

UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA  
FACULDADE DE LETRAS  
CENTRO DE ESTUDOS COMPARATISTAS



**WHAT ABOUT THE ROGUE?**  
**SURVIVAL AND METAMORPHOSIS IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH**  
**LITERATURE**

**Ana Raquel Lourenço Fernandes**

DOUTORAMENTO EM ESTUDOS LITERÁRIOS

(Literatura Comparada)

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Orientação:

Professora Doutora Isabel Maria da Cunha Rosa Fernandes

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## **Abstract**

### **What about the Rogue?**

#### **Survival and Metamorphosis in Contemporary British Literature**

The present dissertation aims at giving an account of the significance of the rogue in contemporary British literature, focusing on this character's survival and metamorphosis particularly from the second half of the 20th century onwards.

The thesis is divided into five sections, comprising three main chapters. The opening section is a general introduction showing the main steps in my approach to the subject under discussion and the attending methodology. In the first chapter I deal with the origins of the literature of roguery and the development of the rogue. Starting with the analysis of six previously selected novels, the second chapter studies the revival of the rogue mainly in the 1950s, adopting a comparative perspective. For this purpose I analyse and contextualise the following works: Joyce Cary's *The Horse's Mouth* (1944) and Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net* (1954); John Wain's *Hurry on Down* (1953), Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954), John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957) and Allan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958). This section closes with an analysis of the transformations undergone by Bill Naughton's radio play, *Alfie Elkins and His Little Life* (1962), making manifest the multiple possibilities inherent in a character such as the rogue.

My third chapter deals with fiction produced in Britain in the last decades of the second millennium and the beginning of a new one, focusing on Martin Amis' and Irvine Welsh's literary works. In their novels, especially Amis's *Money: A Suicide Note* (1984), *London Fields* (1989) and *Yellow Dog* (2003), and Welsh's trilogy

*Trainspotting* (1993), *Glue* (2001) and *Porno* (2002), the rogue is an effective vehicle for both the depiction and the questioning of the society we live in.

The conclusion brings together the main ideas developed in the thesis, concentrating on the characteristics of the rogue and the literature of roguery in the present. The dissertation closes with a section containing attachments and bibliography.

**Keywords:** Rogue, Anti-Hero, Literature of Roguery, Rogue Novel, British Literature, Film Adaptation, Contemporary British Fiction.

## **Resumo Alargado**

### **O “Rogue” – Sobrevivência e Metamorfose na Literatura Britânica Contemporânea**

A presente dissertação propõe-se oferecer um estudo da personagem “rogue”, reflectindo sobre a sua sobrevivência e metamorfose na literatura britânica contemporânea. A estrutura da tese reflecte as etapas que orientaram a pesquisa, compreendendo três capítulos principais.

A introdução contextualiza o estudo realizado, problematiza a personagem do “rogue”, sobretudo na contemporaneidade, e define os objectivos e a metodologia adoptada no trabalho. Segue-se um capítulo teórico (“The Rogue and the Literature of Roguery: A Case of Fortune in the Development of the Novel”), reflectindo sobre as origens desta personagem e sobre as características que a associam ao romance picaresco e à “literature of roguery”, de acordo com a designação proposta por Frank W. Chandler (1901). Na sua génese, o “rogue” partilha características com figuras medievais tais como o tolo e o bobo, o pícaro da literatura do Século de Ouro espanhol e, alguns séculos mais tarde, o “confidence man” (ou “con man”), personagem emblemática da literatura norte-americana do século XIX e seguintes.

Etimologicamente a palavra refere-se a alguém pertencente a uma classe de vagabundos, normalmente descrito como um marginal, desonesto e sem princípios. No entanto, o termo em inglês é também empregue para designar plantas daninhas ou animais com comportamentos selvagens ou violentos. Jacques Derrida, em *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (2005), recupera as diferentes definições deste termo, enfatizando as suas possibilidades de uso na contemporaneidade e sublinhando a sua utilização no âmbito da política mundial para descrever regimes não alinhados (“rogue

states”). Com efeito, a personagem literária do “rogue” revela-se como um excelente meio de reflexão social, política e filosófica, encontrando-se intimamente associada a um projecto de ficção desenvolvido pelos autores que, nos seus romances, elegem esta personagem como protagonista.

O segundo capítulo (“The Turning Point: The Rogue in the Second Half of the 20th Century”) adopta uma perspectiva comparatista e pretende dar conta do modo como autores britânicos recuperam o “rogue” no pós-guerra. Deste modo, analisam-se os seguintes romances: Joyce Cary, *The Horse’s Mouth* (1944) e Iris Murdoch’s *Under the Net* (1954); John Wain, *Hurry on Down* (1953), Kingsley Amis, *Lucky Jim* (1954), John Braine, *Room at the Top* (1957) e Alan Sillitoe, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958). Relativamente aos romances de Cary e Murdoch, ambos apresentam um protagonista “rogue” que é também um artista. Gulley Jimson, o pintor que procura a sua derradeira criação, e James Donaghue, o escritor em busca da sua inspiração, são duas personagens que propiciam uma reflexão sobre a arte e a ficção. Por sua vez, os romances de Wain, Amis, Braine e Sillitoe permitem ainda a sistematização das características dominantes do “rogue” na literatura dos anos cinquenta. Os protagonistas destas obras literárias, nomeadamente, Charles Lumley, Jim Dixon, Joe Lampton e Arthur Seaton são anti-heróis, personagens oriundas da classe média ou classe operária, que reflectem a insatisfação das novas gerações no período do pós-guerra no Reino Unido, e que se afirmam como personagens “anti-sistema”. O sucesso destas personagens é também celebrado nas adaptações cinematográficas de alguns destes romances, designadamente, *Room at the Top* (1958), realizado por Jack Clayton e *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960), de Karel Reisz, dois filmes que marcaram a “New Wave” do cinema britânico.

Este capítulo conclui com uma reflexão sobre as várias adaptações da peça para rádio de Bill Naughton, *Alfie Elkins and His Little Life* (1962), evidenciando as possibilidades de metamorfose de uma personagem como o “rogue”. A análise comparativa de duas adaptações cinematográficas, *Alfie* (1966), realizado por Lewis Gilbert, e *Alfie* (2004), de Charles Shyer, permite observar os diferentes tratamentos do “rogue” em duas épocas díspares, nos anos sessenta e no início do novo milénio, e contribui para aproximar esta figura das personagens que constituem o foco de atenção do capítulo seguinte.

O terceiro capítulo da tese (“The Rogue in the 1980s and Onwards: Transformations in the British Literary Scene”) incide sobre a literatura britânica contemporânea, desde os anos oitenta até à actualidade e compreende duas secções, uma dedicada à ficção de Martin Amis e uma outra reflectindo sobre a obra literária de Irvine Welsh.

Nos romances de Amis, especialmente em *Money: A Suicide Note* (1984), *London Fields* (1989) e *Yellow Dog* (2003), e nas obras que constituem a trilogia de Welsh, *Trainspotting* (1993), *Glue* (2001) e *Porno* (2002), o “rogue” torna-se um meio eficaz de reflexão sobre a sociedade britânica contemporânea e sobre as transformações socio-políticas e culturais vividas nas últimas décadas do último milénio. Deste modo, evidencia-se a capacidade de sobrevivência e de metamorfose desta figura na literatura pós-moderna.

John Self, Keith Talent, Xan Meo, Mark Renton, Terry Lawson e Simon Williamson, os protagonistas dos romances de Amis e Welsh aqui estudados, são personagens com características distintas de outros anti-heróis. Desta maneira, são marginais, sem princípios ou valores que guiem a sua conduta, sobrevivendo à custa de múltiplas artimanhas, movendo-se frequentemente em ambientes de criminalidade e de

violência. Não obstante, o “rogue” é também uma personagem com um espírito peculiar, que se envolve frequentemente em situações insólitas e que apresenta uma ligeireza e uma comicidade que contrasta com a seriedade das temáticas a que, no entanto, também se presta. Assim, o “rogue” revela-se um veículo de entretenimento extremamente eficaz e simultaneamente uma personagem literária com múltiplas aplicações para os autores contemporâneos. Com efeito, é através das aventuras e desventuras dos seus protagonistas que autores como Amis e Welsh abordam nos seus romances algumas das temáticas recorrentes na contemporaneidade: o capitalismo e a sociedade de consumo, a cultura de massas e a cultura popular, a masculinidade associada à violência e à pornografia, e a condição pós-moderna em que vivemos.

A dissertação termina com uma reflexão final que pretende alargar as conclusões atingidas em cada secção da tese, sistematizando as características principais da personagem “rogue”, da “literature of roguery”, e o seu impacto no presente. Na conclusão avalia-se assim o desenvolvimento literário desta personagem nas últimas décadas do século XX e no início do século XXI, e o modo como permite reflectir sobre a sociedade actual. Finalmente, segue-se uma secção com anexos e a bibliografia. Os anexos consistem numa entrevista concedida por David Lodge, que se revelou essencial para um melhor entendimento das transformações culturais vividas nos anos cinquenta no Reino Unido, e dois documentos com informação sobre o programa da peça para rádio de Bill Naughton, *Alfie Elkins and His Little Life*, originalmente transmitida pela BBC, e o programa do espectáculo de teatro realizado no Duchess Theatre, em Londres, em 1963. No que diz respeito à bibliografia, esta encontra-se organizada tematicamente de modo a facilitar a consulta de obras de referência, de acordo com os vários assuntos versados ao longo da tese.



**Palavras-chave:** “Rogue”, Anti-Herói, “Literature of Roguery”, “Rogue Novel”, Literatura Britânica, Adaptação Cinematográfica, Ficção Britânica Contemporânea.

To my parents, Marta and Luís, who made me who I am

To Rui, my beloved companion

To my brother, André, and Anne Marthe for all their support

To my grandmother, Zulmira, for keeping me warm when I most needed it...

*Here we are for the last time face to face  
thou and I, Book,*

descansa agora em paz, e tu, leitor,  
não peças mais ao seu cansado coração

do que ele pode dar-te, o que te rouba:

Pequenos detalhes entre o espírito e a carne.

Porque a literatura é uma arte

escura de ladrões que roubam a ladrões.

Manuel António Pina

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Bem hajam!



## Abbreviations

Reference to the editions of the novels used by Joyce Cary, Iris Murdoch, John Wain, Kingsley Amis, John Braine, Alan Sillitoe, Martin Amis and Irvine Welsh is contained both in the text and in the Bibliography. The following abbreviations of the titles are also used in the text:

<i>THM</i>	Joyce Cary, <i>The Horse's Mouth</i>
<i>UTN</i>	Iris Murdoch, <i>Under the Net</i>
<i>HOD</i>	John Wain, <i>Hurry on Down</i>
<i>LJ</i>	Kingsley Amis, <i>Lucky Jim</i>
<i>RAT</i>	John Braine, <i>Room at the Top</i>
<i>SN</i>	Alan Sillitoe, <i>Saturday Night and Sunday Morning</i>
<i>M</i>	Martin Amis, <i>Money: A Suicide Note</i>
<i>LF</i>	Martin Amis, <i>London Fields</i>
<i>YD</i>	Martin Amis, <i>Yellow Dog</i>
<i>T</i>	Irvine Welsh, <i>Trainspotting</i>
<i>G</i>	Irvine Welsh, <i>Glue</i>
<i>P</i>	Irvine Welsh, <i>Porno</i>

## **INTRODUCTION**

## The Rogue Revisited

Inasmuch, however, as the literature of roguery is conditioned rather by content, the picaresque novel fills but part of its field, and this study must deal with rogue fiction in its wider development and with such other types as celebrated roguery [...].

Frank W. Chandler, *The Literature of Roguery*, vol. 1 (1907)

The present study builds on research work I carried out for my MA thesis on the character of the rogue, focusing on the way the latter crossed the barriers of time in British literature, surviving in different forms and in different eras. The outcome of the research was published in a book entitled *O Pícaro e o "Rogue": Sobrevivência e Metamorfose de Daniel Defoe a Julian Barnes* (2006), to which I will refer on occasion. Nevertheless, there were many questions that remained unanswered, especially one concerning the significance of the rogue in contemporary British literature.

Therefore this new study has followed two main directions. First, I have problematized the rogue's survival and this character's metamorphosis in contemporary British literature, thinking about what the figure of the rogue might have become and asking the question of whether this character does or does not play a significant role in contemporary fiction. Secondly, I have taken into consideration the social, cultural as well as the political and economic issues suggested in literary works dealing with rogues, bearing in mind the moral dimension implied in rogue novels from the start.

From the beginning of the research onwards it became clear that most studies related to the rogue character in British literature dealt with literary forms of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. And indeed the two acknowledged sources in the development of the rogue novel are, first, the picaresque literature from the Spanish Golden Age and, secondly, the rogue pamphlets of Tudor and early Stuart times. Thus, from its birth the

rogue has been continuously associated with the figure of the *pícaro*. Indeed the proliferation of studies on the impact of the latter in Western fiction throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, emphasizing this character's universal dimension, have contributed to the (mis)understanding of the rogue character as a variation on the *pícaro*. Alexander Blackburn's *The Myth of the Pícaro: Continuity and Transformation of the Picaresque Novel 1554-1954* (1979), for instance, re-examines the problem of picaresque tradition in England as well as the United States, and goes as far as to quote examples of Joyce Cary's *The Horse's Mouth* (1944) and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952). However, in order to be able to deal with such a wide literary scope, Blackburn combines three different characters: the Spanish *pícaro*, the British rogue and the American Confidence Man. In reality, each of these literary characters merits a study on its own. Blackburn's approach offers a complete analysis of the influence of picaresque tradition in the Anglo-Saxon world and thus has been a valuable source for my work. Nevertheless, my own research is focused entirely on the British rogue with an emphasis on the way this character is depicted in literature from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards in the United Kingdom.

Therefore, the present dissertation aims at giving an account of the significance of the rogue in contemporary British literature, not disregarding its origins but interpreting rogue literature as a distinct literary form, reclaimed and transformed particularly from the 1950s onwards. Indeed, although at the beginning of the century modernist authors developed the figure of the anti-hero, their conception of character differs radically from a figure such as the rogue. In its rejection of traditional social representation and in its heightening of formal awareness, modernism has to a certain extent severed ties with society, reality and history. Central characters in modern fiction are highly subjective and their depiction of the outside world is often distorted. The

protagonists of rogue literature, in contrast, are characters less concerned with their inner reality, constituting an excellent medium for the depiction of objective reality. Furthermore, as Christopher Hilliard explains: “[t]he challenges that modernist experimentation posed for many readers raised far-reaching questions about literature and its public. ‘Difficult’ and ‘obscure’ poetry and prose conjured up the spectre of an art estranged from ordinary life and ordinary readers.”<sup>1</sup> Quite the opposite occurs in rogue literature, which comes close to the everyday man, depicting everyday life.

In order to map the importance and recurrence of the rogue throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the new millennium, I had to take into account the enormous difference in taste and expectations within a very short period in the post-war years in the United Kingdom. In fact, the British novel lived a moment of renewal in the 50s, breaking with the modernist novel, recovering a tradition inaugurated by 18<sup>th</sup>-century writers, emphasizing for instance the comic and the satirical elements that characterize Henry Fielding’s novels. Therefore, the first obvious effort consisted in selecting a group of writers of the 50s and early 60s representative of the changes in British fiction at the time. Iris Murdoch, Kingsley Amis, John Wain, John Braine and Alan Sillitoe emerged as particularly challenging authors, contributing to a new wave in English writing. These novelists developed and transformed the rogue character and in their fiction articulated the social transformations of their generation, having a tremendous impact on contemporary British writers. Only after the analysis of the work by the above referred novelists would I be able to trace the transformations both in writing style, in social attitudes and in reader expectations in contemporary novelists.

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Hilliard, ‘Modernism and the Common Writer,’ *The Historical Journal* 48.3 (Cambridge University Press, 2005): 770.

The research followed different stages and the readings I have carried out throughout the process led me to include and/or exclude various contemporary authors. Thus, in an initial approach, I considered novelists such as Angela Carter (*Nights at the Circus*, 1984), John Banville (*The Book of Evidence*, 1989), Julian Barnes (*Love, etc.*, 2000), Salman Rushdie (*Midnight's Children*, 1981), Ian McEwan (*The Innocent*, 1990), Martin Amis (*Money*, 1984), Irvine Welsh (*Trainspotting*, 1993), Jeanette Winterson (*Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*, 1985) and Toby Litt (*Adventures in Capitalism*, 1996). However, despite their sharing certain themes and presenting roguish characters in their fiction, it would be difficult to systematize my study and demonstrate any kind of influence of one writer on another. First, the list of authors I came up with was too extensive. Secondly, these authors belonged broadly to different generations: Carter, Banville, Barnes, Rushdie, McEwan and Amis were born in the 1940s, Welsh and Winterson in the late 1950s and Litt in 1968. Thirdly, most of the authors I intended to study already had an extensive oeuvre, impossible to analyse carefully within the limitations of the present thesis. Finally, the work of these authors would inevitably direct me to subject matters that, despite being extremely significant and contemporaneous, would distract me from my initial purpose. Thus, for instance, Carter's fiction would involve a careful study of magical realism, Banville's novels would lead me through an intricate world of moral philosophy, Rushdie's literary work would demand not only an analysis of his style (also associated with magical realism) but would also have to be read in the light of postcolonial studies, and Winterson's literary work is intrinsically linked with feminist and lesbian studies.

As becomes evident from the list mentioned above, the majority of the examples of rogue novels I found in the course of my reading confirmed two tendencies: first, the rogue novel is written mainly by male writers and secondly, the rogue is most



commonly associated with a male character. However, an analysis of the female rogue in contemporary fiction by British women writers would prove a fruitful research field, helping to rethink the role of women in society and literature nowadays. Fevvers, Carter's protagonist in *Nights at the Circus*, and Jeanette, Winterson's main character in *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*, are impressive examples of roguish characters. From their marginal positions in society, both Fevvers (also known as the 'Helen of the High-wire' or 'the Cockney Venus') and Jeanette (an adopted child by working-class evangelists) stand for two different conceptions of New Women, who gradually escape from the restrictive images assigned to them by a patriarchal society and claim their freedom.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, a study entirely devoted to the figure of the female rogue would open up the field, pointing towards new directions in the analysis of contemporary rogue literature.

Reading widely in order to find my primary texts made me realize that the most useful way to approach my subject would be to select writers born in different decades. I took Martin Amis, who begins his career as a novelist in the 1970s, and Irvine Welsh, who publishes his first novel in 1993. I have selected these two authors for various reasons, particularly, because they recover the character of the rogue and place him at the centre of their fiction, they reshape the rogue novel employing an array of new narrative strategies and they explore the image of the rogue as a powerful vehicle of social critique. Furthermore, the fact that Amis is profoundly English in his writing and Welsh essentially deals with Scottish reality allowed for a more extensive understanding of the rogue novel and the different characterizations of the rogue character.

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<sup>2</sup> The examples chosen are by British women writers; nevertheless, Alan Warner's *Morvern Callar* (1995) is an unsettling novel by a male writer about a female rogue.

The present dissertation opens with a chapter entitled ‘The Rogue and the Literature of Roguery: A Case of Fortune in the Development of the Novel.’ The aim of this section is to give a theoretical account of the development of rogue literature. As a starting point, I have drawn closely on picaresque studies. Indeed, academic studies discussing rogue literature are typically associated with the ongoing debate on the picaresque. Frank Wadleigh Chandler and Claudio Guillén are the two major sources I use at the beginning of the chapter. Although many important scholars wrote on this subject at various points in the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>3</sup> Chandler and Guillén mark two crucial moments in the history of the study of the picaresque and the impact of such literature in the development of other forms, namely, the literature of roguery.

In *The Literature of Roguery* (1907), Frank W. Chandler establishes for the first time the picaresque literature within the wider context of the rogue literature, inaugurating the study of the latter. As Fernando Cabo Aseguinolaza affirms in *El Concepto de Género y la Literatura Picaresca* (1992): ‘[y], por supuesto, no debemos

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<sup>3</sup> In the bibliography, I list many important studies on the picaresque (see the section ‘On Picaresque Literature’). Nevertheless, other scholars that have helped to form the canon on picaresque literature throughout the times have been: Marcel Bataillon, ed., *Le Roman Picaresque*, introd. et notes de M. Bataillon (Paris: La Renaissance du Livre, 1931), Erminio Braidotti, “Genealogía y licitud de la designación ‘novela picaresca,’” *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, 346 (1979): 97-119, Américo Castro, ‘Perspectiva de la Novela Picaresca,’ *Hacia Cervantes*, tercera edición (1957; Madrid: Taurus, 1967): 83-105, Fonger De Haan, *An Outline of the History of the Novela Picaresca in Spain* (The Hague, New York: M. Nijhoff, 1903), F. Garriga, *Estudios de la Novela Picaresca Española* (Madrid: Hernández, 1891), Helmut Heidenreich, ed., *Pikarische Welt* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), Fernando Lázaro Carreter, *Estudios de Poética* (Madrid: Taurus, 1976), José Antonio Maravall, *La Literatura Picaresca desde la Historia Social* (Madrid: Taurus, 1986), Alberto del Monte, *Itinerario del Romanzo Picaresco* (Florenca: Sansoni, 1957), Francisco Rico, *La Novela Picaresca y el Punto de Vista*, sexta edición corregida y aumentada (1969; Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barral, 2000), Rafael Salillas, *El Delincuente Español* (Madrid: Suárez, 1898), George Ticknor, *History of Spanish Literature* (Boston: Houghton & Mifflin, 1849), F. M. Warren, *A History of the Novel Previous to the 17th Century* (New York: Holt, 1895) and Ulrich Wicks, *Picaresque Narrative, Picaresque Fictions. A Theory and Research Guide* (New York, London: Greenwood Press, 1989), among many others.

There have been works which bear a direct influence of Guillén’s propositions: Robert Alter, *Rogue’s Progress: Studies in the Picaresque Novel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), Richard Bjornson, *The Picaresque Hero in European Fiction* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), Alexander Blackburn, *The Myth of the Picaro: Continuity and Transformation of the Picaresque Novel 1554-1954* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1979), Peter N. Dunn, *The Spanish Picaresque Novel* (Boston: Twayne, 1979), Howard Mancing, ‘The Picaresque Novel: A Protean Form,’ *College Literature*, 6 (1979-80): 182-204, Stuart Miller, *The Picaresque Novel* (Cleveland and London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1967) and Alexander A. Parker, *Literature and the Delinquent. The Picaresque Novel in Spain and Europe, 1599-1753* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967), among others.

olvidar Chandler (1907: 5), el cual estableció el concepto de *picaresque novel* como subclase del mucho más amplio *Literature of roguery*, aunque fuese con rango especial.’<sup>4</sup>

Claudio Guillén’s ‘Toward a Definition of the Picaresque’ (1962)<sup>5</sup> undoubtedly settles the picaresque within the field of comparative literature. Guillén broadens the concept, placing the picaresque genre beyond the original Spanish pattern, emphasizing the *sensu lato* of the term and its influence on other literatures over the years (becoming a model of ‘supranacionalidad’),<sup>6</sup> and establishing the picaresque myth, important for the development of the form and the rise of the anti-hero during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to the author:

But the modern possibilities of the form would not be fully revealed in Spain. I can but recall here the many correspondences and affinities that supported it and prepared the way for its revival after World War II: Gide and Pirandello, Céline and Brecht, Steinbeck and Orwell, Henry Miller and Kerouac, Malaparte, Chaplin, and Fellini.

Together with irony, there was “dis-couragement” – the devaluation of courage. [...] Threatened with events which no one controls, the novelist hesitates to show men truly risking, or even shaping, their own lives. In the midst of bankrupt revolutions and the orthodoxy of disbelief, Camus’ *homme révolté* is no more a hero of our time than the powerless antihero.

From *Lazarillo* to our day [...] the picaresque has been an outlet of

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<sup>4</sup> Fernando Cabo Aseguinolaza, *El Concepto de Género y la Literatura Picaresca* (Santiago de Compostela: Universidade. Servicio de Publicacións e Intercambio Científico, 1992): 40. ‘And, in truth, we should not forget Chandler (1907: 5), who established the concept of picaresque novel as part of the much wider field of *Literature of roguery*, even though within a specific scope.’ [My translation].

<sup>5</sup> ‘Toward a Definition of Literature’ was first read at the Third Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, held in 1961.

<sup>6</sup> The picaresque becomes therefore a great example of the potentialities of a genre outside its national boundaries: ‘[uno de] los modelos principales de supranacionalidad que se ofrecen al estudioso de Literatura Comparada.’ Claudio Guillén, *Entre lo Uno y lo Diverso* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1985): 93.

human alienation. And today the *pícaro* remains what he has always been: the coward with a cause.<sup>7</sup>

The tendency to expand the boundaries of what is understood by the picaresque has indeed a long critical history. Nevertheless, it is Guillén who most effectively established the genre within the field of comparative literature, becoming an indisputable point of reference for scholars throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Cabo Aseguinolaza also emphasizes the importance of both Chandler and Guillén, among others, in the development of the study of picaresque literature. He singles out three directions followed within picaresque criticism: one that stresses the social context in which the novels were written and the relationship between fiction and reality ('la orientación referencialista'); another that underscores the formal devices employed in picaresque novels ('la orientación formal'); and, last but not least, the comparative approach, surpassing both space and time limits ('la orientación comparatista'). Interestingly, Chandler is alluded to in the description of all three orientations: the first trend had been crucial to the studies developed before Chandler, but the latter also showed an interest in the realism present in the picaresque novels; the second tendency appears in the model presented by Chandler, who placed considerable emphasis on the narrative techniques employed in picaresque novels (especially, the work that signals the birth of the picaresque, namely, *Lazarillo de Tormes*); and, finally, the third current is already displayed in Chandler's study on the literature of roguery, which goes well beyond the picaresque novel. Finally, as far as Guillén is concerned, his work is alluded to in the second and, most importantly, third orientations. His distinction between picaresque genre understood in a strict sense (in agreement with the

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<sup>7</sup> Claudio Guillén, 'Toward a Definition of the Picaresque' (1962), *Literature as System: Essays Toward the Theory of Literary History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971) 106.

Spanish pattern) and picaresque interpreted in a wider scope, as well as his approach to the picaresque myth, have led to a re-evaluation of the genre. As Cabo Aseguinolaza explains:

En realidad, hay grados muy diversos en la extensión posible del género: desde la picaresca española – en si misma de alcance variable –, pasando por la inclusión de obras de la literatura alemana del XVII e inglesa y francesa del XVIII, hasta llegar a abarcar cualquier producción de cualquier literatura, que tenga algún rasgo que vagamente pueda ser considerado picaresco, como la estructura episódica y el antihéroe como protagonista. Todas las situaciones intermedias son posibles. Es probable que, de hecho, un cierto grado de relajamiento conceptual sea estrictamente necesario para el estudio comparativo de la picaresca, y tanto más cuanto más abarcador sea éste.<sup>8</sup>

The first chapter of the thesis draws also on the work by Mikhail Bakhtin. In the essay entitled ‘Discourse in the Novel,’ in *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981), he stresses the importance of the image of the rogue in the picaresque adventure novel and the importance of the latter in the development of the novelistic prose at the beginning of Modernity. Bakhtin also establishes a relationship between the figures of the merry rogue, the fool and the clown, explaining the parallels between the three, and throwing light on their importance for an understanding of the conditions under which the modern novel was born.

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<sup>8</sup> Cabo Aseguinolaza, 41-42. ‘In truth, there are many different degrees of possible developments of the genre: from the Spanish picaresque – also with a wide scope – to the inclusion of German literary works from the 17th century and English and French works from the 18th century, and the addition of any literary production displaying some of the features commonly associated with the picaresque, such as the episodic structure and the antihero as protagonist. All intermediate situations are possible. Eventually, a certain degree of conceptual relaxation becomes necessary for the comparative study of the picaresque. The wider the study, the more is this relaxation needed.’ My translation.

From theoretical considerations on the picaresque and the rogue novel, there follows an overview of the historical development of the latter in England from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries onwards. The rogue, as the protagonist of the action, is depicted as an anti-hero whose values and attitudes are in direct opposition to those of the hero. The rogue, in particular, is an ‘anti-establishment figure,’<sup>9</sup> a ‘half-outsider,’<sup>10</sup> a product of the social environment which surrounds him, a rebel whose cause is his own self-interest. According to Northrop Frye in his essay, ‘Historical Criticism: Theory of Modes,’ in *Anatomy of Criticism* (1975), this character might be associated with the development of the low mimetic mode, which characterizes English literature from Defoe’s time to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and more recently with the ironic mode, which marks literature throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Furthermore, since the rogue has always been described under various names, it proved important to understand the development of the expression ‘confidence man’ in 19<sup>th</sup>-century America and beyond. For the purpose, I have followed four main studies: Gary Lindberg, *The Confidence Man in American Literature* (1982), William E. Lenz, *Fast Talk and Flush Times* (1985), Kathleen De Grave, *Swindler, Spy, Rebel: The Confidence Woman in Nineteenth-Century America* (1995) and John G. Blair, *The Confidence Man in Modern Fiction. A Rogue’s Gallery with Six Portraits* (1979).

Finally, I allude to Jacques Derrida’s work *Voyous: Deux Essais sur la Raison* (2003), which has been translated as *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (2005), in which Derrida recovers the concept of the ‘rogue’ and elaborates on its political, economic and social dimensions in the present age. His work undoubtedly opens up the reflection upon contemporary rogue characters as those portrayed in Martin Amis’s and Irvine Welsh’s fiction.

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<sup>9</sup> See Roger B. Rollin, ed. *Hero/Anti-Hero* (New York: Webster Division McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973) xvi-xvii.

<sup>10</sup> Guillén, ‘Toward a Definition of the Picaresque,’ 81.

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The second chapter of the thesis, entitled ‘The Turning Point: The Rogue in the Second Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century,’ is divided into three major sections. The first, ‘The Rogue as an Artist: Joyce Cary’s *The Horse’s Mouth* (1944) and Iris Murdoch’s *Under the Net* (1954),’ brings together two rogue novels, in which the main character is depicted not only as a misfit but also as an artist. Cary’s Gulley Jimson is a visionary but penniless painter, Murdoch’s James Donaghue is an aspiring but non-inspired writer. Through the narration of these characters’ comic adventures and misadventures, there is a serious questioning of art and reality and an emphasis on the transformations (political, economic, social and cultural) that had begun to be felt at the end of World War II. Therefore, Cary’s and Murdoch’s fictions help to signal a turning point in the British literary scene, which reaches its peak with the work of the ‘Angry Young Men.’

For the first section of the chapter the analysis of the film adaptation of *The Horse’s Mouth* (1958), directed by Ronald Neame, proved useful for both the treatment of the central theme, the artistic process of creation, and the depiction of character, namely, the nonconformist painter Gulley Jimson. Furthermore, the film evinces the possibilities of intertextual pleasure in adaptation, helping to understand the interplay between works (Gulley’s story, Blake’s poetry and Gulley’s paintings). The adaptation is framed in the specific context of the 50s, it shares features with the New Wave Cinema, it employs canvas executed by John Bratby, a leading member of what became known as the ‘Kitchen Sink’ school, updating the meaning already implied in Joyce Cary’s novel – the search for new representations of reality. Both in the novel and the film, the rogue will be instrumental in that quest.

Considerations on the role of art and the process of artistic creation present in Iris Murdoch's novel *Under the Net* also led to various key texts, namely: Murdoch's essay 'Against Dryness' (1961), in which the author advocates a more powerful conception of character in literature, and several insightful analyses of the novel, of which I will mention just two: one by Malcolm Bradbury, published in *The Critical Quarterly* (1962), and another by A. S. Byatt published in *Degrees of Freedom* (1970). Both scholars offer a thoughtful and complex commentary on the various questions raised in the novel, focusing on style, themes and characters. Once more, the rogue depicted as an artist, the writer James Donaghue, exemplifies the pursuit for new ways of giving meaning to reality and to the world.

The chapter is followed by a section entitled 'The Rogue Revisited in the 1950s,' dealing with the pioneering literary works by John Wain (*Hurry on Down*, 1953), Kingsley Amis (*Lucky Jim*, 1954), John Braine (*Room at the Top*, 1957) and Allan Sillitoe (*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, 1959). Indeed, these authors' first novels are illustrative of Walter Allen's claim in his review of *Lucky Jim* (1958) that: 'A NEW HERO HAS RISEN AMONG US.'<sup>11</sup> The protagonists of these novels are undoubtedly anti-heroes and can be said to be rogues, articulating the social and cultural changes in post-war Britain. As becomes evident in the interview with David Lodge (Appendix 1), to which I allude in the present dissertation, this new wave in English writing of the 1950s had a great influence on the generation that followed. Indeed, the analysis of the novels makes manifest the way these authors developed a new style, recovering a tradition that dates back to Daniel Defoe and Henry Fielding, following narrative strategies commonly associated with the picaresque adventure novel (the episodic structure, the depiction of low-life characters and milieu, the comic, the satire and the criticism of

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<sup>11</sup> Walter Allen, 'Review of Lucky Jim,' *The Beat Generation and the Angry Young Men*, eds. Gene Feldman and Max Gartenberg (New York: The Citadel Press, 1958) 339. Also published in *Protest*, eds. G. Feldman and Max Gartenberg (London: Quartet, 1973).



society), but nevertheless innovating in style, language and themes. Kingsley Amis (in 'Laughter to Be Taken Seriously,' 1957), V. S. Pritchett (in 'These Writers Couldn't Care Less,' 1957) and the above mentioned Walter Allen (in his 'Review of Lucky Jim,' 1958) recognised and emphasised these points of contact with earlier literary works.

Moreover, several critical studies became important for an understanding of the major cultural and literary shifts in Britain throughout the 50s, especially: Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), Kenneth Allsop's *The Angry Decade: A Survey of the Cultural Revolt of the Nineteen-Fifties* (1958), James Gindin, *Postwar British Fiction: New Accents and Attitudes* (1963), William Van O'Connor, *The New University Wits and the End of Modernism* (1963), Blake Morrison, *The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s* (1980), Angela Hague's 'Picaresque Structure and the Angry Young Novel' (1986), David Lodge's 'Lucky Jim Revisited' (1996), Michelene Wandor's *Post-War British Drama: Looking Back in Gender* (2001), Rebecca Carpenter's 'Male Failure and Male Fantasy: British Masculine Mythologies of the 1950s, or Jimmy, Jim, and Bond. James Bond' (2002), among others.

When reading these studies it became clear that the new hero of the 50s was actually an anti-hero, or even a rogue. Many of the studies also focused on the relationship between the picaresque and the literature of the 1950s in Britain. There are ample grounds for believing that the recurrence of works establishing a relationship between the *pícaro* and the rebel of the 50s illustrates the growing interest for these characters, the conditions in which they flourished and the literary tradition to which they belong.

The section also deals with the cinematic adaptations of two of these novels, namely, Jack Clayton's *Room at the Top* (1958) and Karel Reisz's *Saturday Night and*

*Sunday Morning* (1960). These two films are significant examples of the British New Wave cycle, bearing witness to the success of the 1950s novels and illustrating the ongoing cultural revolution affecting British society at large. Indeed both films offer a social realist view of the world, reflecting and highlighting ideas and concerns that marked the era of the 1950s. As Christine Geraghty explains:

‘Newness’ is not a word much associated with the 1950s. Instead, the period after the Second World War is characterised first by austerity and then by a secure, rather complacent, affluence. The 1950s is, after all, the half-remembered childhood of those millions born in the immediate post-war period and has tended to assume the aura of a safe and stable golden age. It sits quietly between the upheaval and dangers of the Second World War and the social revolution of the 1960s. But those living in the 1950s often experienced a feeling of change and newness, which they both welcomed and worried about.<sup>12</sup>

The main characters of the films *Room at the Top* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, live through the ‘newness’ of the 50s but they also reveal feelings of anxiety, anger and doubt about the transformations felt in British culture and society at the time. Ultimately, the ‘New Wave’ marks the transition of the rogue from literary productions to the screen, stressing the creative potential inherent in such a character.

This chapter closes with a section intended to provide an account of the swift and profound cultural changes experienced from the 60s onwards. ‘Alfie: Cultural Change and Continuity 1960-2000’ incorporates in its title the name of Bill Naughton’s celebrated protagonist. Through the study of the adaptations of Naughton’s original radio drama (*Alfie Elkins and His Little Life*, 1962), with special emphasis given to

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<sup>12</sup> Christine Geraghty, *British Cinema in the Fifties: Gender, Genre and the ‘New Look’* (London, New York: Routledge, 2000) 21.

Lewis Gilbert's film adaptation in 1966 and Charles Shyer's remake of 2004 (see Appendices 2 and 3), we witness the radical political, economic, social and cultural transformations felt in recent decades. Furthermore, the recurrence of the rogue protagonist and of the themes typically associated with this character clearly promotes both the questioning of Western society and the role of fiction in human existence.

For the completion of this section it was essential to consider the topic of adaptation. In the two previous sections of the chapter I deal with cinematic adaptations but the analysis of the transformations that Naughton's *Alfie Elkins and His Little Life* underwent provided a fertile field of study, involving a stage adaptation, a film adaptation from the 60s and finally, a recent remake of the film. These adaptations become all the more interesting because of the way they repeat but simultaneously change the original radio drama. Indeed, the central character is very much the same throughout the adaptations and there is a clear repetition of themes; however, there is also a striking re-interpretation and re-creation of the protagonist and the themes associated with him, inextricably linked to the social, cultural and historical context in which each adaptation appears.

A number of studies proved useful for these considerations, more specifically the arguments formulated in: *Film Adaptation* (2000), edited by James Naremore, *British Film* (2004) by Jim Leach, *Literature Through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation* (2004) by Robert Stam, *A Theory of Parody. The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (2000) and *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) both by Linda Hutcheon. These studies also provided the tools needed to understand the process involved in updating a character such as the rogue, evincing the link between this literary figure, his anti-establishment nature, and the social, cultural and historical contexts to which he belongs.

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The third chapter of the present dissertation is the longest and most ambitious. It is significantly entitled ‘The Rogue in the 1980s and Onwards: Transformations in the British Literary Scene’ and it is divided into two main sections. The first deals with Martin Amis’s fiction (‘The Rogue and Martin Amis’s Novels’) and the second with Irvine Welsh’s literary work (‘The Rogue and Irvine Welsh’s Scottish Fiction’).

The section devoted to Amis’s literary work opens with considerations on postmodern fiction, evoking various scholars who have reflected upon fiction produced from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards: Ihab Hassan, Fredric Jameson, Terry Eagleton, Brian McHale, Andreas Huyssen and Linda Hutcheon, to name but a few. This overview made it possible to systematize common traits in postmodernist writing, the questions raised in contemporary novels and the treatment of the anti-hero, on several occasions the rogue, as a vehicle for the depiction of the society we live in.

The aim in this first part was to explore Amis’s fiction, focusing on three major novels: *Money: A Suicide Note* (1984), *London Fields* (1989) and *Yellow Dog* (2003). Indeed, as Gavin Keulks explains in his introduction to the study *Martin Amis: Postmodernism and Beyond* (2006), Amis’s career is extremely vast:

Spanning three decades, ten novels, six works of nonfiction, two short story collections, and nearly 400 reviews and essays, Martin Amis’s career already testifies to a lifetime devoted to literature. From the appearance of his first novel, *The Rachel Papers* (1973), to his most recent novel, *Yellow Dog* (2003), roughly 30 years later, Amis has

inspired some of the most controversial literary debates of the contemporary era.<sup>13</sup>

Although the novels commonly understood by critics to constitute a trilogy are *Money*, *London Fields* and *The Information* (1995), my goal was to extend my study to the very last novel published by Amis at the time I started the present thesis, identifying in *Yellow Dog* a remarkable example of contemporary literature of roguery. I have also omitted *The Information* because unlike *Money*, *London Fields* and *Yellow Dog*, the novel draws on matters of Amis's personal life, and the plot centres on the tricks perpetrated by the central character, Richard Todd, on his old friend, Gwyn Barry. Although the novel follows an episodic structure and is extremely comic, it revolves around plots of revenge and is ultimately focused on the contemporaneous commercialised Western literary world. As Brian Finney explains:

Ostensibly a narrative about literary envy, the book satirizes the extent to which the contemporary novel has become one more product which is not just sold through media hype but which creates star authors and makes money out of sending them on book tours and (mis)quoting them whenever the media needs free copy [...]. Ironically, this is just what happened to Amis after he had finished writing the novel [...]. As a result, the British reception of the book was largely distorted by the expensive press coverage accorded Amis's large book advance, change of agent, expensive dental work, and the breakup of his marriage [...].<sup>14</sup>

One of the most challenging aspects of dealing with Amis's literary work, as well as that of Irvine Welsh, is that these contemporary authors are still active. Amis has recently published the novel *The House of Meetings* (2006) and a collection of essays,

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<sup>13</sup> Gavin Keulks, ed. *Martin Amis: Postmodernism and Beyond* (Houndmills, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006) 1.

<sup>14</sup> Brian Finney, *Martin Amis* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008) 57.

reviews and fiction published between 2001 and 2007 entitled *The Second Plane* (2008) and Welsh had two novels published since *Porno* (2002), namely, *The Bedroom Secrets of the Master Chefs* (2006) and *Crime* (2008) and a short-story collection, *If You Liked School, You'll Love Work...* (2007). Their most recent fiction evinces a recurrence of themes, characters, language and style and announces a promising future.

The second part of the chapter is dedicated to Irvine Welsh's novelistic production, particularly, to the trilogy *Trainspotting* (1993), *Glue* (2001) and *Porno* (2002). Because Welsh's first novel, *Trainspotting*, was an extremely innovative work as far as language, style, themes and characters depicted are concerned, it occupies a predominant position in my analysis of Welsh's fiction and in my study on the rogue. Indeed, the author introduces in the novel the rogue characters that will reappear in *Glue* and, especially, in *Porno*. Through the representation of their lives we witness the major political, economic, social and cultural upheavals in Scotland (Leith, Edinburgh) from the 1980s onwards. The rogues portrayed in *Trainspotting* were also celebrated in Danny Boyle's cinematic adaptation, released in 1996. An analysis of the film *Trainspotting* becomes significant in order to understand better the transformation of a countercultural object (Welsh's novel) into a mainstream consumption product (Boyle's successful film), converting disreputable characters into glamorous anti-heroes.

The methodology employed in the analysis of the adaptation of the novel follows a similar path to the one adopted at the end of the second chapter. Previous to the film, the novel *Trainspotting* was also adapted for the stage, by the director and playwright Harry Gibson. Both stage and cinematic adaptations were extremely successful, repeating the impact Welsh's novel had caused at the time of its release. Harry Gibson's film is the last adaptation I mention in the thesis, providing an accomplished example of the dialogue between different artistic domains.

Finally, both *Glue* and *Porno* allowed for the analysis of themes introduced in *Trainspotting*, notably, violence, masculinity, pornography, popular culture and rampant consumerism in British society. The extensive bibliography consulted for this chapter testifies to the innumerable implications of the novels. Nevertheless, two major references provided the apparatus to observe critically the consumer and consuming society that surrounds us: Guy Debord, *The Society of Spectacle* (1994; originally published in French in 1967) and Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (2003; originally published in French in 1981).

Finally, the trilogy I deal with in the present thesis confirms ‘the Irvine Welsh phenomenon.’ As Robert A. Morace explains:

Welsh’s work and the Welsh phenomenon are best seen from the perspective of and as a contribution to British cultural studies which began in the 1950s concentrating almost exclusively on English culture (as fully representative of British culture) and which rapidly developed during the 1990s, when Welsh’s influence became dominant. The Welsh phenomenon represents the most important but still contested shift from Matthew Arnold’s theory of culture, as secular religion with its own set of values, to the more modern, or postmodern, theory of cultural materialism.<sup>15</sup>

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The dissertation ends with a conclusion intending to provide an overview of my argument and to open up the field, pointing towards new directions in the study of contemporary rogue fiction. Indeed, I expect to have gone some way towards answering

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<sup>15</sup> Robert A. Morace, *Irvine Welsh* (Houndmills, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007) 13.

the questions raised at the beginning of my research and which relate to the survival of the rogue in contemporary British fiction. The examples chosen, especially the novels analysed, illustrate the revival of the rogue novel in the 1950s and the continuation of this literary form into the new millennium. Through their fiction, authors such as Martin Amis and Irvine Welsh urge us to rethink the meaning of the rogue nowadays, employing this figure as a powerful vehicle of social criticism.

What I attempted to do with the present study was to trace the tradition of rogue literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and to present the rogue as a highly valuable character in the history of British letters. The focus on contemporary literature revealed itself as a favourable field for the manifestation of this kind of character. Although there are now countless studies on the fiction by Amis and Welsh, they tend to focus on various postmodern issues, on politics, identity, contemporary society, literary authorship, experimentalism in style and language. Clearly, there is simultaneously an attempt to establish links with previous authors. These attempts are extremely noticeable in Amis's case, who is frequently juxtaposed to his father – see, for instance, the enlightening study by Gavin Keulks entitled *Father and Son: Kingsley Amis, Martin Amis, and the British Novel since 1950* (2003) – and also found in Welsh's case, whose literary work is seen following the developments brought about by Alasdair Gray and James Kelman, among others.

However, throughout my research I have not come across any systematic study of Amis' and Welsh's fiction within the tradition of rogue literature. On several occasions these authors' protagonists are characterised as alienated beings, tramps, cheats, petty-thieves, victims of the society they live in, corrupted human beings with distorted value systems, perfect examples of contemporary anti-heroes. Very seldom, however, is the word rogue applied to them, although I must stress as a striking exception the analysis



developed by John A. Dern, who in his study *Martians, Monsters and Madonna: Fiction and Form in the World of Martin Amis* (2000) wrote an entire chapter entitled 'Narrator and Rogue' on the unreliability of the narrator in Amis' fiction, the tradition of the unreliable narrator from Sterne to Amis and the example of the novel *London Fields*.

The attempt to place Martin Amis's and Irvine Welsh's fiction within the tradition of rogue literature and the effort to systematise features that could allow me to speak of the survival of rogue characters in contemporary fiction was thus an arduous task. Nevertheless, it was also a rewarding exercise, allowing me to share both the serious as well as the comic moments of these remarkable characters and to grasp the on-going dialogue they establish with the cultural and historical context in which they appear.

The dissertation closes with a section containing attachments and a bibliography. The first attachment consists of an interview with David Lodge, 'Playing with Ideas: Questions for Discussion' (Birmingham, the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2007). This enlightening conversation proved extremely valuable for a better understanding of the transformations experienced in Britain throughout the 1950s and offered me clues for the analysis of the rogue in contemporary literature. Appendices I and II relate to chapter '2.3. *Alfie*: Cultural Change and Continuity 1960-2000.' The first contains information about the BBC broadcast of the originally radio play by Bill Naughton. The second offers details on the stage play performed at the Duchess Theatre, London, in 1963.

Since I have dealt with so many authors and works, the bibliography is organized thematically in order to facilitate consultation on the different subjects broached in the thesis. It is a comprehensive bibliography insofar as it covers all the research material used for the purpose of the present dissertation. However, it is important to bear in mind

that I have not included the entire available bibliography of the authors I refer to in the thesis, but simply those works that were relevant for my theme.

As a final thought, I would like to add that the continuous metamorphosis of the rogue through the ages is only possible because of the potential embodied by the character and the possibilities inherent in rogue fiction understood as an autonomous literary form. Indeed, the originality of the rogue is manifest in the novelty of contemporary fiction dealing with this character, seducing both creators and readers.

## **PART I**



# 1. The Rogue and the Literature of Roguery: A Case of Fortune in the Development of the Novel

## 1.1. The Rogue: An Intersection of History, Law and Literature

I enjoy a double advantage as I begin. The publication of various contemporary novels of more or less roguish character has proved, beyond any doubt, that to regard the picaresque as an event of the past *only* is a pedantic and erroneous view.

Claudio Guillén, 'Toward a Definition of the Picaresque' (1961)

Given that literature may be understood as a harmonious blend of tradition and originality, the aim of this study is to analyse the ways in which the character of the rogue persists in contemporary British literature. The rogue survives from the moment of the birth of rogue literature until today and invites us to read the present always mindful of the past, clarifying continuities as well as emphasizing transformations. As T. S. Eliot suggested: 'the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past.'<sup>16</sup>

The emergence of rogue literature in England is linked to the development of picaresque literature from the Spanish Golden Age, as represented by two main novels that are fundamental to European literature generally and to English literature in particular: *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes y de sus fortunas y adversidades* (1554) and *La vida de Guzmán de Alfarache, atalaya de la vida humana* (1599-1604). Picaresque literature presents realistic and satirical traits, adopting both a common and a comic style. It develops as an alternative to unlikely fictions such as the pastoral and the chivalric novel, thus being considered as the ancestor of the modern novel. According to Francisco Rico:

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<sup>16</sup> T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and Individual Talent,' *Points of View* (London: Faber and Faber, 1941) 26.

‘las primeras novelas españolas pueden ser consideradas, historicamente, como reacciones contra las novelas pastoriles y de caballerías, pero no como sátiras de las mismas, sino como alternativa.’<sup>17</sup> Francisco J. Sánchez and Nicholas Spaccini further explain: ‘[a]n analysis of picaresque literature cannot be separated from a consideration of the question of social marginality.’<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the *pícaro* is a disreputable character linked with a criminal underworld. Also, according to Claudio Guillén, the picaresque novels of the Spanish Golden Age possess specific formal and thematic traits. Guillén singles out the main features of this subgenre: the protagonist is usually an orphan, an abandoned child in the world who creates his or her own system of values becoming sooner or later a ‘half-outsider.’ The novel is a pseudoautobiography; the narrator’s view is partial but constitutes a powerful critique of society. Special attention is given to the material side of human existence and to collective conditions and vices in society, elements which are a standing invitation for satire and comic effects. And because the *pícaro* moves horizontally through space and, with the help of Fortune, vertically through society, the structure of the novel is episodic.<sup>19</sup> When it comes to understanding the picaresque novel in its wider sense, not all of these traits can be retained. However, orphanhood and estrangement from society are crucial elements:

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<sup>17</sup> Francisco Rico, ed. *Historia y Crítica de la Literatura Española*, vol. III (Barcelona: Editorial Crítica, 1983) 478: ‘The first Spanish novels can be considered, historically, as reactions against the pastoral and chivalric novels, but not as satires of the latter, rather as alternatives.’ My translation.

<sup>18</sup> Francisco J. Sánchez and Nicholas Spadaccini, Afterword, ‘Revisiting the Picaresque in Postmodern Times,’ *The Picaresque: Tradition and Displacement*, ed. Giancarlo Maiorino (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) 296.

<sup>19</sup> Claudio Guillén, ‘Toward a Definition of the Picaresque,’ 75-93. As far as the term ‘half-outsider’ is concerned, Guillén explains: ‘Inwardly and outwardly alone, the young boy is wounded, hardened, and never quite assimilated by an adult society and its many scandals. At once fatherless and homeless – self-exiled [...] he will seek new cities, further replacements for the absent tutor, only to discover that the world can at best act like a cruel stepfather. [...] The author, of course, has tampered with the cards, so that hardship and bitter lesson conspire at every turn to shape the hero into an enemy of the social fabric, if not into an active foe. For the “unfortunate traveller” soon learns that there is no material survival outside of society, and no real refuge – no pastoral paradise – beyond it. Social role-playing is as ludicrous as it is indispensable. This is where the solution of “roguish” behavior is preferred. Now a *pícaro*, the hero chooses to compromise and live on the razor’s edge between vagabondage and delinquency. He can, in short, *neither join nor actually reject his fellow men*. He becomes what I would like to call a “half-outsider.” Hence the ambivalence of the final narrative situation, and the wealth of variations that it can inspire.’ Guillén 80.

The elements that may be considered indispensable to the broader group are all contained in our first characteristic, which can be reduced to the following: the radical solitude of the orphan as a child or young man; and his lasting but ambiguous estrangement from society, “reality,” or established beliefs and ideologies. (One could add roguish behaviour – a moot point: but ordinarily such estrangement will lead to a break with conventional ethics).<sup>20</sup>

In his study, ‘Discourse in the Novel,’ Bakhtin explains how the picaresque novel becomes fundamental in the development of the novelistic prose at the beginning of modernity, and how it is best understood against the background of the high chivalric novel of trial, the extra-literary rhetorical genres (biographical, confessional, sermon genres), and the later Baroque novel. Precisely because it adopts an anti-hero as main character, the picaresque novel becomes the first great example of what Bakhtin terms the Second Stylistic Line in the development of the novel, one in which heteroglossia – different speech types – are introduced into the text:

The image of the rogue determines the first powerful novel-form of the Second Line – the picaresque adventure novel. [...] The hero of such novels, the agent of gay deception, is located on the far side of any pathos – heroic or Sentimental – and located there deliberately and emphatically; his contra-pathetic nature is everywhere in evidence, beginning with his comic self-introduction and self-recommendation to the public (providing the tone of the entire subsequent story) and ending with the finale. The hero is located beyond all these basically rhetorical categories that are at the heart of a hero’s image in novels of trial: he is on the far side of any judgment, any defense or accusation, any self-

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<sup>20</sup> Guillén, ‘Toward a Definition of the Picaresque,’ 95.

justification or repentance. A radically new tone is given here to discourse about human beings, a tone alien to any pathos-charged seriousness.<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, according to Bakhtin, the condition responsible for the stylistic uniqueness of the novel as a genre is the speaking person and his/her discourse, which is artistically represented and strives for social significance. *Who* speaks and under *what* conditions is what determines the word's meaning: '[w]hen we seek to understand the world, what matters is not the direct meaning the word gives to objects and emotions – this is the false front of the world; what matters is rather the actual and always self-interested *use* to which this meaning is put and the way it is expressed by the speaker [...]'.<sup>22</sup> Still according to Bakhtin, the speaking person is thus an ideologue and his/her perception of the world, depicted in action and discourse, is an ideologeme.

Within this context, the rogue, often linked with the image of the fool and of the clown, comes forward at the beginning of modernity as a powerful device to challenge any attempt to constitute an abstract, depersonalised language. Opposed to pathos, the image of the rogue allows for a new dialogical category, the gay deception, which is an effective way of parodying high languages, high positions and symbols:

Opposed to the *lie of pathos* accumulated in the language of all recognized and structured professions, social groups and classes, there is not straightforward truth (pathos of the same kind) but rather a gay and

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<sup>21</sup> M. M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel,' *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982) 406. In contrast to the Second Stylistic Line of development of the novel, the First Line finds its roots in the Sophistic novel. It knows only a single language and a single style and heteroglossia remain outside this type of novel. Toward the beginning of the seventeenth century the First Stylistic Line of the novel begins to change and is best represented by the Baroque novel. In its further development it branches in two directions: the adventure-heroic type and the sentimental psychological novel. Cf.: Bakhtin 372, 375, 383, 387-400.

<sup>22</sup> Bakhtin 401.



intelligent deception, a *lie* justified because it is directed precisely to *liars*.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, the language of the merry rogue emerges as a parodical re-processing of the pathos and seriousness associated with the languages of power that dominate in any given era. The rogue's association with the fool and the clown may also help to clarify what is implied in the earliest stage of development of this character.<sup>24</sup> The rogue perceived as a naïve (simple) *fool*, for example, fails to understand pathos (or rather understands it in a distorted way). But it is this (deliberate) incomprehension of any social conventionality which allows for the parody of the world of conventional pathos and seriousness. Moreover, both rogue and fool share intrinsic characteristics with the figure of the clown. According to Bakhtin: '[t]he clown is one of the most ancient of literature's images, and the clown's speech, determined by his special social orientation (by his privileges as a clown) is one of the most ancient artistic forms of human discourse.'<sup>25</sup> Just like the rogue and the fool, the target of the clown is also society's

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<sup>23</sup> Bakhtin 401.

<sup>24</sup> As far as the roots of the rogue are concerned, Guillén also establishes a link with literary and historical types, associating the rogue with the trickster, the wanderer and the have-not: 'The forerunners of the Renaissance rogue may be classified into three general types: the trickster, the wanderer and the have-not. Pure examples of the first type have appeared perhaps more often in fiction than in fact [...]. But the figure of mischief plays an important part in a number of the so-called sources of literary influences that have been associated with the picaresque novel: Latin comedy, for example, *The Roman de Renard*, the Italian *novelle*, Rabelais, or the German *Schwänke*.

The nature of the have-not, the poor or the dispossessed has been, on the contrary, more social than literary. These types do not begin to assume a predominating position in literature before the realistic narratives and plays of the Renaissance. *Lazarillo* attributes a central role to the representative of a social class which hitherto had contributed only small parts and supernumeraries to works of the imagination. [...] The roots of the third figure, that of the wanderer, seem to lie deeper than those of the two others, for his behavior results from both a positive conception of existence and a criticism of society. [...] The have-not is often obliged to become a wanderer, and the wanderer turns still more frequently into a have-not – both forming the mingled class, which lies nearest to our subject, of beggars and vagabonds.' Claudio Guillén, *The Anatomies of Roguery. A Comparative Study in the Origins and the Nature of Picaresque Literature* (Harvard dissertations in comparative literature), originally presented as the author's thesis (Ph.D.), Harvard University, 1953 (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1987) 69-71.

<sup>25</sup> Bakhtin 405. See also: Kimberly A. Christen, ed. *Clowns and Tricksters: An Encyclopedia of Tradition and Culture*, consulting editor Sam Gill (Denver, Colorado; Santa Barbara, California; Oxford, England: ABC-CLIO, 1998). In her introduction, Kimberly explains: 'Tricksters and clowns, found in virtually every culture, are among the most widespread character types in mythology and popular culture throughout the world. However, they vary greatly from culture to culture, revealing distinct social and religious dimensions of the cultures in which they are found. Like any distinctive character, the tricksters

pathos-charged seriousness. However, his scepticism towards any unmediated discourse is best represented through his malicious distortion of acceptable languages.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, clowns and fools, characteristic of the medieval culture of humour and with whom the rogue shares traits, stand for a certain form of life. They have always crossed over the borderline of life and art, and from the very beginning they were granted the right to folly. Understood as the opposite of wisdom (inverted truth), folly means being free from laws and restrictions, preoccupations and seriousness, and therefore carries deeply ambivalent meanings: '[i]t has the negative element of debasement and destruction (the only vestige now is the use of "fool" as pejorative) and the positive element of renewal and truth.'<sup>27</sup>

These three figures – the rogue, the fool and the clown – are thus important for an understanding of the conditions under which the modern novel was born, not only establishing a link with folklore and the pre-historical roots of novel style, but also introducing the categories (gay deception, naïve incomprehension and malicious

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and clowns of the world (of which there are an unlimited and always changing number) reveal something about the cultures from which they arose and in which they continue to be perpetuated. These multifaceted characters have been and continue to be sources of entertainment, agents of social change, and mirrors of religious conviction for their audiences.' Christen ix.

<sup>26</sup> About the relationships between clown, fool and *pícaro* see: William Riggan, *Pícaros, Madmen, Naiifs, and Clowns. The Unreliable First-Person Narrator* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981) 80: '[...] the evolution of the "artificial" fool from insult artist and idiot-imitator to raconteur and mime did lay the groundwork for the clown-buffon-fool's eventual transition from court and banquet hall to stage and print in the late medieval period, when he merged with another figure: the clown king of the traditional religious and fertility festivals.' See also: Enid Welsford, *The Fool: His Social and Literary History* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, reprinted 1966: 277-278 [London: Faber and Faber, 1935: 273-274]): "Clowns depend on their individualities, but they also fall into groups; they take their tone and colour from their immediate surroundings, and they one and all play variations upon the primal jokes [...] which have made people laugh from generation to generation: 'Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.' We catch our first glimpse of the European clown in ancient Greece [...]. We find him still flourishing in the early years of the Roman Empire [...]. During the Dark Ages, the figure of the Clown becomes blurred. He flourished, no doubt, but he is lost in a medley of acrobats, jongleurs, minstrels and bear-leaders, who can hardly be disentangled from one another. In the later Middle Ages, however, he begins to re-emerge as an amateur or professional actor assuming the dress, and mimicking the ways, of the official court-jester; but, like other institutions of the ancient world, his real life begins again at the Renaissance."

<sup>27</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, translated by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) 260.

distortion of language) which will determine the future of the novelistic genre.

According to Bakhtin:

Thus the rogue's gay deception parodies high languages, the clown's malicious distortion of them, his turning them inside out and finally the fool's naive incomprehension of them – these three dialogic categories that had organized heteroglossia in the novel at the dawn of its history emerge in modern times with extraordinary surface clarity and are embodied in the symbolic images of the rogue, the clown and the fool. In their further development these categories are refined, differentiated, cut loose from their external and symbolically static images, but they continue to preserve their importance for organizing novel style.<sup>28</sup>

The rogue, in particular, will be an extremely fruitful character in the development of the British novel, surviving throughout literary history until the present day. In order to understand this survival it will be helpful to look into the conditions under which this character emerges in fiction.

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From a linguistic point of view, the word 'rogue' is a much travelled one. It first appears in the English language as a legal term used in the reign of Elizabeth I to define a person 'belonging to a class of idle vagrants or vagabonds' (cf.: the Elizabethan statute: Act 14 Eliz. c. 5 § 5). The term thus appears linked with historical events of 16<sup>th</sup>-century England and is synonymous with a specific socio-cultural reality – the beginning of modernity<sup>29</sup>: the enclosures, the decline of the kinship system, the

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<sup>28</sup> Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel,' 405.

<sup>29</sup> Cf.: Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990). Giddens mentions several important events in English society that worked as catalysts for the beginning of modernity, the most significant of which was the decline of the kinship system. Other important changes

migration of countrymen to the city, London, and the consequent erratic growth of the city. According to Arthur F. Kinney: ‘London tripled in population in the sixteenth century until she was near 150,000 (...) and with her growth, crooks moved into taverns throughout the town.’<sup>30</sup>

In times of acute socio-economic and political transformation, the poor often proliferate. Throughout the Tudor period, legislation concerning the needy was enacted. The first ‘Poor Law’ dates from 1531 but it is the legislation from 1598, settled in 1601, that constituted the foundation of all legislation with a view to assisting the poor, until the 18th century. Alongside the proliferation of the poor, there was a growth in crime. The ‘undeserving’ poor were those who *could* but *chose not to* work. These individuals came to be known as ‘rogues’ and it is these rogues who fired the literary imagination of 16th-century England.

The London underworld was soon depicted in prose pamphlets seizing the attention of a new audience in the metropolis: merchants, small bankers, craftsmen. Sandra Clark mentions:

They [the pamphlets] contain a wealth of vivid and detailed observation of contemporary life, of a London underworld of taverns, brothels, and bowling alleys, of country boys at risk in the big city, of wide-scale and

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are closely associated with the increasing power of the State, the movement of the Reformation, the growth of Protestantism, the change in family structure, the growth of a mercantile bourgeoisie and migration from the country to the city. See in particular chapter three: ‘The Pre-Modern and the Modern’, Giddens 100-111. See also: Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, introd. Anthony Giddens (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978).

<sup>30</sup> Arthur F. Kinney, ed., *Rogues, Vagabonds and Sturdy Beggars: A New Gallery of Tudor and Early Stuart Rogue Literature Exposing the Lives, Times, and Cozening Tricks of the Elizabethan Underworld* (Massachusetts: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1990) 16. In the introduction, Kinney further explains: “to understand the birth and growth of the Tudor vagabonds, we must sort out both the historic causes – the enclosure movement, the dissolution of monasteries – and the more immediate sources, such as the disbanding of professional soldiers and the arrival, from Western Europe, of gypsies. In addition, Tudor England suffered from the confluence of various strains on the economy: the sudden shift from home to foreign markets, the introduction of piece-work production, a sharp increase in population, inflation, and debased money.” Kinney 19. See also my study *O Picaro e o Rogue. Sobrevivência e Metamorfose de Daniel Defoe a Julian Barnes* (Lisboa: Colibri, 2006) 39-54, whose argument I use here again.

organized petty crime, of extravagant and fast-changing fashions, of a rising class of middlemen and profiteers, and of an all-pervasive and disquieting sense of social upheaval.<sup>31</sup>

These pamphlets or ‘rogue pamphlets’ soon became a literary novelty, a mixture of fact and fiction, aiming not only to entertain but also to promote moral reflection.

In what constitutes one of the first and most complete academic studies of rogue literature, *The Literature of Roguery* (1907), Frank Wadleigh Chandler classifies the pamphlets as: ‘Beggar-Books’, ‘Conny [sic] - Catching Pamphlets’ and ‘Prison Tracts and Repentances.’<sup>32</sup> And it is precisely the ‘cony-catching pamphlets’ – portraying the ‘cony,’ the victims of those known by the name of ‘cony-catchers,’ versatile in the art of ‘cony-catching’: card and dice players, prostitutes, dishonest people – which will serve as models for a relevant part of the literary production of 16th- and 17th-century England. Indeed, Robert Greene (*A Notable Discovery of Cozenage*, 1591 and *The Black Book’s Messenger*, 1612), Thomas Dekker (*Lantern and Candle-light*, 1608) and authors of criminal biographies such as Thomas Nash (*The Unfortunate Traveller*, 1594), Richard Head and Francis Kirkman (*The English Rogue*, 1665) are important references for Daniel Defoe’s work, mainly *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* (1722), a novel celebrating the life of a rogue, in this case, a female rogue.

Frank Chandler also explains how the literature of roguery is primarily associated with the novel:

The literature of roguery occupies a peculiar place in the history of letters. Determined by subject-matter rather than by form, and depending

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<sup>31</sup> Sandra Clark, *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers. Popular Moralistic Pamphlets 1580-1640* (Rutherford, Madison, Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983) 37.

<sup>32</sup> Frank Wadleigh Chandler, *The Literature of Roguery*, 2 vols. (1907; New York: Burt Franklin Rpt., 1974).

upon observed actuality rather than ideals, it presents low life in lieu of heroic, and manners rather than conscience and emotion. It prefers prose to verse, descriptive narrative to drama, and is therefore primarily associated with the novel.<sup>33</sup>

The literature of roguery may therefore be characterised by: subject-matter (it deals preponderantly with roguery), observed reality, depiction of low life and manners, and by its alliance with the genre of the novel. It also presents a rogue as the protagonist of the narrative: ‘the literature of roguery [...] deals essentially with the occasional criminal who is tending to become professional, or with the professional criminal who stops short of villainy.’<sup>34</sup> The typical crime of the rogue is theft. Regarding rascality with humour, he is cunning, cheats and lives on his wits. But he is not evil in nature, rather he is first and foremost the product of the social environment in which he is brought up or in which he comes to live.

Furthermore, Chandler stresses the link between this type of literature and the picaresque. Indeed, the literature of roguery was born in the later Renaissance and although it includes many types it is most closely linked to the picaresque novel: ‘[c]ompared to the test of preponderant roguery, the test of form, though more precise, is less generally applicable. If the literature of roguery includes many types, one alone is perfectly definite. This is the picaresque novel.’<sup>35</sup>

Indeed Lazarillo de Tormes in *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes y de sus fortunas y adversidades* (1554) has been considered the first Spanish rogue. This work is followed by important fictional texts which helped to form the canon of the picaresque novel, such as Mateo Alemán’s *La vida de Guzmán de Alfarache, atalaya de la vida*

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<sup>33</sup> Chandler 1.

<sup>34</sup> Chandler 3.

<sup>35</sup> Chandler 5.

*humana* (1599-1604)<sup>36</sup> or even Francisco de Quevedo's *Historia de la vida del buscón, llamado don Pablos, exemplo de vagamundos y espejo de tacaños* (1626). During the period usually known as the Spanish Golden Age (16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries), these fictional works circulated throughout Europe and were translated into different languages, including English, having a significant impact on the development of Western literature.<sup>37</sup>

Together with the reception in England of the Spanish picaresque, the literary novelty of the rogue pamphlets played an important part in the development of the English novel and, as already mentioned, influenced authors such as Daniel Defoe. His work can be seen as a place of convergence of both the rogue pamphlets and the picaresque literature in England.

Defoe's interest in rogues will be followed by several authors such as Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, William Makepeace Thackeray and Charles Dickens, who develop this type of novel, the rogue novel, throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, as their fictional work shows, by the middle of the eighteenth century novels

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<sup>36</sup> I argue that Mateo Alemán's *La vida de Guzmán de Alfarache, atalaya de la vida humana* (1599-1604) plays a fundamental role in the construction of the literary canon of the picaresque novel for two reasons: first, this fictional work refers back to *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes y de sus fortunas y adversidades*, helping to constitute the picaresque novel as a literary genre; second, the term pícaro is first linked to Guzmán de Alfarache. Indeed, according to Fernando Lázaro: 'La novela picaresca surge como género literario, no con el *Lazarillo*, no con el *Guzmán*, sino cuando éste incorpora deliberadamente rasgos visibles del primero.' Fernando Lázaro Carreter, "Para una revisión del concepto 'novela picaresca,'" *'Lazarillo de Tormes' en la picaresca* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1972) 204. And Francisco Rico affirms: "Hablamos (hoy) de la novela picaresca, porque al publicarse la primera parte de *La vida de Guzmán de Alfarache, atalaya de la vida humana*, las gentes, extrayendo un común denominador (entre los varios posibles) de las etapas del protagonista y compendiando el título en un mote, «dieron en llamarle Pícaro»." Francisco Rico, *La novela picaresca y el punto de vista*, 106-107.

