CHAPTER - II

THE SOCIETY OF THE CROWD
THE FESTIVE CROWD

Mass society exists in a fragmented form. The commodity culture has shaped it in this way. The ecstasy of affluence and the agony of alienation together becomes the concrete social experience. Bradbury is a writer who is very much concerned about this condition:

[... ] I am concerned with the issue of the liberal intellectual in the late capitalist world, where affluence grows and individual life-styles grow, where in some sense, the common and controlled morality begins to die. The connection between intellectuals and moral independence frays. In this culture, you have a pervasive set of pressures from money, greed and selfishness, on the quality of life. (The Hindu Magazine Literary Review 2 Nov. 1997 X)

There is the overwhelming presence of the crowd everywhere, but the individuals who form the crowd are essentially lonely. The corporate system structures the society with material rewards and the desires associated with them. But personal alienation turns out to be the immediate after-effect. Culture is now characterised by ephemerality. The social has become a collage made of cultural fragments. Pop art and new fashions form the disparate constituents of the social scenario. Psychedelic colours give it an illusory appearance. The signs, structures, and technologies of the postmodern dominate the social scene. Humanism has become irrelevant and the human identity has lost its stability. Human beings find themselves lost among the multiple reflections of the commodified surfaces of culture. Dana B. Polan points out in her essay "'Above All Else to Make You See:' Cinema and the Ideology of the Spectacle:"
the condition of the postmodern is, for Lyotard one of language 'games,' social meaning dissolved into a vast, spectacular *combinatoire*, a dissociation of cause and effect, a concentration on the seductiveness of means and a concomitant disavowal of ends" (Arac, *Postmodernism and Politics* 59).

Social interaction itself becomes reduced to the mechanism of language games. The social as such is characterised by a lack of culturally signifying practices. It offers only fleeting contacts and not long-standing relationships. Such a fragmentary cultural milieu makes the human self schizophrenic. The decentering of society will inevitably affect the self. The random and the heterogeneous that dominate the social scene also contribute to the confusion within the human self.

Industrial capitalism creates the dense human environment of the cities. Such an environment generates mass culture, and the lifestyles and social instincts associated with it. It is characterised by great flux, and hence the people do not show stability. They make frequent appearances and disappearances, and enter into a multiplicity of relationships. The diversification of their contracts and experience as well as the transformation of their identity contributes to their angst. An urbanized society thus alienates people. It is a site for ethnic mixing as well as a melting pot for cultural values. However, precedence is given to material values over cultural values. But the industrial society, in spite of the tension and stress inherent in it, tempts and seduces the human self. The fast pace of life in the city accelerates his consciousness. The skyscrapers, department stores, ghettos, and apartment blocks just constitute a social jungle. The individual living in the
big city experiences anonymity, dislocation, and victimisation in the midst of the totalitarian massing of society. Humanism has certainly seeped out through the hypercivilized and luxurious social surface. The material massification has exhausted the culture.

The wild party, the scene of postmodern social interaction, is in a way a modified form of the masquerades of the past. It is characterised by unrestrained eating and drinking. As Terry Castle has pointed out in *Masquerade and Civilization*, it is a spectacle that satisfies "archaic, irrational, cultural dreams--for new bodies, new pleasures, new worlds" (107). The combination of lights and sounds form a milieu, that creates a sense of unreality and exhibits auditory redundance. Such an environment promotes uncontrolled touching, embracing, fondling, and bodily contacts of various other types. The individuals acquire new flamboyant identities during this occasion through their extravagant styles of dressing. The freedom granted by this social mix promotes hectic verbal and physical activities which include even the sexual. It can be called a spectacle of intense eroticism that functions as a sort of foreplay to the lovemaking that will inevitably follow. The stimulation of the senses is involved, and the contradictory pleasures got from seeing and being seen work together. Scopophilic and exhibitionist tendencies are submitted to the maximum play in this spectacular social mixing.

The unlimited freedom implied by such a social scenario provokes men and women to indulge in excesses. Such physical indulgence also implies moments of self-transcendence in a materialistically oriented world. It
provides the chance to experience "an intensely self-absorptive state of fantasy and sensual gratification" (Castle 72). Thereby they become part of a crowd as well as that of a cultural institution. Freedom, which in fact is an abstract entity granted by the democratic structure, is here experienced collectively; and this gives a special kind of psychological and spiritual release. The social, when it acquires the clothing of fantasy, satisfies the crowd. The freedom from the constraints of the traditional social identities makes this event pleasurable. The racial, ethnic, and sexual identities that characterise the postmodern urban environment face temporal dissolution during such events. Such socialising often degenerates to debauchery, turning the party into an orgy. As a textual strategy, the narration of such events provides variety and excitement.

The traditional power structures are subverted by the festive crowd as theorised by Bakhtin. He visualises a sort of freedom that can be considered Utopian in the carnival crowd. According to Bakhtin, the carnival is a liberation from the practical and utilitarian aspects of life. It paves way for mass experience, mass consciousness, and mass behaviour; and thus provides catharsis for the self. It temporarily resolves the conflicts and differences between social forces. It is not a mere display of physical excess consisting of large quantities of food and drink, and extravagant dresses, but an event that allows the release of the excess inside the human self. Lodge has pointed out how the same process is possible within the academic world:
The novel is essentially a subversive form. I admire the Russian theorist Bakhtin who saw the novel essentially as a carnivalesque form, as a weapon against authoritarian, totalitarian regimes. To that extent, the academia is no different from any other world in the belief that it is the most important institution in the world. (Mohanty interviews Lodge in *The Hindu Magazine Literary Review* 7 Nov. 1999 IX)

The social scene is one experiencing the invasion of the new technologies. The acceleration brought about by them in all fields makes the social a site full of panic and anxiety. Electronic sound tracks make the social interactions, those full of violent energy. The bodies that take part in it vibrate and gyrate, and are seduced from all sides. Arthur Kroker and David Cook have pointed out in *The Postmodern Scene. Excremental Culture and Hyper-Aesthetics* "[...] the social is seductive only on its negative side: the dark side of sumptuary excess and decline" (V). A society that is overloaded materially and intellectually will inevitably move towards a catastrophe. The self, running after commodified pleasures, will finally have to face a nihilism that is intense enough to prompt it towards suicide. The signifiers of cultural excess which speak the language of desire will lure it towards this tragic fate. Friedrich Nietzsche has envisioned "the processing of society into the dark and seductive empire of the sign" (Kroker and Cook 33). The mass is what remains when every referential, meaning, representation, and social value has been removed. In other words, when the mass which
consists of the refuse of the social world collapses under excess weight, all social values disappear. Social values assimilate and expand up to a particular limit. Then they implode and assume the existence of signs. This is the fate towards which a commodified and hyperreal society is heading. It has made the principles of sociology itself redundant. Individuals no longer look upon the society as a truth or as a reality. The shimmering images offered by the simulacrum is the only social reality for them. They will just passively submit to the cancellation and indifference that follow a social condition of excess.

In *HM*, the sociology professor Howard and his wife Barbara are the citizens of an industrialised society, and hence they show the aggressive socialising instincts that characterise it. They have the tendency to give parties according to the trends of the academic world and the needs of the season. It is an expanding world and hence Howard recognizes the need to expand his self through parties. It is a sort of rejuvenation for the self that is fragmented by the mass culture in which it exists. Howard's sociological explanation is that a party gives the opportunity for "relevant forms of interaction" (*HM* 6). As a sociologist, parties give him the opportunity to study the behaviour of men and women who move away from their traditional cultural roles to revel in an atmosphere of freedom: "[. . .] the times were indeed 'a - changing', cultural debate and plurality grew, rock music boomed, psychedelic colours gleamed, the underground found its voice, youth culture claimed its rights of access "(*Bradbury, The Modern British Novel* 341). Since society is undergoing a rapid change, Howard arranges his parties in way that shows high flexibility. "They are unstructured parties" (*HM* 6) that promote random socialising. Howard's attempt is to subvert the traditional social groupings:
So the Kirks are mixing people from the town with people from the university, and people from London with people from the town. They are mixing heteros with homos, painters with advanced theologians, scientists with historians, students with Hell's Angels, pop-stars with IRA supporters, Maoists with Trotskyites, family-planning doctors with dropouts who sleep under the pier. (HM 7)

Thus Howard is able to create an environment in which the human self finds itself in a fabric of relations that reflect the multiplicity and plurality of culture. He wants his parties to be spontaneous events which allow free play of the instincts for socialising. He arranges even the furniture in a way that facilitates "multiple forms of companionship" (HM 71). The arrangements become codes that suggest numerous possibilities for social interaction. The rooms merge easily into one another, and hence there will be a smooth flow of "dancing and talking and smoking and sexualizing" (HM 71). Howard ultimately aims at a sociological experiment that will capture the "social and intellectual flux, confusion and heterodoxy" (Bradbury, The Social Context of Modern English Literature 49) that characterise the world in which he lives.

The party given by Howard described in the novel is one social event that exhibits the multiplicity and plurality of culture:

There are students and youth in Afghan yak, loon-pants, combat-wear, wet-look plastic, bearded Jesuses, long-haired androgynes, girls with plum-coloured mouths. I... The groups that began as
separate and compartmentalized begin to merge and mix; the few becomes a crowd, and moves from room to room. The students begin to talk to the faculty and both groups begin to talk to the third, the strangers: a civic leader from the local Pakistani community, a young man in dark sunglasses who owns the town's sex-shop, which is called Easy Come, a Women's Lib polemicist from London in an Afro-fright-wig, a radical Catholic priest and his Ouspenskyite mistress, the man with the smile badge from the winestore, and much later, when the performance is over, the entire cast and production staff of the nude touring production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, in Watermouth this week. (HM 81)

Howard carries forward his sociological experiments by supervising and motivating these different types of people. He deals with the trivialities that the occasion needs as well as with the psychological necessities. During the party, the traditional and institutional groups split and new groups come into formation. It becomes a scene replete with carnivalesque elements. Bakhtin points out: "The feast was a temporary suspension of the entire official system with all its prohibitions and hierarchic barriers. For a short time life came out of its usual, legalized and consecrated forms and entered the sphere of utopian freedom" (qtd. in Lodge, *After Bakhtin* 110). The music blaring out of the speakers adds to the chaos and there is rhythmic dancing which facilitates new pairing between couples. The party shows abundance in the
matter of drinks and drugs which form a part of the sub-culture of the youth. The random and the heterogeneous constitute the crowd that is present at this social spectacle:

The downstairs of the house looks like a vast museum of costume, as if all the forms and styles of the past have been made synchronic and here, in Howard's own house, have converged, and blurred; performers from medieval mystery plays, historical romances, dramas of trench warfare, proletarian documentaries, Victorian drawing-room farces play simultaneously in one eclectic, post-modern collage that is a pure and open form, a self-generating happening. (HM 82)

All these portend the reversal of hierarchies and the disappearance of reality. Bradbury's belief in the idea of post-modernism as eclectic is reflected in this description.

