
CHARACTER STUDY IN MALCOLM BRADBURY'S FICTION

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ÖZET

Çağdaş İngiliz kampüs romancılarının önemli temsilcilerinden Profesör Malcolm Bradbury'nin 'Eating People Is Wrong', 'Stepping Westward', 'The History Man', 'Rates of Exchange' ve 'Cuts' isimli romanlarında çizdiği karakterler belirgin özellikleriyle ayrı ayrı ele alınmış ve olay örgüsüne olan katkıları incelenmiştir.

Ayrıca kendine has tiplenenin, 'tersinleme' ve 'gülmece' motiflerini nasıl etkili bir şekilde ortaya çıkardığı konusunda çalışmanın diğer bir yönünü oluşturmaktadır.

SUMMARY

In this particular study the remarkable representative of the contemporary English campus novelists, Professor Malcolm Bradbury's four novels and one novella, as it reads in the following order; 'Eating People Is Wrong', 'Stepping Westward', 'The History Man', 'Rates of Exchange' and 'Cuts', have been analyzed separately in regard to character portrayals along with the prominent features, and their contributions to the plot structure have also been handled.

Another facet of this study has included the specially designed characterization which has enabled the author to display the motifs of irony and humor effectively.

In the majority of Malcolm Bradbury's novels, a remarkable characteristic feature seems to have prevailed, which has been the singularity of his characterization. To a great extent, the author has dwelt on the current issues of the era ranging from the 1950s to the late 1980s. In the catalogue of occurrences Bradbury has meant to elaborate on the events or incidents taking place both within the boundaries of university campus and in the social circles relishing the similar academic aura.

The characters he tends to illustrate are generally members of faculty, particularly, professors or students from various social layers of society. In his narrative there has always been a villain who asserts that he should not be questioned on whatever he does. Dr. Howard Kirk and Bernard Frœlich represent the irredeemable heroes respectively in 'The History Man' and 'Stepping Westward'. As an opposite counterpart of such villainous characters, there have always been innocent, unsophisticated heroes like Walker of 'Stepping Westward' or Henry Beamish of 'The History Man'. Utilizing these opposite counterparts assists Malcolm Bradbury to achieve his ironic tone on the grounds that the naive characters most frequently try to perceive the external world through their own well-intentioned perspectives regardless of the presence of individuals who constantly attempt to eliminate them.

In the coming part of the study, four outstanding novels accompanied by a novella whose titles occur as follows, 'Eating People is Wrong', 'Stepping Westward', 'The History Man', 'Rates of Exchange' and 'Cuts' will be examined with regard to character analyses. The contribution of the character portrayal to achieve either an ironical tone or humorous effect will also be studied on the very grounds that characterization has bearing on the general tone of the narrative.

a) Eating People Is Wrong.

In the opening of the novel, the writer introduces the protagonist pointing out Walker's unprofitable tutorial with extra-mural students, his romantically humanitarian qualities, his fervent love for literature and first of all his liberalism which has been reinforced with the cult of original sin has been illustrated clearly. In exposing Walker Treece, the author has supplied detailed information basically on Walker's academic background, political tendency, intellectual pursuits instead of

furnishing the expectant reader with a few words on what he looks like. Walker has been drawn as a rather pessimistic young man and his sceptical attitude to the promises of politicians can easily be perceived.

Malcolm Bradbury has adopted a neutral omniscient narrator. According to Norman Friedman,

"regarding characterization, although an omniscient author may have a predilection for scene and consequently may allow his people to speak and act for themselves, his predominant tendency is to describe and explain them to the reader in his own voice".¹

The particular assertion postulated by Friedman has some relevance to M. Bradbury's narrative because in the vast majority of cases, Bradbury allows his characters to act and speak. For instance, a character who plays a role of primary importance has been introduced only by depicting his external appearance, but this presentation is far from being satisfactory for this reason the author immediately makes him speak and participate in the flow of events so with the help of vital participation of Louis Bates, the reader has been able to form an idea about his aggressive and challenging personality which seems to constitute a threat against Walker's classroom authority.