<sup>37</sup> In England, *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes, y de sus fortunas y adversidades* (1554) was first translated by David Rowland as *The Plesaunt Historie of Lazarillo de Tormes a Spaniarde, wherein is contained his marveilous deedes and life* (London, 1568), and the well-known *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599, 1604) by Mateo Alemán was translated by James Mabbe as *The Rogue: or the Life of Gvzman de Alfarache* (London, 1622). As far as Quevedo's *La vida del Buscón* (1626) is concerned, it was translated by John Stevens as *The Life of Paul the Spanish Sharper* (London 1707). Barry Ife explains: 'The Irishman John Stevens was not the first to attempt Quevedo's *Buscón*, but his version of 1707 made sufficient headway with this impossibly difficult text to get it established among English readers.' Peter France, ed. *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 422. In my study *O Pícaro e o Rogue* (2006), I have written about the English translations of these picaresque novels (34-39). To learn more about English translations of picaresque novels see also: Francisco Javier Sánchez Escribano, ed. *Picaresca Española en Traducción Inglesa (ss. XVI y XVII). Antología y Estudios* (Zaragoza: Universidad de Zaragoza, 1998).

of roguery abandoned the picaresque form, although retaining in most cases its humour and irony, its zest for adventure and its scenes of low life. Thus, rogue fiction developed more and more apart from its source, occupying a special place in the history of British literature. Indeed, examples of rogues abound in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries: from the much acclaimed Jonathan Wild in Henry Fielding's *The Life of Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great* (1743), inspired by true events,<sup>38</sup> to Tobias Smollett's *Roderick Random* (1748) or the underground characters who inhabit Dickens' novels, specifically *Oliver Twist; or, The Parish Boy's Progress* (1838), with characters such as 'the Artful Dodger' and Nancy,<sup>39</sup> as well as William Makepeace Thackeray's *Barry Lyndon* (1844). Furthermore, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century examples can be found in novels such as *Herself Surprised* (1941) and *The Horse's Mouth* (1944), the first and the last novels respectively of a trilogy by Joyce Cary, well-known for its rogue characters: Sara Monday and Gulley Jimson.<sup>40</sup> And from the early 1950s onwards the rogue novel may be said to experience a revival. To the list presented above I would add authors and literary works such as: John Wain's *Hurry On Down* (1953), Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net* (1954), Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954), John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957), Allan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday*

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<sup>38</sup> Indeed, Jonathan Wild was a historical character. According to Frank W. Chandler: 'England sank to the nadir of social misrule in the first third of the eighteenth century, and its prince of darkness was Jonathan Wild. He represents the acme of professionalism in crime. As a terror inspirer he has long been invoked by novelists and dramatists, and every criminal chronicle holds him its darling.' Chandler 155. See also: A. R. Fernandes 94-95.

<sup>39</sup> As far as the characters Dodger and Nancy are concerned they are not central characters in Dickens's novel but they do present roguish traits. They both move in the London underworld, belonging to a milieu of criminality (Fagin's gang). They are disreputable characters: Dodger is a thief, a pickpocket, and Nancy wins her life as a prostitute. However, opposed to Fagin and William Sykes, who are both villains, Dodger and Nancy are rather victims of the society they belong to. And although they are constantly fighting for their survival, they keep their sense of humour throughout their adventures. See: A. R. Fernandes 80-94.

<sup>40</sup> I have compared Sarah Monday (the main character in Joyce Cary's *Herself Surprised*, 1941) to Moll Flanders, two witty rogues, in *O Picaro e o Rogue* (61-80). In the present study I analyse the character Gulley Jimson in Cary's *The Horse's Mouth* (1944), from the point of view of the rogue as an artist, establishing a link with Jake Donaghue, the protagonist of Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net* (1954). See in the present thesis chapter 2: '2.1. The Rogue as an Artist: Joyce Cary's *The Horse's Mouth* (1944) and Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net* (1954).'



*Morning* (1958) and even Bill Naughton's *Alfie* (1966).<sup>41</sup> More recently, one could mention the following novelists: Julian Barnes,<sup>42</sup> Martin Amis (*Money: A Suicide Note*, 1984; *London Fields*, 1989 and *Yellow Dog*, 2003) and Irvine Welsh (and the trilogy *Trainspotting*, 1993, *Glue*, 2001, and *Porno*, 2002), among others. This constellation of twentieth-century writers, brought together under the aegis of the rogue character, is a tentative proposal at mapping the fortune/progress of this novelistic type in recent times.

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From what I have argued before it can be deduced that the rogue is an anti-hero. Northrop Frye's essay, 'Historical Criticism: Theory of Modes,' will be of particular interest in order to understand this classification. Looking back at Aristotle's *Poetics* Northrop Frye affirms: '[f]ictions [...] may be classified, not morally, but by the hero's power of action, which may be greater than ours, less, or roughly the same.'<sup>43</sup> And indeed Frye presents us with a table of the different kinds of heroes found in European literature throughout the ages: the hero of the *myth*; the hero of *romance*; the hero of the *high mimetic* mode (the kind of hero Aristotle had in mind when referring to the epic and the tragedy); the hero of the *low mimetic* mode, of comedy and realistic fiction; and finally the hero of the *ironic* mode. He warns the reader of the difficulty in retaining the word 'hero' as far as the low mimetic mode and, by extension, the ironic mode are

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<sup>41</sup> The novel was an adaptation of the play by Naughton, which was originally a radio drama, broadcast by the BBC in 1962, eventually published in 1963. See in the present thesis chapter 2: '2.3. *Alfie*: Cultural Change and Continuity 1960-2000.'

<sup>42</sup> Julian Barnes's *Talking it Over* (1992) and the sequel *Love and etc.* (2001) are illustrative of the development of the rogue character in postmodern fiction. For more on Julian Barnes and these novels, with a particular emphasis on *Talking it Over* and the rogue Oliver Russell, see my study: *O Picaro e o Rogue* (2006): 104-112.

<sup>43</sup> Northrop Frye, 'First Essay. Historical Criticism: Theory of Modes,' *Anatomy of Criticism. Four Essays*, with a foreword by Harold Bloom (1975; Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000) 33.

concerned. Frye then adds: '[L]ooking over this table, we can see that European fiction, during the last fifteen centuries, has steadily moved its center of gravity down the list.'<sup>44</sup>

In his essay, Frye not only clearly distinguishes a phase in European literature in which the low mimetic mode is brought to the foreground but, equally significant, he also states the importance of English literature in the development of this mode, establishing a direct connection with Daniel Defoe: '[t]hen a new kind of middle-class culture introduces the low mimetic, which predominates in English literature from Defoe's time to the end of the nineteenth century.'<sup>45</sup> Indeed, in literary works such as *Captain Singleton* (1720), *Colonel Jack* (1722), *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress* (1724), Defoe shows a pronounced interest in anti-heroes and criminal activity. And as suggested earlier, his fictional work, particularly *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders*, since it deals with rogues as main characters, will be a fundamental contribution to the establishment of the rogue novel.

Furthermore, in his essay Northrop Frye also stresses: '[d]uring the last hundred years, most serious fiction has tended increasingly to be ironic in mode.'<sup>46</sup> Frye's view will prove to be extremely useful for a discussion of the survival of rogue literature throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially its revival from the early 50s onwards with authors such as John Wain, Kingsley Amis, Irish Murdoch, John Braine, Alan Sillitoe, Bill Naughton and more recently, Martin Amis and Irvine Welsh.

Indeed, in contemporary postmodern literature, the anti-hero seems to have replaced the hero in narrative. This transition was not abrupt. As mentioned by Bakhtin, the image of the rogue will determine the first powerful novel-form of the Second Stylistic Line. This novel-form, the picaresque adventure novel, will flourish and suffer transformations. With it the rogue will also evolve and survive. From the beginning of

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<sup>44</sup> Frye 34.

<sup>45</sup> Frye 34.

<sup>46</sup> Frye 34-35.

the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards the sharp distinction between the two stylistic lines of the novel comes to an end; however, the Second Stylistic Line remains dominant and with it the character of the rogue survives. As Bakhtin argues:

Any novel of any significance in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is of a mixed character, although of course the Second Line dominates. [...] It could even be said that in the nineteenth century the distinctive features of the Second Line became the basic constitutive features for the novelistic genre as a whole. It was in the Second Line that novelistic discourse developed all its specific stylistic potential, unique to it alone. The Second Line opened up once and for all the possibilities embedded in the novel as a genre; in it the novel became what it in fact is.<sup>47</sup>

However, it must be stressed that although the rogue is an anti-hero, not all anti-heroes are rogues. Fiction produced in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, modernist literature, will prove essential to illustrate this point. Authors such as Henry James (1843-1916), Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), Ford Madox Ford (1873-1939), Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), James Joyce (1882-1941), and Dorothy Richardson (1873-1957), to name but a few, will break with conventional forms of English fiction, which they saw as inappropriate to the depiction of their time.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, the term ‘Modernism’ marks an opposition to what is not ‘modern’, specifically ‘tradition’: “‘modernism’ is a legitimate concept broadly signifying a paradigmatic shift, a major revolt, beginning in the mid- and late nineteenth century, against the prevalent literary and aesthetic traditions of the

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<sup>47</sup> Bakhtin 414.

<sup>48</sup> My focus of attention is on English novelists of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, other major modernist novelists and literary works are: Robert Musil (1880-1942), *The Man Without Qualities* (*Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, 1930-1942), Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881), *Notes from the Underground* (1864), Thomas Mann (1875-1955), *The Magic Mountain* (*Der Zauberberg*, 1924) and *Doctor Faustus* (*Doktor Faustus*, 1947), Franz Kafka (1883-1924), *The Metamorphosis* (*Die Verwandlung*, 1915), *The Trial* (*Der Prozess*, 1925) and *The Castle* (*Das Schloß*, 1926), André Malraux (1901-1976), *Man's Fate* (*La Condition Humaine*, 1933), or even Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), *Nausea* (*La Nausée*, 1938).

Western world.<sup>49</sup> Opposed to a mimetic concern with human environment and social conditions, modernist novelists will be more concerned with human consciousness, indicating an ‘inward turn’ in literature.<sup>50</sup>

The development of expressionist and surrealist literature already signals the growing importance of the individual or subjective experience. However, it is specifically the growth of the novelistic form described as the ‘psychological’ or ‘stream-of-consciousness’ novel, which will enable writers such as Woolf, Joyce and Richardson to portray modern life in all its fragmentation.<sup>51</sup> In their novels they challenge the realist model established in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in which the novel is understood as the direct representation of everyday life, and replace it by a modernist psychological model. In *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, Georg Lukács clearly explains the ontological view governing the image of man in the work of leading modernist writers: for the latter, man is by nature solitary and asocial. However, opposed to the individual solitariness to be found in the literature of traditional realism, the solitariness of the modernist man is a universal *condition humaine*. Man becomes an ahistorical being. According to Lukács:

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<sup>49</sup> Astradur Eysteinnsson, *The Concept of Modernism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990) 2.

<sup>50</sup> Cf.: Erich Kahler, *The Inward Turn of Narrative*, trans. from the German by Richard and Clara Winston, foreword by Joseph Frank (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973). See also: Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Models for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978).

<sup>51</sup> Indeed, previous certainties about the physical world and selfhood within it had been swept away. This feeling was intensified by the scientific revolution, technological developments and the new ideas of thinkers such as: Darwin, Freud and Einstein, among others. Western imperialism, the destructive rupture of World War, the communist revolutions, the crisis in the capitalist economy and the rise of fascism were also decisive for this state of affairs. See Deborah Parsons, *Theorists of the Modern Novel: James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007). For more on modernism see also: M. Bradbury and J. McFarlane, *Modernism 1890-1930* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976); P. Faulkner, *Modernism* (London: Methuen, 1977) and P. Faulkner, ed. *A Modernist Reader: Modernism in England 1910-1930* (London: Batsford, 1986); J. Goldman, *Modernism, 1910-1945: Image to Apocalypse* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); B. Kime Scott, *The Gender of Modernism. A Critical Anthology* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990); M. H. Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) and M. Levenson, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

This negation of history takes two different forms in modernist literature. First, the hero is strictly confined within the limits of his own experience. [...] Secondly, the hero himself is without personal history. He is ‘thrown-into-the-world’: meaninglessly, unfathomably. He does not develop through contact with the world; he neither forms or is formed by it. The only ‘development’ in this literature is the gradual revelation of the human condition. Man is now what he has always been and always will be. The narrator, the examining subject, is in motion; the examined reality is static.<sup>52</sup>

The modernist novel will thus re-evaluate the traditional relation of the subject to the outside world and will become known for its formal experimentalism and internal, subjective focus.<sup>53</sup>

Indeed, the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a change in the conception of character and modernist authors felt strongly the need for new methods of literary characterisation. Novelists such as Joseph Conrad (*Lord Jim*, 1900 and *Heart of Darkness*, 1902) and Ford Madox Ford (*The Good Soldier*, 1915), highlight the disjunction between public and private experiences,<sup>54</sup> setting the tone for the depiction of new (anti-)heroes in

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<sup>52</sup> Georg Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, trans. from the German by John and Necke Mander (London: Merlin Press, 1963) 21.

<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that at the same time, authors such as H. G. Wells (1866-1946), Arnold Bennett (1867-1931) and John Galsworthy (1867-1933) differed from James, Conrad, Woolf, Joyce and Richardson mainly because they sought to engage in the social, moral and political problems of the time rather than focus on the psychological life of the individual.

<sup>54</sup> ‘Joseph Conrad’s *Lord Jim* (1900) and *Heart of Darkness* (1902) pair the narrator, Charlie Marlow, a much-travelled sea captain, with figures (Jim, Kurtz) whose volatile mixture of idealism and corruption at once fascinates him, and reveals the limitations of his own view of the world. Ford’s *The Good Soldier* represents a further turn of the impressionist screw. Dowell, the narrator, is himself as volatile a mixture of idealism and corruption as his friend and rival Edward Ashburnham, whose serial philanderings have destroyed several marriages and driven a young woman mad. He says that he cannot help us to understand the sad story he has to tell because the “whole world” is for him like “spots of color” on an immense canvas; if this was not so, he would have “something to catch hold of” (a determinate identity). Dowell, in short, suffers from Impressionism: his inability to tell a straight story is an aspect of his inability to know and be himself.’ Levenson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, 71.

These modernist authors, Conrad and Ford, clearly assimilated Henry James’s example. However, their characters evolved from James’s characters, which were presented as ‘vessels of consciousness.’ In a

future literary works, for example: Stephen Dedalus (previously encountered in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 1916), Leopold Bloom or even Molly Bloom in Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), Miriam Henderson in Richardson's *Pilgrimage* (1915-1938), or Jacob in Woolf's *Jacob's Room* (1922). The anti-heroes of the modernist novel differ significantly from a character such as the rogue, not only in terms of their origins (often they are upper-class types) but also in their relation to life and reality.

Nevertheless, although the rogue can be said to remain dormant during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in English literature, it does not disappear. When writers from the post-War period, particularly those who have become associated with the Movement,<sup>55</sup> decide to break with modernist aesthetics, they not only recover the humour and realism found in the novels of Henry Fielding, but they also turn to George Orwell's recent fiction, more directly concerned with political events and 'ordinary' life, and whose characters present roguish traits – *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen*

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foreword to Conrad's novel, *Heart of Darkness*, Isabel Fernandes explains: 'Ao evidenciar dramaticamente, na relação cúmplice com o seu círculo de ouvintes, as limitações mas também a imperiosa necessidade do seu relato, Marlow estabelece-se na história da ficção inglesa, como uma criatura que se situa no patamar seguinte ao das criações de um Henry James, por exemplo. Há aqui mais do que a mera adesão ao ponto de vista duma personagem como "vaso de consciência". Marlow não é meramente personagem reflectora; como narrador, plenamente caracterizado e inserido num contexto ficcional peculiar, possibilita ao romancista distanciar-se da matéria narrada mas, simultaneamente, aproximar-se mais do que nunca do seu público por ficção interposta.' Joseph Conrad, *Coração das Trevas*, pref. Isabel Fernandes, trad. Bernardo de Brito e Cunha (Lisboa: Nova Vega, 2008): 20.

<sup>55</sup> Blake Morrison explains the origins of the term 'the Movement': "On 1 October 1954, an anonymous leading article entitled 'In the Movement' appeared in the London weekly periodical the *Spectator*. The article drew attention to the emergence of a group of writers who, it claimed, represented something new in British literature and society. [...] The emerging writers, or 'new movement', were presented by the anonymous leader writer (now known to have been the literary editor of the *Spectator*, J. D. Scott) as enemies of the old order [...]. The article conceded that the Movement was still, in 1954, at a formative stage, but ended with an assertion of its importance as 'part of that tide which is pulling us through the Fifties and towards the Sixties'. [...] Who were these writers? The article named just two poets, Donald Davie and Thom Gunn, and three novelists, Kingsley Amis, Iris Murdoch and John Wain, while implying that other writers might also be involved. A better indication of the Movement's 'personnel' came with the appearance of two poetry anthologies in 1955 and 1956. *Poets of the 1950's* (1955), edited by D. J. Enright, included poems by Enright himself, Kingsley Amis, Robert Conquest, Donald Davie, John Holloway, Elizabeth Jennings, Philip Larkin and John Wain. *New Lines* (1956), edited by Robert Conquest, contained the same eight poets and added one more: Thom Gunn. In the years since 1956, the term 'the Movement' has come to be taken to mean these nine poets." Blake Morrison, *The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) 1-3.

*Eighty-Four* (1949) are major works of this type. Blake Morrison, in his enlightening study on the cultural, social and political conditions of the 50s in England, entitled *The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s* (1980), explains:

There was not much twentieth-century fiction to which the Movement could turn in order to discover models for the compromising hero. But George Orwell's novels did provide the precedent which they required. The heroes of Orwell's novels tend to be lower-middle-class in origin; they have 'healthy' and 'normal' appetites for food, drink and sex; they are quite well-informed about politics, but do not get too involved; they are passive, having little control over their own lives or the processes of history: in all these respects, they anticipate the heroes of Movement fiction.<sup>56</sup>

One could argue that from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards and particularly nowadays, main characters are often 'anti-establishment' figures. According to Roger B. Rollin: "the anti-hero can be defined as a literary character who does not conspicuously embody any value system except his own private one (which is frequently in conflict with that of his society). Thus the anti-hero normally is an 'anti-establishment' figure."<sup>57</sup> British contemporary literature proliferates with examples. Contemporary authors use the 'anti-establishment' central figure of rogue fiction as a medium not only for the depiction but also for the questioning of Western society and culture. Furthermore, the political and social dimensions of the rogue characters that

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<sup>56</sup> Morrison 73. Terry Eagleton's essay, 'Orwell and the Lower-Middle-Class Novel,' in *George Orwell: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Raymond Williams (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1974), sees Orwell as part of a development in English culture, traceable to the time of H. G. Wells. For more on the authors from the 50s and the literary influence of George Orwell (Eric Arthur Blair, 1903-1950) see chapter 2 in the present thesis: '2.2. The Rogue Revisited in the 1950s.'

<sup>57</sup> Rollin xvi-xvii.

inhabit the works of contemporary authors may actually be said to be the main aspects for their significance and recurrence in novels nowadays.

### 1.2. The Confidence Man: A Development of the Rogue

The confidence man is a manipulator or contriver who creates an inner effect, an impression, an experience of confidence, that surpasses the grounds for it. In short, a confidence man *makes belief*.

Gary Lindberg, *The Confidence Man in American Literature* (1982)

The rogue was never just one type. Old rogues have been described under various names. Extending from the well-known beggar-books from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, for example John Awdeley's *The Fraternity of Vagabonds* (1561) and Thomas Harman's *A Caveat for Common Cursitors* (1567), to the popular cony-catching pamphlets, as is the case with Robert Greene's *A Notable Discovery of Cozenage* (1591), and even prison tracts from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, such as *A Warning for House-Keepers* (1676), the rogue would be introduced according to his/her ability. The Abraham Man, also known as Poor Tom; the Palliards, or Clapperdudgeons, who raised sores on their skin; the Queerbird or the Prigger of Prancers, usually associated with horse theft; the Kitchen Morts, a young female who belonged to a group of vagabonds; the Cozeners, who hung about taverns, theatres and St. Paul's; the Cutpurses (nips) and the Pickpockets (foists); the Crosbiters, whores used as decoys for gulling; the Wild Rogue; the Courtesy Man, the Cheater or Fingerer, and the Ringfaller, are good examples of the variety of rogues that existed in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in England.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Cf.: John Awdeley's 'The Fraternity of Vagabonds' and Thomas Harman's 'A Caveat for Common Cursitors, Vulgarly Called Vagabonds.' Kinney 25-39, 85-101, 103-153.



The brief tract, *A Warning for House-Keepers* is particularly interesting since it describes old rogues under new names: ‘the pick-lock becoming a Gilter, the pick-pocket a File, the confidence-man a Tongue Padder.’<sup>59</sup> As far as the latter is concerned, some reflections should be drawn. Although there have always been swindlers who trick the common man, winning personal confidence with good looks and words, the expression ‘confidence man’ was only developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it is an American concept. In the *New York Herald*, 8 July 1849, the following story appeared: *Arrest of the Confidence Man* – For the last few months a man has been travelling about the city, known as “Confidence Man”; that is, he would go up to a perfect stranger in the street and being a man of genteel appearance, would easily command an interview. Upon this interview he would say, after some little conversation, “have you confidence in me to trust me with your watch until to-morrow”; the stranger, at this novel request, supposing him to be some old acquaintance, not at that moment recollected, allows him to take the watch, thus placing “confidence” in the honesty of the stranger, who walks off, laughing, and the other supposing it to be a joke allows him so to do. In this way many have been duped.<sup>60</sup>

From this first description, a general characterization of the confidence man and his *modus operandi* can be drawn. This figure becomes known for his skill in manipulating appearances and people’s impressions, his ability to change roles, to use disguise and deception. These features he shares with the rogue. However, the con man possesses a singular trait. Indeed, he acquires his name due to the technique he employs, the confidence trick or game he plays with his victims. According to the *OED*, a

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<sup>59</sup> Chandler 117.

<sup>60</sup> *New York Herald*, ‘Police Intelligence’ (8 July 1849), p. 2, col. 3. On the next day the Confidence Man continues to make news: ‘*The Confidence Man* – The man arrested on Saturday by the officer, of the Third ward, called the “Confidence Man,” who is known to the police authorities by the name of Samuel Williams, alias Thompson, alias Thomas, was searched on being brought to the police office.... This man is evidently an old rogue, and ought to be seen by all members of the police.’ *New York Herald*, ‘Police Intelligence’ (9 July 1849), p. 2, col. 4. See also: Michael S. Reynolds, ‘The Prototype for Melville’s Confidence-Man,’ *PMLA* 86.5 (Oct., 1971): 1009-1013.

confidence man is: ‘one who practises his trick; a professional swindler of respectable appearance and address. Orig. U.S.’ This entry follows the description of the confidence trick (game, etc.): “a method of professional swindling, in which the victim is induced to hand over money or other valuables as a token of ‘confidence’ in the sharper.”<sup>61</sup>

There were a number of reactions towards the arrest of the ‘Confidence Man,’ also known as Thompson (and other names such as Samuel Williams and Thomas). An angry satire appeared on the *Herald* daily newspaper: ‘the *Herald* satire uses the “Confidence Man” theme to attack the established financial society of New York by suggesting that the principles of business on Wall street [sic] differ not at all from the principles of the criminal Thompson.’<sup>62</sup> In *The National Police Gazette*, the rise of the con man is viewed with concern: ‘the success of the criminal even after he is in prison demonstrates that there are confidence men even among the men who pursue confidence men.’<sup>63</sup> But a more optimistic view may be found in the *Merchants’ Ledger*, where it is argued that a good and healthy society can only exist when men still trust each other and can still be swindled.<sup>64</sup> This view is supported by an important literary man of New York, Evert Duyckinck, who not only reprints the *Ledger’s* paragraphs in the *Literary*

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<sup>61</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1989). 16<sup>th</sup> November 2006: < <http://dictionary.oed.com> >.

<sup>62</sup> Johannes Dietrich Bergmann, ‘The Original Confidence Man,’ *American Quarterly* 21.3 (Autumn, 1969): 565.

<sup>63</sup> Bergmann 570.

<sup>64</sup> ‘Who is there that does not recollect in the circle of his acquaintance, a smart gentleman who, with his coat buttoned to the throat and hair pushed back, extends his arms at public meetings in a wordy harangue? This is the young confidence man of politics. In private life you remember perfectly the middle-aged gentleman with well-developed person and white waistcoat, who lays down the law in reference to the state of trade, sub-treasury and the tariff – and who subscribes steadily to Hunt’s excellent magazine (which he never reads). This is the confidence man of merchandise....’

That one poor swindler, like the one under arrest, should have been able to drive so considerable a trade on an appeal to so simple a quality as the confidence of man in man, shows that all virtue and humanity of nature is not entirely extinct in the nineteenth century. It is a good thing, and speaks well for human nature, that, at this late day, in spite of all the hardening of civilization, and all the warning of newspapers, men *can be swindled*.

The man who is *always* on his guard, *always* proof against appeal, who cannot be beguiled into the weakness of pity by *any* sort – is far gone, in our opinion, toward being himself a hardened villain. He may steer clear of petty larceny and open swindling – but mark that man well in his intercourse with his fellows – they have no confidence in him, as he has none in them. He lives coldly among his people – he walks an iceberg in the marts of trade and social life – and when he dies, may Heaven have that confidence in him which he had not in his fellow mortals.’ *Literary World* V (Aug. 18, 1849): 133.

*World* (run by him and his brother, George Duyckinck) but also makes a reference to a farce having to do with the confidence man Thompson ('Burton's comicalities'): '[t]he Confidence Man, the new species of the Jeremy Diddler recently a subject of police fingering, and still later impressed into the service of Burton's comicalities in Chambers street, is excellently handled by a clever pen in the *Merchants' Ledger* [...].'<sup>65</sup> As Johannes Dietrich Bergmann further explains:

The arrest of Thompson in New York in 1849 constitutes the origin of the term *confidence man*, and the contemporary commentaries on his arrest in the *Herald* satire, in the three paragraphs from the *Merchants' Ledger*, in Brougham and Burton's "The Confidence Man" and in the pages of the *National Police Gazette* mark the beginning of a long fascination with confidence men, so entitled. All four reactions to the arrest find in "The Confidence Man" a way of defining society by its interaction with the man who inspires confidence.<sup>66</sup>

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Both Gary Lindberg, in *The Confidence Man in American Literature* (1982), and William E. Lenz, in *Fast Talk and Flush Times* (1985), explain how the confidence man, although analogous to the universal trickster of folklore and mythology (here

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<sup>65</sup> *Literary World*, V (Aug. 18, 1849): 133. The farce entitled 'The Confidence Man' was performed in William E. Burton's Chambers Street Theatre on July 23, 1849. The play is thought to have been written by the Dublin-born actor and playwright John Brougham (1810-80). However, no manuscript seems to have survived. See Bergmann 567-568.

Melville's *The Confidence-Man* (1857) seems to have been inspired by the columns of the *Literary World* and by discussions with the Duyckincks. Paul Smith suggests: 'He [Melville] would not have had to speculate about their [the Duyckincks'] opinions on the very subject he had chosen for his novel, confidence men. They had declared themselves and, in all likelihood, had called the topic to his attention in the summer of 1849. They used a column of their journal to print and comment on three paragraphs from a New York business weekly [...].' Paul Smith, 'The Confidence-Man and the Literary World of New York,' *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 16.4 (Mar. 1962): 333-334.

<sup>66</sup> Bergmann 570. Also according to this scholar, a series of pamphlets entitled *Tricks and Traps* (1858-60) were issued in order to expose to the readers the methods of all 'highly finished scoundrels,' with a section devoted to the confidence man. Bergmann 574-575.

again the paths of the rogue and the confidence man are joined), is a distinctly American figure.<sup>67</sup> According to Lindberg:

The trickster appears in virtually all literatures. His universality suggests that he has something to do with the human condition itself. Paul Radin and Carl Jung theorize that he represents an undifferentiated consciousness, an archetypal psychic structure of extreme antiquity, and that his progress takes him from a primordial, amorphous, instinctual past into the lineaments and psychic traits of human beings. Clearly, the confidence man, who inhabits a modern, highly differentiated, literate society is a much more particularized being than the trickster. He tells us less about the universal human condition than he does about the peculiar qualities of American society that gave rise to him, like the theme of confidence itself.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> See note 25 in the present chapter of the thesis. Nevertheless, neither the rogue nor the confidence man should be confused with the trickster. The latter differs substantially from the former. The trickster is a mythic figure, both creator and destroyer, associated with traditional culture throughout the world. Examples vary from the god Loki, in Scandinavian mythology; to Dagdae, in early Irish literature; the orisha Eshu-Elegbara in West Africa; the Brer ("Brother") Rabbit in African American animal tales; and the trickster Coyote in Native American tales.

A trickster is one who practises trickery, deceives and violates the moral codes of the community. Oral and written tales associated with this pervasive figure are generally humorous. They are used to convey a valuable moral lesson or simply as entertainment, intended to provoke laughter. Human tricksters abound in medieval humorous literature, in drama, chronicle, fabliau and romance. One notable example of a trickster is Till Eulenspiegel, a well-known fictional character belonging to the category of the mythical buffoon and rascal, both humorous and vicious, presented as a famous jester who lives during the Middle Ages (14<sup>th</sup> century). In medieval animal tales the trickster par excellence is the fox (cf.: Reynard the Fox in the *Roman de Renart*). It embodies cunning when opposed to the wolf or the bear but often loses when opposed to domestic animals.

For more on the figure of the trickster see: Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey. A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Alan Harrison, *The Irish Trickster* (Sheffield: The Sheffield Academic Press for the Folklore Society, 1989); John Lindow, *Scandinavian Mythology: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland Pub., 1988); Paul Radin, *Study in American Indian Mythology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956) and my own article on the trickster in Donald Haase, ed. *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales*, vol. 3 (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 2008) 992-995.

<sup>68</sup> Gary Lindberg, *The Confidence Man in American Literature* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) 8. The same kind of distinction applies to the rogue, as explained early in the chapter (see the previous section of this chapter).

The confidence man is entangled with the myth of the New World, and the social situation implied by this concept: the fluidity in social relations, the possibilities for individuals to move about and climb the social ladder in the emergent American society and the consequent weakening of the familiar patterns of identification (family background, class habits and inherited manners). William E. Lenz explains: ‘[t]he American confidence man [...] emerges as a local rather than a mythic figure; he relies not on supernatural powers or charms of courts but on the fluid nature of society in the New World with its unique opportunities for self-government, self-promotion, self-posturing, and self-creation.’<sup>69</sup>

One could add that just as the confidence man arose out of the historical conditions experienced in the ‘new world’ in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the rogue was born out of the socio-cultural reality of the beginning of modernity in 16<sup>th</sup>-century England. But although the con man and the rogue share similar features, they also evidence significant differences. Again, Lindberg’s study helps to delineate the similarities and differences between the two. Indeed Lindberg establishes a relationship between certain versions of the confidence man in American literature – such as Huck Finn, Augie March and the rogues of Southwestern Humour – and the picaro of European fiction (*lato sensu*). The common traits these characters share may be summarized as follows: they are ‘socially marginal, pragmatic, unprincipled, protean, resilient, peripatetic.’ However, they are not equivalent:

The picaro lives for the present; the con man, trading on promise, lives for the future and tends to sustain more illusions. The picaro remains a partial outsider in his social order; often the confidence man gradually aligns himself with social powers and takes them over. Finally, the picaro

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<sup>69</sup> William E. Lenz, *Fast Talk and Flush Times. The Confidence Man as a Literary Convention* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1985) 1.

usually has a good heart; the confidence man at his purest seems to have nothing inside.<sup>70</sup>

In their definition of the confidence man, however, both scholars, Gary Lindberg and William E. Lenz, differ significantly. Whereas the former sees the confidence man as a more general figure, a ‘covert cultural hero for Americans’ – opening the definition beyond criminality and establishing connections between American icons as diverse as the professional criminal, the booster (American slang for shoplifter), the gamesman, the jack-of-all-trades, the gadgeteer, and the self-made man – the latter identifies the confidence man specifically with the criminal, allying the con man with the West and the frontier, a symbol of new opportunities. Lenz explains: ‘he [the confidence man] is defined by the nineteenth-century flush times, by the continually evolving new country, by his shifty language in the service of fun, and by a cardinal motive – personal profit.’<sup>71</sup>

In *Swindler, Spy, Rebel: The Confidence Woman in Nineteenth-Century America* (1995), Kathleen De Grave starts with an overview of the myth of the confidence man in order to argue for the existence of confidence women, also known as ‘confidence queens.’<sup>72</sup> According to De Grave, these figures have constantly been omitted from the

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<sup>70</sup> Lindberg 9. The author further suggests: ‘Aside from the universal trickster figure, there are many more modern analogues of the con man in other literatures, the picaresque, the mountebank, the rogue. Odysseus, Volpone, and Felix Krull are enough to remind us that Americans have not patented tricksters. And some of the giants of professional criminal con artistry are truly international – Ivar Kreuger, Serge Alexandre Stavisky, Victor “The Count” Lustig. What I am suggesting is that the confidence man appears with surprising frequency and emphasis in American literature and popular culture, that this American trickster is peculiarly identified with the themes of promise and confidence, and that he reveals certain popular ambivalences of judgement, most immediately apparent in our everyday usage of “con.”’ Lindberg 9.

<sup>71</sup> Lenz 2. For other studies on the confidence man as criminal and on confidence games see: David W. Maurer, *The American Confidence Man* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1974) and *The Big Con: The Story of the Confidence Man and the Confidence Game* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1940). See also the police textbook by John C. R. MacDonald, *Crime is a Business: Buncos, Rackets, Confidence Schemes*, foreword by August Vollmer (Stanford University, Calif.: Stanford University Press; London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1939), which covers a variety of con games.

<sup>72</sup> The expression ‘confidence queens’ is employed by Thomas Byrnes’s *1886 Professional Criminals of America* (1886; New York: Chelsea, 1969), in which out of the two-hundred entries, nineteen are women. De Grave also mentions H. Bruce Franklin’s *Prison Literature in America: The Victim as Criminal and*

discussions surrounding the con man. Just like their counterparts, however, con women developed out of American history and culture and were and still are important influences in American literature:

[T]he confidence woman, like the confidence man, uses disguise, deception, and manipulation to get what she wants, and, as with him, an aura of comedy surrounds her. She, like the confidence man, is a storyteller, has a gift for making people believe – whatever she wants. But there the similarity ends. Because women, especially in the nineteenth century, are not perceived as having the same access to goods and financial power as men [...]. Whereas the confidence man typically tells a story about a thing – a product, a commodity, an organization – the confidence woman most often tells a story about herself, a story built out of the stereotypes about women that prevail at the time.<sup>73</sup>

Just like Gary Lindberg, De Grave broadens the definition of such a character making it operative beyond criminality (although she does not see the confidence woman as a ‘covert cultural hero’),<sup>74</sup> and unlike William Lenz, who associates the con

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*Artist* (Westport, Connecticut: Lawrence Hills & Co., 1982 [New York: Oxford University Press, 1978]) and David S. Reynolds’s *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), which show how crime literature proliferates in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and acts as a great influence on the modern European and American novel. Cf.: Kathleen De Grave, *Swindler, Spy, Rebel: The Confidence Woman in Nineteenth-Century America* (Columbia, Missouri and London: University of Missouri Press, 1995) 1-2.

<sup>73</sup> De Grave 11. For further studies on the confidence woman as a subversive element in society see also: Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982).

<sup>74</sup> De Grave explains: ‘Most women – white or otherwise – in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were not recognized as part of the business world, and in fact historical realities made it very difficult for women to be boosters or self-made women: history has not left us with many stories of female counterparts for Franklin, Jefferson, or P. T. Barnum. The “shared faith” that Lindberg describes is a masculine, middle-class faith in economic opportunity for the man strong and clever enough to take advantage of the promise America offered.’ De Grave 7.

man with the frontier, De Grave links the flourishing of the confidence woman in America from the 1860s to the early 1900s to the rise of the cities.<sup>75</sup>

Following the study by John G. Blair, *The Confidence Man in Modern Fiction. A Rogue's Gallery with Six Portraits* (1979), De Grave places her argument even one step further away from Lenz, since she does not see the myth of both confidence man and confidence woman to have disappeared into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>76</sup> De Grave further illustrates this idea:

In the early twentieth century, the autobiographies of the professional confidence women, Sophie Lyons, May Churchill, and Madeleine (sometimes prostitute, sometimes con woman), were published. [...] In the 1920s, too, brief analyses like *Confessions of a Gold Digger* appear as relatively straightforward statements of the games women play. Early-twentieth-century fiction also participated in the new explicitness. One of the clearest examples of the new confidence woman in fiction is Edith Wharton's Undine Spragg, the seriously flawed heroine of *The Custom of the Country*.<sup>77</sup>

Both these figures, confidence man and woman, have survived as literary characters but they have also suffered a metamorphosis. According to Blair, the con

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<sup>75</sup> 'Just as the confidence man appears on the edge of the "new country," no matter where it might be, so the confidence woman appears on the leading edge of what Susan P. Conrad calls "countries of the mind." Because women could imagine their own freedom, they could see their restrictions clearly; they could see that the old stereotypes had to be broken before a new relationship between women and society could prevail.' De Grave 19. Cf.: Susan Phinney Conrad, *Perish the Thought: Intellectual Women in Romantic America, 1830-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

<sup>76</sup> According to William E. Lenz: 'The American confidence man is a product of the 1840s, the boom-and-bust flush times, and the ambiguous and shifty new country. In less than one hundred years the confidence man appears on the southwestern frontier, rises to prominence as a symbol of the new country, becomes aligned with the archetypal trickster, falls victim of the Civil War, reappears amid the boosterism of the Gilded Age, and disappears into the twentieth century.' Lenz 195.

<sup>77</sup> De Grave 236. Cf.: Sophie Lyons, *Why Crime Does Not Pay* (New York: Ogilvie, 1913); *Madeleine: An Autobiography* (1919), reprint, with a new introduction by Marcia Carlisle (New York: Persea Books, 1986); May Churchill Sharpe, *Chicago May: Her Story* (New York: Macaulay, 1928); Betty Van Deventer, *Confessions of a Gold Digger*, Little Blue Book no. 1392 (Girard, Kans.: Haldeman-Julius, 1929); and Edith Wharton, *The Custom of the Country* (1913), reprint in *Edith Wharton Novels* (New York: Library of America, 1985) 621-1014.



man in literature stirs up the moral, aesthetic, and epistemic uncertainties of our time. Although he stresses that the term ‘confidence man’ is an American product from the 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>78</sup> he also suggests that this character does not belong to any single nation, rather to Western tradition as a whole:

[T]he confidence man as a character type belongs to no single nation as much as to the Western philosophical and religious tradition which insists not only on such world-shaping dichotomies of good and evil, true and false, God and Satan, but also on despising one term in each pair. The con man becomes important in our time precisely because he challenges the easy continuance of such comforting simplicities.<sup>79</sup>

Extending from the work by Herman Melville (*The Confidence-Man*, 1857), André Gide (*Les Caves du Vatican*, 1914), Thomas Mann (*Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull; The Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man*, 1954), Albert Camus (*La Chute*, 1956), Kurt Vonnegut (*Cat’s Cradle*, 1963) and John Fowles (*The Magus*, 1966), Blair demonstrates how the confidence man depicted in the novels of the authors mentioned ‘incorporates the mainstream displacements in modern moral conceptions.’<sup>80</sup> Indeed, this character allows them to reflect on the uncertain nature of reality, on the role of fiction in human existence and the cultural crisis of the West:

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<sup>78</sup> According to Blair: ‘The United States is important for two basically linguistic reasons: the nineteenth century did produce the term “confidence man” out of the hustle and chicanery of the 1840s and, though the term has long since been imported into England, no precise equivalent exists in the major Continental languages.’ John G. Blair, *The Confidence Man in Modern Fiction. A Rogue’s Gallery with Six Portraits* (London: Vision Press, 1979) 15.

<sup>79</sup> Blair 13-14. In his study, Blair further suggests: ‘Though the con man’s guilt is compounded, the victim is far from innocent, a factor crucial to the moral implications of the figure of the con man.’ Blair 12.

<sup>80</sup> Blair 131. Also according to Blair, the first three portraits revive the con man’s reputation, while the second three elevate him above human status towards godhood: ‘Camus is of capital importance here in preparing the way for Vonnegut’s and Fowles’ more recent portraits; his use of first person narrative, unlike Mann’s, focuses the reader’s awareness through the shadowy listener. At the same time the con man claims, even if the listener and reader resist, superior moral status.’ Blair 100.

In literature the con man is associated as easily with the artist as with the criminal. After all, he generates fictions for his victims while himself inhabiting a fiction generated by the writer for his readers. Hence the con man as central character automatically reflects his creator's conception of authorship and his sense of the role of the fictive in human existence. On the one hand, these portraits record a philosophical and moral evaluation implicit in our growing sense of the centrality of fictions in our lives. On the other, they embody the conception of fiction affirmed by their authors.<sup>81</sup>

The development of the character of the confidence man in literature bears many resemblances to the development of the rogue and rogue fiction. Indeed, the con man can be seen as one type of rogue. Just like Blair's con men, the rogues that will be the focus of attention in the next chapters of this study also stir up 'the moral, aesthetic, and epistemic uncertainties of our time.' In Joyce Cary's *The Horse's Mouth* (1944) and Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net* (1954), the rogue will rise as a non-conventional artist, breaking away with romantic and even modernist conceptions of the creator understood as a genius. In John Wain's *Hurry On Down* (1953), Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954), John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957) and Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958), the rogue is portrayed as a new hero emerging from the lower middle-classes or else the working classes. Interpreted as the epitome of a new age, he is the post-war Welfare State Englishman. And in the novels by Martin Amis, namely, *Money: A Suicide Note* (1984), *London Fields* (1989) and *Yellow Dog* (2003), and Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting* (1993), *Glue* (2001) and *Porno* (2002), the rogue will simultaneously allow for a questioning of notions of authorship and reflection upon the

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<sup>81</sup> Blair 134.

centrality of fictions in the present age. The analysis of these examples will shed some light on the analogy that can be established between the transformations undergone by the confidence man, particularly in postmodern works, as is suggested by Blair's reflection on John Fowles' *The Magus* (in which fiction is seen as indistinguishable from the techniques of the confidence man),<sup>82</sup> and the metamorphosis undergone by the rogue in recent British novels, illustrated especially by authors such as Martin Amis and Irvine Welsh.

### 1.3. The Rogue Nowadays: Still Haunting English Language and Literature?

[W]hen there are only rogues, then there are *no more rogues*.

Jacques Derrida, *Rogues* (2005)

The actual definition of the word may also enlighten the reader on the potential usage of the term 'rogue.' The *Oxford English Dictionary* contains two main entries under the term 'rogue.' Rogue as noun refers to 'one belonging to a class of idle vagrants or vagabonds,' 'a dishonest, unprincipled person; a rascal,' 'one who is of a mischievous disposition.' But the word in English is not used to refer only to human outlaws, indeed it can be extended to plants and animals. According to the *OED*, 'rogue' can signify 'an inferior plant among seedlings' or even 'an elephant driven

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<sup>82</sup> John G. Blair explains: 'In the last analysis *The Magus* in both versions is a parable dramatizing the life-giving function of fiction, fiction as indistinguishable from the techniques of a confidence man. Since nothing beyond the game can be established as real, art has the precious virtue of establishing a context within which roles can make at least temporary sense. [...] In the absence of a supernatural deity, the writer defends us from chaos by the fictions he shapes to offer us a framework in which to choose to live. He becomes a human god, a magus, and also a confidence man of a startlingly benevolent sort. If the magus had set out to plunder mankind, he would have appeared merely devilish as did his counterparts three centuries earlier. Of course, the confidence-man-god remains free, as do other men, to choose the roles he will play; his freedom permits all. In this case he chooses to use his power of pretence not simply to bring his victims under his control but ultimately to enlighten them, to lead them to a conscious acceptance of their own inherent condition of confidence-man-hood. In the absence of God mere humans rise to the godgame.' Blair 129-130.

away, or living apart, from the herd, and of a savage or destructive disposition' and also 'a horse which is inclined to shirk its work on the race-course or in the hunting field.'<sup>83</sup> In these examples one recognises the traits of roguery usually applied to people and some of these features can be also found in the main characters of the novels analysed in the present study, especially in the postmodern fictions by Amis and Welsh: in John Self's lethargy (*Money: A Suicide Note*), Keith Talent's and Xan Meo's violent temperaments (*London Fields* and *Yellow Dog* respectively), Mark Renton's rebellion (*Trainspotting*), Terry Lawson's selfish nature (*Glue*) and in Sick Boy's maliciousness (*Porno*).

In his work *Voyous: Deux essais sur la raison* (2003), translated as *Rogues: Two Essays On Reason*,<sup>84</sup> Jacques Derrida establishes a relationship between the French concept 'roué' or 'voyou' and the English 'rogue.' In his book, special emphasis is placed on the political dimension of these concepts. Derrida speaks of an 'epoch of rogue states,' using the same expression that dominated political discourse during the Clinton administration (1997-2000) in the U.S., 'rogue state' meaning *outcast*, *outlaw* or *pariah state*.<sup>85</sup> For the purpose of this study, one of the most interesting aspects of Derrida's work is his discussion of the concepts mentioned above. It turns out that '[r]oué' characterizes a leading astray [*dévoisement*] that calls for exclusion or punishment.<sup>86</sup> The 'roué' is thus both included and excluded from the normative society, just like the rogue, a term it must be said which 'has inhabited the English language and haunted its literature longer than the word *voyou* has the French language

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<sup>83</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1989). 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2005: < <http://dictionary.oed.com> >.

<sup>84</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005).

<sup>85</sup> According to Derrida: 'There are many signs, statements, and statistics that attest to the fact that it was between 1997 and 2000 under Clinton, and first of all in the speeches of Clinton himself and those of his top advisors (particularly Madeleine Albright), that the literal denunciation of "rogue states" became more and more pronounced. [...] Ronald Reagan had preferred the term *outlaw*, and George Bush tended to speak of *renegade* regimes.' Derrida 95-96.

<sup>86</sup> Derrida 20.

and its literature.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, in a concluding remark, Derrida states: '[a]nd yet *voyou* and *rogue* will outlive for a time the *Etats voyous* and the rogue states that they will have in truth preceded.'<sup>88</sup>

How are we to understand the use of the concept rogue nowadays, its political and philosophical implications, and its link to the 'rogue' character in contemporary British fiction? The analysis of the work of British novelists from the fifties onwards and, particularly, the analysis of Martin Amis's and Irvine Welsh's fictional work will provide an answer to this question. Indeed, these postmodern authors, Amis and Welsh, have reshaped this particular kind of novel. They are known for using an array of new narrative strategies to build a formally innovative work, where experimentalism is at work (thus affecting language and therefore meaning). Moreover, in their novels, the 'anti-establishment' central figure of the rogue functions as a vehicle not only for the depiction but also for the questioning of the society we live in.

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The focus of this chapter has thus been on the emergence of the rogue novel in England and the effective role of the rogue in the development of this type of novel. The survival of the rogue can be best understood if compared with analogous fictional creations. Nowadays, the significance of this particular character in British literature is due to the potential it offers postmodern authors to simultaneously challenge notions of representation and reflect upon the world.

Central to the birth of rogue literature was the development of rogue pamphlets and the influence of picaresque literature in English fiction throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The rogue, who shares traits with folkloric figures such as the fool and the clown, will

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<sup>87</sup> Derrida 93.

<sup>88</sup> Derrida 107.

determine the first powerful novel-form of what became known, after Bakhtin, as the Second Stylistic Line in the development of the novel.

The rogue, the agent of gay deception, is the occasional criminal or even the professional criminal, who stops short of villainy: his typical crime is theft. He is humorous, cunning, cheats and lives on his wits. His estrangement from society makes him a 'half-outsider,' and his view of the environment in which he is brought up and in which he comes to live constitutes a powerful social critique. The rogue is the central character of the literature of roguery, born in the later Renaissance in England. For Frank W. Chandler this literature is primarily associated with the novel. In terms of form it is undoubtedly linked to picaresque literature, while thematically it may be characterised by: subject-matter (it deals with roguish behaviour), observed reality and the depiction of low-life and manners.

At the dawn of the English novel, the work of authors such as Daniel Defoe can be seen as a site of convergence of both the rogue pamphlets and picaresque literature in England. Defoe's interest in rogues is followed by various authors: Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, William Makepeace Thackeray and Charles Dickens. However, as their fictional work testifies, the rogue novel suffered significant changes throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, retaining its subject-matter but losing its picaresque form.

Northrop Frye states the importance of English literature in the development of the low mimetic mode, with which the rogue may be associated, and he warns the reader of the difficulties in retaining the word 'hero.' The rogue is thus an anti-hero but it must be stressed that not all anti-heroes are rogues, as is clearly shown by modernist fiction: the novels by Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and even Dorothy Richardson provide a good illustration of the formal experimentalism and the internal subjective focus developed in modernism. Nevertheless, the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

witnessed a revival of the rogue novel. Post-war authors rejected modernistic assumptions about art and literature, turning to humour and realism as found in the novels by Henry Fielding, and deriving inspiration from authors such as George Orwell, whose (anti-)heroes would serve as models for the fiction to come.

Just as the rogue was born out of the socio-cultural reality lived at the beginning of modernity in 16<sup>th</sup>-century England, the confidence man was equally a product of the historical conditions experienced in the 'new world' in 19<sup>th</sup>-century America. Similarly to the rogue pamphlets, which sought to warn the general public against the tricks perpetrated by criminals in 16<sup>th</sup>-century England, the news published in the *New York Herald*, the *National Police Gazette*, the *Merchant's Ledger* or even the *Literary World* sought to warn readers against a new type of criminal in 19<sup>th</sup>-century American society. Like the historical rogues, who fired the literary imagination of their time, the confidence man also became a subject of fascination in literature, as is exemplified by the farce, *The Confidence Man* (thought to have been written by John Brougham and performed in 1849), and later by Herman Melville's *The Confidence Man* (1857), the first great example of an American novel presenting the con man as the main character of the narrative. As suggested by scholars Gary Lindberg and Kathleen De Grave, both the con man and the con woman survived as literary characters throughout the times and can be found in contemporary literature. This view is also shared by the critic John Blair, who sees the con man as transcending American culture and embodying the uncertain nature of reality, questioning the role of fiction and mirroring the cultural crisis of the West in postmodern literature. Thus the confidence man may be said to be re-united with the rogue, who from the 1950s onwards became the focus of attention of post-war British novelists (particularly, John Wain, Kingsley Amis, Irish Murdoch, John Braine, Alan Sillitoe and Bill Naughton, among others), and who in postmodern

literature has been interpreted as a medium not only for the depiction but also for the questioning of Western society and culture (as it happens with the fictional work by Martin Amis and Irvine Welsh).

Therefore, Jacques Derrida's comments on the rogue are particularly noteworthy, since they emphasise the significance of the concept 'rogue' nowadays, stressing its political dimension and linking it with historical events, and the way it has always been and continues to be an operative literary character, surviving throughout the times. Precisely because it presents as its protagonist such an active character, the literature of roguery may be said to be a case of fortune in the development of the novel.



## **PART II**



## 2. The Turning Point: The Rogue in the Second Half of the 20th Century

### 2.1. The Rogue as an Artist: Joyce Cary's *The Horse's Mouth* (1944) and Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net* (1954)

“No, you can't go in for art without money from somewhere. Art is like roses – it's a rich feeder.”

Joyce Cary, *The Horse's Mouth* (1944)

In the previous chapter, a parallel was drawn between the development of the rogue and the confidence man. These two literary characters transcend the context in which they rose: the socio-cultural reality at the dawn of modernity in England and the historical conditions experienced in the ‘new world’ in America. Their survival in literature throughout the times is attributable to the progressive raise of the low mimetic mode as well as the ironic mode in Western fiction,<sup>89</sup> particularly in the second half of the twentieth century. These characters bridge the gap between high and low culture and they become important in our time precisely because they question moral, aesthetic and epistemic assumptions. And thus they can be portrayed not only as outlaws or outcasts but also as artists, shedding light on the relationship between art and reality.

As the discussion of the novels will demonstrate, Joyce Cary's *The Horse's Mouth* (1944) and Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net* (1954) can be considered as instances of rogue fiction. In these novels the protagonists are artists: Cary's Gulley Jimson is a painter and Murdoch's James Donaghue is a writer. Both characters are simultaneously rogues and creators in pursuit of a new, original work.

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<sup>89</sup> According to Northrop Frye, the *low mimetic* mode is associated with comedy and realistic fiction, while the *ironic* mode is what characterises contemporary fiction (see my first chapter). Cf.: Frye 33.

Although composed in different decades, the novels present common traits as far as subject-matter and form are concerned. They present a rogue as the main character of the narrative: Gulley and Jake live on their wits, they are cunning and humorous. They are portrayed as the outcome of their social environment, always struggling to come to terms with the reality that surrounds them. As such, they survive employing less orthodox methods: occasionally they commit theft, but stopping short of villainy. The comic situations in which the protagonists get involved illustrate these traits: Gulley's theft of Mr Hickson's property, the burglary of the Beeders's flat and Sara's accidental murder; Jake's breaking into flats, the theft of the dog, Mr Mars, and his escape from the hospital towards the end of the novel.

Gulley and Jake are 'half-outsiders,' who have deliberately chosen to occupy a marginal position. They lack political or social commitment and they are often alienated from other individuals and from all forms of established work. They present a protean personality and their destiny seems ultimately ruled by luck. However, the way in which this is conveyed in the two novels is different to some degree. Both protagonists undergo a process of transformation at the very end of their first-person narratives but for Gulley this means the end of his pursuit for the ultimate creative act, while for Jake it signifies the beginning of his quest.

Thus, *The Horse's Mouth* concludes with the literal fall of Gulley's masterpiece, 'The Creation.' The collapse of the painted wall marks the achievement of coherence and unity in Gulley's artistic work. Significantly, in the novel's adaptation to the screen, *The Horse's Mouth* (directed by Ronald Neame, 1958), the protagonist becomes both creator and destroyer as it is him who knocks down the wall with the painting he has just concluded. As for *Under the Net*, it ends with Jake's birth as a writer, able at last to embrace the contingency of the world (of reality, of any given situation, of language),

fit to become a writer. Indeed both novels illustrate the search for artistic freedom, for new representations of reality and new ways of giving meaning to the world.

The episodic structure of both novels and the comic style adopted by the authors are also traits characteristic of rogue fiction and reminiscent of the picaresque. Throughout Gulley's memoir and Jake's 'pseudo-autobiography' the reader follows step by step the adventures of these rogues, their vicissitudes in life, their ability to survive even under harsh conditions. Indeed, Cary's *The Horse's Mouth* and Murdoch's *Under the Net* are novels that reflect changes in their societies, through their form and content. Although many of Cary's contemporaries attempted to change the world by changing language, Cary used a more conventional artistic expression: '[d]iffering then from Joyce and Blake [...] Cary does not want to force readers to try to understand the world of his fiction through entering the writer's own mind and puzzling out what is there; rather, he wishes readers to enter into the characters' lives by feeling the nature and truth of their existence.'<sup>90</sup> Interested in 'the characters' lives,' 'the nature and truth of their existence,' Cary forecasts the 'Fielding revival'<sup>91</sup> in the post-war British novel, often associated with authors such as John Wain, Kingsley Amis and Iris Murdoch. Indeed, as the latter will explain in a celebrated essay, 'Against Dryness' (1961): 'Literature must always represent a battle between real people and images; and what it requires now is a much stronger and more complex conception of the former.'<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Ramona Kelley Stamm, 'Joyce Cary's Onomastic "Orchestration": Name, Symbol, and Theme in *The Horse's Mouth*,' *Literary Onomastics Studies* XV (1988): 45.

<sup>91</sup> Kingsley Amis, 'Laughter to Be Taken Seriously,' *New York Times Book Review* (7 July 1957): 1. See also the next section of the present chapter: '2.2. The Rogue Revisited in the 1950s.'

<sup>92</sup> Iris Murdoch, 'Against Dryness: A Polemical Sketch,' *Encounter* 88 (January 1961): 20.

### 2.1.1. Moulding Identity: Aesthetics and Society in Joyce Cary

‘...Would you let me draw you? I have noticed that you were unwilling.’

‘I am not beautiful.’

‘No. But you have power...’

A.S. Byatt, *Elementals* (1998)

#### The Trilogy: An Introduction

Joyce Cary’s *The Horse’s Mouth* (1944) constitutes the last book of a trilogy, which starts with *Herself Surprised* (1941) and is carried on in *To Be a Pilgrim* (1942).<sup>93</sup> After a brief textual comment on the first, the focus of the analysis will be on the last novel of Cary’s set of three. My aim will be to discuss how there is an ongoing interaction between characters, which in turn gives rise to multiple questions, in particular the way art – both literary and visual – leads to the building of identity in a given society.

Character is at the centre of Cary’s first trilogy since the protagonists of these novels – ‘Sara, a woman in a woman’s world,’<sup>94</sup> Wilcher, who is ‘old and battered by life [...] Liberal by conviction but Conservative in heart’<sup>95</sup> and Gulley, ‘a creator, [...]’

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<sup>93</sup> These novels constitute the first trilogy by Joyce Cary, which is linked with the author’s previous works and his pursuit of the multiple novel, already explored in the African novels and *Castle Corner* (1938): ‘The first trilogy, as is evident from the manuscript collection [the James Osborn Collection of Joyce Cary manuscripts deposited in the Bodleian Library], was not a sudden change in [Cary’s] approach to the novel form nor was it an accidental discovery of the multiple novel form after he had written *Herself Surprised*. It was, rather, a logical development and continuation of his approach to the multiple novel. It was a further exploration of his belief that all reality is interrelated but that the individual has only a partial view of reality.’ Charles G. Hoffmann, ‘The Genesis and Development of Joyce Cary’s First Trilogy,’ *PMLA* 78.4 (Sep. 1963): 431.

Moreover, Cary wrote a second trilogy, for which the basic theme is politics: *Prisoner of Grace* (1952), *Except the Lord* (1954), and *Not Honour More* (1955).

<sup>94</sup> Joyce Cary, ‘Preface,’ *Herself Surprised*, introd. Brad Leithauser (1941; NY: New York Review Books, 1999) 3.

<sup>95</sup> Joyce Cary, ‘Preface,’ *To Be a Pilgrim*, introd. Brad Leithauser (1942; NY: New York Review Books, 1999) 3.

[who] has lived in creation all his life'<sup>96</sup> – are not only the heroes and narrators of each of these novels but also outstanding inventions as characters. Since the protagonist of *To Be a Pilgrim* differs from both Sara and Gulley, clearly lacking the humour of the two, I will not go into great detail as far as this character is concerned. Suffice it to say that Tom Wilcher gives the trilogy 'a sense of historical moment and political depth'<sup>97</sup> (he has once been a political activist and a closefisted lawyer, and he shows signs of concern with the Depression in England and the ascendancy of Hitler on the Continent). In his introduction to the novel, Brad Leithauser compares Sara and Gulley to Wilcher, emphasizing their differences:

A pair of irredeemable outcasts and outlaws, hopeless with money, hapless and intemperate and misguided, Sara Monday and Gulley Jimson are ultimately lovable and irresistible figures. Wilcher, by contrast, is hardly lovable and quite resistible. Leaving aside his unsavory sexuality, he can be a stiff, avaricious, pontificating, and manipulative man.<sup>98</sup>

Indeed, the first and last novels of the trilogy deal with the adventures and misadventures of two rogue characters. Sara herself admits at a certain point of her narrative: 'I must have been born a rogue for I was never at a loss' (*HS* 205). Both narratives are autobiographical, have an episodic structure, a frequently witty style and an open ending. Both characters, Sara and Gulley, are non-conventional, denouncing society's hypocrisy, but simultaneously adapting to and surviving in it. Their lives also seem to be dictated by unpredictable elements that eventually launch them into illicit/criminal activities. The element of surprise is thus a dominant feature in their narratives.

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<sup>96</sup> Joyce Cary, 'Preface,' *The Horse's Mouth*, introd. Brad Leithauser (1944; NY: New York Review Books, 1999) 3. Henceforward all quotations will be signalled by *THM* followed by the number of the pages quoted.

<sup>97</sup> Cary, 'Introduction by Brad Leithauser,' *To Be a Pilgrim*, x.

<sup>98</sup> Cary, 'Introduction by Brad Leithauser,' *To Be a Pilgrim*, ix.

In addition, both novels develop closely following a model known as ‘plot of character,’<sup>99</sup> which involves presenting a protagonist who suffers a radical change of attitude due to a moral revelation or simply because he/she becomes mature or even he/she repents having led an immoral life. However, if Sara Monday already raises enough doubts about the sincerity of her final repentance, thus deviating from such a model,<sup>100</sup> Gulley Jimson never experiences such a process. He does present traits of transformation but this is mainly connected with his artistic view of the world and his epiphanic moments.

In order to grasp the various worldviews suggested by allusion and direct reference in *The Horse’s Mouth* – worlds of art, through Gulley Jimson’s painting, and of literature, with echoes of *Herself Surprised* as well as the presence of Blake’s poetry – attention will be drawn to Cary’s last novel of the trilogy.

### **‘From the Horse’s Mouth’: The Process of Creation**

Art is creation of meanings for the senses and the sensibility, the whole man. As the architect makes his new form (...), so the composer organises his symphony and the novelist his tale.

Joyce Cary, *Art & Reality* (1958)

As *The Horse’s Mouth* opens, Gulley Jimson – fresh serving a prison sentence for threatening the millionaire Mr. Hickson – comments on his surroundings in a

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<sup>99</sup> Hazard Adams, *Joyce Cary’s Trilogies: Pursuit of the Particular Real* (Tallahassee: A Florida State University Book, University Presses of Florida, 1983) 77.

<sup>100</sup> Sara’s narrative is also a confession but this characteristic is just a formal device. At the end of the novel, notwithstanding being sentenced to eighteenth months in prison, what the protagonist of *Herself Surprised* learns can be summarized in a single sentence: ‘[to] keep a more watchful eye, next time, on my flesh, now I know it better.’ Cary, *Herself Surprised*, 248.



language full of powerful visual images and quotes from the first lines of Blake's *Europe: A Prophecy*:

Five windows light the caverned man: through one he  
breathes the air;  
Through one hears music of the spheres; through one  
can look  
And see small portions of the eternal world. (THM 7)<sup>101</sup>

These lines invoke the theme of perception, the first step in the creative process. This perception goes beyond the limits of the senses since it allows the artist to 'see small portions of the eternal world.' This suggests a link with the title, *The Horse's Mouth*, since Gulley, the artist: 'gets his truth straight from the horse's mouth; he is an interpreter of God to man.'<sup>102</sup> However, despite seeing beyond, the main challenge consists of fitting the vision to the work of art: 'Gulley, the artist, is doomed to misconstruction, to neglect, to persecution, to actual prison as well as to the prison of his isolation from his fellow mortals.'<sup>103</sup>

Gulley Jimson is never satisfied with his work, which never seems to be quite finished – paintings such as 'The Fall' and 'The Raising of Lazarus' are only two

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<sup>101</sup> All Blake quotations from *The Horse's Mouth* are presented as they appear in the novel. According to Annette Shandler Levitt: '[f]ollowing from [Julia] Kristeva's metaphor [- "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (*Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, 1980)], *The Horse's Mouth* can be seen as a mosaic of richly varied tesserae representing the interlocking worlds of Gulley Jimson and William Blake.' Annette Shandler Levitt, *The Intertextuality of Joyce Cary's The Horse's Mouth* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1993): 14.

<sup>102</sup> Andrew Wright, *Joyce Cary: A Preface to his Novels* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1972; originally published in 1958 by Harper & Brothers, New York) 125. Edward H. Kelly also points out the meaning of 'outright luck' associated with the expression. He establishes a parallel between Gulley's opinion on the process of artistic creation and John Dryden's ideas on the subject developed in the essay *Parallel of Poetry and Painting* (1680): 'Dryden alludes to the classic story of the artist Apelles, who when in despair because he could not satisfactorily paint the foam on Alexander's horse's mouth, angrily dashed his brush against the canvas, and by mere accident or luck achieved that which had eluded his painstaking care. Dryden's critical statement not only foreshadows the title of Cary's artist's novel, but the term he uses to describe this fortunate correctness, *curiosa felicitas*, derives from Petronius's *Satyricon*, a work which apparently had a lasting influence on Cary. Edward H. Kelly, 'The Meaning of *The Horse's Mouth*,' *Modern Language Studies* 1.2 (Summer, 1971): 10.

<sup>103</sup> Wright 125.

examples. And due to several drawbacks, the work is never really accomplished: as Coker explains to Jimson, her mother cut ‘The Fall’ up and mended the roof with it (while he was away on his second visit to prison). As for ‘The Raising of Lazarus’, due to Sir William and Lady Beeder’s sudden return, Jimson is forced to leave their apartment – which he used without their knowledge – before finishing the grave, Lazarus and the bald heads of the sketches he had made.

The only exceptions to Gulley’s unfinished works – ‘The Fall’ and ‘The Raising of Lazarus’ – are his paintings as a young artist: nineteen canvases, seventeen bought by Mr. Hickson, and two kept by Sara, Gulley’s muse and model. Gulley himself remembers her in the following way: ‘Yes, I found out how to get Sara on the canvas. Some of her anyhow’ (*THM* 45). And it is precisely the Bath picture, portraying Sara – standing in the middle of the wall of Hickson’s big drawing-room, between Goya and Tiepolo – which leads to Gulley’s following remarks (aimed at Coker):

“Where’s your Rubens now or Renoir either? [...] I’ll show you how to look at a picture, Cokey. Don’t look at it. Feel it with your eye. [...] And first you feel the shapes in the flat – the patterns, like a carpet. [...] And then you feel it in the round. [...] Not as if it were a picture of anyone. But a coloured and raised map. You feel all the rounds, the smoothes, the sharp edges, the flats and the hollows, the light and the shades, the cools and the warms. The colours and textures. There’s hundreds of little differences all fitting in together.” (*THM* 130-133)

But as an uncompromisingly innovative modern artist, Gulley Jimson is destined to be a doomed artist. After 1930, a date which goes back to the first book of the trilogy (since Cary organized the novels according to chronological time periods<sup>104</sup>) even

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<sup>104</sup> Melba Cuddy-Keane, ‘Joyce Cary’s Working Papers: A Study of the Compositional Process in Narrative,’ *JML – Journal of Modern Literature* 11.2 (July 1984): 231-244. The author of this article also

Hickson stops buying him. Notwithstanding, Gulley keeps pursuing his artistic goal and even the novel's most dramatic moments are counterbalanced by Gulley's wry humour, ambiguity and witty remarks. At this point, it must be emphasized: "[t]he word 'wit' does double duty in the English language; it means both humour and mental acumen or quickness."<sup>105</sup> Gulley Jimson has both, humour and astuteness and the two episodes revolving around the unfinished paintings – 'The Fall' and 'The Raising of Lazarus' – illustrate this. Furthermore, these episodes are central to the understanding of the narrative. Indeed 'The Fall' is a major painting in Jimson's career. He struggles with it:

Next morning, of course, the canvas looked a bit flat. As always after a party. But when I got back my picture eye, I saw that Adam's new shape was right. Final. Eve was the trouble. She was a bit too clever, too artistic, too flat, more like a composition in line and color than a real piece of stuff. But I didn't know why. (*THM* 52-53)

The solution for this crisis, as Gulley Jimson will discover further on, lies in his female acquaintances: not only Sara, his primary source of inspiration throughout his work, but also Coker. As Jimson explains in a synaesthetic description: 'that's the forearm I want for Eve, with Sara's body. [...] Cook's arms. [...] Eve smooth and thick as a column, strong as a tree. Brown as earth. Or red like Devon ground. Red would be better. Iron ground. Iron for the magnetic of love. English Eve' (*THM* 122-123).<sup>106</sup> But

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adds: 'Cary regarded each time period as an "era," and in outlining the relationship between the different eras, he was attempting to articulate a historical pattern. The first was the Victorian era of "glory," "wealth," and "religion" which was to be replaced by the era of "individualism," "liberalism," and the "rising of confidence of science." Then, [...] the most recent era was to be characterized by the "Return of old standards in Communism, Fascism." Out of the "democratic muddle" there was to appear once again an era of "aristocratic efficiency and rigidity."' (233)

<sup>105</sup> Jack Dueck, *Uses of the Picaresque: A Study of Five Modern British Novels*, diss. (Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1973) 12.