However, this multiplicity and variety barely manage to hide the fragmentation and the degeneration that lie underneath. The mood of the party swings and the instincts associated with the social are discarded in favour of those of the orgy: "The hectic verbal and physical play--primary signs of that paradoxical human contact possible when identity is obscured undoubtedly resolved in many cases into sexual play" (Castle 37-38). The environment that is free of restrictions, makes people indulge in excesses. A German girl shows her desire for exhibitionism by taking off her blouse. Mass culture is one that permits great physical intimacy. Partners are exchanged and thus relationships that exist outside the norms of society are
There are still others who communicate through drugs. The ideology of the counter-culture to which they belong, is revealed here. The physical and sexual excess that is revealed during the party leaves the self overused and empty. It only offers temporal liberation to the "patched, harlequinned, embroidered, self-gratifying, classless, citizens of a world of expectation, a world beyond norms and forms" (HM 223).

A new human consciousness has manifested itself within the realm of the social. It has shown its capacity to expand and explode. The Kirks contain within themselves the new consciousness and thus they become metaphors of social change. They show in themselves the change from puritanism, self-denial, inhibition, and conformity to the ideology of a liberated social life. Their marriage had been a prison filled with frigidity, hysteria, and self-loathing. This sort of repression of the self was a sort of psychic suicide for the Kirks. But finally they underwent the explosion of consciousness and acquired their new flamboyant identities. After this consciousness revolution, the life of Howard and Barbara becomes one of continuous exhilaration. It consists of "swinging, feeling good, getting high" (HM 27). Howard sociologically justifies this change: "The contraints were weakening in all departments, class, sex, work ethics, everything. And man explodes" (HM 24). He identifies a "'politics of growth'" and a "'dialectic of self-statement'" (HM 27) in it. But all this radicalism has not separated the Kirks from the bourgeois ideology. Howard's dialectics looks up on this as an inevitable contradiction.

Society exhibits more permissiveness now. Moral values have succumbed to the principle of pleasure. Gender identities have become
unstable. This instability is reflected in the institution called marriage. They have discarded the consensus model of marriage and have instead adopted a conflict model. Their marriage has evolved from the condition of being a prison to that of a battlefield with its own dialectics and strategies. Marriage has its own responsibilities, but they are not prepared to get trapped in what can be culturally defined as an adult life. They are averse to narrow private worlds and stable personality roles. Their married life which first moved through a closed structure that denied possibilities and adventures, later had to submit to the pressures of the repressed desires that were driving their consciousness towards the breaking point. It was the sexual urge that ignited the spark, paving the way thereby for the great consciousness revolution. Their limitations gave away; and they found themselves true citizens of the present, capable of facing the challenges. The transformation of the Kirks show how individuals "create appropriate personal ideologies, character types and life-styles, appropriate personal and political claims on their environment" (Bradbury, The Social Context 10-11). Marx and Sigmund Freud are certainly motivating forces in their social evolution.

Howard's socialising instincts are reflected in a broader way in the urban scenario of Watermouth where students, politicians, faculty members, publishers, radical socialists, and even new boutiques give parties of their own. It is an environment that breeds a host of counter-cultures. Umberto Eco has pointed out in Apocalypse Postponed:

... when one speaks of counter-culture today, one is obviously attending to class cultures, to youth culture as opposed to 'academic' culture, to cultures with their own ethical
code, to subordinate cultures, and to the practical manifestations of outsider groups which are opposed to the theoretical assertion of the dominant groups. (156)

The confusion and anxiety that the urban society produces and the resulting alienation of the self, result in such groupings. The counter-cultures show a politics of resistance towards authoritarian forces that tend to homogenise society.

The urban social scene reflects contingencies and contradictions that trouble the self. The self has wider areas of access, but it faces the confusion due to excess. Human contacts in such a society are fleeting and momentary, and hence the feeling of unity or cohesion is not there. The fast life of the city has thrown many into the recesses of existential angst. This has increased the number of psychiatric workers, exotic gurus, and so on. The inner regions of the mind are now invaded by these exponents of sociology and psychology, and hence Howard says, "'We are all nude and available'" (HM 73). However, the sociologists can only analyse society, they are helpless when it comes to the matter of preventing its deterioration. Statistics show that divorce and suicide are on the rise. The dark corners of society inhabited by drunkards and hippies, witness rapes and muggings. The suicide of a boy who was a drug addict and who practised some perverted rites related to magic, is referred to in the novel as a metaphor of the times. The angst produced by the postmodern cultural order makes people indulge in excesses, and this leads to their self-destruction. Social meaning has dissolved into the simulacra of sensual festivity. The human self is left confused and
bewildered by "the eclipse of genuine social solidarities" (Kroker and Cook 173). The individual finds himself in an environment that provokes total depersonalization and dehumanisation. Social relationships only show minimalism and they are capable of only fragmenting the human self. Barbara’s words criticising Howard’s sociological concepts fully reveal the essence of this social condition: "'Take a valium. Have a party. Go on a demo. Shoot a soldier. Make a bang. Bed a friend'" (HM 17).

The social decadence of the bourgeois West has also affected the socialist countries as can be understood from RH. In the socialist country Slaka the pervasive power of ideology structures the society, but still the society shows symptoms of excess. The Slakans also have the penchant for holding parties to celebrate certain events. But here the festive crowd obeys the codes of the power structure. However many parties held under the auspices of ideology often degenerate to discussions about trivialities. The invitations to the parties are given on the basis of official favour. The official lunch held in favour of Petworth is farcical, since it is motivated by party politics, and not by social instincts. During the party, people indulge in excessive eating and drinking as well as in superficial discussions about the names of exotic food items. As Robert Stan points out in "Mikhail Bakhtin and Left Cultural Critique:" "The category of carnival not only accounts for mass media channelling of utopian desires, but also has relevance to the political strategies of the left" (Kaplan, Postmodernism and Its Discontents 139).
The socialising instincts of the bourgeois world are subjected to severe criticism in Slaka. Professor Vlic questions Petworth about the characteristics of the United States as a decadent nation:

Always people lying in hot tubs? And everyone divorcing to be singles? Did you take an analyst while you are there to get your head straight? It looks quite a straight head to me. Did you go to a sex shop? And what do you buy there, I don't even know what they sell. Do they have topless seminars now in the university, the topless physics, the topless mathematic? (RI: 266-67).

The lifestyle of Budgie, the wife of the diplomat Steadiman, in a way proves these allegations hurled against the capitalist world. Her taste for socialising borders on aggression. Her instincts have been conditioned by the capitalist world. As Stan points out, they favour what Bakhtin would call "an utopian festival favouring 'free and familiar contact' and the 'intermingling of bodies' " (Kaplan, Postmodernism 137). She is a bourgeois who likes to exhibit herself in social gatherings and thus satisfy her narcissistic fantasies. She longs for social gatherings where "one took one's pleasure, above all, in seeing and being seen" (Castle 38). She finds herself a prisoner in the narrow confines of the society in Slaka. She hungers for the variety and diversity in the social arena of the capitalist world. In Slaka, social interactions are subject to the limitations imposed by spies, police officers, military men, microphones, bugs, and so on. She loves the world of the opera and imagines herself dancing in gauzy veils with men of destiny. She wants to be a part of erotically charged spectacles which suggest possibilities of sexual adventure. She says, "'I've always seen myself in one of the world's
great cities. Dancing, laughing, wearing a diamond in my navel." (RF 160). Budgie appears as a socially liberated woman when she tempts Petworth:

'Angus, I do wish we could take you to the lake. You can take all your clothes off there.' (RF 161). The repressive atmosphere of Slaka has produced alienation and loneliness in her self. Many consider it a risky matter to socialise with Steadiman, since he is a foreign diplomat. Even those who attend, speak with a civil caution. That is a symptom of the society which has been fragmented by political and ideological barriers. Thus we see here a social realm where the cultural excess of the capitalist world is pitted against the ideological excess of the socialist world.

The society that is an aftermath of globalisation on a massive scale is seen to a greater extent in DC. The entire novel is structured around several international social events. During such occasions, there is a coming together of cultures from across the world and the social event takes on the characteristics of a collage. The venues for these international events become global villages that reflect the pluralism and multiplicity of the world. However these social interactions taking place at an international level create an experience characterised by the schizophrenic decentering and dispersion of the human self. Those who attend these conferences carry selves displaced from their domestic environments, and hence the proceedings taking place around them become chaotic and incoherent for them. These conferences also provide venues for the enjoyment of material pleasures. Bradbury has made fun of this aspect of conferences in Unsent Letters:

And thank you, each and every one, for the fine reception -- indeed the several fine receptions--you have given me, for the generous warmth with which you have incorporated me
into your festivities, and for the sensible choice of a suite with jacuzzi; these things are always a great stimulus to thought [. . .]. A fine conference is always known by its choice of setting, and I think we would all want to say that the hotel has not earned its seven stars in vain [. . .]. (185)

The Booker Prize ceremony is a prime social event attended by the glitterati consisting of bankers, businessmen, politicians, ambassadors, and so on; and by the literati made up of Melvyn Bragg, Gore Vidal, Eco, and many others. The event lacks integrity since it has been organised for political and commercial reasons than for any literary ones. The delegates have arrived there to gratify their sensual desires through eating, drinking and promiscuous activities; and not for any discussion about literary matters. As Bradbury points out:

For the fact of the matter is that [. . .] your choice of either topic or speaker makes almost no difference to the quality of a conference whatsoever. [. . .] The quality and mix of the delegates, the texture and thickness of the printed programmes, the standard of the menus, the supply of towels to the rooms, the choice of the band on the last night, the selection of an ideal venue in an ideal season--these are what will ensure the success of your event. (Unsent Letters 197)

Moreover there is the dominating presence of the media which manipulates the entire social occasion to its advantage. A negative impact is created on the social by "the fictive world of the media of hypercommunication" (Kroker and Cook V). Interviews and interactions are artificially stage-managed by it. The media covered social event becomes a disorienting spectacle with
its crowd of celebrities. The writers and critics are submerged in the midst of the backpacks, betacams, gins-and-tonics, champagne, henna-haired media women, and frilly-aproned waitresses. Literature and criticism are denied the social spaces that will enable them to function with integrity. These spaces are invaded by the forces of capitalism.

