CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION
The present study focuses on the culture of excess as brought out through the three novels of Malcolm Bradbury; namely The History Man (HM), Rates of Exchange (RE), and Doctor Criminale (DC).

This study necessitates an enquiry into the causes that underlie this culture. This is an age of universal commodification. Hence commodity production dictates the logic of culture. The varied realms of cultural activity now show just the different manifestations of capital. As Susan Sontag has pointed out in Against Interpretation, culture has come to constitute a dazzling material plenitude: "Ours is a culture based on excess, on overproduction; the result is a steady loss of sharpness in our sensory experience. All the conditions of modern life -- its material plenitude, its sheer crowdedness -- conjoin to dull our sensory faculties" (13). The masses are now fully under the influence of the system of images that constitute the simulacrum. They desire to withdraw from humanistic ideals as well as historical events.

The world is now experiencing a heightened phase of multinational and multiconglomerate capitalism. Technology, marketing, and consumption have formed a snare from which no one can escape. The commodity culture offers material pleasures to the masses, and at the same time alienates them. Everything has undergone the process of commodification, and is now judged on the basis of its value in terms of money. Commodities have now become more important than human beings. In fact, human beings denigrate themselves by excessively depending on commodities. Capitalism has commodified the human mind itself. The society of the spectacle with its unrelated images produces only schizophrenia. Cultural production, which is now in the hand of the capitalists, has become fragmentary. Capitalist society also promotes narcissism for the
sake of consumption. In *Signs of Psyche in Modern and Postmodern Art*, Donald Kuspit refers to this aspect as "the psychopathology of capitalism, with its narcissistic hyper-realization of life and simulation of ecstatic satisfaction" (290). The only identity the masses have is that given by the capitalist society. Terry Eagleton has analysed the levelling effect of the commodity:

[...] the more the commodity form levels all hierarchies of value, mixes diverse life forms promiscuously together and strikes all transcendence empty, the more these societies will come to deplete the very symbolic resources necessary for their own ideological authority. (Regan, *The Eagleton Reader* 147-148)

Capitalism holds together the social order through the agencies of desire. The social structure in the postmodern world is not at all monolithic. It contains political, consumerist, ethical, economic, and professional discourses which exist in a state of fluctuation and conflict. Nicholas J. Fox points out in *Postmodernism, Sociology and Health*:

All vie for control, asserting the advantages of one approach or another. When two coincide [...] there is reorganization, until another challenge from an expertise or wielder of power comes along. Instead of the monolith, we discover that the organisation has disappeared to be replaced by a net of signifying practices, in tension and subject to challenge and resistance. (59-60)

The operation of desire can be seen in such signifying practices. The object of desire is an other, which is unreal and hence unattainable. This excess of desire
thus becomes symptomatic of the all pervasive commodification that flourishes under capitalism. This desire is produced through the play of signs. As Linda Hutcheon has pointed out in *The Politics of Postmodernism*, this is "desire as satisfaction endlessly deferred, that is, as an anticipatory activity in the future tense; desire as fueled by the inaccessibility of the object and dissatisfaction with the real" (144).

Desire thus becomes a fundamental principle ensuring the survival of the capitalist society. Desire is erotic, aggressive, and impulsive. It is released when meaning is destabilised. In fact, what is released is a "surplus or excess of desire, signifying the abundance of desire -- ultimately signifying the fact that desire can never be completely assimilated into normal everyday life" (Kuspit 147-148). Desire cannot be resisted or overcome, since it has some sort of omnipotence. Catherine Belsey has pointed out in *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture*: "Desire is in excess of the organism, conversely it is what remains unspoken in the utterance" (5). Desire always seeks that which is forbidden or unattainable in the cultural order. It lies outside the realm of even nature. It is also not a demand formulated by the intellect. Hence it should be looked upon as a difference. It is produced as a result of alienation. The opposition between the mind and the body is deconstructed by it:

Desire is a metonym (a displaced version) of the want-to-be that necessarily characterises a human life divided between the unmasterable symbolic and the unreachable, inextricable real. And desire itself is split between the quest for satisfaction in the real, 'a refusal of the signifier,' on the one hand and the desire of (for) the Other, the origin of meaning, which entails 'a lack of being.' (Belsey 60)
The signifier always creates and destroys the self. Hence the signifying subject can be found only in the other. This results in the desire for the other. Desire cannot be made part of a theory or system. At the same time, it shows its presence everywhere: "In the twentieth century, desire is more voluble than ever before -- in operas and musicals, poems and pop videos. It produces a proliferation of knowledges, therapies, sexologies, arts of love. [...] desire invades education and advertising, it pervades magazines for men and women" (Belsey 76). In the commodified society, desire is directed not at the human body, but at the commodity.

The process of commodification has been accelerated by the new modes of communication. Culture is now dominated by the spectacles projected by the media. The advertisements shown on the media promote new types of consumption. They function as signs that help in the generation of false needs and desires. The perfect surfaces seen in the visuals of these advertisements are illusory, because beneath them lie gaps and fissures. It is in an urban environment that the domination of advertisements is seen to the greatest extent. They transform the city into a collage of signs. These signs have become the outstanding features of culture itself. Advertisements are also the agents of dehumanisation in that they project the female body in an exaggerated manner. Thus they reduce woman to an object of sexual exchange. Commodity reification can be ultimately traced to the image. The commodity is identified with the image. It is the image that multiplies desire. The media is instrumental in projecting these images through advertisements. Apart from advertisements, the media provides continuous entertainment for the masses. Their already
commodified mind is thus kept in a state of perpetual simulation. The media has thus turned entertainment into an ideology. For the masses, life becomes concentrated in the world of images. Society in a way is held together by such images. The continuous exposure to these images has conditioned the human consciousness into a state of passivity.

Hyperreality becomes the only credible thing for this consciousness. The influence that technology has on culture is seen in this use of the media by capitalism. It does so to produce needs and desires according to the demands of production. Renate Holub has analysed these aspects in Antonio Gramsci: Beyond Marxism and Postmodernism: "In that this culture industry engages in the ideal reproduction of consumers, it functions as a political and social institution designed to manipulate and control unconscious and conscious desires of the masses of the people" (174). The media makes people live in an eternal present and thus erases their awareness of history. The sophisticated modes of media reportage have also caused the nullification of history. When an event is reported as soon as it occurs, history disappears as such.

A study of the commodification of culture cannot avoid an inquiry into the very nature of culture itself: "Culture can be defined in one sense as that which is surplus, excessive, beyond the strict material measure, but that capacity for self-transgression and self-transcendence is precisely the measure of our humanity" (Regan, The Eagleton Reader 155). Karl Marx analyses human nature and finds in it the urge for exploitation of others for one's own prosperity. Human desire is to accumulate capital for oneself, depleting the resources of others:
For Marx, it is in the nature of human nature to be in excess of itself, but that excess can prove destructive if it is not justly distributed. Creatively exceeding the norm is a fine thing for both Marxism and deconstruction, certainly finer than the rigorous equivalents of justice. But it must not be allowed to make a mockery of them either. (Regan, *The Eagleton Reader* 226)

The Marxian notion of surplus-value refers to the Lacanian logic behind surplus-enjoyment. In Marxian terms, the limit of capitalism is the source of its power and the motivation behind its development. Slavoj Žižek has pointed out in "How Did Marx Invent the Symptom?:"

It is this paradox which defines surplus-enjoyment: it is not a surplus which simply attaches itself to some 'normal,' fundamental enjoyment, because *enjoyment as such emerges only in this surplus*, because it is constitutively an 'excess.' It we substract the surplus we lose enjoyment itself, just as capitalism, which can survive only by incessantly revolutionizing its own material conditions, ceases to exist if it 'stays the same,' if it achieves an internal balance. This, then, is the homology between surplus-value -- the 'cause' which sets in motion the capitalist process of production -- and surplus-enjoyment, the object cause of desire. (Žižek, *Mapping Ideology* 330)