The physical appearance of Louis Bates has been drawn mercilessly and this particular description which seems to be a combination of both human and animal qualities renders him a condemned victim from the early chapters of the book.

"Unlike the others, he was not a youth and clearly had not come straight from school. He had an extremely large head, moulded in great pocks and cavities and formed on, it seemed, almost prehistoric, pterodactylian lines. The front of his pate was bald, but starting in line with his ears, a great fan of unkempt black hair stood up; from out of large eroded eye-sockets, black shining eyes fixed Treece with a wet look that he sought attention and interest. "Who?" wondered Treece, pausing in his discourse. He had forgotten the man's name and wondered whether he should, in fact, be here at all, he looked the sort of man who might have been passing the door and seeing a tutorial about to start, had decided to participate."²

1. Norman Friedman, *Approaches to the Novel*, Collected and Ed., Robert Scholas (San Francisco, 1961, p.128.

2. Malcolm Bradbury, *Eating People Is Wrong* (England, 1986), p.13.

Louis has made clear the point that he has been a diligent man without money and leisure to distract him from his studies. He puts it clearly that his purpose in attending Walker's tutorials is to have somebody to give him direction in writing essays. Louis's integrity can easily be noticed when he gives an account of the type of family he has got, but he adds that he does not present this piece of information to complain.

Malcolm Bradbury seems to have an ironic purpose to juxtapose Walker and Louis whose aims, expectations, personalities clash at one point or another. Both men have their own ideals to achieve, but from time to time their paths intersect especially in the matter concerning each man's tender feelings toward a member of the fair sex. Particularly, in the file of Louis, Treece discovers that he worked in the library of a mental hospital and this piece of information seems rather critical and has bearing on his unhealthy personal contacts with others.

Mr. Eborebelosa is another poor character who evokes both the sense of pity and laughter with his incredible ways and ideas. Malcolm Bradbury illustrates the difficulties and misunderstandings arising due to vast cultural differences. The writer uses this feature to emphasize how ridiculous Eborebelosa looks when he demands interest, attention, respect as the son of a chief.

"The Vice-Chancellor looked up, surprised, nervous, and in the broken window a frightened black-face appeared. "How do you 'do, sir," said the face. "I am in prison in the toilet." "Who are you?" said the Vice-Chancellor. "Eborebelosa," said the black face. "Are you a student here?" "Yes, indeed," said Eborebelosa"³

Treece has a difficult time to be an advisor to Eborebelosa or Louis. Eborebelosa has difficulties in adapting himself to a new culture, and Treece tries hard to persuade him into relying on him, otherwise he cannot assist him. Eborebelosa has been given as a typical example for all the students coming from developing countries.

"The house the University has given me, "said Eborebelosa. "Those are lodgings," said Treece. "That is not your house. What did you do there? Did you tell the landlady, it was your house?" "Yes" said Mr. Eborebelosa. "What else did you do? Did you damage any thing?" "I

3. Ibid., p.27.

have dogs to sleep in my bedroom. People also." "Women?" asked Treece. "Some women; some men," said Eborebelosa.

"You must be more thoughtful," said Treece. "We have great difficulty in finding landladies who are willing to accept Negro Students as it is."

"Aha," cried Eborebelosa. "You see, sir, you see. You do not accept us." ⁴

Treece, the liberal hero, makes the reader feel suspicious about the extent of his liberalness. He frequently asserts that he can love all men but never feels comfortable in the presence of strangers. He plans to arrange a party for foreign students, and does not fail to invite Emma who has been known as a good mixer, but Treece is far from predicting the problems which may arise when Emma's amible nature has been misinterpreted by socially awkward individuals like, Eborebelosa and Louis.