'The Barolo Congress on Literature and Power' unfolds yet another picture of a social world pervaded by excess. It is an international event attended by writers and critics from different parts of the world. They socialize at a superficial level as can be seen from the abundance of "shaking hands, chatting, laughing, frowning, embracing, renewing old congress friendships, or old conference hostilities" (DC 126). Professor Massimo Monza, a person who is supposed to be an intellectual and who has a wide social constituency, facilitates their social interaction. The Villa Barolo offers a vast playground where the delegates can indulge in excesses of various sorts. Its classical background is complemented by a technological framework consisting of five channel headsets, video recorders, overhead projectors, fax facilities, and computer interfaces that facilitate socialising on a wider scale. Technology is also evident in the luxuries like power showers and jacuzzis. They reflect the tendency to refine and multiply the facilities for stimulating the senses. The civilities and mannerisms exhibited during the conference under the pretext of resolving international issues like war, are deceptive. Multiplicity has deprived society of its
totality. All humanistic values face elimination in a technologically structured pleasure-oriented society as is clear from the superfluity of this conference.

'The International Congress on Erotics in Postmodern Photography' held at Lausanne fully reveals the decadence of a society obsessed with sensuous pleasures. Its exotic location, ie the saloon of a ship, is one that facilitates excessive self-indulgence. An unfamiliar environment implies the "transgression of traditional gender rules and codes of social behaviour" (Lodge, *After Bakhtin* 110). This results in the emergence of carnivalesque behaviour as seen in the spectacle of orgiastic merry-making on the ship. The delegates become ego-fondling extroverts revelling in an atmosphere of utopian freedom. It is a postmodern scenario where "music as panic vibrations secretes through the body of the social" (Kroker and Cook VI). The people indulge in violent socialising as evident in their "pawing and fussing and fluttering and flapping" (*DC* 226), which soon intensify to become sexually suggestive activities like kissing and gasping. The elements of masquerade are evident in this flamboyant crowd:

One woman was barebreasted. One man wore a Napoleonic uniform. Many had crossdressed: several of the men had on what looked like chiffon bedroom wear, and several of the women were clad in ties, tweeds or dress shirts and dinner-jackets (*DC* 226).

Masquerade offers an illusory freedom by obscuring the identity and thereby promoting sexually promiscuous behaviour in the public. The removal of the signs of gender help men and women to interact with unlimited freedom.
Masquerade is an erotic spectacle that provides a venue for the satisfaction of the urges normally repressed by society. "Transvestite costume was always symbolically charged, evoking realms of perverse and ambiguous sexual possibility" (Castle 40). Clothing itself is a system of signs that needs to be interpreted. Masquerade disrupts this system. The pleasure of masquerade lies "one suspects, in the hermeneutic disequilibrium it entailed" (Castle 57). The ecstasy got from impersonation promotes the acting out of fantasies involving the self and the other. This event proliferates fashions which in fact are deceptions carried out on the surface of the body. Thus the Congress on Postmodern Photography is truly one consisting of "beautiful and outrageous and infinitely photograpable things" (DC 227).

The Buenos Aires Book Fair is a literary event that shows social groupings similar to that of the Booker prize for fiction. The crowd who attend it consist of businessmen, politicians, publishers, writers, and readers. It is also an event that caters to the political need of resuming Anglo-Argentine cultural relations. This accounts for the presence of the British Ambassador, the Argentine Minister of culture, some Argentine writers, and the mistresses of Jorge Luis Borges at the event. Political and economic motivations turn this social and cultural event into a farce. All the speeches given during it originate from what Fredric Jameson has described in Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism as "the masks and voices stored up in the imaginary museum of a new global culture" (18).
The Restaurant *La Rochette* in Brussels functions as another global village. It provides the social space for many a tete-a-tete of the "Eurocrats" and "Euro-framers" (*DC* 281). It is a postmodern pleasure palace filled with "Euro-bimbos" (*DC* 281), silver carts bearing pink lobsters, pâtisseries, caviars, claret and burgundy, and great crystal chandeliers. On the other, it has the atmosphere of a medieval court consisting of princes, plenipotentiaries, ministers, courtiers, lawyers, framers, and fixers. It is just a social gathering for the levelling out of political differences. The relationships established here are motivated by the needs of diplomacy. The global culture creates a social scenario that is unreal and is bereft of any genuine values.

Criminale is a true postmodern philosopher as well as celebrity who socialises with world-famous personalities at international venues. His life is full of congresses, conferences, international flights, and luxurious hotels. He has contacts with people belonging to different social and cultural realms; like ship owners, Nobel Prize winners, Buddhist Thinkers, and Tennis Stars. He is friendly with celebrities like The Dalai Lama, Glenn Close, Pol Pot, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Hans-Dietrich Genscher. Thus he leads a very hectic social life:

He became friend to Presidents. He took vacations with Gorbachev, went to the opera with Mitterrand, played golf with Reagan, drank beer with Helmut Kohl, scoffed tea and scones with Margaret Thatcher. [...] One week he was photographed with Shevardnadze at the Bolshoi, the next with Madonna at the Brown Derby, the next in an argonaut's cap
upon the steam yacht of some Italian socialite, arm carelessly tossed round some topless nymph or other, Aegean in the background. (*D*33-34)

Thus Criminale's social world seems to be one characterised by plurality and multiplicity. However it is really "a world of cultural exhaustion, where mass is greater than self, 'it' than 'we' " (*Bradbury, The Modern American Novel* 139). Beneath the staunch figure of the philosopher that Criminale projects to society, lies his status as womaniser and nude photographer. Thus a philosopher who is supposed to view society from a critical distance, indulges in all its excesses. This in turn reduces him to an empty sign floating amidst the chaos of a fragmented culture. His self is dominated by the technologies and ideologies of this world. He lives among those "'condemned to an eternal present' " (*D* 237).
THE VOICES IN CONFLICT

Bakhtin has stated that social voices which answer one another generate meanings. These voices come from different social and ideological backgrounds. Meaning is found not in the stability of the linguistic form. It is generated during communication. Dialogically interrelated speech practices are always there in society. The ensuing plurality of voices do not fuse into a single consciousness. Instead they exist on different planes and generate dialogical dynamics among themselves. These voices are cultural and political in their texture. Hence it is inevitable that they exist in dialogue with each other. The text of a novel forms a setting where these different voices come together. As Stan points out:

In the broadest sense [...] dialogism refers to the open-ended possibility generated by all the diverse practices of a culture, the entire matrix of communicative utterances within which the artistic text is situated, and which reach the text not only through recognizable influences but through a subtle process of dissemination [...] (Kaplan, Postmodernism 132)

Cultural production is thus intimately linked with dialogism. It is a process that is rooted in language. All literate, non-literate, verbal, non-verbal, highbrow, and lowbrow cultural activities occur through the mode of dialogism. The cultural field as such involves elements that are varied or even opposed to each other. Hence it is an unstable and constantly shifting one. Thus culture is the site of conflicting discourses and competing voices. The confrontation is actually not between voices, but between world views and ideologies.
Urban and postmodern cultures show great plurality as far as voices are concerned. They belong to different ethnic groups and take part in intense dialogic interaction. They reflect the social conflicts that exist in such urban settings. Such societies show a predominance of what Lyotard calls language games. The human self exists in a complex network of relationships in this environment. "The 'atomization' of the social into flexible networks of language games" (Lyotard 17), is what we see here. The social structures are held together by linguistic bonds. An indeterminate number of language games intersect through society. The players determine the moves in the game. Hence they are flexible and can be cancelled. Language games generate a multiplicity of arguments. Social interaction evolves during language games. Thus they affect the professional, emotional, sexual, and cultural constituents of society. But they yield only unstable information that changes according to the motivation of the players.

The fragmentation of social life itself can be analysed using the terms of linguistics. Social life is now characterised by a neutral and reified media speech. The culture that is a result of globalisation, is dense with voices. In capitalist society, dialogic interaction becomes excessive and discourse wears thin of intrinsic values. Hence speech is heading rapidly towards a collapse. It is because each self "exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before" (Lyotard 15). The multiple and complex networks that cover the social structure, have divided language and discourse. Perpetual contradiction and conflict occur within this framework. All this results in a breaking open and refashioning of the subject in literature. In fact dialogic confrontation has fragmented the text. The text becomes a product of the pulverisation of fragmented elements. These elements are
individual, contingent, and superficial. The entire field of dialogue becomes pervaded by a negativity. The interaction between technology and culture has had its effect on dialogic interactions. What we see now is a realm "of social, political, cultural and private interaction, where, against the background of a communicative ethic, individuals negotiate their needs and desires" (Holub 27). The cultural apparatuses and telecommunicative apparatuses have now come together. The devices for hypercommunication now dominate the social scene.

The concept of dialogism is not restricted to the verbal speech of the characters. It is only a part of the whole. The relationship between the author's discourse and the characters' discourses also comes under dialogism. Then there are the discourses outside the text which are alluded to by means of speech. No one discourse is allowed to dominate over the characters. Thus resistance is offered to repressive and authoritarian ideologies. Resistance is created through the variety of discourses; vulgar, polite, vernacular, oral and written that enter the textual space. In Postmodernist Fiction, Brian McHale has analysed how this multiplicity of discourses creates a proliferation of meaning in the text: "Postmodernist fiction, by heightening the polyphonic structure and sharpening the dialogic in various ways, foregrounding the ontological dimension of the confrontation among discourses, thus achieving a polyphony of 'worlds' " (McHale 166). The reader of the polyphonic novel faces a challenging and disconcerting interaction of diverse discourses as represented in the text. Since these discourses are different in terms of the attitudes and values in them, the conflict created during the dialogic interaction remains unresolved. Bakhtin
considers the human self itself as constituted of languages and discourses. It experiences family, class, gender, race, and so on at a linguistic and discursive level: "[. . .] we can locate meaning in the dialogic process of interaction between speaking subjects, between text and reader, between texts themselves" (Lodge, *After Bakhtin* 86). The novel's meaning is generated by this plurality of voices. The discourses, taken from diverse sources which are a part of the text of the novel, communicate different ideological positions. But they cannot be subjected to a totalizing judgement or interpretation.

