and colleagues back home would not believe" (SW 268; my emphasis). It is important in this context to remember that there is nothing clandestine about the Bakhtinian carnival. It is an event in which everybody participates, a joyous celebration of life. To make it into an unlicensed event is to rob it of one of its fundamental qualities. Bakhtin explains: "Throughout the year there were small scattered islands of time, strictly limited by the dates of feasts, when the world was permitted to emerge from the official routine but exclusively under the camouflage of laughter."21

Eagleton claims that Lodge's novels find their dramas and intensities in sex,22 and J. R. Banks argues that there is altogether too much sex.23 Sexual licence plays an important role at the carnival, and sex is also of major concern in Lodge's fiction. "Nobody pays to get laid at a conference," Morris Zapp explains (SW 268), and the novel goes on to prove his point. But again it must be kept in mind that the celebration of the bodily principle in the true carnival is a licensed event, an open and joyous feast. The carnival is privileged with *the right* to emerge from the routine of life, *the right* to be free from all that is official and consecrated."24 In the case of most of Lodge's characters it is essential that their

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21 Bakhtin 90, my emphasis.


24 Bakhtin 257, my emphasis.
goings-on at conferences, and in other places, be kept secret from spouses and absent colleagues. The feeble effort Philip makes to convince Morris that he and Hilary "have an understanding" cannot fool anyone. Admittedly, the writer Ronald Frobisher, who has a brief encounter with Desirée Byrd, is allowed by his wife to seek "carnal satisfaction elsewhere," but only "providing it is nothing deeply emotional, and she and her friends never hear about it" (SW 271). Discretion is thus essential, and so is lack of feeling. This last request is easily granted, though, in Lodge's fictional world. There is hardly any question of a joyous celebration of the flesh here. Most of it is portrayed as compulsive, joyless and decisively guilt-ridden.

Discussing the ideas that initiated the writing of Small World, Lodge states that he wanted the novel to

deal in a carnival spirit with the various competing theories of literary criticism which were animating and dividing the profession of letters and with the complex relations between academic scholarship, creative writing, publishing and the media which are such a striking feature of contemporary culture.25

This metafictional dimension however, has its thematic and realistic double that by far overshadows it. Adultery is a central theme in both Changing Places and Small World. My exploration of this issue may to some extent seem to dovetail with Peter Widdowson's analysis of Lodge's works. The world view presented in them, Widdowson contends, is:

a "representation" of a view of life much less sunnily comic, much more conservative than the play with structuralism, post-modernism and contemporary sexual mores would suggest. "Romance" might be the form; marriage would seem to me to be the issue—and form and content in these books have a significant reciprocity.26

Wenche Ommundsen agrees that marriage is the ruling metaphor for the novels, but doubts that it can be seen as a symbol of stability: "To judge by the marital conflicts which by far overshadow matrimonial bliss . . . marriage is more likely

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to be precisely the site of the strife, the unstable contract where irreconcilable opposites confront each other until death—or divorce—them part." But blissful or not, marriage in Lodge's fiction does remain the norm, a contract upon which society builds.

I will argue against any carnivalesque interpretation of the realistic dimension of these novels, and consequently corroborate Widdowson's conclusion that the novels are essentially pessimistic, not to say dismal and gloomy. But at the same time I intend to show that the form of these novels is actually not pure romance, but the classic novel of adultery from the high bourgeois era. My analysis here will build on Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque as already outlined, and on Tony Tanner's analyses in *Adultery in the Novel*, which he claims that marriage, as an institution, vouched for the stability and permanence of bourgeois society and the bourgeois novel alike. Adultery, self-evidently, is seen as a threat to this stability, but at the same time it constitutes an alluring, tempting other to established norms; hence the fascination. Lodge has reviewed Tanner's work favourably, but with two major reservations. He cannot agree with Tanner's view that adultery in the modern novel has ceased to signify, nor can he accept the proposed strong homology between the system of bourgeois marriage and the system of the bourgeois novel.

In his review of Tanner's book Lodge claims that he is himself "impressed . . . by the durability of adultery as a theme for fiction, persisting in spite of all the changes of literary and moral fashion over the past hundred years." And he concludes that the matter of adultery is still a question of significance in contemporary literature, and, of course, his fiction bears witness to this. Desire and fear, temptation and threat, are facets that are repeated over and over again in Lodge's novels. A desired and at the same time feared other existence is constructed outside the realm of every day life. Adultery is portrayed as a tempting option for academic men in mid-life crises. The sharp edge of infidelity, the pain it may entail, is not entered into though, since it is deemed inappropriate

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for the comic mode. But while Lodge tries to demonstrate the viability of adultery as a modern literary theme and thus refute Tanner's view, his novels follow a pattern already established in the last century, and in fact validate Tanner's contention about the strong connection between this type of literature and the traditional values of bourgeois society.

Widdowson finds marriage to be the issue of these novels, an issue that he relates to "the liberal dilemma and its orientation to conservatism, quietism and defeatism." I fully agree with his view, but will look at the theme from a different angle. How do Lodge's excursions into adultery relate to the carnivalesque? Seen in a larger perspective the issue grows to include not only sex and/or matrimony, but the whole concept of change and renewal in life and society. By focussing on Philip Swallow and his extended mid-life crisis, lasting well over ten years, it is possible to show how a conservative pattern is reinforced through the treatment of *unlicensed* adultery as euphoria, a subsequent insistence on secrecy and eventual matrimonial stability. "For bourgeois society," Tanner argues, "marriage is the all-subsuming, all-organizing, all-containing contract. It is the structure that maintains the Structure, or System." It goes without saying that adultery constitutes a serious threat to this system. Annette Lawson adds to Tanner's argument:

Adultery is all about the setting, breaking, or maintaining and the creation of boundaries. It is about breaching the social order, about transgression. . . . In the breach of a rule is the rule made clear . . . adultery is about much more than marriage. It is about relations between women and men —indeed, it is about the nature of the whole society." The issue of marriage and adultery, "contract and transgression," can thus be seen in a wide perspective. In relation to this issue my following discussion will focus on a particular pattern in Lodge's novels, a pattern of a false sense of freedom and liberating licentiousness coupled with a deep fear of detection.


31 Widdowson 24.

32 Tanner 15.

Widdowson claims that "given the euphoric description of 1960s America, and its effect on Philip, there is no logical necessity for him to revert suddenly to liberal-bourgeois type, except that a deterministic realism requires him to." It is, however, precisely the euphoric quality of life in Euphoria, that makes him "revert." Philip's change is only illusory. An ordinary dictionary provides the clue. "Euphoria" is defined as "an often groundless or excessive feeling of well-being and happiness." Inherent in the very concept of euphoria is thus its basis in delusion, or deviation from some kind of standard norm of happiness. A point that will prove crucial in what follows.

Philip and Hilary had spent their very happy honeymoon in California, and Philip is now, some twelve years later, given the opportunity to return. Already at the outset of his journey to the West-Coast we are told that "emotionally it is still for him a kind of Paradise, the place where he was once happy and free and may be so once again" (CP 21). The escapist undertone of this statement cannot be ignored. California with its connotations of perpetual sunshine, freedom and self-reliance constitutes a perfect image for Philip of the desired other existence. An existence far removed from the toils and troubles of dreary family life in Rummidge. The choice of the word "Paradise" takes on a special significance in this context. Paradise is no longer part of this earth, and thus cannot be part of everyday life. Evidently Philip Swallow does not seriously contemplate a new kind of life; he seeks a temporary release from his ordinary life, an extended holiday. When Philip thinks about Hilary he finds it "difficult after all these years to think of her as ontologically distinct from her offspring. She existed, in his field of vision, mainly as a transmitter of information, warnings, requests and obligations" (CP 25). He is by now disillusioned by what Lawson labels "the Myth of Romantic Marriage," a myth that contains "sexual exclusivity and permanence" and the belief that in a good marriage all of a person's needs will be met. Philip has but changed myths though. The reason for Hilary's wanting him to go to Euphoria in the first place is that he is getting stale, he needs a break. And in the U.S.A. he sets about busily pursuing "the Myth of Me," the

34 Widdowson 26, my emphasis.

35 Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus, ed. Mairé Weir Kay (Springfield: Merriam, 1976) 300, my emphasis.

36 Lawson 24.
story of the development of the self."37 Initially, the dream of self-realization seems to come true. The dreamlike quality of the euphoric bliss in the Californian Paradise is revealed in most of Philip's references to it: "It was indeed, he thought, a perfect marriage of Nature and Civilization, this view [over the Bay Area] . . . The harmony he perceived in the scene was, he knew, illusory" (CP 56; my emphasis). It is as illusory as the happiness of Philip in California. In Euphoria he is "slightly delirious" (CP 66), recapturing "all the helpless rapture of adolescent eroticism" (CP 98). He is "transported" (CP 99) and feels "a dark Lawrentian joy" (CP 100). California is likened to Paradise, the garden of Eden, "the air was cool and sweet, perfumed with the sub-tropical vegetation that grew luxuriantly in the gardens of affluent Plotinus" (CP 170). Thus the dreamlike, transitory quality (because dreams do end) of Philip's life in California is consistently underlined. He moves in with Desirée Zapp (also part of the desired other existence), and the time he has spent so far in Euphoria "seemed like a drugged dream as it receded into the past" (CP 180). Their relationship gradually develops into a love affair, an affair that is far from the Myth of Romantic Marriage. "Now we're having an affair," Desirée complains, "like everybody else. How banal" (CP 185). In the end, playing with the idea of a permanent life in California, Philip reasons with her, "This conversation is getting more and more unreal. I'll go back in a month's time, of course" (CP 176; my emphasis). He feels himself to be a fraud and an impostor.