"The reason for Emma's attendance at the occasion was simple; Treece was, not surprisingly, nervous of the reception and wanted to have some reliable people there, and there was no one more reliable in the department than Emma. Treece had, therefore, telephoned Emma and asked "if we might trespass on your time and good nature." If Emma did not have too much of the first, she had an abundance of the second; and so here she was."⁵

The writer tends to give information about Emma's personality and in the second place he dwells on her physical appearance. This process has been used to emphasize the priority of human nature over externals.

"She was twenty-six, and therefore rather older than most of her fellow students; older, you had to say and wiser. When you saw her, the word you thought of for her was 'handsome'; she looked like the photographs you saw of Virginia Woolf or those tall, brown-eyed, fragile English beauties that fill autobiographies these days, the sort to whom it is not absurd to say, deferentially, "Do you want to go and lie down? for, it seems, even to be what they are is enough to make them look a little tried; life is so intense"⁶

4.Ibid., p.31.

5.Ibid., p.33.

6.Ibid., p.33

Emma indirectly seems to mother Treece. Even though he proves to be a highly qualified scholar in a provincial university and takes pride in being a liberal, ironically he falls short of meeting the demands of his mind and the world. His generosity reaches such an absurd point that he attempts to persuade Emma into accepting Louis as a husband. The way Emma rejects Louis's proposal sounds to convey an ironical message and displays human weaknesses which are rather hard to overcome.

"The trouble is one does like charming people better than good people. It's hideous truth, it's a moral corruption. But it's so. Look, Louis I'm like most women; I have my limitations. I'm just practical. I'm damned if I'm going to live in some mean little house all my life. If you marry me, you do it to make me happy, to take me away from the things that depress me, not to make life harder to bear. I don't want marriage to be the end of my life, but the beginning. Marriage isn't suicide, you know. I know it can destroy, but not me, please."⁷

As it is apparent, dialogue form has efficiently been used to make noticeable some human traits, weaknesses or ideals. Having been rejected by Emma, Louis finds it rather difficult to swallow her insult, and besides this crisis Louis has failed to give a satisfactory paper to Treece who seems to protect him against the ridicule of the faculty, but he has failed to prove that he is a real liberal. Louis begs to be forgiven on the grounds that he has been in love, but Treece tries to maintain his seriousness and authority regardless of his liberal philosophy.

Towards the end of the novel, both Treece and Louis seem to share the similar irony of fate by being hospitalized in the same ward, but Louis's case is much more serious because he is reattacked by a nervous breakdown which may take him months or years to recover. Louis has been victimized by an alien environment which has refused to help somebody out of their own circles.

The presence of Treece and Emma does not assist Louis to break the tight chains loose, and in a sense the loneliness and helplessness of Louis have been accelerated ironically due to their existence. Treece feels the burden heavily and thinks that consciously or not he has also played his own role in destroying this promising, honest, diligent young man in order to comply with the established standards of human society

7.Ibid., p.157.

"It was all my fault", said Emma tearfully.

"Why was it all your fault?"

"I made him do it. I went to see him. I told him what he was, how people saw him. I told him about us, you and me, what we did. I said he was other people's scapegoat, you know, a whipping-boy, the one they spanked when the prince was naughty so that wrong shouldn't go unpunished."⁸

The suggestions presented by Emma do not serve their purpose, but they cause to aggravate the great despair Louis feels, and the only solution to his personal dilemma is an unsuccessful suicidal attempt during a fit of serious depression. Therefore, Emma's piece of advice proves to be abortive. This particular example results in irony because Emma has not foreseen the fatal consequences of her friendly words upon the oppressed and desperate Louis.

b)Stepping Westward

The protagonist, James Walker has got his three novels published, but he has not dreamed that this particular novel will enable him to get a job as a guest writer in one of the American universities. The characterization of Walker has been presented with the help of his physical appearance, daily chores, and dreams that one day somebody will remember him and offer him a job.

