

David Lodge's *Small World*: A Postmodern Academic Quest

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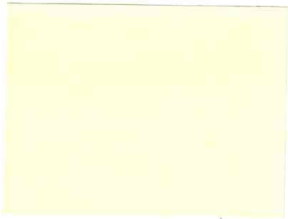
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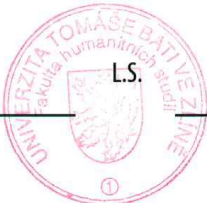
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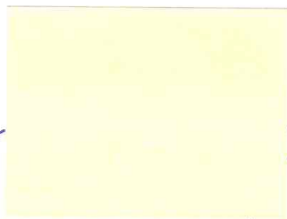
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ABSTRAKT

Tato práce analyzuje román *Svět je malý* Davida Lodge s cílem poukázat na zajímavou kombinaci milostného románu a akademického románu napsaného v postmoderním stylu. První kapitola představuje autorův život a jeho dílo. Následující dvě kapitoly se zabývají funkcí postmodernismu v literatuře a představením akademického románu a rytířského románu. Finální čtyři kapitoly se zabývají analýzou knihy a její struktury s cílem poukázat na její formální prvky a jak jsou použity k vytvoření komického postmoderního románu, který zesměšňuje i literární teorii. Hlavním cílem práce je dokázat, že Lodge paroduje a kritizuje žánry rytířských románů a milostných románů.

Klíčová slova:

Svět je malý, David Lodge, akademický román, rytířský román, postmodernismus, intertextualita, výprava, Svatý grál, univerzita

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the novel *Small World* by David Lodge with the aim to point out the interesting combination of romantic novel and campus novel written in the postmodern style. The first chapter introduces the author's life and his work. The following two chapters deal with the function of postmodernism in literature and an introduction of campus novel and chivalric romance. The final four chapters deal with the analysis of the book and its structure with the aim to point out its formal elements and how they are used to create a comical postmodern novel that even ridicules literary theory. The main objective of the thesis is to prove that Lodge parodies and criticizes the genres of chivalric romance and romantic novels.

Keywords:

Small World, David Lodge, campus novel, chivalric romance, postmodernism, intertextuality, quest, Holy Grail, university

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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INTRODUCTION

The quest is one of the oldest narrative devices. It incorporates a hero's desire to achieve a particular goal, and in order to achieve it, he has to travel a great distance and overcome many obstacles that cause him to develop as a person. This means that the journey itself is as important, if not more, as reaching the objective.

David Lodge uses this narrative device in his novel *Small World: An Academic Romance* because it fits the setting; a number of academicians travelling around the world to conferences via jet planes to find success in professional life, satisfy the need for human interaction and create romantic relationships. The pursuit of love and human connection are themes present in all three novels of the Lodge's Campus trilogy, with *Small World* being the most obvious in this regard since it is dubbed "An Academic romance". While the themes of the quest and finding love are the main focus of the book, Lodge deconstructs the conventions of romantic novel and chivalric romance as genres through intertextuality and pastiche to create a parody of the genres as well as providing a critique of its form and a critique of endless competition between academicians and the literary theories they defend.

In the beginning, this thesis will introduce David Lodge together with his professional life and work. This will be followed by the introduction of postmodernism in literature and the genres of campus novel that David Lodge represents and Chivalric Romance that he uses as an inspiration for *Small World*. Then the thesis will focus on the analysis of the quest as a narrative device in the academic setting, followed by the role of the legend of the Holy Grail in *Small World* and how it is present in the story through the plot and the characters. Next, the thesis will look at the elements of romance in *Small World*, which will describe the titular character Persse McGarrigle and his values and characteristics he shares with the errant knights from chivalric romances, together with a look at some themes present in the book. In the final chapter, the thesis will look at the aspects of postmodernism in *Small World* and describe their meaning in the novel. This thesis's goal is to show that David Lodge's *Small World* is not just a romantic novel but also a critique of literary genres and the world of academia.

1 DAVID LODGE: HIS LIFE AND WORK

David Lodge is a British novelist, literary critic, playwright and a former professor of English literature at Birmingham University. He was born on 28th of January 1935 in London to a lower-middle-class family.¹ His early childhood was influenced by war, as he left London with his mother during the bombings to live in the countryside. In there, he attended a convent school in Surrey. In 1952, he began attending University College, London, where he got his BA in English and later a Master's degree in 1959 and in the same year married his wife, Mary Frances Jacob. Between 1955 and 1957, he served his military service in Royal Armoured Corps, and in 1960, he joins Birmingham University as a lecturer of English.² He also begins to work for British Council, which later leads to his experience with travelling and conferences that was later portrayed in his novels.³ He was appointed as a Senior Lecturer in 1973 and in 1976, he became a professor of modern English literature. He held this position until 1987 when he opted to leave academic life and fully devote his attention to writing.⁴

As David Lodge states in his collection of essays *Write On*:

For me a novel usually starts when I realize that some segment or plane of my own experience has a thematic interest and unity which might be expressed through a fictional story. Then I look for some structural idea which will release and contain that potential meaning.⁵

This element is relevant for his novels as Lodge is often inspired by events from his life and topics and places connected with it. One of these themes is Catholicism, which is connected to his childhood. Despite being in catholic school during his childhood, this culture was not present very strongly in his life, and at that time, he never was truly acquainted with it. It was in later years that he became more knowledgeable of Catholic beliefs, influenced by the works of Graham Greene or Francois Mauriac.⁶

Regarding Catholicism, Lodge questions the relevancy and place of its values in the contemporary world. His first novel, *The Picturegoers* (1960), deals with the question of faith and its impact on the life of an individual; as a young university undergraduate Mark

¹ Bernard Bergonzi, *David Lodge* (Tavistock: Northcote House Publishers, 1995), 29.

² Bergonzi, *David Lodge*, vii.

³ David Lodge, *Write On: Occasional Essays 1965-1985*, (London: Penguin Books, 1988), 70.

⁴ "David Lodge," YourDictionary, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://biography.yourdictionary.com/david-lodge>.

⁵ Lodge, *Write On*, 72.

⁶ Lodge, *Write On*, 29-31.

Underwood, who is a tenant at the household of Mallory family, finds his catholic beliefs reinvigorated, he suppresses his sexual temptations and decides to aspire towards a higher calling of priesthood instead of family life.⁷ *The British Museum is Falling Down* (1965) is a novel following a catholic student worried about his wife being possibly pregnant with their fourth child as he spends his day reading novels in the British library for his paper. Sexual experiences he reads about create a visible contrast to his own experiences and thus pointing out the orthodox stance of the Catholic Church regarding procreation and consequent sexual frustration among the catholic community. In this novel, Lodge also employs the use of intertextuality that is much more prominent in his following works. He draws inspiration from authors like Kafka, Joyce or Hemingway.⁸ Other works dealing with Catholicism are *Ginger, You're Barmy* (1962), which draws from Lodge's experience in the army, *Out of Shelter* (1970), a coming-of-age novel with autobiographical elements from Lodge's war-stricken childhood,⁹ and *How Far Can You Go* (1980) that deals with changes in Catholic dogma and their impact on Catholic society.¹⁰ In his later years, Lodge published novels such as *Paradise News* (1991), where the main character Bernard is a laicized priest who finds hope for happiness after meeting a woman during his stay in Hawaii, where he is visiting his dying aunt. Among his more contemporary works of fiction are novels such as *Therapy* (1995), *Thinks...* (2001) and *Deaf Sentence* (2008), together with biographical novels *Author, Author* (2004) and *Man of Parts* (2011) inspired by the lives of Henry James and H.G. Wells respectively.¹¹

The most famous work of David Lodge is The Campus trilogy, beginning with *Changing Places* (1975) which was inspired by his visit to the United States. It follows the characters of Morris Zapp and Philip Swallow, two professors of English literature that swap their fictional places with Zapp going to Rummidge in England and Swallow to the state of Euphoria in the United States.¹² Lodge explores the differences between English and American culture in a comical way, underlined by the contrast between the two characters, with Swallow being conservative and docile against the extravagant nature of ambitious Zapp. The second book is *Small World* (1984) which reintroduces the two characters from the previous novel along with a number of new ones. It follows the journey of Persse

⁷ Bergonzi, *David Lodge*, 2.

⁸ Bergonzi, *David Lodge*, 7.

⁹ Bergonzi, *David Lodge*, 4-12.

¹⁰ Bergonzi, *David Lodge*, 34.

¹¹ "David Lodge," Encyclopaedia Britannica, last modified January 24, 2021, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/David-Lodge>.

¹² Bergonzi, *David Lodge*, 15.