But then, suddenly, one day he believes he has found the key to the problem. Sitting at a café, watching girls, he finds himself convinced by the Myth of Me: "the West Coast of America . . . was the furthest rim of experiment in life and art, to which one made one's pilgrimage in search of liberation and enlightenment" (CP 194). He recalls Henry James's The Ambassadors: "'Live . . . live all you can; it's a mistake not to'" (CP 195; ellipsis as in CP). Consequently Philip tries to write a mental letter to Hilary to tell her about his relationship with Desirée and that he cannot return to their kind of marriage: "Because I've changed, Hilary, changed more than I should have thought possible. . . . Life, after all, should go forwards, not backwards" (CP 195-96). Nevertheless, there seems to be a shadow of a doubt, as Philip will not send the letter off just yet. He can afford to wait, Hilary is in another country, even in another part of the world. He feels temporarily safe and free. The solution is at hand, but there is no

37 Lawson 25.
immediate need to effectuate it. Tanner provides an explanation for Philip's behaviour:

it is possible to identify a recurring opposition or alternation of realms in the novel of adultery for which "the city" and "the field" provide generic equivalents. . . . This simple distinction suggests that there is an area that is inside society and one that is outside, where the socially displaced . . . couple may attempt to find or practice a greater freedom.38

_Changing Places_ is a campus novel, but at the same time it fits into this pattern of the classic novel of adultery. The city here is Rummidge, Hilary and the children, while California stands for the field, the place where Philip may be happy and free with a new woman (and new children). But only as long as these two realms remain distinct. The people Philip knows in Euphoria "thought Philip was gay because he had taken Charles Boon into his apartment and that she [Desirée] was a lesbian because of the Women's Liberation bit, so [they] didn't imagine that the two of them might be having an affair" (CP 184). Philip is perfectly safe for the time being.

Philip's euphoria and his affair with Desirée end when his two lives finally clash. Philip never sends any explaining letter; it is instead Desirée who informs Hilary of what is happening. Hilary phones Philip to discuss the matter, unfortunately to a phone-in radio programme on which he is appearing. On the air Philip is forced to announce his infidelity: "I'm having one [affair] already . . . But I don't want to tell the whole world about it" (CP 200). The illusory safety of distance is effectively shattered, and, removed from the realm of Euphoria, Philip's affair cannot last. This is also where any parallels between a carnival and Philip's life in the U.S.A. must cease. From the outset Philip's stay there has been presented as temporary and it could last only while separated, concealed, from his "normal" life. Carnival is, of course, also a temporary experience, but it is a _licensed part_ of life. Bakhtin stresses this fact over and over again: "The feast was a temporary suspension of the entire official system . . . For a short time life came out of its usual, legalized and consecrated furrows and entered the sphere of utopian freedom."39 But secrecy is essential for Philip, and as Tanner points out: "one can only be temporarily put out of sight, and such strategies of _concealment_ are mute testimony to the recognition that the given order cannot be

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38 Tanner 23.

39 Bakhtin 89.
changed." There is no doubt that Philip will return to Hilary and England, in spite of Lodge's attempt at an open ending: "without anything being resolved, or explained, or wound up, it can just . . . end" (CP 251; original ellipsis). Widdowson contends that Philip's rejection of the Euphorian way of life strikes "an odd and rather mawkish note." Philip is indeed a mawkish character, but the dreamlike quality of his entire stay in the paradisical Euphoria has thoroughly foregrounded this outcome. The things he imagined he believed in while in Euphoria were but illusions. Philip ends up envying the young their life style, a life style that he cannot share, echoing his thoughts at the beginning of the novel: "he envied them the world of thrilling possibility in which they moved, a world of exposed limbs, sex manuals . . . erotic music and frontal nudity on stage and screen" (CP 27). He is only nostalgically longing for something he can observe but in which he cannot fully participate.

What Philip explicitly rejects here is nothing but the carnival. The carnivalesque crowd is, according to Bakhtin, "concrete and sensual. Even the pressing throng, the physical contact of bodies, acquires a certain meaning. The individual feels that he is an indissoluble part of the collectivity, a member of the people's mass body." But Philip is not part of this collectivity; for him there are clear distinctions between what is private and what is public:

I could never feel like that about any public issue. Sometimes I wish I could. . . . We're private people, aren't we, our generation? We make a clear distinction between private and public life; and the important things, the things that make us happy or unhappy are private. Love is private. Property is private. Parts are private. That's why the young radicals call for fucking in the streets. (CP 249; my emphasis)

As long as the "carnival" can be hid in California, Hilary and dreary Rummidge life need not be considered. Desire and dream are projected to realms outside the

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40 Tanner 204.

41 As Widdowson points out in his article, this is later confirmed in Small World.

42 Widdowson 25.

43 As a character Philip has strong affinities with Adam Appelby who also envies "the others" their apparently untroubled, free and easy access to sex.

44 Bakhtin 255.
actuality of everyday life. But, when distinctions and barriers break down, the "carnival" evaporates. Philip cannot answer this challenge; instead he chooses to return to marriage. Once restored from euphoria it has no bearing on his life.\textsuperscript{45} Philip's "carnivalesque" experiences in California have merely been wish-fulfilling dreams without a future. His entire stay in Euphoria has only served to strengthen his commitment to already-established social values. And contrary to the belief in change and renewal inherent in the carnival, Philip realizes that change is neither possible, nor desirable. Stallybrass and White provide an explanation:

There is no more easily recognizable scene of bourgeois pathos than the lonely crowd in which individual identity is achieved \textit{over against} all the others, through the sad realization of not-belonging. That moment, in which the subject is made the outsider to the crowd, an onlooker, compensating for exclusion through the deployment of the discriminating gaze, is at the very root of bourgeois sensibility. Who would not exchange vulgar participation in the jostle of the crowd for the gift of discriminating judgement? At the carnival the truly fine spirit will only find disillusionment.\textsuperscript{46}

Far from being carnivalesque in this instance, the novel offers the realization of the irrelevance of carnival for the protagonists with whom the reader has been asked to identify. Philip chooses to distance himself from the carnival crowd, the others. This unambiguous rejection of the people's carnival is the basic ideological assumption that informs \textit{Changing Places} and, as I will discuss below, also its sequel \textit{Small World}.

The Repetitive Pattern

Lodge has argued that the total effect of works of art is clearly influenced by patterns of repetition.\textsuperscript{47} In his own campus novels such a pattern is readily found.

\textsuperscript{45} Admittedly Philip claims that for a long time after his return to Britain he mentally remained in Euphoria. This did not, however, affect his outward behaviour and thus only serves to confirm the futility in change (SW 76).

\textsuperscript{46} Stallybrass and White 187.

Philip's rejection of new possibilities is not an occasional occurrence. He is a repetitive and predictable character. His life does not go forwards as was suggested in the planned letter to Hilary. Indeed it only repeats itself over and over again. His affair with Desirée begins on a shaky note: "His limbs trembled uncontrollably" (CP 192). The beginning of his love affair with Joy in Small World is marked by the same peculiar trembling and it seems that he has never stopped shaking: "I was still shaking all over" (SW 83).

Their relationship is basically a variation of a familiar theme. "Proper names in fiction . . . always signify," Lodge asserts and, as her name reveals, Joy is only a younger replica of Hilary. Philip himself realizes this: "looking at Joy out of the corner of my eye was like looking at some younger, prettier version of Hilary" (SW 81). He still is curiously unable to relate feelings of love and freedom to anything but America. Having seen the Bosphorus together with Joy he exclaims; "It's the Bay Area of the ancient world" (SW 252), and Joy, of course, is his "Euphoria," his "New Foundland" (SW 252). Thereby he indicates his failure to confer any sense of true actuality on his relationship with Joy, a failure that can be traced back to their very first meeting, in which Philip seems to observe rather than participate:

And all the time I was looking at myself reflected in the dressing-table mirror, in this weird purple light, my chin on her shoulder, my hands moving over her back, as if I were watching a film, or looking into a crystal ball. It didn't seem possible that it was really happening. (SW 84; my emphasis)

When Philip later tells Joy he loves her, he does it "simply, sincerely, without hesitation, without embarrassment, like a hero in a film" (SW 246; my emphasis). This is very far from any celebration of carnival. As Bakhtin points out, everyone participates in the carnival, there are no footlights, at the carnival "there are no guests, no spectators, only participants."49

Philip believes himself to be "still capable of a great romance" (SW 247). From having relentlessly pursued the Myth of Me for some years, made a career and had countless affairs, Philip now focusses on the Myth of Romantic

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48 Lodge, After Bakhtin 103.

49 Bakhtin 249.

50 The main reason for Philip's travelling the globe at the expense of The British Council is for the opportunity it offers to find "intensity of experience," for him extramarital sex.
Marriage. But, of course, this is not to be. Well foregrounded as it is, the ending is logical. A relationship based on "groundless euphoria" must, by definition, end. And the same dreamlike quality lingers over this love-affair as over the previous one, even if the dream is of another nature now. Lodge says that he had not decided that Philip would dissociate himself from Joy, until the moment when he wrote the scene: a claim that may seem to illustrate the contention that not even authors are fully aware of their creative process. The entire novel strives towards this solution as the only possible one. In Israel one of Philip's fellow scholars remarks: "It is as if the man [Philip] has been given ten days to live and is determined to pack every instant with sensation, sublime or gross" (SW 341), a clear indication of how the dream is rapidly approaching its end.