"This was James Walker, a stout, slightly thyroïdic, very shambling person in his early thirties, victimized by the need for twelve hours' sleep a day; it always fetched him out of bed, promising good fortune, another acceptance, another invitation. Why did he bother? He was tired, lazy person, far enough from youth to be bored by new mornings. Only literacy and indignation kept him alive; the books he wrote in the silent flat were harsh, desperate messages of his impulse to marry with the world".⁹

Malcolm Bradbury has used the neutral omniscient point of view technique in which the author makes commentaries or impersonal explanations from time to time without making his true identity known.

James Walker's indignant struggle as a provincial writer seems quite far from offering him a sense of satisfaction and signals for a successful future, and the

8.Ibid., pp. 286-287.

9.Malcolm Bradbury, *Stepping Westward* (London, 1988), p.31.

pessimistic tone looms over the opening chapters. He realizes the fact that his contribution to the world of history has come to naught, therefore the readers see a James Walker who intensely feels his uselessness.

"His novels had made him a little money, more than enough to cover the costs of the paper he typed them on and the cigarettes he smoked while he wrote them. They dealt with heroes like himself, sensitive provincial types to whom fate had dealt a cruel blow, for whom life was too plain and ordinary to be worth much at all. In the last pages, the heroes, trapped by their remoteness from history, died or make loud perorations about social corruption."¹⁰

Eventually, after a period of long expectation, James seems to have seized a golden opportunity which sounds rather surprising both for himself and his wife, Elaine. He has been a caring husband and father therefore he feels fairly guilty before he makes the final decision. A warm feeling of excitement has enveloped him when he has gone to the telephone booth to break the good news to Elaine.

The author has brought together two thoroughly different personalities to strengthen the ironic effect. To this end, Malcolm Bradbury has arranged a seemingly close friendship between the innocent liberal Walker and the wicked, manipulating, dishonest Bernard Froelich. Walker has been drawn as a true-bred conventional Englishman, and on the other hand, Froelich has been depicted as a hero who is determined to achieve what he has been looking for regardless of others' thoughts, suggestions or ideals. Therefore, calling Froelich a Machevellian hero is going to be an appropriate title.

Walker's rigid way of clothing with a usual string-tie has been used as a characteristic feature shared by all the Englishmen, and his awkward manners on board and ungainly suit render him an easy victim for the open mockery of Froelich and for the ones with an identical stance.

"Froelich looked at him and loved the man. The eye, embedded in that cold flesh, saw, then; passion could take root, enthusiasm grow, in that fleshly rind. Froelich warmed, as he had intended to do, in his genius, and felt the man grow in stature. Walker too knew an occasion when he saw one. "Actually", he said, I think I will take off my tie."¹¹

10.Ibid., pp.32-33

11.Ibid., p.192.

Froelich has insisted that Walker should be invited as a creative writer to the university and when he is making this particular suggestion during the staff-meeting, the only view he has in mind is his promotion and completion of his research concerning the contemporary angry man. The irony lies in the depth of his proposal which has never been grasped by his colleagues, so Froelich reaches his aim using secret methods of his own and he does not act in accordance with a sense of utility.

Walker's dilemma related to his liberalism and career does not reach a conclusion in America, but it goes on growing more and more serious. The moment he has landed the Party, the university administration has initiated a campaign to make Walker take the Loyalty oath, but Walker rejects putting down his signature on the ground that he is not an American citizen. The liberal-minded Walker is under the threat of losing his tenure for the next academic year, but Walker does not yield to any kind of pressure exercised upon his personality.