<sup>106</sup> Significantly, this passage is followed by an excerpt from Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793):

And this is the manner of the daughters of Albion in  
their beauty.  
Everyone is threefold in head and heart and reins, and  
everyone

before he has the opportunity to translate these ideas onto canvas, Jimson is arrested for theft and destruction of Mr. Hickson's property. He parodies this situation with a witty remark directed at the police: 'Be careful what you're doing. I'm Mister Gulley Jimson, and I shall put this matter into my lawyer's hands. First-class lawyers. For false imprisonment and assault. Obviously you don't know who I am. Call a taxi' (*THM* 148). Jack Wolkenfeld perceives an ambiguity in this statement and establishes a relevant analogy with another literary character, the Artful Dodger. He affirms: '[t]he irony of the statement here is that they [the police] do not, in fact, know who Gulley is, nor does anyone else. And Gulley does not always quite know either. He does not ever quite know what his own standing as an artist is.'<sup>107</sup>

When Gulley is finally released he discovers it is already too late for 'The Fall' since it has been used to mend the roof where Coker and her mother live. But Gulley Jimson does not succumb to despair. Nosy, the young aspiring artist, speaks in outrage: 'You are too g-good, Mr. Jimson, too n-noble. You oughtn't to f-forgive a crime like that – a crime against s-s-civilization. I'd like to cut that old woman's throat. I'd like to cut the whole B-British throat. The d-dirty fffphilistines' (*THM* 231). To this attack, Jimson replies: 'Not exactly noble, Nosy [...]. The fact is, I was sick of that god-damned picture' (*THM* 231). Peter J. Reed goes as far as to suggest that, although the

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Has three gates into the three heavens of Beulah  
 which shine  
 Translucent in their foreheads and their bosoms and  
 their loins  
 Surrounded with fire unapproachable: but whom they  
 please  
 They take up into their heavens in intoxicating delight. (*THM* 123)

Charles G. Hoffmann explains the significance of this quote: 'The portrait of Sara begun in *Herself Surprised* is completed in *The Horse's Mouth*: hers is the surprise of innocence in every fall. Gulley's ambivalence toward Sara is resolved because as artist he is freed from Sara the individual woman tempting him as she becomes Oothoon-Eve, a symbol of all womankind to the artist. The Sara of the bath painting is the personal impression of the artist Gulley; the Sara of "The Fall" is to be the impersonal force of nature symbolizing regeneration.' Hoffmann 93.

<sup>107</sup> Jack Wolkenfeld, *Joyce Cary: The Developing Style* (New York: New York University Press; London: University of London Press, 1968) 32. See also my comments on the Artful Dodger in my study *O Picaro e o Rogue* (2006): 85-89.

protagonist is always at odds with society for not understanding his creative vision, what he really wishes for is to be taken away from his own work, which often falls short of his expectations:

The climax to his outbursts typically takes the form of attacks on Hickson, attacks which Gulley knows have led and can lead to jail, and which usually do again. Thus there may be a strong case for Gulley's unconsciously wanting to be taken away from his own painting and from having to face and overcome its inadequacies. Ma Coker's destruction of "The Fall" frees Gulley in a similar way [...].<sup>108</sup>

It is only after losing 'The Fall' that Gulley will be able to move on and eventually produce 'The Raising of Lazarus.' Cornelia Cook suggests: [t]he theme of the painting advances the schematic progress from fall to regeneration.<sup>109</sup> Although it marks some progress for Gulley, the painting is left unfinished. This episode becomes the most comic in the novel. The protagonist clearly takes advantage of the rich art patron represented by Sir Beeder. When the Beeders travel to America, he takes over their luxurious flat, selects a wall for his painting and little by little pawns all the furniture in the apartment in order to buy the material he needs to undertake his painting:

A good wall, as they say, will paint itself. And as I looked at this beautiful shape, I saw what it was for. A Raising of Lazarus. [...] And a masterpiece like that on the Beeders' wall. [...] Then all at once I had an idea. To sell Lazarus to Sir William [...]. And as for getting payment, I'd take an advance. In the only way open to me. Under the circumstances.

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<sup>108</sup>Peter J. Reed, 'Getting Stuck: Joyce Cary's Gulley Jimson,' *Twentieth Century Literature* 16.4 (Oct. 1970): 245.

<sup>109</sup>Cornelia Cook, *Joyce Cary: Liberal Principles* (London: Vision Press; Barnes & Noble: Totowa, 1981) 146.

Damme, I thought, looking at those feet, I'm giving him immortality. The glories he's tried to buy all his life. The Raising of Lazarus by Gulley Jimson, O.M., in the possession of Sir William Beeder. People will point at him in the street. One or two dealers, anyhow. Waiting for him to pop the hooks. (*THM* 270)

Eventually the Beeders return and Gulley flees without completing his painting and leaving behind an empty flat. The comic outburst at the end of this scene evinces Gulley's conflict between his urge for expression and his social predicament. The seriousness of this theme is wrapped in irony (deriving from both Gulley's use of language, the obvious contradictions and the situation he is in):

"It's not that we have done anything illegal," I said, "but there would be a legal investigation which would waste a lot of time. I'd be badgered to death by inquiries and solicitors when I ought to be at work. And then I might get irritated against the government. Which would be stupid. It's no good telling a government that an artist's time and peace of mind might be valuable to a nation, that is, of positive value [...]. It's no good telling it because it couldn't hear. It doesn't possess the necessary organ. It's no good running down the government," I said, "any more than swearing at a paralytic mule for having the habits appropriate to its condition." (*THM* 295)

Although he recognises there is no use in criticising the government, he still goes on scornfully abusing it. As Robert Bloom affirms: 'Gulley is a great and deliberate comedian, exulting in his capacity for reducing his enemies to a fantastic, almost metaphysical, ridicule.'<sup>110</sup> Following Northrop Frye's description of the major

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<sup>110</sup> Robert Bloom, *The Indeterminate World: A Study of the Novels of Joyce Cary* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962) 98.

comic character types in *Anatomy of Criticism*, Jack Wolkenfeld further suggests that the protagonist of *The Horse's Mouth* fits three of the four major comic types developed by Frye: 'that is, he is *alazon* [the impostor], *eirone* [the self-deprecating type], and *bomolochos* [the buffoon].'<sup>111</sup>

The narrative reaches its climax with the production of 'The Creation.' It constitutes the protagonist's strongest visionary experience in the novel. Once more, the artist perceives and creates. Gulley affirms:

And I was desperate for a few pounds, because I knew that I had the biggest idea of my life. It had begun from those trees on our first night in the country. Something bigger than the new Fall. A Creation. And I saw it about fifteen feet by twenty, the biggest thing I had ever seen. It would need a special studio, a special canvas, or wall; a full equipment of ladders, scaffolds, etc.; and buckets full of colour. (*THM* 316)

The breadth of vision contained in his last work of art offers a striking contrast with the flaws in 'The Fall' and 'The Raising of Lazarus.' According to Annette Levitt: '[a]t the beginning of the novel Gulley could not have painted the Creation; it was necessary that he undergo a *Miltonic* fall and regeneration – a process of growth and sensitization – before he could even conceive so fertile and positive a vision of the universe.'<sup>112</sup> Luck is on Gulley's side and brings him the wall he requires: once a wall in a chapel, then a wall in a garage, and finally, the perfect abandoned spot. As the painting gains shape, Hickson dies, Sara dies – following Gulley's attempt to get hold

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<sup>111</sup> Wolkenfeld 43. When referring to the comic fictional modes, Frye states: 'The theme of the comic is the integration of society, which usually takes the form of incorporating a central character to it.' He goes on presenting various comic modes and types. Eventually, he mentions Cary's novel in passing: 'It is more usual, however, for the artist to present an ironic deadlock in which the hero is regarded as a fool or worse by the fictional society, and yet impresses the real audience as having something more valuable than his society has. The obvious example, and certainly one of the greatest, is Dostoievsky's *The Idiot*, but there are many others. *The Good Soldier Schweik*, *Heaven's My Destination* and *The Horse's Mouth* are instances that will give some idea of the range of the theme.' Frye 43, 48.

<sup>112</sup> Levitt 133.

of the first study for the Bath<sup>113</sup> – and eventually the ruined chapel wall collapses, demolished on instructions of the local city council. Nosy, the guileless admirer and would-be emulator, cannot prevent his feeling of indignation but Gulley clarifies: “Well, Nosy, you know very well the Professor [Mr Alabaster, the critic] doesn’t like the Creation. Nobody does. Nobody that is, who is over twenty-five and has any money. You can’t expect them to like a picture like that. It’s dangerous. It’s an act of aggression” (THM 386). Indeed, the painting is the culmination of Gulley’s progress:

“The Creation” stands as a considerable triumph for Gulley. At last he expresses his intuitions as art, and virtually completes a painting. All the spontaneity of his lyric work goes into this mural, but it is controlled and ordered to achieve a coherence and unity his earlier paintings had lacked. At last he creates his epic. A product of the integration of his creative powers, it demonstrates the newly achieved harmony in Gulley’s personality. When the wall collapses, it is as though Gulley has brought it down himself with the sheer force of his creation.<sup>114</sup>

Cornelia Cook interprets the collapse of the wall as ‘a grand dramatic finale to the novel’s action.’<sup>115</sup> According to her it brings together once more the tragedy and comedy present in *The Horse’s Mouth*. And she explains: ‘Cary makes us laugh as Gulley sobs to the whale and to Sara in a comic prelude to the final fall. Not only tears

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<sup>113</sup> Indeed, Gulley pushes Sara down the stairs, at her place, by accident, and she eventually dies at the hospital. The protagonist clarifies: ‘I got a big fright. I didn’t want the police. It might have meant five years. And five years would have finished me. I ran after Sara and grabbed her by the back of her skirt. But she still kept on screaming “Police.” So I gave her a little tap on the bonnet with the Iron Duke, to restore her to her senses; and a little push away from the window. Whereupon she fell down the cellar stairs into some dark hole’ (THM 363). As Andrew Wright explains: ‘[Gulley] has murdered Sara, not maliciously but because she interfered with his effort to take a painting from her flat, with which he could buy paints and equipment for the Creation.’ Wright 134.

<sup>114</sup> Reed 250.

<sup>115</sup> Cook 148.



and joy are one, but life and death as Sara lives again, identified with the whale, the central figure in the new creation.’<sup>116</sup>

Despite not having completed two of his three works of art and having witnessed the destruction of the *Creation*, in his final painting, Gulley reaches his true creativity, he is an artist renewed. The process of creation, and not the creator himself, is what matters the most<sup>117</sup> – the artist is transcended by his work; even Sara exceeds Gulley as he himself recognises, she is immortal and ‘will live in the National Galleries of the world for ever...’ (*THM* 358). And the idea doesn’t exhaust itself in Gulley’s painting, in his *Creation*, coming down about his head even as he is felled by a long-dreaded stroke. Indeed, the narrator’s final creative act is the culmination of his narration, keeping his wits until the very end<sup>118</sup>:

“Please don’t talk,” said the nun. [...] “It’s dangerous for you to talk, you’re very seriously ill.” “Not so seriously as you’re well. How don’t you enjoy life, mother. I should laugh all round my neck at this minute if my shirt wasn’t a bit on the tight side.” “It would be better for you to pray.” “Same thing, mother.” (*THM* 412)

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<sup>116</sup> Cook 148. And she goes on to conclude: ‘as the whale smiles and bends lovingly towards Gulley, form itself becomes active, and with the collapse of the wall, laughter triumphs.’

<sup>117</sup> As Brad Leithauser refers in his introduction to *The Horse’s Mouth*: ‘Gulley stands for process, rather than production; aspiration, rather than achievement’ (*THM*, x).

<sup>118</sup> The episode with the nun in the police ambulance sheds light on the whole narrative. Indeed, early on in the novel (chapter 13) Gulley had affirmed: ‘[...] I am dictating this memoir, to my honorary secretary, who has got the afternoon off from the cheese counter [...]’ (*THM* 77). Andrew Wright further explains: ‘Gulley Jimson is writing for reasons in perfect harmony with his nature. He is writing because he cannot paint. For, although the reader does not learn this fact until near the end of the book, Gulley is lying in the hospital having suffered a stroke.’ Wright 124.

## A 'World of Colour': The Film

It is quite true that the artist, painter, writer or composer starts always with an experience that is a kind of discovery.

Joyce Cary, *Art & Reality* (1958)

*The Horse's Mouth* comprehends acts of creation that go even beyond Gulley's last painting and his own narration. In 1958, Ronald Neame faced the challenge of transferring it to the big screen. Alec Guinness, who saw in the novel an excellent film, wrote the screenplay. Neame himself and his producer, John Bryan, assisted Guinness in his writing<sup>119</sup> and the result is a comic masterpiece, a script full of inventiveness and a good approximation to Cary's original novel.

The film becomes a character study of a talented, eccentric artist: the painter Gulley Jimson, who comes to life with Guinness's visceral performance. The dialogue adopted by the actor, 'mumbled in a harsh, difficult-to-interpret rasp,' is deliberately chosen: 'to avoid giving Jimson any identifiable accent or class, and to emphasize his separateness from those around him: others deal with life via words and discussion, he deals with life via art.'<sup>120</sup> As in the novel, the protagonist of the film is presented as a classless artist.

The movie is as much about the way the artist is caught up in the process of creation as it is about the characters that surround Gulley throughout those moments, mainly Sara (Gulley's ex-wife), Coker (the pub bartender), Hickson (the millionaire), Nosy (Gulley's protégé) and even the Beeders (the art buyers). Because some of the characters that appear in the novel *The Horse's Mouth* receive a thorough treatment in

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<sup>119</sup> Besides *The Horse's Mouth* (1958), Robert Neame developed two other major collaborations with Alec Guinness: *The Card* (1953) and *Tunes of Glory* (1960).

<sup>120</sup> Bruce Eder, 'Alec Guinness and The Horse's Mouth,' *The Horse's Mouth*, dir. Ronald Neame, perf. Alec Guinness, Kay Walsh, Renee Houston, 1958, DVD, The Criterion Collection, 2002: 3.

the previous novels (particularly Sara, the protagonist of *Herself Surprised*), Ronald Neame felt tempted to make a sequel. As he explains:

*The Horse's Mouth* was based on a novel by Joyce Cary. He was a wonderful novelist and very, very underestimated. He wrote several novels about the same people and I very nearly made a sequel to *The Horse's Mouth* called *Herself Surprised* which was going to start with Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton but that was one of those films that were never made.<sup>121</sup>

The film *The Horse's Mouth* is a study on social unease, focusing subtly on class. It has features in common with landmarks of New Wave Cinema (also known as Free Cinema or even 'Kitchen Sink Cinema'): *Room at the Top* (directed by Jack Clayton, 1958), *Look Back in Anger* (directed by Tony Richardson, 1959), *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (directed by Karel Reisz, 1960), *The Loneliness of the Long Distant Runner* (directed by Tony Richardson, 1962), *A Kind of Loving* (directed by John Schlesinger, 1962), *Billy Liar* (directed by John Schlesinger, 1963), *This Sporting Life* (directed by Lindsay Anderson, 1963), among others.<sup>122</sup> *The Horse's Mouth* can thus be seen as part of an English tradition of revolt and criticism toward society. At the core of the film lies an 'outsider', the artist Gulley Jimson, who points to the central theme of the film: the conflict between the artist and society. As Ian Christie explains:

Gulley is the son of a 'proper' painter who has dropped out into the proletarian-bohemian world. His companion in misfortune, Kay Walsh's acerbic proletarian barmaid Coker, is certainly a 'character' [...]. Her visit with him to confront his ex-wife Sara (Renée Houston), now a prim

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<sup>121</sup> 'Ronald Neame interview by Karen Stetler' (DVD Extras, 2002), *The Horse's Mouth*.

<sup>122</sup> For more on British New Wave Cinema, with a particular focus on *Room at the Top* (1958) and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960), see the next section of the present chapter: "2.2.3. Angry Novels in 'New Wave' Films: Jack Clayton's *Room at the Top* (1958) and Karel Reisz's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960)."

middle-class housewife trying to live down her wild youth, is rich with precise social gesture [...]. Nor are the art-buying classes spared. From Ernest Thesiger [...] as Gulley's reluctant patron, to his latest victim, Robert Coote [...], these are unusually sharp vignettes of the very class that Gulley needs, yet despises.<sup>123</sup>

In the production of Robert Neame's *The Horse's Mouth*, paintings really do matter. They are not mere reproductions, nor are they simple illustrations: "they were executed by John Bratby, a leading member of the group of English provincial realists who came to be known as the 'Kitchen Sink' school."<sup>124</sup> The reason Bratby was chosen for this task was because he didn't paint with a brush, he used unconventional methods and challenged perspectives. Indeed, he would get hold of a great tube of paint and squirt it on to the canvas. The result was wonderful photographically and, eventually, the paintings came up well on the screen. According to Neame: '[Bratby] was fed up with this by the end of the picture because people were calling him Gulley Jimson and he was beginning to lose his personality to Alec Guinness.'<sup>125</sup>

Gulley's greatest achievement – his mural entitled 'The Creation' – is also Bratby's biggest work. Indeed, Bratby took six weeks to paint it and at the moment he

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<sup>123</sup> Ian Christie, 'Kitchen Sink Visionary' (brochure with DVD, 2002), *The Horse's Mouth*, 8.

<sup>124</sup> Christie 6. The term 'Kitchen Sink' appears linked with four artists at the centre of claims for a British Social Realism: John Bratby (1928-1992), Derrick Greaves (1927-), Edward Middleditch (1923-1987) and Jack Smith (1928-), in what became known as the 'Beaux Arts Quartet.' David Sylvester, in an essay entitled 'The Kitchen Sink,' uses the term to criticise the quartet's work. He affirms: 'The post war generation takes us back from the studio to the kitchen. [...] Dead ducks, rabbits and fish – especially skate – can be found there, as in the expressionist slaughterhouse, but only as part of an inventory which includes every kind of food and drink, every kind of utensil and implement, the usual plain furniture and even the baby's nappies on the line. Everything but the kitchen sink? The kitchen sink too.' David Sylvester, 'The Kitchen Sink,' *Encounter* 3.6 (December 1954): 61, 62.

Eventually, the intention of the critic was misinterpreted and Sylvester became credited with giving the quartet its name. Nevertheless, the presentation of the quartet owed more to other writers, particularly John Berger (who wrote important art criticism to *The New Statement*) and John Minton. See also: James Hyman, *The Battle for Realism: Figurative Art in Britain during the Cold War 1945-1960* (New Haven and London: The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art / Yale University Press, 2001) 119-128.

<sup>125</sup> 'Ronald Neame interview,' *The Horse's Mouth* (DVD 2002). It is also worthwhile mentioning that a few years later John Bratby was responsible for the drawings that illustrated the 1969 edition of Joyce Cary's *The Horse's Mouth* published by The Folio Society (London), with an introduction by Kingsley Hart.

finished it he knew it was going to be knocked down. Neame describes this moment as follows: '[w]e could only take it once because if it didn't work it would take six more weeks to paint it again. So I had five cameras on it [...]. And it collapsed perfectly. It was a perfect shot [...]. [I]t was the perfect end to it.'<sup>126</sup>

Contrary to what happens in the novel, in the film it is Gulley himself who, in a striking attitude of detachment, destroys his masterpiece, anticipating his pursuit of the next artistic creation and his desire to go beyond: 'I had to do it, Cokey. Too much responsibility for those chaps, destroying a national monument.' But Gulley does not get the last word in the film's finale. As he goes down the Thames, in his houseboat, accompanied by Prokofieff's music ('Lieutenant Kije')<sup>127</sup> with London's bridge on the back, Nosy (Mike Morgan), the great admirer, raises his voice to pay his last homage to Gulley, the painter, the artist, the creator: 'Michelangelo, Rubens, and Blake – you're one of them!' Thus the film reaches its end in a way which owes nothing to the novel's ending but which has the same force.

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<sup>126</sup> 'Ronald Neame interview,' *The Horse's Mouth* (DVD 2002).

<sup>127</sup> 'Part of the success of *The Horse's Mouth* lay in the impact of its wonderful witty, madly paced music. Although Prokofieff's music was actually written for an entirely different movie (Alexander Feinzimmer's *Lieutenant Kije*, about the mad Czar Paul I), the score is recycled here as a perfect accompaniment to Jimson's obsessive need to paint and the ensuing chaos.' Bruce Eder, 'Alec Guinness and *The Horse's Mouth*,' *The Horse's Mouth* (brochure with DVD, 2002) 4.

### 2.1.2. 'It's just one of the wonders of the world': James Donaghue in *Under the Net*

There is only outward activity, ergo only outward moral activity, and what we call inward activity is merely the shadow of this cast back into the mind.

Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970)

#### Introduction

Opening Iris Murdoch's novel *Under the Net* (1954) the reader faces an epigraph: it is an excerpt from *The Secular Masque* by John Dryden (1631-1700). This brief dramatic piece, mythological in character, celebrates the end of the century – hence the 'secular,' from the Latin *saeculares*.<sup>128</sup> The verses that follow, performed by the Chorus, are the end of the play; they echo Momus's satire directed at the gods: Diana ("Thy Chase had a Beast in view"), Mars ("Thy Wars brought nothing about") and Venus ("Thy Lovers were all untrue"), and epitomize the main theme of the masque, the end of one century ("'Tis well an Old Age is out") and the beginning of another ("And time to begin a New").

All, all of a piece throughout:

Thy Chase had a Beast in view:

Thy Wars brought nothing about;

Thy Lovers were all untrue.

'Tis well an Old Age is out,

And time to begin a New.

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<sup>128</sup> John Dryden's *The Secular Masque* was first published in: John Fletcher, *The Pilgrim, a Comedy [in five acts and in prose]: as it is acted at the Theatre Royal, in Drury Lane. Written originally by Mr. Fletcher, and now very much alter'd [by Sir John Vanbrugh]; with several additions. Likewise a prologue, epilogue, dialogue and masque, written by the late great poet Mr. Dryden, just before his death, being the last of his works* (London: Benjamin Tooke, 1700). For a recent publication see: John Dryden, *The Poems and Fables of John Dryden*, ed. by James Kinsley (1962; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980): 836-839.

The epigraph, representative of changing times, illustrates not only the metamorphosis suffered by the novel's main character, Jake Donaghue, but also the placing of Murdoch's style in a new literary context: that of post-war Britain.

### ***Under the Net: The Picaresque Plot***

The first-person novels, then, cause the reader to reflect on his or her interpretive role [...]: all the time the narrator is voraciously reading what goes on around him, someone else is reading him.

Bran Nicol, *Iris Murdoch: the Retrospective Fiction* (1999)

Indeed Iris Murdoch's first novel, *Under the Net*, has often been linked to groundbreaking fictional works such as John Wain's *Hurry On Down* (1953) and Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954).<sup>129</sup> The novel follows a picaresque structure, recounting a series of episodes narrated in the first person by James Donaghue, known as Jake. Moreover, London becomes the central setting of the main character's adventures (particularly Holborn and the financial districts), together with brief but important scenes that take place in another great and enigmatic city, Paris (for instance, Madge's offer of a job to the central character as a film scriptwriter and Jake's dream-like chase of Anna through the Tuileries gardens on the night of the 14<sup>th</sup> of July). From the very beginning, Jake remains an outsider in the society he depicts. Steven G. Kellman explains: 'Jake is perpetually homeless and on the move. A recurrent element in the novel is his quest for a place to spend the night.'<sup>130</sup> Indeed, in Jake's itinerary the

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<sup>129</sup> Cf.: Kingsley Amis, 'Laughter to Be Taken Seriously,' 1-13; Kenneth Allsop, *The Angry Decade: A Survey of the Cultural Revolt of the Nineteen-Fifties* (1958; London: Peter Owen Limited, 1969): 51-103; Angela Hague, 'Picaresque Structure and the Angry Young Novel,' *Twentieth Century Literature*, 32.2 (Summer 1986): 209-220.

<sup>130</sup> Steven G. Kellman, 'Under the Net: The Self-Begetting Novel,' *Iris Murdoch*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York, New Haven, Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986) 98.

nights are of particular significance, acting as moments of transition from one episode to another. As for the central character, Jake describes himself in the following manner:

My name is James Donaghue, but you needn't bother about that, as I was in Dublin only once, on a whiskey blind, and saw daylight only twice, when they let me out of Store Street police station, and then, when Finn put me on the boat for Holyhead. That was in the days when I used to drink. I am something over thirty and talented, but lazy. I live by literary hack-work, and a little original writing, as little as possible. [...] What is more important for the purposes of this tale, I have shattered nerves. Never mind how I got them. That's another story, and I am not telling you the whole story of my life. I have them; and one effect of this is that I can't bear being alone for long. That's why Finn is so useful to me.<sup>131</sup>

Jake is a failed artist, who has stopped doing original work (he once composed an epic poem, entitled 'And Mr. Oppenheim Shall Inherit the Earth,' and published a philosophical dialogue, *The Silencer*) and earns his living by translating the novels of the French writer Jean Pierre Breteuil. At the very start of the novel Jake has finished translating Breteuil's *Le Rossignol de Bois* (*The Wooden Nightingale*). As the reader soon learns, there are striking similarities between the plot of this novel and the action in *Under the Net*. The former, according to Jake, is about 'a young composer who is psychoanalysed and then finds that his creating urge is gone' (*UTN* 22). Although Jake does not acknowledge Breteuil's talent, he confesses that this particular novel is entertaining ('I enjoyed this one, though it's bad best-selling stuff like everything that Jean Pierre writes'; *UTN* 22). Perhaps part of the enjoyment comes from the empathy he feels for the protagonist of *The Wooden Nightingale*. Jake is not psychoanalysed but it is

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<sup>131</sup> Iris Murdoch, *Under the Net*, introduction by Kiernan Ryan (1954; London: Vintage, 2002) 23. Henceforward all quotations will be signalled by *UTN* followed by the number of the pages quoted.



after recording in *The Silencer* the conversations he had had with Hugo Belfounder (while at a cold cure clinic) that he stops writing creatively. It turns out that Hugo, or rather his philosophical ideas about truth and language, are the main subject matter of *Under the Net*. Jake explains: ‘I omitted to mention earlier that I am acquainted with Belfounder. As my acquaintance with Hugo is the central theme of this book, there was little point in anticipating it’ (*UTN* 60). This revelation bestows on Murdoch’s novel a philosophical dimension, overtly related to moral concerns, which is less foregrounded in the first novels of other ‘angry young men,’ such as John Wain and Kingsley Amis. Nevertheless, Jake’s major quest for Hugo Belfounder and for his love, Anna Quentin, together with the search for a home and money, are clear marks of a picaresque structure, reinforced by a comic form.

Indeed, throughout the novel, often with his friend Finn, Jake gets involved in the most awkward situations. In search of a place to live, he accepts the job of housesitting Sadie’s home. However, he soon discovers that he has been deliberately locked in. He decides to pick the lock of the kitchen door and not finding a suitable tool he asks for the help of his friends, Dave and Finn:

It was a simple lock. I am in general not too bad at picking locks, a skill which was taught to me by Finn, who is very good at it. But I could make nothing of this one, largely because I couldn’t find a suitable tool. [...]

I had been leaning there some while [...] when I saw two familiar figures coming down the other side of the street. It was Finn and Dave. [...]

“I can’t come out,” I said calmly, “and I can’t ask you in either.” [...]

Finn and Dave looked at each other, and then they collapsed helplessly. Dave sat down on the kerb choking with laughter and Finn leaned weakly against the lamp-post. They rocked. [...]

“Look here,” I said, impatiently, “stop laughing and get on with getting me out of here.” (*UTN* 97-99).

On another occasion Jake and Finn break into Sam Starfield’s flat in a failed attempt to recover Jake’s translation of Breteuil’s novel. Indeed, after overhearing a conversation between Sadie and Sammy, Jake is furious to find out that they plan to use his translation as the basis for a film, without telling him. This episode becomes one of the most comic scenes in the novel. Inside the flat the two friends find a cage with a large Alsatian dog (the Marvellous Mister Mars, a star of animal movies). Since they do not find the typescript Jake decides to kidnap the dog:

“Finn,” I said slowly, “I have an absolutely wonderful idea.”

“What?” said Finn suspiciously.

“We’ll kidnap the dog,” I said.

Finn stared at me. “What in the world for?” he said.

“Don’t you see?” I cried, and as the glorious daring and simplicity of the scheme became even plainer to me I capered about the room. “We’ll hold him as a hostage, we’ll exchange him for the typescript.” (*UTN* 142)

After taking pains to move Mr Mars and his cage down the stairs and into the taxi, the scene ends, after absurdly lengthy efforts to open the cage, with Jake and Finn celebrating Mr Mars’ freedom. But the climax of this episode only really comes with the intervention of a third character, who has witnessed the efforts to free the dog:

As we talked, the taxi-driver was looking at the thing thoughtfully.

“Unreliable,” he said, “these fancy locks. Always getting jammed, ain’t

they?” He put his hand through the bars and pressed a spring on the underside of the roof. One of the sides of the cage immediately fell open with oily smoothness. That put an end to that discussion. Finn and I studied the face of the taxi-driver. He looked back at us guilelessly. We felt beyond making any comment. (*UTN* 151)

It is in the company of Mr Mars that Jake carries on the search for his philanthropist friend, Hugo. A. S. Byatt describes him in the following way: ‘a curious combination of pacifist, capitalist and craftsman.’<sup>132</sup> Indeed, after having inherited an armaments firm, he converted it to the fireworks business, viewing pyrotechnics as a kind of momentary art. Later, Hugo goes into films and his studio becomes very successful. Eventually, he abandons these activities and by the end of the novel he becomes an apprentice to a watch-maker in Nottingham.

The destruction of the Bounty Belfounder Studio, in South London, is directly related to Jake. In the film studio the protagonist will find a reconstruction of the city of Rome (the Catilinarian Conspiracy is being shot); he will also witness the meeting of the N.I.S.P. (the New Independent Socialist Party), recognising ‘Lefty’ Todd, the character who throughout the novel advocates the alliance between theory and practice in politics. Jake will finally meet Hugo but their encounter is abruptly interrupted by a riot (the United Nationalists break up the meeting and are followed by the police). In a successful attempt to escape, Hugo sets off a Belfounder’s Domestic Detonator, destroying the structure of the whole city. Lefty and Hugo escape but Jake is left behind. Eventually, he eludes the police but only with the help of Mr Mars, who plays dead in what constitutes another extremely comic episode:

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<sup>132</sup> A. S. Byatt, *Degrees of Freedom. The Novels of Iris Murdoch* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970) 28.

Imagine my dismay when I saw that between me and the railway line, across the piece of waste ground from one side to the other, there now stretched a thin but regular cordon of police. [...] I addressed Mars. “You got me in to this,” I told him. “You can get me out.” [...] “Sham dead,’ I said. “Dead! Dead dog!” [...] As I approached the main gate I came into a focus of attention [...]. The police barred my way. They had their orders to let no one out. [...] I strode resolutely on [...]. “The dog’s hurt! I must find a vet! There’s one just down the road.” [...] I walked through the gates. The crowd parted with respectful and sympathetic remarks. As soon as I was clear of them [...], I could bear it no longer.

“Wake up! Live dog!” I said to Mars; as I knelt down he sprang from my shoulder, and together we set off down the road at full pelt. Behind us, diminishing now in the distance, there arose an immense roar of laughter. (*UTN* 170-172)

Examples of comic situations abound in *Under the Net*. And one could easily refer to other episodes, such as the escape from the hospital towards the end of the novel.<sup>133</sup> The three excerpts quoted above are reminiscent of well-known scenes in other novels of the period. Some examples may be found in Wain’s *Hurry On Down*: the unpleasant interview between the protagonist, Edith and Robert Tharkles (the sister and brother-in-law of Charles Lumley’s girlfriend, Sheila); the meeting with Charles’s old headmaster, Mr Scrodd, who is outraged by the main character’s proposal to work at the school as a window-cleaner; and the tricks Charles plays on George Hutchins at Mr Braceweight’s home (in Sussex). Moreover, in Amis’s *Lucky Jim*, there are many examples of humorous scenes: Jim’s accident with the bedlinen at the Welches’, his

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<sup>133</sup> *UTN* 242-266.

attempt to deceive Mrs Welch and her son Bertrand on the telephone and the drunken lecture on ‘Merrie England’ are just a few.<sup>134</sup>

Kenneth Allsop, in his study *The Angry Decade*, considers Wain’s *Hurry On Down*, Amis’s *Lucky Jim* and Iris Murdoch’s *Under the Net*, among others. After quoting a passage from the latter, in which Finn rescues Jake from Sadie’s apartment, Allsop remarks: ‘[t]hat Lucky Jimmish situation, familiar in its tone of moral bigandry, is from one of the early chapters of *Under the Net* by Iris Murdoch, which came out in 1954 – about a year after *Lucky Jim* and Wain’s first novel.’<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, he affirms that judging from Jake’s ‘rootless and restless’ lifestyle (‘[c]adging, scrounging, pinching and sleeping around’), he is undoubtedly a character born of the fifties: ‘Jake’s existence is instantly recognisable in the context of the novels of the early Nineteen-Fifties.’<sup>136</sup> Moreover, according to Richard Todd, *Under the Net* is decidedly: “a novel of its time, its central character an ‘outsider’ figure, its form a tale of picaresque adventure – a form itself raising questions about the way in which ‘necessary’ and ‘contingent’ elements go into the making of novels.”<sup>137</sup>

Nevertheless, the comparison between Murdoch’s Jake Donaghue and Wain’s Charles Lumley as well as Amis’ Jim Dixon is not without controversy. Peter Wolfe, for example, has suggested that Jake deviates from the picaresque tradition precisely because he is too meditative. Wolfe argues:

The strong satirical interest and wide social sweep generally associated with the picaresque novel demand that the hero be roguish and cunning, but not meditative. If he reflects deeply, narrative movement is choked

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<sup>134</sup> For further analyses of these novels see the next section of the present chapter: ‘2.2. The Rogue Revisited in the 1950s.’

<sup>135</sup> Allsop 97.

<sup>136</sup> Allsop 97.

<sup>137</sup> Richard Todd, *Iris Murdoch* (London and New York: Methuen, 1984) 26.

and the social panorama diminished and blurred. Jake's defect is that he is simply not rascal enough.<sup>138</sup>

Wolfe is accurate when he suggests that the main character of the picaresque novel is roguish and cunning. And since the picaresque follows an episodic structure he is also right when he affirms that action prevails over meditation. However, moments of meditation abound in both the picaresque novel and the rogue novel. The latter was much influenced by the former, but slowly managed to secure a definite position in the development of the British novel. The solipsistic view of life presented by the first person narrators of both the picaresque and rogue novels demonstrate the ambiguity that fills these narratives. And the comedy of situation, the humour and wit proper to these novels do not in the least obliterate the moral dimension that lies beneath. Even if not explicitly, the picaresque and the rogue novels present characters that think about the world they live in, who survive in adverse circumstances, denouncing society's hypocrisy and contradictions, and eventually prompting the reader to reflect. The main character of *Under the Net* is certainly a rogue and may therefore be linked with the celebrated novel protagonists of the fifties, such as Lumley and Dixon, as well as with previous examples of roguish characters in British literature, such as Gulley Jimson. Indeed both Gulley and Jake are excellent illustrations of the rogue depicted as an artist and as such, they meditate on the way art can accommodate life.

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<sup>138</sup> Peter Wolfe, *The Disciplined Heart: Iris Murdoch and her novels* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1966) 64.

Furthermore, Hilda D. Spear explains this deviation contextualizing Murdoch's first novel in the whole of the author's oeuvre: "Iris Murdoch repeatedly concerns herself in her novels with art and artifice and it is this aspect of them, perhaps, that denies the appellation 'Angry Young Woman' that was foisted upon her in the 1950s. The picaresque character of Jake's adventures and the apparent rootlessness of his own character encouraged the critics to see him as a kind of 'Lucky Jim' (his adventures could never, surely, have been equated with those of John Osborne's Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in Anger*, the original 'angry young man'). Murdoch has always denied the association and the further we travel from the 1950s, the clearer it is that, whilst the novels of the 'Angry Young Men' were the forerunners of the disillusioned 'University novels' of today, Murdoch was in process of creating a novelistic world unique to her own art, a world which attempts to grapple, not with the so-called social realism of the 1950s and 1960s, but rather with the malaise that lies at the heart of life [...]." Hilda D. Spear, *Iris Murdoch* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995) 23-24.

## ***Under the Net: The Humanistic Tradition***

The end is in the beginning and yet you go on.

Samuel Beckett, *Endgame* (1957)

“I am not telling you the whole story of my life” (*UTN* 23), Jake informs the reader at the beginning of the novel. What is *Under the Net* all about, then? In his introduction to the novel (2002 edition), Kiernan Ryan explains:

In a nutshell, *Under the Net* is Jake Donaghue’s account of how he became the writer who wrote *Under the Net*. It’s Murdoch’s portrait of the artist as a restless, feckless, penniless young man on a quest to find out what he thinks, who he loves, and where his life is heading.<sup>139</sup>

Jake’s adventures cover a period of one week and they start and end in the same location: the mysterious Mrs Tinckham’s newsagent’s shop. However, during this interval of time the main character radically changes his attitude towards life. If at the beginning of the novel Jake states: ‘I hate contingency. I want everything in my life to have a sufficient reason’ (*UN* 26); at the very end he is open to the randomness of the world. When asked about a very simple circumstance, the difference between Mrs Tinck’s kittens, Jake reacts in the following way:

“Oh, but that’s how it always is. It’s quite simple,” I said.

“Why is it then?” said Mrs Tinck.

“Well,” I said, “it’s just a matter of...” I stopped. I had no idea what it was a matter of. I laughed and Mrs Tinckham laughed.

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<sup>139</sup> Iris Murdoch, *Under the Net*, introduction by Kiernan Ryan, ix.

“I don’t know why it is,” I said. “It’s just one of the wonders of the world.” (*UN* 286)

Steven G. Kellman suggests that this scene reveals the protagonist as a complete being, ready to accept reality as it is: ‘[h]is final comment, “It’s just one of the wonders of the world,” is an indication of Jake’s progress as human being and artist in embracing the untidy dappledness of the world.’<sup>140</sup> Indeed, Jake’s final words are illustrative of his metamorphosis and are also an echo of Iris Murdoch’s ideas on reality. She discusses this subject at length in her essay ‘Against Dryness.’ Commenting on the inadequacy of existing theories of personality (mostly inherited from Romanticism), she opposes imagination to fantasy and advocates the need for a Liberal theory of personality. According to Murdoch, art and literature in particular play an important role in conveying the truth about the density of life:

[R]eality is not given whole. An understanding of this, a respect for the contingent, is essential to imagination as opposed to fantasy. [...] Real people are destructive of myth, contingency is destructive of fantasy and opens the way to imagination. [...] But since reality is incomplete, art must not be too much afraid of incompleteness. Literature must always represent a battle between real people and images; and what it requires now is a much stronger and more complex conception of the former.<sup>141</sup>

At the end of the narrative Jake is ready to undergo an artistic regeneration, realizing that he can, in fact, write a novel.<sup>142</sup> This is only possible because the main

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<sup>140</sup> Steven G. Kellman, ‘Under the Net: The Self-Begetting Novel,’ *Iris Murdoch*, edited and with an introduction by Harold Bloom (New York, New Haven, Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986) 101.

<sup>141</sup> Iris Murdoch, ‘Against Dryness: a Polemical Sketch,’ 20.

<sup>142</sup> As Steven Kellman suggests, *Under the Net* can be linked to the tradition of the self-begetting novel, a major sub-genre of the twentieth century. The self-begetting novel finds its paradigm in French literature, more specifically, in Marcel Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*: ‘It is an intensely reflexive novel, employing, in addition to the nascent artist Marcel, such figures as Vinteuil, Bergotte, and Elstir in an effort to keep the reader conscious at all times of the problematic status of art.’ Kellman 95.



character is impelled, apparently randomly, to further explore reality. Jake's enlightenment is mainly due to his (re)encounter with two main characters: Anna Quentin and Hugo Belfounder. It is Anna who leads Jake to Hugo (though Jake will only actually search for him after meeting Anna's sister, the actress Sally Quentin). The episode in the Riverside Miming Theatre in Hammersmith is highly significant: the protagonist finds the woman he loves, Anna, a former singer, now committed to the philosophy of silence. The description of the theatre is dominated by dream-like imagery:

[A]nd then in an instant I understood. I was in the gallery of a tiny theatre. The gallery, sloping and foreshortened, seemed to give immediately onto the stage; and on the stage were a number of actors, moving silently to and fro, and wearing masks which they kept turned toward the auditorium. These masks were a little larger than life [...].  
(*UTN* 40)

In his analysis of the novel Malcolm Bradbury alludes to the surrealistic features found in *Under the Net*, mentioning some of the possible literary influences on Murdoch: '[t]here can surely be no doubt that surrealistic is the right word to use here; the dedication to Raymond Queneau should remind us that [...] there is a very modern vein of fantasy at work here too.'<sup>143</sup> Jake's two crucial (mis)encounters with Anna – at the Mime Theatre and his unfruitful chase at the Tuileries gardens in Paris – are good illustrations of Bradbury's argument. Indeed the two scenes are permeated by an

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Like Marcel, Jake is a writer concerned with language, truth and art. Furthermore, he is surrounded by characters, such as the singer Anna Quentin, the philosopher Dave Gellman and the philanthropist Hugo Belfounder, all of whom will help him in his quest.

<sup>143</sup> Malcolm Bradbury, Iris Murdoch's 'Under the Net,' *The Critical Quarterly* 4:1 (Spring, 1962): 53. And indeed right from the beginning of the novel there are direct allusions to Raymond Queneau's *Pierrot mon ami* as well as to Samuel Beckett's *Murphy*, which hold a place in Donaghue's bookshelf.

Also according to Richard Todd: 'Early reviewers of *Under the Net* were prolix in their comparisons, reading affinities with Cocteau, the Marx brothers, the Crazy Gang, Joyce Cary, Henry Green, E. M. Forster, Kafka and Dostoevsky. But the fruitful comparisons remain with Beckett and the dedicatee, Raymond Queneau.' Todd 29.

atmosphere of reverie.<sup>144</sup> A.S. Byatt further explains Jake's relationship with this female character, Anna, emphasizing her naturalness:

[S]he is seen as pure art, divorced from social distortions, divorced as far as possible from the distorting effects of speech. Her theories of art resemble those of Hugo, although they are not identical, and it is not her 'philosophy of silence' that Jake finds attractive in her or pursues [...].<sup>145</sup>

When the protagonist first meets Anna, she elucidates the relationship between art and life: she refuses singing because it is corrupt, choosing rather mime as a 'very simple' and 'very pure' form of art:

"What is this place, Anna?" I asked.

"That's one of the things that would be hard to explain, Jakie, [...] It's a little experiment."

This phrase grated on me. It didn't sound like Anna at all. There was some other voice here. I thought I would pick my way round this.

"What about your singing?" I asked.

"Oh, I've given up singing," said Anna. "I shan't sing any more." [...] "The sort of singing I do is so" – she searched for the word – "ostentatious. There's no truth in it. One's just exploiting one's charm to seduce people." [...]

"How about the theatre?" I asked. "How does that come in?"

"This is pure art," said Anna. "It's very simple and it's very pure."

(UTN 46)

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<sup>144</sup> For the scene at the Riverside Miming Theatre see *UTN* 38-54; for the episode in Paris (at the Pont Saint-Michel and the Tuileries gardens) see *UTN* 213-220.

<sup>145</sup> Byatt 23. Also according to Byatt: "The relationship of Anna and her view of art to Jake's freedom becomes clearest, perhaps, if we examine her relation to Miss Murdoch's study of Sartre's *La Nausée*. [...] Anna, in *Under the Net*, is surely related to the world where 'circles and melodies retain their pure and rigid contours'. The last scene in *Under the Net* where Jake, in Mrs Tinckham's shop, hears Anna on the wireless, singing 'an old French love song' is surely a deliberate parallel of the final scene in *La Nausée* [...]" Byatt 25.

Eventually Jake recognises in Anna's experiment the influence of a former acquaintance, Hugo Belfounder. And indeed, once the nature of the relationship between the two characters (Jake and Hugo) becomes clear – after the narrator/protagonist introduces the reader to Belfounder – the novel's focus shifts. *Under the Net* evolves into a reflection on the relationship between language and reality: how truth can only be obtained in silence and how all acts of theorizing are flights from truth.

Jake and Hugo's acquaintance goes back to the time in which both characters participated in a cold-cure experiment. They engage in a philosophical discussion about the nature of communication:

“But suppose I try hard to be accurate,” I said.

“One can't be,” said Hugo. “The only hope is to avoid saying it. As soon as I try to describe, I'm done for. Try describing anything, our conversation for instance, and see how absolutely instinctively you...”

“Touch it up?” I suggested.

“It's deeper than that,” said Hugo. “The language just won't let you present it as it really was.” [...]

“So we never really communicate?”

“Well,” he said, “I suppose *actions* don't lie.” (UTN 67-68)

Hugo will have such a tremendous influence upon Jake that the latter will feel compelled to produce a book entitled *The Silencer*. In it, and through the fictional characters of Tamarus and Annandine, he gives voice to both his and Hugo's points of view. However, Jake never shares this with his friend and once the book is published, he feels he has betrayed Hugo and vanishes (until the moment he meets Anna again). This episode creates difficulties for Jake, which he will try to solve throughout the

novel. Within this context, the title *Under the Net* becomes extremely significant, pointing to the central problem of the book.<sup>146</sup> To begin with, the expression ‘under the net’ is employed by Hugo (Annandine):

All theorizing is flight. We must be ruled by the situation itself and this is unutterably particular. Indeed it is something to which we can never get close enough, however hard we may try as it were to crawl *under the net*.  
(*UTN* 91, my emphasis)

It is Hugo who raises the dilemma of the novel and it is Jake, the artist, who will have to find a solution for it: ‘picking one’s way between the opposed camps of theory and silence, the “unutterably particular quality” of human situations and the social presentation of them in art.’<sup>147</sup> Thus, it is no mere coincidence that the title of the book Jake is producing (as he narrates his story, taken from the conversation that he includes in *The Silencer*) and the title of Murdoch’s novel are the same. Iris Murdoch explains:

[*Under the Net*] plays with a philosophical idea. The problem which is mentioned in the title is the problem of how far conceptualizing and theorizing, which from one point of view are absolutely essential, in fact divide you from the thing which is the object of theoretical attention.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> According to Byatt: “Miss Murdoch has said that the image of the net of which she was thinking when she wrote the book was that of Wittgenstein (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.341). Here Wittgenstein uses the net as a picture of the way in which concepts, ideas, connections of thought, can be used to ‘bring the description of the universe to a unified form’. (He instances Newtonian mechanics.)” Byatt 15.

Marijke Boucherie further explains the relation between Wittgenstein’s philosophy and Iris Murdoch’s fiction: ‘A separação ascética entre facto e valor que Wittgenstein preconiza em *Tratado Lógico-Filosófico* constitui o termo contrastivo da arte de Iris Murdoch que tenta fazer nos romances o que o pensador austríaco diz ser impossível na filosofia: “Acerca daquilo que se não pode falar, tem que se ficar em silêncio”. [...] Ao contrário de Wittgenstein, Iris Murdoch não se cala e, romance após romance, cria personagens cujos pensamentos, actos e reacções perante pessoas e objectos são imbuidos de medos, paixões, obsessões, alegrias e prazeres. Em Murdoch, o silêncio puro de Wittgenstein é paradoxalmente criado por *reductio ad absurdum* da tagaralice caótica da contingência humana que os romances colocam em cena.’ Marijke Boucherie, “‘Joie de Vivre’: A Arte Romanesca de Iris Murdoch,” *Actas do XVI Encontro da Associação Portuguesa de Estudos Anglo-Americanos* (Vila Real: Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, 1996) 312.

<sup>147</sup> Bradbury 50.

<sup>148</sup> Frank Kermode, ‘The House of Fiction. Interviews with Seven Novelists (1963),’ *The Novel Today. Contemporary Writers on Modern Fiction*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury (1977; London: Fontana Press, 1990):

Jake's great achievement by the end of his adventures is his capacity to accept that contingency is intrinsic to life and that one ought to be open to different interpretations of reality. Indeed, throughout the novel Jake suffers delusion after delusion until he is free from all misconceptions and ready to become a true artist. His final meeting with Hugo at the hospital towards the end of the novel helps the protagonist to understand that he has often formed hasty and false impressions of people and situations around him. Hugo, against Jake's assumptions, praises *The Silencer*: 'Your thing was so clear. I learned an awful lot from it' (UTN 250), and clarifies the love rectangle in which Jake takes part (clearly showing Jake that he had got it all the wrong way around): 'I'm terribly sorry about all this, Jake; it's like life, isn't it? I love Sadie, who's keen on you, and you love Anna, who's keen on me. Perverse, isn't it?' (UTN 256). As Widmann further explains:

Jake, in actuality, is the person bound by nets of delusion. He is mistaken about almost everything. He thinks Finn will never go back to Ireland; Finn goes to Ireland. When he finds Anna again he plans a reunion: Anna will not allow it and escapes him, in London and Paris. He thinks that Jean Pierre Breteuil is a no-good hack; Jean Pierre wins the Prix Goncourt. Jake thinks Sammy is completely dishonourable; Sammy sends him the check for horserace winnings. Jake thinks Mister Mars will be useful for blackmail; precisely the reverse occurs, because Jake has to

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117-144. [Frank Kermode's 'The House of Fiction' was first published in the *Partisan Review* 30 (1963): 61-82].

In the novel (*Under the Net*) the reference to the title appears in the following excerpt: 'ANNANDINE: [...] All theorizing is flight. We must be ruled by the situation itself and this is unutterably particular. Indeed it is something to which we can never get close enough, however hard we may try as it were to crawl under the net' (UN 91).

pay for Mars. Jake thinks that Hugo is a philosopher; Hugo disclaims responsibility for philosophizing.<sup>149</sup>

Thus the end of *Under the Net* is contained in its beginning; to be precise, in its epigraph. Just as in Dryden's final verses in *The Secular Masque*, Jake will find out that it is time to begin anew (“‘Tis well an Old Age is out” / “And time to begin a New”). As Kellman so accurately argues: “[t]he sense of rebirth, rededication, and liberation at the conclusion of *Under the Net* derives from the promise of a work which will succeed in understanding the contingent world and thereby uttering what is “unutterably particular.””<sup>150</sup> Furthermore, Murdoch's adoption of the picaresque structure (highlighting contingency and discontinuity) and of the corresponding rogue character is a clear indication of her philosophical ideas as expressed in her novels.

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<sup>149</sup> R. L. Widmann, ‘Murdoch's *Under the Net*: Theory and Practice of Fiction,’ *Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction* 10:1 (1968): 14.

<sup>150</sup> Kellman 101.

## 2.2. The Rogue Revisited in the 1950s

### 2.2.1. Charles Lumley, Jim Dixon and Joe Lampton

I suppose people of our generation aren't able to die for good causes any longer. We had all that done for us, in the thirties and the forties, when we were still kids. [...] There aren't any good, brave causes left.

John Osborne, *Look Back in Anger* (1956)

John Wain's *Hurry on Down* (1953), Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954) and John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957) are exemplary texts in the history of post-war British fiction. Wain, Amis and Braine belong to the new wave of British novelists who came to play an important role in the revival of literary England in the 1950s. The three novels mentioned above are these writers' first novels and may be said to have remained their best well-known fictional works. They introduce the contemporary anti-hero in British literature, simultaneously revisiting and reinventing the rogue character.

In an article of 1957 entitled 'Laughter's to Be Taken Seriously,' Kingsley Amis explains that the British novel underwent a movement of renewal in the 1950s, breaking with the modernist novel, and recovering a tradition that had existed at least since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Amis names this movement a 'Fielding revival': 'Post-war England has seen what it would not be excessive to call a Fielding revival. This has been manifested not merely in a renewed critical interest but in a changing attitude toward the novel in general.'<sup>151</sup> Indeed novelists at the time recover several aspects that characterise Fielding's novels: the comedy and the satire, the depiction of low-life characters, the criticism of society and the episodic structure of the novels, strongly influenced by the picaresque. Amis stresses the relevance of satire in the post-war context:

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<sup>151</sup> Kingsley Amis, 'Laughter to Be Taken Seriously,' 1.

We are in for a golden age of satire, in my opinion, and if this is so we will be fortunate indeed. Satire offers a social and moral contribution. A culture without satire is a culture without self-criticism and thus, ultimately, without humanity. [...] Satire in its modern forms I take to be fiction that attacks vice and folly as manifested in the individual. [...] [T]he modern satirist has two important weapons which potentially recover for him all the ground he has lost: humor and realism.<sup>152</sup>

The three novels referred to here (*Hurry on Down*, *Lucky Jim* and *Room at the Top*) illustrate Amis's argument. They also depict and dramatise the disappointments of post-war Britain.<sup>153</sup> The cataclysmic events of World War II undoubtedly changed perceptions of the world, followed by a disbelief in technological achievements and a crisis of identity, in which the self was depicted as fragmented.<sup>154</sup> All these factors

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<sup>152</sup> Amis, 'Laughter to Be Taken Seriously,' 1.

<sup>153</sup> Internationally, the following factors can be accounted for the decline of Britain's position worldwide: the loss of India (1947) and consequent disintegration of the empire, the sterling crisis (1947) and the massive devaluation of British currency (1949), the dependence on U.S. loans and foreign policy, the Suez Crisis (1956) and also the falling behind in the nuclear arms race.

As far as the country's internal situation is concerned, at the end of the Second World War the Labour government of Clement Attlee came into power despite Sir Winston Churchill's popularity. Although rationing on food and clothes continued for several more years after the war (bread was still being rationed as late as 1948), the establishment of the Welfare State and the National Health Service helped to improve people's life in general. One of the greatest accomplishments of the time was the 1944 Education Act, which made possible for everyone to benefit from education at all levels. However, the range of options in society were still limited due to the rigidity of the class system, a situation responsible for widespread feelings of frustration and inadequacy. See Rebecca Carpenter, 'Male Failure and Male Fantasy: British Masculine Mythologies of the 1950s, or Jimmy, Jim, and Bond. James Bond,' *The Minnesota Review* - featuring a special section on 50s Culture, 55-57 (2002): 187-190.

<sup>154</sup> The various members of the Frankfurt School have discussed extensively the commodification or reification process inherent in the modern culture industry. In their seminal work, *Dialectic of Enlightenment (Dialektik der Aufklärung)*, (1944) Adorno and Horkheimer set themselves against the aftermath of the Enlightenment epistemology. According to these two social theorists: 'The fallen nature of modern man cannot be separated from social progress. On the one hand the growth of economic productivity furnishes the conditions for a world of greater justice; on the other hand it allows the technical apparatus and the social groups which administer it a disproportionate superiority to the rest of the population. The individual is wholly devalued in relation to the economic powers, which at the same time press the control of society over nature to hitherto unsuspected heights. Even though the individual disappears before the apparatus which he serves, that apparatus provides for him as never before. In an unjust state of life, the impotence and pliability of the masses grow with the quantitative increase in commodities allowed them. [...] The flood of detailed information and candy-floss entertainment simultaneously instructs and stultifies mankind.' Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972; London: Allen Lane, 1973) xiv, xv.



precipitated the emergence of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century anti-hero (with roguish traits) in literature.

In England, although the period after World War II held the promise of a new beginning for the people who had served their country in the war, the reality proved different and disappointing for many. The end of the war brought a major crisis in the ideal of English masculinity. Working-class and middle-class men, who during the war had fought heroically for their country, were now encouraged to take the opportunities available to them in the new welfare state and become the breadwinners of their families. Women, who had been working during the war in the industries men had left, were sent back home to free up jobs for men (although in reality the majority also kept their work outside the home). The bourgeois vision of normative, middle-class, heterosexual masculinity became the dominant ideal: ‘men were expected to take their uninspiring desk jobs, dutifully perform the tasks assigned to them, and return to the pleasures of the home at the end of the day.’<sup>155</sup>

In no time objections to the dominant construction of masculinity arose. Indeed, the post-war economic boom, the expansion of higher education, the increase of mass consumer goods and mass-distributed culture allowed people to have new aspirations and provoked a reaction against the expectations imposed mainly on men at the time. It was during this period that the expression ‘Angry Young Man’ came to be known, being initially associated with John Osborne’s play *Look Back in Anger* (1956).<sup>156</sup> The

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<sup>155</sup> Carpenter 188.

<sup>156</sup> The label, however, was used for the first time in 1951 as the title of Leslie Allen Paul’s autobiography, *Angry Young Man* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951). See Colleen Wall, *The Comic Anti-Hero: John Wain’s Hurry on Down and Kingsley Amis’ Lucky Jim*, MA diss. (Denton, Texas: Texas Woman’s University, 1977) 1-14.

Micheline Wandor explains some of the new elements present in John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger*: “The school of theatre which this play helped generate became known as ‘kitchen-sink theatre’, an ironic label if ever there was one. [...] The relationship between sink and psyche is critical to this play and to many others of the time. At one level it is a very clear class statement about the nature of the world represented on stage – no longer the drawing-room, with invisible servants working at an invisible sink. The more ‘ordinary’ (i.e. non-gentry) people who are the subjects of these plays shift the class bias of

dilemmas of the main character of the play, Jimmy Porter, express those of all young post-war males. Jimmy has all the symptoms of a male identity crisis: class and gender conflict, no place or cause, no sexual assurance. In his famous speech, Osborne makes Jimmy disclose the reason of his *mal-être*, his dissatisfaction with society: ‘I suppose people of our generation aren’t able to die for good causes any longer. We had all that done for us, in the thirties and the forties, when we were still kids. [...] There aren’t any good, brave causes left.’<sup>157</sup> Kenneth Allsop in his study on the angry decade suggests that characters such as Jimmy, the anti-heroes of the time, lack a sense of purpose in life: ‘the Jimmy Porters simmer and lacerate themselves with self-doubt. They are angry at having nothing they dare to be angry about.’<sup>158</sup>

Notwithstanding the differences between the protagonist of Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* and those of Wain’s *Hurry on Down*, Amis’ *Lucky Jim* and Braine’s *Room at the Top* – in which the main character may be said to be the one who comes closer to Jimmy, although he is moved by ambition rather than anger – the novels were retrospectively labelled as ‘angry’ and the misnomer became also attached to the writers themselves.<sup>159</sup> Although Amis repudiated the label, his early writing (*Lucky Jim*, 1954;

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post-war subject matter. At another level, it is the relationship between sink, psyche, and gender which is also important. Whose world, dilemmas, emotions, story, is it that we are following?’ Michelene Wandor, *Post-War British Drama: Looking Back in Gender* (revised and updated edition of the author’s *Look Back in Gender* [London: Methuen, 1987]; London and New York: Routledge, 2001): 41-42.

<sup>157</sup> John Osborne, *Look Back in Anger* (1957; London: Faber and Faber, 1996) 89.

<sup>158</sup> Allsop 16.

<sup>159</sup> Angela Hague explains: ‘Anger did not officially arrive in London until the first production of *Look Back in Anger* at the Royal Court Theatre on May 8, 1956; Osborne’s play, along with the publication of Colin Wilson’s *The Outsider* on May 26, 1956, appeared to herald a new character in English culture, the working-class or lower-middle-class young man who rebels against the bleakness of the Welfare State and retreats into a self-protective shell of angry vituperation at his surroundings.’ Hague 209.

David Lodge further explains, drawing a clear difference between what was known in the fifties as ‘The Movement’ and the expression ‘The Angry Young Men’: ‘In 1954 it was acclaimed as marking the arrival of a new literary generation, the writers of the 1950s, sometimes referred to as “The Movement” or “The Angry Young Men”. These were two distinct but overlapping categories. “The Movement” was a school of poetry, of which Philip Larkin was the acknowledged leader, and to which Amis himself belonged, along with other academics like John Wain, Donald Davie and D. J. Enright. [...] “The Angry Young Men” was a journalistic term, originally put into circulation by a leading article in the *Spectator*, used to group together a number of authors and/or their fictional heroes, who appeared on the literary and theatrical scenes in the mid-to-late 1950s, vigorously expressing their discontent with life in contemporary Britain. They included John Osborne/Jimmy Porter (*Look Back in Anger*), Alan

*That Uncertain Feeling*, 1955; *I Like It Here*, 1958; *Take a Girl Like You*, 1960 or even *One Fat English Man*, 1963) displayed a certain degree of similarity with other contemporary novelists. David Lodge further explains:

[T]here certainly was an important social change in Britain after the war which manifested itself particularly in the 1950s. And I think the so-called “Angry Young Men” [...] did articulate something about that social change. It’s what gave their work its novelty, because in form it was rather traditional. [...] In fact the word “picaresque” was often used about those novels [John Wain’s *Hurry on Down* (1953), Kingsley Amis’s *Lucky Jim* (1954) or John Braine’s *Room at the Top* (1957)] by critics. In a general sense I guess it’s legitimate to think of their heroes in those terms, as people coming from a lower class and interacting with people from an upper class in a rather subversive way. The sympathy of the novel is behind the rebel, the rogue or the lower class character in encountering the upper classes, the social establishment, and *Lucky Jim* is a classic example of that.<sup>160</sup>

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Sillitoe/Arthur Seaton (*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*), John Braine/Joe Lampton (*Room at the Top*) and Kingsley Amis/Jim Dixon.’ David Lodge, ‘Lucky Jim Revisited,’ *The Practice of Writing* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1996) 89.

However, the reference to the origin of the term ‘Angry Young Man/Men’ is misleading. The trend-spotting article entitled ‘In the Movement,’ published in the *Spectator* (1<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1954), written by an anonymous leader (later revealed to be J. D. Scott), drew attention to a new wave of emerging young writers like Amis and Larkin, and thus gave birth to the literary term ‘The Movement.’ The expression ‘Angry Young Man’ only started to be used later on with the application of the title of Leslie Paul’s autobiography to John Osborne’s play *Look Back in Anger* and its hero, by a newspaper reporter called George Fearon, in 1956. The phrase caught on with journalists and was applied promiscuously to the new writers of the period. According to the *Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*: [‘Angry Young Man’ was] [a] name applied to certain modern British writers, and in particular to John Osborne (1929-94), from whose play *Look Back in Anger* (first performed 1956) the term was derived [...]. They were typically young and of provincial lower-middle-class or working-class origin, and they gained notoriety for their satirical treatment and criticism of the ESTABLISHMENT, with its false or outmoded social, moral, political and intellectual values [...].’ *Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, revised by John Ayto, 17<sup>th</sup> ed. (1870; London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005) 47. See also: Blake Morrison, *The Movement. English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

<sup>160</sup> David Lodge, ‘Playing with Ideas,’ interview with Ana Raquel Fernandes (Birmingham, 1 May 2007). To be published in *Anglo-Saxonica* (CEAUL/ULICES – University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies). See the Attachments.

Moreover in ‘Laughter to Be Taken Seriously’ it is Amis himself who praises the writing of John Wain and Iris Murdoch. Indeed Murdoch’s early novels, specifically *Under the Net* (1954) and *The Flight from the Enchanter* (1956) will also be associated with the literary work of the ‘angry young writers.’<sup>161</sup> For Amis the two authors are key examples of new writers, whose style and subject-matter are reminders of a novelistic tradition inaugurated by Fielding:

John Wain and Iris Murdoch, for instance, are two young writers who, though far too often compared and in most ways poles apart, are alike in their evident feeling that the novel of a consistent tone, moving through a recognized and restricted cycle of emotional keys, was outmoded.

Without having to picture such writers going through an eureka-routine with a copy of “Tom Jones,” one can still detect in them some kind of affinity with its author. Their attempt has been to combine the violent and the absurd, the grotesque and the romantic, the farcical and the horrific within a single novel.<sup>162</sup>

It can therefore be stated that the three novels discussed in the present chapter have definite similarities. They are set in post-war Britain, they present similar protagonists – Charles Lumley, Jim Dixon and Joe Lampton display a certain affinity, in spite of their differences – and they introduce the same themes, illustrating discontent with life in contemporary Britain. The main characters move from their lower-class (as is the case with Dixon and Lampton), or lower-middle-class (as illustrated by Lumley) origins to a better position in society due mainly to the educational opportunities they

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<sup>161</sup> A.S. Byatt explains: ‘The first two books have a social dimension, an emphasis on the possibilities of man’s freedom in society at large and mechanized, an interest in work, in the sense of jobs, which is not importantly present in the later novels, which are more concerned with freedom within personal relationships, with Jamesian studies of one person’s power over, or modification of another person – although both ideas are of course present in most of the novels.’ Byatt 11.

<sup>162</sup> Amis, ‘Laughter to Be Taken Seriously,’ 1.

have received. However, the same society which provides them with more education, knowledge and skills is not prepared to fully accept them. These characters are thus left without a clear function in the space they live in. Alluding to Kingsley Amis and his first novel, *Lucky Jim*, David Lodge argues:

[Amis] articulated for me and a lot of my generation this sense we had of being promoted from out of our lower middle class, or in some cases working class, backgrounds, into the professional classes through educational opportunity – the key being, of course, the 1944 Education Act in this country [...]. That legislation brought – not a huge number, because it was still a very competitive system – but it brought quite a lot of people into the professional classes who in the past would never have got there because of the cost of getting an appropriate education. [...] And there was a tension between the world we went into, the professional world, which had been dominated by the products of public schools (in the British sense – i.e., private schools), Oxford, Cambridge, that sort of network, which had a very fixed code of manners and cultural preferences, and the social class we actually belonged to. The tension could express itself in different ways. For example, in the case of many of the fictional characters it was a preference for popular music or jazz music over classical music, *Lucky Jim* being typical: Jim's reference to 'filthy Mozart' being typical.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Lodge, 'Playing with Ideas.' See the Attachments.

Several English novels of the 1950s have often been said to present a picaresque structure. In an article entitled ‘These Writers Couldn’t Care Less,’ V. S. Pritchett establishes a parallel between the social and literary situation lived in England in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and the situation lived in Britain in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

The England of the new novelists is the ugly England of the industrial suburbs and the new building estates; the hero and his friends are half-working class. [...] They have been given great advantages, but there is no opportunity to exploit them. Hence, they are rude, unreliable, with eyes wide open for the main chance. [...] Where have we seen such a class revolution before? In the England of the late seventeenth century – the sour, acrimonious, dissenting, vital, go-getting, new shopkeeping England of Defoe. We have seen it when the English middle class was born and beginning to make money by individualism and trade. The typical figures are Robinson Crusoe, the Compleat Tradesman, Moll Flanders and Roxana. And just as Defoe celebrated his emergence by a refusal to write literary English, by a determination to stick to what made a profit and to what one can only call a practical, profit-recording style of writing; so the novelists of our new group, write in a desultory vernacular, using every popular circumlocution or slang phrase or image to avoid the literary expression of feeling, so soaked in the associations of bourgeois romance.<sup>164</sup>

The authors of the 1950s abandon late Victorian and early modern literary models and seek inspiration in writers such as Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, or even

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<sup>164</sup> V. S. Pritchett, ‘These Writers Couldn’t Care Less,’ *New York Times Book Review* (28 Apr. 1957): 38.

Laurence Sterne, harking back to the tradition of the picaresque adventure novel.<sup>165</sup> In the same article quoted above, Pritchett explains the reason why modern English novelists praised 18<sup>th</sup>-century writers: '[t]hey discerned that the picaresque novelists were products of revolution: that they were engaged in adventure; and that the modern adventure was a rambling journey from one conception of society to another.'<sup>166</sup>

Following on from Claudio Guillén's seminal study, 'Toward a Definition of the Picaresque,'<sup>167</sup> Angela Hague in an article entitled 'Picaresque Structure and the Angry Young Men' enumerates the picaresque characteristics of Wain's *Hurry on Down*, Amis' *Lucky Jim* and Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net* (1954).<sup>168</sup> Although Hague acknowledges that these novels deviate from Guillén's model in several respects (for example, only *Under the Net* is narrated in the first person), she establishes important parallels that could be summarised as follows: in each novel the protagonist (Wain's Charles Lumley, Amis' Jim Dixon and Murdoch's Jake Donaghue) is a 'half-outsider,' having chosen to inhabit a marginal position and lacking political or social commitment. The three characters seek to adapt to society but find themselves alienated from other individuals, politics, established work and artistic activity. These protagonists are cut

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<sup>165</sup> John Dodds further explains: 'And although the Angry Young Men were certainly realistic in their descriptions of post-war Britain, this was not simply a resurgence of social realism but also a reaction against the literary currents of modernism, Bloomsbury and any literary movement connected or associated with upper middle-class pretensions, with the so-called avant-garde.' See John Dodds, 'From Alice to Zombies: Analogy and Opposition in John Braine's *Room at the Top*,' *Four Fits of Anger: Essays on the Angry Young Men*, ed. Mark Brady et al. (Pasian di Prato, Udine, Italia: Campanotto Editore, 1986) 7-8.

Dodds also quotes David Lodge who maintains: "the 1950s writers were suspicious of, and often positively hostile to the modernist movement and were certainly opposed to any further efforts at 'experimental' writing. [...] They themselves aimed to communicate clearly and honestly their perceptions of the world as it was. They were empiricists, influenced by logical positivism and 'ordinary language' philosophy. Their originality was largely a matter of tone and attitude and subject-matter, reflecting the changes in English society and culture brought about by the convulsion of World War II." See David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977) 213.

<sup>166</sup> Pritchett 38.

<sup>167</sup> Cf.: Claudio Guillén, 'Toward a Definition of the Picaresque' (1971).

<sup>168</sup> Curiously, Murdoch's *Under the Net* is also the author's first novel. See my analysis of the novel in the present chapter.

off from the past, distrust women, present a protean personality and their destiny is ultimately ruled by chance or luck.

Angela Hague draws on the work of various scholars, including V. S. Pritchett, J. B. Priestley, Rubin Rabinovitz, Robert Hewison, who apply the picaresque model to the English novels of the 1950s.<sup>169</sup> For the purpose of this study, rather than departing from a strictly picaresque tradition – no doubt the tradition is there since it helped shape the British adventure novel in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries – I will argue that Wain, Amis and Braine have mainly reinvented the English literary form of the rogue novel, which in its early days was greatly influenced by the picaresque novel of the Spanish Golden Age.<sup>170</sup> Throughout English literature, authors such as Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray, all developed a keen interest in the rogue character and played an important role in the development of the rogue novel. And indeed these are the authors that will have a direct influence on Wain, Amis and Braine.

