

Postmodernism or Neo-Realism:

On Parody in David Lodge's Campus Novel *Small World*¹

TRADITION ET INNOVATION DU ROMAN RÉALISTE BRITANNIQUE:

UNE ÉTUDE SUR LA PARODIE DE *PETIT MONDE* DE DAVID LODGE

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Abstract: Parody in *Small World*, working in both comic and meta-fictional ways, embodies the liberal humanist spirit of traditional realist novel and critical consciousness of the anti-humanist post-theories though it looks like a technique of postmodern novel superficially. *Small World*, as a work of neo-realism, marks a significant tendency in the development of postwar British novel, both inheriting the great realist tradition of British novel and absorbing some innovative factors of postmodernist fiction.

Keywords: Lodge; *Small World*; parody; realism; postmodernism

Résumé: La parodie de *Petit Monde*, qui fonctionne de deux manière:comique et métafictionnel, incarne l'esprit humaniste libéral de roman réaliste traditionnel et la conscience critique de post-théories anti-humaniste, même si elle ressemble à une technique de roman postmoderne superficiellement. *Petit Monde*, en tant qu'une œuvre de néo-réalisme, marque une tendance importante dans le développement de roman britannique d'après-guerre, qui hérite à la fois la tradition réaliste du roman britannique et absorbe certains facteurs novateurs de la fiction postmoderniste.

Mots-clés: Lodge; *Petit Monde*; parodie; réalisme; postmodernisme

INTRODUCTION

In the latter half of the 20th century, two alternating streams of realism and experimentalism dominated the development of the British novel (Qu 621-622). However, from the late 1970s to the 1990s it had entered a stage of the concurrence of the two streams. People seemed to live in an age of unprecedented

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cultural pluralism, which allowed the combination of a variety of styles into a single work. It is in this pluralistic context that David Lodge's *Small World* came into being. Many scholars treat it as a typical postmodern text judging from its formal features such as parody, pastiche, carnival and meta-fiction (Liu; Su; Xu; Yang & Wu; Q. Zhang). However, denying its identification as a postmodernist text, the author of the present paper holds that it emerges out of neo-realism and can be seen as representative of the developing trend of British novel in the 1980s. That is to say, *Small World* both inherits the great tradition of realism and absorbs some new technical innovations of experimentalism. By analyzing the implications of its important formal feature "parody," the paper aims to reveal the essential characteristics of its creation and its significance in enlightening the developing trend of contemporary British novel.

PARODY AND PARODY IN LODGE'S FICTION

Parody as a literary term has a long historical tradition in Western literature, which can be traced to the ancient Greek heritage. Used in the 4th century BC, it is described as the comic imitation and transformation of an epic verse work, such as comedies of Aristophanes. Later, parody of the dramatic tragedy is used often for the meta-fictional or satiric purposes.

In later times parody is often reduced to ridicule or imitation with a somewhat negative connotation. F. W. Householder, a modern scholar on parody, while defining it as "a narrative poem of moderate length, in epic meter, using epic vocabulary, and treating a light, satirical, or mock-heroic subject," also made an extension to describe it as a "device for comic quotation" (Rose 7). Here by 'comic' he means both the quotations from the ancient comedies such as the works of Aristophanes and others, which have the effect of making the audience laugh. But we might wonder, how such a comic effect might take place? Actually, the insertions from another text can set up a comic discrepancy or incongruity between the quoted text and its new context. But such a quotation, no longer holding the same meaning as that of the original text, acquires some new implications in its new context, often embodying the author's attitude towards the parodied text and others. This way, the discrepancy or incongruity between the parody and the parodied text can, more often than not, produce a comic dislocation, which might result in the laughter and ridiculous effect felt by the audience.

Parody is not just a device for the play of fun. According to M.A. Rose, even the ancient scholars distinguished between the 'purely comic' and 'critical-ridiculing' parody (Rose 23). F. J. Lelièvre suggests that, even while something ridiculous or laughable is involved in the functions of parody, it does not necessarily mean that the parodist hold a complete negative attitude toward the target. As a matter of fact, it is possible for the parodist to combine critical insight, criticism and ridicule together, which provides remarkable resources for the multiplicity of the implications of parody. Though many modern critics understand the fact that, most associations of parody with the burlesque or ridicule has seen it being criticized for the negativity or destructiveness of its nature, there are still many others who regard the element of ridicule as a positive and constructive characteristic.