McGarrigle and his romantic adventure across the world together with side stories of other characters, satirizing the life in academic circles and their pursuit of professional glory and search for sexual experience. In this novel, Lodge uses much more intertextual references, allusions and metafictional elements. This became his most famous novel, which was shortlisted for The Booker Prize. The final novel *Nice Work* (1988) is much more grounded than the two previous books and takes place in the Thatcher era of industrial and economic transformation that was less polite towards universities and directly compares industrial and educational “worlds”.¹³

Apart from being a successful novelist, David Lodge had a long career as an academic, spanning over 25 years, and published non-fictional works in the form of essays, journal articles, or critical works regarding his interest in linguistics and fiction and its subsequent analysis. *Language of Fiction* (1966) is his debut critical publication that deals with the importance of implying the same standards of text analysis towards novels that New Criticism has with poetry. *The Novelist at the Crossroads* (1971) studies the state of then-contemporary British and American novel¹⁴ and the possibilities of their future development and direction. In his following two books, *The Modes of Modern Writing* (1977) and *Working with Structuralism* (1981), Lodge’s critical work deals with the emerging structuralism and his place in modern English literature and linguistics. After a five-year hiatus, he published *Write On* (1986), a compilation of essays dealing with his own life experience and literary criticism, followed by *After Bakhtin* (1990), where he elaborates on Mikhail Bakhtin notion about the importance of dialogue in fiction. His more popular non-fictional publication is *The Art of Fiction* (1992), a compilation of newspaper articles analyzing various literary devices and writing practices of fiction in the context of various established writers.¹⁵

During his career, David Lodge established himself as a respected writer and literary critic. His novels are based on his personal experience and deal with the ideas of Catholicism, academic life, and the importance of love. His critical work and vast knowledge of literary theory transcend into his novels, namely the influence of structuralism and postmodernism, which is apparent in *The Campus Trilogy*, where he employs the use of intertextuality, allusions and pastiche. While using technical terms, whether from the field of literary

¹³ Bergonzi, *David Lodge*, 13-28.

¹⁴ Bergonzi, *David Lodge*, 50.

¹⁵ Bergonzi, *David Lodge*, 48-57.

theory or the liturgy, his writing is still accessible for an ordinary reader, which enabled him to become an important figure of Catholic and Campus novel.

2 POSTMODERNISM IN LITERATURE

As a movement, postmodernism has a wide reach across all cultural branches. Emerging in the second half of 20th century, postmodernism can be described as a movement that directly reacts to modernism and is characterized by broad scepticism, subjectivism, a general suspicion of reason and a reaction against the ideas of modernism.¹⁶ It stands against the ideas of enlightenment and puts forward the role of ideology as an important aspect in maintaining political and economic power.¹⁷ The development in science and technology is not considered as a universal vehicle for the progress of humanity; reason and logic are seen as mere constructs working within established intellectual traditions, and the development of most human characteristics is based on the influence of society.¹⁸ The aspect of scepticism shows the approach of postmodernism as there is no absolute truth and everything is open to interpretation.

In literature, postmodernism succeeds the era of modernism, which is characterized by unified text structure, originality, coherence of text and use of symbols and myths.¹⁹ Modernism employs experimentation in order to create new ways to write literature and leave the old literary traditions and philosophical ideologies in the past, creating new means of expressing art.²⁰ It rejects the values of modern western society and bourgeois lifestyle and uses complex writing structure, signifying the effort to create a sophisticated writing style, and while acknowledging the arrival of the values and ideas of modern society, modernist writers are trying to focus on the development of an individual and elaborating on the themes of alienation from the world and society they live in.²¹

Postmodernism presents a shift from modernism in regard to the effort for originality and creation of texts with high artistic value. Instead, it suggests that the modes of literary expressions are finite and therefore include the elements of non-literary media such as television in order to create an artistic freedom through which it portrays the reality of contemporary everyday life.²² It diminishes the difference between the “high” and “low”

¹⁶ “Postmodernism: philosophy,” Encyclopaedia Britannica, last modified Sep 4, 2020, accessed April 17, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/postmodernism-philosophy>.

¹⁷ “Postmodernism: philosophy.”

¹⁸ “Postmodernism: philosophy.”

¹⁹ Edward Quinn, *Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms* (New York: Facts on File, 2006), 330-31.

²⁰ Peter Childs and Roger Fowler, *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* (New York, Routledge, 2006), 145-46.

²¹ Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2001), 159-60.

²² Childs and Fowler, *The Routledge Dictionary*, 185-87.

culture and allows the writer to mix those elements together.²³ This is indicated by drawing from contemporary culture. Postmodernism intertwines art with politics and the development of society, often commenting and criticizing the political and socio-economic realities of the contemporary world.²⁴ The literature tends to be non-traditional in its form and often derives ideas and structures from other forms of literature to create a pastiche of the used genre that is showing the disregard for the coherence of the text and a thin line between reality and fiction.²⁵ A common use of metafiction supports the element of parody by pointing out the fictional status of the book through self-reference²⁶ and the use of intertextuality gives more contexts to the reader and alludes to works of fiction that the author deemed relevant to the story.²⁷ Through this narrative structure, postmodern authors such as Kurt Vonnegut or Vladimir Nabokov question the established ideas about the development of people and society and the relevancy of these ideas to a contemporary individual while pointing out the absurdity of existence.²⁸

An important element of postmodern writing is the use of intertextuality. In simple terms, it is a use of text in another text to create a certain meaning and relationship between them by quoting the text, alluding to the text or creating a parody of it.²⁹ Intertextuality displays the inevitability of being inspired by other works of literature and shows these relationships for a reader to recognize if he can. The use of intertextuality is not only restricted to fiction but to historical texts as well, connecting facts and fiction together. The use of those works adds depth to the text and creates a broader meaning of it, as the understanding is dependent on recognizing the connections and having a wider knowledge of other texts. It also shows the “textuality”³⁰ of historical texts. The truth of the information cannot be completely verified as we only know the information from the text itself. But the point of intertextuality is not to completely debunk historical texts but to parody and question them with the benefit of hindsight.³¹

²³ Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 201-02.

²⁴ Childs and Fowler, *The Routledge Dictionary*, 185-87.

²⁵ J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (London; Penguin Books, 1999), 689-690.

²⁶ Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 151-52.

²⁷ Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 128.

²⁸ Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 201-02.

²⁹ Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 128.

³⁰ Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 127.

³¹ Linda Hutcheon, *Poetics of Postmodernism*, 124-33.

3 THE GENRES OF CAMPUS NOVEL AND CHIVALRIC ROMANCE

3.1 Campus novel

Campus novel is a genre of fiction that started to emerge at the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century. It is set within the world of university campuses and deals with the life and experiences of students and professors.³² Campus novel is synonymous with its satirical and comical approach towards the idiosyncrasies of academic life and offers a view into the changes that universities went through during the twentieth century. University fiction has its place in literary history, particularly in Britain. Mainly they are concerned with the two biggest British universities, Oxford and Cambridge respectively, such as in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Clerk of Oxford*. While they describe life at the university, it is a rather romanticized portrayal of it. It is worth noting that the university community was a much more secluded society of mostly upper-class citizens in the past. This dynamic began to change during the nineteenth century with the Industrial Revolution, reforms and changes in society that continued to the twentieth century. Those changes allowed a more satirical approach towards academic fiction to point out and criticize the inner workings of these institutions and their lack of ability to adapt to the changing landscape of modern society.³³

Changes were made during the nineteenth century in an effort to make universities such as Oxford and Cambridge in England or Harvard in America more relevant in the social landscape. The arrival of capitalism and social growth due to the Industrial Revolution created an opportunity for citizens to accumulate wealth, which subsequently raised interest in post-secondary education among newly emerging working-class students. Reforms were brought to allow availability to this new class of students as well as a possibility for women to join these institutions. Along with the universities being more accessible for the public, changes in curriculum were warranted to adapt to the interests of the new incoming students in need of education relevant to the emergence of new sciences and disciplines. All these changes resulted in raising the importance of universities in England and America, but the changes of the educational system were slow, much due to the conservative nature of the universities. Ultimately, the passage of the Education Act of

³² Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 33.

³³ Kenneth Womack, *Postwar Academic Fiction: Satire, Ethics, Community* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 19-22.