"I came here for the chance to be uncommitted, it was a marvellous chance, and I'm proud to be here, I suppose. Yes, I think I am. It was very disloyal of me to come, really. But I came to be loyal to being a writer. That means not being limited. As I say, I'm not sure whether this is a good commitment. But if you think enough of it to ask me here, then don't limit it at all by anything like, well, the loyalty oath that I have on my desk in my apartment. That's a mistake."¹²

This Loyalty oath has been adopted to secure democracy against any perfidious attempt. Walker comes to America to satisfy his sense of freedom, but what he finds, instead of the liberty of an individual, is absurd items of law which are limiting the ranges of activity of an intellectual writer. Malcolm Bradbury puts a great deal of importance to reflect the reactions of his characters in the presence of a predicament threatening their value-judgements moulding the essentials of their philosophy of life. Now, Walker has been put to a trial which provides him with an appropriate ground to bring his liberal views and ideals into effect.

Walker's unbending obstinacy, makes some of the teachers and students aggressive, and they have set a campaign to speed up his dismissal claiming that it gets rather difficult to follow his courses due to his strange accent. As it is apparent,

12. *ibid.*, p.311.

Walker's moral solidity cannot guarantee him a secure future in the Party. With the propaganda spread far and wide Walker realizes that his chances of staying in the Party are getting less than he has estimated. The external pressure grows so intense that Walker starts to question the standards he has stuck to up to this time.

Froelich gets what he has aspired after, and now the faculty has gathered in the staff-room to decide on whether a new creative writer will be employed for the next academic year. Bernard suggests that the fund for creative writer should be used for another useful purpose, and presents his novel view on publishing a magazine where he is going to issue the chapters of his book which has already been rejected by four publishers.

"His book on Plight had now been refused by four publishers, a fact unknown to his department, and now that he had attained the status he had long ago intended to attain there seemed little need to sail in the difficult waters of publishing any longer. One published to become what he already was. Now with a magazine one could place the chapters as articles, one could promote causes."¹³

Now, Walker has been beaten because his last endeavour to free himself being a slave to conventions has happened to result in an unsuccessful affair with Julie who has been the typical representative of the materialistically-oriented society. Walker has consumed all his energy idly, and his prospects to achieve a brilliant future have also been disappointed owing to the restrictions ever present in human society. Walker's voyage up to a new land which is supposed to offer countless advantages ends up ironically and his sick wife who he tried to divorce several times has remained as the only alternative that he can cling to safely.

"This world, it was true, favored those who had ends in view, and to this extent Froelich had gone forward and Walker had, well gone back. This was because Walker was subjective pessimism and he was objective history, a turning wheel."¹⁴

c)The History Man

Barbara and Howard Kirk are completely fresh characters, that is to say; they do not make a couple with conventional ways. Howard Kirk is a sociologist who closely follows the teachings of Marxist philosophy. The author chooses the neutral

13.Ibid., p.414.

14.Ibid., pp.414-415.

omniscient narrative technique so as not to be assertive, and offers impersonal commentaries which can successfully be used to maintain a humorous or ironic effect. Before introducing characters, the writer prefers to indulge himself in giving general information about the campus, the way students look, the usual parties the Kirks are used to giving and so on. The omniscient narrator presents a bit of information about Kirk's physical appearance and his publications which seem to overthrow the generally accepted moral values.

"Howard is a sociologist, a radical sociologist, a small, bright, intense, active man, of whom you are likely to have heard, for he is much heard of. He is on television a good deal, and has written two well-known and disturbing books, urging new mores, a new deal for man; he has had a busy, literary summer, and a third book is on its way."¹⁵

Barbara's introduction has been made in a similar fashion because before the story progresses, such a quick way of introducing, at least some of the characters, seems necessary. Being a wife to Howard, Barbara resembles Howard from many aspects, particularly the Kirks do not ask each other questions about their private affairs.

"As for Barbara, well, she is at this minute just a person, as she puts it, trapped in the role of wife and mother, in the limited role of woman in our society, but of course she too, is a radical person, and quite as active as Howard in her way."¹⁶

The Kirks mean to be disturbing, especially for the ones with complaisance so they are a threat against bourgeois mentality and stability which are the great enemies of radical views. Howard and Barbara devote all their energy and time to promote social welfare of the community, and the Kirks are rather daring and broad minded in making friends from greatly challenging circles, such as heteros, homos, painters, advanced theologians, pop stars, IRA supporters... Last but not least, they manage to bring together hostile groups without giving any offence to either side.