The above discussions show that the definition and use of parody are often restricted to its one aspect or other, such as meta-fictional or comic, negative or constructive. In fact, parody can be understood and used in a more comprehensive and integrating way. Lodge has conceptualized and used parody as both meta-fictional and comic in his literary criticism and literary creation, which would be further analyzed in the following.

David Lodge's theories and understandings of parody are well exemplified in his criticism. For instance, he has suggested such a definition of parody as both comic and meta-fictional in his *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (1990). Lodge quotes from Bakhtin when explaining the choice of his career as a novelist rather than a poet: "For the prose artist the world is full of other people's words, among which he must orient himself and whose speech characteristics he must be able to perceive with a keen ear. He must be able to introduce them into the plane of his own discourse, but in such a way that this plane is not destroyed. He works with a very rich verbal palette" (Bakhtin 201). Actually, it is also the identity and privilege of novelist that allows Lodge to be drawn to parody and travesty, which is the very kind of discourse he produced as an academic literary critic.

However, if Lodge's early understanding and uses of parody are still at its preliminary stage, lacking sophistication and complexities, then in his later works such as *Changing Places*, *Small World* and *Nice Work*, parody as both comic and meta-fictional is deliberately employed. *Small World* is full of comic parody of works ranging from literary texts to critical theories. Some critics has shown preference for works of general parody such as *Don Quixote*, *Tristram Shandy* and *Ulysses*, while condemning the specific parody as a minor literary form of little importance. However, in Lodge's fiction both general and specific parodies are used as an integrated whole. General parody is used to set up the plot and characters or to reflect upon the creating process. For instance, in *Small World*, the whole plot is a parody of the medieval Grail Legend, used to set up the theme and plot of all kinds of scholars in their life pursuit. Modern professors and medieval knights are built together in the 'dual structure' of parody.

In contrast with general parody, specific parody might be used to satirize or mock the parodied text and express the parodist's purposes (whether affirmative or negative, creative or destructive) without attacking the parodied text itself. Meanwhile, Lodge's uses of specific parodies are quite evident and effectively active. All types of modern and contemporary literary theories are displayed through the utterance and consciousness of the academic characters at the global conferences, which constitute the arena of the various conflicting and dissonant voices. Actually, these voices are never neutral and objective; on the contrary, the author's attitude is implied behind these voices. It might be construction or destruction as well as confirmation or negation, depending upon the author's intention. In addition, the meta-fictional aspect might as well belong to the discussing scope of specific parody. Lodge's double identity as both novelist and critic, inevitably, makes his novel writing practice even more self-conscious and self-reflexive than others. As a result, his fiction is interrogative of itself and self-parodic. By doing so, the meta-parodic meta-fiction has contributed lots of original ideas and profound self-reflections on the different planes of truth, and the relationship between fiction and fact.

Another point making Lodge's use of parody specific is his clearly defined attitude toward the present development of the contemporary British fiction and its relation to the tradition of realism. He has dealt with this matter in his criticism, especially in his essay "The Novelists at the Crossroads," where he reveals not only his taste for realism but his fascination with experiment, and the possibilities in the innovation of novel writing.

In a word, Lodge's use of parody is obviously serious, self-questioning and reflexive at once. Compared with John Fowles, whose use of parody is often the subversion of the novel's realism (for example, parody used in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* subverts the 19th century realism of English novel tradition) and asks for the reader to participate in a self-conscious investigation of relationship between literary conventions, social realities and the historical process (F. Zhang), Lodge's use of parody is non-subversive of traditional realism of the English novel, but more comically colored, more self-consciously meta-fictional and more constructive in inheriting realism and absorbing experimentalism.