The space outside society created for Philip and his euphoria is this time Turkey, Greece and Israel. In remote places of the world, full of romantic and exotic associations for the Western mind, it is possible for Philip to believe, once again, that he has changed irrevocably, and he is therefore firmly set on telling Hilary that he wants a divorce. But again euphoria recedes rapidly in the meeting with the actuality of Philip's life. During the conference in Jerusalem Philip and Joy accidentally bump into his son, and Philip promptly and without hesitation denounces Joy. The clash between Philip's euphoria, his very private "carnival," and "reality" could only end in one way. "I failed in the role of romantic hero," (SW 381) he later explains. "Romantic" here only further stresses Philip's inability to integrate his relationship with Joy in the "real" world, and thereby the impossibility of an adulterous love affair to stand up to actuality. Marriage is permanent, an affair is not.

Philip rejects all change, in Changing Places as well as in Small World. The vaguely contemplated ways out of marital and spiritual confinement are never explored, nor are they perhaps deeply wanted. Because, as Philip suggests early in Small World, they would have been futile: "Habit ruins everything in the end, doesn't it?" (SW 88). A new life with Joy, or Desirée for that matter, would

51 Widdowson claims that Lodge is convincingly sensitive in his treatment of Joy's and Philip's relationship (29). But in view of Joy's happy acceptance of a role as a passive, desirable object, I would rather describe his treatment as completely insensitive.

52 See Haffenden 166. Lodge states "I think I decided at a fairly late stage that Philip Swallow's romantic idyll had to collapse, because his wife Hilary could not be just casually ditched—not within the comic romantic tradition."
eventually also turn into a dull, monotonous routine. Disregarding the novel’s open play here with the Russian Formalist concept of "defamiliarization," we should remember that there is absolutely nothing new about this insight. Many have shared it with Philip. Tanner's analysis provides us with a notorious example. The lover of Emma Bovary, Rodolphe Boulanger, is easily bored with his conquests: "the charm of novelty, gradually slipping away like a garment, laid bare the eternal monotony of passion, whose forms and phrases are for always the same."53 It is only as long as the plunge into the void, i.e., divorce, is not taken, that the belief in liberation in adultery can stay viable. Forbidden fruit is sweet, it is suggested, and to license an affair would be to rob it of its appeal. By rejecting the simultaneously fascinating and threatening challenge of permanent transgression, the dream of the liberating other remains intact. By returning to Hilary, Philip is free to go on keeping a "little shrine to Joy" (SW 87) in his heart. America will remain a paradise to him, a paradise that would, no doubt, have proved dreary in the end, had he settled permanently there together with Joy. The dreariness has been prophesied by Desirée Zapp when she first meets Philip: "you haven't lived with it [the view of the Bay Area] for ten years. Wait a while. You can't rush nausea, you know" (CP 81). This is a far remove from the positive belief in the future that true carnival offers according to Bakhtin: "The birth of the new, of the greater, and the better, is as indispensable and as inevitable as the death of the old."54

In Changing Places and Small World there are repeated explorations of adultery. But these brief episodes of transgression always end in a renewed commitment to marriage,55 a commitment that is anticipated and consistently foregrounded in the texts through the treatment of the adulterous relationship as a state of mental intoxication that can last only while concealed from the actuality of society. Only as unlicensed, temporary, transgression is an affair at all interesting. The implied impossibility of avoiding dreariness and monotony for long, in any place or relationship, is the depressing conclusion. This is indeed confirmation of Bakhtin's notion of how the official feast uses the past to consecrate the present. Change is pointless as it is always already doomed to fail, reduced to a mere repetition of already established patterns. Small World "is

53 Gustave Flaubert, Madame Bovary, as quoted in Tanner 266, my emphasis.
54 Bakhtin 256.
55 As discussed by Widdowson.
about the unattainability of one's desire,"56 Lodge claims. "Change is pointless as
desired happiness is unattainable"—is this why these novels come out so
fervently on the side of matrimony? Tanner provides another possible answer;
change is undesirable and must therefore be portrayed as without potential: "The
failure of marriage as a binding form may either presage or be isomorphically
related to the imperilment of the particular economic system in which it is
embedded and to a possible crisis in the status and ownership of the accepted
discourses."57

Marriage is the pillar on which society rests, a guarantee for social order and
the perpetuation of the structure of bourgeois society. Adultery in this context
becomes too threatening to be granted the status of actuality. Treated as a
temporarily and spatially restricted experience, of which the "wronged party" is
kept uninformed, it is rendered harmless. The rules of society can remain intact.
The suggested futility in change, coupled with the close to compulsive
committing of adultery, in terms of a limited euphoric experience, has wide
implications. Tanner suggests:

If society depends for its existence on certain rules governing what may
be combined and what should be kept separate, then adultery, by bringing
the wrong things together in the wrong places (or the wrong people in the
wrong beds), offers an attack on those rules, revealing them to be
arbitrary rather than absolute.58

This insight of relativity is something that the true carnival of time offers as well.
According to Bakhtin the carnival enables people to realize the relative and
joyful nature of all that exists, "the joy of change."59 He explains, "in the world
of carnival the awareness of the people's immortality is combined with the
realization that established authority and truth are relative."60 But, as I have
shown, Lodge's version of carnival offers no such insight. In the case of adultery,
the fear of detection functions as a confirmation of rules and values that are

56 Haffenden 162.
57 Tanner 85.
58 Tanner 13, my emphasis.
59 Bakhtin 48.
60 Bakhtin 256.
forever unchangeable. The repeatedly abandoned adulterous affairs serve only to confirm the existing societal boundaries. Nothing changes basically; indeed the reader is given the impression that nothing can or should change.

Lodge claims that his "novels show that people in academic life are subject to the same drives and appetites and physical needs as anyone else." The focus on appetites is, however, extremely narrow. The issue of the academy's role in society is all but non-existent. There is nothing in these novels to suggest that the deplorable professional ethics of these campus clowns should change. Their right to run the universities, to neglect teaching and ignore students is not discussed and thus never questioned. This is the official feast celebrating "the existing hierarchy, the existing religious, political, and moral values, norms and prohibitions." As participants in the official feast these novels do not offer even a token challenge to authority.

However, the issue of the university's role in society moves to the forefront in Lodge's next novel, *Nice Work*. From having portrayed a world peopled mainly with academics, Lodge in this novel moves outside the confining walls of the campus. In *Nice Work* the discourse of the academy is made to clash with the discourse of British Industry—both heavily marked by the economic recession of the 1980s.

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61 Haffenden 167.

62 Bakhtin 9.
5 The Stifled Dialogue: *Nice Work*

The last campus novel by Lodge to be discussed in this thesis is, to date, also the last written. *Nice Work* takes as its explicit subject the meeting of the university and the outside world. For the first time Lodge's academy is not presented as an all-inclusive global campus. "With the publication of *Nice Work*," Ommundsen argues, "the academic fiction of David Lodge has, in a sense, graduated."¹ Are there any identifiable reasons for this development? Lodge claims that he had a new intention with *Nice Work* compared to the earlier campus novels: "When universities came under pressure . . . I wrote a novel which is a rather more realistic and positive account of what universities do."² Bakhtin provides a possible explanation for the increased scope of this campus novel: "A sealed-off interest group, caste or class, existing within an internally unitary and unchangeable core of its own, cannot serve as socially productive soil for the development of the novel unless it becomes riddled with decay or shifted somehow from its state of internal balance and self-sufficiency."³ At the time *Nice Work* was written, Thatcher policy had implemented cuts and enforced subsequent reductions in staff in the British university world. Higher education, which in the Robbin's Report era was considered self-evidently good, was questioned. This resulted in a loss of "internal balance and self-sufficiency," to quote Bakhtin. It is thus not until the university has to some extent lost its power that Lodge expands the campus, and lets in the world, to portray a more complex society, a world filled with competing non-academic discourses. *Nice Work* expresses a fundamental ambivalence towards Thatcher policy: on the one hand the novel strives to give a positive account of the academy, but on the other hand, Lodge argues, it "reflects the demoralization of the universities."⁴ The authoritative discourse of the academy is here, for the first time, seriously questioned by him. This tension runs unresolved throughout *Nice Work*, and may

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⁴ Díaz Bild 266.
be one of the reasons for the evasive and noncommittal ending.

The other themes of *Nice Work* are, however, very familiar. Lodge uses his usual technique of "binary structure," contrasting in this case Robyn Penrose and Vic Wilcox, university and industry. This is a pattern already firmly established in his earlier novels with Swallow and Zapp, England and America, amateurism and professionalism. Initially, Lodge planned *Nice Work* to "be about a man who is a successful businessman and has a kind of mid-life crisis and begins to have doubts about his life, and is alienated from his family. . . . part of his crisis would be a relationship with a woman who came from some kind of artistic, intellectual area." This is only a variation on the theme of a male mid-life crisis coupled to adultery as explored in *Changing Places* and *Small World*.

There is also an intertextual dimension to the text, since it is a parody of the nineteenth-century industrial novel. The character of Vic Wilcox has close affinities with John Thornton in *North and South*, apart from having borrowed his name from Henry Wilcox in *Howards End*. Robyn's heritage is partly that of Margaret Hale and Margaret Schlegel in the same novels. *Nice Work* is thus a kind of crossing of many discourses, the industrial novel, the campus novel and the novel of adultery. Bakhtin discusses this hybrid phenomenon: "the novelistic hybrid is an artistically organized system for bringing different languages in contact with one another, a system having as its goal the illumination of one language by means of another, the carving-out of a living image of another language." The novel is thus both an "organized system," and an "image." This

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5 Díaz Bild 271.
6 Díaz Bild 270.
7 *North and South* is part of the body of work usually referred to as "the industrial novel," or "the social problem novel." A number of novels were published in England around the middle of the nineteenth century dealing with the social and economic problems that were the result of the Industrial Revolution.
8 *Howards End* and *North and South* are referred to throughout *Nice Work*. A few examples will suffice here. Robyn Penrose gives a whole lecture on the industrial novel, in which, among other things, a complete outline of *North and South* is given. Neither does she fail to mention that traces of the genre can be found in the work of both Lawrence and Forster. Furthermore, in the closing pages of the novel a young girl enters Robyn Penrose's office wearing a T-shirt with "only connect," a key sentence in Forster's novel, printed on it.
9 Bakhtin 361, second emphasis mine.
view is closely related to that expressed by Lennard Davis: "novels are pre-organized systems of experience in which characters, actions, and objects have to mean something in relation to the system of each novel itself, in relation to the culture in which the novel is written, and in relation to the readers who are in that culture."10 Nice Work purports to interpret, for its readers, two opposing systems, or discourses, each represented by a protagonist. The novel thus presents the conflict between two separate worlds.