1944 that sought to make post-secondary education in Britain more available to working-class students changed the university landscape. This act created a possibility for ordinary students to reach higher education via scholarship, creating an influx of talented male and female students from lower classes as well as for young men who returned from the Second World War to pursue higher education.³⁴ This influx of new students also catalyzed the creation of so-called “redbrick universities” built in the industrial cities of England.³⁵ But despite these positive changes, the revelation students had to face was that even with the reforms allowing them to join universities, they were entering a competitive and elitist society that was still reluctant towards a change.³⁶

These elements lead to the emergence of campus novels that describes these individuals and their existence within the university community. These novels are works of authors who are very well acquainted with the life within a university, as they were its part as students and later as professors. They offer a critique of the university landscape and the unethical nature of the social and educational dynamics inside these institutions. Common features are struggles of university life, weird and quirky characters, competition of scholars and their ideologies and romantic and sexual experiences.³⁷ While the satiric depiction of university life creates an exaggerated and comical view on the matter, its authors depict real issues connected with post-secondary education institutions. It allows the reader to have a critical approach towards the text, resulting in raising the interest of the wider public about these issues. These critiques usually aim at the competitive nature of universities where junior members are under constant threat of expulsion, unlike the privileged upper-class members, creating a willingness to resort to unethical conduct in order to get ahead and also underline a demeaning stance towards lower social classes, misogyny, racism and overall refusal of accepting different cultures and their heritage.³⁸

Kingsley Amis’s *Lucky Jim* (1954) is considered to be a pioneer among modern academic novels. This book portrays a young lecturer Jim Dixon, who is trying to navigate his way through the competitive university environment, as he is faced with many ethical dilemmas. This story comes from Amis’s own experience during his time at University

³⁴ Maurice Kogan and David Kogan, *The Attack on Higher Education* (London: Kogan Page, 1983), 15.

³⁵ “Redbrick University,” Dictionary.com, accessed April 26, 2021, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/redbrick-university>.

³⁶ Womack, *Postwar Academic Fiction*, 19-29.

³⁷ Robert F. Scott, “It’s a Small World, after All: All Assessing the Contemporary Campus Novel,” *Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 37, no.1 (Spring 2004): 81-82. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1315380>.

³⁸ Womack, *Postwar Academic Fiction*, 22-29.

College, Swansea. He belongs to the movement of “Angry Young Man” that is associated with a generation of men that had a problem fitting in within a certain class, as they left the working-class environment and did not subscribe to their values anymore, but at the same time were pushed aside by the social class they were trying to join. This confused generation met with disregard towards their intellect while being oppressed by the hypocritical value system of society they were trying to adopt.³⁹ This is the same experience Jim Dixon goes through. He is struggling to stick to his own values that collide with the ones of the society he is trying to be part of. He accepts a position at “unnamed provincial redbrick university”⁴⁰ to have job security and masks his own self for the sake of keeping it. He is challenged by his superior, Professor Welch, the elitist self-indulging antagonist who cares only about maintaining his status at the university. In an effort to keep his job, Dixon attempts to have a good relationship with him, but knowing Welch is likely to exploit his own work for the sake of keeping his own place at the university, his soul is in turmoil as his inner self fights his outer self. He is also confronted by Welch’s pretentious son Bertrand who puts himself above Dixon as a member of higher social class, and he is also emotionally blackmailed by his fellow lecturer Margaret, whose alleged attempt on suicide has Dixon take pity on her and refer to them as a couple in public. Fortunately, he creates a real human connection with Christine, Bertrand’s girlfriend, that later results in a romantic infatuation, which, together with some help from alcohol, results in Dixon speaking his heart out about the situation in the university during his “Merrie England” lecture, and thus ending the battle of his two personalities and allowing him to become a liberated member of the academic community who is free to search for his calling. Through this book, Amis offers a critique of the university community that seeks to exploit its junior members for the benefit of the people standing above them in the hierarchy, which, together with the threat of losing jobs, results in the suspension of the individual’s growth in the academic field.⁴¹

With *Lucky Jim* setting a precedent for the direction of the campus novel onwards, other authors contributed with their satirical portrait of academic life. David Lodge became popular with his campus trilogy that offers a comical view into the life of university professors and their romantic adventures. Interconnected by the two reoccurring characters, Philip Swallow and Morris Zapp, the main focus of the novels are on creating romantic

³⁹ Womack, *Postwar Academic Fiction*, 29.

⁴⁰ Womack, *Postwar Academic Fiction*, 30.

⁴¹ Womack, *Postwar Academic Fiction*, 27-42.

relationships and bonding with other people, which is something Lodge's characters struggle to do, despite being professors of literature. In the first novel, *Changing Places: a Tale of Two Campuses* (1975), the two aforementioned professors exchange their respective universities and with them each other's wives, which offers them a chance to establish the intimate connection they strive for. In *Small World: an Academic Romance* (1984), these two characters and a number of new ones travel across the world to conferences to establish meaningful relationships and success in personal life. His final book of the trilogy, *Nice Work* (1988), focuses on the relationship of Robyn Penrose, a young university lecturer, and Vic Wilcox, a director of an engineering firm, during the Thatcher era, which saw the universities struggle for funding. Lodge's critique is portrayed through these characters that find themselves in the predicament of trying to be successful in their professional life while being unable to maintain a satisfactory love life or be able to connect with other people due to their inability to communicate together with being preoccupied with their work.⁴²

While Amis's and Lodge's campus novels are considered to be the most popular, there are other authors whose novels tried to entertain as well as criticize. *The Hungry Ghosts: Seven Allusive Comedies* (1974) by Joyce Carol Oates describe unethical practices of scholars who are not afraid to cheat and use their colleagues to gain an advantage in order to get on top of the competitive world of academia.⁴³ The topics of xenophobia and racism are covered in *Japanese by Spring* (1993) by American writer Ishmael Reed, depicting the refusal of multiculturalism in the educational system and prevailing racist tendencies coming from the very core of these institutions.⁴⁴ Even the bureaucratic side of universities who seek political and financial dominance by any means necessary is the topic of another American writer Jane Smiley in her novel *Moo* (1995) that takes place in an American university with an agricultural department that wants to reign superior among other departments and possess the biggest political influence in the university.⁴⁵

In conclusion, the genre of campus novel provides a view into the inner workings of universities and their respective communities. The use of satire allows for creating a slightly exaggerated and comical depiction of these institutions, but the issues criticized by the authors are often based on their own experience. These books offer the possibility of

⁴² Womack, *Postwar Academic Fiction*, 77-97.

⁴³ Womack, *Postwar Academic Fiction*, 60-76.

⁴⁴ Womack, *Postwar Academic Fiction*, 109-26.

⁴⁵ Womack, *Postwar Academic Fiction*, 143-55.

raising awareness about the state of universities and possibly instigate an effort from the wider public towards a positive change.

3.2 Chivalric romance

Chivalric romance is a genre that developed through the high medieval ages and part of the late medieval ages. It is an epic-based narrative derived from the folk tales and legends that portray a hero, usually a knight, going on a series of adventures in order to gain glory and prove his chivalric qualities. The literature of this period comprises of the “Matter of Britain”, commonly known as the Arthurian cycle, the “Matter of France”, and the “Matter of Rome”, with the works concerned with Arthurian legends being the most popular.⁴⁶

Chivalric romance has its roots in the epic genre, but it switches from a focus on the themes of war, brotherhood, and loyalty to the king onto an individual’s spiritual experience. The hero leaves his comfortable life and embarks on a journey in the name of the woman he pursues to prove his courage and virtue during various adventures instead of fighting for his country. This journey tests the values he is conducting himself by and develops him into the person he aspires to be. This effort is inspired by a love for often a married woman that is usually a member of the court. In chivalric romance, women are considered morally pure and virtuous, which are standards the male hero aspires to appropriate through his adventures to be worthy of the woman he loves.⁴⁷

The genre of chivalric romance has a number of distinctive elements. Being based upon legends, it has a strong presence of the fantastical. The hero is in a world that contains magical forces that exist seamlessly within the world. His strength and courage are proved by battling monsters, fighting against the odds in a battle between a mortal human and a mythical creature. His journey is not linear and contains many diversions often instigated by his valiant nature and urge to aid and protect springing from his chivalric manners. This becomes an endless, perpetual odyssey of a knight wandering through the world, taking on various adventures and trying to discover the meaning of his existence which yields no final satisfaction of his desires. It poses an irony in the chivalric stories as the hero’s effort to become the ideal virtuous knight and win the lady’s favours is contradicted by the nature of such intention as absolute perfection is an unattainable concept.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Dani Cavallaro, *The Chivalric Romance and the Essence of Fiction* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2016), 4.

⁴⁷ Derek Albert Pearsall, *Arthurian Romance: A Short Introduction* (Bodmin: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 21-25.

⁴⁸ Cavallaro, *Chivalric Romance*, 28-43.