PARODY IN *SMALL WORLD*

Comic Effects

Different from *Changing Places*, *Small World* is unarguably purely academic novel. Its focus is no longer on localities, but aims at a multinational dimension, with a large cast of characters and polyglot. As a device of producing comic effect, parody has played an even more important role in *Small World*. The whole structure is a parody of the medieval romance called the Grail legend. To try to write novel in the form of romance is a new experiment ever made in Lodge's writing career, which proved a successful move in opening possibilities of reforming novelistic forms.

Actually, reading a novel in the form of a romance might arouse different expectations of the reader. From one of its epigraphs, quoted from Hawthorne's preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*, we can find further illustration:

When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a

certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume had he professed to be writing a Novel. (Lodge, *Small World* 56)

Obviously, Lodge's main purpose is to claim for him certain latitude, some freedom from the restraint of the genre of the novel. Besides that, another aim is to appropriately arrange the elements of the plot already at hand. The circuit of international conferences and cast of a large number of characters require certain structural principles that conventionally govern the romance plot. First romance allows the author much freedom in his constructing of the specific stories and minute details, that is to say, he is freed from the requirements of verisimilitude, economy and plausibility when writing a novel. In his preface, Hawthorne continues to explain that: "(the novel) is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience" (Hawthorne). However, by contrast, romance is really more liberating to authors:

The hero of romance moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him, and enchanted weapons, talking animals, terrifying ogres and witches, and talismans of miraculous power violate no rule of probability once the postulates of romance have been established. (Frye 33)

Actually, readers can hardly find any mysterious witches or talking animals in *Small World*. The greatest advantage Lodge has made use of romance in parody is his perfect organization of plot and extravagant profusion of coincidences in the novel.

Lodge has transposed many elements of the Grail legend into the world of academic conferences. But how would the novel work as an organic whole? In an interview, Lodge has explained his original conception of *Small World*:

The reason why I thought of using the Grail legend in *Small World* is a very simple one. When I started thinking about the novel, I wanted to deal with the phenomenon of global academic travel. The idea came to me at a James Joyce conference in Zurich, which in fact is one of the settings for the novel....This is where I started: a kind of academic comedy of manners, with a global dimension. The characters would travel widely, having adventures as they went. (Thompson)

Evidently, Lodge might have got the inspiration from his personal experiences in attending international conferences. Therefore we have enough reason to conclude that his parody in *Small World* is, to a considerable extent, a kind of self-parody. But his conception of the novel meets some difficulties when he tries to find a constructing principle for plot. Later he realizes Arthurian legend could provide the mythic skeleton or underpinning necessary to give shape to his modern comedy of academic manners, though he could not instantly see all the ramifications.

There really exists an analogy between story in *Small World* and the Arthurian story, particularly the Grail quest in which a group of knights wander around the world. The Prologue of *Small World* is a parody of the Prologue of *Canterbury Tales*. The international conferences of modern scholars are compared to the medieval pilgrimage: "The modern conference resemble the pilgrimage of medieval Christendom in that it allows the participants to indulge themselves in all the pleasures and diversions of travel while appearing to be austere bent on self-improvement" (Lodge, *Small World* Prologue). The contrast between the devoted medieval pilgrims and modern Round Table of professors is of highly comic sense: the latter are no longer the pious pilgrims, but guys who go around the world in pursuit of glory, fame and amorous affairs.

In addition to this, parody is also used to interrelate the vast cast of characters. As mentioned previously, parodying romance endows the author with much freedom in devising coincidences. Actually, coincidences not only remind us of the authorial mind behind the plot but suggest the academic world is really a "small world," where people might come across each other at global conferences. It is a "small world" with superstars saying "big words." One important theme of *Small World* is the individual quest: one is driven primarily by the drive for fame and power; the other is for sex. In the former case, the Holy

Grail is the UNESCO chair of literary criticism with a tax-free salary of \$100,000 that occupies the mind of the upper-level academics. Meanwhile, the Holy Grail symbolizes quest of women, with the central character Persse as a typical example. All these quests use ironic juxtapositions and rich coincidences to expose the human frailties and weaknesses of academics in a comic way.