Robyn Penrose, temporary lecturer in English literature, meets Vic Wilcox, Managing Director at Pringle's, through the Industrial Year's Shadow Scheme. This scheme has been designed to increase the understanding between the university and industry in Rummidge. Whether this is achieved is a moot point, but on a personal level the project is, eventually, highly successful. Vic and Robyn develop a friendship based on mutual respect and appreciation, and also an increased awareness of the other's world. The two introductory chapters in Nice Work set out to present the two main characters. They are described as influenced and determined by diametrically opposite discourses. Following Roland Barthes, Ann Jefferson points out that "the conflict between self and Other is conceived ultimately as a conflict of discourses."11 What discourses form Robyn's and Vic's lives, and what does the meeting between them, self and other, yield in terms of an ideological awareness? Ken Hirschkop correctly points out that "some of the most significant shifts of value and intention may come from a redefinition of one's own context."12 Both Robyn and Vic appear to redefine their own contexts in the course of the novel, and at the same time gain greater knowledge of the other's community. They would consequently seem to bridge the gap between the alleged Ivory Tower and the world outside. But in what follows I will show that this bridging, or coming to consciousness, is only very superficial. A true solution to how the academy and the outside world should resolve their conflict is not even hinted at.

Just as in The British Museum is Falling Down, Nice Work opens with the


male protagonist waking up. Victor Wilcox, much like Adam Appelby, is harrassed by anxiety at the moment of awakening. The harpies that trouble Adam have, however, been updated: "Worries streak towards him like enemy spaceships in one of Gary's video games. He flinches, dodges, zaps them with instant solutions, but the assault is endless" (NW 13). Through the meticulously realistic and detailed rendering of Vic's morning the reader learns that Vic comes from a working-class background, and has worked hard to achieve prosperity. He is married to Marjorie and they live in a stale and unhappy marriage. Embarrassed by his wife's lack of intelligence and revolted by her fat figure, he is nevertheless tied to her by a code of behaviour: "he was in honour bound to put up with her. Vic had old-fashioned ideas about marriage" (NW 165). He is also bound to be responsible for his ageing father, old Mr Wilcox, who comes to dinner every Sunday. Vic is furthermore the father of three children, the older two of whom, Raymond and Sandra, constantly irritate him, being impertinent and lazy.

First and foremost, though, Vic Wilcox is the Managing Director of J. Pringle & Sons Casting and General Engineering, a hazardous business in the times of British industrial recession. He is hard-working, intelligent and fervently pro-British. An engineer by training, he has attended the local College of Advanced Technology, but he has never been inside the University of Rummidge: "Though he lives on its doorstep, so to speak, Vic has never been inside the place" (NW 28). His views of the university, echoing earlier tensions between "Town" and "Gown," are a mixture of suspicion, fear and contempt: "the University seems to Vic rather like a small city-state, an academic Vatican, from which he keeps his distance, both intimidated by and disapproving of its air of privileged detachment from the vulgar, bustling industrial city in which it is embedded" (NW 29).

Nevertheless, this down-to-earth engineer reveals another side. Hustled by "the irritations of home and the anxieties of work" (NW 28), he enjoys a brief interlude of perfect peace on his way to work. Day-dreaming, he listens to female jazz-soul vocalists in his comfortable Jaguar. "The subtle inflexions of these voices, honeyed or slightly hoarse, moaning and whispering of women's love, its joys and disappointments, soothe his nerves and relax his limbs" (NW 29). These discourses contribute to forming the composite character of Vic Wilcox.

Robyn is construed as Vic's opposite. She also wakes up in "her" introductory chapter. But not in medias res as does Vic, leaving the reader to form a first impression of him. Robyn does not wake up until the narrator has furnished the
reader with an ironic presentation of her as a chatterbox theorist. She "doesn't herself believe in the concept of character" (NW 39), nor does she believe in the concept of "self": "there is only a subject position in an infinite web of discourses—the discourses of power, sex, family, science, religion, poetry, etc" (NW 40). In practice, though, the narrator points out, Robyn seems to have the same ordinary human feelings as most people, and he will accordingly treat her as a character. Robyn is also filled with worries at the moment of awakening, "but she deals with them in a rational, orderly manner" (NW 41). We are informed that she comes from an academic background and has a PhD in English Literature. She is presently working as a temporary lecturer in Rummidge, something she enjoys: "She knew she was good, and it wasn't long before she privately concluded that she was better than most of her colleagues" (NW 52). Robyn is a feminist with equally radical views on literature and life. But the truth is that she knows scarcely anything about reality outside the academic walls: "Of course she was aware, cognitively, that there was a life outside universities, but she knew nothing about it" (NW 51). Robyn is neither single nor married. She has an open relationship with Charles, also an academic. It is "not a marriage, not a living-together, not an affair. More like a divorce in which the two parties occasionally meet for companionship and sexual pleasure without strings" (NW 59). Robyn does not believe in the concept of romantic love, she is later to explain: "It's a rhetorical device. It's a bourgeois fallacy" (NW 293).

Both characters thus illustrate, in different ways, the view of the academy as an isolated Ivory Tower in the midst of the industrial town. Their concepts of work, justice, literature and love are diametrically opposite. Evidently Robyn and Vic will provide fertile ground for an exploration of conflicting discourses. The clash is violent at first. Vic recognizes Robyn from a one-day action at the university where she "had seemed to epitomize everything he most detested about such demonstrations—the appropriation of working-class politics by middle-class style" (NW 117). Robyn, for her part, finds Vic's business ethics immoral and causes a walk-out at the foundry by divulging classified information to a worker whose job is threatened, information that she is later forced by Wilcox to negate in order to prevent a strike. From this catastrophic start an improbable relationship eventually develops. The truth is that Vic is starved for intelligent female companionship: "there was something about her that was different from the other women he knew. . . . She wasn't forever fidgeting with her skirt or patting her hair . . . She looked a man boldly in the
Robyn comes to appreciate her weekly excursions out into the other world. She had very reluctantly agreed to participate in the shadow scheme, but she finds out that it is not that ghastly after all. As the scheme is approaching its end, Robyn feels satisfied with her job: "It had been an interesting experience . . . Vic Wilcox had become . . . friendly and confiding . . . Once again she had proved herself invaluable" (NW 257-58). It is not quite over yet though. The persistent theme of adultery must necessarily be brought into the action. During the business-trip to Frankfurt the opportunity presents itself. Robyn's pride is wounded by Charles's affair with another woman and as Vic is helplessly infatuated with her, they end up in bed together. Vic, who has assimilated the jazz-soul message of the power of love, is convinced that this is "true love." Robyn, who doesn't even believe in the concept, "is in control . . . the captain of industry at the feet of the feminist literary critic—a pleasing tableau" (NW 289).

The next morning Robyn is sober again and does not want to be reminded of what has happened. Realizing that Vic will become a nuisance, she leaves him and flies home. Vic, however, is not easily deterred, and when he later proposes to her, Robyn feels trapped. To a friend she complains, "I feel as if I'm getting dragged into a classic realist text, full of causality and morality" (NW 304). So she is and in the end she has to take responsibility for her actions. The conclusion of the novel suggests that she must reject large parts of her earlier academic/feminist basis in favour of Vic's more utilitarian, "realistic" discourse.

In the end she is given an opportunity to stay on in Rummidge and thus continue her academic work. But her business venture with Vic also suggests that she is instrumental not only in perpetuating the women's writing course, but also equally responsible for maintaining the capitalist system which she has so fervently opposed earlier. "Only connect" is an echo from Forster's Howards End, and Robyn apparently succeeds in having it both ways. But the ideological coming to consciousness here necessitates a rejection of feminism and radical

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13 This is partly also an intertextual joke, as the characters upon whom Robyn is based also differ from every other woman that each respective male protagonist has ever met. Here it suffices to note that Vic must have had extremely bad luck, since surely not every woman outside the academy is forever looking at herself in the mirror or giggling hysterically?

14 As always in a Lodge campus novel, adultery takes place "safe from the observation of friends and family" (NW 267).

theory, together with an acceptance and assimilation of the politics of compromise.

The remaining authoritative discourse in *Nice Work* is not that of the academy. It consists rather of the Thatcherite values already assimilated by Vic. He may reject the discourse of romantic love, and at the same time claim that he is "fed up with flogging [his] . . . guts out for companies and conglomerates that have about as much human feeling as a wagon-load of pig-iron" (NW 373). But Vic's change is only cosmetic. It is hardly plausible that he will continue reading poetry between business deals. In the end the major redefinition of his context consists of his being able to set up a business of his own, a dream of very long standing, which has now become realizable through Robyn's financial support.