The novels *Hurry on Down*, *Lucky Jim* and *Room at the Top* recover the literary form known as ‘the rogue novel’ and its central character, the rogue. Together their protagonists reflect a society undergoing profound social changes. They stand as isolated individuals facing an intransigent bourgeois society which seeks to exclude them whilst they are not ready to assimilate and accept the norms that rule their world.

Indeed, all the novels have as their main character a young man trying to find his way in post-war British society. But while Wain, Amis and Braine explore a similar subject – the newly risen lower-middle class male of the 1950s – their treatment of the

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<sup>169</sup> Angela Hague, ‘Picaresque Structure and the Angry Young Novel,’ *Twentieth Century Literature*, 32.2 (Summer 1986): 209-220. See also: J. B. Priestley, ‘Thoughts in the Wilderness,’ *New Statesman and Nation* (26 July 1954); Rubin Rabinovitz, *The Reaction Against Experiment in the English Novel 1950-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969); and Robert Hewison, *In Anger: Culture in the Cold War 1945-60* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981).

<sup>170</sup> Cf.: M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 406: ‘The image of the rogue determines the first powerful novel-form of the Second Line – the picaresque adventure novel.’



protagonist is slightly different. Both Jim Dixon and Joe Lampton share a working-class background and are desperately trying to climb the social ladder of British society. But while Joe is self confident, ruthlessly inventing schemes to attain his goal, Jim is anxious and fearful, turning to various sorts of trickery to cover up his failures and frustrations. As for Charles Lumley, he breaks away with the conventions of society in a slightly different manner since he is already a member of the middle classes by birth.

### **Charles Lumley**

I a twister love what I abhor.

John Wain, *Hurry on Down* (1953)

Throughout the novel *Hurry on Down*, Charles Lumley seeks to avoid the restrictions of class identification, particularly with the middle classes, emerging as the most intricately motivated of the three protagonists. One key moment, towards the middle of *Hurry on Down*, illustrates this idea. While working at a hospital as an orderly, Charles's tranquillity and, most importantly, his anonymity is broken when he is recognized by a young man who had been at college with him, a medical student. The latter does not hide his surprise in seeing Charles taking on such a menial job:

‘What are you doing here?’

‘Wheeling these drums down to the theatre.’

The other flushed slightly at Charles's discourtesy.

‘I meant, of course, what are you doing doing this job?’ Annoyance had poor effect on his syntax.

‘I’ve got to live, haven’t I?’ said Charles in the patient tone of one who is prepared to discuss the matter fully.<sup>171</sup>

Eventually, Charles will have the opportunity to explain his point of view at an evening gathering at the young man’s house. There, the confrontation between Burge, who stands for all that the protagonist despises and rejects – middle-class appearance, good upbringing and education, respectability, *status quo*, ambition and total compliance with the system – and Charles allows for two contradictory visions of society:

‘Just what the bloody hell do you think you’re playing at, Lumley, eh? They tell me you’ve taken a job at the hospital as an orderly. Carrying buckets about and emptying bedpans. What the bloody hell’s the big idea?’ [...]

‘Do I understand, Burge,’ he said, with a hint of a choke in his voice, ‘that you are interfering with my right, the absolute right of a citizen, to do just whatever work I may choose?’ [...]

‘Yes, you bloody well do understand it,’ he cried. ‘That sort of work ought to be done by people who are born to it. You had some sort of education, some sort of upbringing, though I must say you don’t bloody well behave like it. You ought to have taken on some decent job [...].

(*HOD* 173-174)

The matter is thus reduced to one’s place in society. Burge stands for the confident upper middle-class man, who shows signs of prejudice towards the underprivileged, while Charles represents the lower middle-class man, refusing to accept the moral and intellectual standards of the class above him. Although Charles finds himself in a minority of one, he epitomizes a new kind of (anti-)hero and a new

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<sup>171</sup> John Wain, *Hurry On Down* (1953; Gwynedd: Smaller Sky Books – 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition, 2003) 167. Henceforward all quotations will be signalled by *HOD* followed by the number of the pages quoted.

attitude to life, one radically different from that personified by Burge, who affirms: ‘there are some classes of society that are born and bred to it, and ours isn’t. If you take a job like that, you’re just [...] letting the side down. And I don’t like people who let the side down. None of us here like it’ (*HOD* 174).

The episode mentioned above may be interpreted as the climax of Lumley’s confrontation with society, which has its starting point at the very beginning of the novel and is already suggested by the title itself. Indeed, from the moment Charles ‘comes down’ from the university, from the moment he graduates,<sup>172</sup> he immediately begins his quest for neutrality, as the narrator’s rhetorical questions prove: ‘[c]ould he not, just as easily, cast up and be rid of his class, his *milieu*, his insufferable load of presuppositions and reflexes? [...] Why should it not end here, and he be reborn, entering the world anew, to no other music than the chirping of the crickets and his own retching?’ (*HOD* 30).

The title of the novel is thus an explicit reference to the protagonist’s condition and pursuit in life. Charles explains at the very beginning: ‘I have just come down from the University with a mediocre degree in History, I have no job and no prospects, and I am living on fifty pounds I happen to have left in the bank, while I consider my next move’ (*HOD* 7). Eventually the protagonist engages in various activities: window-cleaner, export delivery driver, orderly at the hospital, chauffeur, bouncer and gag writer for radio. He survives in society changing jobs, roles and places – he is rootless and non-committed. However, in his quest to be outside the class structure altogether, the main character is constantly caught in a net of complicated social relations, in which women and money play an important part. Indeed society is perceived as a net which is

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<sup>172</sup> It is significant that the American edition of the novel bears the title *Born in Captivity* (New York, Alfred Knopf, Inc., 1953), suggesting that Charles Lumley is both a victim of society and the way it is organized and a victim of his own social and psychological situation. See: Sam Hynes, “The ‘Poor Sod’ as Hero,” *Commonweal* 64 (April 13, 1956): 51-53; Colleen Wall, *The Comic Anti-Hero: John Wain’s Hurry on Down and Kingsley Amis’ Lucky Jim* (1977).

always coming down to catch the protagonist.<sup>173</sup> This idea is illustrated by various episodes: Lumley's search for freedom is repeatedly undermined by materialistic or economic concerns. While living with Edwin Froulish, an old acquaintance from undergraduate years, and Betty, Froulish's companion, Charles is appalled at the discovery that the 'allowance' Betty brings home and on which they all rely comes from her affair with Robert Tharkles, supposedly a respectable middle-class family man, who symbolizes for the protagonist the hypocrisy of bourgeois society: '[i]t never crossed his mind that, if she were to deceive Froulish, her unfaithfulness would take the form of simple *quid pro quo* prostitution. [...] What shook him [...] was the realization that his own attempt to break out of the net had failed utterly' (*HOD* 80-81).

Furthermore, Charles' life and tranquillity is unsettled by the appearance of a woman, Veronica, believed to be the niece of the well-off Bernard Roderick.<sup>174</sup> Because of her and his desire to win her, Charles begins to think more and more about money, depicted as poison: '[w]hoever she was, she clearly moved in circles that demanded money as a condition of entry – money, good clothes, social position. [...] He began to think increasingly about money. The poison was doing its work' (*HOD* 77). Ultimately Charles is drawn into illicit activities, carrying drug across the country and becoming trapped in a network of criminality:

Now here he was, helping to smuggle heroin, or marijuana, or whatever the vile stuff was, out of the docks and put it in circulation. He had become a member, however insignificant, of the organization that spread

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<sup>173</sup> The powerful image of society seen as a net has also been used by other authors at the time, namely, Iris Murdoch. In her debut novel, the net has an important social significance as well as a philosophical dimension. See my analysis of Murdoch's *Under the Net* in the present chapter.

<sup>174</sup> Since, at the end of the novel, the character of Veronica will appear linked to Moll Flanders, the name Roderick is also significant reminding the reader of *Roderick Random* (1748) by William Makepeace Thackeray. Both references place the novel in a complex but interesting relationship to its literary antecedents.

these drugs throughout the country [...]. The whole thing was one vast network [...]. (*HOD* 108)

Although his activity at the Export Express nearly costs him his life – Charles almost dies after an unlikely car chase – the main character is, nevertheless, given another chance. At the hospital, Charles abandons the idea of pursuing Veronica (he discovers that she is Mr Roderick's mistress) and moves on. The brief affair with Rosa<sup>175</sup> and the time he spends at Mr Braceweight's in Sussex are effectively failed attempts to achieve the neutrality and the new self Charles is seeking. Indeed, while working as Mr Braceweight's chauffeur, the protagonist has his anonymity threatened once again with the appearance of George Hutchins. According to Blake Morrison, this character may be interpreted as a variation of 'the Yorkshire scholar,' a figure embodying many of the prejudices of the time: "[t]he Yorkshire scholar' was a parody of the dour but ambitious scholarship boy; as well as providing the basis for Whitbread in *Jill* [by Larkin], he lies behind later variations of the type, such as Amis's Dixon in *Lucky Jim* and Wain's George Hutchins in *Hurry on Down*."<sup>176</sup> Indeed, although Hutchins stands as the opposite of Lumley, they are both parasites. The ironic comment made by the protagonist in the following dialogue highlights this:

'Well, Lumley, I'm sorry you're down on your luck. [...] Of course, I could see years ago that you hadn't got a real grip on things. But I didn't think you would have come down to this.'

'What do you mean, come down?'

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<sup>175</sup> Just as it had previously happened, when Charles, in need of a change while working as a window-cleaner, dresses again in his middle-class uniform and goes to the Grand Hotel, eventually seeing Veronica for the first time and changing his life style, his adventure with Rosa does not last long since Charles cannot stand stability and routine in his life: 'He faced her. His brain was dry and empty. He wanted to explain to her that it was not his fault. He had not meant to injure her, he had only thought, mistakenly, that he was the kind of man who could bring her happiness and help her to profit by her own particular kind of life-giving simplicity' (*HOD* 195-196).

<sup>176</sup> Morrison 11.

‘I could give you a recommendation that would probably get you a job in a prep. school. That would be a start at least.’

‘Listen, George,’ Charles said wearily. ‘Never mind the missionary zeal. I don’t want honest work. I’m like you, I prefer to be a parasite. A louse on the scalp of society.’ (*HOD* 205)

Finally, in London the main character is portrayed as the lowest of the low, a tramp sleeping on the streets: ‘[i]t was cold on the bench. [...] You musn’t lie down, he knew that, or a policeman could pull you in. [...] [W]hen you were a tramp you didn’t mind offending other people. It was what was expected of you’ (*HOD* 227). Eventually, Charles is rescued by Mr Blearney (an old acquaintance from the time he had first met Veronica), who offers him a job as a chucker-out at the Golden Peach Club. Once more, luck plays an important role in Lumley’s life. At the club he reencounters his friend Froulish. It is he who mentions the business of gag-writing to Charles and later presents the protagonist to Terence Frush, well-known for his radio programmes. After being offered a permanent contract for a job, Charles finally reaches the neutrality he was seeking. As the narrator explains:

Neutrality; he had found it at last. The running fight between himself and society had ended in a draw; he was no nearer, fundamentally, to any rapprochement or understanding with it than when he had been a window-cleaner, a crook, or a servant; it had merely decided that he should be paid, and paid handsomely, to capitalize his anomalous position. (*HOD* 250)

According to James Gindin there is a twist at the end of the novel: ‘Charles ironically finds that he can best retain the personal and the humane in the midst of a highly organized and commercial world. [...] He even thinks of his search in terms of a

mock allegory.’<sup>177</sup> The novel, however, ends ambiguously. The (re)appearance of Veronica, who significantly introduces herself as Moll Flanders, and the dialogue that follows undoubtedly brings the novel close to a long tradition in British literature, that of the rogue novel:

Veronica came in as unconcernedly as if this were the Oak Lounge.

‘I wasn’t quite sure about giving my right name to the man,’ she said, ‘so I just gave him the first name that entered my head. Moll Flanders. I’ve just been reading about her.’

‘I never got to the end of that book,’ he said. ‘Has it got a happy ending?’

‘Not really. It doesn’t end, it just stops. She turns respectable and repents, but you knew that from the beginning.’ (*HOD* 250-251)

Veronica’s intention is quickly grasped by the protagonist: ‘[m]entally he translated this into: *You’re rich now, you’re doing as well as Roderick. And you’re fifteen years younger*’ (*HOD* 251). The novel doesn’t end, it simply stops and doubt lingers in the mind of the reader as Charles seems to accept Veronica back after briefly considering the pros and cons of her sudden reappearance in his life. This final episode marks the protagonist as a ‘contemporary picaro,’ confirming, according to Terrell F. Dixon, ‘Charles’ alliance with the forces of wit, energy, and roguery’<sup>178</sup>:

If an animal who was tame, or born in captivity, went back to what should have been its natural surroundings, it never survived. If it was a bird, the other birds killed it, but usually it just died. Here was his cage, a

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<sup>177</sup> Gindin quotes a passage of *Hurry On Down*, which reminds the reader of John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678, 1684) and may be read as a parody of it: ‘The young man (Hopeless) breaks out of the prison of Social and Economic Maladjustment; he carries on his back a hundredweight of granite known as Education. After a skirmish with the dragon Sex, in which he is aided by a false friend, Giant Crime, he comes to the illusory citadel called Renunciation of Ambition. And so on. What an allegory it would make!’ (*HOD* 233-234). James Gindin, *Postwar British Fiction: New Accents and Attitudes* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963) 131.

<sup>178</sup> Terrell F. Dixon, ‘The Use of Literary History in *Hurry on Down*,’ *Notes on Contemporary Literature* 2.2 (1972): 7.

fine new one [...]. And she had snapped the lock and was calling him into the waving jungle [...].

That was Con. What was Pro?

Pro was that she was beautiful, and he loved her, and to accept her with death and catastrophe in the same packet would be no trouble at all [...].

Pro was that I a twister love what I abhor.

They looked at each other, baffled and inquiring. (*HOD* 251-252)

### **Jim Dixon and Joe Lampton**

[N]ice things are nicer than nasty ones.

Kingsley Amis, *Lucky Jim* (1954)

I was the devil of a fellow, I was the lover of a married woman. I was taking out the daughter of one of the richest men in Warley, there wasn't a damn thing I couldn't do.

John Braine, *Room at the Top* (1957)

While Charles Lumley tries to avoid the restrictions of class identification throughout the novel, and his adventures cover a range of different places and various people, Jim Dixon in *Lucky Jim* and Joe Lampton in *Room at the Top* seek acceptance from the classes above them and move in confined places. The novels mentioned have a unity of place not found in *Hurry on Down*. Jim's world is the academic community at a provincial university where he came to teach history.<sup>179</sup> Joe's story takes place in a fictitious prosperous northern town, Warley, where the main character, at the beginning of the novel, has just got a new job at the Treasurer's Office.

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<sup>179</sup> According to David Lodge: 'Lucky Jim was the first British campus novel (as distinct from the Varsity novel, about the goings-on of young people at Oxbridge) – the first to take as its central character a lecturer at a provincial university, and to find a rich seam of comic and narrative material in that small world.' Lodge, 'Lucky Jim Revisited,' 87-88.



According to John D. Hurrell, the basic attitude of compromising with society undergoes a different treatment in both novels. The protagonists in *Lucky Jim* and *Room at the Top*, despite sharing a similar background and similar aims in life, achieve their goals in a very different manner. Amis' narrative differs from Braine's in tone; the first is celebrated for its comedy while the latter is remembered for the human tragedy associated with it:

The desire to compromise, to lower moral or intellectual standards in a search for social or professional success, continually forces a crisis of conscience on the young man with more ambition and talent than connections, and it is this crisis of conscience in the young man without a distinctive class allegiance that is treated as comedy by Amis and tragedy by Braine.<sup>180</sup>

David Lodge suggests that the comedy present in *Lucky Jim* derives from two sources: the comedy of situation and the comedy of style. The latter is the most original, introducing a new tone to the satirical observation of everyday life. According to Lodge:

The comedy generated by Amis's style was more original, and introduced a distinctively new tone into English fiction. The style is scrupulously precise, but eschews traditional "elegance". It is educated but classless. While deploying a wide vocabulary it avoids all traditional devices of humorous literary prose – jocular periphrasis, mock-heroic literary allusion, urbane detachment.<sup>181</sup>

As far as the comedy of situation in *Lucky Jim* is concerned, Lodge links it to a long tradition of British comic writing which goes back through Waugh, Wodehouse,

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<sup>180</sup> John D. Hurrell, 'Class and Conscience in John Braine and Kingsley Amis,' *Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction* 2.1 (1958): 40-41.

<sup>181</sup> Lodge, 'Lucky Jim Revisited,' 87.

Dickens and Fielding to Restoration and Elizabethan comedy. As David Lodge explains:

Comedy of situation is exemplified by such memorable scenes as Jim's accident with the bed-clothing at the Welches' and his efforts to conceal the damage, his attempts to deceive Mrs Welch and her son Bertrand on the telephone by disguising his voice, his hijacking of the Barclays' taxi after the College Ball, and his drunken lecture on "Merrie England". All these episodes involve the violation of a polite code of manners and contain an element of farce [...].<sup>182</sup>

The narrative in *Room at the Top* is different in style and does not share with *Lucky Jim* its comic characteristics. Indeed, the association of Braine's novel with the picaresque tradition is not made through the witty style but rather via the depiction of the main character as an anti-hero and, most importantly, for its first person narrative. *Room at the Top* is a pseudo-confession of a ruthless character who seems to repent too late of the life he has led.

In spite of these differences, the two novels seem to resort to common elements. In both *Lucky Jim* and *Room at the Top* the main characters develop a relationship with two different women, who stand for different social stances and for different goals in life. In *Lucky Jim*, the protagonist will have to choose between the neurotic Margaret Peel and the beautiful, down-to-earth Christine Callaghan. In *Room at the Top*, Joe's destiny is settled at the moment he abandons the unhappily married Alice Aisgill, the only person who understands him and whom Joe ever loved, choosing instead a 'Grade A' girl, the young and rich Susan Brown.

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<sup>182</sup> Lodge, 'Lucky Jim Revisited,' 86.

For Jim Dixon Christine seems at first unattainable: '[t]he notion that women like this were never on view except as the property of men like Bertrand was so familiar to him that it had long ceased to appear an injustice.'<sup>183</sup> However, his opinion changes in the morning after the episode of the burnt bedclothes. He realizes then that she is neither unattainable nor pretentious, being able to laugh with him at the embarrassing situations he sometimes finds himself in: '[s]he looked at him open-mouthed, then began to laugh. She sat down on the bed but immediately jumped up again as if it were once more on fire. Dixon began laughing too, not because he was much amused but because he felt grateful to her for her laughter'" (*LJ* 73).

As for Joe Lampton, Susan also belongs to a class of women who seem inaccessible but he is determined to get her, snatching Susan from his rival Jack Wales and securing her for himself: 'I've got her, [...] she's mine and I can do what I like with her. I've beaten the bastard Wales. I'll marry her if I have to put her in the family way to do it. I'll make her daddy give me a damned good job. I'll never count pennies again.'<sup>184</sup> For Joe then Susan becomes a mere passport to the top.

Jim's goals are then relatively modest as compared to those of Joe. His primary aim is to keep his position as a lecturer at the provincial university, in spite of the fact that he views the academic world with disgust and boredom. He is, according to Rebecca Carpenter: 'an economic, professional, romantic, sexual and social failure.'<sup>185</sup> At the end of the novel, having failed to secure his position, Jim's life suffers a turn of luck, which accounts for the novel's title, and in a somewhat fairytale ending he is offered a job in London and ends up with the girl he loves, Christine.

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<sup>183</sup> Kingsley Amis, *Lucky Jim*, with an introduction by David Lodge (1954; London: Penguin Books, 2000) 39. Henceforward all quotations will be signalled by *LJ* followed by the number of the pages quoted.

<sup>184</sup> John Braine, *Room at the Top* (1957; London: Arrow Books, 2002) 137. Henceforward all quotations will be signalled by *RAT* followed by the number of the pages quoted.

<sup>185</sup> Carpenter 198.

There could not be a more different ending to Joe's story. The main character in *Room at the Top* has no modest goals. He is portrayed as a self-confident young man willing to sacrifice moral and emotional integrity in order to achieve wealth and social status. John D. Hurrell claims:

Joe has falsely assumed that happiness will come to him automatically when he has eradicated envy by raising his social status. Faced with the crisis of conscience he has succumbed to the lure of success, and his tragedy is that of any man who discovers too late that he has exchanged his humanity for a set of social symbols.<sup>186</sup>

The ending of the novel may be interpreted as a very cynical fairy-tale. Joe, the Prince Charming, finally gets Susan. However he takes her: '[...] not as Susan, but as a Grade A lovely, as the daughter of a factory-owner, as the means of obtaining the key to the Aladdin's cave of [his] ambitions' (*RAT* 139). Unlike Jim Dixon, Joe Lampton is all success but his ruthlessness will lead him to tragedy: '[...] there can be little doubt that the real casualty in the novel, in Joe Lampton's private war, is not Alice at all – although she obviously dies a most real and quite brutal physical death – but rather it is Joe Lampton himself.'<sup>187</sup>

Indeed, while Jim Dixon rebels against the values and codes of the bourgeois world epitomized by the university setting, and his narrative ends with him leaving for London to embark in a career where his freedom of petty affectation will be appreciated, Joe assimilates the values and codes of the upper classes. He gets his social promotion but he sacrifices his consciousness, his integrity and his emotions. Joe himself admits, reflecting upon a key moment of his relation with Alice:

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<sup>186</sup> Hurrell 42.

<sup>187</sup> Mark Brady et al. 59.

Looking back, I see myself as being near the verge of insanity. I couldn't feel like that now; there is, as it were, a transparent barrier between myself and strong emotion. [...] I'm not alive in the way that I was that evening I quarrelled with Alice. I look back at that raw young man sitting miserable in the pub with a feeling of genuine regret; I wouldn't, even if I could, change places with him, but he was indisputably a better person than the smooth character I am now, after ten years of getting almost everything that I ever wanted. I know the name he'd give me: the Successful Zombie. (*RAT* 123)

### **2.2.2. *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning: A Rebel with a Cause***

Even now, production lines sometimes make it difficult for a worker to preserve his individuality.

Edward H. Jones, et al., *Themes: Rebels* (1969)

The debut novel, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958), by Alan Sillitoe has often been praised for its 'social realism': '[i]ts setting can be considered as that of a representative manufacturing town in mid-twentieth-century Britain [...].'<sup>188</sup> The action of the novel takes place in a working-class district of Nottingham. The city is Alan Sillitoe's birthplace and the author (b. 1928) has shared some of the experiences of the main character, Arthur Seaton, since in his early youth he too has worked in various factories. However, the novel goes beyond the autobiographical experience. Sillitoe explains in his introduction to the 1979 edition of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*:

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<sup>188</sup> John Rule, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning: Time and the Working Classes*, an Inaugural Lecture delivered at the University on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1994 (Southampton: University of Southampton, 1994) 5.

Many people make the mistake of assuming that the novel is autobiographical, as they did when it first appeared. It is not, at least not in the strictest sense of the word. When I was writing it I had not been in a factory for ten years. But the novel, while mirroring the sort of atmosphere I grew up in, is a work of the imagination in that all the actors in it are put together from jigsaw pieces assembled so that no identifiable characters came out at the end. I imagine novelists of the middle-class condition also perform in this way.<sup>189</sup>

Like other writers of his generation, often labelled as ‘Angry Young Men’ (Kingsley Amis, John Wain, John Osborne, Harold Pinter, John Braine, William Cooper or even Colin Wilson), Alan Sillitoe is concerned with ‘ordinary’ life, adopting a plain style for a better treatment of the subject matter and a more compelling characterisation of his anti-heroes.<sup>190</sup> Indeed, Sillitoe in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* portrays working class characters and subjects.

The novel is set in post-war Britain, in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century working-class Nottingham. The impact of the post-war economic boom is evident in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, specifically through the depiction of the following elements: the way work is perceived in the light of a new affluence, the exchange of time for money,

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<sup>189</sup> Alan Sillitoe, ‘Introduction to 1979 edition of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*,’ *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958; Hammersmith, London: Flamingo, 1994) 5-6. Henceforward all quotations will be signalled by *SN* followed by the number of the pages quoted.

<sup>190</sup> The literary production of the fifties and early sixties, particularly of the Angry Young Men and the writers of the poetic circle known as The Movement, suffered the influence of a major figure: George Orwell (1903-1950). According to Tim Price: “Orwell’s influence can be seen in four main areas: Firstly, his objectives, becoming a ‘writer’ and writing about his own experiences are of obvious significance [...]. Secondly, Orwell’s subject matter can be seen as a precedent for an exploration of ‘ordinary’ life. Thirdly, his adoption of a plain style is doubly important; firstly, in advancing his subject matter, notably his studies of the working classes, by giving these studies a documentary credibility, and, secondly, in preparing the ground for regional and working class subjects. Finally, Orwell’s attitude to socialism is vital to the 1950s [...].” Tim Price, *The Politics of Culture: ‘Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*,’ unpublished PhD diss. (Nottingham: The University of Nottingham, 1987) 171-172. See also: Morrison 53, 73, 93-95, 130, 163, 211; Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: NLB, 1979): 385-392; Raymond Williams, ed. *George Orwell: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974): 1-9.

the increase in mass consumer goods and mass-distributed culture, increased leisure time, changes in values, new images of sexuality often in conflict with traditional views associated with the family unit. Arthur Seaton, the novel's central character, embodies this new age: he is on the threshold of a new era. By contrasting his father's experience before and after the war, Arthur explains these changing times:

The old man was happy at last, anyway, and he deserved to be happy, after all the years before the war on the dole, five kids and the big miserying that went with no money and no way of getting any. And now he had a sit-down job at the factory, all the Woodbines he could smoke, money for a pint if he wanted one, though he didn't as a rule drink, a holiday somewhere, a jaunt on the firm's trip to Blackpool, and a television-set to look into at home. The difference between before the war and after the war didn't bear thinking about. (SN 26-27)

Indeed *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* concerns working-class culture in Britain immediately after the war and Arthur belongs to a very different generation from that of his father. They both work in the same bicycle factory, however, times have definitely changed: '[n]o more short-time like before the war, or getting the sack if you stood ten minutes in the lavatory reading your *Football Post* – if the gaffer got on to you now you could always tell him where to put the job and go somewhere else' (SN 27).

## Arthur Seaton

Be not deceived [...] for whatsoever a man soweth,  
that shall he also reap.

*Galatians 6:7*

The main character of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* is undoubtedly an anti-hero and can also be said to be a rogue. He belongs to a working-class background, depicting and commenting on the reality that surrounds him. Arthur is the product of the social environment in which he is brought up and lives. And although he is neither an occasional nor a professional criminal, he systematically defies authority and social conventions.

At work Arthur breaks away with the routine by playing tricks on his co-workers, whenever he finds an opportunity, and cheating (among others) the foreman of the factory, Mr Robboe:

Such leisure often brought him near to trouble, for some weeks ago he stunned a mouse – that the overfed factory cats had missed – and laid it beneath a woman's drill, and Robboe the gaffer ran out of his office when he heard her screaming blue-murder, thinking that some bloody silly woman had gone and got her hair caught in a belt [...]. [H]e paced up and down the gangways asking who was responsible for the stunned mouse, and when he came to Arthur, who denied having anything to do with it, he said: 'I'll bet you did it, you young bogger.' (SN 31)

The factory is described as a living animal: 'some monstrous being that suffered from a disease of the stomach' (SN 27). The reference to the 'Monday-morning ring of the clocking-in machine' (SN 30) and to 'the infernal noise of hurrying machinery' (SN 30) bears striking resemblances to 19<sup>th</sup>-century depictions of work in mills in the early



industrial societies (as is the case in novels by Charles Dickens or Benjamin Disraeli, Elizabeth Gaskell or Charles Kingsley). In *Hard Times* (1854), for instance, Dickens renders a vivid and unsettling description of Coketown and portrays the steam-engine of Coketown's mill as a sick and wild animal:

It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down, *like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness.*<sup>191</sup> (My emphasis)

However, Arthur is a symbol of resistance; his attitude at the beginning of the day is not attuned to the ring of the factory: '[t]he bright Monday-morning ring of the clocking-in machine made a jarring note, different from the tune that played inside Arthur' (SN 30). Indeed the protagonist of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* wants to earn enough to have a comfortable lifestyle in his leisure hours and days: '[s]o he settled for a comfortable wage of fourteen pounds. Anything bigger than that would be like shovelling hard-earned money into the big windows of the income-tax office – feeding pigs on cherries, as mam used to say [...]' (SN 32).

As the title of the novel suggests (as well as the internal binary division of the novel: Part One – Saturday Night; Part Two – Sunday Morning), the weekend plays a central role in the protagonist's life. Saturday and Sunday are the only days in which the featureless monotony of factory work is disrupted and in which Arthur is free to truly enjoy himself:

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<sup>191</sup> Charles Dickens, *Hard Times For These Times*, edited with an introduction by David Craig (1854; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969): 65.

For it was Saturday night, the best and bingiest glad-time of the week [...]. Piled-up passions were exploded on Saturday night, and the effect of a week's monotonous graft in the factory was swilled out of your system in a burst of goodwill. You followed the motto of 'be drunk and be happy', kept your crafty arms around female waists, and felt the beer going beneficially down into the elastic capacity of your guts. (SN 9)

Since the weekend is a privileged time, Arthur wonders why some describe the day preceding it as Black Friday: "[f]or Friday, being pay-day, was a good day, and 'black' would be more fitting to Monday. Black Monday" (SN 24). John Rule clarifies this comment: 'Arthur was of course missing the point about Black Friday. It was so-considered from the perspective of the firm and of the consumers of its product. But he was clear enough about the rhythm of the working-class week.'<sup>192</sup> The work from Monday to Friday simply pays for Arthur's free time on Saturday and Sunday and for his chosen lifestyle: Arthur is a young man representative of a new consumer group in a new age. He takes part in the process of mass-production but he also enjoys the mass-consumption of material goods, especially clothes: '[t]hese were his riches, and he told himself that money paid-out on clothes was a sensible investment because it made him feel good as well as look good' (SN 66).

If during the week at work Arthur defies authority in order to break the routine, during the weekend he finds a certain amusement in disrupting social norms and conventions. In the very first chapter, at the beginning of the novel, Arthur is depicted as 'dead drunk' at the White Horse Club, after taking part in a drinking contest, eventually falling down the stairs of the pub and being sick on both a middle-aged man and his lady-friend. Nonetheless, what gets Arthur into more serious trouble is his nasty

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<sup>192</sup> Rule 5.

habit of having affairs with married women, namely Brenda (Jack's wife, his co-worker):

‘Couldn’t care less, couldn’t care less, couldn’t care less – in answer to questions that came into his mind regarding sleeping with a woman who had a husband and two kids, getting blind drunk on seven gins and umpteen pints, falling down a flight of stairs, and being sick over a man and a woman. Bliss and guilt joined forces in such a way that they caused no trouble but merely sunk his mind into a welcome nonchalance. (SN 17)

It might be said that it is through the relationship with women – first Brenda and after Doreen, whom he marries – that Arthur will reach a compromise with society. Indeed, the protagonist of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* embodies the relative freedom and growing permissiveness experienced by the individual throughout the post-war years. Because of Arthur's youth this feeling of liberation is exacerbated. With episode after episode, the protagonist grows aware of the need for values such as friendship and love, trust and responsibility towards others. Brenda's abortion and Arthur's beating by Winnie's husband and his mate are only two consequences of his reckless behaviour. Throughout the novel, Arthur fights against conventions, norms, law and order. This can be seen, for instance, in the comic episode with Mrs Bull (Arthur punishes her malicious gossip shooting her with an air-rifle) and in the unsettling scene in which the protagonist sympathizes with a man caught breaking an undertaker's window: ‘Arthur was stirred by the sound of breaking glass: it synthesized all the anarchism within him, was the most perfect and suitable noise to accompany the end of the world and himself’ (SN 108). It is also evident in the revengeful act of overturning the car which nearly overruns Arthur and his brother:

A diabolic suggestion sprang inspired from Fred's agile brain: 'Let's tip his car over. It's no bigger than a baby's pram.' Arthur laughed, and agreed, regarding it as perfect justice, punishment both for the actual metal that had struck him, and for the cranky driver leaning against the wall. [...]

They heard nothing more. Though locked in a revengeful act, they felt a sublime team-spirit of effort filling their hearts with a radiant light of unique power and value, of achievement and hope for greater and better things. (SN 116)

The end of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* brings the protagonist close to other main characters of the time. Although coming from different backgrounds, a parallel could be drawn with the protagonist of John Wain's *Hurry On Down*. Just like Charles Lumley, Arthur Seaton's quest may be said to be equivalent to Lumley's search for neutrality. Indeed, throughout his adventures, Arthur tries to come to terms with a new social, economic and political reality and, ultimately, embodies a radical new attitude to life. And just like *Hurry on Down*, Sillitoe's novel also ends ambiguously. The metaphor of the catch while fishing on a Sunday morning, by the end of the novel, emphasizes Arthur's relationship with the world as one of perpetual struggle for survival. He throws his first catch back into the stream but he will take the next one home: 'One more chance, he said to himself, but if you or any of your pals come back to the bait, it's curtains for 'em. With float bobbing before him once more he sat down to wait. This time it was war, and he wanted fish to take home [...]' (SN 219). The protagonist realizes the need to catch the fish but he is also aware that once he catches it he is also caught, becoming part of a wider net of power relationships. As the narrator explains:

For himself, his own catch had been made, and he would have to wrestle with it for the rest of his life. Whenever you caught a fish, the fish caught you, in a way of speaking, and it was the same with anything else you caught, like the measles or a woman. Everyone in the world was caught, somehow, one way or another, and those that weren't were always on the way to it. As soon as you were born you were captured by fresh air that you screamed against the minute you came out. (SN 216-217)<sup>193</sup>

### **2.2.3. Angry Novels in 'New Wave' Films: Jack Clayton's *Room at the Top* (1958) and Karel Reisz's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960)**

It is absolutely vital to get into British films the same sort of impact and sense of life that, what you can loosely call the Angry Young Man cult, had in the theatre and literary worlds.

Tony Richardson, 'The Man Behind an Angry Young Man' (1959)

The success of various novels and plays in the fifties goes hand in hand with the adaptations that many went through between 1958 and 1963, becoming part of the trend in film-making known as the British 'New Wave,'<sup>194</sup> for instance: *Room at the Top* (Jack Clayton, 1958), *Look Back in Anger* (Tony Richardson, 1959), *Saturday Night*

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<sup>193</sup> In his study on post-war British working-class fiction, Malek Salman explains: 'What distinguishes the fishing scene in the novel is its metaphorical power that does not only sum up the psychology of the novel's protagonist throughout the narrative, but also offers a philosophical interpretation of life outside the working-class confines of the novel's world. The statement "Whenever you caught a fish, the fish caught you" [...] implies a defiance central to the novel as a whole. Those who control others and suppress them are controlled and suppressed in their turn, they are caught in the mere action of catching others.' Malek Mohammad Salman, *Post-War British Working-Class Fiction with Special Reference to the Novels of John Braine, Alan Sillitoe, Stan Barstow, David Storey and Barry Hines*, unpublished PhD diss. (Leeds: The University of Leeds, School of English, October 1990): 206.

<sup>194</sup> The term was a translation of the French Nouvelle Vague, the films were often shot in black-and-white, in a pseudo-documentary (or 'cinéma vérité') style on real locations and with real people. Lindsay Anderson, Richard Lester, Karel Reisz, Tony Richardson, John Schlesinger and Ken Loach are examples of notable directors of this trend. The 'New Wave' overlaps with the so-called 'Angry Young Men' sharing themes and social concerns.

*and Sunday Morning* (Karel Reisz, 1960), *A Taste of Honey* (Tony Richardson, 1961), *A Kind of Loving* (John Schlesinger, 1962), *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (Tony Richardson, 1962), *Billy Liar* (John Schlesinger, 1963) and *This Sporting Life* (Lindsay Anderson, 1963).<sup>195</sup> Throughout this period British cinema was marked by a mix of social themes realistically rendered, readily identifiable characters and naturalistic settings, usually located in the north of England. The ‘New Wave’ arose as a response to artistic work in other media, transposing successful dramatic or literary texts to the cinema. The films of the late 1950s and early 1960s were representative of the ongoing ‘cultural revolution’ affecting British society at large.<sup>196</sup> Jack Clayton’s *Room at the Top* is particularly significant because it is generally accepted as the first of the ‘New Wave’ cycle. Jim Leach explains:

[T]he new working-class realism first came to the screen in *Room at the Top* (Jack Clayton, 1958), based on John Braine’s best-selling novel. Produced by a mainstream commercial company (Remus), this film is in many ways a transitional text, but it was a critical and commercial success. Its “realistic” approach to social and sexual themes proved highly (and profitably) controversial, and, in all these respects, it was matched only by Woodfall’s *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (Karel Reisz, 1960), based on a novel by Alan Sillitoe.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Kingsley Amis’s *Lucky Jim* was also adapted to the cinema (directed by John Boulting, 1957). However, as David Lodge suggests, the film was not successful: ‘The first paperback edition of *Lucky Jim* did not appear until 1959, tied up to the Boulting Brothers’ disappointing film of the novel.’ David Lodge, ‘Lucky Jim Revisited,’ 85.

<sup>196</sup> British ‘New Wave’ cinema has been continuously interpreted and discussed by various scholars and film critics. Raymond Durnat (*A Mirror for England*, 1970) and Roy Armes (*A Critical History of British Cinema*, 1978), for instance, expressed their lack of enthusiasm for this film trend. Conversely, John Hill (*Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956-1965*, 1986), Arthur Marwick (*Culture in Britain since 1945*, 1991) and Robert Murphy (*Sixties British Cinema*, 1992) have come to recognise the importance of ‘New Wave’ films in representing various aspects of the cultural revolution taking place in Britain in the 1950s. See also: Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards, eds., *Best of British Cinema and Society from 1930 to the Present* (1999; London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002) 185-200.

<sup>197</sup> Jim Leach, *British Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 53. In her review of the film *Room at the Top*, Dilys Powell wrote: ‘It gives one faith all over again in a renaissance of the British

A brief comment on the two films mentioned above (*Room at the Top* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*) will help explain the depiction of the new (anti-) hero and the themes associated with this character. Indeed, *Room at the Top* became one of the most successful film adaptations in 1958, starring Laurence Harvey as Joe Lampton, Sigmone Signoret as Alice Aisgill and Heather Sears as Susan Brown. The film was a seminal work, innovative both in language and sexual attitude, exploring provincial urban life, class snobbery and corruption, and paving the way for other realistic motion pictures. Jerry Vermilye makes the following comments on Neil Patterson's adaptation of the novel into a screenplay and the Oscars awarded to the film:

Neil Patterson's deeply probing and well-crafted screenplay, based on "angry young man" John Braine's acrid first novel, employs naturalistic, often vulgar, dialogue and realistic characterization to tell this ironic and engrossingly bitter tragicomedy. The Oscar awarded Patterson for his fine adaptation was only one of many prizes garnered by *Room at the Top*. The British Film Academy termed it both England's Best Movie of the Year, as well as the Best Film from *Any Source*, with Simone Signoret singled out "Best Foreign Actress."<sup>198</sup>

From the very beginning of the film, Joe is depicted as an ambitious young man, determined to climb the social ladder. He has recently got a job at the treasury department in Warnley's [sic] Town Hall. However, he is far from satisfied, and this position is just the start of his pursuit of wealth and social status. After the interview with the Mayor, he meets his colleague and friend-to-be Charles Soames (Donald

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cinema.' *Sunday Times*, 25 January 1959, reprinted in Christopher Cook, ed., *The Dilys Powell Film Reader* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1991) 20-22.

<sup>198</sup> Jerry Vermilye, *The Great British Films*, foreword by Deborah Kerr (Secaucus, N. J.: The Citadel Press, 1978) 180.

Houston). Through the window of their office the protagonist observes a couple in the street; the man's expensive car is only matched by the beauty of the woman who accompanies him. When asked by Charles if that is what he really wants ('[t]he clerk's dream, the girl with the Riviera tan and the Lagonda?') Joe does not hesitate and answers decidedly: '[t]hat's what I'm going to have.' This scene sets the tone of the film. In order to overcome his past in working-class Dufton, he pursues Susan Brown, the daughter of the wealthy industrialist Mr Brown (Donald Wolfitt), challenging everything and everyone who might oppose him, namely, his rival Jack Wales, as becomes evident in the scene at the theatre when Joe is introduced to Susan and eventually meets Jack.<sup>199</sup> However, the protagonist's plans are almost shattered by his affair with Alice Aisgill, a married middle-aged woman. Unlike the novel, in the film Alice is French, a feature intended not only to intensify the erotic appeal of this character but also to heighten the nature of her feelings towards Joe. It is true that *Room at the Top*, together with other 'New Wave' films, might be interpreted as portraying misogynist attitudes towards women.<sup>200</sup> Or the characterisation of Alice might be used as an example of how the traditional view of women was slowly being subverted in the cinematic production of the late 50s and early 60s, gaining according to Robert Murphy both 'seriousness' and 'emotional weight'<sup>201</sup> Indeed, the first tension between Joe and Alice arises when the protagonist learns that in her youth she had posed naked for an artist:

'Why? Why did you have to do it? There're millions of women a lot poorer who would rather have died than expose themselves for a few

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<sup>199</sup> Meaningfully Susan and Jack were the couple Joe had seen from the window at the Town Hall at the beginning of the film.

<sup>200</sup> Cf.: John Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956-1965* (1986).

<sup>201</sup> Murphy 31.



lousy rocking shillings. Damn you to hell. I'd like to beat you black and blue.'

'But what's it to do with you? It was long before I met you. I must remember your beastly little provincial mind doesn't like many things.'

'You stupid bitch, it isn't that at all. Don't you see it's the idea of other people looking at you naked that I hate? It's not decent, don't you see?'

'Oh, you're very brave and very moral all of a sudden. It isn't decent of me to pose for an artist who sees me as an arrangement of light and colour, but it's perfectly O.K. for you to kiss me all over and to lie for an hour just looking at me. I suppose it gives you a thrill, a dirty little thrill. I suppose you see me as your own dirty postcard. You can't imagine that a man can look at a naked woman without wanting to make love to her. Can you? [...] Now listen, I own my own body and I'm not ashamed of it and I'm not ashamed of anything I've ever done. [...]

Although he loves Alice, Joe cannot let go of what Susan represents: wealth, success and power. He ends up doing exactly what his aunt in Dufton warned him against: 'Joe, you wouldn't sell yourself for a hand full of money?' And eventually betrays the oath taken with Alice: '[t]o thine own self be true' (*Hamlet*, Act 1, Scene 3). Eventually, after breaking up with Alice, she suffers a horrible death in a car accident. The protagonist's guilty conscience grows as nobody seems to blame him; but Joe remarks towards the end: '[n]obody but me. That's the trouble.' The film adds two scenes to the novel: the marriage ceremony at the church and the departure of the newly wedded couple to the sound of wedding bells. The very last scene is set immediately after the ceremony, Susan sits beside Joe and addresses him, misreading her husband's tears: 'Joe, wasn't it absolutely the most wonderful wedding? Now we really belong to

each other till death us do part. Darling, you're crying. I believe you really are sentimental after all.' Ironically, the last shot of the film shows them being driven towards the top of the road.

The film was followed by the sequel *Life at the Top* (1965),<sup>202</sup> again with Laurence Harvey, and a later TV series entitled *Man at the Top* (1973), starring Kenneth Haigh. The success of these adaptations suggests a keen interest at the time from all those who saw both films and followed the TV series and who might have felt some empathy towards Joe Lampton: '[o]ne can certainly disapprove of Joe, hero or anti-hero call him what you will, but real anger directed at him would, in the circumstances, be rather unfair.'<sup>203</sup>

The films *Room at the Top* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* are then extraordinary examples of the British 'New Wave.' Both films are adaptations of bestselling-novels, following a realistic approach to social and sexual themes. According to Albert Finney (the leading actor in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*), these films deal with two main topics: working class subjects taken seriously, which until then was not a very strong British cinematic tradition, and sex:

A lot of people were outraged [...] when the film [*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*] came out. They thought it went far too far. They thought the world was going to come to an end because it looked like I'd been in bed with a married woman who was not my wife. There was a lot of trouble [...]. In terms of sex the law then was that you had to have one foot on the floor like in snooker. I think in fact *Room at the Top* was the

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<sup>202</sup> Also based on Braine's sequel of the novel, *Life at the Top* (1962). As far as the differences between the two novels are concerned, John Dodds suggests: 'And there can be no doubt whatsoever that Joe "deliberately rejected his background" – which makes the novel much more about class-rejection than it is about class-commitment. The novel merely hints at political, social and economic disillusionment on the part of the working classes; it is not until the sequel, *Life at the Top*, that the reader really sees the rejection of the collective ideology, of the values of one-up-manship and the ensuing loss of respect on the part of the compromised individual [...].' Brady et al. 6.

<sup>203</sup> Brady et al. 66.

first British film [...] which kind of intimated that two consenting adults had actually done something in bed together.<sup>204</sup>

The very first scene of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* is set in the Raleigh bicycle factory, in Nottingham. It is a scene that precedes the credits. Arthur Seaton, the anti-hero of the movie, appears on screen and delivers a voice-over monologue, which reveals his *modus vivendi*: Arthur is against any kind of authority ('Don't let the bastards grind you down, that's the one thing you learn') and he is also amoral ('What I'm out for is a good time. All the rest is propaganda'). Indeed, Arthur wants to be free: to be in but not of the system. Nevertheless, as both the novel and the film suggest, the idea of true self is betrayed by the impact of the consumer society on the protagonist and on the cultural environment in general. The scene that follows the opening of the film is briefly set at Arthur's house at tea time: Arthur's father (Frank Pettitt) is mesmerized by TV. Immediately after, the scene changes and we are in the main character's room: Arthur goes through his wardrobe – an indicator that whilst he is against the system, he still enjoys some of the pleasures associated with the consumer culture, only made possible in the post-war society – and indeed he gets ready for a Friday night out. At the pub popular culture is depicted as debased and trivial: while Arthur takes part in a drinking contest, a pop group performs Adam Faith's recent hit, 'What Do You Want (If You Don't Want Money),' which may be seen as a sign of the times. Nevertheless, according to Jim Leach:

Despite their scathing depiction of most forms of popular culture, the New Wave films did not speak from the point of view of traditional high culture. As far as music was concerned, the filmmakers were on the side of those who advocated jazz as a more authentic form of popular culture

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<sup>204</sup> 'Albert Finney – excerpt from the Guardian interview at the National Film Theatre on 6 June 1982' [extra features], *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, dir. Karel Reisz, perf. Albert Finney, Shirley Anne Field and Rachel Roberts, 1960, DVD, MGM/British Film Institute, 1998.

than rock'n'roll. [...] *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* has a score (by jazz musician John Dankworth) that evokes Arthur's youthful vitality, even though there is no evidence that it represents his own musical taste.<sup>205</sup>

The protagonist's attitude gives way to permissive and irresponsible behaviour: he plays tricks on people (for instance, the episode with the dead mouse in the factory or the one in which Arthur hits Mrs Bull (Edna Morris) with an air-rifle, or even when he turns a car upside down with Fred's help), and he dates married women. Usually, he gets away with this reckless behaviour even though he is sometimes faced with the consequences of his acts. One good example is Brenda's pregnancy. In the novel, after a miraculous 'hot bath,' the problem is solved. Meaningfully, in the film, Brenda (Rachel Roberts) decides to keep the baby. In one of her dialogues with Arthur her words are striking: '[y]ou know the problem with you, you don't know the difference between right and wrong and I don't think you'll ever will.'

Eventually, Arthur is punished for breaking social rules. At the Goose Fair the protagonist is caught with Brenda by her husband. Jack's brother, together with his friend from the army, stalk Arthur and beat him up, in what constitutes one of the most violent episodes of the film. The time spent recovering allows the protagonist to revise some of his attitudes and come closer to Doreen (Shirley Anne Field). Differently from the novel, however, the film does not end with Arthur 'sat by the canal fishing on a Sunday morning in spring' (SN 216), rather it ends with a scene set near the new estate where Arthur and Doreen, his upwardly-mobile girlfriend, will soon be living. The main character's final act of defiance consists in throwing a stone at the new estate, but this

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<sup>205</sup> Leach 57.

gesture is rendered futile. He may keep throwing stones and breaking windows, but he has chosen to settle down, either he wants to admit it or not.

#### 2.2.4. The New Protagonist of the 1950s

It is often said that there are no working-classes in England now, that a 'bloodless revolution' has taken place, which has so reduced social differences that already most of us inhabit an almost flat plain, the plain of the lower middle- to middle-classes.

Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (1957)

As exemplified by the four novels analysed, Wain's *Hurry on Down*, Amis's *Lucky Jim*, Braine's *Room at the Top* and Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, post-war British fiction rejected modernism, reacting against the experimental fiction of the 1920s' novelists (Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson or even D. H. Lawrence). The authors of the 1950s re-established the individual character by stressing its ties with social, political and cultural reality. They sought inspiration not only in the realism of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century fiction but also in the late Victorian and Edwardian novel (particularly the work of Arnold Bennett<sup>206</sup> as well as H. G. Wells and John Galsworthy). The changes that transformed British society after World War II, and the commitment of the novelists to portray them influenced the form and content of the novels: hence the emphasis on themes concerning social change, class mobility and

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<sup>206</sup> According to Malek Salman: 'Many of the post-war novels that dealt with the attempts of a young man to rise above or break away from the poverty and narrowness of provincial towns (Braine's *Room at the Top*, Storey's *This Sporting Life*, Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, Waterhouse's *Billy Liar* and C. P. Snow's *Time of Hope* (1949)) show colourless style, description of provincial towns, treatment of ambition, money and success, characteristics central to Bennett's work.' Salman 104.

As far as H. G. Wells is concerned, I would like to mention three of his dystopian novels: *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899; rewritten *The Sleeper Awakes*, 1910), *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) and *The Invisible Man* (1897). Concerning John Galsworthy, I will only mention *The Forsyte Saga* (1906-1921), in which some of the ideals of Victorian society are challenged.

cultural revolution, along with the depiction of a rogue as the central character, usually drawn by a series of adventures from one episode to another.

Notwithstanding their differences, the protagonists of the novels mentioned above (Charles Lumley, Jim Dixon, Joe Lampton and Arthur Seaton) all stand as isolated individuals facing an intransigent bourgeois society, which seeks to exclude them whilst they are not ready to assimilate and accept its norms. Together the four characters provide a sketch of a society undergoing profound social changes. Thus, the opening pronouncement of Walter Allen's review of *Lucky Jim* became one of the key moments in recognizing the importance of such characters in the development of post-war English novel. Indeed, as Allen claims:

A NEW HERO HAS RISEN AMONG US. [...] He has one skin too few, but his is not the sensitiveness of the young man in earlier twentieth-century fiction [...]. One may speculate whence he derives. The Services, certainly, helped to make him; but George Orwell, Dr. Leavis and the Logical Positivists – or, rather, the attitudes these represent – all contributed to his genesis. In fiction I think he first arrived last year, as the central character of Mr. John Wain's novel *Hurry On Down*. He turns up again in Mr. Amis's *Lucky Jim*.<sup>207</sup>

Moreover, William Van O'Connor explains the characteristics of the new protagonist, recurring to various examples: Philip Larkin's *Jill* (1946), John Wain's *Hurry on Down* (1953), Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net* (1954), Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954), Dennis Enright's *Academic Year* (1954), Thomas Hinde's *Happy as Larry* (1957), John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957), Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1959), Keith Waterhouse's *Billy Liar* (1960), David Storey's *This*

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<sup>207</sup> Walter Allen, 'Review of *Lucky Jim*,' *The Beat Generation and the Angry Young Men*, eds. Gene Feldman and Max Gartenberg (New York: The Citadel Press, 1958) 339-340. Also published in *Protest*, eds. G. Felman and M. Gartenberg, (London: Quartet, 1973).

*Sporting Life* (1960), Andrew Sinclair's *My Friend Judas* (1961), among others. O'Connor affirms:

English fiction in the years since World War II has produced a new kind of protagonist. He is a rather seedy young man, and suspicious of all pretensions. He spends a lot of time in pubs, has any number of half-hearted love affairs. He gets into trouble with his landlady, his boss, and his family. There is nothing heroic about him, unless it is his refusal to be taken in by humbug. He is a comic figure, with an aura of pathos about him.<sup>208</sup>

As the novel and the two cinematic adaptations testify (*Room at the Top* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*), the protagonists of these works are new (anti-) heroes. They are, in their own different ways, rogues who live on their wits, use their charm and invent schemes, at the same time betraying their anxieties, angers, and doubts about the changing times they live in. James Hall mentions Joyce Cary's *The Horse's Mouth*, Wain's *Hurry on Down*, Amis's *Lucky Jim*, Braine's *Room at the Top* to emphasize the significance of the rogue or confidence man in contemporary novels (the 1950s fiction). He gives a very enlightening explanation of the impact of the new (anti-)hero – such as Gulley Jimson, Charles Lumley, Jim Dixon, Joe Lampton (and one could also add Arthur Seaton) – on British culture and society:

Though retaining much of his old purgative function for the reader, the confidence man has become a subtler and more socially acceptable fellow. Much of modern literature and thought has engaged in reducing conscience from an idea of perfection to something nearer human

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<sup>208</sup> William Van O'Connor, *The New University Wits and the End of Modernism*, with a preface by Harry T. Moore (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963) 135. O'Connor also gives an interesting account on the reactions to the novel with the new hero in the fifties, particularly the ones by J. B. Priestley and Somerset Maugham, who criticize it, and C. P. Snow, who argues for the new writers, their main characters and the new style.

possibility. The confidence man plays his part in this reduction by creating an awareness of the inevitable pull between “rational” planning and its emotional resisters. *He does directly for the reader what the rogue of earlier fiction did indirectly.* For all his outrageous acts, he has become less embarrassing to the public while becoming more human, less instrumental, more embarrassed himself. Apparently, the world lives less surreptitiously with its ambiguous wish to master the environment.<sup>209</sup>

(My emphasis)

This approach to the social and cultural changes in post-war Britain has thus provided an overview of how rogue literature has not only survived but indeed flourished throughout this period, adapting and changing to meet the demands of this new era as evidenced by the literary and theatrical productions of the 1950s, when the rogue steps on stage and also on the screen. A form that had traditionally been associated with the Spanish Golden Age or 18<sup>th</sup>-century England and the rise of the novel offered authors in the 1950s myriad possibilities for articulating their vision of the society they observed. Not perhaps in quite the same way, and certainly not in the same style, but a rogue’s a rogue for all that.

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<sup>209</sup> James Hall, *The Tragic Comedians. Seven Modern British Novelists* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963) 107.



## 2.3. Alfie: Cultural Change and Continuity 1960-2000

### 2.3.1. What About Cultural Changes?

Sexual intercourse began  
In nineteen sixty-three  
(Which was rather late for me)-  
Between the end of *Chatterley* ban  
And the Beatles' first LP.

Philip Larkin, *Collected Poems* (2003)

The first stanza of Larkin's poem, 'Annus Mirabilis' (composed in 1967 and published in 1968)<sup>210</sup> embodies the popular climate of the 1960s, a decade of radical political, economic, social and cultural transformations. According to Patricia Waugh: '[t]he decade witnessed enormous transformations in attitudes to authority, sexuality, censorship, and civil liberties.'<sup>211</sup>

From a political perspective, the prime minister Harold Wilson conveyed a message of prosperity and national unity under the benign mantle of the welfare state. Economically, there was relative affluence, which meant consumer liberation from post-war austerity. In social and cultural terms, the sixties saw the dawn of a new social order, a shift in lifestyles, the rise of British pop and rock'n roll, the proliferation of youth subcultures, the questioning of sexuality, women's emancipation, the massification of education, the development of technology, TV, fashion and design.

Post-war British 'culture,' according to Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and E. P. Thompson,<sup>212</sup> was no longer understood as the privilege of a particular class

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<sup>210</sup> Philip Larkin, *Collected Poems*, ed. with an introduction by Anthony Thwaite (London: The Marvell Press and Faber & Faber, 2003) 146.

<sup>211</sup> Patricia Waugh, *The Harvest of the Sixties. English Literature and Its Background 1960-1990* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 5.

<sup>212</sup> Cf.: Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957); Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1750-1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958; revised edition, London: The Hogarth Press, 1993); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1963).

or intellectual elite (the view defended by F. R. Leavis or T. S. Eliot), but rather as a whole way of life, a fragmented product of different class, ethnic and generational groups. According to Williams: ‘the development of the word culture is a record of a number of important and continuing reactions to these changes in our social, economic, and political life.’<sup>213</sup>

*Alfie*, the first film to be referred here, produced and directed by Lewis Gilbert in 1966, is a good example of the shift in culture in the era of ‘swinging London’ and the sexual revolution. The film encourages reflection on sexual and gender politics and also points towards a critique, which will be further developed over the next decades, on the moral laxity and the complacency of liberal culture in British society.

Indeed, the optimism of the sixties contrasts strongly with the mood of disaffection which developed throughout the seventies and eighties. The year 1976 marked the breakdown of the British political culture of consensus. This was a time of industrial decline, strikes, unemployment and racial tensions, of crisis in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. James Callaghan’s government was strongly marked by the decline of the Labour party and the rise of the New Right. In 1979 Margaret Thatcher was elected Prime Minister and an era of individualism and monetarism followed, leading to profound social and cultural fragmentation. Countercultural idealism faded but its rhetoric, appropriated by the New Right, survived the sixties and was transferred into the realm of enterprise culture. The increasingly commercially driven literary culture also led to a generalised loss of faith in art, more and more in compliance with the official institutions.

The nineties followed as an era known for its ‘post-’ condition: post-industrial, post-modern, post-Marxist, post-feminist, post-colonial. Self-consciousness, parody,

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<sup>213</sup> Williams, *Culture and Society*, 16.

pastiche, and the grotesque emerged as the dominant artistic traits in an attempt to address the crisis of knowledge in contemporary Western society (a crisis to which Jean-François Lyotard called attention in his work of 1979, *La Condition Postmoderne; The Postmodern Condition*, 1986).<sup>214</sup> In *A Theory of Parody*, Linda Hutcheon analyses what she believes to be one of the most significant concepts in the twentieth century. According to the author: ‘parody in this century is one of the major modes of formal and thematic construction of texts.’<sup>215</sup> Hutcheon describes it not only as one of the major forms of modern self-reflexivity but also as a form of inter-art discourse, existing in non-literary works *per se*, and not a mere transfer from the practice of literature. It will be interesting to bear in mind Hutcheon’s statement when analysing the most recent cinematic version of *Alfie*.

In fact, as recently as 2004, a remake of the first *Alfie* appeared, this time directed by Charles Shyer. The film follows the earlier screenplay by Bill Naughton in what might be considered either a memento or precisely a parody of the 1966 original. I will take as my point of departure the two film versions of *Alfie* in order to examine the shifts experienced in British society since the 1960s and the centrality of the rogue character in the depiction of social changes.

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<sup>214</sup> See the introduction to my next chapter on postmodernism: ‘3.1.1. Introduction: Postmodernism.’

<sup>215</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody. The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000) 2.

### 2.3.2. A History of Adaptations from Theatre into Cinema

[A]n adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing.

Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006)

Pour le prendre autrement, posons une notion générale de texte au second degré [...] ou texte dérivé d'un autre texte préexistant.

Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré* (1982)

Adaptation from one medium to another in contemporary Western culture has become common practice. But what is meant by adaptation? Most studies on this subject focus on the process of transference from novel to play or novel to film.<sup>216</sup> This tendency seems to be associated with modern reading practices, where resistance has developed to re-reading the novel. The public therefore seeks another way of repeating the experience: '[a]daptation into another medium becomes a means of prolonging the pleasure of the original presentation, and repeating the production of a memory.'<sup>217</sup>

Studies that focus primarily on the adaptation of novels into films have largely proliferated in universities and other institutions of higher education, where film studies programmes are often attached to literature departments.<sup>218</sup> Since the 1960s academic writing on adaptation has become increasingly sophisticated, drawing on the theoretical writings of critics and scholars such as Roland Barthes, Gérard Genette, David

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<sup>216</sup> Cf.: Philip Cox, *Reading Adaptations: Novels and Verse Narratives on the Stage, 1970-1840* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), Robert Giddins, Keith Selby, and Chris Wensley, *Screening the Novel: The Theory and Practice of Literary Dramatization* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), Peter Reynolds, ed. *Novel Images: Literature in Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993); Deborah Cartmell, Imelda Whelehan, eds. *Adaptation: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text* (London: Routledge, 1999); Geoffrey Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Tantivy Press, 1975).

<sup>217</sup> John Ellis, 'The Literary Adaptation: An Introduction,' *Screen* 23.1 (May/June 1982): 4-5.

<sup>218</sup> See James Naremore, 'Introduction: Film and the Reign of Adaptation,' *Film Adaptation* (London: The Athlone Press, 2000) 1-16.

Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, among others. In general, however, it seems to continue to focus on questions of fidelity, oscillating between two approaches. One is exemplified by George Bluestone<sup>219</sup> (and the implicit metaphor of translation, dealing with the concept of literary versus cinematic form), who focuses especially on the problem of textual fidelity, emphasizing similarity. The other is illustrated by the French auteurs (François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, Jacques Rivette, Eric Rohmer), who understand the film as a language of its own and the film director as a sort of writer, paying particular attention to the difference between verbal text, on the one hand, and film on the other.<sup>220</sup>

Linda Hutcheon, however, dismisses the notion of proximity or fidelity in the analysis of the adapted text.<sup>221</sup> In her recent study, *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), she defines adaptation (interpreted as both process and product) according to three perspectives:

First, seen as a *formal entity or product*, an adaptation is an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works. [...] Second, as *a process of creation*, the act of adaptation always involves (re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation; this has been called both appropriation and salvaging, depending on your perspective. [...] Third, seen from the perspective of its *process of reception*, adaptation is a form of intertextuality: we experience adaptations (*as adaptations*) as

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<sup>219</sup> George Bluestone, *Novels into Film: The Metamorphosis of Fiction into Cinema* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957).

<sup>220</sup> Alexandre Astruc, 'The Birth of the New Avant-Garde: La Camera-Stylo,' *The New Wave*, ed. Peter Graham (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968) 17-23.

<sup>221</sup> Indeed the dominance of 'fidelity criticism' has been challenged by scholars such as: Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), Sarah Cardwell, *Adaptation Revisited: Television and the Classic Novel* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), Kamilla Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and Robert Stam, *Literature through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation.<sup>222</sup>

Thus, the practice of adaptation goes beyond the straightforward process of transferring, translating from a genre such as the novel into play or film. The analysis that I offer for consideration derives from an interest in the process of adapting a work across different media: from a radio play, originally, to a play on stage and then into film. The history of the adaptations to be presented here may be regarded as a curious example, destabilising some of the views previously mentioned, moving away from studies focused on novel adaptation, and also breaking with the tendency to believe that the original text is of primary importance.

### 2.3.3. *Alfie*, the Radio Play and the Stage Version: The Birth of a Rogue

“So look at me now. I got a bob or two, some decent clobber, a car, an’ my health back, but I ain’t got my peace of mind. An’ if you ain’t got that you got nothin’.”

Bill Naughton, *Alfie* (1963)

*Alfie Elkins and His Little Life* by the Irish playwright William John Francis Naughton, or Bill Naughton (1910-1992) was originally a radio drama, broadcast by the BBC in 1962.<sup>223</sup> The play was a near-monologue, the confessions of a Cockney, Alfie Elkins, a lorry-driver and petty thief, living by the code of self-interest but ultimately

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<sup>222</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006) 7-8.

<sup>223</sup> *Alfie Elkins and His Little Life* broadcasted on 7 January 1962, repeated on 3 February 1962 and 23 January 1964. It was part of the Third Programme of the British Broadcasting Corporation: ‘responding to the public’s growing interest in the arts [...] the BBC instituted three complementary networks designed not only to inform and entertain, but to educate the public as well: the Home Service, the Light Programme, and the Third Programme.’ The goal of the latter consisted in raising cultural standards. Cf.: University of Delaware. Special Collections Department. *BBC Third Programme Radio Scripts 1940-1969*: < <http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/findaids/bbc.htm> > (accessed November 21, 2005).

For more information on the Third Programme see Kate Whitehead, *The Third Programme. A Literary History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) and Humphrey Carpenter, *The Envy of the World. Fifty Years of the BBC Third Programme and Radio 3. 1946-1996* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1996).

redeemed by marriage. In an interview with Peter Roberts, when asked what had been the background for the play, Bill Naughton explained:

Early on in the war I was working with Cockneys and keeping one of my journals and Charles Madge, who is now Professor of Sociology at Birmingham and with whom I chatted about my new mates, asked me to write an article on the East End Type. I published the article and called it *The Spiv* which was a very common slang word in the East End of London but wasn't then known outside. From this I came to write a Third Programme play, *Alfie Elkins and his Little Life* [...].<sup>224</sup>

The radio play was a success as some of the reviews written after the first broadcast of *Alfie Elkins* prove:

This was proper radio... In one of the best bits of acting I have ever heard, Bill Owen [as Alfie] juts the man through the words, stabbing the Cockney sentences through endless cigarette butts (*Sunday Telegraph*). This is, as the title makes plain, a 'little life,' but it was a brilliant radio portrait (*Glasgow Herald*).<sup>225</sup>

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of June, 1963, the play, now entitled *Alfie*, premiered at the Mermaid Theatre, directed by Donald McWhinnie, with John Neville in the role of the main character. Shortly afterwards the play was transferred to the Duchess Theatre, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July of that same year.<sup>226</sup> It had changed entirely from the original radio play, introducing a first person narrator, rather than using the third person narrator that met up with Alfie and linked up his adventures. According to a review published in *The Times*, there were some striking differences between the radio original and the stage version of the play. Besides the addition of new episodes, such as a medical examination scene in

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<sup>224</sup> Peter Roberts, 'Working from Life,' *Plays and Players* (London, July 1963): 20-22.

<sup>225</sup> *Radio Times. BBC, TV and Sound*, vol. 154, no. 1991 (January 4, 1962). See Appendix I.

<sup>226</sup> See Appendix II.

which Alfie chats with the doctor and simultaneously makes asides to the audience, the element of time had been removed and the ending seemed to subvert any existing moral intention:

[T]he biggest change is a note of triviality which is nowhere to be found in the original. One reason for this is that the element of time has been removed, so that instead of changing from a confident young egoist into an ageing stoic with no chances left, Alfie now finishes up as a [sic] young and debonair as ever, even picking up at the end of the play with the girl he had in the first scene – a facile cyclic trick that cancels out the significance of what has happened in between.<sup>227</sup>

But Naughton's opinion on this subject is slightly different. When asked about the moral intentions of the stage play, he answers:

Although Alfie's attitude is a very sophisticated social and moral attitude the basic tone or feeling is moral. He's constantly feeling what are instinctive principles and it's a constant fight between them and his desire to be detached, to be troubled by nobody, to have as much pleasure as he can.<sup>228</sup>

After rewriting the play into a novel,<sup>229</sup> in 1966, Naughton produced the screenplay for a film adaptation, directed by Lewis Gilbert (born in London, in 1920), which launched the acting career of Michael Caine. It gave him his first Academy

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<sup>227</sup> 'Exploring a "Spiv" in Depth,' *The Times*, Thursday, June 20, 1963: 16.

<sup>228</sup> Peter Roberts, 'Working from Life,' 22.

<sup>229</sup> Bill Naughton, *Alfie* (London: Macgibbon and Klee, 1966). The review in *The Times* (Saturday, June 27, 1970: 23) states: 'Alfie, the Casanova of the transport caffs, has had a long and deservedly profitable run. Here he is again, popping in and out of bed in a regional sort of way [...]. The book is warm and funny and salted with true and honest observation, but Bill Naughton has done better than this.' According to the review of the book *Trawling the Unconscious* and an interview with Naughton by Irving Wardle, published in *The Times* (Monday, July 15, 1985: 11), the paperback edition of *Alfie* sold two million copies.



Award nomination and the New York Critics' Prize for Best Actor. *Alfie* underwent its ultimate metamorphosis and Naughton won a screen writers' award for it.<sup>230</sup>

Various themes are raised in *Alfie*: individualism, social class and money, thievery, love and marriage, unfaithfulness and divorce, male chauvinism vs. women's emancipation, morality, among others. These are conveyed by a protagonist who is actually an anti-hero, a rogue: 'who does not conspicuously embody any value system except his own private one (which is frequently in conflict with that of his society).'<sup>231</sup> This anti-establishment character has a long tradition in literature. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, in novels where the main character is an anti-hero:

[E]veryday life is presented to us as the underside of real life. [...] Here everyday life is priapic, its logic is the logic of obscenity. But around this sexual nexus of common life (infidelity, sexually motivated murder, etc.) are distributed other everyday aspects: violence, thievery, various types of fraud, beatings.<sup>232</sup>

All these elements combine in *Alfie*, but in the film they are meant to stand for the spirit of a new liberal age lived in British society in the sixties.