Almost all characters' names in *Small World* are parodying of those in the Grail legend. They are implications of all kinds. As pointed out by the author himself when referring to his own and Paul Auster's novels: "In a novel names are never neutral. They always signify, if it is only ordinariness...The naming of characters is always an important part of creating them, involving many considerations, and hesitations, which I can most conveniently illustrate from my own experience" (Lodge, *Art of Fiction* 37).

Compared with *Changing Places*, *Small World* is more carnivalesque in spirit. Here the parody is both comic and creative. The story moves forward with a rapid movement and quick alterations of scenes. Through parodying the classical romance, Lodge seems to understand the narrative power of romances in weaving materials into the novel.

As I worked at *Small World* I became more and more interested in the romance idea, weaving in as many romantic motifs as I could, and I very deliberately exploited the narrative codes of mystery and suspense. I wanted to have a lot of enigmas and moments of uncertainty, and if you have a good many characters you can naturally create suspense by leaving one character and moving to another (Haffden 162).

Though Zapp and Swallow do not correspond to any particular figures in the Grail legend, but they can be seen as veteran knights as well. Kingfisher comes from Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, referring to the Fisher King. Siegfried von Turpitz's black glove on his hand, suggestive of a source of sinister power because nobody knows what's underneath it, is from the story of the black hand in the Grail Chapel in one of the versions of the Grail legend that Weston discusses.

Evidently, Lodge is parodying the medieval romance from different versions. The comic effect is produced through the amusing contrast between modern scholars scuttling the global conference and the medieval knights in search of the Holy Grail. The difference is the symbolic content of the Grail between them. Unlike the medieval knights who set the search of the Holy Grail as their pure life goal and see the journey as a kind of spiritual purification and self-improvement, the modern scholars mostly aim at the seizure of power, glory, fame and physical enjoyment without much consideration of the holiness of the academic study itself. Actually only Persse is a definite exception. However, he is a somewhat farcical figure in the novel, depicted as a modern Don Quixote who pursues an invisible Angelica like the chivalric knight wielding his long spear at the flocks and windmill.

As observed previously, *Small World* is a text full of parodies of various modern and contemporary literary theories. This is the specific parody specific of Lodge. His interest in and concern with critical theories are necessarily related to his double identity as novelist and critic. The various critical theories are displayed so miraculously in the novel that it might be used as an introductory textbook for beginners of modern critical theories. However, the theories are never neutrally weaved into the novel in an absolutely objective way. On the contrary, they are full of profound implications, indicating the attitudes of the author towards them.

There are many discussions of romance theories in the novel. Miss Sybil Maiden is the self-claimed pupil of Jessie Weston, and Angelica is specialized in the field of Romance. At the Rummidge conferences, Miss Maiden had a vehement argument with another scholar about the Grail legend (Lodge, *Small World* 12). It is interesting to watch the scholars argue about issues of Romance. The different interpretations of the Grail legend by these scholars imply the conflicting critical ideas of different generations. Since Lodge has adopted the Grail legend as his structural principle in giving unity to the novel, he is obviously biased in believing in the explanation given by Persse, i.e., the Grail as the symbol of the quest of human kind. It must be admitted that Myth and Archetypal criticism has its wide application in the studies of classical romance. However, the implication is perhaps suggestive of the danger of overdoing with the theory: 'How far can you go' with critical theory? The author might have suggested through this parody: they have gone a bit too far. Miss Maiden's theory appears again in the immediate context, implying a bit of the author's satire. "Martineau Hall, in which they ate and drank,

was in contrast, a low cylindrical building, confirming Miss Maiden's views on the universality of sexual symbolism (Lodge, *Small World* 17). It is really a hard question, to which even the author himself declines to give a definite answer. Actually the author's ambivalent attitude toward critical theories shows the changing process of his critical career. What he maintains here is not relativism but a kind of pluralism, of seeing the world in an open and more dialogic way.

What follows is the parody of post-structuralism. Deconstructionists dismiss the possibility of interpreting literary text because they regard the meaning of texts as the gliding of signifiers. The interpretation of texts is just like a play with signifiers. Morris Zapp' lecture shows all that: "The reader plays with himself as the text plays upon him, plays upon his curiosity, desire, as a striptease dancer plays upon her audience's curiosity and desire. ... The dancer teases the audience, as the text teases its readers, with the promise of an ultimate revelation that is infinitely postponed. It is the delay in the stripping that makes it exciting, not the stripping itself; because no sooner has one secret been revealed than we lose interest in it and crave another" (Lodge, *Small World* 27).