Dialogism can also be discussed from a semiotic point of view. As Stan points out: "The sign for Bakhtin is material, multi-accentual and historical, it is densely overloaded with the traces of its historical usages and lives in dialogical interrelation with other material signs" (Kaplan, *Postmodernism* 122). Human consciousness and the ideologies propagated by it are all ultimately semiotic in texture. Hence verbal interaction as well as writing inevitably shows the play of signs. In fact, signs come into being in the spaces that exist between individuals. The sign functions and acquires meaning in these spaces, which constitute the realm of social interaction. No individual can exist outside the realm of signs. On the other hand, the social organisation of individuals is essential for the formation of the medium of signs. Katherina Clark and Michael Holquist have discussed this aspect in *Mikhail Bakhtin*: "The comprehensiveness and power of signs is manifest primarily in spoken speech [. . .]" (226).

Julia Kristeva has studied the condition of discourse in the capitalist society in *Desire in Language*: "As capitalist society is being economically
and politically choked to death, discourse is wearing thin and heading for a
collapse at a more rapid rate" (92). Philosophical, aesthetic, and scientific
discourses are coming up at a rapid rate. But these discourses just form an
excess which does not have a great and long-standing impact on culture.
Language has become trapped in the complex systems of modern society
and as a result it has become incommunicable. The literature that is fashioned
out of it only exhibits contradictions and oppositions.

A culture that shows multiplicity can be represented only in a dialogic
novel. This multiplicity is a subject of intense discussion, interpretation,
and evaluation. Language becomes a background for dialogic activity in a
literary work that expresses this condition of the postmodern intellect.
Finitude and enclosedness are alien to the postmodern culture, and hence it
needs novels that make use of the dialogic mode.

The text of HM exhibits dialogic interaction among the characters, who
live in the academic world. The university professors and students who form
the characters have voices that are cultural, political, and above all sociological
in texture. Bradbury has cleverly employed the academic setting of the
University at Watermouth to articulate these voices. The classes conducted
there are dialogically interactive. During these classes, the teachers make the
students the objects of therapy. These classes generate psychic forays into
the unconscious, and yield discussions about subjects like bourgeois
materialism or racism. The verbal-ideological belief systems of the outside
world show their predominant presence in the university. All this is evident
in the dialogic discussion that takes place inside Howard's class. The voices
of Howard and those of the students are juxtaposed, and the discussion
becomes something beyond what is there in the original context. The student George Carmody criticises Marx, John Stuart Mill, and Max Weber in his paper. One student Merion Scoule says that there is no ideology in the paper, whereas another student Michael Bennard points out that it carries the ideology of bourgeois self-justification. This becomes as Stan says, an instance of "social voices anticipating and answering one another" (Kaplan, Postmodernism 121). Howard criticises the static model of society presented by Carmody. He calls it "an anal, repressed paper" (HM 134). He declares that it is not fit to be part of an academic discussion. Such conflict is inevitable in a discussion that "embrace a plurality of discourses and the ideologies and world-views associated with them" (McHale 166). Thus here the confrontation is not merely between voices but between ideologies. Sociology itself is subjected to a discussion with regard to the visit of Professor Mangel. While Howard and Rogerundy call Mangel a geneticist and racist, Moira Millikin expresses her wish to keep biological explanation as well as sin and evil right out of sociology. Dr. Macintosh adopts an approach based on the principles of economics. Language here becomes a site of conflict. The plurality of voices here do not fuse into a single consciousness. The voices of Dr. Zachery, Moira, Roger and Flora Beniform go in divergent directions. The tensions of class differentiation, the cultural aspect of class, the genetic aspect of race, the classification of science, and the ideological orientation of the human mind are all issues that are battled at the site of language using the tools of dialogism. This results in constant interaction within the text, and its subsequent modification in terms of its ideas and meaning. These voices in a way overburden the text. Ideological debate makes Dr. Zachery define the very
concept of fascism itself as an elegant sociological construct. Those, who call others fascists, are those who oppose contingency, pluralism, and liberalism. Instead of branding alien voices as fascist, one should use one's voice to engage in conflict with them on dialogic terms.

Urban settings show greater diversity in the matter of the voices that engage in dialogic interaction. They generate "the challenging, disconcerting, ultimately unresolved interaction of diverse discourses representing diverse attitudes and values, sometimes within the same speaking or thinking subject" (Lodge, After Bakhtin 58). Parties which form the high point of the urban social scenario, show intense interaction between divergent voices. Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, contraception and totalitarianism, virtue and politics, and above all the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are made subjects for discussion. The party given by Howard is one that shows an excess of voices:

In the living room, faces and voices throw violent sound around, it is the noise of man growing. 'Kant's version of the inextricable entanglements of perceptual phenomena,' says someone. 'I'm low because I'm high,' says someone else. By the wall Barbara is talking to a small, dark girl standing by herself, in a white hat and a dark-blue trouser suit. 'What kind of contraceptive do you use?' asks Barbara socially. 'What about you, Mrs. Kirk?' says the girl, who has a mild scots accent. 'Oh, I'm Pill,' says Barbara, 'I used to be Bung but now I'm Pill. What's your method?' 'It's called Brute Force,' says the girl. 'The devious working of the totalitarian mind,' says someone. 'You're trying to confuse me and fuck up my head.' says someone else. (HM 83)
Postmodern urban culture shows a greater degree of polyphony. It contains many ethnic voices that signify the process of globalisation. At Howard's party, there is a Pakistani who speaks with an accent that shows his ethnicity. He doubts how university educated intellectuals could take part in the decadent orgy that is going on around him. According to the Catholic priest, the orgy is slowly replacing the mass as prime sacrament.

Since the main character Howard is a sociologist many of the social problems undergo dialogic discussion in the text. Today each person exists in a complex fabric of relations and this results in him experiencing a lot of stress. The differences and contradictions that are seen in culture are reflected in social relationships also. Howard's student, Felicity Phee who has been pursuing a sexist, anti-male point of view, now wants to put an end to the lesbian relationship that has produced a slavish mentality in her. Howard shows to her the open-ended possibility of following her own course. On the other hand, when Miss Callendar declares that she has a moral conscience, Howard accuses her of having one. He wants to change her conservative voice into that of a rebel. Thus he dialogically manipulates the viewpoints of others. Howard's sociology gives importance to ideology, whereas Flora's depends upon psychology. The accident of Howard's colleague, Henry Beamish, is interpreted by them in different ways. Howard calls it a chance or a contingent event arising out of unpredictable features coming into interaction. At the same time, he considers it as a radical gesture against the self, a self which Henry falsified by marrying Myra, a social superior with all the bourgeois ambitions. From a socio-cultural point of view, the bourgeois lifestyle destroyed Henry's social and moral conscience. Flora is suspicious of Howard's theorisation. She interprets Henry's accident
taking into account the nature of human consciousness. She feels that Henry has attempted to commit suicide. She refers to Marx, Freud, and social history while giving her explanation. The voices of Howard and Flora are the products of a culture that is burdened by with an excess of theory and ideology.

A culture always shows the presence of dialogically interrelated speech practices. When the idioms of different classes, races, and genders come together, there is a competition for ascendancy. Bakhtin points out that the construction of a novel is based "not on abstract differences in meaning nor on merely narrative collisions, but on concrete social speech diversity" (qtd. in McHale 166). Such a diversity is visible in RE. Many political and cultural voices intersect through the text. The novelist, Katya Princip's voice is that of dissent at the extrinsic level in an ideologically oriented country like Slaka. In fact, her voice shows kynicism. Žižek has discussed kynicism in detail:

Kynicism represents the popular, plebeian rejection of the official culture by means of irony and sarcasm: the classical kynical procedure is to confront the pathetic phrases of the ruling ideology -- its solemn, grave tonality -- with everyday banality and to hold them up to ridicule, thus exposing behind the sublime [...] of the ideological phrases the egotistical interests, the violence, the brutal claims to power. (Žižek, Mapping Ideology 313)

Dialogism always opposes official monologism. The guide Marisja Lubijova functions as an exponent of ideology. While Lubijova gives a monologue about the economic achievements of the country, Princip makes ironic
comments. These comments dialogically intersect through Lubijova's speech and the text becomes the site of conflict:

'Says comrades, 'explains Lubijova, when he pauses, 'I am pleased to represent here our Minister of Culture, who regrets he is elsewhere, to welcome our excellent visitor Comrade Petwurt.' 'Our Minister of Culture,' Princip whispers in Petworth's ear, 'A soldier who has read a book. Better than the last one: a soldier who had not read a book.' 'Says we are proud to welcome you to our country of many achievements, economic and also cultural. Since the feudal and bourgeois times we have made a great leap forward.' 'Who hasn't?' murmurs Princip.(RE 124)

This extract can be understood if we take into consideration Bakhtin's concept that there is no unitary political subject. As Stan points out: "One can hear the voice of the proletarian in the bourgeois and the voice of the bourgeois in the proletarian, without denying that social class is a meaningful, even indispensable category" (Kaplan, Postmodernism 142). The voices of Professor Rum and the official Tankic, all emanate from the ideological framework; and tend to attack the capitalist system and prophesise its imminent collapse. Meanwhile the British linguist Petworth takes a position that is neither that of assent or dissent, which the ideological critics interpret as bourgeois relativism. Since Petworth is a linguist, his central concern is language and during the visit to Slaka he experiences the multiplicity at the site as well as the ensuing struggle: "Bakhtin argues that language is where these struggles are engaged most comprehensively and at the same time most intimately and personally. It is in language, not in the nation-state that
The concept of class struggle is important for a country like Slaka, but Petworth understands it in terms of the grouping of social forces at the language site and not in any nation-state.

Petworth’s lecture about the present condition of language provokes severe criticism. A number of voices come up that try to prove him wrong. The major point of their criticism is that Petworth is speaking about the language of capitalist oppression. Mr. Picnic points out Petworth’s failure to understand the hegemony of forces, that constitutes the struggle that takes place at the language site. Plitplov uses the term “bourgeois linguistics” (RE 196) to criticise him. The dialogic interaction here consists of ideology dominated criticism that intends to modify or eliminate Petworth’s bourgeois concepts.