Through the heavily biased characterization of Vic and Robyn the potential for creating a fruitful relation between industry and the academy is wrecked. The dialogue between self and other is not allowed to materialize. How can a proper dialogue be created with the use of stereotypes? As Ommundsen points out, "the caricature is never far away in Lodge's character portrayal, and turned 'characters' in the sense of types, his creations lose the psychological credibility most readers associate with the notion of a fully realised fictional character."¹⁶ This is not a problem in his more comic novels, she argues, but becomes one in the more ambitious novel *Nice Work*. In this novel, as I will show, the main flaw lies in the uneven characterization of the two protagonists. "Who pays?" is the question Vic Wilcox teaches Robyn to ask. In the end Robyn, the stereotype, pays, of course. Lodge admits as much, although he thinks Vic suffers more, he contends, "I suppose the joke is on Robyn."¹⁷ I suppose it is, yet it is all very predictable and not very funny.

The Academic Spinster

In the following I will discuss the nature of Lodge's joke on Robyn. We have already seen that Lodge considers comedy to offer resistance to post-structuralist theories about "the death of the author." Authors are responsible for the construction of whatever makes the reader laugh.¹⁸ In Sigmund Freud there is

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¹⁶ Ommundsen 98.

¹⁷ Díaz Bild 266.

support for Lodge's view. A joke does not "come about unintentionally," Freud argues, "and we must try to discover the intention underlying the construction of the joke."¹⁹ But we are often reluctant to do so, as Freud goes on to explain: "We are inclined to give the thought the benefit of what has pleased us in the form of the joke; and we are no longer inclined to find anything wrong that has given us enjoyment and so to spoil the source of a pleasure."²⁰ It may well be that a scrutiny of the thought underlying the joke in Nice Work may spoil the pleasure, but the issue is of too great importance to be ignored. Only recently an investigation in Canada showed that sexist humour is far from innocent. Investigating reactions to sexist incidents on campus, Brigitte Bill and Peter Naus found that "to perceive a situation as humorous causes it to appear less discriminatory, and more acceptable."²¹ Theytentatively conclude that "it seems that if sexism is disguised by and delivered through humor, it is interpreted as being harmless and innocent, and it thus escapes criticism."²² Michael Mulhay supports their view:

Humour can allow the most unadulterated expression of sexist views because, when we speak humorously, we are not fully responsible for what we say. From the outside, from within the realm of serious discourse, the messages of humour are extremely difficult to oppose successfully. Yet the messages conveyed by humour may have very serious consequences.²³

It may thus be possible to escape criticism of sexist views through the use of humour and comedy. But, as we have seen, Lodge considers jokes in fiction to be the sole construct of the author. Authors are therefore fully accountable for what they write, also for sexist jokes. In what follows, I will show how Lodge, in the elegant wrapping of an intertextual game, presents a stereotypical "liberated"


²⁰ Freud 132.


²² Bill and Naus 646.

woman, and that this is the main reason for the failure of a constructive dialogue between self and other in *Nice Work*.

Galen Strawson claims that Lodge "may seem to take sides in his opening, lethally non-judgmental description of Vic's home and morning routine. But then he does exactly the same to Robyn, with gleeful symmetry."24 This is far from true. It is difficult to shake off the impression that Robyn exists as a mere vehicle for Vic's mid-life crisis as originally planned by Lodge. The characterization of Vic Wilcox is vivid and sympathetic. Through a mixture of direct narrative and an unmediated stream-of-consciousness technique the reader is presented with a complex character. Robyn, on the other hand, remains only a type, a crude caricature of a "liberated" woman. She is externally described by the narrator who sets out to tell the facts of Robyn's life: "While Robyn is getting up, and getting ready for the day, thinking mostly about the nineteenth-century industrial novels on which she has to lecture this morning, I will tell you about Charles, and other salient facts of her biography" (NW 41). Admittedly Robyn is let back into the narration for brief intervals. But also here the characterization is externally focussed and never profound. Mary Jo Salter is of the opinion that "Lodge has been clever in fleshing out the tacky capitalist Vic as a sympathetic and idiosyncratic man, while leaving Robyn Penrose mostly as a type—risen, as her surname suggests, from the pen."25 But why choose a stereotype as the major spokesperson for the academy, if the aim is to give a positive account of the universities? Robyn Penrose is only one in a row of stock feminist characters created by Lodge. May it be that he is unable to portray independent women in any other way? Over the years, Lodge's feminist characters have had the same characteristics.26 The characterization of Robyn is partly a parody of other


26 Feminist writer Desirée Byrd, Morris Zapp's ex-wife, haggles for money with Morris's kidnappers. Although she has made a fortune out of the fictional account of Morris's and her marriage, she is portrayed as unwilling to pay his ransom, thus jeopardizing his life. Needless to say, she is supported by her feminist publisher, Alice Kauffman, who advises her to offer a bit more than she had originally planned, but only because it would damage her sales if Morris died. Another portrait of an independent woman in *Small World* confirms the picture of career women as callous. Marxist professor Fulvia Morgana borrows from Morgan le Fey, the witch of the Arthurian legend and is both threatening and sadistic. Professor Morgana, by the way,
literary characters, and the stereotypical portrayal of the academic spinster becomes very explicit when related to the backgrounded works. Hutcheon's theory of parody in the twentieth century has already been discussed.\textsuperscript{27} Here it will suffice to conclude that her view of parody as wide-ranging "repetition with difference,"\textsuperscript{28} has clear affinities with Bakhtin's discussion of how prior discourses may influence a creative writer. He argues that "when such an influence is deep and productive, there is . . . a further creative development of another's (more precisely, half-other) discourse in a new context and under new conditions."\textsuperscript{29} How is this "further creative development" expressed in \textit{Nice Work}?

The novel includes a number of intertexts. Two main models that I will discuss here are \textit{North and South} by Elizabeth Gaskell, and \textit{Howards End} by E.M. Forster. According to Helena Bergmann, "the desire for social reform through a reconciliation of the classes is a major theme in . . . the [industrial] novels."\textsuperscript{30} This reconciliation is, evidently, also the aim of \textit{Nice Work}.

\textit{North and South} tells the story of an independent young woman, Margaret Hale. As a minister's daughter she has enjoyed a classical education. Margaret is strong-willed and intelligent and in many ways refuses to adapt to the traditional role of a Victorian middle-class woman. Gaskell also presents John Thornton, a self-made millowner. Although initially strongly prejudiced against each other, Thornton and Margaret eventually fall in love. Margaret's contempt for the
discloses the same feline characteristics as does Dr Penrose. While the former "yawns—a quick, surprisingly wide yawn, like a cat's" (SW 127), the latter yawns "suddenly, like a cat, revealing two rows of white, even teeth, before she covered her mouth" (NW 108). The cat-like career women in Lodge's fiction contrast sharply with the non-competitive motherly female characters. Barbara Appelby is a young Hilary Swallow, just as Joy Simpson has the same genetic heritage. To some extent Marjorie Wilcox, although less intelligent, has affinities with these characters as well, and is accordingly rewarded for her more dog-like affection for her husband by being promoted to his secretary.

\textsuperscript{27} See the discussion in chapter three on Lodge's use of parody in \textit{The British Museum is Falling Down}.

\textsuperscript{28} Linda Hutcheon, \textit{A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms} (New York: Methuen, 1985) 32.

\textsuperscript{29} Bakhtin 347.

industrial town and its values gradually subsides, and through her influence Thornton learns to see his workers as individuals. As Bergmann points out, one of the major concerns of this type of novel is "the softening effect on the male character of a woman's influence." When Thornton eventually is forced to face bankruptcy, he is saved by Margaret's love and substantial inheritance. The ideological conclusion of the novel suggests an acceptance of the potentials and power of industrialism, but they could and should be rendered less destructive through the incorporation of traditional liberal-humanist values.

This notion of liberal-humanism is further expounded in Forster's novel *Howards End*. This is the story of how Margaret Schlegel, an intelligent young woman with a love for art and literature and an abhorrence of the business world, eventually marries a prosperous business man, Henry Wilcox, in the hope of making him connect "the prose with the passion." Their relationship is complex, and often severely threatened by their divergent views of life. The novel explores their relationship against the background of Edwardian England, with increasing urbanization, technical development and unrest.

Conflicting Discourses: Self and Other

At one thematic level the three novels—*North and South*, *Howards End* and *Nice Work*—deal with the same conflict-ridden relationship between self and other. The female protagonists struggle against discourses that threaten to reduce them to being passive recipients of the views and notions of the other. As Jefferson suggests in a discussion of Jean-Paul Sartre, "the subject is divided from [herself] . . . by the image of [herself] . . . that comes from the Other." Margaret Hale has a traumatic experience of this division from herself on the night after her impulsive intervention in the strike that is the turning-point of the novel. In an emotionally and sexually loaded scene, Thornton, urged by Margaret, goes out to confront his starving and rioting workforce. On the verge of being lynched, Thornton is saved by Margaret. Discovering the immediate danger, she throws her arms around him, forming a human shield against the

31 Bergmann 134.

32 Jefferson 160. Throughout her article Jefferson uses the masculine pronoun, since the issue of the body in the self-other relationship entails particular problems for the female subject (175, note 5). In my discussion, which is not restricted to the body issue, I have chosen to disregard her distinction.
threatening mob. Margaret is appalled when she afterwards realizes how she must appear in the eyes of others. She tries to resist the verdict of public opinion. Her conscience is clean and she has a strong sense of having performed only her duty to a fellow human being: "I would do it again, let who will say what they like of me. . . . Let them insult my maiden pride as they will—I walk pure before God!" (NS 190-91). But the prevailing discourse of proper behaviour is too powerful to be overcome by Margaret, and when night comes she is unable to sleep, deeply disturbed by an acute sense of shame. Jefferson comments: "what is taken from the subject is [her] . . . sense of mastery: as subject [she] . . . has to concede that 'I am no longer master of the situation.'" Margaret has lost control of both her feelings and her life through the verdict passed by the other. She is caught by the values and morality of Victorian public opinion. When Thornton the next day fervently assures her that he loves her as he has loved no other, Margaret represses all tender feelings for him and rejects him vehemently: "Your way of speaking shocks me. It is blasphemous" (NS 195). Not until Margaret is able to liberate herself from the discourse of virtuousness is she able to realize that she has treated both Thornton's and her own feelings in a niggardly way. In an act of what Patsy Stoneman labels "balanced emancipation," both Thornton and Margaret are finally able to free themselves from the governing Victorian attitudes. Stripped of social constraints they are now free to act according to their own wishes.