The chivalric romance is intertwined with the ideals of courtly love. It is characterized by the hero's complete devotion to the lady he loves, fulfilling her every wish in an effort to serve her.⁴⁹ The hero's position in the relationship is inferior, as he does not reach the same high ethical standard that women are associated with in chivalric romances and occupy a position below the social hierarchy of his love interest. He longs for her love that inspires him to pursue chivalric values and seeks her validation for his valour. The hero perpetually admires the lady's beauty and spiritual qualities, treating her in a courteous manner, and while his desire is to become her lover, their relationship is platonic. The result is a hero going on dangerous adventures to pledge his allegiance and prove worthiness for her heart. These feats of heroism gave birth to Troubadour poetry which portrayed love as a long pursuit of a knight's passion for a lady to express his feelings towards her and win her heart.⁵⁰ In the end, the hero does not succeed in becoming the lady's lover and continues to seek adventures in her name.⁵¹

The stories of chivalric romance unfold in a large world, which is due to the hero's many adventures he undertakes. The story presents many characters that exist independently within its universe. The hero's story is a centrepiece upon which more stories are built, establishing an ensemble of characters. This creates an episodic structure of the narration where more added stories expand the world, overlap each other and develop together with the main story towards their respective conclusions.⁵²

Probably the most famous work of chivalric romance is *Perceval, the Story of the Grail* and the legend of Perceval. Perceval does not embark on a journey to win a lady's love, but to become a knight and later in the story to search for the Grail, an artefact portrayed as a golden chalice that holds unknown magical powers. While not being the most chivalric in his manners, his tutor recognizes his talent in combat, and his restlessness soon sets him off towards adventure after being knighted. During one of his journeys, he meets with the Fisher King, who offers him to stay in his castle overnight. He encounters a strange occurrence during his stay as a girl walks several times through the hall with a grail during a feast. While Perceval wants to ask who was served from the grail, he decides not to, according to the teaching of his mentor. Later in the story, it is revealed that by not asking about the Grail, he failed to heal the injured Fisher King and put the safety of the land in

⁴⁹ C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 2-3.

⁵⁰ David Herlihy, *Medieval Culture and Society* (London: Macmillan, 1968), 229.

⁵¹ Cavallaro, *Chivalric Romance*, 43-46.

⁵² Gillian Beer, *The Romance* (London: Methuen & Co, 1970), 20-21.

jeopardy. This prompts Perceval to embark on a quest until he reveals the mystery of the Grail.⁵³

The search for the Grail presents a shift in the structure of a journey in chivalric romances. Instead of an endless quest in pursuit to prove the hero's chivalric values, the goal Perceval sets for himself represents a point in his journey that puts an end to his search and subsequently provides satisfaction for his desire to succeed and create meaning for his life. While the search itself is meant to be a difficult feat, it yields its price and allows the hero to stop wandering and live in peace.

The Grail legend sustained itself through time, and to this day, it is a concept that still lives on in contemporary society. In postmodern literature, the structure of the quest for the Grail offers a chance to explore the form through fabulation and question its aspects concerning the worth of pursuing a certain goal and what constitutes fulfilment in professional and romantic life.

⁵³ Richard Barber, *The Holy Grail: Imagination and Belief* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 14-21.

4 QUEST AS A PLOT DEVICE

The quest is one of the oldest plot devices used in writing. It is synonymous with the old legends, such as Homer's *Odyssey* or *Epic of Gilgamesh*, but most prominently with the Arthurian legend and the quest for the Holy Grail. The quest itself can be described as a long and difficult journey of an individual or a group towards a specific goal.⁵⁴ The quest as a plot device has a large number of characters who travel great distances to usually exotic places in search of their goal. The protagonists are put into situations where they are going against the odds with their strength and wits being tested by the struggle they endure, such as a difficult battle with the enemy or loss of determination and subsequent inclination to give up and live an easier life.⁵⁵ These conflicts create an environment in which every character can grow, learn new things about himself and becoming a different man.

Lodge was very familiar with the world of literary conferences, which inspired him to write a novel, and he wanted to explore this environment about competing literary theories and the relationships between the academicians on a professional and sexual level.⁵⁶ He adopts the quest as a plot device, citing the legend of the Holy Grail being the main inspiration.⁵⁷ The structure fits the setting of *Small World*, namely travelling long distances to the conferences and a large number of different characters. As he mentions in one of his essays:

The main problem is to find some plot mechanism that will bring together a large number of varied academic types from different countries and involve them in meeting each other frequently in different places and in different combinations, and have continuous narrative interest.⁵⁸

4.1 Quest in an academic setting

As mentioned previously, Lodge uses the motif of the quest as the main plot device and a way to narrate the story. In *Small World*, the characters are individuals with their own agendas, moving in academic circles and meeting each other on their travels. Unlike in a classical quest, where the characters embark on a journey to face a subject that poses a

⁵⁴ The goal of the character stems from an inner desire obtain or reach something based on an incident creating the desire.

⁵⁵ David Mikics, *A New Handbook of Literary Terms* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 252-53.

⁵⁶ Lodge, *Write On*, 71-72.

⁵⁷ Lodge, *Write On*, 72.

⁵⁸ Lodge, *Write On*, 72.

threat or to serve a lady he loves, in this book, the intentions of its characters are selfish and are supposed to satisfy their own ego and desire.⁵⁹ Their “quests” are influenced by the interaction with other academicians and their actions, whether they help their agendas or go against them. The academic setting and mutual influence between the characters emulate the notion of a literal “small world” where these characters exist.

4.1.1 Academic setting

The book is set in the university campuses and literary conferences. In a way, it is a “small world” inhabited only by certain people, namely the academicians, who travel from place to place “in search of adventure and glory.”⁶⁰ Together with settings connected with travelling (planes, airports, pubs), it is the conferences and campuses where the characters meet and talk about their work, relationships, mingle and face off each other with their respective work. In the case of Persse, they are the only places where he can happen to find his beloved Angelica, as he follows her from conference to conference.

The conferences are also a part of major plot points, with the obvious one being Persse meeting Angelica at the University of Rummidge, but also Phillip Swallow finding out that the woman he had a passionate affair with was indeed alive and well living in Turkey, where he was attending a conference. The conferences are also pivotal for Morris Zapp’s pursuit of the “Holy Grail” in the form of the Chair of Literary Criticism granted by UNESCO; as he wants to invite Arthur Kingfisher, a man tasked with finding the right candidate, to a conference he is co-organizing in order to “cajole, wheedle and flatter the old guy into seeing his own irresistible eligibility for the UNESCO chair.”⁶¹

4.1.2 Academicians as the characters

All the main characters of *Small World* are a part of a community open only to certain people with certain skills, but instead of knights, they are academicians. They are smart, well-read and competitive individuals who are more or less successful in their respective fields. Apart from Persse and Angelica, who are just entering the world of academia, these are experienced scholars whose paths have crossed before, giving those characters background to their relationships.

Thanks to advancements in technology, it is much easier for scholars to travel as the world gets smaller. They can take part in many events they are interested in, embarking on a

⁵⁹ Christopher Booker, *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 70.

⁶⁰ David Lodge, *Small World: An Academic Romance* (London: Penguin Books, 1988), 63.

⁶¹ Lodge, *Small World*, 249.

journey spanning the whole world with the quest of presenting their respective ideas and later in the book the chance to get the UNESCO Chair of Literary Criticism. Lodge directly compares the academicians with the knights of medieval romances, with Zapp stating that “Scholars these days are like the errant knights.”⁶² During summer, scholars travel around the world searching for knowledge and trying to make their mark with their work and literary theories in the academic field. This is the “search of adventure and glory”⁶³ that is reminiscent of the knights of medieval romance.

4.1.3 Academicians finding love

Since *Small World* is an academic romance, one of the leading themes of the book is the quest for love, represented in the first place by Persse McGarrigle’s pursuit of Angelica Pabst. Persse is a young lecturer from University of Limerick, who comes to Rumridge to visit a conference held in the local university. He is a man who is inexperienced, well-mannered and pure at heart as he is yet to experience the perils of adult life. Persse is a “tabula rasa” and creates a contrast against other characters in *Small World*, who are older, more experienced and thus more ethically and emotionally corrupt. At the conference, he meets Angelica Pabst and immediately falls in love.

Angelica is a mysterious young woman that charms Persse with her vast linguistic knowledge and interest in romantic literature. To Persse, she represents a chaste elegant woman of almost otherworldly beauty and intellect deserving of nothing but respect and romantic demeanour from his person that is correspondent with his attitude towards women.