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<sup>230</sup> 'Screen Writer's Award,' *The Times*, Friday, March 10, 1967: 10. The film *Alfie* was voted Best Picture of the Year in the annual British Film critics' pool. In 1975, Ken Hughes directed a sequel of the 1966 *Alfie*, entitled *Alfie Darling* (with singer Alan Price in the title role), and more recently, it has been turned into a musical, directed by Lawrence Till at Watford Palace Theatre (from 27 May to 18 June 2005), with music by John Cameron, book and lyrics by Eden Phillips. The title of the sequel is particularly interesting since it combines the titles of two key films of the mid-1960s, *Darling* (John Schlesinger, 1965) and *Alfie* (Lewis Gilbert, 1966). According to Jim Leach: '[w]ith their youthful protagonists, played by rising stars Julie Christie and Michael Caine, these films offered female and male versions of the new sexual attitudes, while raising awkward questions about the point of view from which they observed the characters.' Leach 128.

<sup>231</sup> Rollin xvi-xvii.

<sup>232</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 128.

### 2.3.4. *Alfie* in the 60s: The Rogue in the Movie Picture Screen

[T]he trend to permissiveness was firmly established with the commercialization of eroticism in the films, television, and advertising industries which had followed the lead of the wartime pin-ups and girlie magazines.

John Costello, *Love, Sex and War: Changing Values 1939-45* (1985)

The action of the film is set in ‘swinging London,’ the centre of the cultural and sexual revolution of the 1960s. A panoramic view of the metropolis at night constitutes the first scene. Soon Alfie appears on screen and addresses the audience, revealing himself as the onscreen narrator of his own story. According to Jim Leach: ‘[h]is controlling perspective is established in the opening sequence when he gets out of a car, in which he has been trying to get comfortable with one of his “birds,” introduces himself, and assures us that the credits will not appear as usual at this point.’<sup>233</sup> Indeed Alfie is not alone, as he explains, and one can hear Sissie who is calling for him at the back. From this first scene, the dominant questions of the film are raised, promoting reflections on sexual and gender politics.

Alfie is a womaniser and a sexist. In the course of the film we learn that he is having an affair with Sissie, a married woman, and Lily, his friend Harry’s wife. He has a ‘standby’ called Gilda. He has a flirtation with Carla, a nurse at the Sanatorium, and he gets involved with Ruby, a rich widow. His chauvinism is perceptible in the language he uses, specifically, when talking about and addressing women. His description of Gilda is a striking example of this: ‘[n]ow I’m off to visit a little bird called Gilda. While she ain’t exactly stupid, she is a bit on the simple side. She’d never

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<sup>233</sup> Leach 130.

make a number one. I mean, she ain't the sort of girl you could show off. She ain't an exciting dresser but she's a crackin' little standby.'

It does not seem to matter to the main character whether these women are married or not, as is the case with Sissie and Lily, or if they are truly in love, as happens with Gilda. The protagonist lacks any notion of responsibility or morality. This behaviour can be seen in the 'lesson' he gives to Gilda, inciting her to steal: '[t]he one thing you gotta get in that little head of your'n, gal, is that nobody don't 'elp you in this life – you gotta 'elp yourself. Why, if you'd only fiddled five bob a day you'd 'ave two hundred nicker on one side by now.' This attitude is further illustrated by his neglecting to make a commitment to Gilda in order for them to raise their son together. Nevertheless, although he refuses to marry her, he does help Gilda to support their son and seems to enjoy spending time with him. Leach affirms:

Yet Alfie's casual attitude to the women in his life – he often uses the pronoun "it" when he discusses them – is so blatant that he seems to be putting on a performance. There are strong hints that he cares more for the women than he admits.<sup>234</sup>

There are few moments in which Alfie thinks over his actions. He only reflects on the significance of life and death when he is shaken by disease and fears dying: '[k]now wot, I used to think money was everything. If you got money, I used to say, you can have beautiful birds, handsome suits, a car of your own. But those things ain't a bit of use without good health.' He is disturbed by Lily's illegal abortion and deeply shocked when the job's done and he has to get rid of the aborted fetus: 'I started prayin' or somethin', sayin' thing like "God help me!" and things like that, and then I starts to

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<sup>234</sup> Leach 130-131.

cry' [...]. And I thought to myself, "You know wot Alfie? You know wot you done? You murdered him.""

When the main character finally decides he wants to settle down with Ruby, the woman who can provide him not only with pleasure and affection but also, most importantly, with money, the story suffers a reversal and Alfie is tricked. Ruby replaces him with a younger man. In the final scene, which takes us back to the initial setting, Alfie meets Sissie again and reverts to his old behaviour. Indeed, the significance of what has happened in between seems to be cancelled out and Alfie's 'what's it all about?' remains a rhetorical question that seems to embody the spirit of the time from a very self-centred and hedonistic perspective.

### **2.3.5. *Alfie* in the 90s: The Remake**

Remakes are invariably adaptations because of changes in context.

Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006)

Charles Shyer's version of the story, co-written with Elaine Pope, is set in the nineties.<sup>235</sup> The remake of 2004 follows the earlier screenplay by Naughton in what might be seen as a salvaging or rather a parody of the 1966 original. Much has changed as far as sexual and gender politics are concerned and the first scene of the film, depicting a fashionable Alfie (Jude Law) in his modern flat, focusing on a figure of Superman, sets the action in a very different world from that first depicted by Lewis Gilbert, although the poster of Bruce Weber's documentary 'Let's get lost' (1988) on the troubled life of the jazz musician Chet Baker, a compulsive womaniser, suggests a recurrence of themes.

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<sup>235</sup> Charles Shyer (American director, Los Angeles, California, 1941-).

The film softens the original Alfie's callousness and chauvinism and depicts emancipated and extremely independent women: Julie is a single mother, Lenette is Afro-American and owns a bar while Liz, the mature woman, twice widowed, has multiple sexual partners. Indeed, the film gives a twist to the themes it borrows from the original version. Dorie is the unfaithful married woman who meets Alfie at the beginning of the action but who, at the end, no longer succumbs to his charms. Lenette has sex with Alfie in revenge for Marlon's unfaithfulness (Marlon being Alfie's best friend). When she finds out that she is pregnant she decides to keep the baby, even though she pays a visit to the abortion clinic with Alfie. And Nikkie, the most emotionally dependent character, who takes drugs and suffers from depression, eventually leaves. Furthermore, there are a number of references to homosexuality, from the doctor of whom Alfie states: 'Miranda, the penis doctor is a he with a little bit of she thrown in,' to the bisexual girls Alfie meets at the night club, or to the flowerseller who addresses Alfie implying that the protagonist's lover might either be a woman or a man: '[t]ell me what she, or he, is like, and we will find the appropriate bloom.'

Alfie is also no longer a lorry-driver and petty thief but a limousine driver instead and the action is no longer set in London but in Manhattan, New York, where opportunities to earn good money abound and where the most beautiful women in the world reside. This suggests that what was once one of the centres of the cultural revolution in the post-war Western world has been replaced by the 'Big Apple,' which in turn has come to play a central role in cultural, economic, financial and political terms in the world. Nevertheless, the same questions are raised in the film, though they are answered differently, according to the ethos of the 90s, to which Alfie now belongs. Here, the main character still lives by a code of self-interest and his goal in life is to aim higher. Similarly to the 60s version, for example, he decides to settle down with Liz (the

rich widow) but soon realises she prefers younger men. His expectations in life are shattered but he is not beaten, reminding us of Naughton's comments on the character of the original play:

He [Alfie] himself is a sort of modern Everyman who turns his back or attempts to turn his back on those relationships of life that draw him such as marriage, fatherhood, children, and even God. He loves to live his life without any involvement so he doesn't have to give anything – but he can be a very cheerful, easy-going companion and the play is about his attempt to resist these things taking hold of him and staying what he imagines to be free and unattached.<sup>236</sup>

The last scene in Shyer's version however is not as lighthearted as the one in the film by Lewis Gilbert, in which Alfie's character is closer to that of the radio play. Indeed, it reintroduces a moral dimension which had seemed neglected. The new version deviates from the original film but includes it within itself as background material. In doing so, it pays homage to Gilbert's version by recognising the merit of the original work. Nevertheless, it also reworks the text, playing with its conventions, mainly the creation and depiction of a rogue character such as Alfie. At the end of Shyer's film, Alfie is alone and despite his best efforts, he has lost his peace of mind and admits that he is beginning to feel small cracks. He addresses the audience for the last time: '[s]o what's the answer? That's what I keep asking myself. What's it all about? You know what I mean?'

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<sup>236</sup> Peter Roberts, 'Working from Life,' 22.

### 2.3.6. The Rogue as Film Protagonist: 1960-2000

[A]daptation is how stories evolve and mutate to fit new times and different places.

Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006)

The remake of *Alfie* in the nineties is not an isolated event, rather it is part of a broader cinematographic trend of remakes. We need only think of films as diverse as: *Psycho* (Gus van Sant, 1998; Alfred Hitchcock, 1960), *Ocean's Eleven* (Steven Soderbergh, 2001; Lewis Milestone, 1960) or *The Manchurian Candidate* (Jonathan Demme, 2004; John Frankenheimer, 1962). It is interesting to analyse the way in which all these films draw on the original. Robert Stam compares the process of adaptation with that of transformation in the almost Chomskian sense of a 'generative grammar': '[c]entral to the transformational grammar of adaptation are permutations in locale, time and language.'<sup>237</sup> Thus, the source text usually goes through a process of actualization, according to the historical context in which it is produced, the individual options taken by the filmmaker, the desire to reproduce the time frame of the original or update it as far as plot, setting and themes are concerned. At the same time, a remake can amplify, subvert, transform or simply ignore elements of the source.

Shyer's film can, in some respects, be interpreted as a parody of the original version from the 60s. According to Linda Hutcheon: '[parody] is one of the major modes of formal and thematic construction of texts.'<sup>238</sup> The film version of 2004 presents the main features commonly associated with this form: it is self-reflexive, it stands as a modern example of intertextuality, it implies a critical distancing from the original marked by irony: '[p]arody, then, in its ironic "trans-contextualization" and inversion, is repetition with difference. A critical distance is implied between the

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<sup>237</sup> Robert Stam, 'Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation.' Naremore 69.

<sup>238</sup> Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, 2.

backgrounded text being parodied and the new incorporating work, a distance usually signaled by irony.<sup>239</sup>

In *Alfie* (2004) one filmic text is set beside another, rather than against: ‘[i]f the desired response is a reaction to the recognition and interpretation of parody, then the producer of the text must guide and control the understanding of the reader [the viewer].’<sup>240</sup> The remake seems to be faithful to this idea: it still follows Bill Naughton’s original script, plot and characters, adapting it to a different time and a different space, a new metropolis, although one may argue that there is no great choice between London and New York in the new millennium since globalisation has made the world shrink. Thematic continuity between the two films is also achieved through soundtrack. ‘Alfie’ composed by Burt Bacharach and Hal Davies features in both films: in the first the vocal is Cher and the music is produced by Sonny Rollins, in the second it is performed by Joss Stone and produced by Dave Stewart and Mick Jagger.

Whether parody is intended as a subversive or as a conservative force, readers/viewers still have to decode it *as parody* for the intention to be fully realized, thus acting as co-creators of the parodic text.<sup>241</sup> The same applies to the viewers of *Alfie* who, though free to interpret, are also responsible for that interpretation, for creating new, active meanings out of it, moving beyond the relations between author, text and reader/viewer, and reflecting on the different contexts presented: historical, social and ideological.

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<sup>239</sup> Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, 32.

<sup>240</sup> Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, 89. Cf.: Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) 53-54: ‘what is important to readers, critics, and authors alike is what literature *does* and not what it *means*. [...] Now if the reader and the literary text are partners in a process of communication, and if what is communicated is to be of any value, our prime concern will no longer be the *meaning* of that text [...] but its *effect*. [...] Our interest, then, is directed toward the pragmatics of literature – “pragmatic” in [Charles] Morris’s sense of relating the signs of the text to the “interpretant.”’

<sup>241</sup> Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, 93.



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The revival of the rogue as a central character in post-war fiction is clearly entangled with the socio-cultural reality of the fifties and sixties in Britain. Bill Naughton's *Alfie* – both the radio play (1962) and the stage play (1963) – reflects the changing values of a decade of radical political, economic, social and cultural transformations. The protagonist is not one of a kind. Rather, he shares features with preceding anti-heroes, especially John Braine's Joe Lampton (*Room at the Top*, 1957) and Alan Sillitoe's Arthur Seaton (*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, 1958). Indeed these three characters share the same working-class background. Moreover, in the film adaptation, *Alfie* (directed by Lewis Gilbert, 1966), starring Michael Caine, the main character is derived from New Wave protagonists like Arthur (Albert Finney) in the film *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (directed by Karel Reisz, 1960). Nevertheless, while *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* is set in the industrial Midlands, *Alfie*'s location is in the 'swinging London,' a city seized by change and affluence, and with an increasingly assertive youth culture.

Throughout stage play and film the protagonist, Alfie, appears as a confident young man, narrating his own adventures. He mirrors a society undergoing profound social and cultural transformations: sexual freedom, changing gender roles, new attitudes towards class and more wealth. Nevertheless, the main character does not stand by any collective value system, rather he embodies his own private one, showing an inability to make commitments and to take responsibility for his actions and for others. Alfie is at odds with society, his desire to be detached and to have as much pleasure as he possible can collide with the need to find his place and his purpose in life. Hence the significance of the (rhetorical) question the protagonist keeps asking himself: 'what's it all about?'

Furthermore, the pertinence of this same interrogation is taken over in Charles Shyer's 2004 remake. The 90s and the beginning of the new millennium may be interpreted as the apogee of the consumer society in the Western world. The action of the film is thus set in Manhattan, New York, the city which seems to have replaced London as the centre of political, economic, social and cultural changes. However, through the main character's first person narration we witness the way these transformations and the ultimate freedom of the individual in the affluent consumer society eventually becomes distorted. The revival of a rogue protagonist and of themes already present in Gilbert's adaptation – individualism and money, violence, love and marriage, unfaithfulness and trickery, male chauvinism vs. women's emancipation – constitutes a substantial argument for the survival of the rogue and the importance of this character in literature nowadays. Indeed, in the next chapter, through the analysis of the literary work of two contemporary authors, Martin Amis and Irvine Welsh, my purpose is to show how the rogue as a central character develops a new role and contributes to the on-going debate concerning the place of fiction in human existence.

## **PART III**



### 3. The Rogue in the 1980s and Onwards: Transformations in the British Literary Scene

#### 3.1. The Rogue in Martin Amis's Novels

##### 3.1.1. Introduction: Postmodernism

The twentieth century marks the middle period of a great transition in the state of the human race. It may properly be called the second great transition in the history of mankind.

Kenneth E. Boulding, *The Meaning of the Twentieth Century* (1965)

Fiction produced in the second half of the twentieth century has been generally categorized, though not without some controversy, as postmodernist writing. We need only think of the theoretical works by Ihab Hassan, Fredric Jameson, Terry Eagleton, Brian McHale, Andreas Huyssen and Linda Hutcheon, among others, to grasp the scope of the polemics involved. This development reflects in the literary field, a phenomenon which, from the 50s onwards, is felt in all areas of knowledge, specifically in Western societies. Lyotard, one of the first philosophers to write on the postmodern condition, states: '[o]ur working hypothesis is that the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the postmodern age. This transition has been under way since at least the end of the 1950s, which for Europe marks the completion of reconstruction.'<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. from the French by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, foreword by Fredric Jameson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986) 3. The French reads: 'Notre hypothèse de travail est que le savoir change de statut en même temps que les sociétés entrent dans l'âge dit postindustriel et les cultures dans l'âge dit postmoderne.' Jean-François Lyotard, *La Condition Postmoderne: Rapport sur le Savoir* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1979) 11.

Hassan, in his 'Postface 1982: Toward a Concept of Postmodernism',<sup>243</sup> explains some of the difficulties inherent in the act of defining the postmodernist phenomenon, which needs to be distinguished from modernism.<sup>244</sup> These difficulties might be summarised as follows: the fact that the word evokes what it wishes to surpass yet is not separated from it, thus embracing continuity and discontinuity; the lack of consensus about the meaning of the label 'postmodernism' among scholars; its openness to change and its plurality; the lack of both historical and theoretical definitions; the problem of periodization raised by such a concept – it is both a diachronic and a synchronic construct.<sup>245</sup> Moreover, Hassan raises the question concerning the relationship between postmodernism in literature and postmodern society: 'is it [postmodernism] only an artistic tendency or also a social phenomenon, perhaps even a mutation in Western humanism?'<sup>246</sup>

In order to understand the scope of this question, let me turn to a well-known distinction made by Terry Eagleton, which clarifies the difference between postmodernism and postmodernity:

The word *postmodernism* generally refers to a form of contemporary culture, whereas the term *postmodernity* alludes to a specific historical period. Postmodernity is a style of thought which is suspicious of classical notions of truth, reason, identity and objectivity, of the idea of

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<sup>243</sup> Ihab Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus. Toward a Postmodern Literature*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1971; Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1982) 259-271. Later, this postface was transformed into a chapter and published by Ihab Hassan in *The Postmodern Turn. Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987) 84-96.

<sup>244</sup> Hassan will coin the neologism 'indeterminance' to designate two central tendencies in postmodernism: one of indeterminacy, the other of immanence. Cf.: Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus*, 269.

<sup>245</sup> After explaining these difficulties, Hassan elaborates a scheme identifying the main differences between modernism and postmodernism. Cf.: Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus*, 267-268. For other spatialized representations of the opposition between modernism and postmodernism see also: Venturi, *et al.* (1977), Jencks (1980), Wollen (1982), Fokkema (1984) and Lethen (1986). Cf.: Brian McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) 7-8.

<sup>246</sup> Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus*, 266.

universal progress or emancipation, of single frameworks, grand narratives or ultimate grounds of explication. [...] Postmodernism is a style of culture which reflects something of this epochal change, in a depthless, decentred, ungrounded, self-reflexive, playful, derivative, eclectic, pluralistic art which blurs the boundaries between ‘high’ and ‘popular’ culture, as well as between art and everyday experience.<sup>247</sup>

Both terms are closely related, nevertheless postmodernism will be the term used by Eagleton throughout his study to cover both realities. Thus, in response to Hassan’s question, the term denotes an artistic tendency directly related to a social phenomenon in all its different manifestations – psychological, philosophical, economic and political. Any definition of postmodernism calls upon a vision of ‘correspondences.’ According to Hassan: ‘we have created in our mind a model of postmodernism, a particular typology of culture and imagination, and have proceeded to “rediscover” the affinities of various authors and different moments with that model.’<sup>248</sup>

In *The Cultural Turn* (1998), Fredric Jameson suggests that it is precisely the difficulty in establishing relationships between various authors, different moments and unknown works in various arts that accounts for some hostility to postmodernism. According to Jameson:

Some of the resistance to it [postmodernism] may come from the unfamiliarity of the works it covers, which can be found in all arts: the poetry of John Ashbery, for instance, as well as the much simpler talk poetry [...]; the reaction against modern architecture [...]; the pop buildings and decorated sheds celebrated by Robert Venturi in his manifesto *Learning from Las Vegas*; Andy Warhol, pop art and the more

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<sup>247</sup> Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA: Blackwell, 1996) vii.

<sup>248</sup> Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus*, 265.

recent Photorealism; in music, the moment of John Cage but also the later synthesis of classical and ‘popular’ styles found in composers like Philip Glass and Terry Riley, and also punk and new wave rock [...]; in film, everything that comes out of Godard [...] as well as a whole new style of commercial or fiction films [...].<sup>249</sup>

For Jameson postmodernism is linked to ‘the cultural logic of late capitalism’<sup>250</sup> and numbers among its more distressing effects: ‘the effacement of some key boundaries or separations, most notably the erosion of the older distinction between high culture and so-called mass or popular culture.’<sup>251</sup> In contrast with Fredric Jameson’s view, Linda Hutcheon suggests that this deliberate contradiction allows postmodern fiction: “to offer what Stanley Fish [...] once called a ‘dialectical’ literary representation, one that disturbs readers, forcing them to scrutinize their own values and beliefs, rather than pandering to or satisfying them.”<sup>252</sup>

In *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, Linda Hutcheon deals, as the title suggests, with the postmodern cultural phenomenon, presenting a framework within which to discuss it and outlining the model and historical background of postmodernism, namely its relation to modernism, its structural model derived from architecture, and the importance of the 1960s, when: ‘we discover that the world has no fixed centre and that, as Foucault taught, power is not something unitary that exists outside of us.’<sup>253</sup> The postmodernist novel becomes therefore the privileged space to question concepts that have come to be associated with liberal humanism, such as autonomy, centre, closure,

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<sup>249</sup> Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn. Selected Writings on the Postmodern 1983-1998* (London, New York: Verso, 1998) 1.

<sup>250</sup> Cf.: Fredric Jameson, ‘Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,’ *New Left Review* 146 (1984): 53-92.

<sup>251</sup> Jameson, *The Cultural Turn*, 2.

<sup>252</sup> Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988) 45. Cf.: Stanley Fish, *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972) xiii.

<sup>253</sup> Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, 86.



authority, uniqueness, origin, among others. Contemporary British fiction abounds with examples of such notions, as found in the novels and short stories by Peter Ackroyd, Martin Amis, Julian Barnes, A. S. Byatt, Angela Carter, Ian McEwan, Salman Rushdie, Irvine Welsh and Jeanette Winterson to name but a few. These postmodern writers often deploy anti-heroes or rogues who effectively reflect the rapid transformations (Western) society has been going through in recent decades and the conflicts that have emerged from it.

Starting with the work of Martin Amis, I will examine the way in which this postmodern writer in particular challenges literary representation in order to reshape perceptions of fiction and reality, positioning the rogue as a central character in his fiction and exploring the themes commonly associated with this anti-hero.

### **3.1.2. Martin Amis's Early Work: 'Surely, nice things are dull, and nasty things are funny'**

[P]arody is a game.

V. Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* (1973)

Martin Amis (b.1949) begins to publish in the early 1970s. He belongs to a generation of novelists – which I mentioned above – who register in their writing a shift in social attitudes, sexual mores, political consciousness, religious beliefs and cultural values. Curiously enough – or not, since it might be interpreted as a reaction against imposed values – these new novelists write in a time of Conservative government, the Thatcher era. According to Peter Childs: '[i]t is a striking phenomenon that the most politically repressive decade in post-war British history should also be one in which

fiction was believed to have undergone a renaissance.<sup>254</sup> Martin Amis's early novels, such as *The Rachel Papers* (1973)<sup>255</sup> and *Dead Babies* (1975), which together with *Success* (1978) constitute an informal trilogy,<sup>256</sup> can be seen as representative of a change in attitudes in British society.

*The Rachel Papers* is Martin Amis's first novel. As the author mentions in an interview with John Haffenden, in 1980, the book is a parody of the adolescent novel and the main character, Charles Highway, a nineteen year-old young man, who aspires to be a literary critic, is its best representative:

[*Martin Amis:*] Yes, the only twist I was conscious of giving to the adolescent novel – the genre to which *The Rachel Papers* belongs – is that Charles Highway is a budding literary critic, whereas the narrators of such novels are usually budding writers.<sup>257</sup>

The action of the novel takes place in the very last five hours before the protagonist's twentieth birthday. The title of each chapter is thus associated with a specific hour: the first chapter is entitled 'Seven o'clock: Oxford' and the novel finishes with 'Midnight: coming of age.' During this period Charles remembers events that date from a few hours ago or previous years, memories that are brought back while the main character attempts to organize papers and personal notes written by him throughout his life.

Charles Highway intends to start a new phase in his life but precisely because he is not a conventional character he remains ambiguous until the very end. Indeed his two

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<sup>254</sup> Peter Childs, *Contemporary Novelists. British Fiction since 1970* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 9.

<sup>255</sup> The novel *The Rachel Papers* (1973) by Martin Amis was publicly acclaimed in 1974, when it won England's Somerset Maugham Prize. The novel was also adapted into a film in 1989 (directed by Damian Harris).

<sup>256</sup> Cf.: James Diedrick, *Understanding Martin Amis*, 2nd ed. (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina, 2004) 28.

<sup>257</sup> John Haffenden, 'Martin Amis,' *Novelists in Interview*, ed. John Haffenden (London and New York: Methuen, 1985) 9-10.

main goals throughout the novel are to be accepted in Oxford and to conquer Rachel Noyes. Both goals symbolise the main character's social ambition and he does eventually attain them. He encounters some obstacles though; for example, Rachel begins by refusing him, increasing Charles' obsession, which, not surprisingly, ceases once he gets what he wants. David Hawkes demonstrates that this loss of interest is linked with Rachel herself, who had been depicted as the protagonist's fantasy, but who suddenly invents a character for herself, becoming a fictional character with a life of her own. She talks about her Parisian father, who fought in the Spanish Civil War, but at the end these stories turn out to be a product of her imagination: she never had such a father. Rachel therefore ceases to be part of Charles' dream-world: '[w]hen she [Rachel] is no longer a character in one of his [Charles Highway's] stories, or when she invents a character for herself, she loses his attention.'<sup>258</sup>

Ability to manipulate and impunity are two notions constantly associated with the main character. John Haffenden suggests that this model breaks away from the traditional idea one has of the novel, in which characters are depicted through their actions and are punished or rewarded according to the role they play in the development of the narrative. Martin Amis answers Haffenden mentioning:

That's certainly true. In a comic novel the rejected heroine would usually be given some good lines – lingering to set the record straight – but in *The Rachel Papers* Charles Highway says on the last page, '[s]he left without telling me a thing or two about myself, without asking if I knew

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<sup>258</sup> David Hawkes, 'Martin Amis (1949-),' *British Writers: Supplement IV*, eds. George Stade and Carol Howard (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1997) 28-29. Furthermore, this loss of attention is also fuelled by Charles's awareness of Rachel's bodily functions. John A. Dern explains: 'It is because of this "anti-reality" mindset that Charles, when firmly confronted with Rachel's corporeality, her human substance (she becomes more than another folder to his files), cannot cope. His first clue arrives one morning when he picks up a pair of Rachel's underwear from the floor and sees they are stained. [...] Later, she wets the bed and has a pimple, and both real-life events contribute, finally, to the dissolution of their relationship.' John A. Dern, *Martians, Monsters and Madonna: Fiction and Form in the World of Martin Amis* (New York, Bern, Berlin: Peter Lang, 2000) 59-60.

what my trouble was, without providing any sort of come-uppance at all' (pp. 218-19). You can see the whole process of meting out apt punishments or improbable conversations becoming rather strained...<sup>259</sup>

There are similarities in the way the protagonist relates to the other characters and his relationship with literature. In the essays he writes to enter Oxford, Charles quotes Chaucer, Shakespeare, Blake and Hardy, but he has no intention of going into deep analysis. His purpose is simply to show off, displaying his rhetoric skills, and make a good impression with his knowledge. Charles's vanity however is clearly perceived by the Professor who comments on his work:

'I won't go on ... Literature has a kind of life of its own, you know. You can't just use it... ruthlessly, for your own ends [...]'. 'Stop reading critics, and for Christ's sake stop reading all this structuralist stuff. Just read the poems and work out whether you like them, and why. Okay? The rest comes later – hopefully [...]'.<sup>260</sup>

The novel is abundantly supplied with intertextual references. The protagonist perceives the world through his readings and his writing and insofar as he plays with them he asserts himself as a postmodernist character:

Charles Highway is a postmodern character who lives through literary texts – both the ones he reads in order to find out how to act in real life and those he writes as records and analyses of his real life ... In fact, Highway has no 'real' life at all; he experiences the world on an entirely textual basis...<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Haffenden 9-10.

<sup>260</sup> Martin Amis, *The Rachel Papers* (1973; London: Vintage, 2004) 211. Henceforward all quotations will be signalled by *RP* followed by the number of the pages quoted.

<sup>261</sup> Hawkes 28-29.

One of the intertextual references is *Lucky Jim* (1954), Kingsley Amis's first novel. There is an ongoing dialogue between both novels and the artistic intention that lies in their background. This difference of perspective is linked with the two different generations to which these authors belong, one from the 1950s and the other from the 1970s. In *The Rachel Papers*, Martin Amis's first novel, Charles Highway rejects Jim Dixon's (the protagonist of *Lucky Jim*) maxim: '[n]ice things are nicer than nasty ones' (*LJ* 243), replacing it with a general principle closer to his own aesthetic project: '[s]urely nice things are dull, and nasty things are funny. The nastier a thing is, the funnier it gets' (*RP* 88).<sup>262</sup>

According to James Diedrick, Martin Amis elaborates in *The Rachel Papers* the principles that will shape his future work: '[w]hat is emerging here is Martin Amis's own literary manifesto – one part exorcism of his father's precedent, one part declaration that his own comedy veers toward the grotesque.'<sup>263</sup> Although significantly different, the two novels that follow, *Dead Babies* and *Success*, share common traits and they too prepare the ground for Amis's treatment of character, themes and style in his future fiction. There is a clear sense with these three novels that a new oeuvre is beginning to be written. Amis's style becomes more meticulous, he plays increasingly with language, which is always intense, on occasions even violent, and often witty.

In *Dead Babies*,<sup>264</sup> for instance, there is a growing interest in the representation of American characters and in the themes of cruelty and violence, sex, addiction and pornography, hedonism and the ultimate loss of any human values. Indeed the

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<sup>262</sup> Gavin Keulks writes about the interplay of *Lucky Jim* and *The Rachel Papers*. He identifies three related issues in the novels: the competitive tensions between literary generations; the recurrence of themes, such as class and philistinism; the symbolic dialogue between Martin Amis's *The Rachel Papers* and Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* concerning style, themes and comedic techniques. Galvin Keulks, *Father and Son: Kingsley Amis, Martin Amis, and the British Novel since 1950* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003) 101-132.

<sup>263</sup> Diedrick 36.

<sup>264</sup> Martin Amis, *Dead Babies* (1975; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984). The novel was also adapted into a film, entitled *Mood Swingers*, in 2000 (directed by William Marsh).

characters depicted in the novel (six English residents of Apleseed Rectory, three Americans, a woman from London, 'Johnny' and the authorial persona) seem to embody the worst tendencies of the 70s in Britain projected into an indefinite future. Diedrick argues about the novel: '[i]t manifests Amis's ambitious experiments with genre, point of view, and voice as he moves beyond the autobiographical locus of his first novel and toward the wider social engagements of his later work.'<sup>265</sup> *Success*<sup>266</sup> also introduces themes pursued in later works by Amis, namely, the theme of the double. In the novel two foster brothers, Gregory Riding and Terrence Service, narrate in alternating monologues their adventures in London in the late 1970s during a period of exactly one year. Both characters are anti-heroes. At the beginning Greg is portrayed as a successful young man while Terry is depicted as hopeless. By the end of the novel, however, they have exchanged roles. In the meantime they have both led their sister Ursula to suicide (they both develop an incestuous relationship with her). Similarly to Diedrick, who had argued about the wider dimension of *Dead Babies*, the literary critic Paul Ableman also recognises the social significance of this novel:

Gregory talks like a super-dandy out of [Ronald] Firbank and Terry like a super-yob. Neither of them is very convincing as a person but this drawback is somewhat mitigated by the reader's growing perception that the book is a parable about the decline of the old order in England and the new raj [reign] of the yobs.<sup>267</sup>

*Success* clearly prepares the ground for *Money: A Suicide Note*. Just as Terry is obsessed by success at any cost, reflecting the kind of society he lives in, so too the

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<sup>265</sup> Diedrick 40.

<sup>266</sup> Martin Amis, *Success* (1978; London: Vintage, 2004).

<sup>267</sup> Paul Ableman, 'Sub-texts,' *Spectator* 240:2815 (15 April 1978): 23-24. Diedrick further explains: 'By the end of the novel, Terry's language, like everything else in his life, has been reduced to the level of commerce.' Diedrick 55.

protagonist of *Money*, John Self, can only think about money, mirroring the consumer society to which he belongs.

The novel which follows *Success*, entitled *Other People: A Mystery History* (1981) marks a change of style in Amis's novels. It is remarkable because it poses a challenge to our understanding: '[p]ursuing his quest to "see the world differently," Amis looks through the eyes (and ears, nose, taste, touch, mind) of a woman suffering from what seems to be amnesia.'<sup>268</sup> The subtitle, 'A Mystery Story', suggests a kinship with detective novels but the reader is the only detective at work since the main character Mary Lamb/Amy Hide's fate is less important than the reflections promoted by the novel.<sup>269</sup> Again the detective motif will be central to Amis's future fiction, especially to *The Night Train* (1997).

It is *Money*, however, that illustrates a new phase in Amis's career. Peter Childs argues: '[i]t is only with *Money: A Suicide Note* (1984) that Amis moves away from a tight control on form and gives free rein to his linguistic exuberance.'<sup>270</sup> According to Nicholas Tredell the novel aroused interest in three main respects:

The first and most immediately arresting was its vibrant narrative voice; the second was its portrayal, through that voice, of a narrator-protagonist, John Self, who could be seen to embody the acquisitiveness of the 1980s [...]; the third was its use of [...] 'the intrusive author', the author who appears as a voice, perhaps even as a character, in his own text, as one 'Martin Amis' does in *Money*.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Diedrick 57.

<sup>269</sup> In order to comment on time, memory, sexual identity, evil, death and the relationship with other people, Martin Amis adopted the techniques of the 'Martin School of Poetry', whose central figures were Craig Raine and Christopher Reid, and whose purpose consisted in experimenting with language, imagery and point of view. This will be important for Amis's future work, for example, the novels *Money* and *Time's Arrow* and several stories in *Einstein's Monsters* and *Heavy Water*. Cf.: Diedrick 58-64.

<sup>270</sup> Childs 36-37.

<sup>271</sup> Nicholas Tredell, ed., *The Fiction of Martin Amis. A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000) 55.

From this brief overview of Amis's early fiction, I would like to stress the importance of the novels' main characters. Charles Highway in *The Rachel Papers*, the six characters of *Dead Babies* (namely, Quentin, Diana, Giles, Keith, Celia and Andy), and both Terence Service and Gregory Riding in *Success* are anti-heroes and they present roguish traits. They are the product of the society that surrounds them, behaving amorally, and living an obsession with sex, drugs, money and/or power. Ultimately, they constitute early experiments that will eventually culminate in some of Amis' most accomplished creations, such as John Self (*Money*), Keith Talent (*London Fields*) and Xan Meo (*Yellow Dog*) – three unequivocally rogue characters.

### 3.1.3. Martin Amis's *Money: A Suicide Note*

This is a suicide note. By the time you lay it aside (...), John Self will no longer exist. Or at any rate that's the idea. You never can tell, though, with suicide notes, can you?

Martin Amis, *Money. A Suicide Note* (1984)

In *Experience*, Martin Amis remarks about *Money: A Suicide Note*: 'it is a novel that John Self, the narrator, had in him but would never write.'<sup>272</sup> The novel follows the vernacular dramatic monologue in the Russian *skaz* tradition. James Diedrick, in his analysis of Amis's novel, establishes an analogy with the master text of this tradition, Dostoevsky's novella *Notes from Underground*. In this text, the narrator's alienation from society makes him a harsh critic of that same society. According to Diedrick: 'Self is a literary descendant of Dostoevsky's protagonist, sharing the Underground Man's brutal, seamy honesty.'<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Martin Amis, *Experience* (London: Vintage, 2001) 6.

<sup>273</sup> Diedrick 73-74. For further study on the *skaz* tradition see Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 259-422.



The narrator and protagonist of *Money* is undoubtedly an anti-hero, a rogue, a tramp, and his narration, his version of facts, is ambiguous. There is a clear difference between Self and the Underground Man. Self does not develop profound theories on the nature of man, and the critique on society is made explicit in action rather than through the protagonist's reflections. In *Money* the reader is never certain of what to take as true or untrue, as the seeming plausibility of the narrative is continually challenged by the unreliability of Self as a narrator who often suffers from amnesia, blackouts and confesses to hearing voices (he has at least four voices in his head),<sup>274</sup> and by the introduction of a fictional author, Martin Amis, who together with the protagonist engages in a game that disorients readers on the level of the narration. As Diedrick explains: 'Self and the Amis character are secret sharers more than antagonists. Many of Self's experiences are, in fact, those of his creator viewed through the distorting lens of an unlikely double.'<sup>275</sup>

Briefly, John Self is an Anglo-American film director, 'addicted to the twentieth century' (*M* 91), to money and consumerism, well-known for his 'controversial TV ads for smoking, drinking, junk food and nude magazines' (*M* 78). During the six months which constitute the time of the narrative, Self rolls around London and New York in pursuit of his first film deal, which will consist of a story based on his own life. The name of the protagonist suggests the use of a satirical device. It alludes to forms of postmodern self-reflexivity. On the one hand, Self reflects on his own existence, on the other hand there is an intrusive author, the fictional author Martin Amis, who appears as a character in the text and who has been hired by Self to rewrite his script. The theme of

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<sup>274</sup> The protagonist of *Money*, John Self, affirms: '[t]here are, at the latest count, four distinct voices in my head. First, of course, is the jabber of money [...]. Second is the voice of pornography. [...] Third, the voice of ageing and weather [...]. Number four is the real intruder. I don't want any of these voices but especially don't want this one. It is the most recent. It has to do with quitting work and needing to think about things I never used to think about.' Martin Amis, *Money. A Suicide Note* (London: Penguin Classics, 2000) 108. Henceforward all quotations will be signalled by *M* followed by the number of the pages quoted.

<sup>275</sup> Diedrick 96.

the double is thus explicit in the introduction of this character who echoes the name of the extra-fictional writer, the homonymous Martin Amis, the novel's author. Both characters, Self and Amis, play a game but not on equal terms, since Amis is perfectly aware of his function, while the protagonist doesn't seem to be fully conscious of his role. According to Laura L. Doan: 'John Self is the victim of an elaborate money conspiracy perpetrated by Fielding Goodney, a financier-cum-confidence man, involving regular surveillance of Self, innumerable anonymous telephone calls, and several actors posing as potential investors.'<sup>276</sup> Self is thus tricked into financing himself, and Martin Amis, near the end of the novel, admits his complicity in this operation.

According to Richard Todd: '[p]erhaps emblematic of the difficulty such a text presents is the chess game Self and Amis play toward the end.'<sup>277</sup> But it is this same game that allows us to speak of a transformation, a metamorphosis of the main character, who finally assumes control over his own narrative. The last section of the novel is of Self's entire responsibility and its ending contradicts any explicit intention in the novel's subtitle, 'A Suicide Note.' Indeed Self survives his suicide attempt:

Self may be the victim of his author's postmodern assumptions about fiction, but he never surrenders his fundamental autonomy [...]. In the final pages of the novel, an italicized section symbolizing Self's escape from his author's surveillance and control, he has one brief, final encounter with the Amis character, curses him and watches him leave the room, looking "stung, scared" (359). Having survived suicide, Self even survives his author's withdrawal of authorship.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Tredell 74.

<sup>277</sup> Tredell 72.

<sup>278</sup> Diedrick 99.

This may be interpreted as ‘postmodern de-naturalizing, the simultaneous inscribing and subverting of the conventions of narrative.’<sup>279</sup> And the complex narrative structure constructed inside the novel also has its counterpart outside. Only at the end of the novel, together with the protagonist, does the reader understand that Self is a victim. Laura L. Doan points out: ‘[j]ust as Goodney plays a confidence trick on the protagonist, Amis practices his trickery on the reader by setting up an elaborate ruse.’<sup>280</sup>

From this brief account it should be clear that *Money* is a fragmented text since Self cannot give a whole and coherent account of the events that are taking place. Even the reader is called upon to be identified with a fictional reader whom Self addresses occasionally using the second person personal pronoun ‘you’ as is the case in the following examples: ‘I wish you were here, I wish you were here to tell me it looked okay’ (*M* 195) or ‘Ah!, I’m sorry. I didn’t dare tell you earlier in case you stopped liking me, in case I lost your sympathy altogether – and I do need it, your sympathy’ (*M* 211). Postmodern fiction then challenges the reader with ontological questions concerning the status of reality and the world, aspects explored by the American critic Brian McHale in his book, *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987): “according to McHale postmodern fiction confronts the reader with questions about what sort of world is being created at each moment in the text, and who or what in the text they can believe or rely on [...]. [This] force[s] the reader to engage in what McHale calls ‘a suspension of belief and disbelief.’”<sup>281</sup>

Martin Amis also problematizes the whole question of literary representation in *Money: A Suicide Note*. Instead of presenting a progressive structure, the novel is a site of fragmentation. It thematizes not only the postmodern concern with the unstable nature of textuality and subjectivity, two inseparable notions, but also the preoccupation

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<sup>279</sup> Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, 47.

<sup>280</sup> Tredell 75.

<sup>281</sup> Simon Malpas, *The Postmodern* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005) 24.

with a radically indeterminate world. Linda Hutcheon suggests that one of the reasons for this may be political and refers to Lennard Davis to explain her view:

Lennard Davis describes the politics of novelistic narrative representation in this way: ‘Novels do not depict life, they depict life as represented by ideology’ (L. Davis 1987: 24). Ideology – how a culture represents itself to itself – ‘doxifies’ or naturalizes narrative representation, making it appear as natural or common-sensical (25); it represents what is really *constructed* meaning as something *inherent* in that which is being represented.<sup>282</sup>

This may well apply to Martin Amis’s *Money: A Suicide Note*. Indeed, as the title suggests, the novel is also a critique of the capitalist society of the Western world, represented by two exponents, America and the United Kingdom. It is not by chance that: “Money is set in ‘fastfood, fastbuck, fastfuck Manhattan’ as well as the ‘*louche* London-on-the-make.”<sup>283</sup> Self is a victim of the consumer – and consuming – society that surrounds him. He is the outcome of the ‘process of simulation’ which, according to Jean Baudrillard, has come to dominate society at all levels (political, economic, social and cultural), making it impossible for him to distinguish the real from the model or the medium itself.<sup>284</sup> And indeed Self embodies the ‘aesthetics of the hyperreal’:

It is the whole traditional world of causality that is in question: the perspectival, deterministic mode, the “active,” critical mode, the analytic

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<sup>282</sup> Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, 47. See also: Lennard J. Davies, *Resisting Novels: Ideology and Fiction* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987) 24.

<sup>283</sup> Tredell 58. Cf.: Eric Korn, ‘Frazzled Yob-Gene Lag-Jag,’ *Times Literary Supplement* 4253 (5 October 1984): 1119.

<sup>284</sup> Cf.: Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (1994; Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006) 1-42. Cf.: Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation* (Paris: Galilée, 1981) 9-68.

mode – the distinction between cause and effect, between active and passive, between subject and object, between the end and the means.<sup>285</sup>

For the protagonist of the novel absolute notions such as good and bad have become relative. And his lethargy often leads him to choose bad: ‘[w]hat is this state, seeing the difference between good and bad and choosing bad – or consenting bad, okaying bad?’ (*M* 26). There is a moral commentary involved in the depiction of this character and of the society which surrounds him. Martin Amis, the author, elucidates:

I do mean him [the character John Self] to be a consumer, and he is consumed by consumerism, as all mere consumers are. I also mean him to be stupefied by having watched too much television – his life is without sustenance of any kind – and that is why he is so fooled by everyone; he never knows what is going on. He has this lazy non-effort response which is wished on you by television – and by reading a shitty newspaper. Those are his two sources of information about the planet.<sup>286</sup>

This critique is directed at specific aspects of British society in the 80s. Indeed the novel’s action is set in 1981. There are allusions to the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer, together with references to riots in English cities: ‘[s]eems that Prince Charles had a thing with one of Diana’s sisters, way back, before he fingered lady Di [...]. More riots in Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, the inner cities left to rot and burn’ (*M* 155). It is the Thatcher era and the novel also reflects on the economic and social system in force at the time. The main character can thus be interpreted as a symbol of the greedy individualism that characterizes Thatcherite Britain. However,

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<sup>285</sup> Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 30. The French reads: ‘C’est tout le mode traditionnel de causalité qui est en question: mode perspectif, déterministe, mode «actif», critique, mode analytique – distinction de la cause et de l’effet, de l’actif et du passif, du sujet et de l’objet, de la fin et des moyens.’ Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation*, 54.

<sup>286</sup> Haffenden 7.

Self cannot be interpreted as a simple metonym for Thatcherism,<sup>287</sup> instead he is a fundamental element in the depiction of a dystopic time. According to Tamás Bényei: ‘Amis’s novel seems to be a study of the inauthentic self in the fallen state of fear, seeking false safety in the false god it has created: money. [...] One of Amis’s primary concerns is exactly the inauthenticity of desire in contemporary society; in the (relentlessly) dystopian landscape of the self he presents.’<sup>288</sup>

The protagonist of *Money*, John Self, is a victim of his own debased private culture. Even his relationships with women are ruled by money. He visits brothels, he likes strippers, he picks up prostitutes in the streets and he even describes his passion for Selina Street, one of the women with whom Self is seriously involved in the course of the novel, in terms of money and pornography, as a commodity, a mere sexual object:

I had fever. And I had Selina fever too. Lying in that slipped zone where there is neither sleep nor wakefulness, [...] Selina came at me in queries of pink smoke. I saw her performing flesh in fantastic eddies and convulsions, [...] the arched creature doing what the creature does best – and the thrilling proof, so rich in pornography, that she does all this not for passion, not for comfort, far less for love, the proof that she does all this for *money*. I woke babbling in the night – yes, I heard myself say it, solve it, through the dream-mumble – and I said, *I love it. I love her... I love her corruption.* (M 37)

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<sup>287</sup> Tredell 79.

<sup>288</sup> Tamás Bényei, ‘Allegory and Allegoresis in Martin Amis’s *Money*’ (1993) in *The Proceedings of the First Conference of the Hungarian Society for the Study of English*, vol. 1 (Debrecen: Institute of English and American Studies, 1995) 182-87. *The Martin Amis Web*. Ed. James Diedrick. 2004. BBC Education Web Guide. 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2005. <<http://martinamis.albion.edu/allegory.htm>>. Initially developed by James Diedrick, the site was redesigned and is now managed by Gavin Keulks. The current version of the Martin Amis Web was launched on 30 April 2006 and can be found following the link: <<http://www.martinamisweb.com/>>.

There is one exception, though, Martina Twain. This character is the exact opposite of Selina Street. And just as the character Martin Amis, hired to rewrite Self's story, functions as a double of the main character in England, the character Martina Twain<sup>289</sup> is Amis's counterpart in America, illustrating one more aspect of Self's consciousness. In New York, she introduces the unread Self to writers and thinkers such as Freud, Marx, Darwin, Einstein; to works such as the allegorical novel *Animal Farm* and the dystopic *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell; she offers him an economic history entitled *Money* and she even invites Self to go to the opera to see Verdi's *Othello*. Martina represents Self's only chance to relate to high culture as opposed to his own debased private culture. She also represents the main character's most likely opportunity to regenerate, to move from the dog status which Self attributes to himself after reading *Animal Farm*<sup>290</sup> to a world beyond. However, the change never occurs, he lets himself be seduced by Selina and Martina catches them both together in what constitutes one more among the set of betrayals which govern the characters' relationships (personal as well as professional) throughout the novel.

'Is there a moral philosophy of fiction?' – asks the character Martin Amis in *Money* at a certain point, and immediately he adds: '[w]hen I create a character and put him or her through certain ordeals, what am I up to – morally?' (*M* 260). He then explains: 'characters have a double innocence. They don't know why they're living through what they're living through. They don't even know they're alive' (*M* 260). Thus, it seems it is up to the reader to make some meaning out of it: '[y]es, you see, readers are natural believers. They too have something of the authorial power to create

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<sup>289</sup> Diedrick draws the readers's attention to the meaning of the word 'twain': «“twain” literally means two.» Diedrick 94.

<sup>290</sup> John Self wonders: 'Where would *I* be in *Animal Farm*? One of the rats, I thought at first. But – oh, go easy on yourself, try and go a little bit easy. Now, after mature consideration, I think I might have what it takes to be a dog. I *am* a dog.' (*M* 207)

life...’ (*M* 260). Curiously, these statements have their counterpart outside fiction, as the interview the writer Martin Amis gave to Haffenden demonstrates:

A novelist has to take a reading of the world, and that is what happens in all the novels that interest me. Just what is going on here? It sounds banal, but it’s an absolutely vital question for the novelist. It’s the highest investigation. Yet it is always best to trust the artistic impulse; I don’t have a strong contrary impulse to go around assigning moral statuses to characters. The point is that you have to make it as vivid and intense as you can, and let the reader choose. Style is not neutral; it gives moral directions.<sup>291</sup>

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*Money* ends with Self’s diary entry, commenting on his new impoverished life. He has definitely become a tramp but Amis considers it as his first happy ending:

John Self in *Money* ends up as a tramp, and yet I feel that it’s my first happy ending. [...] I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but the only semi-colon in the book appears in the last sentence, which is meant to be a mighty clue to the idea that he is slowing down... because at one point he has said that he wants some semi-colons in his life. He wants to slow down and look at the scenery.<sup>292</sup>

*Money: A Suicide Note* is clearly a postmodern novel, an artistic construct representative of the ‘epochal change’ experienced in Western society throughout the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>293</sup> Amis’s novel is self-reflexive, playful, plural, subverting narrative conventions. It is a postmodern novel for its ‘indeterminance’ – to

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<sup>291</sup> Haffenden 22-23.

<sup>292</sup> Haffenden 14.

<sup>293</sup> Cf.: Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism*, vii-x.



use Ihab Hassan's term<sup>294</sup> – and fragmentation; for its depiction but also for its questioning of mass culture, of consumer society: the society of media and spectacle we live in.<sup>295</sup> Indeed, it blurs the boundaries between 'high' and 'popular culture', introducing everyday experience and common themes (such as pornography, violence, criminality, among others) into the realm of (serious) art. It prompts a reflection on our society and culture, questioning exactly the same notions mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, such as: authority, autonomy, subject, centre, origin, closure and uniqueness, among others.<sup>296</sup>

### 3.1.4. The Short Stories in the Context of Martin Amis's Novelistic Production

For the one fact about the future of which we can be certain is that it will be utterly fantastic.

Arthur C. Clarke, *Profiles of the Future* (1972)

[T]he short story is alive.

Nadine Gordimer, *Flash of Fireflies* (1994)

Amis is well known for his novels and non-fictional work and less for his short stories. Nevertheless, his two published collections of short stories are extremely significant in the context of his work. They deal with themes and characters recurrent in the author's work and further developed in Amis's novels. These short stories anticipate and/or intersect with his novels, showing the persistence of certain social and political concerns on the writer's part.

*Einstein's Monsters* (1987) is the first collection of short stories by Martin Amis. Written in the 1980s, a period of serious concern about the threat of nuclear weapons,

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<sup>294</sup> Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus*, 263.

<sup>295</sup> Cf.: Jameson, *The Cultural Turn*, 1-20.

<sup>296</sup> Cf.: Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, 57-73.

these stories depict dystopic worlds and function as a critique of Western society. According to the author, *Einstein's Monsters* 'refers to nuclear weapons, but also to ourselves. We are Einstein's monsters, not fully human, not for now.'<sup>297</sup> Through a fragmented narrative style the stories depict increasingly improbable worlds either in the present or in a futuristic setting. This work will be fundamental to the novel written by Amis shortly after, *London Fields*, which will develop to exhaustion such themes as the apocalypse, violence and death.

The collection consists of five short stories introduced by an essay entitled 'Thinkability' in which Amis discusses the nuclear crisis of the 80s and its impact on writers of his generation. According to David Profumo:

As he [Martin Amis] explains in his polemical essay "Thinkability", this was prompted by impending fatherhood and by a reading of the works of Jonathan Schell. The resulting stories are powerfully chilling illustrations of the ways in which the fearful threat of nuclear destruction has already poisoned the human spirit.<sup>298</sup>

Indeed the stories that follow explore post-nuclear settings, conveying a dystopic vision of society. Following Rachel Falconer's categorization of the short stories: '[t]hree of the five entail futuristic, post-nuclear disaster settings ("The Time Disease," "The Little Puppy That Could," and "Immortals"), while two have "realistic" settings in a suspended present, with the holocaust psychologically imminent but the actual explosion yet to come ("Bujak and the Strong Force, or God's Dice" and "Insight at Flame Lake").'<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Martin Amis, 'Author's Note,' *Einstein's Monsters* (1987; London: Vintage, 2003) 6. Henceforward all quotations will be signalled by *EM* followed by the number of the pages quoted.

<sup>298</sup> David Profumo, 'Interview: David Profumo Drops in Martin Amis,' *Literary Review* 107 (May 1987): 41.

<sup>299</sup> Rachel Falconer, 'Bakhtin's Chronotope and the Contemporary Short Story,' *South Atlantic Quarterly* 97.3-4 (Summer-Fall 1998): 708.

Falconer builds her argument around Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of the chronotope and how time and space help to distinguish genres,<sup>300</sup> suggesting that the brevity of the short story is one point of critical consensus for genre theorists. Indeed, the intrinsic force of the short story derives from its 'unity or totality of *effect*,' as stated by Edgar Allan Poe.<sup>301</sup> Emphasis is thus given to length and plot. Usually a small narrative form, the strength of the short story lies in its unified plan and its closure, creating an impression of totality for the reader. According to B. M. Éjxenbaum: '[s]hort story is a term referring exclusively to plot, one assuming a combination of two conditions: *small size* and plot *impact* on the ending.'<sup>302</sup> Contemporary studies on postmodern short fiction tend to emphasise the structure of the short story and its sense of imminent ending (cf.: Norman Friedman).<sup>303</sup> Drawing on Cartier Bresson's or Brassai's definition of photography, which can be described as cutting off a fragment of reality but simultaneously opening it like an explosion to a much more ample reality, Julio Cortázar establishes a brilliant comparison between the art of photography and that of short story writing:

[T]he photographer or the short story writer finds himself obliged to choose and delimit an image or an event which must be meaningful, which is meaningful not only in itself, but rather is capable of acting on the viewer or the reader as a kind of opening, an impetus which projects the intelligence and the sensibility toward something which goes well

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<sup>300</sup> Cf.: Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics' (1937-38), *The Dialogical Imagination*, 84-258.

<sup>301</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, 'Review of *Night and Morning: A Novel*' by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *Graham's Magazine* (April 1841), *The New Short Story Theories*, ed. Charles E. May (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1994) 66.

<sup>302</sup> B. M. Éjxenbaum, 'O. Henry and the Theory of the Short Story,' *The New Short Story Theories*, ed. Charles E. May, 81.

<sup>303</sup> Norman Friedman, 'Recent Short Story Theories: Problems in Definition,' *Short Story Theory at a Crossroads*, eds. Susan Lohafer and Jo Ellyn Clarey (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1989) 13-31.

beyond the visual or literary anecdote contained in the photograph or the story.<sup>304</sup>

This is true with Amis's short stories in *Einstein's Monsters*. Furthermore, and again according to Falconer: 'the short story form enables Amis to focus on a single theme, the threat of nuclear holocaust, while presenting a range of different responses to it so that no one perspective dominates and the exercise of agency rests finally with the reader.'<sup>305</sup> The multiplicity of perspectives is made clear by the way the stories of the collection end. Despite focusing on a single theme, there are various surprising endings, two stories are more optimistic ('Bujak and the Strong Force, or God's Dice' and 'The Little Puppy That Could')<sup>306</sup> and three have nightmare endings, closely following the depiction of a dystopic future society ('Insight at Flame Lake,' 'The Time Disease' and 'The Immortals').

As previously suggested, this first collection of short stories by Amis anticipates the novel *London Fields*, which in turn has been described by many critics as an apocalyptic novel.<sup>307</sup> *London Fields* is set in the future and has a nuclear background. Hence, when trying to establish a link between the novel and Amis's previous work, one can interpret the short stories as variations on the theme of the apocalypse, realised

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<sup>304</sup> Julio Cortázar, 'Some Aspects of the Short Story,' *The New Short Story Theories*, ed. Charles E. May, 247.

<sup>305</sup> Falconer 707.

<sup>306</sup> As far as the first short story is concerned, John A. Dern explains: '[...] Bujak is a formidable person [...]. Complementing his tremendous physical power, Bujak has emotional power. [...] This power frightens and deters merely because it exists [...]. Bujak's personal holocaust descends on his return home from a short trip: he finds his family – mother, daughter and grandchild – beaten to death. [...] But the most telling aspect of the incident is that Bujak finds the men in the house and does *nothing*.' Dern 98.

Concerning 'The Little Puppy that Could,' Dern clarifies: 'Not only does the physical world mutate [...] but so do gender roles, making women, with names like Keithette and Kevinia, "the natural leaders" [...]. Men, with names such as Tom or Tim, serve the women and sprint hut to hut with messages.' Dern 103.

<sup>307</sup> Cf.: Diedrick, *Understanding Martin Amis* (2004); Penny Smith, 'Hell Innit: the millennium in Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*, Martin Amis's *London Fields*, and Shena Mackay's *Dunedin*,' *The Endings of Epochs. Essays and Studies* 1995 (Cambridge, U.S.A.: D. S. Brewer, 1995): 115-128; Peter Childs, *Contemporary Novelists. British Fiction since 1970* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Peter Stokes, 'Martin Amis and the Postmodern Suicide: Tracing the Postnuclear Narrative at the Fin de Millennium,' *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 38 (1997): 305-306; Anne-Laure Fortin-Tournès, *Martin Amis, le postmodernisme en question* (Rennes : Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2003). See my analysis of *London Fields* by Martin Amis.

in *London Fields* through the depiction of a dystopic world threatened by nuclear disaster.

Connections may also be established between the stories of the collection *Einstein's Monsters* and other novels by Amis; such is the case with 'The Time Disease' and *Time's Arrow*. Falconer suggests:

The possibility that the "apocalypse," whenever it occurs, might throw time into reverse (as Einstein theorized happened at the beginning of the universe) is one that Amis explores at novelistic length in *Time's Arrow* and in short form in "The Time Disease" (the third story in *Einstein's Monsters*). [...] [It] describes a world turned upside down by the effects of nuclear fallout, including distortions of the normal temporal patterns. Survival here depends on doing nothing [...]. The ironic twist is that the "time disease," a form of radiation sickness, does not accelerate the ageing process but the reverse; "coming down" with "time" here means dying of *youth*.<sup>308</sup>

Links between short stories and novels in Amis's work become even more evident in the author's second collection of short narrative. *Heavy Water and Other Stories* (1998), written a decade after *Einstein's Monsters*,<sup>309</sup> moves away from the strong sense of apocalypse present in earlier stories but persists in the critique of the capitalist society of the Western world, a recurrent theme throughout Amis's work, extremely well exemplified in a novel such as *Money* and more recently developed in *Yellow Dog*. The collection is composed of nine stories: 'Career Move' (1992), 'Denton's Death' (1976), 'State of England' (1996), 'Let Me Count the Times' (1981),

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<sup>308</sup> Falconer 710.

<sup>309</sup> Although three of the stories were published before the stories in *Einstein's Monsters* were written: 'Denton's Death' (*Encounter*, 1976), 'Heavy Water' (*New Statesman*, 1978; rewritten in 1997), 'Let Me Count the Times' (*Granta*, 1981). Cf.: Russell Celyn Jones, 'Not Such Light Reading,' *Times* 24 September 1998: 40.

‘The Coincidence of the Arts’ (1997), ‘Heavy Water’ (1978/1997), ‘The Janitor on Mars’ (1997), ‘Straight Fiction’ (1995) and ‘What Happened To Me On My Holiday’ (1997). Each story may be linked either to previous or future works by Amis as far as themes, style, settings, characters and situations are concerned. Indeed, only ‘The Coincidence of the Arts’ and ‘The Janitor on Mars’ are new. According to John A. Dern: ‘[all the other stories] range from 1976 to 1997 in date of composition and, accordingly, reflect Amis’ style at various stages in his career, from the hesitant, experimental “Denton’s Death” to the emotional, stylistically impressive “What Happened to Me on My Holiday.”’<sup>310</sup>

The short story ‘State of England’ is central to the collection, not only because it is the longest but especially because it redeploys Amis’ archetype of the anti-hero, simultaneously promoting a critique of postmodern England. Big Mal is a cliché: ‘a bouncer who represents the seedy underside of England, which is, in Amis’ canon, increasingly all of England.’<sup>311</sup> Brooke Allen suggests that Mal is the prototypical Amis-man:

He is spiritual brother to John Self of *Money*, Richard Tull of *The Information*, Terry Service of *Success*. An Amis-man experiences not love but a queasy mixture of lust, fear, and need. He fatally confuses pleasure with joy, and has no use whatever for mere contentment. He hankers after status and success, although he is sharp enough to know that they are not, in themselves, sufficient.<sup>312</sup>

To the list of spiritual brothers quoted above I would add the main character of *Yellow Dog*, Xan Meo, who similarly to John Self and Terry Service, belongs to a

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<sup>310</sup> Dern 109.

<sup>311</sup> Dern 113.

<sup>312</sup> Brooke Allen, ‘Pretentious & hollow,’ *The New Criterion on line* (review of Martin Amis’ *Heavy Water and Other Stories*). 24<sup>th</sup> May 2006: < <http://www.newcriterion.com/archive/17/mar99/amis.htm> >.

working-class background and is desperately trying to move away from it. Natasha Walter goes further and suggests that Big Mal stands mostly for the English male:

‘State of England’ is a big title for such a story; and Amis clearly thinks this is more than just the story of Big Mal; rather, this is the story of England – and especially of the English male. And it’s a nasty story, Amis keeps telling us. It’s about bad food and bad sex, about fear and failure.<sup>313</sup>

Furthermore, besides the connections between Big Mal and other of Amis’s main characters, in ‘State of England’ we also find names, such as Joseph Andrews and Lucozade which will reappear in the novel *Yellow Dog*. Curiously, in both story and novel, Joseph Andrews (a clear parody involving the eponymous hero of Henry Fielding’s novel of misadventure) stands for an American reality based on popular culture and violence (in the short story and in the novel Joseph Andrews lives precisely in California, L.A.). According to Nathaniel Rich:

[Amis’s] locations and characters have become increasingly American [...]. Yet this transformation is part of a larger movement, a widening of his whole scope. Amis has not only reached out to a new continent, but has moved from analyses of character to analyses of Western culture and thought. Gradually he has shifted from micro to macro, from within to without.<sup>314</sup>

Two other stories in *Heavy Water and Other Stories* are set in America: ‘Career Move’ and ‘Straight Fiction’ – the latter is a very interesting piece dealing with gender issues in a society where homosexuality is the norm and heterosexuals are discriminated

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<sup>313</sup> Natasha Walter, ‘Fat Men, Thin Lives,’ *New Statesman* 25 September 1998: 81-82.

<sup>314</sup> Nathaniel Rich, ‘A Heavier Amis,’ *The Yale Review of Books* 2.1 Spring 1999 (review of Martin Amis’ *Heavy Water and Other Stories*). 24<sup>th</sup> May 2006: < <http://www.yale.edu/yrb/spring99/review02.htm> >.

against. In ‘Career Move’ there are echoes of *The Information*. To mention one example, the screenwriter Alistair submits his screenplay, *Offensive from Quasar 13*, to an obscure journal entitled the *Little Magazine*. This is the same name of the journal of which Richard Tull is the literary editor in *The Information*.

The counterpart of Alistair is the poet Luke, who submits his work to well-known agents and producers. By inverting the cultural position occupied by poetry and screenplay writing in postmodern society, Amis reduces art to a commodity and defies the reader’s expectations: ‘[p]ostmodern society, like its modern counterpart, possesses a balance between what is seen as “art” and “entertainment.” Amis simply devalues what is perceived as a higher art – poetry – by making its producers seem whorish [...]. Meanwhile, screenplay writing is critically elevated.’<sup>315</sup>

‘The Coincidence of the Arts,’ in turn, also deals with cultural stereotypes. However, instead of inverting them it explores them further through the figure of Sir Rodney Peel, an English portrait painter who emigrates from London to New York, a space in which his accent, mannerisms and flattery work in his favour:

After many soggy years of artistic and sexual failure, in London, SW3, Rodney was now savouring their opposites, in New York. You could still see this failure in the darkened skin around his eyes [...]; you could still nose it in his pyjamas, unlaundered for fifteen years [...]. But America had reinvented him. He had a title, a ponytail, a flowery accent, and a pliant paintbrush. He was an unattached heterosexual in Manhattan: something had to give. [...]

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<sup>315</sup> Dern 110.



Rodney still felt that he had a chance of becoming a serious painter.  
Not a good chance – but a chance.<sup>316</sup>

In ‘Let me Count the Times’ and ‘The Janitor on Mars’ we are faced with pornography, sexual fantasies and pedophilia, again themes that run through Amis’s work in general. We need only think of titles such as *Success*, *Money*, *London Fields* and *Yellow Dog*, among others. In ‘Let me Count the Times,’ Vernon, a middle-aged businessman obsessed with sex, echoes characters such as Terry Service (*Success*), John Self (*Money*), Keith Talent (*London Fields*) and Xan Meo or even Clint Smoker, a tabloid reporter described as ‘a big wanker with a small penis’<sup>317</sup> (*Yellow Dog*). To mention one among various possible examples, just as Keith Talent lives in a world of *simulacra*,<sup>318</sup> preferring to watch Nicola Six on video than to seeing her for real, the same happens with Vernon, who is obsessed with make-believe:

The next time he tried, he swung open the door to find his wife upside down over the headboard, doing scarcely credible things to a hairy-shouldered Turk. [...] And did Vernon’s wife mind any of this? Mind? She liked it. Like it? She *loved* it! (*HW* 82-83)

‘The Janitor on Mars’ is reminiscent of Amis’ work as a screenwriter of science-fiction (as with *Saturn 3*, directed by Stanley Donen, ITC Films, 1980)<sup>319</sup> and it also links with the futuristic atmosphere created in the collection *Einstein’s Monsters* (the story is set ca. 2049). The short story is about an automaton on Mars who comes into contact with humans when the oxygen level in the Earth’s atmosphere rises to alarming

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<sup>316</sup> Martin Amis, *Heavy Water and Other Stories* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1998) 96. Henceforward all quotations will be signalled by *HW* followed by the number of the pages quoted.

<sup>317</sup> Theo Tait, “‘Yobs and Royals’”. Martin Amis’s tabloid morality tale,’ *The Times Literary Supplement* 5 Sept. 2003: 4.

<sup>318</sup> For a definition of *simulacra* see Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994); Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation* (1981).

<sup>319</sup> According to David Profumo: “Martin Amis describes sci-fi as ‘a kind of family hobby; also I reviewed it for a good many years in *The Observer* under the pseudonym of Henry Tilney, the hero of *Northanger Abbey!*’” Profumo 42.

levels. But 'The Janitor on Mars' is more than sci-fi and along with the serious discussion about the environment it speaks of pedophilia, focusing on a case occurring in an orphanage in England:

The boy was not in San for one of his workdays injuries, something like a burn or a twisted ankle. Timmy was in San because he had been raped: three days ago. Mr Caroline had found him in the potting-shed, lying on the duckboards, weeping. And from then on Timmy had lapsed into the semi-autistic bemusement that had marked his first two years at Shepherds Lodge [...]. The flower had partly opened. It had now closed again. (*HW* 159)

The loss of innocence is a theme that runs right through Amis's work. In the novel *Yellow Dog* the gloomiest side of the plot involves Xan Meo, who appears to develop uncontrolled sexual thoughts about his four-year-old daughter Billie. The use of this upsetting theme has a very clear purpose in Amis's literary work, warning against such harmful deeds and alerting the reader to the need for more innocence in the world.

Finally, a word about style in 'Denton's Death,' about the story that gives the title to the collection and the impressive short story that closes *Heavy Water and Other Stories*, 'What Happened to Me on My Holiday.' All spin around the theme of death. Written in an earlier stage of Amis's career (1976) and never rewritten, 'Denton's Death' is the shortest story of the collection and the most experimental. The main character is described as: 'an old tramp in a dirty room, afraid to die' (*HW* 32). Denton is haunted by three figures that come to torture and kill him. The story follows a pattern of repetition. What might be considered as the key sentence appears at the beginning and at the end of the short story: '[s]uddenly Denton realized that there would be three of them, that they would come after dark, that their leader would have his own key, and

that they would be calm and deliberate, confident that they had all the time they needed to do what had to be done' (*HW* 28, 33). John Dern establishes an interesting connection between the theme of the absence of motive in the short story and central novels in Amis's career, especially *Money* and *London Fields*:

Amis offers no motivation for Denton's murder. [...] Like John Self from *Money*, he sees no reason or motivation behind the actions of those aligned against him. "Denton's Death" [...] offers some of the first signs that he is seriously considering the aesthetic collapse of motive which, as a subject in itself, will be a focal point in novels such as *Money*, *London Fields* and *Night Train*.<sup>320</sup>

'Heavy Water,' in turn, although written at an early stage (1978), suffered major modifications (1997) just before it was published as a central part of the collection *Heavy Water and Other Stories* (as is made evident by the title). The moment of revelation in this story occurs in Portugal when John, the main character, and his mother leave their cruiseship, going ashore to visit a small Aquarium. During this short visit, John, who has lived all his life with his mother, has a moment of self-revelation. Watching a turtle confined to the small space of an inflated swimming pool, he realizes that he too had been living oppressed by his mother, reduced to a 'dehumanized man-child.'<sup>321</sup> The short story ends with John's suicide attempt, prevented by his mother, and a note of desolation stressed by the use of sharp short sentences, the reference to the 'empty lips,' the 'soothing lullaby,' John's tears and to 'the bottle,' 'the gin,' 'the clean water':

She walked him down the cabin. He came quietly. She sat him on the bunk. With her empty lips she started to sing a soothing lullaby. John

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<sup>320</sup> Dern 111.