At the MLA conference where the novel develops towards its climax, several theories are presented when academics display their views on "The Function of Criticism." Swallow still insists his traditional humanistic scholarship. Michel Tardieu expresses his views on the function of criticism from the perspective of structuralism. Siegfried von Turpitz makes use of the theory of Reader Criticism. Fulvia Morgana has her Marxist approach towards the function of criticism. Morris Zapp repeats his deconstructuralist reading of literature as he has said at the Rummidge conference. At last, when Arthur Kingfisher asks the audience to raise questions, Persse raises a magic question that clarifies the understanding of the function of criticism and solves the controversy about it. "What follows if everybody agrees with you?" The explanation given by Arthur Kingfisher was more illuminating to the academics at the conference: "You imply, of course, that what matters in the field of critical practice is not truth but difference" (Lodge, *Small World* 319).

Evidently, the implication of the author is that, criticism should function in an interactive, communicative and dialogic way. Lodge's attitude toward critical theory was becoming less ambivalent when he applied Bakhtin's dialogism into his critical practice in the 1980s and 1990s. Actually, Lodge opposes the dominance of any school of literary criticism and insists on the pluralism of criticism rather than the relativism of criticism that is often held by post-structuralists. Lodge's advocating for critical diversity can actually be found in his later criticism:

In Bakhtin's perspective it is not possible to say the last word about anything in the human sphere, whatever maybe the case in the physical sciences, and he venerated Dostoevsky for founding his art of fiction upon this principle: at the end of Dostoevsky's novels, says Bakhtin, 'nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not been yet spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and always will be in the future.' The subject therefore always entails a certain measure of self-deception or bad faith which manifests itself in various discursive symptoms" (Lodge, *After Bakhtin* 94).

The discovery and introduction of Bakhtin in the west is of so great importance that his dialogic principle has, to a great extent, solved the crisis of criticism and contention in literary studies. In this sense, Persse may be, not improperly, regarded as Bakhtin when he poses a question that illuminates the whole business of criticism, "What follows if everybody agrees with you?" The question implies Bakhtinian dialogic philosophy, according to which the existence of self depends on the existence of other (through surplus vision).

Meta-Fictional Aspects

Lodge's use of parody has shown its two aspects of both comic and meta-fictional. However, some differences must be made between parody and meta-fiction in order to apply them into correct analyses of *Small World*. While the former, when used separately, might refer to a reflection by an author on their activity as author, or on that of others, or on the compositional procedures of texts, or on the role of the

readers as interpreter of the text; the parody of a literary text, as shown previously, can not only depend upon such meta-fictional reflections, but upon other characteristics of parody such as its comic refunctioning of the parodied text. It must be stressed that, not all meta-fiction may be parodic in the traditional, comic sense of parody, and not all parody may be meta-fictional in the sense that is the reflection of the novel writing practice of an author.

The meta-fiction in John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is not predominantly parodic, for its references to other texts outside the fictional world are not part of clearly comic parody though they serve to reflect the fictional nature of the work. Understandings of Fowles's novel as parody mostly rely upon the separation of parody from the comic, and the equation of parody with the general characteristics of meta-fiction such as the direct address to the reader, or the introduction of self-reflection into the novel writing process. In his novel John Fowles, through meta-fiction, manipulates the expectations of the reader through the direct address to the reader on the confrontation of traditional and modern theories of novel. Parody, in this self-consciously manner, is located in the oscillation between covert and overt critiques of a literary convention, i.e., the 19th century critical realism (Rose 94).

In contrast with John Fowles, Lodge's use of parody is both comic and meta-fictional. It gives new life to other literary works or devices by making them a part of a meta-fictional reflection on the author's own writing practices. It also plays with a confusion of fiction and reality and with allusions of modern theories about them. *Small World* is deliberately self-conscious and has many critical reflections on the art of fiction.