However there are professors at the University of Glit who have the grand project of dialogically bringing together the ideas of Hegel, Marx, Freud, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Such dialogic interaction is inevitable, as emphasized by Tzvetan Todorov in Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle: “Intentionally or not, all discourse is in dialogue with prior discourses on the same subject, as well as with discourses yet to come, whose reactions it foresees and anticipates” (X). Professor Vlic’s discourse contains a criticism of the capitalist and socialist economics. His ideological bent of mind makes him look at wealth and other material possessions in terms of the decadence it brings upon society as can be understood from the example of the United States.
Petworth finds himself caught in a matrix of communicative utterances that belong to the intelligentsia of the University. According to Stan, here we see a situation in which "the idioms of different classes, races, genders, generations and locales complete for ascendency" (Kaplan, Postmodernism 121). All these form an excess that reflects upon the sensibility of Petworth. Petworth finds it difficult to understand the language that he is hearing at the moment. He experiences the negativity that characterises the linguistic process: "[. . .] 'A writer is someone for whom language is a problem, who experiences its profundity, not its instrumentality nor its beauty'" (Barthes qtd. in Kristeva 107).

The realm of social interaction always shows the presence of speech practices which are dialogically interrelated. Petworth's awareness of this fact makes him talk about the speech-making habits of different nations. But he finds it difficult to articulate his words in an alien socio-cultural environment. However he makes an attempt to communicate this linguistic complexity through the following instances:

- Germans will speak soulfully of Kant and Beethoven,
- Americans colloquially of space and territory,
- Norwegians poetically of mountains and fish, Russians proudly of industry and sport, while the British will speak only about their weather, and then to condemn it.

(Re: 124-25)

Petworth further makes use of his knowledge as a linguist, to make an analysis of the lovemaking habits of people belonging to different cultures:

- 'What, finished so soon?' says the Frenchwoman, 'My sadness has almost gone away,' says the Scandinavian, 'Great, what
did you say your name was?' says the American, 'You have made a great contribution,' says the Russian, 'Okay, now let's eat,' says the German, and 'Feeling better, darling?' says the English woman. (RE 125).

Petworth's elaborate illustrations make no impact on the ideologically oriented mind of Professor Rum. He is concerned only about the politics of Petworth's speech. His attitude is the product of a culture that has entrapped everything within ideological and political constructs. Hence even the language revolution in Slaka is something based on ideological difference. The linguistic function of social communication itself is something semiotic and according to Bakhtin, "everything ideological has semiotic value" (Clark and Holquist 225).

Any social gathering shows a predominance of language games. They point towards the ongoing processes of fragmentation and mechanisation: "The social subject itself seems to dissolve in this dissemination of language games. The social bond is linguistic, but it is not woven with a single thread" (Lyotard 40). It shows the presence of an indeterminate number of language games, following their own rules. Petworth, who is a visitor in the foreign country Slaka, gets trapped in a network of language games. Even the meanings of words appear unstable to him. He experiences the breakdown of the connection between the signifier and the signified. There is, for instance, the discussion of the meaning of the word "'ruspi'" (RE: 127). For Tankic the word signifies a swimmer, whereas according to Princip it refers to a man with two pencils in its nose. The signifier "'pencils'" (RH: 127) is analysed by Professor Rum producing a profusion of signifiers like "'feder,'"
"'stylo,' " and " 'pen' " (RE 127). But the signified is not found. Language refuses to acquire meaning here. According to Jacques Derrida, there is just "the simultaneous referral and deferral of meaning which signifiers carry with them" (Fox 103). The word "'nurdu' " (RE 129) is next subjected to dialogic interpretation. Lubijova makes a deconstructive analysis by saying that it refers to a fruit that is not an orange. Vera follows the same strategy and says that it is not a lemon. Princip tells a story to make it clear that the signified is a pumpkin. Thus we see a dialogic search through mazes of signifiers to find the signified. It is difficult to grasp the meaning because the socio-cultural context surrounding the utterance mentioned here is boundless. The narration of this story takes place through dialogic interaction:

'So, once upon a certain time, and you know all stories start so, there was a king who had three sons, and the youngest is called Stupid,' says Katya Princip. 'That is his name?' asks Vera, 'Stupid?' 'In your story call him what you like,' says Princip firmly, 'but in mine he is called Stupid. And one day the king tells Stupid he must travel to another land and make a peace with the king of it, because these two kings have fought each other. Fought?' 'Fought' says Petworth. (RE 130)

In fact, storytelling is a part of the culture of Slaka. The strong oral tradition in Glit is revealed when the ladies whom Petworth meets there tells him some stories. The voice narrating the story mingles with so many other voices:

'Do you like to hear one of our stories?' 'The one about the tailor?' 'No, the one about the shah?' 'In Wales there are
Discussion about ideological issues like Marxist inflation, and the difference between socialism and capitalism all take place while a deceptively simple fairy tale is being narrated. The story itself consists of a dialogue between a shah and a wizard. This multitude of voices disorients Petworth:

Words are spilling through his mind, in strange excess, a medley of sounding voices that penetrate and confuse. But it is as Katya Princip, that deceptive novelist, has said to him, in another place, now distant: the more words, the more country. But what country is it? The English that is no longer English, the English of second language users, reels through his head, a head that hardly feels like his. (RE 271-72)

Such a condition is symptomatic of what Stan calls "the social and psychic contradictions that constitute the subject as the site of conflicting discourses and competing voices" (Kaplan, Postmodernism 142).

The plurality of languages has created the need for translators like Lubijova. They occupy a strong position in a socio-cultural milieu in which
dialogism occurs and which involves voices that convey different languages. In the novel, Lubijova is the guide, interpreter, and voice of Petworth. During a dialogic interaction, she experiences a sort of dehumanisation. She is passive and has no voice of her own. She just experiences the continuous flow of the words of others through her head. This excess fragments her own consciousness, and she loses her own words and points of view as well as her hopes and desires. Lyotard has pointed out: "[...] one is always located at a post through which various kinds of messages pass" (15).

The novel does not limit itself to these dialogic encounters. It involves also the theorisation of the dialogic principle. Professor Vlic's discourse contains an analysis of what dialogism means:

[...] each partner must be considered consenting person and no one should be subservient and no one on top. Of course in dialogi different partners will have different priority and the object of attention will not be quite the same. But if dialogi shall work well, and be a true coming together, the different elements will be fit to the satisfaction of both partners. A tendency toward individuation exists in dialogi, but should be criticized. Our aim is not partial dialogi, but whole dialogi. (RE 267)

Lubijova agrees with his concept, and adds that dialogism involves a linkage of context and relation based on the assumption about the common interests of the partners.

The party at Steadiman's place attended by diplomats is one that shows globalisation and the ensuing pluralisation of world views. However there is no free flow of conversation during the party. The speech habits of the
conservative British itself complicates the difficulty. The interlocutors are able to overcome to an extent their differences and dialogism occurs. The scenario of postmodern social interaction consists of the coming together of different cultures. Steadiman's party is one during which serious matters as well as trivialities are subjected to intense discussion. The plurality of the voices assembled here show a concern for diverse issues like Cricket, Princess Margaret, the All Blacks, Edward Bond, plays featuring naked actors, love affairs, and the British sausage.

The text of *DC* deals with globalisation which has entered a more intense phase. The novel centres around a series of international conferences. Jay's quest for the enigmatic philosopher Dr. Criminale, takes him to many conferences. These conferences provide venues for the exchange of ideas as well as for the enjoyment of sensual pleasures. This is clearly revealed in Jay's words to Ildiko Hazy, the Hungarian girl who was the publisher of Criminale's books:

> And just look at it, congresses everywhere. There's a winemakers' congress, a crime-writers' congress, a gastronomy congress, there is a gastro-enteritis congress. There's a volleyball congress, an investment bankers' congress, I bet that one's hard to find, there's a pipesmokers' congress. And a ballet congress, a watchmakers' congress. An Olympics congress, an Esperanto Congress. (*DC* 222)

We get here a picture of a culture fragmented into so many sites for dialogic interaction. At the same time, it is one that reveals the specialisation and the variety that have become intrinsic to it.

The Booker Prize ceremony with which the novel opens is one that shows the commodified voices of the present literary scene that is dominated by politicians and publishers. The voice of the media hovers over everything
else. There is "a linguistic fragmentation of social life itself to the point where norm itself is eclipsed, reduced to a neutral and reified media speech [. . .] which itself then becomes but one more idiolect among many" (Jameson 17). The media controls all dialogic interactions by virtue of the technology at its disposal. It manipulates the voices and images of real-life personalities.

'The Barolo Congress on Literature and Power' is another socio-cultural event that shows the same characteristics. Since both politicians and writers attend, it literally becomes a dialogue between literature and power. Postmodernists, Marxists, and feminists of different ethnic varieties enter into dialogue at the Villa Barolo which virtually becomes a global village. Delegates having nationalities as widely different as American, Russian, Japanese, French, English, African, and East European assemble there to form an excess of voices. The differences between cultures generate the dynamics of their interaction. It becomes a spectacle that shows the multiplicity of ideological positions existing in this world.

Professor Monza speaks about the need for dialogism in a conference that deals with issues like the end of humanism, the death of narrative, the disappearance of the self, and deconstruction. He conducts the discussions in a scientifically precise way:

The papers started, first one by a writer, then one by a politician. Monza would listen birdlike, check them all with his stopwatch ('One more minuta!'), as if this were some Olympic event in speed paper-giving, then halt the flow and demand that we all immediately engage in our 'great common dialoga.' (DC 164-65)
The arrangements at the Villa Barolo show that dialogism has entered a decisively technological phase. Video-recorders, overhead projectors, and other facilities are there to capture the performance of the participants. The multi-linguality that is created here is collected in the headsets. Translators specially imported for the purpose are stationed in glass boxes. The set-up also provides computer interfaces and fax facilities, which help the passage of electronically coded messages back and forth across the world.

'The International Congress on Erotics in Postmodern Photography' is a truly postmodern one held on board a ship. By choosing a ship as a venue for dialogic interaction, the normal convention has been subverted. It is a conference which does not limit itself to the discussion of ideas and concepts. The motive of pleasure-making takes precedence over the dialogic mode and the crowd gets reduced to a chaos of noises. Kroker and Cook have analysed this condition: "When mass disappears into energy, then the body too becomes the focus and secretion of all of the Vibrations of the culture of panic noise" (V).

Voices advocating Magical Realism are there at the Buenos Aires Book Fair. However the voice of the writer Borges dominates over them even in his absence. This is again a pseudo-literary event manipulated by the voices of politicians who are there under the pretext of resuming Anglo-Argentine cultural relations. Their dialogic interaction is hence farcical. The literary discussion shows the plurality of critical viewpoints. The dialogic interaction there leads to the ultimate question as to what is real and what is unreal.