With this outlook, Persse represents the romantic and naïve side of love, and while appreciating the physical beauty of Angelica, it is her character and purity that he cherishes the most. But apart from Persse, many other characters are trying to find some kind of love. Fulvia Morgana indulges in wild sexual antics; Phillip Swallow is trying to satisfy his longing for excitement and genuine passion, while Arthur Kingfisher lacks any real excitement in his life and struggles with the inability to get physically aroused.

⁶² Lodge, *Small World*, 63.

⁶³ Lodge, *Small World*, 63.

4.2 Structure of a quest in *Small World*

For the quest to begin, there has to be an inciting incident or The Call⁶⁴. This is an event that changes the current state of the hero's life as he wants to go on the journey to satisfy his compulsion.⁶⁵ In the case of Persse McGarrigle, it is the moment he finds himself back home in Ireland from the Rummidge conference. Despite the misfortune of Angelica leaving without a trace, when he returns to Ireland and finds himself staring at the night sky and reciting a sonnet by Keats, he decides to find her. The protagonist now has an object of desire and wants to pursue it as it is worth all his effort to do so.

Subsequently, the hero embarks on a journey to achieve his goal. The journey to his goal is long and often filled with various obstacles and ordeals.⁶⁶ Persse travels across continents in an effort to find Angelica, not hesitating to use all his resources along the way. He is met by negative influences, namely the possibility that Angelica could be living a double life as a stripper and former porn actress. He is convinced to bring her to a better life path, making the sexual service industry and its lowly morals his adversary. But most significantly, it is the timing that is his biggest obstacle, as he always is one step back behind Angelica. During his journey, Persse also suffers from "disillusionment" after discovering that Angelica probably is a sex worker and former porn actress of low morals. Persse loses his reason to carry on with his quest and decides to end it, but the following revelations have him recommence his journey.

It is a common trait of a quest that the hero has his companions who aid them throughout the journey.⁶⁷ And while this is not typical for *Small World* since Persse travels on his own, because of his polite nature, Persse makes friends on his journey that accompany him for a certain period of time. The most notable are Morris Zapp, who functions as an "older knight", sharing his wisdom with him and providing moral support: "Don't despair, Percy. I'll tell you what to do: come to the next MLA. Anybody who's a conference freak is sure to be at the MLA,"⁶⁸ and Ronald Frobisher, who helps him with the search for Angelica through the streets of London. Some characters have a more episodic appearance in the story and fulfil the role of The Helper, who aid the hero with his mission and showing him "the right path".⁶⁹ Such character is Michel Tardieu, whom Persse meets at T.S. Eliot

⁶⁴ Booker, *Seven Plots*, 70.

⁶⁵ Booker, *Seven Plots*, 70.

⁶⁶ Booker, *Seven Plots*, 73.

⁶⁷ Booker, *Seven Plots*, 72-73.

⁶⁸ Lodge, *Small World*, 308.

⁶⁹ Booker, *Seven Plots*, 77-78.

conference in Lausanne and who gives him information about where Angelica is accommodated.

Before reaching the goal, the hero usually goes through a final ordeal, being a last great test before reaching the goal.⁷⁰ Persse's test is more of patience, as he waits several months till December to attend MLA in order to find his beloved, which proves more difficult, as she is not listed in the program.

In the case of many epic narratives, the end goal is something very important and noble. In the case of *Small World*, this notion is subverted as the main hero is just looking for a girl. When Persse finally finds Angelica, he reaches his goal and does not hesitate to make love to her when he is finally alone with her. But instead of finding peace and gaining a new life with Angelica, his journey does not end in his favour as he discovers that Angelica is engaged.⁷¹ This serves as an anti-climax of the story as all the effort was for nothing, and at the same time, it debunks the idea of a romantic myth since being a believing in love and giving all the effort to reach it does not guarantee success.

⁷⁰ Booker, *Seven Plots*, 78-79.

⁷¹ Booker, *Seven Plots*, 82.

5 THE ROLE OF THE LEGEND OF THE HOLY GRAIL IN *SMALL WORLD*

The subject of the Holy Grail has impacted literature on a great scale throughout the history of literature and is still relevant today. Popularised by the Arthurian legend and the works of Chrétien de Troyes, the Holy Grail represents a mysterious artefact possessing the power of giving and nourishing life.⁷² The tradition of the Holy Grail as a “sacred vessel” predates the stories of medieval romances, but through those stories, it is widely known as a cup used by Jesus Christ during The Last Supper as well as a cup into which was caught Christ’s blood.⁷³

Along with its desirability, the legend of the Holy Grail is connected with the premise of a long and difficult search. These elements of search and great reward are dominant in *Small World*, as most of the characters are in search of something that is desirable to them and in order to reach their goal, they travel great distances and give a huge amount of effort to be successful. These allusions to the legend of the Holy Grail, along with some characters in the book inspired by the Arthurian legend, are important for the structure of *Small World*.

5.1 Quest for the Holy Chair

During his travel to Italy, Morris Zapp is seated beside Fulvia Morgana, a professor from the University of Padua. They engage in conversation, and when Fulvia starts talking about the conference in Chicago she attended, she mentions a certain “UNESCO chair.”⁷⁴ This catches Zapp’s interest, and after learning more about it, he realizes that this chair is a “price worthy of his ambition.”⁷⁵

The UNESCO Chair of Literary Criticism represents the Holy Grail within the academic world. In essence, it would allow its occupant to freely indulge in theorizing and writing while having a tax free high salary with paid travel, many benefits and minimal responsibilities, giving an amazing power to the person appointed. For Zapp, it would be the joyous climax of his academic career, as he aspires to get to the point where he would be recognized as the best paid literary critic who is free to write and do his research without the obligation of teaching and other responsibilities.

⁷² Giles Morgan, *The Holy Grail* (Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2005), 10.

⁷³ Morgan, *Holy Grail*, 19.

⁷⁴ Lodge, *Small World*, 120.

⁷⁵ Lodge, *Small World*, 120.

This opportunity has Morris Zapp put all his effort into getting that chair, which proves to be a difficult task as he is in a race against other accomplished scholars (notably Rudyard Parkinson) and was not the first to find out about it. By virtue of competition, everybody is trying to get ahead of the rest. Scholars compete with their literary theories and try to gain an advantage in cunning fashion, such as Morris Zapp plotting to invite Arthur Kingfisher, a man supposedly tasked with choosing the candidate, to a conference in Israel to establish himself in his eyes as a worthy candidate or Rudyard Parkinson giving a complimentary review to Phillip Swallow's book about Hazlitt in order to shift the waters of literary criticism and harm Zapp's effort, which subsequently backfires at him.

For the final "battle" at the MLA conference, the candidates speak on "The Function of Criticism,"⁷⁶ but unfortunately for all of them, the seat is taken by the man that was asked to give assistance in choosing the candidate, Arthur Kingfisher.

5.2 The allusion to the Fisher King

Arthur Kingfisher is a character David Lodge created to further allude to the Holy Grail legend. He bears the name of King Arthur, which is symbolic as he is an accomplished retired academician and authoritative figure in the literary world. His surname, Kingfisher, is of greater significance to the story, as it alludes to the Fisher King, a character from Arthurian legends. The Fisher King is known as a keeper of the Grail, who was wounded in battle in the area his thigh and penis.⁷⁷ His injury prohibits him from moving, so he spends his days fishing in the boat and waiting for a noble hero to ask him the right question to heal him and his land.⁷⁸

The state of Arthur Kingfisher is similar. After a long career in academy circles, his imagination was crippled along with his libido, meaning that he cannot produce original thought and cannot get an erection. His conviction is that intellect and sexual desire are connected, and if he cannot "arouse" his brain, his "organ" would not get aroused either. He is trying to battle this situation by smoking opium and having psychedelic dreams, but nothing seems to arouse his interest, and even though he appreciates the beauty of his companion, Ji-Moon Lee, his body does not respond to it. This changes during the MLA conference when Perse asks "the question" to the panel of speakers: "What follows if

⁷⁶ Lodge, *Small World*, 316.

⁷⁷ Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval: The Story of the Grail*, trans. Nigel Bryant (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006), 41-42.

⁷⁸ Morgan, *Holy Grail*, 44.

everybody agrees with you?”⁷⁹ This question finally arouses Arthur Kingfisher’s mind, which has not happened for a long time and along with it, an unexpected warm front swoops over Manhattan, symbolizing the arrival of new life into the academic world and Kingfisher himself. Arthur Kingfisher has his mind and body rejuvenated and decides to come out of retirement to take the UNESCO Chair of Literary Criticism.