The trauma of being "subject to the grip and grasp of the gaze of the Other" is also a major theme in *Howards End*. Margaret Schlegel is continually struggling against the contemporary code of behaviour. During the novel the character of Margaret changes to some extent. Although never abandoning her belief in liberal-humanism, Margaret seemingly adopts more and more of her husband's views. Her contempt for the world of business subsides, and she comes to the conclusion that "more and more do I refuse to draw my income and sneer at those who guarantee it" (HE 172). The hope of accomplishing this reconciliation on a personal level is one of the reasons for her marriage to Henry Wilcox: "She would only point out the salvation that was latent in his own soul, and in the soul of every man. Only connect! That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion . . ." (HE 183).

33 Jefferson, discussing Sartre, 160.


35 Jefferson 153.
But a crisis evolves between Margaret and her husband. When it is revealed that Mr Wilcox has had a mistress during his previous marriage, Margaret is deeply disturbed. She nevertheless restrains herself, taking a standpoint based on proper female conduct: "She must not comment; comment is unfeminine" (HE 237), and on the supposedly inherent feminine quality of pity. True to this attitude, Margaret forgives her husband. But when her unmarried sister Helen becomes pregnant by an unknown lover, and is brutally rejected by Mr Wilcox for disgracing the family, Margaret can conform no longer, but speaks her mind: "'Not any more of this!' she cried. 'You shall see the connection if it kills you, Henry! You have had a mistress—I forgave you. My sister has a lover—you drive her from the house. Do you see the connection?'" (HE 305). But he fails to do so and from this point on Margaret no longer conforms to the discourse of the other, and leaves her husband. Only when he is completely broken by his son's being found guilty of the murder of Helen's lover, are they reunited at their farmhouse, Howards End, which throughout the novel has stood as a symbol for Old Liberal England.36

In Nice Work the models from the two earlier works have been partially inverted. The domestic, strong, and angelic character of Margaret Hale, initially caught in the female role prescribed by Victorian conventions, and the character of Margaret Schlegel, also bound by a contemporary pattern of conduct, have been turned into Robyn Penrose, an emancipated, highly competitive lecturer who bases her life on feminist criteria, not dependent on anybody or on anything but her own wits. The character of Robyn Penrose is classified by Eagleton as a "frigid bluestocking."37 Lodge asserts that the women's movement has made women "more interesting—to know, and to write about."38 Furthermore, he claims that as a result of feminism women have become "less submissive to social stereotyping" than before.39 There is no trace of this view in Nice Work,

36 For a discussion of Howards End see Peter Widdowson, E. M. Forster's Howards End: Fiction as History (London: Sussex U P, 1977). He concludes that the novel prophesies "the crisis of liberal-humanism in the 20th century, and, correlative to this, the crisis of realism in the novel" (114). The link to Lodge's novel is obvious, if Howards End is a prophecy, then Nice Work is the prophecy come true.

37 Eagleton 100.

38 David Lodge, "Thinking about Women: Eleven Male Authors Discuss the Impact of Feminism on Their Writing," Times Literary Supplement 3-9 June 1988: 615.

39 Lodge, "Thinking about Women" 615.
however. Robyn, an intellectual and a feminist, is the twentieth-century academic spinster par excellence.

The view of the academic woman as a callous careerist seems to be endorsed by most campus novelists. They give vent to prejudices voiced already a century ago: higher education turns women into militant bluestockings, unsuited for marriage and family life. In university fiction, a career woman on campus with a family is a rare bird. The assumption seems to be that women with authority unsex themselves. According to this pattern a female academic lacks profound feelings (except for her work). Furthermore, campus novelists usually find it worthwhile to point out that female scholars take no interest in their looks and that they are, needless to say, deplorably incapable of taking care of a home. There also seems to be a common assumption among writers of this type of fiction that successful female intellectuals are necessarily either frigid or sexually deviant in one way or another. Indeed, the concept of frigidity was not known until the 1920s, when it was first used as a weapon against the assault of spinsters, feminists, lesbians and man-haters alike. In this context Sheila Jeffreys argues that "It was assumed that the 'normal' woman would enthusiastically embrace sexual intercourse. The deviant woman who failed to respond with enthusiasm was classified as 'frigid.' Prior to the 1920s the concept of the 'frigide' had not been necessary because normal women had not been expected to have

40 Unsexing is obviously also the reason for Lodge's choice of Robyn's first name. Pointing to the importance of proper names, he states: "An androgynous name seemed highly appropriate to my feminist and assertive heroine" (The Art of Fiction 38, my emphasis). Why feminism and assertiveness should necessarily entail unsexing is a question he does not enter into.

41 Two examples will serve to strengthen my case: Maria Theotoky, Robertson Davies's protagonist in The Rebel Angels (1982; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), makes the following comment: "Scholar I may be, but I refuse to play the game some of the scholarly women in the University play, and make the worst of myself, dress as if I stole clothes out of the St. Vincent de Paul box, and had my hair cut in a dark cellar by a madman with a knife and fork" (277). In this context it is perhaps also worth pointing out that eventually the beautiful Maria Theotoky leaves the university to marry a prosperous business man. Jemima Shore, in Antonia Fraser's Oxford Blood (1985; London: Methuen, 1986), has the following to say about the home of a female scholar: "[she did not necessarily ascribe] the untidiness-beyond-parody of the North Oxford house, books and potties competing for attention, frequently doing an exciting balancing act in the same pile, to the presence of an intellectual mother" (101). But why not, if it is at all worth commenting on? Well, because there is evidence of the opposite too. Dr Marigold Milton had "given birth to four children, making a point of reading Proust between pangs of labour . . . her house was so exactly polished that even the students wiped their feet" (101). It seems that there are only extremes to be found in the world of female scholars.
such a response to sexual intercourse.”

Jeffreys also points out that it was with the spread of the sexologist Havelock Ellis's work that it became assumed that it was "quite normal" for men to enjoy inflicting pain, and that women certainly enjoyed receiving it. The assault of feminism seems to have changed all this; in campus literature feminists are often portrayed as inflicting pain upon their partners; Lodge's own creation in the novel *Small World*, the sadistic Italian professor Fulvia Morgana, is a case in point.

In *Nice Work* this stereotypical portraying of a female intellectual is consistently carried out. Robyn Penrose is described as an innocent, unwitting victim of a powerful theoretical feminist discourse. While Vic Wilcox argues and comments on his morning paper's articles, Robyn Penrose, whose profession is so closely tied to the printed word, reads feminist articles "with the kind of pure, trance-like attention that she used to give, as a child, to the stories of Enid Blyton" (NW 47). Robyn is characterized as unable to break the spell of this discourse. Fully aware of the power of the discourses that surround her, she is nevertheless unable to see herself as in any way manipulated. "The truly determined subject is he who is not aware of the discursive formations that determine him," she confides, "Or her" (NW 40), thereby indicating that she, at least, is in control of her own mind and life, although the narration suggests that the opposite is in fact true. Jefferson provides an explanation of this phenomenon: "it is through the Other that the subject falls prey to a representation that constructs [her] . . . in terms of the stereotype. The Barthesian

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43 Jeffreys 131.

44 After having both bitten and scratched Morris Zapp, Fulvia Morgana (not exactly a redhead, but her hair is tawny and fiery) finally ties him up, and it is in this position that Morris finds himself when Fulvia invites her husband to join them in bed. Morris takes immediate leave of the couple, he is definitely not interested in Fulvia's husband and has never liked sadomasochism. But significantly enough, his ex-wife, the well-known feminist writer, the red-haired Desirée Byrd, is said to have sado-masochistic inclinations (SW 153-57). There is also the small episode in *Nice Work* when Robyn (red-haired), with relish, squeezes a pimple on Charles's plump bottom, a treatment that he only feigns to dislike, whimpering into his pillow. Robyn, of course, is the "dominant" partner in their relationship (NW 158-59).

45 Ian Carter devotes a chapter of his study to what he terms "Barbarous Women." Campus fiction is full of militant lesbians who threaten the *status quo* of the university world, while the wholesome and beautiful heterosexual female academics often have the sense to leave university. See *Ancient Cultures of Conceit: British University Fiction in the Post-War Years* (London: Routledge, 1990) 159-76.
subject is alienated not merely by becoming an image in the eyes of the Other but through . . . assimilation into the doxa."46 Robyn's assimilation into the feminist stereotype is consistent. Her home is an "incredible litter of books and dirty coffee cups and wineglasses and album sleeves and copies of Spare Rib and Marxism Today" (NW 166). Furthermore, Robyn has been stripped of all sexual passion. She is interested in sex basically on an intellectual level. She is not a virgin, but as a feminist she is "into non-penetrative sex these days . . . for reasons both ideological and practical. Feminist theory approved, and it solved the problem of contraception" (NW 154; my emphasis). It may also be noted that, true to stereotype, Robyn has earlier rejected a man whom she was deeply attracted to because she did not feel certain that his interest would last. Instead she looked around for someone who would be faithful, and who would be possible to dominate, and she found Charles, "clever, personable, and, she thought, probably loyal (she had not been proved wrong)" (NW 44).