The exhaustion of postmodernism itself which is a result of the excess of theorising is seen at the conference, 'The Death of Postmodernism: New Beginnings' held at Schlossburg. A multitude of voices advocating parody,
pastiche, blank irony, narrative indeterminacy, new history, chaos theory, and late modern depthlessness converge there to see the end of an epoch that has showed so many strategies for subversion. The last conference in the novel is one held by a group of English teachers as a part of an attempt to find a truly European association. It points towards the heightened Euro-centrism that the world is going to experience.

All these voices representing various strains of postmodern thought intersect through Criminale. He speaks in favour of dialogue, at the same time criticises monologue:" There is no proper relationship of literature and power. Power seeks a monologue and art is a dialogue. Art destroys what power has constructed. So these two can never discuss properly with each other [..]" (JC: 147). Criminale's view can be related to that of Bakhtin. According to Bakhtin, Socratic dialogues are characterized by the opposition to any official monologism claiming to possess a ready-made truth. Socratic truth ('meaning') is the product of a dialogical relationship among speakers; it is correlational and its relativism appears by virtue of the observers' autonomous points of view. (Kristeva 81)

Criminale points out that Marxism is a monologue. It is an absolute entity that denies pluralism. It lacks the free flow of differences that is essential for any kind of dialogue.

Many political strategies are dialogically manoeuvred in the postmodern world. The politicians, the ministers of culture, the financial advisers, and the representatives of international cultural commissions in fact see even literary conferences as occasions for new diplomatic alignments. The restaurant La Rochette at Brussels, which forms the political and cultural centre of the "New Europe" (JC 280) is a venue where European
ministers, Commissioners, and Directors discuss fundamental problems of the European community. The "Euro-lawyers," "Euro-lobbyists," "Euro-fixers," and "Euro-framers" (DC 281) also assemble there to carry out underhand deals. This tête-à-tête in the heart of Europe acquires the cultural identity of a great medieval court. Here the politically and economically powerful princes, plenipotentaries, and ministers discuss international issues. Meanwhile the less powerful voices of lawyers, courtiers, framers, and fixers converge to create frauds. Such a dialogic interlinking of voices, forms the driving force of the politics centred on the European Union that is acquiring new dimensions in this world.
THE UNBRIDLED LIBIDO

Sexuality has come to pervade culture in a variety of forms and modes, and this has resulted in the generation of a lot of fetishes. The inner dynamics of the capitalist society require a free exhibition of sexuality and a corresponding release of sexual energy. They reduce the female body to an erotic sign that is subjected to the maximum exploitation. Women are made to assume the status of objects and their images take precedence over their selves. Jean Baudrillard's concept as quoted in Joseph Bristow's *Sexuality*, is one that analyses the relationship between sex and capital:

This pressure towards liquidity, flux and the accelerated articulation of the sexual, psychic and physical body is an exact replica of that which regulates exchange value: capital must circulate, there must no longer be any fixed point, investments must be ceaselessly renewed, value must radiate without respite -- this is the form of value's present realization, and sexuality, the sexual *model*, is simply its mode of appearance at the level of the body. (143-44)

Ultimately "the discourses on sexuality become operations of power, engulfing almost all facets of our modern and postmodern life" (Holub 199). Sexuality is just one more manifestation of the excess that is causing the decline of culture. As Bataille has pointed out: "... sexuality involves disorderly and anti-rationalistic experiences that are by turns excessive, wasteful, ruinous, even murderous" (Bristow 122). Sex has become symbolic of "the ecstatic implosion
of postmodern culture into excess, waste, and disaccumulation" (Kroker and Cook I). The seductive surface of culture is leading it towards a catastrophe. The intrinsic qualities are laid waste through the excess of sexuality. Sex is no longer a part of the reality that we associate with normal social life. It has acquired the nature of the image and the sign. But in the matter of gender difference, the sign has become redundant. When sexual difference is eliminated out of socio-cultural constructs, chaos comes into existence and the body becomes covered with the signs of sexual excess.

Behind sexuality, lies the prime motivating force called desire. It is a site full of contradictions and lies in excess of that in which it is generated. Since it is an abstract entity existing beyond the grasp of linguistic structures, a true understanding of its nature is difficult. Desire does not submit to the restraints of culture, which is posited as "the location of both sexual meanings and proprieties and prohibitions" (Belsey 52). It resides in the recesses of the human mind and produces in it a craving for the subversion of cultural norms. This will enable the free play of the libido. Desire arises from sexual difference. Thus it posits a split between the self and the other, which produces displacement and alienation. Desire cannot be displayed, but in capitalist society it generates many forms and motivates many activities. It is the force that underlies the excess, irrationality, and chaos that has affected culture.

Postmodern culture celebrates sexuality in various ways. Sexuality exists in capitalist society by virtue of certain codes of its own as can be understood from the way it is represented by the media. Sexuality is fantasised about, mystified, and exaggerated. It is then presented in a perverted, distorted, and falsified form. The signs associated with sex are glorified and
its real nature is rendered obscure. Sex is rendered abstract through such "a fictional unity of representation" (Finn 52). The codes of sexuality in the capitalist society promote voyeuristic pleasures and the masses become spectators. Sexual imagery denotes the male point of view and hence it caters to the pleasure derived from the sight of the other i.e. the female body in states of nudity. Pornographic art debases the relationship between man and woman. It projects in fact the relationship between the spectator and the image. The male instincts for possession and consumption are satisfied through voyeuristic fantasies offered by such art. At the same time, pornography degrades him and makes him regard women as objects or commodities to be used. It exaggerates the sexuality of women, and thus deprives them of identity and wholeness. For Baudrillard, pornography represents not a fantasy world, but a hyperreal one:

Although he claims we may be tempted to believe along psychoanalytic lines that pornography presents a phantasmatic regime in which various fetishes and perversions are put into play, the only illusion it upholds is paradoxically a fantasy of the real: a 'hyperreality' in which any distinction between representation and the actual world collapses altogether. [ . . . ] Instead of providing a seductive world of rituals and apparitions that sustain the endless pleasures of seduction, all pornography can do is act out the deadening machinations of capital. (Bristow 145) Such representations of sexuality have resulted in the new culture of permissiveness which induces men and women to seek multiplicity in their sexual relationships.

We cannot escape from the fact "that sex is an essentially political issue, for it is an effect of power and therefore an inevitable site of political struggle" (Finn 53). The concepts of sex are created by the discourses of power:
What they really signify is a set of social relations that produce us as particular kinds of subjects (dominated and divided subjects) and at one and the same time conceal the history and direction of that process of production (the process of our subjectification) by referring our identities, pleasures, desires, conflicts, and needs to an imagined internal agency, an abstract, privatized, objectified, impersonal principle -- once the soul, nowadays sex. (Finn 53)

The social hierarchy gives the male access to the discourses of power, with which he can subjugate the female. The operation of power aimed at the colonisation of the psyche occurs through the agencies of seduction. Michel Foucault has studied this aspect of sexuality:

One tracks along the course laid out by the general deployment of sexuality. It is the agency of sex that we must break away from, if we aim--through a tactical reversal of the various mechanisms of sexuality -- to counter the grips of power with the claims of bodies, pleasures and knowledges in their multiplicity and their possibility of resistance. (qtd. in Finn 55)

Consumer culture eroticizes the female image and uses it to sell commodities. This process ultimately turns the real woman into a commodity. Griselda Pollock points out in "Painting, Feminism, and History:" "The feminine body in mass culture is the symbol of saturation by the commodity, the field of play for money, power, capital and sexuality" (Barrett and Phillips, Destabilizing Theory 153). Culture confers on to women an identity that is analogous to the frivolous and decorative multiple objects mass produced for her. Amelia Jones has analysed this process of dehumanisation of the female self in Postmodernism
and the *En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp*: "[...] the feminized commodity is given value through an association with the sexual itself -- with the prostitute, the prototypical figure of the intersecting field of values" (162). This identity of the woman designed by the fashion industry, is meant for consumption by men. Such glorification of her body posits the reduction of her self. The capitalist strategy of photography has in fact created a semiotics of the feminine. It makes the female body the focal point of the fetishes of capitalist culture.

The greater expansion of commodification brings about "a heightened fetishization of the woman's body" (Jones 164). This process perverts, distorts, and heightens her sexuality as well as her desire which is in fact the displaced desire of man reproduced in her in a perverted form. The desire for exhibitionism is produced in women through clever capitalist strategies. Women in their various social roles as models, striptease artists, prostitutes, and even as mothers and wives show the tendency to obey the perverse desire that cultural conditioning has produced in them. The inner logic of the commodified culture makes the status of woman that of a "fetishized commodity and eroticized object" (Jones 166).

Consumer culture tends to release its surplus energy through erotic and riotous spectacles. Gender differences are celebrated or are transcended through the strategies that are implicit in fashions and styles. The violent and aggressive socialising that characterises postmodern culture shows the elements of the masquerade. People tend to crave for the erotic pleasure got from cross-dressing. It is an attempt to see the self and the other together. The urban modes of carnival show the unrestrained intermingling of bodies resulting in orgies which are the manifestations of libidinous excess. The extravagant costumes
promote unabashed voyeurism as well as unbridled exhibitionism. Sexually suggestive behaviour that takes place at the site of cultural interaction, is without doubt a carnivalesque activity. A "liberated vocabulary of gesture" (Castle 37) is exhibited here and is symptomatic of the permissiveness that is invading the realms of culture. In fact, it can be called an occasion during which mass culture shows its intrinsic qualities through collective foreplay. The event opens up infinite possibilities of sexual pairing: "[...] sexual activity, if not taking place at the event itself was in one sense or another stimulated by masquerading" (Castle 41). The individuals who have disguised their identity have in fact turned themselves into fetishes. This adds to their sexual attractiveness and tempts them to indulge in excesses. It is a scene of reversal that exposes the arbitrariness of sexual identities and the instability of gender-related meanings. Such a celebration marks an escape from the rigid bureaucratic structures of capitalist as well as socialist societies.