5.3 Persse – the naïve chivalric hero

As the young chivalric hero of the love story *Small World* is centred around, Persse McGarrigle is also based on a character from Arthurian legends, Perceval. Perceval was brought up by his mother in a forest, practically oblivious of the chivalric culture, being an innocent individual. Despite his lack of knowledge and experience, he is recognized as a talented man with potential who decides to leave his home in order to become a knight that subsequently adopts the chivalric values, joins the Round Table and seeks the Holy Grail, undergoing a journey of developing himself from an ignorant and foolish man to a knight.⁸⁰

The first similarity is in the Persse’s name that alludes to the aforementioned knight. Persse is, just like Percival, a young man innocent at heart who attends his first conference. His inexperience is pointed out by Morris Zapp, calling him “A conference virgin.”⁸¹ This remark foreshadows the revelation of his sexual virginity to Angelica, signifying his chastity. His surname McGarrigle means “Son of Super-Valour” in old Irish, symbolizing the nature of a man who is able to stand up for himself, act honestly and willing to go out into the unknown world in order to pursue his goal. He is a chivalric man who holds women in high esteem and treats them accordingly, as shown by his disgust for the “Fine pair of knockers there,”⁸² remark by Robin Dempsey. While interacting with other people, he is hesitant to draw conclusions about them too soon unless they are behaving in a rude or deceitful way. He is polite and respectful to anyone he interacts with for the first time, making him likeable for the people he meets. Although aware and appreciative of the physical side of female beauty, good morals and refined character are of great importance to him, which he sees in Angelica and therefore holds her to a high standard. The opposite demeanour uncovers his innocent nature and subscription to high moral principles, being shocked and horrified by the possibility of his love interest making money with her body.

⁷⁹ Lodge, *Small World*, 319.

⁸⁰ Barber, *The Holy Grail*, 14-21.

⁸¹ Lodge, *Small World*, 18.

⁸² Lodge, *Small World*, 8.

The greatest similarity with Perceval is Persse being on a quest. In his case, he is trying to find love. He is determined to put all his resources and effort to find the woman he loves, as he is sure that Angelica, a woman he barely knows, is “the one”, which again points to his inexperience and naivety. During the story, he makes many acquaintances in the academic circles and becomes respected by the older academicians. This is underlined when Siegfried Von Turpitz plagiarizes his MA on T.S. Eliot and Shakespeare for his lecture at the conference held in Amsterdam. His metamorphosis into a rightful member of the “worldwide campus” takes place at the MLA conference, where his intriguing question not only ridicules the effort of the scholars in establishing their theory to be the correct one but also earns the respect of an elder scholar authority, Arthur Kingfisher, by intriguing his mind and healing his “intellectual impotence” just as Perceval heals the Fisher King in the continuation of Chrétien’s *Conte del Graal*.⁸³ Sadly for Persse, his effort does not yield success, but the journey he endured made him a new man.

⁸³ Norris J. Lacy, *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 356.

6 ROMANCE IN *SMALL WORLD*

By definition, *Small World* is a campus novel. It is set in an academic setting, and the main characters are academicians.⁸⁴ *Small World* is also a comic novel that satirizes the academic world, but the main focus of the book is on the story of Persse McGarrigle and his romantic adventure along with other characters and their romantic endeavours, which makes it primarily a romantic novel.⁸⁵ As Lodge states in *The Art of Fiction*:

The “break-through” point in the genesis of *Small World* came when I perceived the possibility of basing a comic-satiric novel about the academic jet-set, zooming round the world to international conferences where they competed with each other both professionally and erotically, on the story of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table and their quest for the Grail.⁸⁶

This narrative structure allows Lodge to incorporate the notion of long journeys and multiple characters synonymous with the Quest for the Grail together with the element of romance that Lodge uses as a structural principle for *Small World*.⁸⁷ This makes the book “not so much an academic novel, as academic romance,”⁸⁸ and as such, it incorporates many motifs used in the romantic genre.

6.1 Aspects of chivalric romance

The aspects of chivalric romance are pivotal for Persse’s quest, as his journey shares many qualities with the genre. Similarly to an errant knight, Persse embarks on a quest around the world because of a love of a woman and goes through many difficulties to proclaim this love and prove his devotion to her. The difference is that, unlike a knight, he does not know where she is as he is looking for her. He has knight-like qualities such as honour, a sense of justice, courage and reverence towards the female sex. He also writes poetry, which is indicative of his romantic nature and alludes to him being a troubadour in a sense. He falls in love with Angelica, who represents to him a woman that is of pure body and spirit. She has the characteristics of a lady from chivalric romance as she is superior to her admirer, especially in literary knowledge, which is shown when Persse displays a lack of knowledge about structuralism, contrary to Angelica. Her name “Angelica” symbolizes the angelic qualities she possesses in Persse’s eyes, underlined by her surname “Pabst”, which

⁸⁴ Quinn, *Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms*, 63.

⁸⁵ Quinn, *Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms*, 63.

⁸⁶ David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1993), 102.

⁸⁷ Lodge, *Write On*, 73.

⁸⁸ Lodge, *Write On*, 73.

alludes to the word “Papst”, which means “Pope” in German. Her interest in romantic literature also suggests that she has the same romantic nature as Persse, which further convinces him that they are meant to be together.

This results in Persse proclaiming his love for her by writing her name in the snow. He is willing to quit his job and even go past the possibility of Angelica not being a virgin, despite the fact he is a virgin himself and has a “believe in premarital chastity.”⁸⁹ To show his love even further, he recites an excerpt of *The Eve of St. Agnes* by John Keats, declaring his love through poetry. He then agrees with Angelica that they will meet in her room to finish the poem, but in the end, he is fooled by her and has his desire unfulfilled.

Throughout the rest of the book, Persse is looking for Angelica with determination and resilience, travelling around the world and believing that it will prove him worthy of Angelica’s love. In the end, his desire of being with Angelica is not fulfilled, which is similar to the faith of knights in chivalric romances, who go on adventures for the women they love to not be rewarded with a peaceful life with them, Persse is shown to be inspired by the knight characters from the chivalric romance, both in his personality and his story.⁹⁰

6.2 Romantic Motifs in *Small World*

Apart from the aspects of chivalric romance, there are more motifs that are present in the story of *Small World* and which help establish the characters and their subsequent development. The motive of love is the most important in *Small World* as the story of Persse McGarrigle, who seeks his true love, ties the whole narrative together. Apart from Persse, there are other characters longing for romantic satisfaction. Philip Swallow is a man that is caught in the mundanity of his life and longs to feel once again the rush and excitement of romantic passion he felt with a woman he met in Italy, which subsequently happens as they reunite. Fulvia Morgana is in search of sexual exhilaration, and her open marriage allows her to pick sexual partners at various conferences she attends. Despite not being interested in any romantic notions, even Morris Zapp changes his priorities after his kidnapping experience to enjoy simpler things in life and starts a relationship.

Adventure is another vital part of *Small World*. It is best portrayed by Persse’s romantic adventure that has him going around the world. His travels take him to exotic locations such as Zurich or Tokyo, where he meets other characters that help him in seeking Angelica. Phillip Swallow goes through the adventure of newly born romance when he

⁸⁹ Lodge, *Small World*, 39.

⁹⁰ Cavallaro, *Chivalric Romance*, 43.

begins an affair with Joy, a woman he spend a night with in the past. In the end, he decides to go back to his wife, not becoming the romantic hero he wanted to be. Morris Zapp almost goes through an unexpected sexual adventure with Fulvia Morgana and her husband, but he decides not to join them in a threesome and flees at the last minute.

Coincidence is present frequently throughout *Small World*. Lodge justifies the use of coincidence through the use of chivalric romance structure, which has different stories intertwined into each other as well as for the sake of creating comical situations too.⁹¹

Many coincidences appear throughout the book. When Persse finds the note from Angelica with a message referring to a text in *The Faerie Queene*, he unsuccessfully looks for it through bookstalls at the airport until he runs into Cheryl Summerbee, who pulls the copy of *The Faerie Queene* from her desk and gives it to him so he can find the reference. A coincidence for more comic purpose is when Ronald Frobisher takes Persse out for a night in Soho, and they happen to stumble upon a club that has a photograph of a girl who looks like Angelica on their window display. It prompts Persse to enter the club and subsequently embark on an investigation about Angelica's life. This shows that Lodge uses coincidence to drive the plot forward as well as for comical purpose.

⁹¹ Lodge, *Art of Fiction*, 151-52.