While Victorian society's moral codes dictated Margaret Hale's attitude to sex, Robyn Penrose's social life in general and love life in particular are subject to other rules, other doxa, just as rigid. But "a doxa is no longer a doxa if it is no longer finished and complete, if its structures are opened up."47 The affinities here with Bakhtin's authoritative word that demands unconditional allegiance, and does not permit any play with its boundaries, is obvious. The authoritative word is forever tied to its source of authority; should the source be dissolved, the word's power is dissolved too. When Robyn leaves the charmed world of the academy, the authoritative discourses that have so far held her prisoner begin to lose their power. Already early in the novel there are indications of a certain tension within the character of Dr Penrose.

Robyn's first major escape from the stereotypical frame comes at the Wilcox's lunch party. Instead of her delivering the usual seminar-like speeches on literary theory, it turns out that she has social skills and takes a genuine interest in talking with the Wilcox family. This side of Robyn is unexpected. The stereotypical intellectual should only be able to manage an abstract, theoretical discussion. Charles, who has lived with Robyn for several years, gives voice to public opinion by afterwards implying that Robyn is scaring to the unintellectual woman. He even asks her if she discussed a lot of literary theory with the Wilcox

46 Jefferson 170. By doxa is understood "the déjà-dit (the already-said), the platitudes of public opinion" (170).

47 Jefferson 171.
family. At the same lunch party Robyn deviates again from the feminist intellectual stereotype. Alone with Vic she explains that, for her, sex earlier served the same psychological purpose as religion, "very personal and private and rather intense" (NW 243). This is incompatible with the Robyn who is described as interested in intense sex only on an intellectual level. Neither is it compatible with the woman who, later, under the influence of her feminist friend Penny Black, sniggers at Vic's lack of sexual experience: "Twenty-two years in the missionary position? That's kind of perverted" (NW 294). The signs of struggle within Robyn against what Eagleton sees as "the stereotype of the sexually independent woman" seem to suggest that Robyn is caught in a discourse that she does not control. Her occasional breakthroughs are instantly checked when she is subjected to feminist influence again. A discourse fabricated by the feminist other, Lodge seems to be saying, alienates Robyn from her true self, threatening to confine her to a passive, trance-like condition. When the infatuated, hopelessly romantic Vic proposes to her, Robyn rejects him as vehemently as Margaret Hale once rejected Thornton, but not because of any sexual modesty or shame. Marrying Vic is inconceivable to Robyn because they have nothing in common and their love-making was "just a fuck, nothing more or less" (NW 301). Here is a complete inversion of the moral code of Victorian society. Robyn conforms to stereotype feminist doxa, and completely distances herself from Margaret Hale and also from Margaret Schlegel, who dreamt of only connecting the prose with the passion.

But eventually not even Penny Black is able to exert any influence. When she suggests that Robyn should tell Vic she is a lesbian, Robyn is described as separating herself from Penny and what she stands for (the assumption here is, of course, that "feminist" equals "lesbian"):

48 To be true to the stereotypical pattern it has to be made explicit that Robyn prefers to be "on top." As Wilhelm Stekel had put it, "Indeed, certain women feel roused only if they are 'on top,' i.e. by clinging to the fantasy that they are males" (Frigidity in Woman in Relation to her Love Life [1926], as quoted in Jeffreys, 182).

49 Eagleton 100.

50 Incidentally, the character of Penny Black was dropped from the TV version. This seems a wise decision. Lodge states that "her function as confidante, useful in the novel, seemed unnecessary in the screenplay" ("Adopting Nice Work for Television," Novel Images: Literature in Performance, ed. Peter Reynolds [London: Routledge, 1993] 200). But, as we have seen, Penny Black's function is not simply that of a confidante, she is also yet another example of Lodge's stereotypical feminists.
"Tell him you're a lesbian," said Penny, with a sly, sideways glance. "That should put him off." Robyn laughed, a little selfconsciously, and pressed her knees more closely together. She had a suspicion that Penny Black herself had tendencies of this kind. "He knows I'm not a lesbian," she said, "all too well." (NW 295)

At this moment Robyn begins liberating herself from the "feminist" discourse, and she will eventually be able to admit respect for and friendship with Vic Wilcox. His influence has made it possible for her to break out of the trance-like condition in which she was caught. Robyn is finally free to "connect."

Robyn appears to liberate herself from the grip of the other, and so does Vic. In the end he is able to realize that his infatuation with Robyn was based on false romantic concepts. In an act of "balanced emancipation" they are made to echo Thornton and Margaret Hale in North and South and also Margaret Schlegel in Howards End, who were able to liberate themselves from the contemporary governing codes and attitudes. The softening effect earlier reserved for the female protagonist has here been partially transferred to the male. The industrial leader, through his numerous positive qualities, is able to help liberate the "liberated" lecturer from the feminist discourse that has held her captive. Only when freed from the grip of feminism can Robyn Penrose actually find her true self.

Herein lies a major parodic difference between Lodge's novel and these two backgrounded works. Eagleton suggests, with reference to North and South, that Nice Work "reveals over a century and a half later how little things have changed."51 And at the same time he claims that Robyn "is a Margaret Hale after all."52 But this is only a half-truth. Because she is, and she is not. It is true that her financial support of Vic's business project parallels Margaret's support of Thornton. But while Robyn's literary models were able to free themselves from contemporary dominant discourses, she herself does the opposite. Robyn rejects a "feminist" discourse only to adopt the dominant male discourse. This is not a sign of stagnation, but regression. To suggest, as does Richard Sheppard, that Robyn should be some kind of corrective, although not completely convincing, to the "atrocious stereotype of female academics"53 is unwarranted, based as it

51 Eagleton 99.

52 Eagleton 101. This is with reference to Robyn's financial support of Vic's business venture.

53 Richard Sheppard, "From Narragonia to Elysium: Some Preliminary Reflections on the
seems to be on the necessity of adopting an authoritarian male discourse. At the end of the novel there is a suggestion that Robyn may one day find a man who deserves her.\textsuperscript{54} This is a solution precariously close to the answer to the problem of spinster teachers voiced in \textit{The Journal of Education} in 1932: "what they really need is marriage, a home and family."\textsuperscript{55} Lodge asserts that writing about Robyn was a "rather refreshing experiment, and it helped that the character is an avowed feminist."\textsuperscript{56} There is, however, nothing refreshing about this stereotype. A constructive dialogue cannot be created by means of caricature.

\textbf{Anachronistic Parody}

As pointed out by Eagleton in certain respects little has changed between \textit{Nice Work} and \textit{North and South}.\textsuperscript{57} This is particularly striking in the description of the crowd in "the riot,"\textsuperscript{58} a scene in \textit{Nice Work} with echoes from \textit{North and South}. The tumultuous uprising in Gaskell's novel is the climax of the narration. It is described in terms of stormy sea-imagery: "slow-surging wave of the dark crowd" (NS 172), "savage satisfaction," "cruel" and "thoughtless," "mad for prey," "wild beating and raging against the stony silence," "the stormy passions would have passed their bounds, and swept away all barriers of reason" (NS 177-78). Lodge suggests that this fear of working-class violence, which manifested

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54} A solution that has been foregrounded by the narrator's ironic comment on Robyn's single status: "She was her own woman once more . . . if, perversely, she felt a little lonely and neglected by the end of the week—this was no doubt because she had been overworking" (NW 322).
\item \textsuperscript{56} Lodge, "Thinking about Women" 615.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Eagleton 99.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Quotation marks are used here to indicate that the "riot" described in \textit{Nice Work} has very little to do with what is usually associated with the concept. There are certainly no overt threats of bloodshed or violence in the modern scene, neither is there any serious risk of a permanent take-over of power by the "rioters." But the parallels between this scene and the riot scene in \textit{North and South} are too obvious to ignore.
\end{itemize}
itself in the description of the crowd in the "industrial novels," "was fuelled and informed by memories and myths of the French Revolution." He uses the riot in Gaskell's novel to support this view. At a safe distance in time from the French Revolution, it could perhaps then be expected that we would find a new attitude to the crowd in Lodge's novel. At a superficial level this is also the case, but an analysis of the subtext shows that nothing has really changed, at least not for the better.

In *Nice Work* "the riot" is preceded, as in *North and South*, by a passage that evokes the fear of male, working-class, sexual violence. While Margaret is described as indignantly blushing at the outspoken admiration of the workmen she meets in the street (NS 71-2), Robyn is made into a sexual quarry in the machine-shop at Pringle's: "the faster she walked, the more of a sexual object, or sexual quarry, she became, twisting and turning between the rows of benches... her cheeks as red as her hair, the wings of her nostrils white, her eyes fixed steadfastly ahead, refusing to meet the gaze of her tormentors" (NW 145-46).

The parallel with *North and South* is obvious. In an echo of Margaret's request to Thornton, Robyn later suggests to Vic that he should explain Pringle's new policy to his workers. He agrees and summons a series of lunch-meetings in the transport shed. At one level *Nice Work* here presents an inversion of the deadly threat that the strikers pose in Gaskell's novel. During Vic's speech a young woman enters the platform, "obviously deranged because she was in her underwear" (NW 252). The crowd starts to cheer, yell and roar, and the meeting is on the verge of collapsing when Robyn saves Vic by intervening and stopping the girl, who luckily enough is one of her students. Compared to the mob in *North and South*, "cruel, fickle and irrational, liable to be overcome by a collective madness," the description of the modern crowd seems innocent: "A hush fell over the assembly," "expectant," "listened to him attentively," and when the kissogram arrives "broad grins," "cheers," "much laughter," and "the men guffawed good-naturedly, and settled to hear him out" (NW 251-53). This defusion of the threatening mob by liberating laughter might be interpreted as a new way of looking at crowd behaviour. Of the threatening waves of Gaskell's crowd there is little left. There is only a hint of a ripple in the buoy-like appearance of Brian Everthorpe whose "grinning face bobbed like a red balloon"


60 Lodge, *After Bakhtin* 114.
(NW 252). It seems that the men who tormented Robyn earlier are really quite nice chaps, only innocently joking, and furthermore Robyn herself, the former "sexual quarry," is now able to avert the breaking up of the meeting through her professional authority. The desperate situation described in *North and South*, where the rioters are brutal and half mad has changed considerably. Furthermore, there is no need for Robyn to resort to her femininity, as Margaret once did, in order to save the industrial leader. It seems as if this modern scene is a complete inversion of Gaskell's riot.