"Author's Note" is strong evidences of Lodge's deliberate intention to break up the fictional reality of novel, and to expose the pure fictionality of the novel. However, in the process of establishing the plot and depicting characters, the author deliberately introduces the concrete time, place and names of characters to equip his fiction with a sense of reality.

Here, actually, Lodge is making an exploration about the relationship between illusion and reality, a controversial subject discussed so frequently by his predecessors and contemporaries. In contrast with Lodge's claim of the pure imaginativeness of his fiction through the "Author's Note," Daniel Defoe put strong stresses upon the reality of the novel through Prefaces to *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*:

I affirm that the story, though allegorical, is also historical. It is the beautiful representation of a life of unparalleled misfortune and of varied experiences found nowhere else in the world. . . . This may be depended upon as truth, and to this I set my name. (Defoe)

It is interesting to compare Lodge's Author's Notes with Defoe's Preface. The former deliberately exposes the fictional nature of his novels though making efforts to bestow his plots and characters with a sense of reality, while the latter makes use of every means to persuade his readers believe the truthfulness of his novel's representation of reality. Defoe's understanding of the truthfulness of novel as equation to the real events in real life is restricted to his age. He lays special stresses on the personal experiences because of his strong opposition to the pure fiction of the earlier classical legends and romances. Lodge's understanding of fictional reality is quite different from Defoe's, not only because his trilogy involves medieval romances but also because of his notion of fictional reality:

Writing, strictly speaking, can only faithfully imitate other writing. Its representation of speech, and still more of non-verbal events, is highly artificial. But a fictional letter is indistinguishable from a real letter. A references to the circumstances in which a novel is being written, in the text itself, would normally draw attention to the existence of the 'real' author behind the text, and thus break the fictional illusion of reality, but in the epistolary novel it contributes to the illusion." (Lodge, *Art of Fiction* 24)

The preference for 'Author's Note' bears some resemblance to the postmodern concept of regarding history and fiction as cultural sign systems and ideological constructions. Obviously, this kind of understanding of history as being, like fiction, but a discourse construction or a collection of signs blurs the clear distinction between fiction and reality made by the traditional outlook of history. It seems that, the parodic comicality of 'Author's Note' lies in the turning of the reader's expectations which are based on their past reading experiences. Actually, the authors' declaration of the pure fictionality of their works

does not mean that their novels may not be possible to affect the outside world through exerting effects upon the reader's mind, but that their fiction remain fiction, while the external world remains distinguishable from it. In addition, the author's deliberate exposition of the fictional nature of fiction is, ironically and contradictorily, contrasted with his keen effort to present his readers a sense of authentic representation of reality. The sense of realistically authentic representation of life is undermined by the forewarning of the intruding authorial voice in the 'Author's Note.' Many allusions of Lodge's own personal experiences as academic critic and novelist can be traced to the detailed descriptions in his campus trilogy. Based on this point, it can be seen that *Small World* is neither pure invention nor true stories, but a combination of them. In fact, the subtlety of artistic creation lies in the intricate involvement of illusion and reality, truth and falsity. And accordingly, the fictional reality is still reality, though on a different level. As to these complex issues, the author himself has his own insight:

Novelists are and always have been split between, on the one hand, the desire to claim an imaginative and representative truth for their stories, and on the other the wish to guarantee and defend that truth-claim by reference to empirical facts: a contradiction they seek to disguise by elaborate mystifications and meta-fictional ploys such as framing narratives, parody and other kinds of intertextuality and self-reflexivity or what the Russian formalists called "baring of the device." (Lodge, *After Bakhtin* 18)

In addition to this sustained built-in commentary upon the techniques and compositional devices of novel, there are many other comments on literary issues and questions. As to the relationship between life and literature, Morris Zapp has his remarkable thoughts: "the root of all critical error was a naïve confusion of literature with life. Life was transparent, literature opaque. Life was an open, literature a closed system" (Lodge, *Changing Places* 47-48). Here through the consciousness of his characters, Lodge is trying to explore the differences between art and life. Interestingly, in *Small World*, when trying to persuade Fulvia not to believe Desiree's book, Zapp abuses novelists in such strong terms: "It's true. Novelists are terrible liars. They make things up. They change things around. Black becomes white, white black. They are totally unethical beings" (Lodge, *Small World* 135). Here the author, in an extremist way, exposes the pure fictionality of the novel and emphasizes the moral significance of the novel's role played in society.