<sup>321</sup> Dern 118.

wept into his hands. There was nothing new in Mother's eyes as she reached for the bottle, and for the gin, and for the clean water. (*HW* 153)

'What Happened to Me on My Holiday' deals with the theme of loss. The story is narrated by an eleven-year-old boy, Louis, who is faced with the sudden death of his step-brother, Eliaz. Death is seen as both a natural phenomenon and a threat. It occurs in nature – animals die just like the sprat, which cannot go in the bag precisely because it is dead. But it can also be unnatural – as suggested by the episode with Bablo trying to swim without his arm-floats and having to be rescued. Diedrick suggests the emotional effect of the story is created through the use of a remarkable linguistic device and an innovative style (a characteristic present in all of Amis's work):

Amis represents Louis's response to this loss [of his step-brother, Eliaz] by means of a highly stylized phonetic speech (part American slang, part British phrasings) that is the verbal equivalent of the estrangement and stupefaction death leaves in its wake: "[Zo thiz zdory is vor them, doo, as well as vor Eliaz.] I dell id thiz way – in zargazdig Ameriganese – begaz I don't want id to be glear: do be all grizb and clear. There is thiz zdrange resizdance. There is thiz zdrange resizdanze."<sup>322</sup>

Martin Amis's short stories demonstrate how self-conscious the author is, how he plays with intertextual references, inviting the reader to interpret his work as a continuous rewriting of recurrent themes, where (rogue) characters become familiar elements, prompting a reflection not only on British society, but also on our (Western) society and culture as a whole (even if Amis is profoundly English in his writing). Indeed, Amis's preoccupations are global issues and the short stories play a fundamental role in conveying that message.

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<sup>322</sup> James Diedrick, 'Book Review: Heavy Water and Other Stories by Martin Amis,' *The Richmond Review*. 24<sup>th</sup> May 2006: < <http://www.richmondreview.co.uk/books/heavywat.html> >.

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The digression from the analysis of Martin Amis' novels to his short stories has proved valuable not only for an understanding of Amis's fiction as on-going work, in which each particular novel or short story establishes a dialogue with past or even future literary productions, but also for realising the significance of treatment of character, especially in the depiction of men in Amis's fiction. According to José Francisco Fernández Sánchez: '[c]iertamente Amis muestra un interés especial por la masculinidad, y en sus personajes varones se aprecia la inseguridad de éstos en el trato con las mujeres, así como una crisis de los esquemas masculinos tradicionales.'<sup>323</sup> Indeed, in stories such as 'Bujak and the Strong Force or God's Dice,' 'The Little Puppy that Could' (*Einstein's Monsters*), 'State of England,' 'Let Me Count the Times,' 'Heavy Water' and 'Straight Fiction' (*Heavy Water and Other Stories*) different types of men are portrayed and masculinity is problematized.<sup>324</sup> And it is precisely the short story 'State of England' that becomes more significant in the context of my discussion, not only because it depicts a rogue as the central character but also because Big Mal serves as the model and inspiration for Xan Meo, the protagonist of Amis's *Yellow Dog*.

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<sup>323</sup> José Francisco Fernández Sánchez, '¿Hacia una nueva masculinidad? Los hombres de los relatos de Martin Amis,' *Breves e Intensos Artículos sobre Relatos Cortos de Autores Británicos Contemporáneos*, ed. José Francisco Fernández Sánchez (Almería: Universidad de Almería, 2001) 138. 'Undoubtedly, Amis shows a great interest in masculinity and one can witness the insecurity of his male characters in their relationship with women, as well as in the crisis of the traditional patterns of masculinity.' My translation.

<sup>324</sup> It would also be interesting to comment on the significance of the titles of Amis's short stories, which seem to operate as clues, guiding us in our reading or deliberately confounding expectations. For instance, the title 'Let Me Count the Times' echoes the sonnet by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 'How I love thee? Let me count the ways' (Sonnet 43). And the expression 'Heavy Water' is associated with war, since this type of water can be used to produce nuclear weapons.

### 3.1.5. *London Fields*

**CWEB** *London Fields* is a millennial novel, not merely in the sense that it's set in 1999. Almost everything is in decline. It's a dying century, a dying millenium, a dying almost everything.

**MA** Yes, the end of history. That is the millennial theme. But there is a longing for renewal, for redemption, for a new start.

'Martin Amis interviewed by Christopher Bigsby' (1992)

*London Fields* (1989) has been described by many, including James Diedrick, Penny Smith, Peter Childs, Peter Stokes and Anne-Laure Fortin-Tournès, as a novel of the apocalypse. It draws on themes already present in Amis's first collection of short stories *Einstein's Monsters* (1987): nuclear threat, the end of the world, violence and death. According to James Diedrick: '[it] is like the monstrous, mutant canine that terrorizes the postapocalyptic villagers in "The Little Puppy That Could."' The novel relentlessly pursues a vision of deformation and death, darkening the lives of everyone caught in its force field.<sup>325</sup> Penny Smith also stresses this quality: '[i]t's the end of the century and the planet is braced for impact [...] because while previous millenniums didn't really mean the end of the world [...], this time things are different.'<sup>326</sup> And Peter Childs affirms: '*London Fields* is a postmodern apocalyptic take on the millennium's finale.'<sup>327</sup>

Just like *Einstein's Monsters*, *London Fields* is written in the 1980s, a period marked by serious concerns about the threat of nuclear weapons. My aim is to clarify the way in which the novel depicts a dystopic world, showing the persistence of certain

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<sup>325</sup> Diedrick, *Understanding Martin Amis*, 118.

<sup>326</sup> Smith 120.

<sup>327</sup> Childs 46.

social and political preoccupations on the writer's part, and how the character of the rogue is crucial in the fulfilment of this task.

Statements on the postmodern apocalyptic nature of the novel echo the 'Note' that precedes the start of *London Fields* and which has a double function. First, it helps to clarify the title's choice: '[a] word about the title. Several alternatives suggested themselves. For a while I toyed with *Time's Arrow* [Amis's next novel, on the Holocaust]. Then I thought *Millennium* would be wonderfully bold (a common belief: *everything* is called *Millennium* just now).'<sup>328</sup> But simultaneously it teases the reader because of the way in which it finishes, proving to be a good example of postmodernist writing. Indeed, the note is signed with the initials M.A. These can either stand for Mark Asprey, one of the novel's characters, ultimately the fictional creator of *London Fields*, or rather they can stand for Martin Amis, the novel's author. This device reminds us of forms of self-reflexivity used by Amis in previous novels. Such is the case with *Money* which also starts with a note, a suicide note, signed with the same initials, M.A. Here, however, they may either refer to the fictional author Martin Amis, who appears as a character in the narrative, or to the extra-fictional writer, the novel's author.<sup>329</sup>

For Brian Finney, the novel's narrator, Samson Young, and the remaining characters are simply fictional instruments of the novel's author. Nevertheless, one is led to think of Mark Asprey as the fictional author.<sup>330</sup> It is he, a well-known English

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<sup>328</sup> Other alternatives follow: *The Death of Love*; *The Murderee*; *London Fields, or the Murderee: Final Version*. Martin Amis, *London Fields* (1989; London: Vintage, 2003). Henceforward all quotations will be signalled by LF followed by the number of the pages quoted.

<sup>329</sup> Other works by Amis that also have a note previous to the text signed 'M.A.' are: *Dead Babies* (1975) and *Einstein's Monsters* (1987). In both cases however there are no doubts that this time we are dealing with the real author, Martin Amis.

<sup>330</sup> The expression 'fictional author' is suggested by Brian Finney in his analysis of the novel. Cf.: Brian Finney, 'Narrative and Narrated Homicides in Martin Amis's *Other People* and *London Fields*,' *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 37.1 (Fall 1995): 3-15. See also: Finney, *Martin Amis* (2008).

Following Wayne C. Booth's argument, my argument is that Mark Asprey may be identified with the implied author (the 'official scribe' or the author's 'second self') of the novel *London Fields*, more specifically Martin Amis. Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd ed. (1961; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983) 71.

writer, who creates the novel by compiling the papers left by Samson (a terminally ill American). However, Finney argues that Mark Asprey is merely an alter ego of Martin Amis: ‘held at a distance from [his] creator who [is] himself locked in [his] solipsistic state of non-narrating being.’<sup>331</sup> This metafictional game does not end here. Just like John Self in *Money*, who discovers at the end of the novel that he has been manipulated, so too Samson discovers at the end that he is a victim. His suspicions are stated in the two letters he writes before committing suicide. One is addressed to Mark Asprey: ‘[y]ou didn’t set me up. Did you?’ (*LF* 468); the other to Kim Talent, in which Samson confesses: ‘I feel seamless and insubstantial, like a creation. As if someone made me up, for money’ (*LF* 470).

The novel therefore works as a game of ‘text-theft’<sup>332</sup>: Samson Young steals the story from Nicola Six’s diaries, from Keith Talent’s brochure, from Guy Clinch’s fiction, and builds the plot. Mark Asprey, in his turn, steals the whole work from Samson, notwithstanding his last wish, the destruction of the manuscript, and even adds

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Aguiar e Silva speaks of ‘autor textual’ (‘textual author’) as opposed to ‘autor empírico’ (‘empirical author’). He explains: ‘[O autor empírico] possui existência como ser biológico e jurídico-social [...] [o autor textual] existe no âmbito de um determinado texto literário, como uma entidade ficcional que tem a função de enunciador do texto e que só é cognoscível e caracterizável pelos leitores desse mesmo texto.’ Vítor Manuel de Aguiar e Silva, *Teoria da Literatura*, 8ª ed. (1987; Coimbra: Livraria Almedina, 1999) 227.

Helena Carvalhão Buescu distances herself from the model developed by Wayne C. Booth and comes closer to the notion developed by Umberto Eco, ‘Autor Modelo,’ and especially the one established by Aguiar e Silva, ‘autor textual.’ She clarifies: ‘[...] o Autor Modelo constitui uma hipótese interpretativa, dedução de dados da estratégia textual por parte de um leitor empírico activamente envolvido num acto de *cooperação interpretativa*, não devendo por isso ser visto como actualização das intenções do sujeito empírico – como a seu modo propõe Wayne C. Booth [...] – mas como actualização das intenções virtualmente contidas no enunciado.’ Helena Carvalhão Buescu, *Em Busca do Autor Perdido. Histórias, Concepções, Teorias* (Lisboa: Edições Cosmos, 1998) 14.

For further discussions about this subject, see the following critical studies: Michel Foucault, ‘Qu’est-ce qu’un auteur?’ *Dits et Écrits 1954-1988*, édition établie sous la direction de Daniel Defert et François Ewald avec la collaboration de Jacques Lagrange, vol. I (1954-1969), (1954; Paris : Gallimard, 1994); H. L. Hix, *Morte d’Author: An Autopsy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990); John T. Kirby, ‘Toward a Rhetoric of Poetics: Rhetor as Author and Narrator,’ *Journal of Narrative Technique*, 22:1 (1992): 1-22; Alexander Nehamas, ‘What an Author Is,’ *Journal of Philosophy*, 83 :11 (1986): 685-691; Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction. Contemporary Poetics* (London : Methuen, 1983); Oscar Tacca, *Las Voces de La Novela* (Madrid: Gredos, 1985); Robert Weimann, ‘History, Appropriation, and the Uses of Representation in Modern Narrative,’ *The Aims of Representation. Subject/Text/History*, ed. Murray Krieger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) 175-215.

<sup>331</sup> Finney, ‘Narrative and Narrated Homicides in Martin Amis’s *Other People* and *London Fields*,’ 3-15.

<sup>332</sup> Peter Stokes, ‘Martin Amis and the Postmodern Suicide: Tracing the Postnuclear Narrative at the *Fin de Millennium*,’ *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 38.4 (Summer 1997): 300-311.



Samson's diaries to it. Finally, behind Asprey is Amis, the extra-fictional author<sup>333</sup> of *London Fields*. Indeed, there is a metafictional gesture of breaking the fictional frame, implicit from the very beginning, in the 'Note' addressed to the reader.

In *The Death of the Author*, Roland Barthes states: 'the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them.'<sup>334</sup>

Frederick Holmes takes Barthes's thesis about the death of the author as his point of departure and affirms:

Martin Amis's *London Fieds* both comically illustrates Roland Barthes's thesis about the death of the author and parodies it by rendering it literal. The novel self-consciously dramatizes a contest for authorship; all of the characters are 'authors' of one sort or another who are vying with each other to shape events into the form of a story that will count as authoritative. None, however, is the real originator of the plots, which issue from the intertextual web formed by the various codes operative in the culture at large.<sup>335</sup>

Not only Nicola's murder, as Holmes suggests, but also Samson's suicide are a way of providing closure to the novel, which in turn survives these deaths and, through

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<sup>333</sup> Following once more Wayne C. Booth's argument (see Note 89), Asprey can be identified with Amis, the implied author. Nevertheless, the so-called 'real author' (or 'empirical author') should not be dismissed, especially in the case of *London Fields*. As Helena Carvalhão Buescu explains: '[...] o autor textual não coincide, nem necessária nem totalmente, com o autor empírico – embora mantenha com ele relações cuja pertinência e funcionalidade importa não desdenhar. Trata-se de uma representação funcional de uma série de traços que operam a inserção do texto no conjunto mais lato das práticas sociais e simbólicas. [...] Dito de outro modo: o texto sabe e mostra que *vem de alguém e vai para alguém e que nesse movimento se jogam relações complexas.*' Buescu 25.

<sup>334</sup> Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author,' *Modern Literary Theory*, eds. Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (1989; London: Arnold, 2001) 188. The original reads: 'l'écritain ne peut qu'imiter un geste toujours antérieur, jamais originel; son seul pouvoir est de mêler les écritures, de les contrarier les unes par les autres, de façon à ne jamais prendre appui sur l'une d'elles [...].' Roland Barthes, 'La mort de l'auteur,' *Le Bruissement de la langue. Essais critiques IV* (Paris : Éditions du Seuil, 1984) 67.

<sup>335</sup> Frederick Holmes, 'The Death of the Author as Cultural Critique in *London Fields*,' *Powerless Fictions? Ethics, Cultural Critique, and American Fiction in the Age of Postmodernism*, ed. Ricardo Miguel Afonso (Amsterdam – Atlanta, Georgia: Editions Rodopi, 1996) 53.

the figure of Asprey/Amis, finds a way to circulate. As Foucault argues: '[w]hat difference does it make who is speaking?'<sup>336</sup> It is precisely this question which defines the very nature of contemporary writing. The identity of the author does not really matter, what is at stake are the modes of existence of a discourse. Peter Stokes draws on this idea to claim that: '[I]like Foucault's essay, Amis's fiction suggests that discourses need to be thought of in terms of their social function – as means of agency. [...] What Amis's recent fiction underscores, then, is the power of discourse, rather than the power of the author.'<sup>337</sup>

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*London Fields* is thus a multi-layered novel. Its apocalyptic discourse unfolds in various ways. Through the depiction of a destabilized world, the representation of postmodernist space and the thematics of apocalypse, it convincingly illustrates what for Brian McHale are: 'many of the strategies by which postmodernist writing has endeavored to represent the unrepresentable scene of nuclear apocalypse.'<sup>338</sup>

Anne Laure Fortin-Tournès suggests that there are three sorts of cataclysm present in the text: 'le cataclysme imminent,' 'le cataclysme généralisé' and 'le cataclysme individuel.'<sup>339</sup> The first is linked with references made to *The Apocalypse of John*, known for its description of the end of the world (chs. 4-22), and which works at this level as the hypotext of *London Fields*.<sup>340</sup> Consider first the following excerpt from

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<sup>336</sup> Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?' *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-structuralist Criticism*, ed. and introduction Josué V. Harari (London: Methuen, 1979) 141. The French version reads: 'Qu'importe qui parle?' Foucault, 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?' *Dits et Écrits 1954-1988*, 789.

<sup>337</sup> Stokes 305-6.

<sup>338</sup> McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism*, 159. McHale develops this idea with examples of Thomas Pynchon's postmodernist novel *Gravity's Rainbow* and Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, among others.

<sup>339</sup> Anne-Laure Fortin-Tournès, *Martin Amis, le postmodernisme en question* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2003) 25.

<sup>340</sup> 'The Revelation of St. John the Divine,' *The Bible*, authorized King James Version (Swindon, U.K.: The Bible Society, Oxford University Press, 1994) 995-1007.

the novel: '[w]hen God got mad [...]. He promised plague, famine, mile-high tides, sound-speed winds, and terror, ubiquitous and incessant terror, with blood flowing bridle deep' (*LF* 133). Then the whole excerpt, without gaps:

When God got mad he was a jealous God. He said that if she didn't come across at least one more time He'd wash his hands of the whole planet. He had other planets, thanks, and in better parts of the universe. He promised plague, famine, mile-high tides, sound-speed winds, and terror, ubiquitous and incessant terror, with blood flowing bridle deep. He threatened to make her old and keep her that way for ever.

She told Him to fuck off. (*LF* 133)

All allusions to the original hypotext, recognisable in the elements 'He'd wash his hands,' 'God,' 'plague,' 'famine,' 'mile-high tides,' 'sound-speed winds' and 'terror, with blood flowing bridle deep' are undermined by the play between different styles, formal and informal, serious and comic, and the juxtaposition of two characters: God and a female character, who the reader identifies as Nicola Six. Although the former is supposed to be omnipotent, this does not prevent the latter from telling him to 'fuck off.'<sup>341</sup> The whole excerpt is a parodic subverting of the hypotext and a parody of the idea implied in 'the death of God,' or the death of any kind of authority, resulting in the utmost comedy because of the biblical language used out of context.

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<sup>341</sup> Noteworthy are also the connotations of the character's name: 'Nicola is also wrapped in all the metaphors men have used through the ages to express their fear of (and desire to control) female sexuality. Her first name alludes to "Old Nick," the proverbial name for the devil – an association she underscores when she introduces Keith to Keat's poetry with "Lamia," a poem about a female demon lover.' Diedrick 127. The repetition of her surname is also reminiscent of the number of the beast in *The Apocalypse*: 'she really did a number on him. What was the number? It was Six. Six. Six' (*LF* 97). But her surname may also be confused with 'sex' or 'seeks,' as happens with Keith when he meets her for the first time. Finally, she is also associated with the atomic bomb in Hiroshima. She convinces Guy she had a childhood friend called Enola Gay, who later had a child called Little Boy. Only later in the novel does she offer him a book explaining that Enola Gay was the plane that dropped the first atomic bomb, named Little Boy (see *LF* 124, 444-445).

The second cataclysm refers to the threat of a nuclear disaster. This was a major concern for British society in the eighties and haunted Amis's writing, as the collection of short stories entitled *Einstein's Monsters* illustrates. Penny Smith argues: '[a]lthough the year is supposed to be 1999, 1989 is how it reads, with the bubble of the Eighties about to burst and recession immediately around the corner.'<sup>342</sup> Nuclear holocaust, however, is displaced into another apocalypse scenario: London is an urban hell haunted by apocalyptic weather conditions. According to the reviewer Mick Imlah:

Martin Amis's new novel is set around Ladbroke Grove in the later months of 1999, when the world in general and London in particular are "behaving strangely" under pressure from The Crisis. This is not (which comes as a strange relief) a nuclear crisis, nor a viral one; though it has a cold-war element, a financial-disaster element, and an Indo-Chinese element, it is mostly to do with the weather: a "low" sun, "dead" clouds and "superbolt" lightning in turn terrify the sky. A rogue asteroid is darting towards south-East England at planet-shattering velocity, and an unprecedented eclipse is predicted for November the Fifth.<sup>343</sup>

The title confirms this idea. It is a paradox, as Samson notes: '[t]his is London; and there are no fields. Only fields of operation and observation, only fields of electromagnetic attraction and repulsion, only fields of hatred and coercion' (*LF* 134). The title therefore seems to stand for a desire to escape from the present, from 'the world situation.' Indeed, Samson imagines London Fields as a space of 'harmless escapism': '[b]ut I am trying to ignore the world situation. I am hoping it will go away. Not the world. The situation. I want time to get on with this little piece of harmless escapism. I want time to go to London Fields' (*LF* 64).

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<sup>342</sup> Smith 115.

<sup>343</sup> Mick Imlah, 'A Dart in the Heart,' *Times Literary Supplement* 4513 (29 September-5 October 1989) 1051.

Finally, the third cataclysm is linked with the personal drama lived by each character: Nicola Six, Keith Talent, Guy Clinch and ultimately Samson Young. The novel is a mixture of genres.<sup>344</sup> It starts as a murder mystery, an odd one it must be said since the murderess, Nicola Six, is desperately searching for her murder. She is thus in control of the story and knows what will happen to her; she writes it in her diary. Eventually she puts it at the disposal of Samson Young, an American writer, suffering from a terminal illness and running out of time. This is his last opportunity to write a masterpiece:

This is a true story but I can't believe it's really happening.

It's a murder story, too. I can't believe my luck.

And a love story (I think), of all strange things, so late in the century, so late in the goddamned day.

This is the story of a murder. It hasn't happened yet. But it will. (It had better.) I know the murderer, I know the murderess. [...] And I couldn't stop them, I don't think, even if I wanted to. [...] You can't stop people, once they *start*. You can't stop people, once they *start creating*. (LF 1)

And indeed nothing will prevent Samson from reaching the end of the story, even though it turns out to be slightly different from what he expected: he will turn out to be the murderer.<sup>345</sup> Indeed, Samson's knowledge is limited throughout the novel, he is 'the unreliable narrator.' According to Wayne C. Booth: '[s]ome of our greatest problems come when we are given another character as unreliable as the hero to tell his ambiguous story.'<sup>346</sup> In *London Fields*, however, there are no heroes and all characters have an ambiguous story. Also, although Samson is writing Nicola's story, he ends up

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<sup>344</sup> According to James Diedrick: 'The novel is a mutant form as well – an unstable mixture of millennial murder mystery, urban satire, apocalyptic jeremiad, and domestic farce.' Diedrick 119.

<sup>345</sup> See the analysis of the novel by John A. Dern in which he discusses the role of the character Samson Young in more detail. Dern 44-55.

<sup>346</sup> Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 339.

‘outwritten’ by her: ‘[d]ocumentary evidence. Is that what I’m writing? A documentary? As for artistic talent, as for the imaginative patterning of life, Nicola wins. She outwrites us all’ (*LF* 43).

Nicola simultaneously manipulates Keith and Guy, playing the whore with the first and the virgin, the Madonna, with the latter. And together with Mark Asprey, who turns out to be her lover, she tricks Samson, letting him believe that he is in control of the narrative. As she explains to him, she does not want a mere ending, she wants ‘the right ending’ and for that all characters are needed:

‘Do you really need Guy? Couldn’t you just edit him out? [...]

‘I agree it’s a drag in a way but I do need him. Keith can’t go on alone. There’s not enough in him. Of course it could be managed. Easy. A bungled rape, strangulation. I could have managed that on the first date. [...] But what do you think I’m after? A “senseless killing”? Anyway events are moving now. I just let the next thing happen.’ (*LF* 119)

Peter Brooks sheds some light on Nicola’s words, explaining the significance of the ending in narrative: ‘[t]he development of the narrative shows that the tension is maintained as an ever more complicated postponement or *détour* leading back to the goal of quiescence. As Sartre and Benjamin compellingly argued, the narrative must tend towards its end, seek illumination in its own death. Yet this must be the right death, the correct death.’<sup>347</sup>

Nicola’s words quoted above imply that for a meaningful ending expectations have to be disrupted.<sup>348</sup> Keith could not be the murderer simply because that was what he was meant to be from the start. He was bad but there were still worse guys: ‘Keith

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<sup>347</sup> Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot. Design and Intention in Narrative* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984) 103.

<sup>348</sup> Cf.: Bo Aslak Graesborg and Thorbjørn Lind, ‘The Reader in London Fields,’ MA. diss., Aalborg University, 2000, 37.

Talent was a very bad guy. You might even say that he was the worst guy. But not *the* worst, not the very worst ever. There *were* worst guys' (LF 4).

Keith Talent is perhaps the best example in the novel of a 'rogue' character. According to Diedrick: 'Keith constitutes the third portrait in Amis's fictional triptych of driven, grasping "super-yobs" (the other two are Terry Service in *Success* and John Self in *Money*), and he is by far the most corrupt.'<sup>349</sup> He is described in the novel as a bad guy though not a villain<sup>350</sup>: 'Keith Talent was a very bad guy. You might even say that he was the worst guy. But not *the* worst, not the very worst ever. There *were* worst guys' (LF 4).

His list of activities range from violent to non-violent crime. As he soon finds out, though, violent crime such as armed robbery and racketeering (fighting about drugs) is not fit for him: 'he just didn't have the talent' (LF 5). He proves incapable of clubbing an Asian woman to her knees in his armed robbery and is mocked thereafter by his colleagues, Chick Purchase and Dean Pleat. And as far as racketeering is concerned: '[i]t took Keith several crunchy beatings and the first signs of a liking for hospital food, before he concluded that he wasn't cut out for racketeering' (LF 5). He

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<sup>349</sup> Diedrick 123. Characters such as Keith Talent attract Martin Amis the most. In an interview with Enric González, Amis explains: 'Mis personajes suelen ser *yobs*, esos humanoides descerebrados típicamente británicos. Los conozco bien porque dediqué 10 años de mi vida a ser un *yob* y, francamente, me lo pasé en grande. Hay otros que escriben sobre la aristocracia y la clase media. Lo mío son los *hooligans*, los fracasados, gente así.' Enric González, 'Martin Amis. El Escritor Airado,' *El País Semanal* 14 abril 1996: 58. See also: Sánchez 137.

<sup>350</sup> As I have pointed out in chapter '1.1. The Rogue: An Intersection of History, Law and Literature,' the rogue differs from the villain. Frank Wadleigh Chandler explains: 'At the outset roguery must be distinguished from villainy. The latter is the creature of malice, if not of pathological conditions; its evil proceeds to extremes. The former is less vicious; it regards rascality with humor, or explains it as the result of social environment. Between the two no hard or fast line can be drawn; for the rogue may vary from the practical joker bent on mere mischief to the swindler and the highwayman; while the villain, like Hamlet's uncle, may smile and smile, or with Iago carol a drinking song. Nevertheless, the distinction remains generally perceptible. Falstaff is not to be mistaken for Iago, and the contrast between them, as between every rogue and villain, hinges less upon the relative venality or atrocity of deed committed than upon the rascal's and the author's point of view.' Chandler 1-2.

See for the purpose the description of Fagin as a villain, following Vladimir Propp's and Algirdas Julien Greimas's models, in my analysis of Charles Dicken's *Oliver Twist* (1838). A. R. Fernandes 89-94. Cf.: A. J. Greimas, *Sémantique structurale: recherche de méthode* (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1996); Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, ed. and introd. Svatava Pirkova-Jakobson, trans. Laurence Scott (Bloomington: Research Centre, Indiana University, 1958).

decides to play safe, stick to the weak: '[o]f course. So much simpler. He pondered the wisdom of this and drew a lesson from it, a lesson which, in his heart, he had long understood. If you're going to be violent, stick to women. Stick to the weak' (*LF* 5). He finally discovers a new profession, working as a *cheat*<sup>351</sup>:

Keith cheated people with his limousine service at airports and train stations; he cheated people with his fake scents and colognes at the pavement stalls of Oxford Street and Bishopsgate (his two main lines were Scandal and Outrage); he cheated people with non-pornographic pornography in the back rooms of short-lease stores; and he cheated people on the street everywhere with the upturned cardboard box or milk crate and the three warped playing cards: Find the Lady! (*LF* 6)

Although he earns 'three times as much as the Prime Minister' he eventually loses everything, being addicted to gambling. But cheating to earn a living is not the only kind of trickery Keith practises; he betrays his wife, Kath, on several occasions and in different ways: '[a]nd Keith was cheating hard that week, cheating on everyone, it seemed, and especially his wife' (*LF* 7). Keith's talents, however, are not only for cheating. He has another talent, playing darts: 'Keith had no intention, or no desire, to be a *cheat* for the rest of his life. [...] Keith could mentally pursue an alternative vision, one of wealth, fame and a kind of spangled superlegitimacy – the chrome spokes of a possible future in World Darts' (*LF* 7).

From the start of the novel he is presented as the main candidate for the murder, which the reader knows will take place at some stage. However, Keith 'never had what it took to be a murderer, not on his own. He needed his murderess' (*LF* 6). Throughout the novel he will be a toy in the hands of Nicola Six. Knowing him to be addicted to

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<sup>351</sup> 'Everyone in the novel is involved in some form of cheating, but it is Keith's sole means of support.' Diedrick, *Understanding Martin Amis*, 123.



TV, tabloids, sex, violence, money and pornography, the tall, dark, thirty-four-year old Nicola will play the whore with this chauvinist character, becoming his female fantasy figure. Because she understands that Keith's sense of reality is shaped by the mass media, especially TV, she seduces him by taping pornographic videos of herself.<sup>352</sup> Baudrillard explains: '[s]imulation is characterized by a *precession of the model*, of all the models based on the merest fact – the models come first, their circulation, orbital like that of the bomb, constitutes the genuine magnetic field of the event.'<sup>353</sup> Seeing Nicola on video is the true thing, having her naked by his side spoils the idealised simulation:

She left him [Keith] there, sprawled on the covers in his frilly gasmask. Then re-entered, in electronic form. On screen she came into the bedroom slowly in black cape and tigh-high boots and witch's pointy hat. [...] Keith was doing handsome. Then the real thing – the necromancer – came into the bedroom. [...]

Nicola and Keith were sitting up in bed together, smoking. They drew huskily on their cigarettes. Nicola raised her chin as she exhaled. She said,

‘You're not to reproach yourself, Keith. It happens to everyone.’ [...]

‘Pressures of darts,’ he said.

‘Yes. And a little difficulty switching from one medium to another.’

(LF 427-429)

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<sup>352</sup> Cf.: John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972) 45-47.

<sup>353</sup> Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 16. The French reads: ‘La simulation se caractérise par une *précession du modèle*, de tous les modèles sur le moindre fait – les modèles sont là d’abord, leur circulation, orbitale comme celle de la bombe, constitue le véritable champ magnétique de l’événement.’ Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation*, 31-32.

Just like John Self in *Money*, Keith Talent lives in a world of ‘simulacra,’ according to the definition given by Jean Baudrillard.<sup>354</sup> He may also be said to be the best example in the novel of a character embodying the values of the society he represents. A society that ought to be identified with that of the 80s, under Thatcher, under neo-liberalism, in which values such as individualism and competitiveness flourished, resulting ultimately in social polarisation, insecurity and loss of values.<sup>355</sup> According to Graham Fuller: ‘Keith himself is damned by class, a victim of cancerous cultural conditioning and forlorn dreams of betterment, the sleaziest excrescence of Thatcherite greed in fiction.’<sup>356</sup>

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In *London Fields*, Amis not only gives us a foretaste of life under the shadow of nuclear threat, he also presents the reader with one more example of fictional representation of the uncanny scene of nuclear apocalypse. The novel is multi-layered and displays an apocalyptic discourse which unfolds in various ways: through the depiction of a dystopic time and space, through the depiction of the personal drama of each character (mainly Samson, Nicola, Guy and Keith), through the use of parodic language and apocalyptic themes, such as the end of the world. It demonstrates how self-conscious the author is, how he plays with intertextual references, inviting the reader to interpret his work as continuous rewriting, where characters and themes constitute familiar elements, promoting a reflection not only on postmodern British society, but also on our Western society and culture as a whole.

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<sup>354</sup> Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 1-42. Cf.: Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation*, 9-68.

<sup>355</sup> Cf.: Arthur Marwick, *British Society Since 1945*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (1982; London: Penguin Books, 2003).

<sup>356</sup> Graham Fuller, ‘Murder He Wrote: Martin Amis’s Killing Fields,’ *Village Voice* 35.7 (24 April 1990) 75.

### 3.1.6. *Yellow Dog: Is it Unusual?*

J'aimerais renaître chien, pour être moins malheureux. Chien de rue, fouilleur de poubelles; personne ne me remarquerait. J'aimerais être un chien jaune, bouffé par la gale, dont on s'écarterait sans faire attention.

Bernard-Marie Koltès, *Roberto Zucco* (1988)

In an interview with John Haffenden, when asked what had been for him the legacy of his father, Martin Amis answered:

The most obvious thing is the English tradition of writing about low events in a high style, which is the tradition of Henry Fielding. I think I've inherited and haven't had to work much at ear – although it's not as good as my father's – the importance of rendering the way people speak as exactly as you can: that is quite easy, in fact, because you don't contrive it, you listen to it.<sup>357</sup>

This is certainly true throughout Martin Amis's work. One need only think of novels such as *The Rachel Papers*, *Dead Babies*, *Money: A Suicide Note* or *London Fields*. This idea may be illustrated by an example from *Money*:

I'd had a couple of drinks, lapped up some fast food, and jumped into a cab. I only had time for fast food. I'm going to kick fast food too, one day. The time has come to kick fast food. Time to fast from it... That session with She-She had done me no good at all. Although I had tarried in the Happy Isles for well over an hour, the actual handjob was the work of a moment – forty-five seconds, I'd say. (*M* 104)

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<sup>357</sup> Haffenden 24.

However, in *Yellow Dog* (2003) this specific kind of writing developed by Amis reaches its peak, becoming at times almost excessive. According to the critic Theo Tait, who wrote perhaps one of the harshest reviews of this novel:

The problem with Martin Amis is easily stated; in *The Rachel Papers*, Charles Highway manages it in one long sentence:

One of the problems with being over-articulate, with having a vocabulary more refined than your emotions, is that every turn in the conversation, every switch of posture, opens up an estate of verbal avenues with a myriad side-turnings and cul-de-sacs – and there are no signposts but your own sincerity and good taste, and I've never had much of either.[...]

Amis has fought a long and often heroic war with redundancy and tautology, brilliantly repeating, embarrassing and defamiliarising the language into new meaning. [...] The worst thing about *Yellow Dog* is that it shows Amis losing this battle.<sup>358</sup>

I couldn't agree less with this last statement, particularly in view of the quotation with which Theo Tait begins his analysis. The critic-to-be, Charles Highway, the novel's protagonist (in *The Rachel Papers*), enunciates a project that Amis will pursue throughout his work and which may be clearly identified once again in *Yellow Dog*, thirty years after Amis's first novel.

All the familiar elements from Amis's work are to be found in the novel *Yellow Dog*: an obsession with low-life characters, themes such as the commodification of

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<sup>358</sup> Theo Tait, "Yobs and Royals." Martin Amis's tabloid morality tale,' *The Times Literary Supplement* September 5, 2003: 1, 5. See also the comments on Amis's *Yellow Dog* by the Portuguese translator, Telma Costa in: Ana Raquel Fernandes, 'Telma Costa, Tradutora,' *Anglo-Saxonica – Revista do Centro de Estudos Anglisticos da Universidade de Lisboa*, II: 25 (Lisboa: CEAUL and Colibri, 2007): 245-258.

violence and ‘the obscenification of everyday life,’<sup>359</sup> the dense detail of London life, the decay and collapse of our (Western) society, the alienation of human beings. As regards style, there are various funny names, such as He, the King’s mistress, a butler called Love and an equerry called Bugger. Some parts of the novel are written in text-messaging shorthand or as e-mails, others follow the style of the memoirs of ‘Mad’ Frankie Fraser.<sup>360</sup> Satire and pastiche run throughout the novel. In an interview with Emma Brockes, Amis refers specifically to style in *Yellow Dog*: ‘I thought it was thinning out. But I don’t think that any more. There’s more plot in this book. There’s more drive.’<sup>361</sup>

There are four strands of narrative and as these stories develop, connections emerge. Each story involves a particular social register and depicts a specific world. A comparison might even be established with the intersecting worlds within a Dickens’s novel. According to Robert Douglas-Fairhurst: ‘*Yellow Dog* starts to look like a testing, testing parody of a Victorian multi-plot novel – Dickens with a snarl.’<sup>362</sup>

The novel is structured in three main parts, the first part comprehending five chapters, while parts two and three include three chapters each. The chapters are also subheaded; in total there are sixty-five fragments carefully displaced to allow the stories to emerge. The main character is Alexander Xan Meo (an actor and minor writer) who, right at the start of the novel, is attacked outside ‘Hollywood,’ a Camden bar, without

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<sup>359</sup> The expression was first employed in a review of the novel *Yellow Dog* published in *Publishers Weekly* October 13, 2003.

<sup>360</sup> ‘Mad’ Frankie Fraser was considered a key figure in the criminal underworld in the UK during the 50’s, 60’s and 70’s. He has published a number of books which are his own memoirs, such as, *Mad Frank: Memoirs of a Life of Crime* (1994, 1995), *Mad Frank’s Diary: A Chronicle of the Life of Britain’s Most Notorious Villain* (2000), *Mad Frank’s London* (2002) and *Mad Frank’s Britain* (2002). See ‘Mad’ Frankie Fraser’s website < <http://www.madfrankiefraser.co.uk/frankiefraser.htm> >.

<sup>361</sup> Emma Brockes, ‘Even the praise is bad for you,’ *The Guardian*, Friday August 29, 2003. *Guardian Unlimited*. 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2005: < <http://books.guardian.co.uk/departments/generalfiction/story/0,6000,1031580,00.html> >.

<sup>362</sup> Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, ‘Dickens with a snarl,’ *The Observer* [*The Guardian*], Sunday August 24, 2003. *Guardian Unlimited*. 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2005: < <http://books.guardian.co.uk/reviews/generalfiction/0,6121,1028231,00.html> >.

apparent provocation. Although Xan had successfully moved on from his working-class background and settled down, describing himself as ‘the dream husband,’<sup>363</sup> he now undergoes a radical change of personality and ‘his head injury leads to an atavistic relapse, into primitive beliefs and attitudes.’<sup>364</sup> He becomes sexually and verbally violent, especially towards his wife, and explains: ‘[m]ale violence did it’ (*YD* 1). This is perhaps the darkest side of the novel since there are clear indications of a creeping sexual interest in his four-year-old daughter Billie. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst suggests that this may be interpreted as a concern with the theme of the loss of innocence, which runs throughout Amis’s work: “[i]n *Yellow Dog*, too, ‘innocence’ is a word which tolls like a bell. What we need as we grow older, Amis seems to be arguing, with his usual fizzing intelligence, is not more experience. What we need is more innocence.”<sup>365</sup>

Xan’s story is linked to two amusing satires, one dealing with high life, on the royal family, the other concerned with low life, on the gutter press. The royal family is a victim of blackmail: the teenage Princess Victoria has been caught on video in her bath by a peeping tom and King Henry IX and his court try to prevent the public release of the film. Meanwhile, at the *Morning Lark*<sup>366</sup> – perhaps suggestive of the *Mirror Sport* – the tabloid reporter Clint Smoker, ‘a big wanker with a small penis,’<sup>367</sup> is busy writing celebrity gossip and, at a certain point, disappears off to the US to examine the world of commercial pornography. Curiously, the character that ends up becoming the moral voice of the novel is a porn star. The reviewer Samuel Carlisle clarifies:

At the maelstrom’s center of all this porn we get Karla White, a former porn actress, who is introduced to propel the sense of the industry, as

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<sup>363</sup> Martin Amis, *Yellow Dog* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2003) 5. Henceforward all quotations will be signalled by *YD* followed by the number of the pages quoted.

<sup>364</sup> Tait 5.

<sup>365</sup> Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, ‘Dickens with a snarl,’ *The Observer* [*The Guardian*], Sunday August 24, 2003. [Guardian Unlimited](http://books.guardian.co.uk/reviews/generalfiction/0,6121,1028231,00.html). 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2005:

<<http://books.guardian.co.uk/reviews/generalfiction/0,6121,1028231,00.html>>.

<sup>366</sup> The *Morning Lark* is Keith Talent’s tabloid of choice in *London Fields*.

<sup>367</sup> Tait 4.

well as to plainly spell out just what Amis wants to say. The nature and purpose of Karla's character varies drastically; she'll later surrealistically reveal herself as a sibling of Xan's. At first, she appears as an affair from Xan's past intent on seducing him again, but soon becomes the moral voice of the novel.<sup>368</sup>

According to Theo Tait: '[p]ornography has been, and ought to be, fertile ground for Amis: a figure for futility, solipsism and alienation (of the social being from the sexual being), for the chaos of desire.'<sup>369</sup> And Amis himself explains about pornography:

'Exploitative' is the key word here. It suggests that, while you are free to be as sexually miserable as you like, the moment you exchange hard cash for a copy of *Playboy* you are in the pornography-perpetuation business and your misery becomes political. The truth is that pornography is just a sad affair all round (and its industrial dimensions are an inescapable modern theme). It is there because men – in their hundreds of millions – want it to be there. Killing pornography is like killing the messenger.<sup>370</sup>

Joseph Andrews, the novel's villain, for his part, is an East End gangster resident in California. He belongs to an extended criminal family and shows a particular interest in dictating his memoirs in a style similar to that used by 'Mad' Frankie Fraser. 'Joseph Andrews' is also the title of a story in Xan's collection of short stories entitled *Lucozade*. This is what gets Xan into trouble. There is a clear parody involved in the use of names such as 'Joseph Andrews' and 'Tom Jones,' both of them eponymous heroes of Henry Fielding's novels. In the context of Amis's work, Joseph Andrews is the

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<sup>368</sup> Samuel Carlisle, 'Muddled Brilliance: Finding the Significance in Martin Amis' Latest Novel,' *Meaningful Audacity* 1 December 2003. 19th June 2008: <<http://www.meaningfulaudacity.com/2003/12/01/muddled-brilliance-finding-the-significance-in-martin-amis%e2%80%99-latest-novel-yellow-dog/>>.

<sup>369</sup> Tait 6.

<sup>370</sup> Martin Amis, *The War Against Cliché. Essays and Reviews 1971-2000* (2001; London: Vintage, 2002) 161-162.

villain in *Yellow Dog*, while the second refers to the singer Tom Jones (b. Pontypridd, South Wales, 1940-), whose songs are mentioned in the novel (e.g. 'It's Not Unusual').

Finally, there is also a taste of disaster in the allusions to an approaching comet and black humour in the story entitled '101 Heavy,' where an aeroplane is brought down in flight by a corpse in a coffin that breaks loose: '[o]f the 399 passengers and crew on this ten-hour flight, Royce Traynor was the only one who would feel no erosion of his well-being' (*YD* 32).

Clint Smoker, Joseph Andrews and to a certain extent Xan Meo belong to an underworld of low life, sex, crime and violence, while the characters associated with the Royal Family (King Henry IX, Princess Victoria, the servant Love, Bugger and even the King's mistress, He Zizhen) belong to high society but see themselves drawn into a world of scandal, a world of pornography – an amusing and yet serious critique of contemporary society. The novel is shot through with references to the 'British way of life;' such is the case with the allusions to the British Royal Family, the tabloid press, well-known singers and famous hits, like Tom Jones and his much-publicised 'It's Not Unusual,' and even, the parody of Henry Fielding's titles, *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*. Both characters and themes in *Yellow Dog* constitute familiar elements of Amis's work – violence, 'the obscenification of everyday life,' pornography – however, exactly because they prompt a reflection on our (Western) society, they may be considered universal. Even if he is profoundly English in his writing, even if his work is laden with Anglo-American cultural references, Amis's preoccupations are global issues.

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The term postmodernism denotes an artistic tendency directly related to an on-going social phenomenon of transition, of change in the status of knowledge, which has



evolved since the second half of the twentieth century. In fiction, postmodern writers give voice to some of the major transformations (Western) society has been going through. In contemporary British literature, Martin Amis's literary work is particularly significant on account of the way it challenges notions of fiction and reality (to which his style and language, themes and characters play an extremely important role). As John A. Dern explains:

Because meanings are no longer clear, Amis is ambiguous. Truths simply multiply in the contemporary period. Rosenau's postmodern "end to the burden of moral agency" leaves a contemporary novelist with no single verity with which to work, no moral bulwark. His novels must reflect this multiplicity of truths where "meaning" is replaced by "meanings."<sup>371</sup>

Throughout the present chapter, my focus of attention has been on the way Amis employs the rogue in his fiction, especially in his novels, and how effective this central character is as a medium for both literary experiment and social critique. Indeed, according to James Diedrick: "[a]ll of Amis's novels emphasize the degree to which cultural conditions condition character, especially the characters of males living within what Frederic Jameson has called 'the cultural logic of late capitalism'."<sup>372</sup>

Charles Highway (*The Rachel Papers*), the six main characters in *Dead Babies*, Terence Service and Gregory Riding (*Success*) are examples of Amis's early treatment of character in novelistic discourse. They all present roguish traits: they are the product of the social environment that surrounds them, they cheat, lie and live on schemes; on occasion they are violent and the thin line that separates them from malice is not clear cut. It is worth mentioning these characters since they will be the embryos of Amis's

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<sup>371</sup> Dern 46-47. Cf.: Pauline Marie Rosenau, *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

<sup>372</sup> James Diedrick, 'The Fiction of Martin Amis: Patriarchy and its Discontents,' *Contemporary British Fiction*, eds. Richard J. Lane, Rob Mengham and Philip Tew (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003) 240.

future protagonists, especially the rogues John Self (*Money*), Keith Talent (*London Fields*) and Xan Meo (*Yellow Dog*). According to Amis: '[n]owadays, our protagonists are a good deal lower down the human scale than their creators: they are anti-heroes, non-heroes, sub-heroes.'<sup>373</sup>

As far as John Self is concerned, he is an unreliable narrator and a disreputable character, behaving amorally, addicted to money and consumerism, stupefied by reality TV and pornography. Ironically, Self represents the inauthenticity of the self in contemporary society. Similarly to the argument developed by John G. Blair in *The Confidence Man in Modern Fiction* (1979),<sup>374</sup> the depiction of the rogue in Amis' novel *Money* allows for the discussion of the uncertainty of reality, the role of fiction and the cultural crisis of the West. Self practises his trickery on other characters but is ultimately the victim of an elaborate ruse. In the end he inhabits a fiction generated by the writer to his readers. Thus the rogue as a central character (just like the con man): 'reflects his creator's conception of authorship and his sense of the role of the fictive in human existence.'<sup>375</sup>

The discussion of Martin Amis' collections of short stories (*Einstein's Monsters* and *Heavy Water and Other Stories*) is intended to provide not only a clear example of the close link between the various fictional works by the author (recurrence of style, themes and characters), but also to analyse the different treatments of character provided by Amis. Indeed, both collections offer the reader stories (such as 'Bujak and the Strong Force or God's Dice,' 'State of England,' 'Let Me Count the Times,' 'Heavy Water' and 'Straight Fiction,' to mention just a few) which depict various main characters, notably male characters (Bujak, Big Mal, Vernon, John and Cleve,

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<sup>373</sup> Martin Amis, 'Saul Bellow and the Moronic Inferno,' *The Moronic Inferno and Other Visits to America* (1986; London: Vintage, 2006) 6.

<sup>374</sup> See 'Chapter 1.2. The Confidence Man: a Development of the Rogue.'

<sup>375</sup> Blair 134.

respectively), problematizing notions of masculinity and gender roles in society. As a character, Big Mal is a particularly interesting example since he is depicted as a rogue and presents common traits with the main character Xan Meo in *Yellow Dog*. Mal (similarly to Meo) is the prototypical Amis-man, he confuses pleasure with joy and love, yearns for status and success, is deeply confused at times but ultimately manages to survive the adversities that occasionally arrive.

In *London Fields*, Keith's name appears at the very beginning of the novel juxtaposed with the epithet 'murderer' (LF 3). However, it will turn out that he is not a murderer. Indeed, Keith is a rogue, less vicious than a villain, incapable of seriously hurting anyone. He is also a womaniser, cheating on his wife. He comes from a lower class and is addicted to gambling, TV, tabloids, sex, violence, money and pornography. He lives on schemes, working as a cheat, always aiming higher in order to improve his position in society. It is seriously implied that he is the product of a disjointed society. Nevertheless, the seriousness of his actions goes hand in hand with the intrinsic comedy of the situations he finds himself into.

Finally, the overview of *Yellow Dog* helps once again to emphasize the importance of low-life characters in Amis's fictional world: Xan Meo, Clint Smoker and Joseph Andrews are extraordinary examples of this. Xan Meo emerges as the protagonist, helping to establish a link between the different stories that run through the novel. The central character is a rogue, victim of his past (he has gangster ancestors) and of male violence (he is beaten without any direct provocation and this event drastically changes his life). Ultimately, he may be interpreted as a vehicle for satire of modern life, acting as a warning for the pernicious effects of sex and violence on the absence of values and social restraint.

Hence Martin Amis's fiction draws upon the tradition of what I have been deliberately designating 'the rogue tradition' and reinvents it. Rogues such as John Self, Keith Talent and Xan Meo are extraordinary creations, but they have to be understood bearing in mind a specific cultural panorama and, especially, the literary transformations and achievements that took place in Britain in the 1950s. As John D. Dern explains:

In fact, Amis' decaying worlds are merely logical, contemporary extensions of the bleak, working-class worlds illustrated in Philip Larkin's *Jill*, Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and John Braine's *Room at the Top*. Just as Amis argues that the hero's stature has deteriorated over time, so, too, has the subject matter of fiction: novels have become anti-novels; heroes have become anti-heroes; bleakness has become decay.<sup>376</sup>

The next chapter will focus on a contemporary Scottish writer, Irvine Welsh. The analysis of his trilogy (*Trainspotting*, *Glue* and *Porno*) will be equally challenging as far as style, language, the depiction of character and themes are concerned. Similarly to Amis, in his fiction Welsh will often present the reader with a rogue as the main character, and he will show a keen interest in the themes commonly associated with this anti-hero, discussing important contemporary issues, especially violence, masculinity, pornography, mass/popular culture, capitalism and consumer society, morals and postmodernism.

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<sup>376</sup> Dern 72.

## 3.2. The Rogue and Irvine Welsh's Scottish Fiction

### 3.2.1. *Trainspotting*: Novel, Play and Film: Where the “Literary” and “Pop” Meet

#### Introduction: Background to *Trainspotting*

‘No one is innocent.’

Sex Pistols (1978)

‘Choose us. Choose life.’

*Trainspotting* (1993)

Twentieth-century Scottish writing, for most people, involves names such as Alasdair Gray (*Lanark*, 1981) and James Kelman (*How Late it Was, How Late*, 1994),<sup>377</sup> responsible, among other authors, for the Scottish renaissance in the late 1970s and 1980s. In the wake of the developments set in motion by Kelman and Gray, who broke away from the English middle-class novel, depicting characters who struggle with modern life and their fragmented identity, and who, through their narrative innovations, experiment with language, Irvine Welsh emerges as a singular voice. He belongs to the new wave of Scottish writing, together with authors such as Janice Galloway, Ian Banks, Alan Warner and A. L. [Alison Louise] Kennedy. Welsh's narratives focus on Scottish youth culture, gender, urban lifestyles and the complexities of Scottish identity.

In *Trainspotting* (1993), Irvine Welsh developed an innovative fictional form to illuminate the decline in contemporary post-industrial Scottish society, denouncing the squalid texture of everyday life in Edinburgh's underclass. The novel is set against a background marked by the policies of monetarism and privatization introduced in the

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<sup>377</sup> James Kelman won the 1994 Booker Prize with *How Late it Was, How Late*. Along with Tom Leonard, Alasdair Gray and Liz Lochhead, Kelman had been involved since the 1970s with Philip Hobsbaum's creative writing group in Glasgow, being responsible for a rebirth of Scottish letters.

1980s by a new Tory administration under Margaret Thatcher. The decline of traditional industrial society had a tremendous impact on gender roles, on the formation of subjectivity and on class-consciousness, accelerating its fragmentation. According to Ian Haywood:

[The] emphasis on poverty rather than capitalist exploitation has had the ideological effect of submerging working-class identity (or significant fractions of it) into a heterogeneous, proletarianized underclass of alienated social groups, defined by their economic unproductiveness and an inability to participate fully in society: families living on social security, single parents, the disabled, the homeless, delinquents, drug addicts.<sup>378</sup>

The characters portrayed by Welsh are characters who 'inhabit the geographical and social margins of Edinburgh.'<sup>379</sup> These characters are essentially rogues<sup>380</sup> moving in an urban setting, linked to the criminal underworld, who assume a central role in the narrative. This is very much the case of Renton in *Trainspotting* (1993), used by Welsh to expose problems of violence, drug use, self-centeredness and the complete absence of any sense of morality.

The novel has been described by John Hodge, responsible for the screenplay for Danny Boyle's 1996 film version, as 'a collection of loosely related short stories about several different characters.'<sup>381</sup> Indeed the fragmented episodes, in which various voices appear, all share elements such as setting, time, characters and themes. The book is divided into forty-three chapters, comprising seven sections ('Kicking', 'Relapsing',

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<sup>378</sup> Ian Haywood, '4. Post-industrial Fictions,' *Working-Class Fiction. From Chartism to Trainspotting* (Plymouth: Northcote House in association with The British Council, 1997) 141.

<sup>379</sup> Susanne Hagemann, 'Introduction,' *Studies in Scottish Fiction: 1945 to Present*, ed. Susanne Hagemann (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996) 13.

<sup>380</sup> See my definition of rogue in chapter 1.

<sup>381</sup> John Hodge, *Trainspotting and Shallow Grave* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1996) xi.

‘Kicking Again’, ‘Blowing It’, ‘Exile’, ‘Home’, ‘Exit’). The loosely connected chapters also reflect the publication history of *Trainspotting*, sections of which appeared in different anthologies and literary journals prior to the publication of the novel. The story entitled ‘First Day of the Edinburgh Festival’ was the first to be published (1991) in *Scream, If You Want to Go Faster: New Writing Scotland*, edited by Janice Galloway and Hamish Whyte. Duncan McLean also published parts of the novel in two *Clocktower* pamphlets, *A Parcel of Rogues* and *Past Tense: Four Stories from a Novel*, and Kevin Williamson published sections of what later become part of *Trainspotting* in the literary magazine *Rebel Inc.*<sup>382</sup>

The aim in this chapter is to address the process of transferring, translating, adapting a work across different media: from a genre such as the novel, originally, to a play on stage and then into a film. In the process of doing so, it also makes manifest the centrality of the rogue character. *Trainspotting* was rewritten into a play by Harry Gibson and first seen at Glasgow’s Citizens theatre in 1995. It suffered its ultimate metamorphosis in 1996 when it was adapted to the screen, with Ewan McGregor as Renton.

The history of the adaptations may be regarded as an interesting example since it promotes reflection on contemporary Western popular culture. *Trainspotting* by Welsh is a striking example of the way literary and popular cultures meet, defying all attempts at division between the two. Indeed, the novel illustrates some key characteristics of postmodernism: it blurs the boundaries between ‘high’ and ‘popular culture,’

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<sup>382</sup> See Cristie L. March, *Rewriting Scotland. Welsh, McLean, Warner, Banks, Galloway, and Kennedy* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2002) 11; Aaron Kelly, *Irvine Welsh* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2005) 10. For further information see also BBC - Writing Scotland - Irvine Welsh. 13 March 2006: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/arts/writingscotland/learning\\_journeys/scotlands\\_languages/irvine\\_welsh/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/arts/writingscotland/learning_journeys/scotlands_languages/irvine_welsh/)

introducing everyday experience and common themes (such as pornography, violence, criminality, among others) into the realm of art.<sup>383</sup>

### **The Rogue in Scotland: Renton & Co.**

In the novel special attention is given to narrative voice. A few sections are narrated in Standard English by a third-person narrator (e.g. ‘Victory on New Year’s Day’, ‘Grieving and Mourning in Port Sunshine’ and ‘There’s A Light That Never Goes Out’). Standard English is also used in free indirect discourse in strategic chapters, as in ‘Growing Up in Public’ and ‘Victory in New Year’s Day’ (from the first section, entitled ‘Kicking’), which seem to exemplify the distance of certain characters, such as Nina and Stevie, from their Scottish background: ‘while the thoughts of both characters are rendered indirectly in Standard English, they speak in Scots, as if their distance from their surroundings were paralleled by an inner division, a part of them having gone south to England never to return.’<sup>384</sup>

For the most part, the remaining chapters are narrated in the first person, but the language varies according to whom is speaking: ‘Welsh takes care to identify each narrator with particular patterns of speech and expression in their use of dialect.’<sup>385</sup> The issue of the ‘stepmother-tongue,’ the depiction of a variety of contemporary ‘Scots’ vs.

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<sup>383</sup> Cf.: Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn* (1998).

<sup>384</sup> Nicholas M. Williams, ‘The dialect of authenticity: the case of Irvine Welsh’s *Trainspotting*,’ Ton Hoenselaars and Marius Buning, eds. *English Literature and the Other Languages*, with an afterword by N. F. Blake (Amsterdam, Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1999) 228. While Nina does not identify with her Scottish roots: ‘Nina could not be part of this strange festival of grief. The whole thing seemed uncool. [...] She could find no emotional connection though, between the her of now and the her of then [...],’ Stevie, who has just returned to Edinburgh after a stay in London, where he fell in love, is alienated from his old friends’s habits: ‘[h]e was still high throughout the match, whereas for the others it went drastically wrong. Again he became distanced from his friends. First he couldn’t share their happiness, now he couldn’t relate to their despair.’ Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting* (1993; London: Vintage, 2004) 32, 48. Henceforward all quotations will be signalled by *T* followed by the number of the pages quoted.

<sup>385</sup> Peter Childs, ‘Irvine Welsh: Sex and Drugs and Violence,’ *Contemporary Novelists. British Fiction since 1970* (Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 246.



standard English and the concern with the written representation of vernacular forms is thus at the core of the novel.<sup>386</sup> In *Trainspotting* there is no singular single authoritative discourse, rather multifarious meanings and voices; in Bakhtin's terms, the novel is rich in polyphonic heteroglossia:

The orientation of the word amid the utterances and languages of others, and all the specific phenomena connected with this orientation, takes on *artistic* significance in novel style. Diversity of voices and heteroglossia enter the novel and organize themselves within it into a structured artistic system. This constitutes the distinguishing feature of the novel as a genre.<sup>387</sup>

In Welsh's novel, however, the use of dialects might be said to be associated with a political agenda of resistance. According to Alan Sinfield, the language in the novel is not so difficult if the standard English speaker reads it loud: '[t]he writing in dialect and the violence of language and action are not just realism: [...] what is accomplished specifically is that English people and other literary readers are prevented from supposing that they can readily assimilate Scotland.'<sup>388</sup>

The bulk of the action in *Trainspotting* is set in Edinburgh, in the north of the city, from Muirhouse and its postwar housing schemes to the rundown docklands of Leith, in the mid- to late-1980s and early 1990s,<sup>389</sup> in the 'years of unemployment,' of drug-taking and the Aids epidemic. According to Welsh:

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<sup>386</sup> See John Skinner, 'Contemporary Scottish Novelists and the Stepmother Tongue,' Hoenselaars and Buning 211-220. According to Skinner: '[t]he term "stepmother tongue" could in fact be applied to all anglophone writing outside metropolitan England and mainstream America, particularly when refined by the twin co-ordinates of "land" (in the broadest sense of geographical identity) and "language" (either in its literal sense or as a simple referent for cultural identity)': 212.

<sup>387</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 300.

<sup>388</sup> Alan Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* (1997; London, New York: Continuum, 2004) xxvii.

<sup>389</sup> There are some exceptions, such as: Tommy and Mitch's trip to Glasgow for the Iggy Pop concert (which actually took place on 15 December 1988) and Mark's trips to London. Also as far as time is concerned, the novel definitely takes place some years after the Falklands War (March-June 1982), as the

*Trainspotting* was started as a novel in the summer of 1988. I was sitting in Heriot-Watt University's library, where I had been sent by my employer to "study" for the yuppie Daz-coupon qualification they call the MBA (Masters degree in Business Administration). [...] I was listening to a fellow MBA student from the Home Counties and a middle-class Glaswegian student telling me about what kind of a city Edinburgh was that made me think about its image. That image was a lie: it was at best just a small constituent part of the culture of that city. That of the middle-class, festival city. Yet it had a hegemony over all the other images of this urban, largely working-class but multi-cultural city. Other realities existed, had to be shown to exist.<sup>390</sup>

The novel's characters all belong to the working class, although in the post-industrial era they live in, they can no longer identify with it. In denying their past they become utterly lonely in a capitalist society characterized by its commodity culture, in which work is replaced by leisure, action by consumption, life by lifestyle, and in which individualism dominates. Without any prospects for the future, these characters survive living on the margins of society, moving in an underworld of hard drug culture, as opposed to the respectable bourgeois mainstream. According to Alan Freeman:

In *Trainspotting*, characters are free from the old hegemony of the imperial-industrial nexus, but have no transcendent realm to call their own. An independent burgh until 1920, when it was absorbed by Edinburgh, Leith's port and other industries have stagnated over twenty years. Though retaining a sense of difference from the bourgeois culture

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story entitled 'A Scottish Soldier' suggests. Johnny Swan, who had his leg amputated due to drug injection into the artery, fakes being a victim of the war, begging at Waverley Station with a large piece of cardboard stating: 'Falklands Veteran – I lost my leg for my country. Please help.' (*T* 319).

<sup>390</sup> Irvine Welsh, 'City Tripper,' *The Guardian* 16 February 1996, Friday [Review]: 4.

for which Edinburgh is best known, its own community has fragmented, and the gentrification of the shore area advances. Along the shore from Leith is the Gasworks at Granton, mentioned in the book [...], its massive towers counterpointing the castle of Edinburgh's twin poles.<sup>391</sup>

In *Trainspotting*, action revolves around the disintegrating lives of a group of drug addicts. The very titles of the first sections suggest a movement between going on and off drugs: 'Kicking', 'Relapsing', 'Kicking Again'. Furthermore, the novel opens with Mark Renton's first-person narrative, describing Sick Boy's (Simon Williamson) withdrawal symptoms: '[t]he sweat wis lashing oafay Sick Boy; he wis trembling. Ah wis jist sitting thair, focusing oan the telly, tryin no tae notice the cunt' (*T* 3). From the first chapter onwards, Mark Renton,<sup>392</sup> also known as 'Rent Boy' or simply 'Rent', emerges as the central character. His is the first voice heard in *Trainspotting* and throughout the novel he is the one who seems least alienated from society. In his attack on the spirit of Scottish nationalism, embodied in characters such as the violent Begbie (Frank Begbie, also known as Franco), he shows political awareness and actually invites Scots to ponder their own situation:

Ah hate cunts like that. Cunts like Begbie. Cunts that are intae baseball-batting every fucker that's different; pakis, poofs, n what huv ye. Fucking failures in a country ay failures. It's nae good blamin it oan the English fir colonising us. Ah don't hate the English. They're just wankers. We are colonised by wankers. We can't even pick a decent, vibrant, healthy culture to be colonised by. No. We're ruled by effete arseholes. What does that make us? The lowest of the fuckin low, the scum of the earth.

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<sup>391</sup> Alan Freeman, 'Ghosts in Sunny Leith: Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*,' Hagemann 254.

<sup>392</sup> Renton is described as a 25 year-old youth with dyed spiked black hair 'in an attempt to shed the McLeish image' (*T* 136). He is said to have a Catholic mother, a Protestant father from Glasgow, an older brother, Billy, who joins the army and eventually dies in Northern Ireland, and a younger handicapped one.

[...] Ah don't hate the English. They just git oan wi the shite thuv goat.

Ah hate the Scots. (*T* 78)

His is the voice of criticism and rejection of the mainstream. Renton states: '[s]ociety invents a spurious convoluted logic tae absorb and change people whae's behaviour is outside mainstream' (*T* 187). He denounces the British way of life, the consumer society, which is best portrayed by the well-known 1980s slogan that he cynically quotes<sup>393</sup>:

Choose us. Choose life. Choose mortgage payments; choose washing machines; choose cars; choose sitting oan a couch watching mind-numbing and spirit-crushing game shows, stuffing fuckin junk food intae yir mooth. Choose rotting away, pishing and shiteing yersel in a home, a total fuckin embarrassment tae the selfish, fucked-up brats ye've produced. Choose life.

Well, ah choose not tae choose life. (*T* 187-188)

Despite his lack of commitment to social systems, he shows an ability to adapt and a capacity to survive. Sinfield suggests: '[i]n fact, matters are not quite so bad because Renton affords something of a bridge to the liberal, middle-class reader. He was at university for a year, is thoughtful and likes books (he steals them because he wants to read them); he uses quite a few long words and can carry on a conversation about Brecht.'<sup>394</sup>

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<sup>393</sup> The Choose Life T-Shirts were launched by the English fashion designer Katherine E. Hamnett in 1983, in the midst of the Thatcherite government. They were adopted by popular pop bands, such as Wham! The T-Shirts carried a socially and politically conscious slogan, encouraging people to choose life over war, extinction, drug use, suicide and violence. See the designer's website: < <http://www.katharinehamnett.com/> >.

<sup>394</sup> Sinfield xxiv.

Renton is also aware that drugs are a temporary relief and escape from his own frustration and hate.<sup>395</sup> They too are a commodity bought and sold, turning Renton and his friends both into consumers and characters consumed by trade in the heroin subculture. Renton reflects at the beginning of the novel, refusing to accept any responsibility:<sup>396</sup> “Ah’m tempted tae quote Johnny [Johnny Swan, ‘Mother Superior’, a friend once, now *the* dealer] n say that we wir aw acquaintances now. It sounds good in ma heid: ‘We are all acquaintances now.’ It seems tae go beyond our personal junk circumstances; a brilliant metaphor for our times” (T 11).

Thus, heroin becomes a metaphor for loss of identity and stands for the supposed pleasures associated with consumer society, in which existence is reduced to the very act of consumption (see the section in the novel entitled ‘Scotland Takes Drugs in Psychic Defence’ – the defence, taking drugs, however, is self-destructive).<sup>397</sup> Furthermore, heroin use in the novel is linked to popular culture and popular icons, references extending from musicians Lou Reed, David Bowie, Iggy Pop, to musical groups such as the Sex Pistols from the punk rock era.<sup>398</sup> In Western contemporary capitalism, Jean Baudrillard explains: ‘consumption is an active mode of relations (not only to objects, but to the collectivity and to the world), a systematic mode of activity and a global response on which our whole cultural system is founded.’<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> Frustration and hate come forward in his feelings towards Sick Boy (he despises him), in his attitude towards his brother after his death (he has sex with his pregnant sister-in-law Sharon) and even in his views of mere animals such as cats and dogs: ‘Ah fuckin hate cats, nearly as much as ah hate dug. Ah advocate the banning ay the use ay animals as pets and the extermination ay aw dogs, except a few, which could be exhibited in a zoo’ (T 230).

<sup>396</sup> Renton’s sex life is actually a failure: his relation with Hazel is a disaster (T 76) and in the chapter ironically entitled ‘The First Shag In Ages’ he has sex with an underaged, Diane (T 150).

<sup>397</sup> T 71-75. See also: Kelly 42-49.

<sup>398</sup> On heroin and the politics of popular culture see Henry A. Giroux, *Stealing Innocence. Youth, Corporate Power, and the Politics of Culture* (New York: Palgrave, 2000).

<sup>399</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, edited and introduced by Mark Poster, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., rev. and expanded (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001) 24. The French reads: ‘la consommation est un mode actif de relation (non seulement aux objets, mais à la collectivité et au monde), un mode d’activité systématique et de réponse globale sur lequel se fonde tout notre système culturel.’ Jean Baudrillard, *Le Système des Objets* (Paris : Editions Gallimard, 1968) 275.

Precisely because it skilfully blurs the boundary lines between ‘high’ and ‘popular culture,’ *Trainspotting* turns out to be a significant example of a postmodern novel. This can be further exemplified by the episode narrated by Renton at the end of the chapter entitled ‘The First Day of the Edinburgh Festival,’<sup>400</sup> in which he produces ‘a work of art’ (the letters of the football team ‘HIBS’) with the ‘guts, tissue and blood’ of a fly he catches in the filthy public bathroom he is forced to use because of his diarrhoea (a heroin withdrawal symptom). This alone is already significant because it is presented in clear contrast with the ‘high’ art produced at Edinburgh Festival. However, the aesthetic contemplation is abruptly interrupted by Renton realizing that he has lost the opium suppositories he had just got from his supplier. In an act of despair, Renton digs through his own waste matter:

Ah roll up ma shirt sleeve and hesitate only briefly [...] before plunging ma hands and forearms intae brown water. Ah rummage fastidiously and get one ay ma bombs back straight away. Ah rub off some shite that’s attached tae it. A wee bit melted, but still largely intact. [...] Locating the other takes several long dredges through the mess and the panhandling of the shite ay many good Muirhouse and Pilton punters. Ah gag once, but get ma white nugget ay gold, surprisingly even better preserved than the first. (*T* 26)

In this excerpt the aesthetic of authenticity, often associated with scatology, known as a feature of Scots writing, takes the form of an anti-aesthetic.<sup>401</sup> It is a moment of ‘carnavalesque transgression,’<sup>402</sup> which is followed by other key episodes: ‘Traditional Sunday Breakfast’ (Davie Mitchell covers his girlfriend’s family in

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<sup>400</sup> For comments on this episode see: Kelly 55; March 29-30; Sinfield xxiv-xxv; Nicholas M. Williams, ‘The dialect of authenticity: the case of Irvine Welsh’s *Trainspotting*,’ Hoenselaars and Buning 226-227.

<sup>401</sup> Cf.: Nicholas M. Williams, ‘The dialect of authenticity: the case of Irvine Welsh’s *Trainspotting*,’ Hoenselaars and Buning 223.