Georges Bataille has analysed the waste involved in the process of production and consumption. Jürgen Habermas refers to this in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*:
This is to say [. . .] a deep ambivalence embedded in itself between the reproduction of labor power directly necessary for life and a consumption of luxury that removes the products of labor from the sphere of vital necessities in a wasteful way and hence from the dictates of the processes of sheer metabolism. (222)

Marx found that a world of material abundance would inhibit true freedom. Wasteful expenditure will entrap the self. Art as well as perverse sexuality comes under the realm of luxury consumption. They have their ends in themselves. These result in a bourgeois society where commodities are more important than people. The individual loses his own value when he excessively depends on commodities. Thus the value of the commodity in terms of money becomes the only recognisable value. In bourgeois society, a person's status depends on the condition of his being the possessor of a particular commodity. Bataille's concept of excess is derived from his vision of the processes of nature. He looks upon death and sex as excesses performed in relation to the inexhaustible resources of nature. When an organism collects more energy than it can use, the surplus energy is spent unproductively. This is an instance of wastage of energy. It is the same sort of wastage that occurs in the socio-cultural realm. When superfluous resources are not used for raising production or the standard of living, it gets squandered in wars, pollution, and so on. Unnecessary expenditure and wasteful orgies characterise such a society. In *Raiding the Ice Box. Reflections on Twentieth-Century Culture*, Peter Wollen has analysed Bataille's concept of excess: "Bataille posited that every 'restricted economy' based on production, utility and exchange is shadowed by a 'general economy,'
in which an excess or surplus is freely spent or wasted, with no presumption of return" (27). Man’s innate impulse to waste takes the form of conspicuous consumption in capitalist society. For the masses, consumption becomes a postmodern orgy. This is a negative and destructive impulse. The self is that which is ultimately annihilated. Bataille regards waste as something that gives pleasure and as something that provides escape from restrictions. Such a culture is characterised by the extravagant decoration as well as the excessive display of the body. Dysfunctional and heterogeneous elements will inevitably dominate it.

Capitalist society constructs sex itself as something that is voyeuristic, narcissistic, and fetishistic. It is sex that is motivated by the desire aroused by the images that are mass produced. The operation of power is thus seen in the realm of sex. The body is subjected and made to submit to this power. This power operates through signs and brings about the colonisation of the body. Gender division and the hierarchy based on it, are the determining factors as far as sexuality is concerned. But in capitalist society, this sexuality takes refuge in pornography. Pornography reduces and objectifies woman to a mere image that is meant for the satisfaction of man’s desire. Geraldine Finn analyses pornography in Why Althusser Killed His Wife: Essays on Discourse and Violence:

The hoardings on the street, newspaper stands and cornerstores, movies, television, and literature and art show [. . .] women (or sometimes suitably feminized men) presented as objects of and for masculine desire, against which men are encouraged to measure their subjectivity and sexuality. (59)
A voyeur's world has no history or depth. It is concerned only with the fleeting present and hence it is superficial. A voyeur is tantalised only by sexual imagery. He is in a complex political set-up adept in "the subjugation of bodies and the control of population under the mystifying sign of Sex" (Finn 60). The sexual codification of identities has already undermined the status of woman in society. In capitalist society, the female body is colonised by the signs of fashion and sexuality. Her body thus becomes a space for the free play of the signs of cultural excess.

The postmodern culture is one that brings together a multitude of social voices, which dialogically interact with one another. Thus language becomes the site of conflict and struggle, the results of which are often excessive. Social interaction in an urban setting in the form of the wild orgy consisting of drugs and free love, is a modified version of the carnival. The multiplicity as well as the diversity that characterises postmodern culture is put into play during these occasions. Such a culture gives importance to language games, and these language games posit the danger of the dissolution of the social subject itself. In The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, Jean-Francois Lyotard explains how this prevents the formation of a social totality:

This orientation corresponds to the course that the evolution of social interaction is currently taking: the temporary contract is in practice supplanting permanent institutions in the professional, emotional, sexual, cultural, family and international domains, as well as in political affairs. (66)
The instability that marks the postmodern world is prompting thinkers to point towards the end of history, ideology, and philosophy. The wounds caused by the Second World War are still there in the human psyche. Richard Ruland and Bradbury discuss this aspect in *From Puritanism to Postmodernism: A History of American Literature*:

What followed the war was an age of materialism, military expansion, ideological anxiety, and a sense of the rapid transformation of consciousness. This was an age of the media, the record, the new message system, the multiplication of styles, the accelerating confusion of levels of reality. (371)

Such a historical situation itself has given birth to a condition of excess. Hence historical, ideological, and philosophical indeterminacy prevails in all areas of intellectual activity. The glorification of the present itself is an outcome of the disappearance of a sense of history. Hiroshima and the Holocaust have deprived many words of their signification. These spectres of violence and terror have fragmented culture. If history is looked upon as moving in a cyclical manner, then it is evidently in a phase of decline from which probably there is no coming back. The collapse of Marxism and the fall of the Berlin Wall are clearly political events that have determined the course of the evolution of postmodern culture. The postmodern world is a post-holocaust, post-ideological, and post-political one. The sterility that has affected the postmodern man's sense of history has led to the perception of history as a chaos of events. The historical and the political no longer fuse together to form a coherent whole. They are now like fragments which have drifted apart. Political movements like Thatcherism have played a role in the commodification of culture. Meanwhile the command
The economy has declined in Marxist countries with the advent of glasnost and perestroika. Concepts like free market and entrepreneurial liberty are attracting the people of these countries. The fall of the Berlin Wall has speeded up the process of commodification in these countries. Geographical and ideological maps have changed as a result. Democracy and capitalism are on the verge of becoming universally accepted political systems. However, a sense of apocalypse and global crisis has only increased. A series of tragic events that form recent history has created the feeling that there is no hope for the future. At the same time, whatever historical experience there is in the postmodern world, it is certainly one that is hybrid and mixed. It is an experience that crosses the boundaries of nations and ideologies. Though liberation and democracy are spreading across the world, the repressive state apparatus still exists in some countries. This apparatus creates a society of surveillance where every act of the individual is surveyed by the state. There the power of the state operates through the signs of ideology. All the tools of modern technology are used by the state to achieve this purpose. The state needs only the fragmentary picture of the individual got through its spy network. Thus it contributes to the process of dehumanisation and fragmentation in society.

There is constant research and intertextualising in all fields including literature, and as a result new traditions are being constructed. The new technologies are changing not merely the methods of production, but also the mechanics of writing. Many styles and many codes exist together, and cause the slippage of meaning. Literary texts hence exhibit the loss of signification. Postmodern critical viewpoints acknowledge that there are many truths and many realities. They promote multiple readings and interpretations, leading to an excess of critical theorising: "The same indeterminacy that prevails in
accounts of the physical world is equally present in the philosophy of serious literary criticism as it struggles without any certainties to construct an adequate usable account of itself" (Ruland and Bradbury 418). Language itself due to the rise of structuralism, has become a system of signs that can be used arbitrarily. As far as literary texts are concerned, the reader plays an important role in determining their meaning. Hence there is no ultimate or final interpretation for a work of literature. It is also considered that the meaning of the literary text is created by the reader. The strategies of deconstruction used for interpreting a work, give great importance to the response of the reader. According to these strategies, meaning is something that is determined by the reader. Thus the text becomes a site for the play of meaning. Hence it can be pointed out that "we live in a moment of creative exhaustion, of labyrinthine aesthetic pluralism, of critical mystification, an age of decadence" (Ruland and Bradbury 427).

The postmodern text with its literary references, parodies, pastiches, allusions, quotations, and a host of other devices provokes the reader to resort to deconstructive strategies. Such a text shows gaps and fissures which cause the meaning to slip out. Hence it shows the defeat of language itself as a tool for the communication of meaning. Postmodern texts often reveal only the play of an excess of signs. A variety of languages, styles, registers, genres, and intertextual citations are crowded together in them. Such texts are ultimately constituted of multiple worlds of discourses. The voice of the author is itself used to expose the fictionality of the narrative. At the same time, postmodern fiction is characterised by the death of the author. As Roland Barthes points out in his essay "The Death of the Author: " "The removal of the Author [...] is not merely an historical fact or an act of writing; it utterly transforms the modern text (or--which is the same thing-- the text is henceforth made and read
in such a way that at all its levels the author is absent" (Lodge, Modern Criticism and Theory 169). This concept denies the possibility of a text having a unified source or origin. The text just facilitates the interaction or conflict between different writings. The writer disappears by projecting himself into the writing. The text also reflects the process of fragmentation that is seen in the world outside. The systems and absolutes that have been broken down in the world find representation in it.