7 ASPECTS OF POSTMODERNISM IN *SMALL WORLD*

7.1 Intertextuality in *Small World*

One of the important aspects of *Small World* is the use of intertextuality. The author himself says that “intertextuality is not, or not necessarily, a merely decorative addition to a text, but sometimes a crucial factor in its conception and composition.”⁹² Intertextuality is a reference of a text in another text whose meaning or source is relevant to the story, character or situation. It can take many forms such as allusion, direct quotation, imitation or parody, but its impact is dependent on the reader and his knowledge.⁹³

The intertextuality of *Small World* lies at its core since Lodge used the structure of a quest, being inspired by the Grail Legend, Ulysses by James Joyce and T.S. Eliot’s *Wasteland*, which are both inspired by the same source of the Grail Legend.⁹⁴ The characters of the novel are inspired by the literary works of the past. Both Persse McGarrigle and Arthur Kingfisher are based on Perceval and the Fisher King, respectively. Along with them, the character of Angelica Pabst alludes to another Angelica from *Orlando Furioso*, who has an uncanny ability to disappear, and seductive Marxist Fulvia Morgan refers to Morgan Le Fey.⁹⁵ This underlines the fictitious nature of the book, as to some degree, these characters from *Small World* are partially a reinterpretation from other works.

Various authors are also directly quoted in the book. Persse often quotes T.S. Eliot and W.B. Yeats to express his feelings towards Angelica, such as when he recites passages from Yeats’s *The Eve of St. Agnes* after he proposes to her. These quotations serve as an intertextual reference to other romantic stories, but also as a way Persse tries to get to know Angelica and use their shared interest in romances to get closer to her. The most obvious connection between these authors and Persse is that they are poets. After his visit to Amsterdam and surviving the emergency landing, he decides to live in isolation for a while and “spend the summer in some humble equivalent of Yeats’s lonely tower, writing poetry.”⁹⁶ Another case of poetry expressing feelings of the character is when Philip Swallow watches a young couple from the window of his office in Rummidge and thinks of an *Ode on a Grecian Urn* by John Keats:

⁹² Lodge, *Art of Fiction*, 102.

⁹³ Quinn, *Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms*, 218-19.

⁹⁴ Lodge, *Write On*, 72-73.

⁹⁵ David Lodge, “Interview with David Lodge,” interview by Raymond H. Thompson., *The Camelot Project*, University of Rochester, May 15, 1989, <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/text/interview-with-david-lodge>.

⁹⁶ Lodge, *Small World*, 208.

More happy, happy love!
 For ever warm and still to be enjoyed,
 For ever panting and for ever young.⁹⁷

This little part of the poem captures the feelings of Philip Swallow, whose relationship with his wife Hilary lost the “warmth and enjoyment” as he longs to experience a new love again.

The most important piece of intertextuality in *Small World* comes in the form of few verses of *The Faerie Queene* by Edmund Spenser. In Persse’s first visit to St. George’s chapel at the Heathrow airport, Persse scribbles a short petition on a noticeboard that says “Dear God, let me find Angelica,”⁹⁸ which he subsequently replaced during his second visit to the chapel to “Dear God, let me forget Angelica. Lead her from the life that degrades her,”⁹⁹ after discovering she sells her body for a living. Due to a series of coincidences, he finds himself once again on the Heathrow airport carrying a document guaranteeing allowance for the son of her cousin Bernadette, since during a literary sightseeing tour, he met the man with who she had an illegitimate baby. He once again enters the chapel to discover that on his last petition, a reference was written in the form of a verse from *The Faerie Queene* by Edmund Spenser. After unsuccessfully looking for the book through bookstalls at the airport, he runs into Cheryl Summerbee, who pulls the copy of *The Faerie Queene* from her desk. The verses Persse finds say:

The wanton Maidens him espying stood
 Gazing a while at his unwonted guise;
 Then th’one her selfe low ducked in the flood
 Abash’t that her a straunger did advise:
 But th’other rather higher did arise,
 And her two lily paps aloft displayed,
 And all, that might his melting hart entise
 To her delights, she unto him bewrayd:
 The rest hid underneath, him more desirous made.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Lodge, *Small World*, 158.

⁹⁸ Lodge, *Small World*, 125.

⁹⁹ Lodge, *Small World*, 205.

¹⁰⁰ Lodge, *Small World*, 258-59.

This reveals to Persse that Angelica has a twin sister, Lily, a former porn actress and stripper who used Lily Papps as her stage name. The reference also points out that one is of good manners and the other is rather wicked, just as the poem suggests. This realization that it is not Angelica who sells her body has Persse recommence his search. At the same time, it points out how little Persse knows about Angelica, which is then confirmed at the MLA university, as Persse cannot tell the difference between the twins and ends up in bed with Lily instead of Angelica.

References to various texts are quite common in *Small World*, as it is set in the world of academia, and different works of art are discussed among the scholars. Many authors of classical romances, such as Chrétien de Troyes, Ludovico Aristoto or Edmund Spenser are mentioned by Angelica, who read them for research for her paper presented at the MLA conference. Apart from these, the works of literary criticism, especially structuralism, are mentioned in the book. Morris Zapp quotes Viktor Shklovsky when talking with Philip Swallow about defamiliarization regarding sex life and how repetition destroys its novelty; Robin Dempsey refers to Ferdinand de Saussure, as he explains structuralism to Persse. This contrast shows that while the academicians refer to these works to discuss literary theory, they also use them for describing everyday life events.

In summary, intertextuality in *Small World* is pivotal for the reason that literature is the topic the characters are specialized in. Through referencing other texts, they convey their emotions and thoughts. It also shows the similarities between the story and other romantic works mentioned in the book, which points out that this book is based on older works of literature.

7.2 Pastiche in *Small World*

By using the structure of a classical Arthurian legend, Lodge creates a parody of a classical genre of chivalric romance and the Legend of the Holy Grail and transcends its story and structure into the contemporary world of literary conferences. Castles, mysterious forests and vast lands are replaced by campuses, airport terminals and skyscrapers, creating a significant and comical difference between romantic settings of chivalric romances and common locations of the contemporary world. Despite the presence of exotic locations in *Small World* such as Tokyo or Hawaii, Swallow's journey to Turkey parodies the notion of beautiful romantic locations from chivalric romances as he is arriving into a rather poor

country that is “on the rocks, no imports allowed, so there’s no coffee, no sugar. No bumpaper either, I understand, so I should take some with you.”¹⁰¹

Instead of knights travelling on horses and bearing swords, it is the academicians travelling via plane with their pencils and favourite books. This simile is acknowledged by Morris Zapp when he compares academicians to errant knights. Much like these knights, academicians fight between each other for glory, but instead of crossing swords, they write books and papers in order to get grants and be able to travel and embark on their own quest, fighting against academic peers in conferences like knights on tournaments to gain fame and respect. In the book, the ultimate goal for the academicians represents the UNESCO Chair of Literary Criticism, which alludes to the pursuit of the Holy Grail in Arthurian legends. The Holy Grail is known as an elusive and unreachable artefact with the power to heal the king and the wasteland.¹⁰² It is kept by the Fisher King, who waits for a hero who asks the right question.¹⁰³ In *Small World*, this dynamic is subverted. Arthur Kingfisher, an advisor to UNESCO regarding the Chair of Literary Criticism, is “healed” by the question posed by Persse McGarrigle, and instead of giving the Chair to somebody, he keeps it for himself.

The aforementioned question Persse utters has its own use for mocking the world of literary criticism. When he asks, “What follows if everybody agrees with you?”¹⁰⁴ nobody has an answer for him. Arthur Kingfisher elaborates on the question to explain that by having everyone agree with you, there is no chance of further competition. Lodge, therefore, through this passage implies that among the circle of literary critics, being right is not as important as having a different opinion and thus fuelling one’s ego through this difference in opinion and the need to argue about topics with other people. It is even more comical from the postmodern perspective since it does not recognize something such as the final truth, only more questions and answers. So when Kingfisher determines that Persse has asked the “right” question, it is a comical situation as there is no such thing as a “right” or “wrong” question. Furthermore, the scholars desire to gain further knowledge and discover new ideas, which motivates them in research. Finding the right answer would mean that there is nothing more to look for, cancelling the need for any more research. In that case, it is better to ask the wrong question so the research could continue.

¹⁰¹ Lodge, *Small World*, 159.

¹⁰² Morgan, *Holy Grail*, 9-11.

¹⁰³ Lacy, *Arthurian Encyclopedia*, 156.

¹⁰⁴ Lodge, *Small World*, 319.

7.3 Metafiction in *Small World*

Another aspect of postmodern literature used in *Small World* is metafiction. Metafiction can be described as a work of fiction that points out its fictionality.¹⁰⁵ It is self-conscious about its language, story, and literary form, making it possible for a writer to create situations that are unlikely or impossible to happen without compromising the reader's experience. This disconnect from reality allows the writer to explore the relationship between reality and fiction,¹⁰⁶ often via parody, and have more freedom in story-telling.