<sup>402</sup> Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 10-12; 19-58.

excrement) and 'Eating Out' (Kelly contaminates the food of a group of offensive male customers with her bodily emissions). Indeed, the prevalence of such grotesque and macabre descriptions, not only in *Trainspotting* but also in subsequent works (*Marabou Stork Nightmares*, *Filth*, *Glue* and *Porno*) have given Welsh the reputation of a nightmarish writer.<sup>403</sup>

Going back to the novel, however, the episode mentioned at the end of 'The First Day of the Edinburgh Festival' may be said to set the tone for the whole novel, which continuously questions commonly accepted notions of the dominant culture. According to Nicholas M. Williams: '[t]he meaning of the suppository and perhaps the meaning of heroin generally throughout the book, is to reveal the material basis of all "elevated" notions, the lowness hidden beneath all highs, whether they be art, middle-class respectability, English superiority, or the English language itself.'<sup>404</sup>

### **The Novel's Ending: Exit to Amsterdam**

At the end, in the last chapter, 'Station to Station', the reader learns through a third person narrator that Renton has 'ripped off' his mates, stealing the money from the drug deal they had in London and dismissing any feeling of guilt. Sick Boy, a born exploiter, 'NUMERO FUCKING UNO' (*T* 30), would understand: '[h]is main anger would be directed at himself for not having had the bottle to do it first' (*T* 342). Second Prize, consumed by his drinking problem: 'was so busy destroying himself, he'd scarcely notice anyone giving him a hand' (*T* 342). And as for Begbie, the psychopath, who robbed, terrorized people, intimidated his mates and beat his girl-friend, Renton 'could find no sympathy for that fucker' (*T* 343).

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<sup>403</sup> See March 29-30.

<sup>404</sup> Hoenselaars and Buning 227.

That leaves only Spud (Murphy Spud), whose lack of cynicism towards the world and lack of articulacy (best exemplified in the chapter ‘Strolling Through the Meadows’) makes him a victim of society. Spud is the only character that makes Renton waver:

Spud could not be held responsible for society’s materialism and commodity fetishism. Nothing had gone right for Spud. The world had shat on him, and now his mate had joined it. If there was one person whom Renton would try to compensate, it was Spud. (*T* 343)

At the end, Renton flees to Amsterdam, embarking on a new life, away from his mates, away from Leith and its ghost trains,<sup>405</sup> away from Edinburgh, away from Scotland. This brings us back to the title of the novel. Indeed, ‘train-spotter’ is a term usually applied to ‘one (esp. a small boy) whose hobby is observing trains and recording railway locomotive numbers.’<sup>406</sup> However, in Leith there are no more trains, making obvious the meaningfulness and futility of the characters’ lives in the novel. Renton’s decision, nevertheless, stuns him and a note of ambiguity haunts the end of *Trainspotting*:

He smirks at the irony of him, a junky who has just ripped off his best mates, pontificating in such a manner. But was he a junky? True, he had just used again, but the gaps between his using were growing. However, he couldn’t really answer this question now. Only time could do that. (*T* 343)

Renton possesses the characteristics of a rogue. Briefly: he is both included and excluded from mainstream society, he is an ‘anti-establishment’ figure,<sup>407</sup> he moves in

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<sup>405</sup> Cf.: Alan Freeman, ‘Ghosts in Sunny Leith: Irvine Welsh’s *Trainspotting*,’ Hagemann 256.

<sup>406</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1989). 28<sup>th</sup> June 2008: < <http://dictionary.oed.com> >. See also the study by Murray Smith, *Trainspotting* (London: British Film Institute, 2002).

<sup>407</sup> Cf.: Rollin xvi-xvii.



an urban setting and joins disreputable characters. Notwithstanding his background, the subculture he is linked to throughout the novel, he aims higher and is ready to do what it takes, cheating his so-called mates: '[h]e had done what he wanted to do. [...] Now, free from them all, for good, he could be what he wanted to be. He'd stand or fall alone' (*T* 344). Renton's awareness, his capacity to adapt and his desire for change make him the perfect medium for a harsh criticism of society as a whole.

*Trainspotting* thus promotes not only a reflection on contemporary Scottish issues but also on global issues, even if Welsh is profoundly Scottish in his writing, and thus becomes a fundamental reference in British literature.

### ***Trainspotting*: Harry Gibson's Stage Adaptation**

It is not what critics call 'a well-made' play; back in 1994 we simply aimed to get it on, small and quick, because we thought highly of Irvine stuff and wanted to see whether it could work on stage.

Harry Gibson, *4-Play* (2001)

*Trainspotting* was originally adapted into a play by the playwright Harry Gibson.<sup>408</sup> Previous to the stageplay, however, an attempt was made to adapt it for BBC Radio but the project was never carried out: the language was too strong and the piece was censored. In an interview with Chris Mitchell, Gibson explains: "BBC Radio asked me ages ago to do an adaptation of *Trainspotting*. Then they looked at it. When they realised that landing on 'Planet Trainspotting' means you can't walk for two lines without bumping into a cunt, they bottled."<sup>409</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> Gibson has also adapted the following novels by Welsh: *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (Citizens Theatre, 1996), *Filth* (Citizens Theatre, 1999) and *Glue* (Citizens Theatre, 2001).

<sup>409</sup> Chris Mitchell interviews Harry Gibson: 'Expletives Repeated' [Interview about the original stage production of *Trainspotting* in 1996]. 23.08.2006: < <http://www.spikemagazine.com/0977spot.php> >.

Gibson's stage adaptation of *Trainspotting* premiered at Glasgow's Citizens Theatre, as part of Mayfest, in 1994. The play became a classic of 'in-yer-face theatre,' a kind of experiential theatre which unsettles the audiences by the use of extreme language and images, questioning moral norms, depicting as well as criticising society.<sup>410</sup> According to Derek Paget:

The staple theatrical techniques employed are those perfected in the post-war alternative theatre: direct address to the audience, rapid transformations of time, place and character through 'open' declaration of theatrical process (as against the elision and concealment used in bourgeois, boulevard theatre).<sup>411</sup>

Paget goes on to explain how through the collective role-exchange of actors and the rapid transformation of settings on stage, the play managed to convey the novel's multiple points of view, 'inviting the audience into the creative process.'<sup>412</sup>

Indeed, the original cast was of four actors, who just as in the published text shared roles and were named as 'Mark' (Ewen Bremner), who also played Boy; 'Tommy' (Jim Cunningham), who played the Drunk, Simon and Morag; 'Franco' (Malcolm Shields), who played Johnny and the Mother; and 'Alison' (Susan Vidler), who also played June, Lizzie and Lassie:

Although surprisingly faithful to Welsh's dialogue interior monologue presentation, and range of characters and narrative lines, Gibson reduced the novel's forty-three vignettes to twenty short scenes, used just four actors to play twelve parts and significantly reduced the novel's humor in

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<sup>410</sup> See 'In-Yer-Face Theatre.' 19.08.2006: < <http://www.inyerface-theatre.com/az.html#> >. See also Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today* (2000; London: Faber, 2001).

<sup>411</sup> Derek Paget, 'Speaking Out. The Transformations of *Trainspotting*,' *Adaptations. From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*, 133.

<sup>412</sup> Paget 134.

order to emphasize the unrelieved grimness and futility of the characters' lives.<sup>413</sup>

From this first production onwards the play toured within the UK. It was at Edinburgh's Traverse Theatre (1994), Edinburgh Festival (1995)<sup>414</sup>, and London with two productions, both in 1995, the first at the Bush, in North London, directed by Ian Brown, the second at the Ambassadors and Whitehall theatres, in West End, directed by Gibson. There were also various stagings outside the UK, 'including the "sanitized version" that appeared off-Broadway in 1998 with no injecting, no body fluids, and no overflowing toilet.'<sup>415</sup> According to Welsh in an interview by Kano: '[s]ince then [the first production on the small stage at the Citizens] I've seen many versions of it all over the world, the latest an incredible operatic-style piece in Portuguese which I stumbled on to by chance in Lisbon.'<sup>416</sup>

The success of the novel, which was initially published as a small print run of 3,000, outstripped the expectations of both its author and publisher.<sup>417</sup> And the reasons for this have to do with the good reception of Welsh's second work, a collection of short

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<sup>413</sup> Robert A. Morace, *Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting. A Reader's Guide* (New York, London: Continuum, 2001) 78. These actors will come across Welsh's path again: Susan Vidler in the *Trainspotting* film and in the play, *Hole*, Ewen Bremner in the films *Trainspotting* and *Acid House*, Jim Cunningham in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* and Malcolm Shields in *Hole* and the *Acid House* film.

<sup>414</sup> While the play at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh, was directed by Ian Brown, Harry Gibson developed the version which played the Edinburgh Festival (the Edinburgh Fringe) in 1995.

<sup>415</sup> Morace 79.

<sup>416</sup> Harry Gibson and Keith Wyatt, eds. *4-Plays. Based on the Novels and Novellas by Irvine Welsh* (London: Vintage, 2001) 3. In Portugal, *Trainspotting*, directed by Pedro Varela, was performed at Apoiarte, Casa do Artista, Carnide (2000). The following actors took part in the play: Ricardo Carriço, Julie Sergent, Pedro Varela, André Gonçalves, Pedro Górgia, Gonçalo Dinis, Lavínia Moreira, Ana Rita Inácio and Anabela Moreira. Marta Plantier was responsible for the music and Paulo de Carvalho also participated. There was another adaptation of the play entitled *Xuto*, directed by Marco Alves, and performed at Cine Teatro dos Olivais (2005). The following actors took part in the play: Marco Alves, Marta Inez, Manuel Bernardo, Tiago Ferreira, Frank Navalhadas, Mariana Inez, Luís Filipe Martins, Erika Monteiro, Manuel Antunes, Paula Barbosa and Tony Galamba. See CETbase – Teatro em Portugal. Centro de Estudos de Teatro, Lisboa. 23.08.2006: < <http://www.fl.ul.pt/CETbase/default.htm> >. In the interview Welsh was referring to the first of these two versions.

<sup>417</sup> By early 1995 *Trainspotting* had sold 50,000 copies and three times that number a year later, having been reprinted sixteen times. In 1996 two editions of the novel were on the bestseller lists, the regular and the film tie-in. Cf.: Morace 73.

stories entitled *The Acid House* (1994),<sup>418</sup> which made readers backtrack into *Trainspotting*, to the success of Harry Gibson's stage adaptation and undoubtedly the release of the film *Trainspotting* in February 1996.

### Screening *Trainspotting*

'Multicultural societies need multicultural art [...]'

Irvine Welsh, *4-Play* (2001)

The project of adapting Irvine Welsh's novel to screen was carried out by the same trio responsible for the successful contemporary thriller *Shallow Grave*, released in 1994, and which won the Alexander Korda award for Best British Film of that year. The trio was producer Andrew MacDonald, screenwriter John Hodge and director Danny Boyle. The film emerged at a moment when British film production witnessed a rise in its levels. According to John Hill, throughout the 1990s there were a number of outstanding commercial successes, such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994), *Trainspotting* (1996) and *The Full Monty* (1997). As far as *Trainspotting* is concerned: '[it] took over £12 million at the UK box office (and a further \$16 million in the US).'<sup>419</sup>

Besides being a landmark in the history of British cinema, *Trainspotting* has also played a fundamental role in the degree of visibility of Scottish cinema worldwide. Together with the 1995 box office successes of *Rob Roy* and *Braveheart*, which triggered a revival of Scottish image, *Shallow Grave* and *Trainspotting* contributed to a

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<sup>418</sup> According to Welsh: 'It was only when clubby types started buying *The Acid House*, then backtracked into *Trainspotting*, that it started to shift from the shelves.' Irvine Welsh, 'Introduction,' *The Acid House. A Screenplay* (London: Methuen, 1999) vii.

<sup>419</sup> John Hill, 'Cinema,' *The Media in Britain. Current Debates and Developments*, eds. Jane Stokes and Anna Reading (London: Macmillan Press and New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999) 75.

higher perception of the distinctiveness of Scottish film production. Nevertheless, a non-Scottish company played a fundamental part in financing both *Shallow Grave* and *Trainspotting*. As Murray Smith points out: ‘*Shallow Grave* was funded jointly by the Glasgow Film Fund and the London-based television company Channel 4 (total budget at just over £1 million), while *Trainspotting* was, uniquely, financed wholly by Channel 4, the budget of £1.7 million exceeding the company’s investment in any other single film.’<sup>420</sup>

In his introduction to *Trainspotting and Shallow Grave*, Hodge explains the two main reasons why he thought *Trainspotting* would never make a film. First, its disruptive narrative, the fact that there is no single story: ‘[o]nly towards the end does it take on a continuous narrative form.’ Secondly, its multiple narrators, each enacting a different variety of ‘Scots’: ‘[t]he characters, each with a distinctive voice, are defined by internal monologue as much as anything, and the language is uncompromizingly specific to a time and place.’<sup>421</sup>

Part of the success of the film, however, is due to the way it follows a strategy of differentiation which offers audiences a distinctive kind of film experience, playing up the Scottish/national as well as the American/international elements of the film, moving away from the Hollywood norm and asserting itself as an art film. Adapting the film was no easy task and Hodge followed many of Gibson’s strategies, reducing incidents and amalgamating characters, but also adding up some scenes:

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<sup>420</sup> Also according to Smith: “So a non-Scottish company played a major hand in enabling both projects [*Shallow Grave* and *Trainspotting*]. It is also worth emphasizing that Channel 4 is a television company, and that both films appeared as part of the company’s very successful ‘Film on Four’ series. ‘Film on Four’ pioneered the practice (in Britain) of a television company producing or co-producing films which would receive a theatrical release prior to broadcast, a formula subsequently emulated by the BBC (who, using this model, co-funded with the Glasgow Film Fund another one of the four Scottish films in production in 1995, *Small Faces*).” Murray Smith, ‘Transnational Trainspotting,’ *The Media in Britain*, 219-220. See also Murray Smith, *Trainspotting* (London: BFI – British Film Institute, 2002).

<sup>421</sup> Hodge, ‘Introduction,’ *Trainspotting and Shallow Grave*, ix.

My intention was to produce a screenplay which would seem to have, approximately, a beginning, a middle, and an end, would last ninety minutes, and would convey at least some of the spirit and content of the book. This involved amalgamating various characters, transferring incident and dialogue from one character to another, building some scenes around minor details from the book and making up a few things altogether.<sup>422</sup>

According to Hodge, in order to get the essence of the adventurousness of the novel, the reckless, extreme lifestyles of the characters, a choice had to be made. As Renton is one of the most frequent voices to be heard in the novel and the most articulate, he became the natural choice as the main-character.

The film's reception has not been unanimous, though an undoubted success at the box office. Those who praised Welsh's novel for its political force, for addressing issues of de-industrialisation, class tensions, racism, sectarianism, domestic violence, sexism or homophobia, severely criticised the film. Alan Sinfield suggests that:

The extent to which ideas and attitudes may be provocative but constructive in subcultural contexts, and unacceptable in the mainstream, is illustrated by the film *Trainspotting* [...]. Unfortunately, the film diminishes or removes most of the challenging aspects of the book. This is not because film is a blunter medium – by no means – but because film

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<sup>422</sup> Hodge adds: "If I missed out your favourite bits, well I'm sorry but I missed out some of my own as well. 'Memories of Matty', for example, is probably my favourite chapter: it has enough material for a whole film in itself, but too much to fit into a single scene in this version. [...] My own contributions to the script make up a small proportion of it and are not crucial. I am proud, however, to have found a fitting monument at last for Archie Gemmill's goal against Holland in 1978. A whole nation of gullible males was moved by feelings of disappointment, betrayal, and ecstasy during that summer. Seventeen years later it seemed an ideal emotional cocktail for Mark Renton." Hodge x.

as we plan and distribute them today cost a lot, and therefore tend to get made with international money for mainstream consumption.<sup>423</sup>

The film becomes appealing to a mainstream audience, particularly to a young one, for the way it enacts British popular culture, and celebrates social difference as cultural diversity. No doubt there is an erasure of the novel's class dynamics, which 'results in a shift from recognising social difference as constituted by inequality and disadvantage to the depoliticised celebration of social difference as cultural diversity.'<sup>424</sup> However, according to Cartmell and Whelehan: '[c]ommercially it is obvious that a popular film adaptation of a novel can transform the text's value, from esoteric object to object of mass consumption [...].'<sup>425</sup>

Together with the release of the film there was aggressive and canny marketing. Director Danny Boyle explains the importance of a powerful marketing strategy for the success of any film, mentioning two examples, *Shallow Grave* and *Trainspotting*:

We had a relationship with a company [...] they picked *Shallow Grave* and they marketed it in an amazingly proud way. They didn't try to sell it just as a British film. They sold it as a film to go and see in the Multiplex on a Friday night [...]. And they really went for it in *Trainspotting*. They marketed it in a hugely inventive way, tremendously aggressive, slightly glamorous but [...] you have to appeal to people, you have to tend people and get them into the cinema.<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> Sinfield xxxvii-xxxviii.

<sup>424</sup> Kelly 72.

<sup>425</sup> Cartmell and Whelehan 7.

<sup>426</sup> 'Retrospective: An Interview with Director Danny Boyle - February 2003,' *Trainspotting. The Definite Edition*, dir. Danny Boyle, perf. Ewan McGregor, Ewen Bremner, Jonny Lee Miller, Kevin McKidd and Robert Carlyle, 1996, DVD (2 disc), Universal Studios, 2003. According to Smith: "The film distributor, PolyGram Filmed Entertainment, launched an expensive publicity campaign (£850,000, or half as much as the film's production costs, for the UK launch) which resembled the heavy publicity associated with the Hollywood 'event' movie more than the modest campaigns associated with 'small' European releases. [...] Indeed, the publicity for the film showed a wry awareness of its own nature, exhorting us to 'Believe the Hype!' Rather than using the channels and spaces typically used by the large American distributors,

The celebration of British popular culture becomes even more effective in the film by the careful construction of a soundtrack, mixing countercultural classics of the 1970s and 80s with Britpop and dance tracks, making it really connect with the audience:

What we've tried to do in the film is make it stand through a period of time running from the mid- to late 80s up to now. We've tried to illustrate that not with signs going up saying '1987' but actually with pieces of music. So these guys are trapped inside Iggy Pop, they're still listening to it, they're a kind of washed up punks at the beginning of the film [...]. But by the time you reach the end of the film there's actually a wonderful Pulp track in it, there's a Blur track and there's a lot of more modern stuff. They move through the house scene and the rave scene, that's represented by underworld [...], and then they end up with Britpop. So we've tried to shape the chronology of the film through the music.<sup>427</sup>

Indeed, the film starts with a chase, Renton (Ewan McGregor) and Spud (Ewen Bremner) being pursued by two security guards. The scene rapidly changes to an image of Renton drugged followed by an opening five-a-side soccer game, where the whole gang is presented, and ending with Renton lying on the floor of Mother Superior/Swanney's flat. The use of Iggy Pop's 'Lust for Life' over these opening scenes sets the tone of the film, one of disenchantment and nihilism.<sup>428</sup> This view is stressed by Renton's voice-over; as in the novel, he is critical of consumer society, the new British way of life:

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however, PolyGram invested in outlets and employed a design consultancy (Stylorouge) associated with pop and rock music culture. The company also collaborated with its competitor EMI in order to ensure an effective launch of the soundtrack CD tie-in." Smith, *Trainspotting*, 10.

<sup>427</sup> An interview with director Danny Boyle, Shepperton Studios, 10<sup>th</sup> November 1995, during the audio dubbing of the film. 'Retrospective: Sound of the Film –Then,' *Trainspotting. The Definite Edition*, DVD, 2003.

<sup>428</sup> Cf.: Smith, *Trainspotting*, 47.



Choose life. Choose a job. Choose a career. Choose a family. Choose a fucking big television [...]. Choose good health, low cholesterol and dental insurance. Choose fixed-interest mortgage repayments. Choose a starter home. Choose your friends. [...] Choose sitting on that couch watching mind-numbing, spirit crushing game shows, stuffing fucking junk food into your mouth. Choose rooting away at the end of it all [...]. Choose your future. Choose life.

But why would I want to do a thing like that?<sup>429</sup>

Renton's voice-over is undermined, however, by the images that go with his internal reflections. Renton and Spud are pursued by two hard-looking Store Detectives precisely because they've stolen different objects (pens, tapes, CDs, etc.), which fall during their run, in order to pay for the heroin they consume: 'I chose not to choose life: I chose something else. And the reasons? There are no reasons. Who needs reasons when you've got heroin?'<sup>430</sup>

Heroin is also a commodity bought and sold, turning Renton and his friends both into consumers and characters consumed by trade in heroin subculture. This is already implicit in the first scene at Mother Superior's, when Alison (Susan Vidler), Sick Boy (Jonny Lee Miller), Spud, Renton and Swanney (Peter Mullan) take heroin. And it becomes even more evident in future scenes, such as when Renton accepts Tommy's money and actually becomes partly responsible for Tommy's (Kevin McKidd) addiction, which will ultimately result in his death.<sup>431</sup> Again this sequence significantly has Iggy Pop's 'Nightclubbing' as the background for the events, since Iggy is a popular

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<sup>429</sup> Hodge 3-4.

<sup>430</sup> Hodge 5.

<sup>431</sup> Renton is also partly responsible for the breaking up between Tommy and Lizzy, having switched their sex video, 'Tommy + Lizzy Vol. 1,' with another video labelled '100 Great Goals.' During the sex scenes which bring to a climax the night spent at the Volcano club, Lizzy urges Tommy to put on their sex tape, but they soon discover that it is nowhere to be found.

icon and a junkie-survivor.<sup>432</sup> Another scene quite important in this context occurs when Renton pays a visit alone to the Mother Superior: ‘What’s on the menu this evening?’ he asks, to which Swanney answers: ‘Your favourite dish,’ adding cynically: ‘And would sir care to settle his bill in advance? [...] Regret to inform, sir, that your credit limit was reached and breached a long time ago.’<sup>433</sup> Lou Reed’s ‘Perfect Day’ seems now to be the perfect background music, not without a touch of irony, given the sequence that follows, in which Renton having had an overdose is taken by taxi to the hospital and dumped outside it.<sup>434</sup>

### **The Film’s Ending**

[P]opular cultural forms have moved so far towards centre stage in British cultural life that the separate existence of a distinctive popular culture in an oppositional relation to high culture is now in question.

Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, ‘Popular Culture’ (1987)

As Diane (Kelly Macdonald) explains to Renton, in what might be considered a turning point of the film (Renton has just quit his drug habit for the second time): ‘You’re not getting any younger, Mark. The world is changing, music is changing, even drugs are changing. You can’t stay in here all day dreaming about heroin and Ziggy [Iggy] Pop.’<sup>435</sup> Renton fully understands this, his view filtered through his voice-over: ‘She was right. I had to find something new. There was only one thing for it.’<sup>436</sup>

At this point the action of the film switches to London. The metropolis is presented in a parodic contemporary retake of all those ‘Swinging London’ montages,

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<sup>432</sup> Cf.: Smith, *Trainspotting*, 18.

<sup>433</sup> Hodge 60-61.

<sup>434</sup> On heroin and the politics of popular culture see: Giroux (2000).

<sup>435</sup> Hodge 76.

<sup>436</sup> Hodge 76.

changing rapidly to the rhythm of the music, ‘Think about the way (Bom Digi Digi Bom)’ by Ice MC: Big Ben, the Tower of London, Piccadilly Circus, traditional buses and taxis, City gents in suits, classic street names (such as Carnaby Street, Regent Street, Oxford Street, among others). These images are linked to previous scenes, mocking what is traditionally perceived as British, as with the close up of a traditional Sunday breakfast at Gail’s home, just before Spud makes a mess of it, splitting the contents of his dirty sheets over everyone and everything in the room. Nevertheless, the London images are in strong contrast with the urban setting or even with the view of the Pentland hills presented in the film up to this moment. There is also a clear shift as far as music is concerned with Britpop coming forward, illustrating not only a change of setting as well as of times.

This change is crucial to Renton, who leaves the gang for the first time, moving away from a counter culture and actually entering the mainstream, as he will find work in the world of real estate. His words in the film embody the Thatcherite ethos of the late 1980s: ‘Profit, loss, margins, takeovers, lending, letting, subletting, subdividing, cheating, scamming, fragmenting, breaking away. There was no such thing as society and even if there was, I most certainly had nothing to do with it. For the first time in my adult life I almost felt content.’<sup>437</sup> Murray Smith suggests:

With their parallel commitments to self-interest, greed and short-term gain, the junkies constitute a revealing mirror image of the political and economic neo-conservatism of the 1980s. Both stand in contrast to the ordinary, lower-middle-class and working-class life that we see elsewhere in the film.<sup>438</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> Hodge 78.

<sup>438</sup> Smith, *Trainspotting*, 48.

Renton will be reunited with the whole gang once more for one last skag deal. At this point in the film Sick Boy has become a pimp, Begbie is wanted by the police in connection with an armed robbery, Spud is in need of money and Tommy has just died HIV-positive (although the actual cause of this death is toxoplasmosis). The success of the heroin deal makes the gang feel united again: 'We settled on sixteen thousand pounds. [...] And just for a moment it felt really great, like we were all in it together, like friends, like it meant something.'<sup>439</sup> However, this feeling of joy does not last long, the moment of celebration in the pub being replaced by Begbie's usual violence, who first verbally abuses an unfortunate customer and then smashes a pint of beer in the man's face. Renton's thoughts are echoed by Sick Boy's comment in the pub, who after being briefly away, jokingly says: 'Still here, I see' (meaning Spud, Renton and obviously the money). And when Renton suggests they wouldn't 'run out on a mate,' Sick Boy promptly answers: 'Why not? I know I would.'<sup>440</sup>

As the film draws to a conclusion, we see Renton betraying his 'friends,' stealing the gang's money and running away: 'So why did I do it? I could offer a million answers, all false. The truth is that I'm a bad person, but that's going to change. [...] I'm cleaning up and I'm moving on, going straight and choosing life. [...] I'm going to be just like you: the job, the family, the fucking big television [...] to the day you die.'<sup>441</sup>

Alan Sinfield argues that one of the most disappointing differences between novel and film is how the latter suppresses the contrast between Renton and Sick Boy, crediting Renton with Thatcherite sentiments, when in the novel Sick Boy is *the* Thatcherite *par excellence*.<sup>442</sup> Murray Smith, however, has a slightly different and

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<sup>439</sup> Hodge 99.

<sup>440</sup> Hodge 101.

<sup>441</sup> Hodge 106.

<sup>442</sup> Cf.: Sinfield xxxviii.

interesting interpretation of the film, drawing a comparison between Renton's story and the *Bildungsroman*, the novel of 'character formation,' in order to point out the ambiguity present at the end of *Trainspotting*:

In its traditional form, such a novel [the *Bildungsroman*] would end with the central character finding his place and integrating with society. The ending of *Trainspotting* in these terms is, once again, ambiguous. On the one hand, Renton breaks with the gang and thus with his past, and to that degree appears to be abandoning his life as a countercultural 'outsider' for something more conventional. On the other hand, he has just stolen several thousand pounds, money obtained from the sale of illegal drugs, and doesn't seem too perplexed by his actions: hardly the behaviour of a model citizen.<sup>443</sup>

Richard A. Gilmore suggests that Renton does not mean what he actually says. Thus, his last monologue, just as his first one ('Choose life'), should be taken ironically:

Given what we have come to know about Renton, however, his intelligence, his wit, his determination, not to mention his opening monologue, we might want to take this [the concluding voice-over] ironically. [...] [H]e does not mean exactly what he says. What he does mean remains unspecified, remains to be reconstructed.<sup>444</sup>

In 2006, ten years after the release of the film, Harry Gibson directed a new production of *Trainspotting*, the stage adaptation, equally successful. The cast this time was of five actors: Brian Alexander as Franco, Laura Harvey as Alison, Peter Milne as Mark, Peter J. Ireland as Sick Boy and Ruairaidh Murray as Tommy. Their 2006 tour included theatres all over Britain: Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Belfast, Oxford,

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<sup>443</sup> Smith, *Trainspotting*, 50.

<sup>444</sup> Richard A. Gilmore, 'Into the Toilet: Some Classical Aesthetic Themes Raised by a Scene in *Trainspotting*,' *Doing Philosophy at the Movies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005) 118.

Birmingham and Bath.<sup>445</sup> Gibson states again the differences between the play and the movie:

One big difference between the play and the film apart from the fact that the play just uses one set and four actors [sic] and you can smell it happening in front of you is that the movie ends up being the [anti-] heroic's getaway, while the play stays with the trainspotters, left standing in the ruined old Leith railway station waiting for trains that will never come to get them away from it all. Irvine Welsh liked that ending. Truer to life.<sup>446</sup>

The novel's ending, the play's or the film's endings, despite variations of tone, settings and themes, all share something in common. Indeed, the characters portrayed in these works are not simply good or bad, rather survivors in the society we live in, making us think carefully about the kind of world we belong to. This will be important for the appraisal of two novels intrinsically linked to *Trainspotting: Glue* and, especially, *Porno*, the sequel to Welsh's first novel.

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<sup>445</sup> *Trainspotting – The Play*. 23.08.2006: < <http://www.trainspottingtheplay.co.uk/> >.

<sup>446</sup> Interview with Director Harry Gibson: 'Trainspotting The Play 10 Years Ago' [Interview provided to the press to promote the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary production of *Trainspotting*, the play based on Irvine Welsh's novel]. *Spike magazine: books, music, art, travel*. 23.08.2006: < <http://www.spikemagazine.com/1205-harry-gibson-trainspotting.php> >.

### 3.2.2. *Glue*: Sticking Together Even When Falling Apart

I'm sticking with you  
'cos I'm made out of glue...

Lou Reed / Velvet Underground, 'Sticking with you' (1985)

Normally, I like to have characters that are living in a short time frame in the novels, and put them in a position whereby they're having to overcome something. Like Renton [in *Trainspotting*] has to overcome his heroin addiction in a short time frame of about a year. [...] But *Glue* ended up a lot more expansive.

Irvine Welsh, 'Interviewed by Christopher Kemp' (2001)

Although different in form and style from Irvine Welsh's other novels, *Trainspotting* and *Porno*, *Glue* is nevertheless linked to these two novels. Together, I would argue, they constitute a trilogy. Both *Trainspotting* and *Porno* have a fragmented structure, in which several voices appear, eventually giving cohesion to the whole narrative. In *Porno*, the sequel to *Trainspotting*, characters such as Sick Boy, Renton, Dianne, Spud, Alison, Second Prize and Begbie are reunited and they interact with new ones in a new Leith, approximately ten years after the adventures narrated in *Trainspotting* took place. In between much has happened and *Glue* allows the reader to understand the changes Leith and its inhabitants went through from the 70s until the new millennium.

The novel *Glue* is divided in four main parts and an epilogue ("Reprise: 2002: The Golden Era"), following a linear structure. The first few chapters are gathered under the subtitle "Round About 1970: The Man of the House" and depict four different families, focusing on four young lads, their parents and siblings. From the very start it is a man's world and attention is directed towards the adult male characters and their sons: David Galloway and Andrew, Henry Lawson and Terry, Duncan Ewart and Carl and

Wullie Birrell and Billy. The fathers, particularly Duncan and Wullie, are clearly representatives of an old order about to change. They are still very much a product of traditional industrial society, displaying a strong working-class identity as exemplified in the episode in which Duncan stands up for Wullie at work in the factory.<sup>447</sup>

Although the beginning of *Glue* is rather positive, there are already premonitions haunting the optimistic mood in which the novel starts. Curiously enough, it is through the eyes of the female characters (Susan Galloway, Alice Lawson, Maria Ewart and Sandra Birrell), wives and mothers, that the delicate balance of these characters' lives is shown. In his analysis of *Glue*, Aaron Kelly argues that the treatment of women in the novel is different from Welsh's previous works: '[in *Glue*] it is the agency of the female characters that is asserted as a means of disrupting the masculine assumptions of the novel.'<sup>448</sup> And indeed an example could be drawn from the very first chapter ("Windows '70").<sup>449</sup> When moving into the new buildings of the scheme in Leith, Davie Galloway looks out of his apartment at the scheme below him, his feelings conveyed through a third-person narrator: 'Davie felt like a newly crowned emperor surveying his fiefdom. [...] For Davie Galloway, it was the big windows that exemplified all that was good about these new slum-clearance places' (*G* 3). However, it is Susan (Davie's wife)

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<sup>447</sup> The episode is as follows:

'- I art Ewart shop steward. And you art? Duncan continued the joke. He knew this routine backwards. But the man wasn't laughing any longer. He gasped out breathlessly – Wullie Birrell. Ma wife... Sandra... gone intae labour... Abercrombie... eh'll no lit ays go up tae the hoospital... men oaf sick... the Crofton order... says that if ah walk oaf the joab ah walk oot for good...

In a couple of beats, indignation managed to settle in Duncan's chest like a bronchial tickle. He ground his teeth for a second, then spoke with quiet authority. – You git tae that hoospital right now, Wullie. Thir's only one man that'll be walking oaf this joab fir good n that's Abercrombie. Rest assured, you'll git a full apology fir this!

- Should ah clock oaf or no? Wullie Birrell asked, a shiver in his eye making his face twitch.

- Dinnae worry about that, Wullie, jist go. Get a taxi and ask the boy for the receipt and ah'll pit it through the union.'

Irvine Welsh, *Glue* (2001; London: Vintage, 2002) 19. Henceforward all quotations will be signalled by *G* followed by the number of the pages quoted.

<sup>448</sup> Kelly 182.

<sup>449</sup> This subtitle together with the first chapters of each section of the novel (respectively: "Windows '80", "Windows '90" and "Windows '00") constitutes not only a pun on the Microsoft operating system, but simultaneously provides an effective interface between the reader and the decade portrayed.



who notices the striking contrast between the huge windows (clearly a sign of opulence in Davie's eyes) and the blazing heat (the side effect of having such windows), and worries about the amount of new articles that Davie brings to the house (undoubtedly a sign that they are living beyond their means and simultaneously raising suspicions about Davie, revealing him to be a petty thief):

Susan rose slowly [...]. Beads of moisture gathered on her forehead. – It's too hot, she complained. [...] Susan Galloway shook her head again. She looked past the new kitchen table, and saw the new three-piece suite, the new coffee table and new carpets which had mysteriously arrived the previous day [...]. A bike? Where was the money coming from for a bloody bike? Susan Galloway thought, shivering to herself as the blazing, sweltering summer sun beat in relentlessly, through the huge windows.  
(G 4-5)

The second part of the novel, '1980ish: The Last (Fish) Supper,' sets the action in the eighties, a decade marked by monetarist policies and privatisations introduced by the Tory administration under Margaret Thatcher. The pernicious effects of the policies introduced at this time are felt at different levels in *Glue*. The change in the political scene has a strong impact on the society to which these characters belong. Stylistically, the third-person narrator employed at the beginning of the novel (associated with the older generation of parents) gives way to several first-person narrators (as already announced by Andrew Galloway's narration in the last chapter of the first section, which also introduces the use of Scottish phonetic vernacular in the novel). This shift may be interpreted as a sign of the times since in the new post-industrial culture growing attention is drawn to the individual. The four lads (Andrew, Terry, Billy and Carl) are now in their teens and striving to find their way in the society they live in.

Ultimately their future is determined by random circumstance and decisions they alone take. Throughout this section youth culture is highlighted, with special emphasis on themes such as male culture, violence and sexuality. But although this section is very much focused on male identity, it opens with Sandra Birrell's perspective, denouncing the squalid atmosphere in the schemes and foreshadowing what is about to happen:

As the fibres of her body and soul seemed about to relax, drunks materialised in the streets outside, spilling into the soundless void, filling it with their screams and chants. [...] But those vendors of misery always seemed to stop outside her door, and there was one particularly persistent guy who had inadvertently taught her every verse and chorus of *Hearts Glorious Hearts* over the last few months. (G 33)

Indeed football seems to be at the very heart of this section: it is a substitute for sex and a way of channelling violence. It is also during the Hibs (the Hibernian Football Club) – Glasgow Rangers match that the interaction between the four main characters of *Glue* and some of the characters already known from *Trainspotting* becomes clear. Begbie, Tommy, Renton and Spud together with Terry, Gally, Carl and Birrell are all involved in a major riot during the match. The chapter ironically entitled 'The Sporting Life'<sup>450</sup> is immediately followed by another (significantly entitled 'Clouds') in which one form of youth marginality (football hooliganism) is replaced by another: drugs. Not surprisingly, Simon Williamson (Sick Boy), the remaining element of the familiar crew of Welsh's first novel, is introduced at this point in the novel. The two episodes – at the football match and at the disco – reach a climax with the stabbing of the Clerie's boy,

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<sup>450</sup> The title of the chapter is reminiscent of David Storey's novel *This Sporting Life* (1960) and the film adaptation with the homonymous title directed by Lindsay Anderson (1963).

eventually leading to Gally's arrest<sup>451</sup> and changing the lives of the four main characters forever.

The nineties are the turning point of the novel ('3. It Must Have Been 1990: Hitler's Local'). The fragmentation of the community in this post-industrial society is again seen through female eyes. During a visit to Wullie and Sandra Birrell, Maria Ewart's thoughts (conveyed in free indirect style) dwell on the new era they live in. Confidence, faith and hope in life seem to have been reduced to a matter of money and material goods, signs of opulence in a new commodity culture that has definitely replaced the old community values:

Maria Ewart slipped a foot out of her shoe and let her toes knead the carpet's thick pile. The luxurious furnishings of her friends' home had much in common with their own. The Birrells' house, like the Ewarts', was fitted out with optimistic redundancy cash, a statement of confidence, faith or hope, that something would turn up, something to secure this new status quo. [...] It made Maria feel mildly ashamed, but this was the first time she'd been back down to the scheme since they'd moved up to Baberton Mains, nearly three years ago. The thing was, most of the people they'd been friends with had gradually moved out. And Maria was always going on about the people that had moved in to replace them, how they didn't have the same feeling for the area, there was no community spirit left, it was a dumping ground for social problems and it had gone downhill. (*G* 183-184)

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<sup>451</sup> Andrew Galloway narrates: 'It's the polis. Ah jist ken. [...] It's for me. [...] Doon the station they take ays intae a room n leave ays thair. [...] Aw ah kin dae is think aboot Setirday night, aboot the boy's face, aboot Polmont; aboot bein daft enough tae pill the knife, stupid enough tae gie um it, mad enough tae take it back. [...]

– Once more Andrew, did you give that knife to anybody that night?

Ye nivir grass. [...] Ah'm a mug, ah'm gaun doon but thir's nowt ah kin dae. Ye dinnae shop nae cunt. But surely some cunt'll tell thum it wis Polmont. Thi'll no lit me dae time, no Doyle n that, no the rest ay the boys. They'll tell Polmont, they'll git it pit right' (*G* 134-137).

Despite their apparent display of wealth and well-being, both couples are casualties of this new lifestyle. Wullie and Duncan are the ones who are most affected. Unemployed and without any sense of purpose, they are stripped of their manhood and depicted as redundant: '[n]ow Wullie Birrell often felt useless. Redundancy seemed to be a term which meant more than just the loss of a job. [...] Like Wullie, Duncan was finding life hard without a job, struggling to pay off the mortgage on their small house in Baberton Mains' (*G* 185). And while Wullie retreats into his own world and finds refuge in new gadgets such as the computer, 'his second major purchase,' Duncan is unable to pursue his main hobby. Even though his son Carl is in the business and has become a professional disc jockey, he does not enjoy the new trends in music, which he describes as 'Thatcherite music,' a product of 'Thatcherite children.' And indeed the music from the end of the 80s and the beginning of the 90s stands for a lifestyle totally different from his own:<sup>452</sup>

Duncan was far more concerned about what he saw as the poor quality of music today. – That's no music, it's nonsense. Stealing other people's stuff and selling it back tae them. Theft, Thatcherite music, that's what that is. Thatcher's bloody children, right enough, he grumbled. (*G* 186)

Duncan and Wullie belong to an old order, they are examples of the traditional ordinary working man in industrialised areas who will turn out to be the victims of the postmodernist transformation of masculinity felt throughout the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Britain. Indeed, as argued by John Beynon:

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<sup>452</sup> Indeed Duncan Ewart is a fan of Elvis Presley and the first musical references to appear in the novel are of singles such as: 'The Wonder of You,' 'In the Ghetto' and 'Suspicious Minds.' However, by 1980 the four lads are listening to the Clash's first album ('Police n Thieves'), dance to the rhythm of groups such as the Odyssey ('Use it Up n Wear it Oot'), Blondie ('Atomic'), The Jam ('Start!' and 'This is the Modern World') and Bowie ('Ashes to Ashes'). Finally, from 1990, onwards Carl has become a successful techno DJ.

Millions of men in the advanced economies lost their jobs and economic authority in the succession of recessions throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. The message was clear: loyalty, faithfulness, dedication to employers no longer counted for anything when it came to the operation of raw capital. The turning point in Britain was the 1980s Thatcherite deregulation of the economy, her adoption of market-led policies and a refusal to provide state hand-outs to halt the all-too-evident decline of heavy industry. [...] This fuelled consumption and led to the mushrooming of out-of-town shopping malls, retail parks and the promotion of shopping as a primary 'leisure-pleasure' activity. [...] The shift from manufacturing to servicing, and from industrialization to electronic technology, was immensely damaging for working class men.<sup>453</sup>

Sandra and Maria also show a concern for the world in which their sons have grown up, a strikingly different world from their own, apparently with greater wealth but crueller, harsher and devoid of values: '[w]orse, it seemed that young people, despite their fundamental decency, now had to buy into a mind-set which made viciousness and treachery come easy' (*G* 186).

Throughout this section the reader can follow the advances made by each main character. Indeed Carl has become a successful DJ and Birrell a professional boxer, although he dreams of setting up his own business, synonymous with money and, eventually, respect: '[m]e, having my ain bar, my ain business. Sounds good. It's the only way to make money, having your ain business, buying and selling. And having money is the only way to get respect. Desperate, but that's the world we live in now' (*G*

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<sup>453</sup> John Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture* (Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2002) 107.

206). However, fortune does not smile on them all. After serving some time in prison, Gally never quite adapts to life on the outside, he becomes addicted to drugs, tests HIV positive, fails as a father and husband,<sup>454</sup> and ultimately, towards the end of the novel, commits suicide. The state of vulnerability he is in is perhaps best understood during the group's trip to Germany for the beer festival in Munich (Oktoberfest), when the party their friend Wolfgang hosts is briefly interrupted by Gail, who climbs to the roof of the house and balances dangerously on the tiles.<sup>455</sup>

As for Terry, although Duncan has always defended him, he admits he is a bit of a rogue: 'Duncan always stuck up for Terry. Granted, the boy was a bit of a rogue, but he hadn't had an easy life and he was a big-hearted laddie' (*G* 187). In point of fact, the novel revolves around different characters, focusing mainly on the life of four youngsters: Andrew Galloway, Terry Lawson, Carl Ewart and Billy Birrell. Nevertheless, as in *Trainspotting*, in which Renton emerges as the central character, in *Glue* Terry displays features that make him one of a kind. Undoubtedly, all the characters in the novel show roguish traits, but it is Terry who emerges as the true rogue.

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<sup>454</sup> The scene in which Gally fights with his unfaithful wife and hits their daughter Jacqueline by mistake, eventually ending up in prison, is overwhelming: "[w]hen ah challenged her, she just laughed in ma face. Telt me what he was like in bed. Better than me; much better than me, she said. A real animal, she telt ays. [...] Ah thoat about *him*, n ah couldnae believe it. She must've been talkin about somebody else. It couldnae be McMurray, no Polmont [...]. Ah couldnae take it. Grabbed her by the hair. [...] Ah clenched ma fist intae a ball, pulled it back and [...] and ma daughter was behind me [...]. Ma elbaw went intae her face, crushed the side ay her face, her fragile wee bones..." (*G* 215).

<sup>455</sup> This episode shakes the remaining three friends. Carl's description is very vivid:

- GIT DOON FAE THAIRE GALLOWAY YA WEE RADGE! Billy's ragin.

Gally's eyes look weird; it's shitting us all up, it's like the cunt's just gone. [...] Ah'm shouting at the toap ay ma voice, - C'moan Galloway, ya attention-seeking wee prick! Huv a fuckin heart! These people huv been lookin eftir us. We're oan holiday! They didnae need aw this shite! [...] Suddenly Lawson grabs him and pulls him roughly into the house [...]. Ah head back upstairs.

When ah git thaire Gally's laughing away, but it's a strange laugh. (*G* 340-341)

## Terry Lawson, *The Rogue*

I think if you get good characters they have universal application.

Irvine Welsh, "Interview by Christopher Kemp" (2001)

Indeed Terry displays the main features of a rogue: he is the product of the social environment he is brought up in, he is cunning, cheats (mainly women but also his friends), lies and steals. He is the prototype of the occasional criminal who is becoming more and more professional, and he always regards rascality with humour.

Terry stands out as self-centred and completely rejects any accepted social rules or conventions: 'They wanted ays tae stey oan as well, sais ah could dae a couple ay O grades if ah pit ma mind tae it. But what dae ye want tae stey oan at school fir when yuv already rode jist aboot every bird their that'll go? Waste ay fuckin time' (*G* 36). Having given up school, he first earns his living going round the schemes in Leith with his juice lorry. Such activity will win him the name of 'Juice Terry.' This character is perhaps the most perfect embodiment of male chauvinistic behaviour. He is a womaniser and a sexist, as demonstrated by the language he uses when referring to women and by how unfaithful he is to all of them. These features help him to build his male identity but are not enough. According to Suzanne Hatty:

Class, ethnicity, and youth combine to place the individual within potential networks of violent relations. Gender intersects with these flashpoints of vulnerability to exacerbate the likelihood of men's involvement in violent behaviour and to decrease the likelihood of women's involvement.<sup>456</sup>

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<sup>456</sup> Suzanne E. Hatty, *Masculinities, Violence and Culture* (Thousand Oaks, California and London: Sage Publications, 2000) 7.

Thus, violence is also an intrinsic part of Terry's maleness, not only straightforward physical violence, which may take place randomly at a football match (see, for instance, the chapter 'The Sporting Life'), but also criminal violence, associated with his professional activities. As Terry ironically lets one of the 'lassies' from the DHSS (Department of Health and Social Security) know:

– This is the third time that's happened to me, ah explain, trying tae keep a smirk oaf ma face. – The last place ah started in only went n caught fire. The one before it hud tae shut wi flood damage. Ah'm starting tae think ah'm cursed! [...]

This lassie's as sweet as an unexpected tax rebate. We agree thit ah'll jist huv tae keep up the good fight until they kin send ays along tae dae something suitable. – It wis whin the juice lorries finished, that's what snookered me, ah explained tae her.

It did n aw; eftir that ah changed ma line ay work. (*G* 236)

With his associate Uncle Alec, a compulsive drinker, Terry engages in a life of small crime – his new 'line ay work' consists, among other things, of robbing houses. He lives up to his reputation and when in Germany, at Wolfgang's house, Carl and Gally cannot help remarking:

- Acceptable, Mr Ewart? Gally asks.

- Most palatial, Mr Galloway. – Ah'm just fuckin relieved that Juice Terry's no here, the cunt would've cleaned the place oot by now.

Gally laughs, – Eh'd have hud Alec Connolly over fae Dalry wi the van! (*G* 284)

It is with the two characters – Terry and Uncle Alec – that one of the most hilarious scenes in the novel takes place. The chapter entitled 'Competition' is an



accomplished example of comedy of situation. They break into a detached house only to find out that they have competition. Things seem to get slightly out of control as they realise they are not alone:

– We open the door and tiptoe intae the kitchen through the darkness. [...] [A]ll of a sudden there's an almighty crash and ah almost shite masel. Ah realise it's Alec, eh's fell heavily oan ehs erse. – What the fuck... ah spit through the darkness at the clumsy drunken cunt.

– Ah slipped oan something... eh moans.

Thir's a hell oaf a smell n aw, really fuckin pungent [...]. Ah'm startin tae think that the filthy fuckin jake's follayed through when ah realise that somebody's shat across the flair, n that's what Alec's slipped in. [...] Then in front ay us, ah sees this figure, standin in the doorway. Ah catch a glint fae a shard ay moonlight and ah realise thir's a knife in its mitt. A young boy, about eighteen, n eh's shitein it. (G 263)

The boy is a young junkie associate of Murphy Spud – once more the characters from *Glue* interact with already known ones from *Trainspotting*. Terry is aware of Spud's drug addiction. Moreover, at this point in the novel, the reader (familiar with the action of Welsh's first novel) is able to place the events in time. Indeed, the present episode occurs a while after Renton has ripped off his mates:

Ye can never trust a junkie, and ye never, *ever* work wi one. [...] Ah mind about no trustin junkies, n he's livin proof, cause this mate ay his ripped him n ehs pals oaf. They hud a big skag deal doon in London, n the boy absconded wi the loot!

– Heard that Renton cunt stiffed yis, mate. You, Begbie n Sick Boy, that's what they tell me, ah said. – What's aw that about, eh.

– Aye... that wis a couple ay years ago. No seen um since.<sup>457</sup> (*G* 265)

Terry self-assurance is only shaken towards the end of the novel when he is reunited with his friends Carl and Billy. He realises then that he has become like his father, unable to commit to a relationship or to care for his son:

Lucy had told him about the problems their son was having at school. Like father... it was the unspoken assertion on her lips. He thought of his own father, as estranged from him as he was from his son. Terry had a sickening, mature reflection that there was nothing he could do to be a more positive influence on the kid's life. (*G* 541)

Anthony Burgess points out the decline of parental guidance and authority in the permissive society of the 1980s as a direct cause of an increase of male violent instincts: '[t]he structure of the family has traditionally encouraged this [the suppression of violence], and the child has always in the same tradition, learned the duty of citizenship [...]. [But] our parents are no longer the custodians of an acceptable order: young boys despise their fathers.'<sup>458</sup> And indeed the pattern of Terry's life experiences is transferred to that of his son.

Terry also confesses that he was with Gally the night before his suicide. He speaks out of guilt. The reader learns that against all odds it was Terry who wounded Polmont with the crossbow (to prevent the latter from telling Gally about his illicit affair with Gail, his friend's wife). And indeed it is Gally who eventually saves Polmont's life, calling for an ambulance: '– Polmont was gaunny say it then [...]. Or

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<sup>457</sup> The dialogue between Terry and Spud also anticipates the action of *Porno* (2002), Welsh's next novel, a follow up of both *Trainspotting* and *Glue*, as becomes apparent in the remaining of the dialogue:

- How's the rest ay the boys, Sick Boy n that?

- Aw, eh Sick Boy's still in London. Eh came up tae see ehs Ma a few weeks back but, and wi hud a few bevies.

Never phoned *me* up, the cunt. Still, ah eywis liked Sick Boy. – Good. Tell um aw the best when ye see um. Great cunt, Sick Boy. N what about Franco, he still inside, aye?

- Aye, Spud says, the very mention ay that name makin um a wee bit uncomfortable. (*G* 265)

<sup>458</sup> Anthony Burgess, 'Criminality by Clockwork,' *The Independent* 27 August 1988.

mibbe eh wisnae, ah dinnae ken! [...] Ah dunno if ah meant tae scare um or shut um up or if it wis an accident [...]. [...] On the wey oot, we stoapped n Gally called an ambulance for Polmont. It saved the cunt's life" (G 545).

Therefore, Terry exemplifies the rogue in a modern context, more precisely, in British society from the 80s onwards, in the countdown to the new millennium. He is feckless and dissolute, he constantly tricks those who surround him, and he frequently becomes involved in criminal activities. However, Terry is not evil, rather he is a victim of the society he belongs to, constantly struggling to get through life, and often getting involved in the most awkward situations and the most comic episodes.

### **Masculinity, Violence and Popular Culture**

[M]asculinities are not given but achieved through a constant struggle with countervailing tendencies.

Ben Knights, *Writing Masculinities* (1999)

A more prominent cultural response to transitional changes and crises in masculinity is violence to others.

Jonathan Rutherford, *Men's Silences: Predicaments in Masculinity* (1992)

The novel *Glue* raises questions about gender, power and ideology in general, and about masculinity in particular. The analysis of a chapter such as 'The Sporting Life' will prove useful for our understanding of the following interrelated themes: masculinity, violence and popular culture. The title of this chapter draws on David Storey's novel (*This Sporting Life*, 1960), which was adapted for cinema by the director Lindsay Anderson some three years later (*This Sporting Life*, 1963). Both novel and film are illustrative of the fifties, together with other novels and films that marked this period in British culture and society (such as *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*,

*Lucky Jim*, *Room at the Top* or *A Kind of Loving*), as discussed earlier.<sup>459</sup> Indeed the novel *This Sporting Life* depicts the changes in society at the time, focusing on sports, violence and its effect on life.<sup>460</sup>

The episode narrated by Andrew Galloway in the chapter mentioned above ('The Sporting Life') also relates to sports, violence and youth culture but in a rather different manner. The episode portrays a new reality born in the eighties and intrinsically linked to the Tory government: the football casuals culture. First, a definition of the casuals phenomenon is necessary. Secondly, it is important to connect it to the world of multinational capital, consumerism and money. According to Simon Frith:

[...] [T]he problem of leisure and unemployment has arisen just as the leisure *industry* is being acclaimed as the solution to Britain's economic problems. [...] Pop's leisure significance is thus being fought for again – hence, Britain's newest youth subculture, the 'casuals,' whose aggressive, stylistic celebration of leisure goods and 'life-style' conceals both continuing dole queues and continuing 'hooliganism' – the street-corner menace now comes from such nice, clean-cut Tory-looking boys and girls.<sup>461</sup>

However, as Duncan Ewart affirms, the '*real* hooliganism' is not perpetrated by these young lads, who are also victims of the system, but rather by the government: '[i]t's jist silly, stupid boys showin oaf wi thir mates. [...] They've aw been demonized oot ay all proportion tae take people's minds off what this Government's been daein for

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<sup>459</sup> See interview with David Lodge in the Attachments.

<sup>460</sup> The main character, Arthur Machin, is a professional rugby player who carries the violence of the field into every area of his life.

<sup>461</sup> Simon Frith, 'Art ideology and pop practice,' *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988) 471. On the cultural history of the casuals see also: Phil Thornton's *Casuals: Football, Fighting and Fashion – The Story of a Terrace Cult* (Lytham: Milo Books, 2003). Irvine Welsh shows a concern for this theme in previous novels, namely in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (1995).

years, the *real* hooliganism. Hooliganism tae the health service, hooliganism tae education...’ (*G* 187). The four main characters of the novel (Terry, Carl, Billy and Andrew) belong to a de-industrialized contemporary world in which Duncan’s working-class value system is untenable. They struggle to find a new sense of identity in late capitalism. In joining the casual culture they embrace the creed of style, pleasure and commodity of the present age. They illustrate the apparent explosion in the consumption of men’s fashion in the 1980s. Although the infamous yuppie was at the centre of this trend at this time, his ‘underclass counterparts’<sup>462</sup> were the rising ranks of working classes, students, drop-outs and the unemployed, as represented by the four protagonists in *Glue*. In their own way, Terry, Carl, Billy and Andrew are the embodiment of the New Lad image.<sup>463</sup> Indeed, recent studies on contemporary masculinities have claimed that: “masculinity is not an unproblematic ‘given’ of male biological identity so much as a cultural construct to which the individual is expected to fit himself.”<sup>464</sup> Moreover, Michael Mangan further emphasizes the complexity of a concept such as gender:

[T]he word ‘gender’ [...] does not refer to a category or even a quality so much as to a relationship. It is a word which sets out to explain relations between various categories of men and women. This explanation

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<sup>462</sup> See Tim Edwards, *Men in the Mirror. Men’s Fashion, Masculinity and Consumer Society* (London: Cassell, 1997) vii.

<sup>463</sup> The New Lad image spawned by various men’s magazines (*GQ*, *Esquire*, *Arena*, *FHM*, *Loaded* and *Maxim*, to mention but a few), especially from the 1990s onwards, will be a recurrent theme in the novel *Porno*. Tim Edwards explains: ‘Men’s magazines in the UK now constitute a growth market. But the so-called new style magazines for men are not new internationally and, in the UK, men’s general interest magazines have an equally long history. It is, to put it simply, that they weren’t *called* men’s magazines and this is what constitutes the key difference: the self-conscious targeting of men as consumers of magazines designed to *interest* men if not necessarily to be *about* men. [...] As a result, then, there are three sorts of men’s magazines: the first is a list of fully style-conscious and self-conscious general interest magazines aimed directly and overtly at a male readership including *GQ*, *Esquire*, *Arena*, *For Him Magazine (FHM)*, *Loaded* and *Maxim*; the second, a series of supposedly more specific periodicals with a more open readership that carry regular features concerning men’s style and fashion including *Attitude*, *i-D*, *The Face*, *The Clothes Show Magazine*, *XL* and *Men’s Health*; and the third, a gargantuan group of men’s interest magazines which covertly target men as their primary readership including car, computing, photographic, sport and technical titles.’ Edwards 72-73.

<sup>464</sup> Michael Mangan, *Staging Masculinities. History, Gender, Performance* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 5.

inevitably intersects with – and competes with – other explanations, such as race, class, age, national identity and sexual orientation, which may themselves be relative. And, of course, none of these explanations are ever ideology-free: they are all implicated in the contested meanings which affect larger social debates and practices surrounding social and subjective being.<sup>465</sup>

While, in past times, supporting a football team meant having a strong sense of affiliation to a territory and a community, for the casuals everything is mutable. They represent the paradigm shift in football and in popular culture. Indeed, they have no sense of loyalty and therefore feel no need for symbols which may identify them with a specific team. They find meaning in violence and it is through violence that they reach a sense of identity. According to Connell:

Violence becomes important in gender politics among men. Most episodes of major violence (counting military combat, homicide and armed assault) are transactions among men. [...] Violence can become a way of claiming or asserting masculinity in group struggles. [...] The scale of contemporary violence points to crisis tendencies (to borrow a term from Jurg n Habermas) in the modern gender order.<sup>466</sup>

Even Billy, although reluctant at first (he says: ‘– Only a coward doesnae wear thir colours [...] ye wear them wi pride’ (*G* 86)), understands this new order, the stylish look of the casuals, and eventually disposes of his team’s scarf:

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<sup>465</sup> Mangan 9.

<sup>466</sup> R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed. (1995; Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2005) 83-84. Connell further explains that to understand the making of contemporary masculinities it is important to map the crisis tendencies of the gender role. He uses a framework of three structures of gender relations, namely: *power relations* (intrinsically linked to the historic collapse of the legitimacy of patriarchal power and the emancipation of women); *production relations* (triggered, for instance, by post-war growth in women’s employment); and *relations of cathexis* (gay and lesbian sexuality as a public alternative to heterosexual practice). See Connell 85-86.

Dozo goes, - Billy, Gally... what's this? Eh looked at Carl's Red Hand flag. Carl shat it. Ah cut in. – Eh... wi took it oaf this daft Hun doon the station. Fir disguise, like you says. Nae colours. Take it oaf Billy, ah nudged Birrell, and the cunt did, though eh wisnae chuffed. (G 93)

The dialogue takes place at the pub, where the four friends are gathered with other members of the scheme (the psychotic Dozo Doyle, the thug Marty Gentleman, Joe Begbie and Ally Jamieson), and among whom are the familiar characters of Welsh's *Trainspotting* (Renton, Tommy, Spud and Frank Begbie). It is particularly significant that the group gathers in a pub, a completely masculine environment, where tensions are prompt to accumulate and explode.<sup>467</sup> Together they embark in an episode of random, gratuitous violence:

This is our chance. Gentleman steps forward n batters the White Skinners cunt a fuckin beauty. [...] Juice Terry runs in and gubs the bastard n Birrell just starts punchin every cunt. [...] We're aw gaun fuckin mental now and Doyle's right in the thick ay things, charging intae a load ay boys. Begbie's brar elbays a boy a sneaky cracker in the side ay the heid. [...] Thir's fuckin chaos wi every cunt pointin the finger at every cunt else n the cops've goat Gentleman, Juice Terry and Frank Begbie. (G 104-105)

Violence seems to be cut short by the positive intervention of the football star, George Best (not without an ironic twist): 'Mair boatels n cans fly [...]. One boatel goes

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<sup>467</sup> It is also significant that this episode follows two violent scenes: the first is narrated by Billy in the chapter entitled 'Copper Wire'; the second is a brief episode under the title 'Lateness' narrated by Gally. In 'Copper Wire' there's a scene of extreme violence and cruelty towards two guard dogs (the scene echoes another episode in *Trainspotting* of brutal violence towards animals: 'Strolling Through the Meadows' (T 153-161)). In 'Lateness' Gally, Billy and Carl are victims of Blackie's violent temperament – the director of the school they attend punishes them not only for their lateness but also for their language: '– Aye? Aye? he sortay shrieks, pointing tae his specs. It sounded like some cunt hud grabbed ehs baws. – Eyes are what you have in your head you stupid boy! We speak the Queen's English here. What do we speak?' (G 82).

towards George Best oan the pitch, jist fawin short. Eh picks it up and makes oot tae drink fae it. [...] [A]h reckon that Best, jist by daein that, stoaped a major riot' (*G* 105).

At the very end of the chapter, however, there is no real sense of justice. Although some of the members of the group have been arrested, the general feeling is of satisfaction since they have become news – the ultimate reward for these lads:

Eftir a bit, Carl goes tae the newsagent n comes back wi a *Pink*, n it's barry, cause thir's a mention about us in the match report:

this miss was the cue which sparked off a serious disturbance at the away end. It seems as if some Hibs supporters were in the wrong section of the ground. Police moved in quickly to remove the troublemakers.

Then, in the stop press, it sais thit thir wis eight arrests inside the ground and another forty-two outside.

- Could've been better, Dozo said. (*G* 108)

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The end of *Glue* is very significant. Duncan's death symbolizes the end of an era but simultaneously brings Carl, Billy and Terry together, implying a sense of hope for the future: '[b]ut through Duncan's death something hung in the air between them. There was just *something*, some kind of second chance [...]' (*G* 539). Aaron Kelly, in his analysis of the novel affirms: '[u]nlike *Trainspotting*, there is a sense of regeneration and solidarity amidst death and tragedy [...].'<sup>468</sup>

This sense of regeneration (that Kelly refers to) is carried out into Welsh's next novel, *Porno*. In fact, the epilogue of *Glue* prepares the ground for the last piece of the

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<sup>468</sup> Kelly 197.



trilogy. In ‘Reprise: 2002: The Golden Era’ the characters are depicted in their most creative phase: Carl is working with Kathryn Joyner, a successful music star (who eventually Terry introduced to his friend by chance), and Rab (Billy’s younger brother) is part of the group now. Something is bound to happen. Together they will join Simon Williams’ project in *Porno* and their paths will finally cross with the lives of the roguish characters from *Trainspotting*.

### 3.2.3. Irvine Welsh’s *Porno*: From Skag to Pornography – Celebrating the Hangover of Youth

It’s time to move on.

Irvine Welsh, *Porno* (2002)

In *Pornography, the Theory: What Utilitarianism Did to Action* (2006), Frances Ferguson advances the argument that pornography is one among many practices developed by modern utilitarianism. Ferguson further suggests that pornographic representations cannot be disembodied from the social field: ‘Pornography’ – she argues – ‘offers more a social evaluation than an evaluation of an object.’<sup>469</sup> Also according to the author, novelists in particular have been responsible for the revival of the term. This is true because the novel has become a genre of social evaluation.

Availing myself of Ferguson’s study, my aim at this juncture is to discuss the importance of the novel *Porno* (2002) by Irvine Welsh and the question of pornography in contemporary British culture and society. *Porno* is the sequel to Welsh’s first well-known novel, *Trainspotting* (1999), reuniting the familiar crew (Sick Boy, Renton, Dianne, Spud, Alison, Second Prize and Begbie), as well as introducing various new

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<sup>469</sup> Frances Ferguson, *Pornography, the Theory: What Utilitarianism Did to Action* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004) 9.

characters, especially Nicola (Nikki) Fuller-Smith, a film student interested in pornography.

Throughout the novel Sick Boy appears to be the central character. After spending approximately ten years working in the entertainment industry in London, mainly in strip clubs, he is back in Edinburgh and seems decided to fulfill his dream of directing and producing a movie, more precisely an amateur pornographic movie (later entitled *Seven Rides for Seven Brothers*).<sup>470</sup> As he explains: “porn is mainstream now. [...] Young people as consumers don’t make the distinction now between porn or adult entertainment and mainstream entertainment. In the very same way they don’t between alcohol and other drugs” (P 347).

Whereas *Trainspotting* is divided into seven sections (‘Kicking,’ ‘Relapsing,’ ‘Kicking Again,’ ‘Blowing It,’ ‘Exile,’ ‘Home,’ ‘Exit’) and offers randomly numbered chapters titled ‘Junk Dilemmas,’ *Porno* is divided in three (‘Stag,’ ‘Porno’ and ‘Exhibition’) and renders Sick Boy’s monologues in chapters of numbered ‘Scams.’ Where *Trainspotting* dealt with drug addiction, drug abuse and HIV/Aids, *Porno* revolves round the pornography industry through all the scams linked to the project of producing a porn film, perpetrated mainly by Simon or Sick Boy. However, according to Fiachra Gibbons in an article that appeared in *The Guardian* prior to publication of the novel:

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<sup>470</sup> The title echoes the 1954 film musical *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, in which seven women are kidnapped for marriage, stressing women’s subordinate status. The plot of *Seven Rides for Seven Brothers*, however, is quite different. As Nikki explains: ‘The story is roughly this: seven lads are on an oil rig. One of them, Joe, has a bet with another, Tommy, which states that each one of the seven ‘brothers’ needs to get laid while on weekend shore leave. But not only do they have to get fucked, they have to have satisfied their own well-known sexual predilections. Unfortunately, there are two of them who want to do other things, of a cultural and sporting nature, and a third is a hopeless virgin. So the odds are stacked in Tommy’s favour. But Joe has allies: Melinda and Suzy, who run a high-class brothel, and who contrive to find the seven rides who’ll sort out those pesky brothers once and for all.’ Irvine Welsh, *Porno* (2002; London: Vintage, 2003) 189-190. Henceforward all quotations will be signalled by P followed by the number of the pages quoted.

Picking up their stories 10 years after *Trainspotting* finished, the new book will be set in the same milieu of low-life Leith "scumbags and bampams", although large parts of the area notorious for squats and crack dens have now been yuppified. Smart restaurants and bars may have sprung up all around, but Welsh claims that life in the schemes is still as grim as it was. Nor has Leith's small army of streetwalking prostitutes or its Aids problem gone away either.<sup>471</sup>

### **Masculinity**

Pornography, in our most common general understanding of the word, is a sexually explicit representation. It may be viewed in public, but it must, we think, be basically a private matter, because the responses to pornography vary widely.

Frances Ferguson, *Pornography, the Theory: What Utilitarianism Did to Action* (2004)

Throughout the novel *Sick Boy* is constantly depicted trying to trick people. Even before returning to Edinburgh, he keeps in contact with (Francis) Begbie, who at the beginning of the novel, as the reader learns, is still in Saughton Mains prison serving out a sentence for manslaughter. But *Sick Boy* keeps in contact sending Begbie anonymous gay porn. The character states: '[i]t's all part of my little war against my home city' (P 24). This and the fact that right at the beginning of *Porno* one encounters some of the male characters of *Trainspotting* (re)introduces the question of masculinity. Indeed much of *Trainspotting* as well as *Porno* revolves round masculinity as a cultural construct. If in the opening pages of *Trainspotting* there are references to a muscle-

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<sup>471</sup> Fiachra Gibbons, 'Eight Years on from *Trainspotting*, Irvine Welsh pens the sequel: *Porno*,' *The Guardian* 22 August 2001: 3. See also: < <http://books.guardian.co.uk/news/articles/0,6109,540572,00.html> >.

bound masculinity depicted in the Jean-Claude Van Damme video, which is in direct contrast with the description of Sick Boy's body in crisis, wrecked by heroin withdrawal symptoms, in *Porno* the reader is faced with what could be seen as a parallel situation. As far as the reference of Van Damme is concerned, Aaron Kelly explains:

The historical emergence of the contemporary muscle-bound action hero – a trend in which Van Damme follows actors such as Sylvester Stallone (particularly his *Rocky* and *Rambo* films) and Arnold Schwarzenegger – significantly occurs amidst the de-industrialisation and decline of manual labour in Western societies from the late 1970s to the present. Such films offer a compensatory physically expressive masculinity and redisplay of the male body in an era where traditional forms of male action and identity based on physicality have been undermined by economic change.<sup>472</sup>

At the beginning of the novel *Porno*, Simon's 'little war against [his] home city' (P 24) prompts a reflection on different types of 'lived masculinities' and the importance of popular magazines for men – both straight mags like *Loaded*, *FHM*, *Maxim*, as well as porn mags like *Mayfair*, *Penthouse* and *Playboy* – in the widespread of new regimes of representation. With respect to these new modes of representation, Antony Easthope reflects upon masculinity as a cultural construct, examining what he calls dominant masculinity, which works as a gender norm, as opposed to other types of 'lived masculinities' (including gay masculinities).<sup>473</sup> And Victor Seidler further explains the difference between sex and gender, the 'biological' and the 'socially and historically constructed':

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<sup>472</sup> Kelly 41.