The postmodern culture shows a condition in which everything has exceeded the powers of comprehension of the senses. Hence writing which emanates from this culture exhausts all possibilities through excess. The texts so produced lack referential qualities, because signs outrun signification in them. Thus literature becomes one of noise and redundancy. It is also one of silence since it evades interpretation. The world of hyperactivity is seen reflected in it. As a result, the text reels under the weight of the chaotic excess of meanings. Data is present in it in excess of system. Hence the reader finds himself immersed in an excess of matter in a condition of indeterminacy.

Such texts become a labyrinth full of signs as far as the reader is concerned. Hence he is left with no option, but that of deconstructing them. Deconstruction focuses on the instability of meaning which characterises these texts. It is a strategy that evades any finality. It deals with oppositions like male/female, good/bad, speech/writing, and so on. It attempts to reverse the cultural hierarchies. Peter Barry has analysed this aspect in the introduction to Issues in Contemporary Critical Theory: A Selection of Critical Essays:

The play of différences through every level of the text means that we constantly encounter aporias (cul-de-sacs) where our search for meaning is blocked, leaving us with a tissue of gaps, slippages, discontinuities, and lacunae before which a
critic is as helpless as any other reader. Deconstruction is the kind of reading which results: its aim is to trace and explore the self-contradictions and discontinuities which result from the play of différence and ultimately defeat the possibility of coherent communication. (14-15)

Thus it can be seen that all the cultural institutions of postmodern society are pervaded by excess, and this excess has been portrayed in the three novels of Bradbury that have been selected for study. Bradbury (1932-2000), who occupied the position of the Professor of American Studies at the University of East Anglia, stands prominent among the British campus novelists. As a campus novelist, Bradbury has often been compared to Kingsley Amis.

Bradbury's status as a campus novelist is relevant for the present study, because the campus is a place which clearly reflects the changes in culture. The different movements and fashions of the world come together in the campus. Thus it becomes a setting that brings out the pluralism and multiplicity of postmodern culture. Moreover the campus helps Bradbury to effectively focus his satire on certain issues, like academic habits and pretences. He closely dissects the claims of superiority that the academicians raise and lays bare the dubiousness that underlies them.

Actually the campus novel came into existence in the 1950s. It can be called an Anglo-American invention. The campus which becomes the ultimate and all pervasive setting of such novels, creates the impression that nothing exists beyond it. The time that a person spends at a university is one during which he makes full use of his intellect and also experiences great disillusionment.
However the academic world is not an end, it is only a means. In fact, it is a world to be transcended. The academic world is a place where a person spends a period of gestation before entering the world of high finance, corrupt politics, or trendy literature. Bradbury's concern as a liberal humanist is seen in his novels. He portrays the values of humanism as under threat even in the peaceful, civilized, and tolerant world of the university.

In all his works, Bradbury points towards the need for human values in a world of rapidly changing fashions. This is certainly a career-oriented world. But if people pursue their careers casting aside all values, self-destruction will be the result. Bradbury tries to create through his works an awareness of the dangers of dehumanisation. Passivity should not be the attitude towards such a social condition. Bradbury is in fact giving a warning to the readers about the ill-effects of moral entropy. In the postmodern world, people have no time to think about the self. They struggle in the midst of amoral, abstract, and impersonal forces. Bradbury has probed into the nature of this struggle.