"The principle is creative mixture. So the Kirks are mixing people from London with people from the town. They are mixing heteros with homos, painters with advanced theologians, scientists with

15. Malcolm Brudbury, *The History Man* (England, 1976), p.3.

16. *Ibid.*, p.3.

historians, students with Hell's Angels, pop stars with IRA supporters, Maoists with Trotskyites, family planning doctors with dropouts who sleep under the pier."

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Myra and Henry Beamish have been introduced as the Kirk's intimate friends. The introduction of the Beamishes makes the reader see the striking differences which have emerged due to the different style of life adopted by the Kirks. Henry Beamish has completely been pleased with the sort of life he leads and seems to resist any sort of changes, but he has been incapable of realizing the fact that his marriage is about to break up. Henry has been drawn as a rather naive character who cannot perceive the purpose of the people with whom he contacts and he has been unconscious of his wife's disloyalty to him with his bosom friend, Howard. Henry has been depicted as a victim who deserves being a scape goat, and Howard takes pride in rescuing Henry from difficulties he gets into.

One of the weaknesses of Howard has been his overconfident attitude to others around, and ironically he means to be of assistance to Henry or Felicity, but the reader clearly witnesses the discrepancy between his views and actions. The scandalous parties they arrange exceed all the sensible limits but the couple seems not to be disturbed by all this commotion taking place in their own house. Apparently they assume the role of a liberal-minded couple who does not have scruples about their way of thinking and behaving, but both Howard and Barbara fail to calculate the high cost of infidelity. Howard gives the impression that he is the product of fifties and his insistence to remain the way he is, irritates Howard to a great extent. As it has been traced closely, Howard's so called liberalism proves to be false because it is obvious that Howard cannot be tolerant of the people with different views.

"Now he looks at Howard with bright eyes, he says, "You asked me to look at theories about the workings of social change in the works of Mill, Marx and Weber. I hope this is a justifiable interpretation." Howard looks at the intolerable figure: he says, "I hope it is." Carmody now dips his head and draws the fat document from its folder; he begins to read the first sentence from the hand written page. "Wait a minute," says Howard, "Are you proposing to read all that?" "Yes, sir," says Carmody. "I'm not "sir", says Howard, "I don't want your deference." 18

17.Ibid., p.7

18.Ibid., p.131

Carmody, as a typical moral reaction, starts a campaign to reveal the scandalous private life of Howard. Carmody runs the risk of being expelled from the department therefore, he joins hands with Felicity to disclose the lascivious activities of Howard. Meanwhile, Howard experiences an incredible success in having intimacy with priggish Miss Callendar who has been Carmody's advisor. This closeness between two totally different personalities makes one think the possibility that Howard, the well-known schemer, is exploiting Miss Callendar to achieve his purpose.

"At least I hope you don't believe Mr. Carmody's version. 'I listen to all stories with a certain healthy scepticism', says Miss Callendar. 'Do you take milk?' 'Thank you,' says Howard coming and sitting down on the sofa. "Well,' says Miss Callendar, 'a tale of sexual heroism. Do go on.' 'I gather you know that I'm being accused of giving good marks to Miss Phee in exchange for her sexual favours?' says Howard. 'Yes' says Miss Callendar. 'sugar?' And of general moral corruption' says Howard, with political overtones. No, thanks.' 'I think you basically being accused of intellectual persecution' says Miss Callendar." 19

Howard has lived by the ethics which have been shaped according to the dictates of his own conscience and mentality. He feels that Miss Callendar is going to accuse him of robbing the chastity of girl students in exchange for good grades, therefore, under this particular threat he tries to persuade Miss Callendar into believing that he has wanted to help Felicity out of a perverted intimacy. Again, Howard presumptuously claims that he is free from blame because he is acting upon good-will only.

