AIN SHAMS UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF AL ALSUN
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

A STUDY OF THE COMIC ELEMENT IN THE NOVELS OF DAVID LODGE ,

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO

GINGER ,YOU'RE BARMY,
THE BRITISH MUSEUM IS FALLING DOWN,
HOW FAR CAN YOU GO?,
CHANGING PLACES
AND
OUT OF THE SHELTER.

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SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE M.A.DEGREE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

BY

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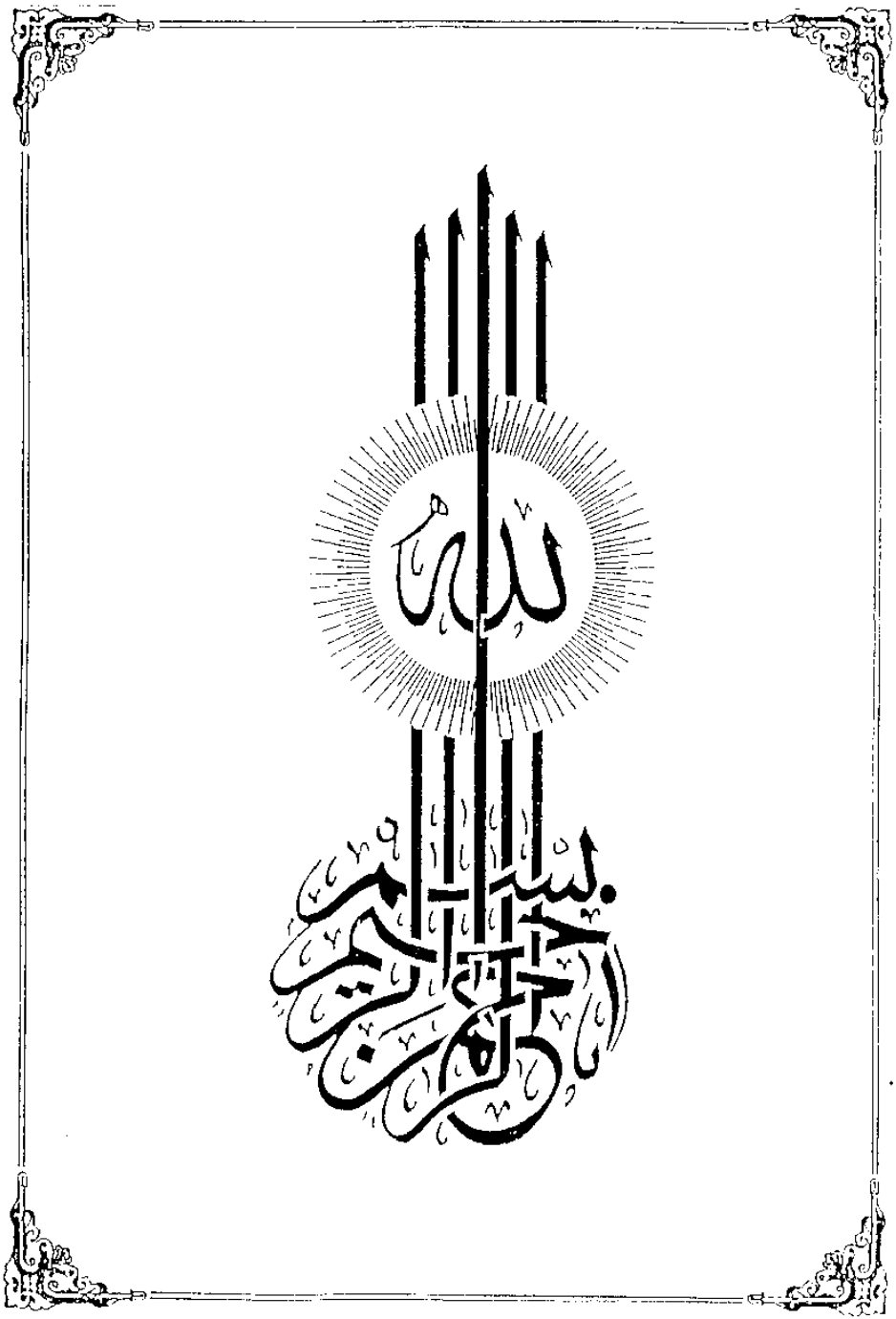

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The first chapter deals with David Lodge's autobiography. It then discusses Britain's state after the war. In the 1950s the "Movement of the Angry Men" took place. In this chapter we come close to David Lodge, the realist, whose interest in society is reflected in his novels.

The second chapter goes deep down to the essence of the term "Comedy". It traces the historical development of comedy throughout the ages until Lodge's time. Here we learn of Lodge's comedy and where his comic greatness lies, as applied to his respective novels. The last part of the chapter discusses Kingsley Amis and Lodge. In spite of the differences between them , they share many common traits.

The last chapter is about Lodge the satirist. The word "satire" is clarified and the three types of satire are portrayed. Here we learn of the method of satire, the forms of satire and the two related kinds of satire. Lodge belongs to the comedy and farce type.

Many writers deal with comedy as if it were indistinguishable from satire,T.G.A.Nelson suggests two factors that distinguish comic and satiric texts.

Highet suggests seven tests that guide us to consider whether the work is satiric or not; each test is applied to Lodge. This chapter deals with the academic life and ends in Lodge's novels.

CHAPTER ONE

DAVID LODGE AND HIS AGE

Chapter One

In this chapter we will come close to Lodge the novelist. We will also discover all the circumstances that enriched his creative talents resulting in Lodge's realistic comic novels. Lodge was not only influenced by his early childhood, but by Britain's state in the 1950s and the literary movements that took place in the 50s.