But this impression is offset by other indications. The men, assembled to hear the new company policy, are presented as an anonymous mass of people. Raymond Williams argues that we never see ourselves as "the masses": "the masses are always the others, whom we don't know, and can't know." When we see a mass of people we are likely to interpret them according to some convenient formula, a formula that proceeds from our intention. It is this formula, Williams points out, that is so vital to examine. The formula for the crowd here is one of men more interested in making a goosepimpled Kissogram girl strip, than in hearing what the Managing Director has to say about Pringle's, and consequently their own, future. In short they show the traditional characteristics of the mob according to Williams's definition: "gullibility, fickleness, herd-prejudice, lowness of taste and habit." It is not until the girl is removed from the stage by Robyn's intervention that the workers are able to come to their senses, overcoming their collective madness, quite in parallel with the awakening of the mob in *North and South* when they discover the blood on Margaret's forehead. The workers may no longer pose a physical threat to Vic, or to the Kissogram girl for that matter, but they are described as severely threatening the meeting as such. As Vic observes "another minute, and the meeting would've collapsed" (NW 254). Furthermore, it must be kept in mind that Gaskell's rioters certainly have a righteous cause. They are desperate because Thornton has brought in cheap Irish labour to replace them, thus depriving them of their already meagre livelihood. Why the men in *Nice Work* behave as they do is not explained. Lodge's "rioters" are portrayed as simple and

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62 Williams 298.
The suggestion seems to be that, easily distracted, they are incapable of attending to issues of importance. Few people, if any, would accept such a simplistic description of themselves, and to quote Williams: "To the degree that we find the formula inadequate for ourselves, we can wish to extend to others the courtesy of acknowledging the unknown."64 This courtesy is not extended in *Nice Work*. As Brian Connery points out; "the characters furthest from the centre of Lodge's comic world—intellectually, socially or geographically—are the butts of the most demeaning jokes."65 Thus, a closer scrutiny of the subtext yields that the attitude towards the crowd as it comes forth in the nineteenth-century industrial novel has changed very little, and then only in a negative respect. The workers are presented condescendingly and negatively, as vulgar, threatening and incapable of self-restraint. The post-modern parody is here fundamentally conservative and disturbingly anachronistic.

Hutcheon stresses the necessity of a "critical distance" between the parody and its backgrounded texts,66 and Lodge agrees with this notion. He claims that "intertextuality . . . must involve significant difference as well as similarity" to separate it from plagiarism. Furthermore, the "allusions to the precursor text, 63 Not unruly children, but bewildered soldiers, is the role that Robyn assigns to the Pringle workforce in her daydreaming about their visit to campus "like a lost army . . . they stared about them with bewildered curiosity at the fine buildings and the trees and flowerbeds and lawns" (NW 347). The attitude here is perhaps more benevolent than the view that emerges in the "riot" scene, but it is just as condescending. The fact remains that these people are in need of someone to guide them. Carter ends his presentation of social class in the campus novel with the conclusion that the "working class is always with us, a perennial internal threat to cultural order" (128). It seems that the presentation of the Pringle workforce should have been well worth considering in this chapter named "Barbarous Proletarians."

64 Williams 300.

65 Brian A. Connery, "Inside Jokes: Familiarity and Contempt in Academic Satire," *University Fiction* 131. His comment is made with reference to *Small World*, but it is equally true for *Nice Work*. Not only the workers on the shop-floor are the victims of this condescending attitude, office workers seem equally cheap targets for laughs. Secretaries and telephone operators are described as forever giggling and simpering (NW 34, 35, 105, 201), Vic's wife, a former typist, reads "with great concentration and hardly moving her lips at all" (NW 175), and when Robyn acts as Vic's P. A. in Germany she is careful to avoid "giving any impression of suspicious intelligence" (NW 277). Or as Lodge describes it, "pretending to be Vic's dumb bimbo" ("Adapting *Nice Work* for Television" 196).

66 Hutcheon 32.
when recognized, must enhance the meaning of the later text."67 It is beyond doubt that the allusions to the parodied sources do enhance the meaning of Nice Work, but the diachronic comparison which is thus suggested is thoroughly disappointing. Connery argues that Lodge's "use of literary conventions remains primarily a formal and aesthetic manner . . . and offers neither a conservative endorsement of bygone values nor a progressive critique of outgrown false consciousness."68 But, as I have shown, Lodge's use of parody cannot be restricted to aesthetics. It is useful to remember here that "novels do not depict life, they depict life as it is represented by ideology."69

By choosing the worn-out stereotype of the academic woman Lodge fails to bridge the gap between the academy and the outside world. The novel serves only to confirm old prejudices about the remoteness of the academy, and the total irrelevance of literary studies.70 Admittedly, Robyn tells Vic's daughter Sandra that instead of studying psychology to understand how people function, she should study literature: "I'm not sure psychology will help you there, said Robyn . . . You'd probably learn more about how people's minds work by reading novels" (NW 303). But the reader who looks for textual support of this claim will look in vain. Reading novels has certainly not helped Robyn; she is far less able than her unintellectual counterpart Vic to understand what makes people "tick." Neither will reading Nice Work help many readers to understand or appreciate the academy.

The paradox here is clear; by not being able to refrain from the traditional sexist stereotyping of the female academic, Lodge transforms Nice Work into his most severe criticism of the universities to date. The description of the university as "the ideal type of a human community, where work and play, culture and nature, were in perfect harmony" (NW 346), stands in sharp contrast with what his fictional academy actually produces in terms of aloofness, isolationism, and general incompetence. It is of course true that Lodge brings two different worlds into contact, in the hope of making them connect, echoing Thornton's solution in

68 Connery 132.
69 Davis 24.
70 As discussed above, the all too familiar description of the crowd reinforces a condescending attitude towards the working classes.
North and South where he argues for bringing individuals from different social classes into "actual personal contact" (NS 432). Because, Thornton says, "we should understand each other better, and I'll venture to say we should like each other more" (NS 432). But the gap between the academy and the outside world is in Nice Work rather portrayed as unbridgeable,⁷¹ and the reason for this state of affairs is explained as being mainly due to the academy's fascination with irrelevant, even dangerously radical views on life, such as "feminism," which cannot be applied outside the walls.

Freud argues that we might "over-estimate the value of the thought on account of the enjoyment given us by its joking envelope."⁷² This seems a singularly apt way of describing the very positive literary reviews of Lodge's intertextually elegant novel Nice Work.⁷³

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⁷¹ Except, of course, for the purely personal friendship between Robyn and Vic.

⁷² Freud 132.

⁷³ Anthony Burgess, for one, claims that Nice Work is "a work of immense intelligence, informative, disturbing and diverting" ("Coketown in the 80s," rev. of Nice Work: A Novel by David Lodge, Observer 18 Sep. 1988: 43).
Conclusion

Ever since the Middle Ages the academy has provided rich material for fiction. David Lodge writes in a well-established tradition, further consolidated by metafictional strategies linking it to canonized texts and authors. In my discussion of Lodge's campus novels I have largely disregarded the elegant exterior in favour of an analysis of underlying discourses. It has been my intention to unravel some of the ideological impulses that inform his work, impulses that one may easily be distracted from noticing in the enchantment of the elegant intertextuality that all of his novels display.

As we have seen, Lodge's criticism and fiction are often difficult to separate. This is further complicated by the increasing space given to the incorporation and assessment of his own fiction in his criticism. The reception of Lodge's campus fiction confirms how writing in a tradition may vouch for positive reviews from readers who know what grid to apply. But, despite views to the contrary, readers without prior access to the canon is in a poor position to learn anything from Lodge's elaborate parodies. An allusion to *Ulysses* will not set up a learning process in a reader who is unfamiliar with this work. An audience without the necessary training, will instead have to focus on the realistic dimension of Lodge's fiction, and are left with detailed observations of contemporary British academic life. What they take with them after having closed a Lodge novel is mainly the impression created by its ideological framework.

Lodge has himself invited a Bakhtinan reading of his novels, but, as I have shown, his fiction advocates an ideology that is to a large extent opposed to such an activity. In *The British Museum is Falling Down* the authoritative discourses of the Church and the academy stand uncontested. The novel ends in passivity and resignation. *Changing Places* and *Small World* are also characterized by a mood of disillusionment and resignation. Although flirting with openness and change, they display an unequivocal acceptance of established norms and prohibitions in society. Finally, *Nice Work* evinces clear anti-feminist and elitist patterns.

Bakhtin has taught us that we must reject or assimilate the words of others. This necessitates an awareness and active scrutiny of the discourses that constantly try to persuade us. In Lodge's campus fiction, such a scrutiny is complicated by the elegant wrapping of the discourses, and the hiding of authority under the gay mask of the campus clown. This, however, should not
deter us from investigating the inherent world views. The authoritative discourses emanating from the pages of his campus novels vie for allegiance, but we, as readers, have the choice, and also the responsibility, to assimilate or reject them.
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