



**HAL**  
open science

# Narrative Democracy in Jonathan Coe's and Hanif Kureishi's Novels: to Share or not to Share?

Imad Zrari

► **To cite this version:**

Imad Zrari. Narrative Democracy in Jonathan Coe's and Hanif Kureishi's Novels: to Share or not to Share?. *Études britanniques contemporaines - Revue de la Société d'études anglaises contemporaines*, 2019, 57, 10.4000/ebc.7837. hal-04890462

**HAL Id: hal-04890462**

**<https://univ-tlse2.hal.science/hal-04890462v1>**

Submitted on 16 Jan 2025

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

## **Narrative Democracy in Jonathan Coe's and Hanif Kureishi's Novels: to Share or not to Share?**

Imad Zrari

University Toulouse Jean Jaurès (CAS – École doctorale ALLPH@)

When working on the novels by Jonathan Coe and Hanif Kureishi, democracy appears to be a complex notion, questioning itself, narratives and other themes. The notion of democracy is not reduced to a mere political or societal issue, it goes a step further by penetrating and questioning fiction and narratives.

In fact, democracy has been transferred from a public space to a more intimate space such as the novel. A plethora of questions emerge from this movement that blurs the text, shakes its reader and its author in his quest to make fiction the locus of democracy. The authors' determinations to reconcile high and popular cultures – which might be put into perspective – are an obvious manifestation of this will to democratise.

From a diegetic point of view, narration and its control may have become shared between the reader and the narrator. I would like to show that not only observers but also confidants, the readers seem to have become actors of the creation. Synonymous with a degree of narrative sharing and control, narration may have become a breeding ground and catalyst for dealing with democracy.

From a political point of view, Coe and Kureishi share a form of detachment and disengagement, which gives the readers the power to interpret. Analyzing the notions of oscillation and political contradiction, metamodern characteristics, my thesis concurs with Nelly Wolf's about the democratic role attributed to misunderstanding and interpretation.

However, the imbrication of politics or narratives can appear dangerous since it may fall under the yoke of populism and public performance. Fiction can nurture a pretense of democracy when it turns democracy into political storytelling in the style of Boris Johnson and Donald Trump, two characters broached by Coe.

From a theoretical point of view, narrative democracy is also part of a critical debate on postmodernism. Democracy actually implies an idea of hope, sincerity, and

humanity, values that postmodernism does not dwell on. The fictions of Coe and Kureishi seem to embody a need for democracy and justice by representing the invisible for instance. This debate not only questions the generic labelling of these authors but also heralds a new artistic epoch. The question flowing from this perspective is to what extent narrative democracy heralds a new artistic era. A post-democracy? That is to say a new way and frame to govern and share power where humanity has signified its comeback. To explore the democratic streaks we find in Coe's and Kureishi's novels, I first look at the ways in which the contemporary novel has become a new sexualised locus of democracy, a *sexual parliament*, where Coe and Kureishi give the floor to the sexually invisible and where the quests for gender and sex identity have become central points in their fictions. In the second section, I suggest that narratives may have achieved an experience of democracy through the diegesis of sharing and the sharing of diegesis. This democratic experience is reinforced by the motif of dilemma, that is to say the struggle between individual and collective choices, and the recurrent motif of oscillation, a 'metamodern' feature, making the narratives more participative. However, this diegetic oscillation or participative narrative that gives the reader the power to choose and to become a dynamic actor might jeopardise democracy and present challenges to the definition of political literature and democracy. This new way of writing and thinking politics seems to foster un-democracy and to reveal the inability of politics to transform the real.

### **The Contemporary Novel: a New Sexualised Locus of Democracy**

Coe and Kureishi depict people who usually represent the sexual margins of society. This representation of people who have been sexually invisible offers a democratic reading of British society. In many novels, the narrator intends to portray a *sexual parliament of the invisible*. Gender identity through homosexuality, bisexuality and transgender, is a recurrent motif where both artists give the floor to the ones that society rejects, excludes and condemns. There is a myriad of homosexuals whose gender and sexual identity is at the heart of the plot. Their representation is most of the time considered simpler and smoother. This representation is also present in Kureishi's fiction and starts at the very beginning of *The Buddha of Suburbia* when Karim performs oral sex with his future stepbrother Charlie Kay. As for heterosexuality, it is seen negatively. In *What a Carve Up!*, it is

seen as contentious and a source of misunderstanding.

Coe's and Kureishi's views on sexuality are modernized, challenged and debunk stereotypes. In *The Black Album*, Deedee Osbourne makes Shahid his doll by dressing him like a woman. In this scene of cross-dressing, as in other ones coping with homosexuality and transgender, Kureishi shows how gender stereotypes can be reversed, how they can be stupid and fragile. By representing the sexual invisible and putting them to the fore, Coe and Kureishi deconstruct heterocentricism. However, this growing attention towards the sexual invisible raises an issue, itself shared between two main arguments: an optimistic vision on the one hand, in saying that the invisible can be represented thanks to narratives but a pessimistic one on the other hand arguing that there would be only narratives as a means of representation.

Still to suggest that sexuality seems to be the common thread of this democratisation, low culture has gained ground by the growing presence of sex and pornography. Indeed, shocking is one of Kureishi's favourite activity and it is not surprising that he has been referred to as a pornographer. Kureishi, who wrote pornography, considers 'writing about sex and drugs a specialty' (Kaleta 117). His novels actually include permissive sex, drug use, raves, masturbations, sextoys, voyeurism, orgies... *The Buddha of Suburbia* actually focuses on Karim's sexual experiments and exploits. The protagonist has sex with Helen, Helen's dog, Charlie, Jamila, Eleanor, and has a threesome with Pyke and his wife Marlene.