"Miss Phee's one of my advisees. She's a very sad creature. She's been through everything. Boy trouble, girl trouble, an abortion, the identity crisis, a breakdown...' The menopause,' says Miss Callendar. 'No yet', says Howard. 'Well, you've something to come,' says Miss Callendar. 'A scone? I made them myself.' Thanks says Howard.' She had a crisis that night. A lesbian affair she was having was breaking up.' 'Isn't she rather hogging the problems?' asks Miss Callendar. 'She was in trouble,' says Howard, 'she went down there into my study, and started raking through my papers. She wanted to be caught, I think; anyway, I caught her.' 'The instinct of curiosity,' says Miss Callendar, 'Mr.Carmody has that too.'"20

19.Ibid., pp.207-208.

20.Ibid., p.208.

Carmody's heart swollen with grudge against Howard has led him to arrange a devilish scheme to exhibit Howard's scandalous intimacy with one of his students. Now, in the following excerpt Miss Callendar discusses the motives of Carmody with Howard who still makes efforts to prove that he has meant to extend a helping hand to Felicity;

"I want you to see that this situation isn't as Carmody described it,' says Howard; 'I want you to see it humanly.' 'My Carmody wanted you to see him humanly,' says Miss Callendar. 'Miss Phee needed help,' says Howard, 'that's why I took her into my house. That's why she was there over the weekend while my wife was away.' 'Did your wife go far?' asks Miss Callendar. 'London' says Howard. 'You did tell me about her trips to London,' says Miss Callendar, 'she goes her way, you go yours. No doubt you were able to give her much more attention and help while she was away.' 'She was there,' says Howard, 'to look after the children. We looked after them together. We took them to the fun-fair, walked in the country with them.' 'But did you give her some help,' says Miss Callendar, 'there were photographs of the help.' 'Exactly,' says Howard."²¹

Malcolm Bradbury reveals misconceptions of Howard with Miss Calendar's catechism. Although Howard ironically goes on defending his corrupted ideals, the knowing reader sneers at his obstinacy.

Howard's excessive self-confidence, corrupted notions lead to fatal consequences. Barbara cannot tolerate being neglected any more. In the opinion of onlookers they have a moderately happy marriage, but actually it is a marriage of futility.

"The more we go into this, 'says Barbara, 'the more I feel the last thing we need is a party. I think it's a very doubtful celebration. 'You thought that last time,' says Howard, 'and it cheered you up.' 'My God, Howard,' says Barbara, 'what in hell do you know about my cheerfulness or my misery? What access do you have to any of my feelings? What do you know about me now?' 'You're fine,' says Howard. 'I'm appallingly miserable,' says Barbara. 'Tell me why?' asks Howard. 'I prefer not to' says Barbara."²²

21. Ibid., p.219.

22. Ibid., p.209.

The fatal accident that leads Barbara to death has passed unnoticed by Miss Callendar and Howard who accidentally leave the door of their room open and Barbara happens to go by this very room before this accident will take place.

"But it is a small altercation, and down in the basement they do not hear it. Nor do they hear when, higher in the house, in a guest bedroom empty of Felicity's things, a window smashes. The cause is Barbara who, bright in silvery dress, has put her right arm through and down, savagely slicing it on the glass. In fact no one hears; as always at the Kirks' parties, which are famous for their happenings, for being like a happening, there is a lot that is, indeed, happening, and all the people are fully occupied."²³

d) The Rates of Exchange

Apparently, the prophet of the English language, Dr. Petworth finds himself helpless in the midst of an east European country where he fails to communicate his views due to political and language barriers.

The naivety of Dr. Petworth gives rise to funny situations because his only concern has been to lecture the Slakan university students on the English Language and Linguistics.