Culture has become phallocentric. It idealises and celebrates sex, gender and the body by "turning them into floating signifiers, abstract symbols, and arbitrary signs [...] in the prisonhouse of phallocentric language" (Finn 90). Excessive sexuality can be understood with reference to the free play of signs at the site of the female body. Such a fetishized and colonised body points towards a culture of chaos. In this situation, humanistic values are cast aside, and sexuality with its associated pleasure and potency is regarded as the only intrinsic value. It generates desire which exceeds the need and thus pushes sexuality beyond the normal cultural limits. In this context one should
refer to Bataille's notion of transgression as discussed by Susan Rubin Suleiman in "Pornography, Transgression and the Avant-Garde: Bataille's Story of the Eye."

The experience of transgression so defined is indissociable from the consciousness of the limit or prohibition it violates; indeed, it is precisely by and through its transgression that the force of a prohibition becomes fully realized. The characteristic feeling accompanying transgression is one of intense pleasure (at the exceeding of boundaries) and of intense anguish (at the full realization of the force of those boundaries). And nowhere is this contradictory heterogeneous combination of pleasure and anguish more acutely present than in the interior experience of eroticism, insofar as the latter involves the practice of sexual 'perversions' opposed to 'normal,' reproductive sexual activity. (Miller, The Poetics of Gender 120)

Sexuality here becomes one more instance of the wasteful self-indulgence of bourgeois culture.

_HM_ shows how sexual revolution brings about social and cultural change in the lives of the Kirks. They began their married life in an atmosphere of sexual timidity. However soon they were able to give up their conservative viewpoints, and move towards the realm of erotic thrills and intense passions. The great change in the marital life of the Kirks came with the extramarital affair that Barbara has with Howard's student Hamid. The conservative social ethic of total possession of the wife, first tempted him to commit violence upon his wife. But his knowledge of sociology helped him to control his primitive instincts:
And he did know a little Marx, a little Freud, and a little social history, he knew how, quantitative change suddenly becomes qualitative change and how reification occurs, and how sex is not simply genital interaction but an ultimate discharge of the libido, a psychic manifestation. (HM 26)

Thus the Kirks experience the working of the sexuality that serves as a prime motivating force behind social and cultural change. Howard considers this sexuality as emblematic of a new consciousness that brings about transformation according to the dynamics of the progress of history. The Kirks now begin to lead a life full of "high erotic satisfactions" (HM 26). They experiment with daring sexual strategies, like making love in public places like parks. They satisfy their craving for exhibitionism by running naked across the moors past Adel. Such excessive desires can be linked to the pervasive influence that capitalism has on the human psyche. The desire for liberation comes from excessive attachment to the fetish. All these tendencies have changed sex into an abstract principle in postmodern society. Desire as associated with the new sexuality, constantly provokes attempts to seek new modes of sexual pleasure, but it never finds satiety.

The multiplicity inherent in culture in the present condition, makes people crave for the same quality in sexual relationships. They enjoy extra-marital relationships inspite of the stress on their married life. The self-destructive nature of these relationships does not prevent them from continuing with them:
We recklessly, draw on our strength and sometimes in the violence of passion we squander considerable resources to no real purpose. Pleasure is so close to ruinous waste that we refer to the moment of climax as a 'little death.' Consequently anything that suggests erotic excess always implies disorder. (Bataille qtd. in Bristow 123)

Such excessive indulgence makes sex a site of panic and anxiety. The urban society offers Howard and Barbara a lot of opportunities for such relationships. Barbara enjoys a relationship with an actor Leon. She spends entire weekends with him just for the purpose of making love. Howard acts out his role as an understanding husband, by accompanying Barbara to the station when she is off to London for her weekend fling. He does not mind her relationship with many others. Flora, the social psychologist, is one woman with whom he is intimate. Flora, who is a true exponent of the permissive society, prefers unconditioned fornication to marriage. For Howard, this affair is also like a treatment that he is undergoing so as to invigorate him for his normal married life. Howard also has a relationship with Myra, the wife of his friend, Henry. Myra's married life is not a happy one, because Henry is a dull partner, especially in the matter of sex. Howard places himself in a position of masculine power and looks upon women as objects to be enjoyed as is clear from the way he tempts Miss Callendar, a newly arrived member of the faculty. He tries to break her old fashioned morality by talking about the permissive society. He uses a discourse of power to subject her to a sexual encounter. Howard's morality conditioned by the permissive culture makes him adopt a direct approach: "I like you physically," says Howard, 'and you're a serious challenge. You haven't been made over'" (HM 108). Thus his attitude is one that posits "the viewer as the
male-spectator-owner of the world viewed, and woman as the object of his gaze, his desire, his will, his power and his control" (Finn 57). Howard is seeking in "illicit relationships--pleasure so long forbidden by the cultural order" (Belsey 52). Hence he is prompted to attack the conventional morality of Miss Callendar. He invites Miss Callendar for a relationship that is essentially sado-masochistic. Miss Callendar resists Howard's attempt at degrading her "as a small, unmodernised, country property, ripe for development to fit contemporary tastes" (HM 109). Then Howard criticises her for rejecting all the new values that are related to sex and morality. Finally these values win, when in a weak moment Miss Callendar submits to Howard's desire.

How a permissive society has perverted sexuality is seen in the case of Howard's student Felicity Phee. She faces some problems, because her lesbian relationship with her girl friend is on the verge of a breakdown. When she consults Howard, he only encourages her perverted instincts by asking her to follow her own desire and not that of others. Thus Howard functions as a strong advocate of the permissive culture here. Meanwhile Felicity, who is tired of her lesbian relationship, wants to try other experiments, like having a heterosexual relationship with Howard. Howard satisfies her desire and later gives her the sociological explanation that he tried a sort of therapy on her. Howard actually exploits her, without taking into consideration the fact that she is his student. He wants only moments of physical pleasure, whereas Felicity longs for deeper emotional involvement. Finally Howard gets involved in a scandal, when one student Carmody accuses him of granting marks on the basis of sexual favours. Then Howard tries to justify his action by projecting his false morality.

The relationship between sex and family life, is the subject in which the social psychologist, Flora is interested. The study she makes of Henry's married life, leads her to the conclusion that it is monotonous because it is sexually dormant. According to Flora, extramarital affairs give greater strength to a marital
relationship. She believes that Henry can be made virile only through some kind of sex therapy. Flora's social psychology functions just as an apology for the excessive sexuality that is prevalent in society.

The party held by Howard can be taken as an example of the urban carnival. It exhibits the libidinous excess that characterises permissive culture. It is an occasion during which the body becomes a fetish and the mind a voyeur. Disguises, fashions and appearances are celebrated; and the bodies mingle more freely and vigorously. The people indulge in what can be called a sort of collective foreplay. The instincts for voyeurism as well as exhibitionism are allowed free play:

The German girl in the see-through blouse has started, in a corner, with a group of men around her to take it off. She lifts it upward, over her head, and it whirls in the air above then for a moment. [...] The German girl has joined the dancing, and is gyrating in front of him, her big breasts bouncing, a mobile Aryan sculpture of the New Woman. (HM 86)

The presence of the staff and cast of the nude touring production of "The Importance of Being Earnest" (HM 81) further emphasises this culture of nudity. A catholic priest attending the party regards it as symptomatic of the process by which the orgy is replacing the mass as the prime sacrament. The degeneration seen during the party is also a sort of liberation. Thus Howard's party shows a picture of "man free, free of economic timidity, sexual fear, prescriptive social norms, man cocky with the goodness of his own being" (HM 87). Sexuality crosses all social and cultural barriers, and inevitably implodes into excesses of all sorts.
But beneath this colourful spectacle of excess lie the dark corners of sexual crimes and perversions. In fact, they can be looked upon as manifestations of what feminists call "social and political structures that confine or coerce us into repressive or oppressive sexual positions" (Finn 52). We find Barbara at the railway station being exposed to "the magazine display: the bright photography of faces, clothes and breasts, the clean modern graphics" (HM 193). These magazines contain articles about "the vaginal versus the clitoral orgasm" (HM 193) and "fashion photographs in which, on some beach in Tunisia, nipples slip chancily into view out of loose silk, and female faces pout angrily, in the fashionable style, at the prodding camera" (HM 194). There are also magazines devoted exclusively to sex, like the one which Barbara browses through in the company of Leon. Thus we find even women enjoying pornography in the company of men. However there is no doubt that pornography is against women. It forms a concrete instance of how sex is distorted and manipulated in capitalist society. The fantasies it promotes, generate abnormal sexual practices. They provoke the male instinct to assault and mutilate the female body. Here we can perceive what Bataille posited as "the battle fought between prohibitive reality and the inflammatory death drive" (Bristow 122). The capitalist society regards pornography itself as something purgative. Pornography thrives by exaggerating the gender difference. It assumes the mode of fantasy, but strengthens, the hierarchy by portraying women as objects of male desire.

Howard not only takes an active role in the permissive culture, he also sociologically analyses it. His work "The Coming of the New Sex" (HM 37) is in fact inspired by the sexual revolution in his own life. The book makes a study of the new sexual mores in Britain. Sexual identities have been restructured and as a result the signifiers 'man' and 'woman' have acquired new uses.
In *RE*, it becomes clear that the decadent sexuality of the capitalist world is practised in the socialist world also. In an ideology dominated country like Slaka, sex is a sort of politics. Here sexuality is something that is used for tempting or trapping the political adversary. Prostitutes sponsored by the state are there to lure the visiting dignitary, especially one from a capitalist country. There is also a large network of spies to catch any act of sexual indiscretion. They focus their attention on perversions like homosexuality. Thus in Slaka, "sex is essentially a 'political' issue, for it is an effect of power and therefore, an inevitable site of political struggle" (Finn 53).

Petworth experiences this strange combination of sex and politics in Slaka. There are prostitutes even at the airport, willing to offer themselves for foreign money. Thus Marxist ideology does not prevent the citizens of Slaka from debasing themselves to become objects of sexual pleasure for the sake of capitalist money. Petworth sees at *Barr'ii Tzigane* girls who are dressed in an exotic manner so as to be sexually appealing. The folkloric singer behaves in a more sexually provocative manner by throwing her skirt over her frilly undergarments thus exploiting the eroticism attached to that which is hidden. The striptease performed in the dim cellar of a state night club uses the same strategy for temptation in a more elaborate manner:

He remembers [...] the disappointment when the seventh veil around the thin thighs is about to fall, and the lights cut, leaving only in some bleak and deceitful exchange, one single spotlight which illuminates no longer the girl, who has disappeared into total blackness, but the earthenware pot, which woobles, teeters, is steadied by a momentary hand, held upright, and the act ends. *(RE: 251)*

All these form instances of the exposure as well as the exploitation of the female body, for the entertainment of men. They are reduced to objects to
satisfy the voyeuristic fantasies of men. Thus socialist Slaka shows the presence of the capitalist scheme of sexual exploitation that forces women "into socio-sexual relationships that are intrinsically sado-masochistic" (Finn 51). The female body is decorated and thereby falsified to give pleasure to the male gaze. The striptease shows the most severe display and debasement of the female body:

Striptease — at least Parisian striptease is based on a contradiction. Woman is desexualized—at the very moment when she is stripped naked [...].