My main characters are typically confused but concerned moral agents; their liberalism is less a political than a moral perspective: their aim is decency and good will, and the comedy and indeed the potential tragedy or at least pathos arises when the world, in its contingency, refuses to let them, or blurs the moral perspectives they tell they profess. (Vinson, Contemporary Novelists 91)

Bradbury brings out the moral conflicts through comedy, since it is the best medium to bring out what is insufficient or is lacking. Comedy also helps to bring out the irony that underlies the values of the present day. Bradbury highlights contemporary issues through his brilliant use of wit. Bradbury believes in the British tradition of comedy. Comedy develops along lines that are different
from those of strong sentiments and deep emotions. The one who writes comedy can maintain the detachment that is essential for the subject. By making use of this technique, Bradbury keeps up a philosophical outlook. Bradbury points out:

It occurs again and again in the British writers who find the human condition and the social rules by which they have to live somewhat absurd. These are matters of comedy. But they are also part of a ritual tradition, which you pretend to accept, and are led into questions of hypocrisy. If society has rigid rules, then you are going to break them from time to time. (Gowri Ramnarayan interviews Bradbury in The Hindu Magazine Literature Review 2 Nov. 1997 X)

By doing so, Bradbury exposes the irony as well as the absurdity that characterises this society.

Bradbury's novels certainly reflect the pluralism of the postmodern world. The conferences and parties in them mix the most incongruous elements. His works "bring people, representing various points of view on some current question of politics or communal definition, into sharp, comically outrageous conflict" (Vinson, Contemporary Novelists 91). Bradbury, in fact, mimics attitudes and points of view as well as writers and literary themes. He also incorporates experiences he has gained during his travels in his works. Sachidananda Mohanty points out in "The many worlds of Malcolm Bradbury:" "Despite his rootedness to his own milieu, he was a true internationalist" (The Hindu Literary Review 17 Dec. 2000 IX). Thus the cultures from across the world get represented in them. His novels certainly reflect Mikhail Bakhtin's
conceit that competing cultural voices and languages constitute a novel. The diversity that results from these voices and languages, creates a carnival within the realm of fiction. Carnivalesque qualities are more or less present within any society and any novel, but are seen with greater intensity in late twentieth-century Britain. Parodies, subversions, mockeries, and celebrations have certainly made their presence felt in the postmodern British literary scene. Hence it can be pointed out that the satire in Bradbury's works that deal with "post-colonial Britain is increasingly, in the terms Bakhtin outlines, a carnival of diverse linguistic, cultural and racial possibilities" (Stevenson, A Reader's Guide to the Twentieth-Century Novel in Britain 141).

Bradbury's works contain metafictional elements. He uses strategies like the author's note to give the reader a heightened awareness of the fictionality of the text. Thus he exploits the tension between fantasy and realism. Bradbury's preference for metafiction stems from the fact that it is the sort of fiction that responds to cultural change. Metafiction treats reality itself as a construct. Though it points towards the fictionality of reality, it does not completely deny reality. Bradbury's works also show the opposition between fictional desire and fictional reality. He constructs the text in a way that facilitates the conversion of the one into the other. He heightens the metafictional nature of the text by momentarily appearing as a character in the text. By using metafictional devices, Bradbury puts into question the very frankness of the characters in his novel. The evolution that Bradbury has undergone in his career as a writer is seen in the greater technical self-consciousness he shows in his later works. Each novel of Bradbury gives the impression of being a game. He unravels the complexities of postmodern life though the plurality of fictional worlds that he
creates. Since the question of reality has become problematic in fiction, the act of creating fiction is now a game. Bradbury can be compared to John Barth, since both writers show a preoccupation with the idea that life involves the construction of plots. Though Bradbury uses metafictional devices, his style is one that can be called reader-friendly. He believes in doing experiments without completely straying away from realism. The shift in the trends of the experimental traditions after modernism, is reflected in his works.

Bradbury's metafictional devices show his tendency to regard history itself as a text. Bradbury is also aware of the fact that history contains plot structures that are beyond human control. He attacks the hypocrisy of those who profess historicism through some characters. In their hands, historicism becomes a disguise for opportunism. Bradbury treats any historical situation as something that can be subjected to multiple interpretation. Bradbury makes use of various techniques to make clear that the plots of history are fictional. Thus history becomes a badly made plot for a character who lands himself in a difficult situation. History shows a proliferation of plots, hence it is marked by uncertainty. It faces exhaustion due to this condition of excess. Bradbury's works probe into the inner meaning of history by satirising the events and movements that constitute it. He is certainly an author writing under the pressure of history.