Alien to the Slakan culture, it seems rather difficult for Petworth to avoid mishaps which render him an awkward and pitiable figure. Although the adventures of Dr. Petworth have occupied all the narrative, this fact does not count for calling Petworth the protagonist in the real sense.

The author reveals the fact that Petworth has no identity at all in Slaka and the things he values highly seem to be disregarded here. The Slakans fail to call him correctly and this particular example serves as an evidence to indicate that he has no identity in Slaka.

Another character with a minor role to play has been Mr. Steadiman who has been drawn both as a funny and pathetic figure. This cultural attaché leads a difficult life which has been made even harder with an unmanageable wife and countless traffic accidents.

23. Ibid., p.230.

In this particular novel, the strange occurrences gain priority over characterization. For instance, Katya Princip a dissident novelist with a great imaginative power has not been allowed to get her novel published. In a world of restrictions is it possible for an individual to have an identity of his own? In a way, the writer emphasizes the current idea that the people living in the Iron Curtain countries have to act in accordance with the dictates of the regime. Katya gets closer to Dr. Petworth in order to achieve her first and only purpose, which is to have her book published in Europe, and unconsciously Petworth has been appointed as a courier.

Katya calls one of the characters Stupid, and now the reader discovers the fact that Dr. Petworth acts without discretion and loses the copies of Katya's novel for this reason he deserves being called stupid. The turbulence enveloping the whole world causes the loss of the novel. Petworth believes that he has a complete control and privilege in the realm of linguistics, but he ironically comes to realize that he fails to convey his views, and he also yields to the secret, plotting ways of the Slakans.

A clerk in a white shirt makes some telephone calls, and then says:

"I'm afraid they offloaded your briefcase at Frankfurt by mistake."
'oh, no,' says Petworth, 'When will I get it?' 'I'm afraid you won't,' says the clerk. 'When they found the passenger wasn't scheduled through the airport, their security people blew it up. I see,' says Petworth, 'You'll take more care of me.' 'well, these days one has to be very cautious,' says the clerk. 'You're entitled to make a claim, of course. Was there anything in it of great value?' 'I suppose not,' says Stupid."²⁴

Lubijova, Tankic and Mrs Gogo can be considered types rather than characters to study. Each takes great pains to make a good impression upon Dr. Petworth, but their exaggerated ways make them pure caricatures. They try to present and talk about things that do not exist at all. The false pictures about their true standards increase both the quality of humorous and ironic effects of the narrative.

e) Cuts

Malcolm Bradbury handles a subject which dominates the whole lives of individuals. It is the power of money which has ever been superbly important. In this particular novel money is everything; money makes the world rotate briefly.

Again, in the novel the author tends to illustrate types of individuals who stand for the qualities of various groups of people. The main purpose of the writer is

24. Malcolm Bradbury, *Rates of Exchange* (London, 1983), p.309.

to emphasize the policy of the English government adopted to rationalize the private and public expenditure in 1980s. The restrictions imposed affected every household and institution in England, and the individuals who were greatly influenced by this generally practised cut-down were the members of poverty-stricken districts

Malcolm Bradbury turns his attention to script-writers and film producers activated by merely financial motives.

Henry, the provincial school teacher, who has led a life of isolation is hired by a film company. He has been drawn as an unsophisticated individual and this particular disadvantage of Henry makes him get into various difficulties. The scripts he has already written undergo vast changes in connection with the actors' and film stars' tendencies or moods. So Henry plays the part of a helpless script-writer who has been drifted to and fro with the passing fancy of the producers and film cast. Henry hands in his resignation with the expectation of a more comfortable future, but the events take such an unfavourable turn that he has repented of his folly hundreds of times.

The author has recourse to using dialogues to enliven the narrative, and the events gain so much importance that characters do not emerge as individuals deserving to be examined. So the chain of occurrences overshadows the characters in a world ruled by materialistic motives only.

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