<sup>473</sup> See Antony Easthope, *What a Man's Gotta Do: The Masculine Myth in Popular Culture* (London: Paladin, 1986); and also: Sean Nixon, *Hard Looks: Masculinities, Spectatorship & Contemporary Consumption* (London: UCL Press, 1996).

So the ‘natural’ is often opposed to the ‘socially and historically constructed’. In a similar way sex is seen as part of the ‘natural’ which comes to be seen as the ‘biological’ and gender is seen as a radically separated discourse which is socially and historically constituted.<sup>474</sup>

In *Porno*, Begbie is an extreme example of dominant masculinity, he embodies the myth of the heterosexual male who is tough (and in Begbie’s case extremely violent), masterful, and always in control. But Begbie is not always knowing and very seldom self-possessed. As he comes out of prison he asserts:

One fuckin thing ah’m gaunnae dae is tae find the fuckin sick cunt that kept sendin ays that fuckin filthy poofs’ porn whin ah wis inside. Added six months oantae muh fuckin sentence whin ah battered this wide wee cunt thit laughed whin ah sais: ‘Lexo n me’s partners.’ (P 101)

The idea of the dominant male is undermined precisely by the character that embodies it, who is set up by Sick Boy and who at the end of the novel is lying in a coma at the hospital. The novel has a rather ambiguous open ending. Sick Boy addresses Begbie at the hospital always thinking that he is unconscious and cannot possibly hear him, but eventually Begbie does understand him: ‘I bend right over the fucking drooling vegetable stooge. – Get well soon... Beggar Boy. I’ve always wanted to call you that to your fa... and my heart leaps out of my chest as something fucking grabs my wrist. I look down and his hand is like a vice around it. And when I look up, his eyes have opened and those blazing coals of enmity are staring right into my lacerated, penitent inner self...’ (P 484).

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<sup>474</sup> Victor J. Seidler, *Rediscovering Masculinity: Reason, Language and Sexuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989) 188. Joan Wallach Scott also explains: “[G]ender becomes a way of denoting ‘cultural constructions’ – the entirely social creation of ideas about appropriate roles for women and men. It is a way of referring to the exclusively social origins of the subjective identities of men and women. Gender is, in this definition, a social category imposed on a sexed body.” Joan Wallach Scott, ‘Gender as a Useful Category of Historical Analysis,’ *Culture, Society and Sexuality: A Reader*, eds. Richard Parker and Peter Aggleton (London: UCL Press, 1999) 59.

## Nikki Fuller-Smith: The Society of the Spectacle

[P]ornography concerns not just sex and our ideas about it but the values that persons can come to have and our ideas about them.

Frances Ferguson, *Pornography, the Theory: What Utilitarianism Did to Action* (2004)

In the novel pornography has definitely replaced heroin as the main object for consumption, although Spud still struggles with his addiction.<sup>475</sup> This (ex)change gives way to a reflection on society. Welsh's novel is successful in raising various voices and conveying different perspectives concerning the role of capitalism nowadays, the link between popular culture and sex industry, the public vs. the private, feminism vs. masculinity and gender roles. One of these voices comes from a new character, Nikki Fuller-Smith. In a review published in *The Observer*, entitled 'Sick Boy and the hangover,' Burhan Wazir affirms:

Welsh establishes himself as something of a Renaissance man, expertly, and, for the first time, writing sympathetically about women. He introduces Nikki Fuller-Smith, a sexually voracious film school student who works in a massage parlour to earn money. Smith finds her calling in pornographic movies. She is the most well-rounded character yet to surface in a Welsh novel [...].<sup>476</sup>

Indeed, in the novel Nikki is given full extended voice. Although she has a very different background from the remaining characters – she is not Scottish but English,

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<sup>475</sup> In the chapter entitled 'Counselling' Spud is portrayed as still hopelessly addicted to heroin: 'Loadsay us have faults, man. Mine is gear, gear and gear. It's just likes a shame that one person hus tae pey so many times ower for the one fault. Of course, ah've goat chorin n aw, but if ah kicked the collies seriously, then the chorin might stop, or at least slow doon a bit' (P 63).

<sup>476</sup> Burhan Wazir, 'Sick Boy and the hangover,' *Observer* 18 August 2002: 30. See also: < <http://books.guardian.co.uk/reviews/generalfiction/0.6121.776256.00.html> >.

her milieu is not working-class but upper-class, and most important, she is a woman. As the novel progresses she becomes a mediating figure, offering ‘a counterpoint to the Laddishness of Welsh’s male characters.’<sup>477</sup> As opposed to Sick Boy and his associates, Terry Lawson,<sup>478</sup> Rab and Billy Birrell, but mainly (Mark) Renton – who Simon comes across in Amsterdam and who joins the film project – Nikki sees the opportunity of participating in a pornographic movie not so much as a ‘scam’ to earn her ‘some big money,’ but rather as a means of self-empowerment. Whereas at the beginning of the novel, in order to pay her university studies, she works in a sauna, where she also engages in sex work (masturbating and performing oral sex on clients),<sup>479</sup> from the moment she begins thinking seriously about the project she sees it as a favourable occasion to assert herself by using her knowledge as a film student, writing the script for the film with Rab (Birrell),<sup>480</sup> to become a celebrity (even if a porn star).

In a society of spectacle, reality is substituted by its representation or image, becoming an object of contemplation. According to Guy Debord:

Understood in its totality, the spectacle is both the outcome and the goal of the dominant mode of production. It is not something *added* to the real world – not a decorative element, so to speak. On the contrary, it is the very heart of society’s real unreality. In all its specific manifestations – news or propaganda, advertising or the actual consumption of

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<sup>477</sup> Kelly 210.

<sup>478</sup> *Porno* brings together not only characters from *Trainspotting* but also from *Glue*, such is the case with Terry, who in the novel will be often linked with the theme of voyeurism and eventually will become involved with Sick Boy: ‘Terry Lawson organises shag parties in pubs after closing time. One of the sessions is inadvertently caught on a closed circuit security camera and the group decides henceforth to film these events in an amateur way. [...] [Sick Boy] upon hearing of Terry’s amateur porn club [...] offers the upstairs room of Port Sunshine and seizes upon what he feels will be a scam that will really earn him some big money.’ Kelly 207.

<sup>479</sup> However, in one occasion Nikki accepts going out with ‘a prominent Basque nationalist politician’ and eventually she loses control of the situation: ‘It wasn’t rape, but it wasn’t consensual either, and it felt demeaning. I push him away in anger and he’s crumbled back onto the bed, full of regret now, apologising profusely’ (*T* 216).

<sup>480</sup> Again, Rab is the brother of Billy Birrell who appears for the first time in Welsh’s *Glue*, gaining in the novel *Porno* a more visible role.

entertainment – the spectacle epitomizes the prevailing model of social life. It is the omnipresent celebration of a choice *already made* in the sphere of production, and the consummate result of that choice.<sup>481</sup>

The relationship Nikki maintains with her own body illustrates how she lives dependent on the language of the spectacle and its signs of the dominant organization of production. Even though she knows the images of women's magazines (*Elle, Cosmo, New Woman, Vanity Fair*) as well as lad's magazines (*GQ, Loaded, Maxim*) are compositions, products ready for consumption, she still yearns to be like a model in a magazine, obviously preferring the representation to the real:

- You fucking horror show, I sneer at my image in the mirror. I'm looking at my naked body and then at the model in the magazine. [...] There is no way mine is as perfect as hers. [...]

I'M NOT FUCKING LIKE HER.

The most horrible thing a man can say to me is that I've got a great body. Because I don't want a good, great, lovely, beautiful body. I want a body good enough to be in the magazines [...].

I should be in the library studying or working on my essay instead of spending half my time in W.H. Smith skimming that rack shamelessly: *Elle, Cosmo, New Woman, Vanity Fair*, looking at them all; the men's as well, *GQ, Loaded, Maxim*, gaping at all those bodies [...]. Oh yeah, knowing, on a cognitive, intellectual level that those images are compositions, they're made up [...]. (P 66-67).

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<sup>481</sup> Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995) 13. The French original reads: 'Le spectacle, compris dans sa totalité, est à la fois le résultat et le projet du mode de production existant. Il n'est pas un supplément au monde réel, sa décoration surajoutée. Il est le coeur de l'irréalisme de la société réelle. Sous toutes ses formes particulières, information ou propagande, publicité ou consommation directe de divertissements, le spectacle constitue le *modèle* présent de la vie socialement dominante. Il est l'affirmation omniprésente du choix déjà fait dans la production, et sa consommation corollaire.' Guy Debord, *La société du spectacle* (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1967) 11.



## Pornography

Pornography writes the story of sexuality as inequality, an inequality that is intrinsic to every sexual act involving more than one person.

Frances Ferguson, *Pornography, the Theory. What Utilitarianism Did to Action* (2004)

Even if Nikki's initial attitude is wholly in favour of pornography – even though her reasons may be dubious – she seems to change her views as the novel progresses. Thus Nikki can be said to express different views in the ongoing debate on the issue of pornography and feminism. Nikki shares her flat with two other girls – Lauren, an anti-pornography feminist and Dianne, not the young girl from *Trainspotting*, but a full grown woman, a master's student in psychology who is writing her thesis on pornography and the sex industry. As opposed to Lauren, for whom pornography is a way of using/exploiting people, mainly women, Nikki sees it as an opportunity to make a film and she is fully conscious of what she is doing (or so she says). After informing her flatmates that one of the actors, Terry, suffered an accident – having ruptured his penis during one of the shootings of the film – and that Simon is determined to find a replacement,<sup>482</sup> the three girls (Lauren, Nikki and Dianne) have a discussion in which their positions on pornography become clear:

Now Lauren explodes with anger. – You're being exploited. How can you! They're using you! [...]

This is doing my head in. I have to try to make her see through her own neurosis here. – I'm fed up studying film when I've got the opportunity to make one. Why are you getting so het up about it all?

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<sup>482</sup> Indeed, Sick Boy convinces Curtis to be the replacement (see *T* 314-320).

- But it's pornography, Nikki! You're being used!

I let out my breath slowly. – What do you care? I'm not stupid, it's my choice, I tell her. (P 266)

It is, nevertheless, Dianne who puts her finger on the real issue, one cannot look at pornography merely as a way of oppressing women. Indeed pornography has become a complex object for consumption, looked for by men as well as women. Dianne explains this to Lauren in the dialogue that follows the extract quoted above:

She [Lauren] looks at me [Nikki] with a quiet, composed rage in her eyes – [...] What you are doing is against your own sex. You're enslaving and oppressing women everywhere! You study this Dianne! Tell her, she urges.

[...] – It's a wee bit more complex than that, Lauren. I'm finding out a lot about this as I go along. I don't think porn per se is the real issue. I think it's how we consume.

- No... no, it's not because the people at the top are always men!

[...] – Aye, but probably less so in the porn industry than any others. What about girl-on-girl action filmed by women for the consumption of women? Where does that fit in with your paradigm? she asks. (P 266)

The reader will find in the excerpt links to the positions defended by feminists such as Andrea Dworkin, Catharine A. Mackinnon or even Susanne Kappeler – all known for their anti-pornographic position.<sup>483</sup> As Mackinnon explains, tolerance towards pornography is an illusory promise of freedom and equality:

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<sup>483</sup> Cf.: Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (Leeds, Yorkshire: The Women's Press, 1981) and Dworkin, *Intercourse* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1987); Catharine A. Mackinnon, *Feminism Unmodified. Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1987); Susanne Kappeler, *The Pornography of Representation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986).

In this protection racket of tolerance, everybody's sexual bottom line is defended as freedom of expression, which has the political genius of making everybody potentially complicit through the stirring between their legs. But anyone with an ounce of political realism knows the promise is illusory: sexual freedom is not and will not be equally delivered [...]. And anyone with an ounce of political analysis should know that freedom before equality, freedom before justice, will only further liberate the power of the powerful and will never free what is most in need of expression.<sup>484</sup>

Sara Diamond and Ann Snitow consider the antipornography movement (like Dianne in the novel) and offer a different approach to the issue, one that is against censorship.<sup>485</sup> Sara Diamond suggests that to understand pornography a difference should be made between sex and sexism:

One of the greatest dangers we face when trying to understand pornography is confusing explicit sex with sexism. It is possible to create images of sexual experience that do not perpetuate the current imbalance of power between men and women. Other cultures have produced humorous, visually pleasurable or powerful images of lovemaking, free from degradation. Sexism enters the picture in the ways that the porn industry creates images and in the assumptions that people call upon when interpreting them.<sup>486</sup>

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<sup>484</sup> Mackinnon 15.

<sup>485</sup> Cf.: Sara Diamond, 'Pornography: Image and Reality' and Ann Snitow, 'Retrenchment versus Transformation: The Politics of the Antipornography Movement,' *Women Against Censorship*, ed. Varda Burstyn (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985).

<sup>486</sup> Sara Diamond, 'Pornography: Image and Reality,' *Women Against Censorship*, 41.

However, as Nikki understands towards the end of her affair with Sick Boy, she has been used and tricked, together with Mel and Gina, who also participate in the film. Nikki bursts out when she realizes the kind of editing made by Sick Boy:

And now it's me, getting this same edited treatment. A close-up of my face, then a cut of Curtis's cock which looks like it's going in and out of my arsehole, but it's another take of Mel's arsehole. – Nobody fucked me up the arse! What the fuck is this, Simon! [...]

- Look, it was an editorial decision, a creative decision. [...] Do you think that Ving Rhames actually got fucked up the arse by the guy that played Zed in *Pulp Fiction*? [...] It's a movie, Simon says. – We faked it. [...]

- No, I'm screaming, - because this is different! It's a porn movie and in porn the expectation is that the performers don't fake it, they *perform* the sex acts! (P 371-372)

A society free from censorship needs an on-going debate on the limits of activities such as pornography. Undoubtedly, a valuable approach to the issue consists in producing and enjoying images of sexual experience free from degradation. Nevertheless, as Nikki's example proves, the careless manipulation of pornographic images exclusively for material or commercial purposes can easily lead to sexist depictions of individuals, undermining the freedom and equality every human being is entitled to.

## The Cannes Adult Film Festival

In a world that *really* has been turned on its head, truth is a moment of falsehood.<sup>487</sup>

Guy Debord, *The Society of Spectacle* (1995)

*Seven Rides for Seven Brothers* is finally presented at the Cannes Adult Film Festival.<sup>488</sup> Since, according to Jill Forbes and Sarah Street, Cannes ‘became [...] extremely important for critical and commercial interests and for European attempts to sell films on the basis of their artistic quality,’<sup>489</sup> it is not surprising that the world famous adult film festival has begun to be held in the same location.<sup>490</sup> This may be seen as an attempt to make the entertainment world accept, acknowledge and embrace the adult movie industry.<sup>491</sup> Indeed, every year in May, precisely at the same time of the Cannes Film Festival, the porn equivalent to the Palm d’Or, the Hot d’Or, is awarded.

Welsh explores thoroughly the scenes set in Cannes. Through Sick Boy’s voice the reader learns how pornography exemplifies the contemporary capitalist society, driven by the mere desire to consume and with little power of judgement:

[...] No, we need tits and arse because they have got to be available to us [...]. Because we’re men? No. Because we’re consumers. Because those are things we like, things we intrinsically feel or have been conned into believing will give us value, release, satisfaction. We value them so we

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<sup>487</sup> The French original reads: ‘Dans le monde réellement renversé, le vrai est un moment du faux.’ Debord, *La Société du Spectacle*, 19.

<sup>488</sup> See the section in which Sick Boy discusses the letter of acceptance (for full exhibition at the Cannes Adult Film Festival) with Renton (*T* 401).

<sup>489</sup> Jill Forbes and Sarah Street, *European Cinema: An Introduction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) 20.

<sup>490</sup> The analogous American honour is the AVN Award, presented and sponsored by the American adult video industry trade *AVN (Adult Video News)* to celebrate exceptional performances of American pornographic movies.

<sup>491</sup> The organiser of the event, David Cyrsho of *Hot Video*, explains: ‘We’ve been working at the magazine to try to show that this business is a real business.’ See the following website, entitled ‘News: Cannes Gets Sexy.’ 16 April 2007: < <http://www.filmfestivals.com/cannes98/d7crawl7.htm> >.

need to at least have the illusion of their availability. For tits and arse read coke, crisps, speedboats, cars, houses, computers, designer labels, replica shirts. That's why advertising and pornography are similar; they sell the illusion of availability and the non-consequence of consumption. (P 450)

Eventually, the questions surrounding pornography are replaced by the ones raised by what becomes the biggest scam of the novel, this time perpetrated not by Sick Boy but rather by Renton. The latter gains the status of a central character as the novel reaches its end, for the second time Renton rips off Sick Boy. Together with Dianne<sup>492</sup> they run away to San Francisco in America and are joined by Nikki, whose last message to Sick Boy is as follows:

Simon,

I'm off to visit Mark and Dianne. You won't find us, that I guarantee. We promise to enjoy the cash.

Love, Nikki

PS: When I said you were the best lover I ever had, I was exaggerating, but you weren't bad when you tried. Remember, we're all faking it.

PPS: As you said about the British, watching people get fucked has become our favourite sport. (P 481)

The novel *Porno* is a remarkable sequel and a significant contemporary example of literature of roguery. It presents various innovative features, gathering rogues of Welsh's previous works, especially Renton from *Trainspotting* but also Terry from *Glue* (a minor character in *Porno*), and dealing with themes intrinsic to the rogue novel:

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<sup>492</sup> Dianne eventually drops her studies on pornography and sex industry and joins Renton: 'We try to change the subject, to pick ourselves up by looking ahead. She's telling me that she doesn't think that her thesis on porn is very good, and in any case she fancies a year off. Maybe even check out a college in the States. What will we do in San Francisco? Just hang out' (T 474).

observed reality, depiction of low life and manners, the question of social marginality, violence, sex, thievery, various types of fraud, beatings, etc. Moreover, the novel also deals with postmodern issues, namely the consumer capitalism and the commodification process linked with pornography in contemporary society.

The novel comprises alternating narratives by Simon, Nikki, Spud, Renton and Begbie. Nevertheless, although Renton's narrative grows in length and significance towards the third and last part of the novel, it is Simon who emerges as the central character throughout and stands as an accomplished rogue by the end of the novel. Indeed, Simon stands for the trickster tricked, parodically illustrating *Porno*'s epigraph, 'Without cruelty there is no festival,' from Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* (Essay 2, Section 6). As Robert Morace explains: '[d]espite its weaknesses, readers can take pleasure in *Porno*'s ending because they take pleasure in Simon's pain: the pain without which, as Nietzsche understood, there is no festival.'<sup>493</sup>

One of the most innovative aspects of *Porno* is the depiction of a female character, Nikki Fuller-Smith, who stands as the counterpart of Simon. She clearly disrupts the male world created by Welsh, which dominated both *Trainspotting* and *Glue*, and which is still very much present in *Porno*. Nevertheless, in presenting traits commonly associated with the rogue (she is cunning, cheats and lives on her wits, always seeking to better her situation), she reminds the reader of the possibility and significance of female rogues in contemporary postmodern literature.

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This chapter has focused on Irvine Welsh's trilogy, *Trainspotting* (1993), *Glue* (2001) and *Porno* (2002). The novels present the reader with the political, economic,

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<sup>493</sup> Morace, *Irvine Welsh*, 135.

social and cultural transformations in Scotland (Leith, Edinburgh), lived by several young male characters, and experienced from the late 1970s to the new millennium.

The characters of the trilogy are essentially rogues, living on the margins of society, moving in an urban environment and linked to the criminal underworld. Through them Welsh directs the reader's attention to the capitalist world we live in and the problems associated with a self-centred individualist consumer society where violence, drug use, pornography and criminality seem to proliferate.

Welsh is not alone in his treatment of contemporary themes, especially the question of pornography, and the constant play between 'high' and 'popular' culture,' as demonstrated in previous chapters, more precisely in the study of Martin Amis's *Money*, *London Fields* and *Yellow Dog*. Furthermore, as far as pornography is concerned, Robert Morace explains:

Novels by John McGahern, Martin Amis and Ian McEwan have dealt with pornography and A. L. Kennedy's *Original Bliss* and Alasdair Gray's *Something Leather* have used pornography to illuminate Scottish identity, as in a way does David Mackenzie's NC<sub>17</sub> film *Young Adam* (2003), adapted from a novel by Alexander Trocchi, who supported himself and his heroin habit by writing pornographic novels for Olympia Press.<sup>494</sup>

Although the majority of the characters in Welsh's three novels come from a working-class background, they no longer identify with it. Indeed, they belong to a post-industrial era, marked by wealth, consumption, 'leisure-pleasure' activities, but simultaneously more competitiveness, individualism and fewer community values.

In *Trainspotting*, Mark Renton's first-person narrative opens the novel. His voice is one of criticism and rejection of the mainstream. He is the character who is

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<sup>494</sup> Morace, *Irvine Welsh*, 129.



least alienated from society and most politically aware. Renton is also the one who shows the greatest ability to adapt and get through difficult periods.

The study of the adaptations of the novel, both stage and screen, provide interesting examples for our understanding of the impact of *Trainspotting* in British culture, and the role it played in raising the visibility of Scottish culture and society worldwide. Moreover, the film specifically presents Renton as the main character, depicting him as a rogue (he is cunning and wily, he is often involved in illicit activities and he cheats his friends), who survives in the most adverse circumstances and who, at last, seems to find his place in society. However, the ending is ambiguous, especially because Renton, who has the last word, is undoubtedly an unreliable narrator.

*Glue* is the most wide-ranging novel of the trilogy, providing the reader with background material on the radical changes felt from the 1970s onwards. The novel introduces new characters and focuses on four young lads: Andrew, Terry, Billy and Carl. Eventually their lives intersect with the lives of the characters from *Trainspotting*, namely Renton, Spud, Simon (Sick Boy) and Begbie, preparing the ground for the novel that follows, *Porno*. Through the depiction of the four characters in *Glue*, especially Terry, Welsh is able to broach the issues of masculinity, violence and sexuality. Indeed, according to Morace:

*Glue* is clearly a book about men and about male bonding – the pun is unavoidable. [...] *Glue* is a novel of fathers and sons and male friends and a novel about how boys become men in the small world Welsh describes: about their first fight, sex, alcohol, drink, job, etc., about trying to make an impression on mates, girls, hard men, about trying to obey the law(s) of the father(s): the ‘ten commandments’ of Duncan Ewart, biological father to Carl, surrogate father to his friends. All of this sounds simple, but

Welsh's treatment of masculinity manages to be at once exhaustive, insightful, serious, funny and strangely affecting.<sup>495</sup>

Terry becomes a very significant character in the novel precisely because he displays the traits of a rogue: he engages in a life of petty crime, repeatedly tricking and lying to those who surround him. Nevertheless, he is a humorous character, often involved in the most comic episodes. Ultimately, through his wit and with some luck he survives, despite occasionally facing the most unfavourable circumstances.

The last piece of the trilogy, *Porno*, develops into a serious discussion on pornography in contemporary British culture and society, the 'society of spectacle' that we live in the Western world. Throughout the novel, Simon is depicted as the central character. He is a rogue, who lives on scams. Furthermore, the adventures narrated in the novel all seem to revolve around Simon's project of directing and producing an amateur porn movie and presenting it at the Cannes Adult Film Festival. Yet the plot thickens not only with the re-appearance of Renton, who eventually tricks Simon once again, but also with the introduction of a new female character, Nikki Fuller-Smith, Simon's counterpart, who appears as a disruptive and extremely significant element in Welsh's world of male characters.

Together, *Trainspotting*, *Glue* and *Porno* constitute a remarkable contemporary example of the literature of roguery. The three novels bring together various rogues, who move in a counter culture, surviving until the new millennium. Welsh reinvents the rogue character, dealing with the themes commonly associated with the rogue novel and combining them with postmodern issues. Thus, these novels become a striking example of the survival of the rogue and of the transformation of this character in contemporary British literature.

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<sup>495</sup> Morace, *Irvine Welsh*, 122.

## **CONCLUSION**



## What about the Rogue? An Overview

The history of modern English literature [...] can be seen as an oscillation in the practice of writing [...]. If the critical pronouncements associated with each phase tend to be somewhat predicable, the actual creative work produced is not, such is the infinite variety and fertility of the human imagination working upon the fresh materials thrown up by secular history.

David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing* (1977)

The purpose of this thesis has been to demonstrate how the character of the rogue persisted in British literature in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although changing in order to fit new cultural, social, political and economic contexts. Looking back on this study, I hope my argument has offered a clear explanation of the rogue's survival and his metamorphosis in contemporary British literature.

In order to accomplish this project, I adopted a chronological approach to literature, complementing it with an account of the dominant literary features of each period analysed, in particular the decades between 1950 and the beginning of the new millennium, focusing on the rogue's new characteristics in fiction. In point of fact, the rogue survives as a literary figure because he is a mutable character, adapting to various historical contexts and thus becoming a powerful vehicle for the representation of reality. This feature becomes especially significant in moments of transition such as the years immediately after World War II in Britain, the revolution of the 'swinging 1960s,' the rise of a conservative government in the 1980s under Margaret Thatcher, and more recently the terrorist attacks on 9/11, which had a global effect, provoked the 'war on terror' and changed perceptions of the world.

Throughout this dissertation I have explored a wide range of novels and films from the mid- 1940s to the late 1960s, establishing parallels between them as well as illustrating and discussing the different literary uses of the rogue character at different moments in time. In addition, I have also examined the fiction of two contemporary British authors, Martin Amis and Irvine Welsh, identifying the main characteristics of the rogue nowadays. Each section of this study ends with a partial conclusion intended to bring out the main argument and to provide a link with the following chapters. Thus the questions addressed at the end of the present dissertation effectively reprise those issues raised at the beginning of my investigation and pursued through each section, in particular the ongoing discussion on the significance of the figure of the rogue in the present day.

The thesis began with a brief explanation of the emergence of the rogue character and what became known as ‘the literature of roguery,’ a designation first employed by Frank Wadleigh Chandler in 1907. This functioned as a much needed starting point for my understanding of 20<sup>th</sup>-century literature of roguery. The protagonist of this literary form is an anti-hero, a disreputable character linked to the criminal underworld, an anti-establishment figure, whose acute observation of reality allows for a profound critique of society, powerful but not without humour or wit. Such a character has caught the attention of British novelists over several centuries. Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, William Makepeace Thackeray and Charles Dickens are some of the authors who employed this literary figure in their fiction.

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the rogue seems to lie quiescent in British literature. Mainly a character of low or lower-middle-class origins, a means of conveying a wealth of vivid and detailed observation of contemporary life, of everyday aspects, such as violence, thievery, various types of fraud and sexual love, and thus

clearly engaged with the surrounding reality, the rogue character was neglected by modernist novelists who opted for the depiction of a new (anti-)hero, highly subjective and very much estranged from ordinary life.

However, by the 1940s, Joyce Cary's first trilogy emphasises the characters' lives and the truth of their existence, leaving behind modernist techniques and following a less experimental mode of artistic expression. In Cary's novel, *The Horse's Mouth*, the rogue is depicted as an artist, a painter who seeks new ways of giving meaning to the world. Similarly, one decade later, Iris Murdoch's first novel, *Under the Net*, also has a rogue as protagonist, this time an aspiring writer, whose artistic quest rouses the moral, aesthetic, and epistemic uncertainties of the time, ultimately reflecting the creator's understanding of the fictional in human existence. The rogue as artist opens up many new expressive possibilities. No longer a mere low-life or petty thief at odds with society, he is now a literary construct who stands for a distinctive way of (re)viewing the world, prompting readers to reflect on the creative process, on the arts in general and fiction in particular.

The great revival of the rogue in the 20<sup>th</sup> century occurs in the 1950s. By making a detailed study of key novels of the period, as well as their intertextual relations and the way they are connected with their immediate context, it was possible to identify and systematize common traits. John Wain's *Hurry on Down*, Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim*, John Braine's *Room at the Top* and Allan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* all present a rogue as the protagonist. They depict characters coming from a working-class or middle-class background, embodying the disappointments of post-war Britain, the changes experienced in society in the 50s, the perceived disparities between the social structure and the aspirations of these young post-war males. To some extent

these characters mirror the class base of their own creators, who through their writing evince the preoccupations of the time:

The new brand of hero was an opportunist, a sexual predator, and resented authority as a matter of course. This male protagonist could be found in drama as well as fiction – Jimmy Porter in John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* (1956) for example – and extended the public’s perception of the authors themselves. The writing was not innovative, turning its back on the more experimental writing of the previous decades. It was a prosaic, realistic mode best defined as ‘anti-modernist’ since it eschewed the intense psychologism of the modernist novel, and continued the reaction against modernism begun in the 1930s. The 1950s novel characteristically concentrated upon recognisable people in ordinary environments living everyday lives in the Midlands and the North.<sup>496</sup>

The anti-heroes portrayed in novels of the 1950s are thus rebels, usually in conflict with the establishment, who fight against the conformity of the new welfare state, rejecting any fixed code of manners or cultural preferences carried out in the comfort of an increasingly affluent Britain. They illustrate the transition from one conception of society to another and somehow embody a class revolution only seen in the England of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, the England of Defoe, as explained by V. S. Pritchett.<sup>497</sup> Moreover, as far as style is concerned, the novelists of the 1950s return to the comedy and the satire that characterise Fielding’s novels and the episodic structure and the desultory vernacular common to the picaresque.

The proliferation of the rogue is felt throughout the 1950s and the 1960s. The theatrical and filmic adaptations of literary works dealing with rogues during this period

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<sup>496</sup> Clive Bloom and Gary Day, *Literature and Culture in Modern Britain*, vol. 3: 1956-1999 (Harlow, London and New York: Longman, Pearson Education, 2000): 53.

<sup>497</sup> Pritchett 38.



testify to the success of this character, the importance of the class struggle in which he was engaged, and his commitment towards critiquing society. Angry novels are turned into 'New Wave' films, as is the case with Jack Clayton's *Room at the Top* and Karel Reisz's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. Furthermore, the adaptations of Bill Naughton's *Alfie Elkins and His Little Life* demonstrate the myriad possibilities the rogue offers for articulating views of society that vary according to his historical context. Indeed, the creation of a character such as Alfie is best understood against the background of the 'swinging sixties' and the optimistic climate that characterises this decade in Britain. However, this optimism is strikingly different from the mood of disaffection that marked the decades that followed. In truth, the most recent recreation of Alfie in 2004 reclaims some of the cheerfulness of the original character but ultimately makes manifest the radically different world we live in nowadays. The contemporary rogue is classless and seems to be adrift in a society in which materialism and individualism have reached a peak. Thus the significance of the rhetorical question at the end of Charles Shyer's film: 'What's it all about?', Alfie's apparently unsophisticated question, carries an unmistakable prediction of the present and times to come.

By following the transformations which the rogue character has undergone since the 1950s and the 1960s, the reader is able to accompany the dominant issues and characteristics of each period. The present dissertation provides a critical engagement with the current understanding of fiction produced in Britain in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup>. For this reason I chose to examine the work of two very different novelists, who notwithstanding their differences have many features in common: Martin Amis and Irvine Welsh.

Both Amis and Welsh are understood as part of the diversity of the fiction produced in the 1990s. As Nick Bentley suggests:

Two things can be said with relative certainty: first, that the period is one of healthy production of narrative fiction seen by the vast number of novels produced in Britain during the past decade or so and fuelled by the rise of the literary-prize culture [...]. The second main characteristic of 1990s fiction is its sheer diversity. Examples of novels can be identified that address issues of provincialism and globalization, multiculturalism and specific national and regional identities, experimentation and reengagement with a realist tradition, as well as renewed and reinvigorated interest in a range of differing and overlapping identities: nation, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality and even the post-human.<sup>498</sup>

The detailed analysis of the central novels by Amis and Welsh illustrates some of the key features mentioned above. Both of these authors explore the contemporary social and cultural climate, they offer new views on masculinity, they comment on many of the perverse effects of the politics of the 1980s, they criticize the overemphasis given to the celebrity culture and the media, and they deal with the contemporary underworld, the rise of criminality, violence, the effects of drugs, sexuality and mass consumption of pornography, expressing many of the millennial anxieties that characterise British fiction in the 1990s.

The present study also sets out to account for other important characteristics in the fiction of Amis and Welsh, commonly associated with the postmodernism of the 1990s. One of the main features of fiction produced at this stage may be defined as the blurring of the boundaries between fiction and reality. In his literary work, Martin Amis

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<sup>498</sup> Nick Bentley, 'Introduction: mapping the millennium. Themes and trends in contemporary British fiction,' *British Fiction of the 1990s*, ed. Nick Bentley (London and New York: Routledge, 2005) 1.

explores self-reflexive forms and intertextual references in order to call into question the relationship between text and world. The Amis's novels that were the focus of attention in the present study, *Money: A Suicide Note*, *London Fields* and *Yellow Dog*, stressed the shift in the perception of the world that was felt during the 1990s. *London Fields*, for instance, still bears the mark of the threat of nuclear war, a reminiscence of the Cold War with its notable impact on British culture, while *Yellow Dog* partially echoes the events in New York and Washington of the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001, thus alluding to another event that would have great resonance in Britain, as throughout in the world.

As for Irvine Welsh, in his trilogy, *Trainspotting*, *Glue* and *Porno*, he employs techniques associated with postmodernism, not only for formal purposes, but also to question the relationship between fiction, reality and the construction of identity. Through his novels, Welsh denounces the dangerous effects of the consensus politics of 1990s Britain, displaying countercultural attitudes and ultimately offering a point of resistance to the cultural regulation of British society. In his writing he also engages with new forms of articulating a Scottish identity within the process of devolution, focusing on youth cultures and subcultures.

One of the most interesting features shared by both Amis and Welsh is the way in which they use the character of the rogue to accomplish their stylistic project and ideological agenda. Their novels have done much to keep open the possibilities inherent in such a character. Their treatment of vicious protagonists inevitably leads us to consider the relationship between contemporary anti-heroes and the emblematic figure of the rogue.

Furthermore, although the protagonists depicted in the novels analysed are far from being models of virtuous behaviour, there is an implicit ethical dimension manifested in Amis's and Welsh's literary work. One might argue that the novels'

protagonists not only embody the conception of fiction affirmed by their postmodern authors, but bear witness to contemporary displacements in modern moral conceptions.

Therefore, in addition to the social, cultural and political significance of present day rogue literature, there is also a philosophical dimension, which opens up a debate on ethical issues associated with this type of literature. Through their style, language, themes and characters, contemporary authors such as Amis and Welsh contribute to a particular understanding of the world, expressing their own sense of what matters. Their fiction does not present solutions and it certainly does not follow a moral plan. However, it does provide perceptible, solid, social commentary, laying bare the contradictions and excesses that seem to characterise contemporary British society, and ultimately engaging the reader in the discussion of the role of fiction in reality. As Geoffrey Galt Harpham explains about the relationship between ethics and literature:

Literature contributes to “ethical” understanding by showing motivations, revealing the ends of action, holding the mirror up to the community and the individual so they can judge themselves, promoting explanatory models that help make sense of the diversity of life, and imagining the “unity” that might be desirable in a human life.<sup>499</sup>

In fact, studies expressing a concern with narrative fiction and the ethics involved in literary theory and novel criticism, such as Wayne C. Booth’s *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (1988), Alasdair MacIntyre’s *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (1981), Martha C. Nussbaum’s *Love’s Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (1990), David Parker’s *Ethics, Theory and the Novel* (1994) and Richard Rorty’s *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (1989), shed new light on the literary production of Amis and Welsh. Their novels effectively give voice to the contradictions

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<sup>499</sup> Geoffrey Galt Harpham, ‘Ethics,’ *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995): 400.

noted between value systems, and the perennial conflict between the individual and society. John Self in *Money: A Suicide Note*, Keith Talent in *London Fields*, Xan Meo in *Yellow Dog*, Mark Renton in *Trainspotting*, Terry Lawson in *Glue* and Simon Williamson in *Porno* all exemplify Baudrillard's logic of the simulacrum or even Guy Debord's concept of the spectacle as part of human experience.

Thus the distinctiveness of the rogue novel lies also with its ethical value, its questioning of reality, offering different discursive possibilities, presenting characters and situations embedded in the web of contingencies that dominate the global context of contemporary postmodern age. As Derek Attridge suggests, alluding to literature in general:

We rightly value the works belonging to the tradition of literature for a number of different things they are capable of being and doing, most of them not strictly literary. [...] [L]iterature, understood in its difference from other kinds of writing (and other kinds of reading), solves no problem and saves no souls; nevertheless, [...] it is *effective*, even if its effects are not predictable enough to serve a political or moral program.<sup>500</sup>

In order to survive, the literature of roguery has not just relied upon the historical memory of 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century-literature. It has had to find ways to reinvent itself, emphasizing its significance in the present rather than the past, dealing with language, themes and characters innovatively, experimentally. Through their work, contemporary novelists have re-envisioned this literary form and depicted the rogue from new points of view, in new contexts, under different guises, thus strengthening a literary tradition that was born with the advent of the modern novel.

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<sup>500</sup> Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature* (2004; London and New York: Routledge, 2005) 4.

As an afterthought I will add that the word rogue may have seemed old fashioned and misleading at the beginning of my study but I hope this dissertation has contributed to the revival of the term, giving new impetus to the debate on the political, social, cultural and philosophical implications of such an enduring literary character.

## **ATTACHMENTS**





# Playing with Ideas: Interview with David Lodge

Birmingham

Tuesday - 1 May 2007

Professor David Lodge (1935-) is Emeritus Professor of English Literature at the University of Birmingham, where he taught from 1960 until 1987. He lives in Birmingham and writes full-time. He is the author of numerous works of literary criticism and essays including *Language of Fiction* (1966), *The Novelist at the Crossroads* (1971), *The Modes of Modern Writing* (1977), *Working with Structuralism* (1981), *Write On: Occasional Essays* (1986), *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (1990), *The Art of Fiction* (1992), *The Practice of Writing* (1997), *Consciousness and the Novel* (2003) and, more recently, *The Year of Henry James: The Story of a Novel* (2006).

David Lodge has written several novels: *The Picturegoers* (1960), *Ginger, You're Barmy* (1962), *The British Museum is Falling Down* (1965), *Out of the Shelter* (1970), *Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses* (1975), *How Far Can You Go?* (1980), *Small World: An Academic Romance* (1984), *Nice Work* (1988), *Paradise News* (1991), *Therapy* (1995), *Home Truths: a novella* (1999), *Thinks...* (2001), and *Author, Author* (2004). He has also written two plays: *The Writing Game* (1990) and *Home Truths* (first produced in 1998), and a collection of short stories, which has been published in England only: *The Man Who Wouldn't Get Up And Other Stories* (1998).

Based on his experience as a literary critic and as a fictional writer, David Lodge accepted to give the present interview commenting on the tradition of the rogue literature in British context, the change in fiction in the 50s, his own work and contemporary writing.

**Ana Raquel Fernandes – Do you recognize a crucial change in fiction in the 50s? Do you see the character of the rogue as a crucial figure in works such as John Wain's *Hurry on Down* (1953), Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954) or John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957)? In which ways do these fictional works subvert the tradition and give a new dimension to the anti-hero and to the rogue character, which seems to become a tool for a critique of British culture and society?**

David Lodge – Yes, there certainly was an important social change in Britain after the war which manifested itself particularly in the 1950s. And I think the so-called “Angry Young Men”, which is what you’re talking about, really – it’s another term for that movement, that new wave in English writing - did articulate something about that social change. It’s what gave their work its novelty, because in form it was rather traditional. And it certainly influenced me because I was growing up and hoping to be a writer at precisely that time (I was born in 1935 so in 1950 I was fifteen and by the end of the decade I was twenty-five and started writing my own novels then). In fact the word “picaresque” was often used about those novels by critics. In a general sense I guess it’s legitimate to think of their heroes in those terms, as people coming from a lower class and interacting with people from an upper class in a rather subversive way. The sympathy of the novel is behind the rebel, the rogue or the lower class character in encountering the upper classes, the social establishment, and *Lucky Jim* is a classic example of that. I don’t know if you’ve read my introduction in the Penguin Modern Classics...

**ARF - Yes, I have. [Kingsley Amis, *Lucky Jim*, introd. by David Lodge (1992; London: Penguin Books, 2000).]**

DL – I talked about that social confrontation there. I also said I thought it was really a novel about the late 40s, because Amis was certainly working on it by 1950, and he himself belonged to an earlier generation than mine. But he articulated for me and a lot of my generation this sense we had of being promoted from out of our lower middle class, or in some cases working class, backgrounds, into the professional classes through educational opportunity – the key being, of course, the 1944 Education Act in this country, which provided free secondary education and (if you could get into a university) free tertiary education to everybody, and a maintenance grant also to support students who needed it. That legislation brought – not a huge number, because it was still a very competitive system – but it brought quite a lot of people into the professional classes who in the past would never have got there because of the cost of getting an appropriate education. So I felt very much – certainly looking back (I’m not sure what I felt at the time exactly) – that this was a change in British society. And there was a

tension between the world we went into, the professional world, which had been dominated by the products of public schools (in the British sense – i.e., private schools), Oxford, Cambridge, that sort of network, which had a very fixed code of manners and cultural preferences, and the social class we actually belonged to. The tension could express itself in different ways. For example, in the case of many of the fictional characters it was a preference for popular music or jazz music over classical music, *Lucky Jim* being typical: Jim's reference to 'filthy Mozart' being typical. This was not in fact Amis's own prejudice, he actually liked classical music, but he did like jazz, he was hugely enthusiastic about jazz at that time. Perhaps it might also be a liking for cheap movies and popular magazines, popular culture generally, which now in the postmodernist period everybody welcomes and there's no kind of snobbery about it at all, but in those days there was. And for me and many other young men who went into the armed forces to do our national service, which was obligatory in those days, the tension was very clearly defined by the officer/other ranks division. My novel about National Service, *Ginger You're Barmy* (1962) is a typical product of my class and generation. I was well-educated but didn't belong to the officer class, didn't share the officer ethos, the whole public school leadership thing, and so the Army confronted me with the English class system in a very stark form and I didn't like it. I suppose I rebelled against it in a way, I certainly explored the theme of rebellion in the novel.

So broadly speaking I agree with you, and I know what tradition you're talking about. But as a literary term the word "rogue" has a slightly old-fashioned, archaic sort of resonance today, and suggests a degree of immorality or amorality, which I don't think is true, say, of *Lucky Jim*, of Jim Dixon. He is highly moral actually, he is morally very scrupulous. In fact it takes him a long time to shed his rather protestant conscience. He is so anxious not to hurt people that he doesn't really liberate himself until late in the story. So I wouldn't say he is a rogue exactly, but his behavior looks like that of a rogue. He seems transgressive to the establishment characters because he gets drunk and burns the bedclothes and all those kind of things. He's a comic kind of rebel or anarchist but he doesn't actually harm anybody very much. He doesn't cheat, which is a typical rogue thing. Some of the other fictional characters of the

fifties, I suppose, are more ruthless – you are more familiar with them than I am because I haven't re-read many of these novels for an awfully long time. For example, the hero of *Room at the Top* (1957) is prepared to transgress the moral code in his own interest. I can't remember John Wain's hero in *Hurry on Down* (1953). I mean, is he a rogue?

**ARF – Yes, Charles Lumley is definitely a rogue and the novel is very interesting because it is the first published of the kind. It precedes the others and opens up the way for them. The anti-hero is always moving from one place to another. It is a kind of an on-going adventure...**

DL – Right, that reminds me of the characters of the picaresque novel. It is not always characteristic of these nineteen-fifties novels but I guess it is of *Hurry on Down... Lucky Jim* has very much a unity of place, hasn't it?

**ARF – Yes, it has. But I do think these novels have more to do with the tradition developed by [Daniel] Defoe, [Henry] Fielding, [Tobias] Smollett or [William Makepeace] Thackeray. The question of morality or amorality is extremely interesting because there seems to be no explicit morality but in-between the lines there is: through the actions of the central character the reader is put in such a position that he/she has to make a judgment. This question is even more complex in contemporary writing, in which fictional writers draw from this tradition and also from the novels of the 50s.**

DL – Yes, I agree about that. Have you included Keith Waterhouse's *Billy Liar* (1959)? Do you know the book? You definitely ought to read that. I suppose he's a writer who doesn't quite belong in the literary canon – probably that's why you haven't come across it – but it was a very popular novel, a very representative one and very much part of this movement. A successful film was made [directed by John Schlesinger in 1963] with Julie Christie, it was her very first film role, and it is worth getting hold of. It's set in a provincial northern town like so many of those novels and it's about a young man, who's about eighteen or nineteen. He's working in an undertaker's and he's terribly frustrated by the repressive atmosphere and the social climate of

this place, and he dreams, he has Walter Mitty-like dreams of himself [Walter Mitty was a character created by the American humorist James T. Thurber] in various heroic roles, but actually his life is very, very limited. And he lies all the time (he has two or three girlfriends going on at once and he lies to his boss) and keeps getting caught. He's a rogue alright, although his sins are fairly small, and he is an ineffectual rebel. It's a rather sad tale in a way because he meets this very bohemian girl, played by Julie Christie, who invites him to go away with her and in the end he can't do it. He can't break out of this oppressive social background. I'm sure it is still in print, so have a look at it.

**ARF – It is very interesting that you've talked about a novel and the film adaptation because most of the novels from the 50s we've mentioned so far have been adapted.**

DL – And the films in fact helped to make them culturally much more important than they would have been otherwise. [Alan Sillitoe's] *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958) is another example.

**ARF – Although *Saturday and Sunday Morning* is slightly after, at the very end of the decade, and I think we can already see a change. I would place it together with novels from the 60s: it presents more realistic traits and social concerns that are dealt with in a more straightforward way.**

DL – I'm not sure I would agree with you. It seems to me a classic novel of the 50s. It is not such a humorous novel as some of the other works we've been speaking of. It is not exactly a satirical novel either, and in a way the establishment doesn't really appear in it, does it? There's not that kind of conflict. But there is a critique of wage slavery and a rebellion against it in the story, and there is also a kind of rebellion against orthodox sexual morality. The background is all fifties, absolutely fifties: the descriptions of factory work and the industrial relations and the pub culture and the whole thing. Its impact was very much the same kind of impact as *Lucky Jim* or *Room at the Top* or *This Sporting Life* (David Storey, 1960) – another non-satirical novel about that sort of social change, in which the main character is a professional rugby player – and

*A Kind of Loving* (Stan Barstow, 1960). All those novels were made into films and they were all very influential films.<sup>501</sup> Stan Barstow's *A Kind of Loving* was published at the same time as my first novel [laughter], I remember that very well, because they were reviewed together. And that's another story of a very young man growing up in a very oppressive and repressive provincial city, getting a young girl into trouble and finding the avenues of a fuller life closed off to him. Again it might not be quite grist for your mill because I think the rogue is a much more proactive figure than some of these characters who try to rebel and fail.

**ARF – You've mentioned the humor of these novels a lot and I would also add the irony. Normally the rogue is associated with a literature – the rogue literature – that can be linked to writers such as Defoe and Fielding, mainly Fielding, whose narratives are always humorous and in which the traits of the character and the situations in which he/she finds himself/herself are very peculiar ones. There's a significant tradition in English literature and a very specific one as well... How did all this panorama influence your own work?**

DL – Yes, I would agree that there is such a tradition. As to how I feel my own work fits into this frame or how far I was influenced by some of these writers of the 50s, I have to say that I was also influenced heavily by a quite different and earlier literary tradition, namely the Catholic novel of Graham Greene particularly, and Evelyn Waugh to some extent. But for anybody like me, who was a university student and then a post-graduate in the 1950s, and who wanted to have an academic career, *Lucky Jim* perfectly expressed the mixture of attraction and repulsion we felt for the class of people who were running the academic world in those days, who were nearly all Oxbridge graduates from before World War II. The private hostility of the young assistant lecturer towards his Professor, and his efforts not to show it, for instance, were expressed in terms that were instantly recognizable as well as very funny. *Lucky Jim* was a kind of model or precedent for quite a lot of subsequent campus novels written in England: Malcolm

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<sup>501</sup> *Room at the Top* (1959), directed by Jack Clayton; *A Kind of Loving* (1962), directed by John Schlesinger; *Lucky Jim* (1963), directed by John Boulting; *This Sporting Life* (1963), directed by Lindsay Anderson.

Bradbury's *Eating People is Wrong* (1959) being an example, and my own *The British Museum is Falling Down* (1965) another.

**ARF – And later on your trilogy: *Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses* (1975), *Small World: An Academic Romance* (1984) and *Nice Work* (1988).**

DL – Yes, right. We saw the possibility of using the academic setting as a kind of microcosm of the larger world, in which you could study the tensions in society at large and you could examine the ageless themes of sexual attraction, power, and so on, in a satirical way. I think *Lucky Jim* gave a lot of writers the sense of the possibilities of that form, which originally was an American form, the campus novel. *Lucky Jim* was a native version of it and it was different from the American version precisely in drawing on the robust farcical tradition that you talk about, the Fielding, Smollett tradition. The earliest American campus novels were Mary McCarthy's *The Groves of Academe* (1952), Randall Jarrell's *Pictures from an Institution* (1954) and Vladimir Nabokov's *Pnin* (1957), and they're much more novels of wit and polite social satire and intrigue, they're more intellectual really. They don't use broad farce in the way that, say, Amis does and to some extent I do too in some of my comic novels.

I don't think my first novel *The Picturegoers* (1960) owes much at all to the rogue tradition. I wouldn't have thought so. I started writing it in 1956 when I was in the army. I had read *Lucky Jim* not long before actually. I suppose I was influenced to some extent by the idea just beginning to be articulated in the fifties, that popular culture was not something to despise. It meant a lot to people, it was a way by which ordinary people modeled their lives, or escaped from them ... I'd started the novel before I read *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) by Richard Hoggart. I read that when I was half way through writing my novel and it confirmed my sense that there was a theme here: the effects of popular culture on ordinary people. So I think the *Picturegoers* reflects a sense that writers of my generation had, that it was worth writing about ordinary people in rather ordinary places. To be a writer you didn't have to be an expatriate or to speak six languages or to travel abroad. I was able to get published, I think – my first novel was published in 1960 – because this new literature that you are writing about opened up the

market. Publishers were now looking for novels about ordinary provincial or suburban life rather than exotic subjects.

The second novel, *Ginger You're Barmy*, is in a way about rebellion, and two kinds of rebellion really: there is the rather romantic and anarchic kind displayed by the Ginger character, who rebels against the army spectacularly and suffers for it, and there is the narrator, who starts by resisting the military ethos but then decides to just make himself comfortable and get on with his own life and feels in a way that he has compromised himself by that. So I split myself into two with those characters. The narrator is not a rogue, he doesn't do anything that transgresses, but he is internally a kind of rebel, one might say.

And then *The British Museum is Falling Down* (1965): I suppose Adam Appleby, the hero of that, owes something to these characters you call rogues in the sense that although the action of the novel occupies only one day it is in a way a bit of a picaresque novel. It moves from one episode to another and each part is characterized by a different style, a parody of some different author. So there is an episodic feeling about it. I don't quite feel that any of my characters in later novels could be described as rogues – but you may have a different view.  
[Laughter.]

**ARF – In the light of what you have just said, I would just like to add that *Out of the Shelter* (1970), your fourth novel, is also quite interesting. First because of the epilogue you've added, which is based on real events, second because it has a young man, Timothy, as the main character, and third because it depicts a specific time in Europe, the post-war period, going back to all these references, from the 50s, that are present in your novels and that you have lived as well. In the novel the main character lives a number of different experiences that open his eyes to the world. It's a kind of adventure and a "rite of passage". Again, it would be interesting to know how you see this particular novel today.**

DL – Yes, I would call it a passage novel, a *rite de passage*... It's quite a personal book, as you said. I would never have written it if I hadn't had something like Timothy's experiences, but I felt they were representative in a way of how my generation had come to terms with war, which



we experienced in a childish, almost mythological form, and then learned more about it historically in retrospect. The post-war period was dominated by American culture, which was the victorious culture really, and there was an element of rivalry with Russia, which comes into the novel too. And there was the whole question about German war guilt: how long it would go on for and whether it was redeemable and how you felt about the Nazi Germany, how you felt about the Germans as you learned more about recent history. So I was attracted to the idea of writing a novel with these elements. My own experience, suitably developed and extended in various ways, was a sort of arena in which I could explore all those themes, which I think were historically significant and central for my generation. Of course Timothy is very much myself, the scholarship boy, the boy coming from a very humble background and discovering art and literature. He's clever but culturally undernourished, more so than I was actually. My father was a musician, a dance musician, and also pretty well-read for a man with no formal education. So I represented Timothy's life as more culturally deprived than mine really was, more typical of a culturally undernourished lower middle class background. It's certainly a novel which reflects the cultural and social changes we're talking about, but not, I think, particularly in terms of a picaresque character. You may disagree... I suppose the kind of transgression involved is the key question, because the picaro is somebody who transgresses the law or morality but is in some way excused or justified because he is conflicting with rather despicable people, he is disarmingly amusing, and the kind of people he cheats are themselves cheats. Timothy finds himself in transgressive situations, living secretly as a boy in a woman's hostel for instance, which is a version of the old story of a man hiding in the harem. And he does come to the edge of a rather disturbing sexual experience with an older woman in that novel. He is unwittingly involved to some extent in a secret gay community in Heidelberg, which neither he or his sister really understand. But he's an innocent, and I suppose this is really what I would say about your thesis: that some of the characters you are interested in are innocent and some are not – but can you have an innocent rogue?

The character of the innocent perhaps comes from *Candide* [Voltaire, 1759], and before him from *Don Quijote*. And he is a very common kind of hero for a modern picaresque novel of

comic episodes exposing faults in society. You get a hero who is apparently so naïve that he keeps getting into trouble. He causes a huge amount of havoc in a way that the picares do, but not intentionally, so I think there's a distinction to be drawn there. Maybe there are characters who combine features of both but I would say that certainly Timothy is an innocent and I would say that to some extent Adam Appleby in *The British Museum is Falling Down* is that kind of character too.

**ARF – The characters associated with the rogue literature are also linked with themes (explored in the past masterfully for instance by Fielding) that relate to violence, the way violence is depicted, or the way sexuality is depicted, and the language used is always innovative. In ‘Discourse in the Novel’ (1934-35), Mikhail Bakhtin has written on the importance of such an anti-hero in the development of the novel. Would it be that writers from the 50s use this character because it allows them to go back to these same themes, themes that are on the spot at that moment in British culture and society? They seem to go back to this rogue tradition and they add something new to it. And perhaps the same can be said of contemporary postmodern British writers, who learned with the writers from the 50s and who explore these themes from a new perspective. I am thinking about the fictional work of two specific writers, Martin Amis...**

DL – That's what I was going to say: Martin Amis would be a good example to use...

**ARF – And the other one is a Scottish writer, Irvine Welsh.**

DL – Martin Amis, of course, would have been soaked in the novels of the 50s. He would have read them and he would have read his father's novels of course. And he certainly deals with more transgressive behaviour and more overtly transgressive characters than Kingsley. Though it just occurs to me: do you know Kingsley Amis's *One Fat Englishman* (1963)? The central character [Roger Micheldene] is a rogue without any doubt (his first name may be meant to suggest that) and, in a way, [Kingsley] Amis's characters became more transgressive as he went on writing. His early novels were relatively genial and the heroes quite sympathetic. When I

first read *One Fat Englishman* I was very puzzled by it. I couldn't work it out, I didn't know what Amis was getting at. Now I realize he was doing a kind of self-portrait. I mean, he was not a terrifically nice man and he was aware of it I think. He behaved just like that character does, actually. Roger Micheldene is a rogue certainly, he should be grist for your mill. I wrote an essay about *One Fat Englishman* in the *Guardian* – in their *Saturday Review* they have a series called Re-readings and I did one of that novel (*Guardian Review*, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2002, p.37).

One thing that came into my head while we were talking just now was the importance of the films of those novels in the 50s and 60s. A film that was very much part of that whole cultural movement was in fact Tony Richardson's film of *Tom Jones* (1963), which was hugely successful and established the actor Albert Finney (who also played Arthur Seaton in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, 1960) as a star. There you see a kind of demonstration, if you like, of the kinship of those novels and the cultural impact they had with the picaresque tradition in English fiction. You must know a lot about the picaresque novel in Spanish or Portuguese? Is there a tradition in Portuguese too?

**ARF – Actually during the time some of the great picaresque novels were being published (e.g. *Guzmán de Alfarache*, 1599/1604; *La pícaro Justina*, 1605; *La hija de Celestina*, 1612; *El Buscón*, 1626, among many others) Portugal was governed by Filipe II of Spain (Filipe I of Portugal). The Iberian Union lasted between 1580 and 1640. So, for example, the second part of *Guzmán de Alfarache* (*Segunda parte de la vida de Guzmán de Alfarache, atalaya de la vida humana*) was actually published in Lisbon in 1604. However, by the time the Iberian Union ended (with the revolution on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December of 1640) the golden age of the picaresque tradition was already fading.**

DL – I suppose the novelty, if you like, of the picaresque novel was that it put the lower orders in the foreground of the story. In that way it was different from romance and classical literature. And that's a reason for Bakhtin's interest in it too. There's a sense in which that division between the picaresque novel and heroic romance collapsed as the novel developed in Europe in

the eighteenth century. It integrated both of them really. Bakhtin's theory of the novel explains that, and I think it's very, very persuasive.

**ARF – And that's when – in the eighteenth century – the definition of rogue novel comes into use and begins to be very effective within the British context.**

DL – Of course most British novelists know nothing about the original picaresque novels. I mean, *Don Quijote* is about the nearest they get to knowing what that literature was like. So the picaresque tradition is mainly assimilated through the English adaptations of it in the eighteenth century. It's all borrowed second, third, fourth hand, isn't it? What about novels about actual criminals?

**ARF – The criminal biographies, for example, are very much connected with the rogue tradition. Frank Wadleigh Chandler in *The Literature of Roguery* (1907), mentions the importance of these biographies in the development of the rogue novel. But a distinction should be made between the occasional criminal, the rogue, who cheats and steals, and the habitual criminal (the villain), whose main crime is murder. The novels of actual criminals certainly played a part in the development of a new genre in the first half of the nineteenth century: the detective fiction, which will play an important role in the twentieth century... And going back to the idea of postmodern writers. How would you describe the influence of the 50s novel nowadays on British writers such as Martin Amis, Irvine Welsh or even Ian McEwan, who is often compared with Amis...**

DL – I don't think Ian has got very much in common with Martin Amis actually as a writer. They are the same generation and so they're often grouped together and, of course, they're friends also. Some of Ian's early stories are very transgressive – the hero having incest with his sister and things like that – but his characters are not exactly rogues. It would surprise me if Irvine Welsh knew much about the novels we've been talking about – the English novels of the 50s. He would know, of course, Scottish ones and he would have been influenced by Alisdair Gray (1934-) for instance.

The novels of the 50s are characterized by being, as I said before, very conservative in narrative form. The metafictional tricks, parody, pastiche, and so on which are characteristic postmodernist fiction only start coming into the English novel in the late 60s and 70s. They were going strong in America at the same time and Martin Amis was certainly very influenced by American literature. This is perhaps the big difference between him and his father. Kingsley couldn't stand American writing and the Americans didn't like his writing. I think that the next generation, the Martin Amis and Ian McEwan generation, and perhaps even more the generation after them, in a way took the social revolution of the 50s for granted. It had happened before they came on the scene. And they were more likely to be stirred by big global issues like the sexual revolution, nuclear war or the threat of it, intercultural contrasts and clashes, whereas the novels of the 50s were very domestic, they were very much about what was going on in England, as I've said, the lives of ordinary people in ordinary places. They don't have big horizons and they don't take on usually big political themes: the characters are rebels not revolutionaries. I'm not sure how I would begin to try and trace the most characteristic features of the Amis – McEwan generation or of their successors back to the 50s. My sense is that the novels which had such an enormous importance in the 50s don't really have very much influence anymore, with the exception perhaps of *Lucky Jim*, which is a kind of classic and still read. Perhaps some of the others are still read, but that's my feeling.

I suppose the sexual revolution comes into this because so much of that fiction in the 50s is concerned with the oppressive sexual morality of England and breaching it causes terrific consequences for the characters, it ruins their lives. In fact, Ian McEwan's latest novel, *On Chesil Beach* (2007), is set in 1962, exactly just before the sexual revolution. The two central characters are virgins when they get married and the wedding night is a disaster. Ian is obviously trying to say that this was what could happen because of the repressive sexual code of those days, although in the closing section you see that the permissive society has its own casualties too. Much contemporary fiction is concerned with the consequences of sexual permissiveness rather than transgression.

There are plenty of contemporary novels about central characters who behave in very anti-social ways. What about female picaros?

**ARF – That is a whole subject that I would like to explore. I think there are fewer female picaresque characters or rather female rogue characters than their male counterparts (Daniel Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Roxana* (1724) are good examples, and also in the twentieth century Joyce Cary’s Sarah Monday in *Herself Surprised*, 1941). Nowadays I think we have plenty female rogue characters, for example, in the work of: Angela Carter (1940-1992), Maggie Gee (1948-), or even Jeanette Winterson (1959-), whose work is very much linked to gender studies, among others. And this is another interesting thing: the rogue seen traditionally is mainly a product of the imagination of male writers and is usually male. It’s a very male tradition but indeed there is a female tradition parallel to this and throughout British literature you have examples of female rogues, and in fact most of them are creations of male writers as well. Nowadays, I would venture to say, you have more women writing and more women writing about female rogues.**

DL – Yes, I am also thinking of a very striking novel by a male writer about a female rogue. The title is a strange one, *Morvern Callar* (1995) by Alan Warner...

**ARF – And about your own work, we’ve talked about your first four novels but you’ve suggested that you do not identify traits associated with the rogue novel in your later work.**

DL – Yes, I guess I don’t really. The comic novels, *Changing Places* and *Small World*, are in a way very episodic novels. But in the case of *Changing Places*, it is very much a binary novel, so every incident in one country has its reflection in the other. That is not a structure I associate with the picaresque novel, which is a much more loosely linked series of adventures. There’s a sense in which the character of Morris Zapp [in *Changing Places*] is a bit of a rogue, I suppose. Most people find him sympathetic although they disapprove of him, but what they disapprove of usually is his cynicism and his manipulation of the system: his egocentricity and his cheerful

acceptance of the principle “to those who have, more shall be given”. He’s a comic character. If you recall Shakespeare’s Falstaff, he’s in that kind of tradition, I think: a man you can’t really approve of but on the other hand he amuses us and he also in a way cuts through various pretenses and hypocrisies of conventional life. So there’s a kind of honesty about him. Morris Zapp deliberately transgresses academic pieties about the value of great literature and so on. He sees it just as a business, it’s just a business which he’s good at – he says in effect: “speaking personally, Jane Austen is just a pain in the ass, but I teach her very well and I try to stop anybody else writing a book about her” and that kind of thing. So I suppose you could say he’s the rogue and Philip Swallow is the innocent in *Changing Places*. That’s how they react respectively to their cultural exchange.

In *Small World* the main character, Persse [McGarrigle], is innocent, completely innocent, and a stereotype. He is having picaresque adventures through his quest for his beloved girl. Philip Swallow and Morris Zapp are subsidiary characters. Philip Swallow has become less innocent by that time but I wouldn’t call him a picaro, really. There are elements of farce in *Small World* particularly, which you could trace back to Fielding and Smollett – I think of Phillip Swallow’s adventures in Turkey particularly, where he suffers various kinds of comic misfortune, wiping his bottom with his own lecture notes during a power cut, for example. And there’s a use of coincidence but that’s borrowed from romance, and not from the picaresque, there are lots of allusions to chivalric romance, and it was really chivalric romance which provided me with the model for that novel. It’s the interlacing – a term I’ve come across in discussions of the prose romance in renaissance literature – of stories. In *Small World* there are lots of different characters whose fortunes intersect and then separate again, so you get an interlacing effect. I think the structure of the picaresque novel is more usually a series of discrete adventures happening to a single hero. My own imagination tends to work with binary oppositions, actually. Nearly always there’s some kind of balance between two opposing characters or cultures or ideas, and there’s some sort of debate between them. In *Nice Work* (1988) the opposition is between academia and industry, the male and the female, the pragmatist and the theoretician, and neither Robyn Penrose nor Victor Wilcox have anything roguish about

them at all. In the case of *Thinks...* (2001) I suppose Ralph Messenger, the professor, is a bit of a rogue in a way, but it is stretching the term. I think that, as you would expect, the influence of the 50s rogue figure is much more obvious in my earlier work than in the later work because I was writing in that cultural climate.

**ARF – And your last novel *Author, Author* (2004) is actually completely different from what you have written.**

DL – Completely different, yes.

**ARF – Do you think this is an example of what will follow?**

DL – I've almost finished another novel but it's not a biographical novel. It resembles *Therapy* more than any other of my books. But I do want to write another historical-biographical novel because I've enjoyed writing *Author, Author* very much. But as you probably know it had a rather unfortunate history. It was overshadowed by another book on Henry James Colm Toibin's *The Master*, published earlier in the same year, 2004.

**ARF – Does your new book have a title?**

DL – Yes but nobody knows... [Laughter.] [In fact it is called *Deaf Sentence*, and that is no longer a secret.]

**ARF – And when will it be launched?**

DL – Well I haven't finished it yet. It's too late to be published this year so I imagine it'll come out next spring. Do you know which is my most popular book in Portugal? I can tell you, it's *Paradise News* (1991), it has been reprinted several times.

**ARF – And in order to finish I will just go back to something you've said at the beginning of our talk: the rogue is an old-fashioned word... In his work *Voyous: Deux essais sur la raison* (2003), translated as *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (2005), Jacques Derrida**



**establishes a relation between the French concept ‘roué’ or ‘voyou’ and the English ‘rogue’. Special emphasis is placed on the political dimension of these concepts, Derrida speaks of an ‘epoch of rogue states’. One of the most interesting aspects of his work is the reflection on the concepts mentioned. Just like the rogue, the roué is both included and excluded from the normative society.**

DL – Yes, I see. Well, the word “rogue” is still in use in current English. It usually refers to someone we regard with distrust, but you would not apply it to someone who is really evil. A rogue refers to someone naughty, not to be trusted, but not without a certain charm. Sometimes you qualify the word with a positive adjective, as in “He’s an amiable rogue.” In other words, the rogue is not a villain. In normal use it always refers to a male, who is associated with minor offences but has saving graces. It’s not a legal term anymore. Nowadays one uses it in an almost metaphorical way, to refer to someone not strictly moral in his dealings. I’m not sure whether I’ve ever used it in my fiction – perhaps in passages of dialogue...



## **APPENDICES**



## Appendix I

Sunday Evening, January 7, 1962<sup>502</sup>

Third Programme

9.10

**Alfie Elkins and His Little Life**

by

**Bill Naughton**

with

**Bill Owen**

Alfie ---- Bill Owen

Ruby ---- Hilda Fenemore

Annie ---- Barbara Young

Elsie ---- Norma Griffin

Fred ---- Charles Leno

Station Officer [also Alfie's father] ---- Joe Sterne

[The Guv'nor ---- Charles Lamb]

Narrator ---- John Bryning [1913,-]

Production by Douglas Cleverdon [1903-1987]

BBC recording

To be repeated on February 3

Bill Owen is appearing in 'Luther' at the Phoenix Theatre, London.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Broadcast: Saturday evening, February 3, 1962 - 6.30 p.m.**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Broadcast: Thursday evening, January 23, 1964 - 9.00 p.m.**

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<sup>502</sup> *Radio Times. BBC, TV and Sound*, vol. 154, no. 1991, January 4, 1962. The recording in the Catalogue of the British Library is under the reference H346/02.

## Appendix II

### ALFIE

Produced by Peter Saunders and The Mermaid Theatre Trust Ltd at the Duchess Theatre, London, on the 22nd July 1963, with the following cast of characters<sup>503</sup>:

*(in order of their appearance)*

ALFIE	<i>John Neville</i>
SIDDIE	<i>Glenda Jackson</i>
GILDA	<i>Gemma Jones</i>
HUMPHREY	<i>David Battley</i>
WOMAN DOCTOR	<i>Audine Leith</i>
HARRY CLAMACRAFT	<i>George Waring</i>
JOE	<i>Jerry Verno</i>
LILY CLAMACRAFT	<i>Marcia Ashton</i>
CARLA	<i>Maureen Davis</i>
PERC	<i>Patrick Mower</i>
LACEY	<i>Patrick Connor</i>
FLO	<i>Edna Landor</i>
ANNIE	<i>Mary Hanefey</i>
LOFTY	<i>Alan Townsend</i>
RUBY	<i>Margaret Courtenay</i>
SHARPEY	<i>David Battley</i>
VY	<i>Wendy Varnals</i>
MR SMITH	<i>Norman Wynne</i>

Directed by DONALD MCWHINNIE

Designed by DAVID MYERSCOUGH JONES

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<sup>503</sup> Cf.: Bill Naughton, *Alfie. A Play in Three Acts* (London and New York: Samuel French, 1963).

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### I. Primary Bibliography:

Martin Amis

Irvine Welsh

Other Primary Bibliography

Filmography

### II. Secondary Bibliography:

Theory/Historical Overview

On Picaresque Literature

On Rogue Literature

On the Confidence Man

On the Trickster

On the 1950s and 1960s

On Martin Amis

On Irvine Welsh

Other Secondary Bibliography

The best endeavours have been made to ensure that the URLs for external websites referred to in the dissertation are active. However, there are no guarantees that a site will remain live or that its content will remain available.

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