Finally, instead of hiding his artificial devices of composition, Lodge deliberately flaunts his role as an author and exposes the self-consciousness of his double identity as both writer and novelist. These parodistic meta-fiction in *Small World* shows that, Lodge at times turns his back on verisimilitude, a realistic principle that novels should be a close and true imitation of real life. However, he denies the "postmodernist" monopoly of meta-fiction: "meta-fictional discourse is not so much a loophole or alibi by means of which the writer can occasionally escape the constraints of traditional realism; rather, it is a central preoccupation and source of inspiration" (Lodge, *Art of Fiction* 208).

Thus the parodistic meta-fictional passages establish a complex relation with the conventions of realism. They acknowledge the artificiality of the conventions of realism even as they employ them; they disarm criticism by anticipating it; they flatter readers by treating them as intellectually sophisticated enough to discuss writing matters with the author.

Writing as both novelist and critic, Lodge's novels can be read through the lens of his criticism. "Meta-fictional writers have a sneaky habit of incorporating potential criticism into their texts and thus 'fictionalizing' it. They also like to undermine the credibility of more orthodox fiction by means of parody" (Lodge, *Art of Fiction* 208). This might serve as the author's self-annotation and self-anatomy of his own novels.

Rather than say that parodistic meta-fiction offers us a relativistic view of the distinction between illusion and reality, or fiction and history, it is mostly to be used for showing how the fictional work is constructed. However, the attention it gives to the compositional procedures of fictional work does not necessarily undermine the ability of the novels or their writers to make a realistic representation of real life, or the sober, competent readers to judge the real events happening in the real life. Thus, meta-fictional parody can be seen as different from both meta-fiction and parody. It functions in several ways: to show how the author may use it in comic ways to criticize and re-function less self-reflective works of fiction; to educate their own readers to a greater awareness of both the possibilities and

limitations of fiction; and to create new fictions from old ones.

CONCLUSION

Parody as an important formal technique employed in *Small World* is not to be necessarily classified into the realm of writing techniques of modernism and postmodernism. In fact, it has a long tradition in Western literary history. Lodge's employment of this technique is unavoidably restricted to his age and might be connected to those of the modernists and postmodernists. Superficially the formal feature of *Small World* bears a resemblance to modernism and postmodernism; in essence they imply the liberal humanism of traditional realism. His parody of various critical theories indicates his attitude against the anti-humanist tendency of deconstructionist reading and interpretation of literary texts in contemporary literary criticism. Actually, Lodge's criticism assumes the traditional humanist mode. Despite his familiarity with the twentieth-century critical theories, he has a profound awareness of the defects and danger in applying them in practical criticism. The conceptual boundary between creative and critical discourse, as one of the basic assumptions of the traditional humanism, is in danger of being abolished by post-structuralism. They are unlikely to inspire or encourage the writer who practices his art outside the academy. In his practical criticism Lodge emphasizes humanist value and common sense, and strives to ground historical, evaluative criticism in textual form rather than its content or context. His criticism seeks no scientific system because in his mind theoretical construction serves the purpose of interpreting works of literature. Most modern and contemporary critical theories are domesticated and purified in his system of criticism characteristic of liberal humanism and empiricism.

Based upon the above critical analysis of *Small World*, we can see the modernist and postmodernist factors are its "variants," and the liberal humanism its "theme." In the context of cultural pluralism Lodge has successfully compromised a seemingly impossible compromise. *Small World* came into being in the context of cultural pluralism, when realism and experimentalism flowed into the concourse. Lodge's creation, however, do adhere to the great tradition of realism though he makes much use of postmodernist technical innovations such as parody, flashback, polyphony and others. His brand of realism is neither that of the 18th century nor that of the 19th century, but a kind of neo-realism combining traditional realism and experimentalism. It shows the author's emphasis upon the dialogic nature and communicative function of the novel and his deep humanist concern, marking an important trend in the postwar British fiction.

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