It is only the time taken in shedding clothes which makes voyeurs of the public; but here, as in any mystifying spectacle, the decor, the props and the stereotypes intervene to contradict the initially provocative intention and eventually bury it in insignificance.

(Barthes 91)

The opera portrayed in the novel conveys images of sexual disguise in a landscape that shows an excess of desire. It is a landscape that can be understood only with regard to Baudrillard's concept of seduction: "'A universe that can no longer be interpreted in terms of psychic or psychological relations, nor those of repression and the unconscious, but must be interpreted in the terms of play, challenges, duels, the strategy of appearances — that is, the terms of seduction' " (qtd. in Bristow 141). In the opera, the males disguise as females and vice versa, for the purposes of deceit. This exchange of sexual identities creates confusion and pleasure at the same time as far as the viewer's sensibility is concerned. The costumes worn by the actors are exotic, and some even give the appearance of animals. They subvert the cultural as well as sexual codes
implicit in the dress worn by a person. All aspects of the opera show that its motive is to reduce the spectator by presenting a plot consisting of sexual intrigue.

Petworth is intimidated by the excessive sexuality of the women he meets in Slaka. Princip takes pleasure in exhibiting her own body before Petworth. She tempts him to look closely at her body. Her behaviour reflects the capitalist degradation of the female body to a commodity which serves as a space for the circulation of signs. She further glorifies her body as something universal: "You don't have a sad wife, you have me only, no other, all the bodies are my body, do you feel it happen, I do, you do, I know you do, yes, yes!" (RE 222). Her explanation for this exhibitionism and celebration of the body is that one should not be bound by the fetishism of commodities. She is actually freeing herself from the Freudian fetish which implies "the displacement of erotic desire on to some non-sexual part of the human body [. . .] or inanimate object (for example, clothing)" (Lodge, Afier Bakhtin 140). She also shows the aggressive desire to possess Petworth's body which she feels contains a present for her. She uses the strategies of magical realism to give Petworth the impression that he is in a sexual fantasy which shows her as a princess enchanting him.

Budgie is another woman with a great sexual appetite. She carries within herself the values of the western capitalist world and hence finds her sexuality repressed by the strictures placed by the ideologically structured society of Slaka. She finds the act of lovemaking difficult in Slaka because of the extensive network of spies that is always observing her. She is always spied upon since she is the wife of a diplomat from a capitalist country. The continuous experience of being spied upon makes her react in a complex way: "'The voyeur in me responds, the hungry struggling soul resists'" (RE 159). Thus in
her consciousness she experiences the sado-masochistic pleasure of the male spectator along with the pain of the female whose body is falsified and objectified. Her sexual frustration in Slaka forces her to make suggestive gestures to Petworth as soon as she gets a moment of privacy with him. The tendency for exhibitionism is there in her as seen in her wish to appear before Petworth in a red lingerie. For the same reason, she invites him to go to the lakes so as to practise nudism and also to a club where she can strip him. But the restrictions of Slaka makes it difficult to satisfy desires that characterise capitalist society. However she also has the critical mentality to make an ironic comment upon the new liberated sexuality:

I’m afraid we live in an age of excessive sexual confession. There are people nowadays who only go to bed with you to tell you long stories about all the other people they’ve had, who, and when, and how often, where and why and which way up. (RI: 173)

Lubijova, Petworth’s guide shows an ideologically oriented view even in the matter of sex. She looks upon the capitalist society as one obsessed with sex especially in its perverted forms, and her attitude towards the visitors from the capitalist countries is coloured by this view. She regards with suspicion Petworth’s relationship with Budgie and Princip. She considers Budgie as wild and uncivilized, and disapproves of her public flirting. She also criticises the sexual relationships of the members of her own society like Princip. In a way, she deconstructs the image of the radical, liberated woman writer that Princip projects to the outside world. Lubijova’s criticism reveals
Princip as a weak woman who submits her body before men who wield power, like Rum. There is the further degradation that Rum is a person who cannot satisfy her sexually. Lubijova in spite of her critical account of the sexuality of others, harbours a secret desire for Petworth. She also behaves in a sexually suggestive way to strangers during a party inside the cockpit of a plane. She represents the double standards adopted by socialist countries like Slaka, in the matter of sex.

Professor Vlic, a prominent academic of Slaka, is another character who offers a socialist criticism of the decadent sexuality of the capitalist west. He identifies western sexuality with high divorce rates, sex shops, topless models, and its most powerful sex symbol, the Playboy magazine. The Playboy magazine functions as a cultural code for beauty. It centres round a system that constitutes "women as objects available for the use and/or contemplation of a subject that is male" (Finn 36). The production machine of western capitalism projects the seductive images of women to promote consumerism. Such depiction of women has become a cultural practice, which shows the operation of the power of the male.

Criminale's personal life shows the presence of several women who occupy the position of being either his wife or his mistress. However no woman really satisfies him and he is always on the search for more. He has a strong awareness of the relationship between sex and power: "'The erotic for me has always something to do with power. A woman to please me must always have a certain grip on power'" (DC 235). Thus he exploits women all the more by seeking power in addition to pleasure, from them. In his case, we see sex as a source of personal identity and power. Criminale posits
sexuality itself as an excess when he says: "It is what we confuse ourselves with on the way to something better. It misdirects us and empties us. It is our unfortunate necessity, our incontinence, our error, our folly" (DC 235). Here Crinimale's words reflect Bataille's notion about the wastefulness implicit in sexuality: "The most intense pleasures [...] arise from this ruinous squandering of resources, as they expend themselves in symbolic death" (Bristow 123). He praises the erotic and upholds desire in spite of his awareness of its wastefulness. He is in favour of the cult of the celebration of the body. For Crinimale, the body "was pure presence, flesh as flesh. The erotic self was a place of plenitude, the naked being was a place beyond culture or disguise" (DC 241). Thus Crinimale justifies the tendency for exhibitionism prevalent in postmodern culture: "These forms of representation constitute the active subject as male and as an essentially spectator subject, and his sexual pleasure is an essentially voyeuristic, narcissistic and fetishistic pleasure" (Finn 57). In fact these images confer on to him the status of being the producer, the owner and the spectator; and thus place him in a male power site. They imply the domination of the male over the female. The female is debased because her image becomes more important than her. In other words, this condition shows the signifier becoming more important than the signified. Thus in the postmodern world a sexually active lifestyle becomes a characteristic of celebrities like writers and philosophers. The reference to the many mistresses of the magical realist writer Borges further exemplifies this fact.

In DC also there are women obsessed with sex. Ros, the assistant producer of a television programme, shows the excessive sexuality of a woman occupying
a position of power. In her relationship with Jay, she occupies the dominating position. Thus there is a reversal of the sexual hierarchy here as can be understood from Jay's condition:

Luckily, I had Ros's offer of bed and board—through the board was, it became very apparent, completely dependent on the bed. Each night Ros would claim her rental in the great gymnasium of her bedroom, where her experiments in revisionist gender-pairing and new theories of orgasm proved remarkably demanding. Ros was one of those people who believe that the outer parameters of sex have still not been entirely discovered yet. (I.C. 23)

The desire for shopping and the desire for sex exist on the same plane as far as Ildiko is concerned. She has succumbed to the clever strategies that capitalism uses to "solicit female desire by constructing needs where none formerly existed" (Jones 168). This constant commodification of the mind aggravates her sexual urges. She takes perverse pleasure in dressing as well as undressing before Jay. She is not merely the publisher but is also the lover of Criminale. While maintaining a relationship with Jay, she wishes to resume the one she had with Criminale. In fact her visit to the Villa Barolo is prompted by her jealousy which is aroused by the fact that Criminale is involved in affairs with so many other women.

The commodified sexuality of the postmodern world can be discerned in Miss Belli and Miss Uccello, the assistants of Professor Monza. Their sexuality is artificial because it is meant for specific purposes. Here they function in the background providing erotic pleasures for those who attend the Congress. The "Eurobimbos" (I.C. 281) at the Restaurant La Rochette in Brussels serve a similar purpose, which is that of providing sexual entertainment to the "Eurosaxte" (I.C. 281).
In fact, these women have been dehumanised to satisfy the excessive sexual demands of capitalist society. The voyeuristic tendencies of the male as acting through the power structure, make the female behave in a way that satisfies these tendencies. The female becomes deprived of the qualities that can be called feminine and instead becomes like the image envisioned in the fantasy of the male: "For the woman he observes is the objectification of his idea, his desire. She is, after all, Man-made: not a real woman at all but the product of masculine imagination and masculine power" (Finn 57).

Sexuality finds open expression in social gatherings, which often degenerate to orgies. 'The Conference on Erotics in Postmodern Photography' becomes an instance of this. The delegates, who come to attend the conference, behave in a manner that show their wild sexual urges: "They stood close to each other, pawing and fussing and fluttering and flapping. They chatted, and embraced and laughed and shouted; they kissed and gasped and flirted and posed" (UC 226). Some exhibit their body, whereas others hide their identity. The sexual code related to cross-dressing is subverted as can be seen in the instances of men dressed as women and vice versa. The strategy of cross-dressing creates a new order of signification and opens the possibilities of new types of sexual relationships. Thus the scene resembles a masquerade with its erotic associations. The people exhibit gestures that exceed the limits of culturally approved social behaviour. Their bodies intermingle in a manner that gives them maximum physical contact. When identity is obscured, there is greater freedom for sexual intimacy. It is "a debauched world of fashion" (Castle 119) that is created here. Its vibrant sexuality is an ecstatic expression of the inner dynamics of postmodern culture. The waste as well as the excess that characterises this culture is released through it. This is inevitable in the case of a culture that rests on "the general problematizing of the body and its sexuality" (Hutcheon, The Politics 142).
The condition of art, literature, and architecture in the commodified society is examined in the following chapter. The aim of this study is to bring out the extent of the influence of the culture of excess in these realms. It thereby concentrates on the new aesthetic sensibility that has evolved as a result of this influence.