Bradbury's vision of the world is one that has been coloured by the concepts of structuralism. Structuralism is the philosophy of signs and hence it has great relevance in a world dominated by signs. The semiotic point of view regards the world itself as a linguistic invention. It is another fact that the world shows a plurality of linguistic systems. These systems have their own codes:
In fact everything we display, signal or exchange with is a language -- sex, food, money, clothes, sport, wives. Everything is a sign system governed by rates of exchange (a good title for a modern novel, incidentally). I am a language and you are a language, though some of us are better at it than others. (Bradbury, Unsent Letters 167)

Today people are engaged in semiotic activity all the time. There are so many dialects and idiolects. All languages are fictions, but they help in the temporal control of reality. Languages are above all important tools in the most important activity of the postmodern world, i.e. trading. Such a profusion of languages is inevitable in a world which shows an excess of egos, identities, lifestyles, and professions. As a result, everything has become unstable. There is no longer any fixed point of reference.

HM can be considered as Bradbury's response to the changing values of culture. It points towards the dangers of a situation which will result if humanism is discarded altogether. The university in the novel is essentially a British 'new' university consisting of concrete and graffiti. The novel centres around Howard Kirk, a sociology lecturer as well as an aggressive preacher of left-wing politics. In fact, it can be said that Bradbury has developed Howard from the character James Walker in the earlier novel Stepping Westward: "Kirk, then, is frankly set up as the 'historicist enemy.' However he is not a character, but rather a stereotypical 'rat'" (Seymour-Smith, Guide to Modern World Literature 323). Howard is a historicist who lies and manipulates. He is not an entirely negative character. When certain aspects of his personality are taken into account, it
can be seen that he bears resemblances to Bradbury himself. Howard finds himself enveloped by the plot of history as well as fiction. He gets caught in a series of events which turn repetitive. Howard's lifestyle and Bradbury's style as a writer of fiction, converge at this point. Patricia Waugh has analysed Howard's relationship with history in *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*:"Howard acts as though he were the embodiment of history and thus in control of both his own and others' destinies" (49). However he finds himself face to face with the multiple possibilities of interpretation, the numerous plots that can be drawn out of, or imposed on, any historical or fictional situation.

*RE* is set in a Communist country Slaka, which is experiencing the dictatorship of the proletariat in its most complete form. The novel in fact reflects Bradbury's experiences in the Communist world. Bradbury had visited China after the cultural revolution. In Slaka, restrictions are imposed by the state in matters right from economics to linguistics. Production is the miracle in which the people believe and this belief has been created by state propaganda. This belief is just a politically motivated fiction, and it is given the status of history and reality by the state. East European or rather Marxist critical methods are satirised in the novel. In Marxist countries, ideology is used to undermine all capitalist art. They approach art and literature with the cold correctness of Marxism. *RE* also shows Bradbury's preoccupation with academic life. This is accompanied by greater technical self-consciousness. The novel shows Bradbury's metaphorical attempt to find links between monetarism and poststructuralism. In fact, a close study of the novel's imagery and plot reveal
poststructuralist concepts of culture. The novel satirises cultural exchange at the international level. Parody and pastiche have been extensively used in it. The novel revolves round the British linguist Petworth. His personality is marked by instability. He does not try to change the plots of history like Howard. He just lets himself be carried away by them and hence he is not a character in the world historical sense.

*DC* is concerned with the quest of a journalist, Francis Jay for an elusive philosopher, Dr. Bazlo Criminale. This quest ultimately becomes a quest for the meaning of history. It covers many political and literary events that unravel the postmodern cultural milieu. The novel can also be regarded as a satire on the events and movements that constitute the nineties.

The following chapter undertakes a study of the society of the crowd. It takes into account the festivity, the rapid dialogic encounters, and the uncontrolled play of desire that form a part of mass society. Thereby it aims to undertake an analysis of the culture of excess as it exists in this society.