The first hint at possible metafictional remark can be observed in a prologue of *Small World*, where David Lodge talks about Geoffrey Chaucer and pilgrimages, alluding to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, which is about a group of pilgrims that tell each other stories to pass the time during their journey to Canterbury. These stories are the book's main focus, and the journey to Canterbury is more of a device to tie those narratives together, which is similar to the structure of *Small World*, where Persse's story works as such device that ties the secondary storylines together. Another remark stands at the beginning of the novel where Lodge begins the story with the same words T.S Eliot opens *The Wasteland*, which is not only a form of intertextuality, but it also correlates with the weather in Rummidge; a cold and humid April evening that had many people not to come to the conference, causing the low attendance numbers. This way, Lodge is practically copying the weather settings from another book.

An interesting way Lodge makes *Small World* self-aware about being a work of fiction is through the character of Sybil Maiden. She is first introduced during a dinner at the Rummidge conference, and not soon after, she begins to discuss the quest for the Holy Grail with Persse, which alludes to the very structure Lodge is using for *Small World* and subsequently the Persse's journey. This is brought up again during Persse's visit to Hawaii, where he once again meets Sybil Maiden. After insisting that he must not give up trying to find Angelica, Persse responds with: "Like the Grail Knights?"¹⁰⁷ This way, the book points to the material it was inspired by.

Another remark showing elements of metafiction is during Persse's visit to Lausanne, where a conference on T.S. Eliot. There he comes across Michel Tardieu, who gives him information about Angelica's accommodation. After Persse asks whether he would come

¹⁰⁵ Quinn, *Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms*, 257.

¹⁰⁶ Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London & New York: Routledge, 1984), 2.

¹⁰⁷ Lodge, *Small World*, 286.

with him, he declines and says: “I have performed my narrative function for tonight.”¹⁰⁸ This shows that the novel is self-aware about the fact that this specific part of the story was there to move the plot forward.

The point at which *Small World* is at its most metafictional is when Cheryl Summerbee begins to explain what the true romantic narrative in literature is:

Real romance is a pre-novelistic kind of narrative. It's full of adventure and coincidence and surprises and marvels, and has lots of characters who are lost or enchanted or wandering about looking for each other, or for the Grail, or something like that. Of course, they're often in love too...¹⁰⁹

Through this passage, the book acknowledges its own form and plot, as defined by Cheryl. The most unrealistic thing is that Cheryl is able to have this knowledge since this is something that would be expected from a scholar. Even though Angelica inflicted a change of taste upon Cheryl, she should not have the ability to describe the genre in such a well-spoken way, and it points to the book's awareness of being a work of fiction.

Through the use of metafiction, Lodge highlights the artificial nature of *Small World*. The book is self-aware about being a work of fiction, which Lodge achieves by describing the very structure of the quest for The Grail he is using for the story, the use of uncanny coincidences for the story to move forward and the characters having abilities and knowledge beyond the realistic scope.

7.4 Romance and literary criticism

The intertextual reach of *Small World* goes beyond referencing romantic poems. While the main focus of the book is to tell a story about scholars that are trying to create human connections and find satisfaction in romantic life in the world of literary conferences, Lodge uses *Small World* as a vessel for a literary critique of his own novel and its structure through metafictional self-reflection when Angelica presents her lecture.

In this lecture, she presents her view on the structure of romance. She defines the epic as a “phallic genre”¹¹⁰ and together with the tragedy, their conclusion leads towards “a single, explosive discharge of accumulated tension,”¹¹¹ which refers to male climax, such as an ending of Othello, where the reader's curiosity is aroused, which creates a desire to reach

¹⁰⁸ Lodge, *Small World*, 266.

¹⁰⁹ Lodge, *Small World*, 258.

¹¹⁰ Lodge, *Small World*, 322

¹¹¹ Lodge, *Small World*, 322.

the conclusion in which the titular character kills himself, resulting in a singular, big climax. This is different in the genre of romance, which she describes as a “supremely invaginated mode of narrative.”¹¹²

In contrast to the epic and tragedy, according to Angelica’s lecture, romance is a genre structured as a female’s climax:

It has not one climax but many, the pleasure of this text comes and comes and comes again. No sooner is one crisis in the fortunes of the hero averted than a new one presents itself; no sooner has one mystery been solved than another is raised; no sooner has one adventure been concluded than another begins. The narrative questions open and close, open and close, like the contractions of the vaginal muscles in intercourse, and this process is in principle endless. The greatest and most characteristic romances are often unfinished - they end only with the author’s exhaustion, as a woman’s capacity for orgasm is limited only by her physical stamina. Romance is a multiple orgasm.¹¹³

Through this part of Angelica’s lecture, Lodge cunningly describes the structure of *Small World*. Following the same model, Persse’s journey is a series of episodic events, going from one crisis to another. As he travels from country to country to be disappointed that he did not find Angelica, he is subsequently rejuvenated by receiving information about her having feelings for him or discovering that her twin is the lustful woman he had Angelica for, which begins another adventure and creating a sequence of high points and low points, much like during a female orgasm. It also reveals the ending of Persse’s journey, as the conclusion of his story does not result in ending up with Angelica, who is already engaged. Instead, it is left open when Persse realizes that Cheryl Summerbee, a checker he met at Heathrow, could possibly have some feelings for him and that he might be feeling the same. He discovers that she went travelling with the destination unknown, leaving Persse to look for the woman he is in love with once again.

¹¹² Lodge, *Small World*, 322.

¹¹³ Lodge, *Small World*, 322-23.

CONCLUSION

David Lodge's *Small World* is a campus novel that is set in universities and literary conferences and has academicians as their main characters. It contains several storylines of characters trying to succeed on a personal or professional level, which are tied around the story of the young Irish lecturer Persse McGarrigle and his pursuit of a woman he loves. The narrative draws inspiration from the genre of chivalric romance and the legend of the Holy Grail. The main hero shares qualities of the characters from chivalric romances and shows devotion and admiration towards his romantic interest. Persse McGarrigle and Morris Zapp both go on a quest to achieve their respective goals, which represent their own personal Holy Grails.

The use of the quest motif as a structure is fitting for *Small World*. There are multiple characters that travel great distances from one conference to another. These characters are scholars who are a part "small world" of academia. They travel to distant and exotic locations where they often come across each other. The characteristics of the quest are displayed by the journey of Persse McGarrigle, who travels all around the world and overcomes many obstacles in his pursuit of Angelica Pabst.

The main romance is the one of Persse, whose platonic naïve love represents the purest form of romantic affection. Along with him, others are looking for satisfaction in love, whether it is concerned with sexual satisfaction or the emotional intensity of the relationship. Lodge parodies the genre of romantic novels and their tropes. Persse is a hopeless romantic whose desire is to get married to a girl he does not really know anything about. His progress is aided by uncanny coincidences, which underlines the parodic approach of the author. The naivety of his actions is revealed to him when he sleeps with Angelica's twin sister Lily under the impression it was Angelica all along. Then his journey comes to an end when he discovers that Angelica is engaged. This way, Lodge points out the ridiculousness of the romantic genre tropes and the improbability of them ever happening in real life.

The novel is woven with intertextuality. The characters are inspired by characters from other works and allude to them through their names, such as Persse to Perceval or Arthur Kingfisher to the Fisher King. They also share the qualities of the characters they are inspired by since Persse is a young, naïve lecturer that grows during his journey to a much more complete man, and Kingfisher is an elder accomplished scholar who is "wounded" and is unable to arouse his mind or his manhood. This is fixed by Persse as he "heals" him

through his question about literary criticism. Through this, Lodge creates a pastiche of the Grail legend and its characters in the academic setting.

Throughout the book, there are many references to other works and authors because the characters have literary knowledge and refer to romantic stories from the past. The references often match the feeling of the characters or draw similarity to the situation they are in. This shows that Lodge was inspired by other works of literature and incorporated them into his own novel. The book is also self-aware about its fictionality, which is achieved by many repeated descriptions of the novel's plot and genre within the story. This culminates in the final lecture from Angelica, where Lodge writes a critique of his own book. The book does not only parodies the genre of the romantic novel but also the legend of the Holy Grail and debunks its premise by having Persse not succeed in his quest and showing that despite a great effort, there is no guarantee of a reward.

David Lodge's *Small World: An Academic Romance* is a romantic campus novel that goes in a similar direction as *Changing Places* and deals with the struggles of academicians finding love and human connection. As a postmodern book, it contains a great amount of references to other works that can be recognized by the seasoned reader. But it is also a critique of the literary genres it adopts and shows its follies when implemented in a fictional story that intermingles with the real world.

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