David Lodge is known to general readers as a novelist whose works, while often treating serious themes are "exuberant" and "marvelously funny" as Michael Rosenthal tells us in New York Times Book Review .The settings and characters of Lodge's novels reflect his own life experiences, including a childhood in wartime London, a stint in the British Army, study as a graduate student and work as a university professor. His Roman Catholic upbringing has greatly influenced his fiction as well. Most of his novels mention some Catholic statements in them. Dennis Jackson emphasizes that the main theme in Lodge's novels is the struggle of his Catholic characters to adapt themselves to the conflict between their spiritual and sensual desires.

It's interesting , to come close to Britain's state at that time , in order to analyze how Lodge's works were influenced by such circumstances.

> Britain experienced in the post-war years considerable alterations both in international role and in domestic organization. In the latter area, new attitudes and values resulted from the effects of the war, the creation of the Welfare State, and a moderate redistribution of the nation's affluence. These factors helped to lower traditional barriers between classes, creating some sense of possible social mobility. Changes of this sort encouraged many authors in the fifties towards renewed interest in class, conduct and manners. The older generation of novelists, however, looked back at least half-regretfully to the disappearance of earlier ways of life before the war; whereas the new authors who emerged in the fifties welcomed change. They also suggested that new developments had gone only far enough to reveal how much had not yet been achieved. John Wain,

> works of the decade. Its hero, Jim Dixon, embodies several of the new attitudes which Allsop suggests were typical of "the new state of mind" of the fifties such as "irreverence... impatience with tradition ...vulgarity, sulky resentment against the cultivated." [2]

Jim is a teacher whose doubts about the job he has to perform occasionally drives him to pull hideous faces or engage in muttering and wild uncontrolled anger. His resentments, however mostly emerge in a kind of engaging clumsiness, leading him through drunken disasters with bed clothes and with the delivery of a lecture. In the end, he is rescued from the confusions of his academic life, ironically, by a member of the moneyed classes he professes to despise, and departs with an ideal girl for a remunerative job in London. This happy ending depicts comedy more than the social criticism of an angry man. Jim's farcical adventures and the ludicrous characters who menace him are too unreal to function as vehicles for satire or anger.

Finally, Jim's luck at the end of the novel also exemplifies a tendency towards reconciliation with society, rather than any real desire to reform it, which is present even in the novels of the 1950s which appear most angry. Yet rebels or angry men settle for compromise and social acceptance.

The angry young men of that period are seldom genuinely critical of the forces shaping contemporary life: their "dissentience seems little more than irritation at their exclusion from a satisfactory ... place in society." In the case of Amis, personal success largely terminated dissentience; just as his rebellious characters are quickly reconciled by the acquisition of a job and a place in the world.

Gilbert Phillips in The Novel Today describes these angry men as if they are beating against the door not to destroy it, but to gain attention, hoping that if they made enough fuss they would be let in. The moment they get what they wanted, they would calm down and settle.

David Lodge confirms Phillips's opinion. He remarks that

> the angry -provincial-neorealist fiction of the fifties doesn't seem, in retrospect, a particularly glorious chapter in English literary history.[3]

In 1980 David Lodge wrote an essay under the title "The Limits of the Movement" . In it he discusses the movement that took place in England in the 1950s. As a critic, he admits that, terms that label periods in literary history or group together writers of a particular time have certain aims in common - terms such as Augustan and Romantic, are necessarily imprecise, and open to challenge. Such imprecision and challenge are so vital for criticism. It cannot do without such concepts, since it is only by means of them that the literary data can be reduced to a clear and easy order - the order of literary history.

Lodge believes that one might go further and say that the institution of literature itself depends for its health on the currency of these descriptive terms. If the literary scene in the last decade has seemed to many observers rather dull, part of the reason may have been the failure of the good writers who have to find common ground among themselves, or the failure of criticism to make them collectively visible. Lodge likes Henry

James's idea that art lives on discussion, argument, comparison of new points, new attempts and even curiosity. To Lodge all such debates are likely to be productive when the issues are sharply focused by a dominant school or movement.

The last literary movement to manifest itself in England was that which emerged in the 1950s and was simply called the "Movement". In the 1960s, there was a general cultural revolution the "Counter Cultural" mix of drugs, rock music, hippiedom, happenings and radical politics. This movement had its effect on writing the movement being non-literary in orientation. There were also small groupings of writers, such as the poetry "Group" presented over by Edward Lucie-Smith and Phillip Hobsbaum, or the Liverpool poets, or today's young political playwrights. Black Morrison wrote a very thorough historical and critical study about the 1950s Movement which was called The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s.

Morrison mentions that the Movement was effectively launched in 1954 by the literary editor of the Spectator, J. D. Scott. He wrote an editorial entitled "In the Movement",which was published in October 1st issue. In

this article Scott discussed the group of young poets identified by another Spectator writer, Antony Hartley, who described such poets as having certain qualities in common: academism, anti-romanticism, hard headed common sense. Such qualities distinguished them from the capital Modernist tradition, and he suggested that the same literary values were making themselves felt in prose fiction with the publication of lively first novels by two of these poets - John Wain's Hurry On Down and Kingsley Amis's Lucky Jim. Scott argued that these new writers were reflecting, in their work, real changes in British society, and were destined to dissolve the rather weary and washed out custodians of the modernist, cosmopolitan high cultural tradition who had controlled the literary market place since the Second World War.

> The Movement ... is bored by the despair of the Forties, not much interested in suffering ... So it's good-bye to all those rather sad little discussions about "how the writer ought to live" and it's good-bye to the " experimental writing " The Movement as well as being antiphone, is sceptical , robust , ironic , prepared to be as comfortable as possible. [4]