*The Buddha of Suburbia* or *The Black Album* could be compared to *Portnoy's Complaint* by Philip Roth. Considered as pornographic, it deals with the same subjects. The main protagonist Alexander Portnoy resembles Karim and Shahid. The passage where Shahid has sex with his teacher is characteristic of this growing use of pornographic elements in Kureishi's fiction. Shahid is sexually objectified by Deedee who turns 'herself into pornography' to repeat Kureishi's words. Pornography is also emphasised by the alternating of long shots and close-ups as in porn movies.

However, it would be simplistic to reduce sexual scenes to mere pornography or voyeurism. They have a role in the plot. In *The Terrible Privacy of Maxwell Sim*, the scene when Alison discovers Max's father masturbating on a picture of her is not a scene of silly masturbation but a scene tinged with humour that will shape Max's life (Coe 2011, 181):

The door was ajar. I silently pushed it further open and looked inside. It was Mr Sim, and I cannot only imagine that he must have had a heavy Sunday lunch a couple of hours earlier – perhaps washed down with some red wine – because I cannot believe that he meant to fall asleep in the attitude in which I found him. He was lying on his side, facing the door. His trousers and pants were pulled halfway down his legs and in his right hand he held a crumpled tissue. His penis lay wrinkled and flaccid between his legs, and from its purple tip a little strand of semen dribbled down onto the pale-blue bedspread. Purple and pale blue – Aston Villa colours: that was the first silly thought that came into my head. Weird how the mind works. The only other thing I could see on the bedspread was a photograph: a glossy colour print of the picture he had taken on the small shingle beach next to Coniston Water. I noticed that he had folded it neatly and carefully in half, so that the figure of Chris was hidden and the only person you could see was me, all wet and cold in my skimpy orange bikini. (Coe 181)

This scene has a narrative plot since it will have a definite impact on Alison's relationship with Max, making his love for her impossible and reinforcing the motif of missed opportunities once again, so dear to Coe and Kureishi:

All I know is, after I had seen his father watching me, and lusting after me, all week, after I realized what his reasons were for taking this photograph – I could not have got myself involved with Max, however much I liked him. (Coe 182).

This scene also contributes to misleading the narratee; the person that Mr Sim lusts after is not Alison but we will eventually learn, in a sort of epiphany, that it is Christopher, Alison's brother and Max's friend.

Thus, pornographic or sexual scenes and elements are not here to stimulate the reader's libido but to lend for psychoanalytic analyses, to reverse gender stereotypes or to show that power can be a socio-sexual dynamic between characters.

Coe and Kureishi appear to take some distance from the characteristics of postmodernism that is to say irony, fragmentation and scepticism and tend to swerve towards metamodern features such as sincerity and humanity to cite Thomas Vermeulen and Robin Van den Akker in *Notes on Metamodernism*. As David Stravis writes in 'The Anxieties of the Present', the twenty-first century has seen artists that

have attempted ‘to overcome the uncertainties of the human condition by reaching out for a renewed period of sincerity, a desire to formulate some kind of grip on reality, one which was challenged during postmodernism’ (Stravis 350). Irony which may or may not be accessible to all, might pose a danger for the writer who uses it, because it is possible that the reader does not note it and takes the text at face value, thereby leading to misinterpretations and confusing the ironist with the ones he or she lampoons. Therefore, irony seems no longer to play a major role and has proved to be disconnected from the people because of its complexity and the gap it can create. This postmodern trait alongside others such as ‘wilfully tricky plots, buried illusions, and uncompromising opacity’ (Rebein 221) has resulted in ‘a strong resurgence in the presentation, or rejuvenation, of selfhood and identity, and a concomitant rejection of the postmodern idea of the ‘Death of the Subject’’ (Stravis 352). As Patricia Waugh also puts forward, there is ‘a renewed interest in retrieving the self’ (Waugh 2013, 31) hence the new trend in the quest for gender and sex identity (Stavris 352). This reassertion of selfhood is indeed broached in Coe’s and Kureishi’s novels where themes like ‘estrangement’, ‘mental disturbance and depression’ (Waugh 31), loneliness, gender issues are explored so as to embrace reality.

Indeed, many characters in Coe’s and Kureishi’s novels question life and sex identity. In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Karim is in search of his sexual identity and navigates through life looking for answers. The quest for gender identity has become the driver of the plot in many novels such as in *The Terrible Privacy of Maxwell Sim* or *The House of Sleep* where the novel deals with the progressive gender transition of Robert who no longer accepts his masculinity: ‘How he loathed and despised this preposterous organ, with its infinitely predictable patterns of behaviour, its changeless, robotic responses to an over-familiar range of visual stimuli’ (Coe 1997, 153). The question of sexuality is a human question, one of existence that is at the core of many novels and makes the novels of Coe and Kureishi swerve towards the lad-lit genre. A genre where the main protagonist is most of the time an urban man exposing his emotions and his problems such as loneliness and sexual frustration.

In short, the contemporary novel has been a new sexualised locus of democracy where Coe and Kureishi give the floor to the sexually invisible. Their novels have become a sexual parliament where the authors include the excluded, where low culture overthrows high culture and where the quest for gender and sex identity have become major concerns. Truth and meaning, seminal goals of this quest, seem to have

buried irony, henceforth seen as disconnected from reality and the people. Indeed, the novel lays itself bare and represents a paragon of sharing. However, this sharing is not only intimate but may also be narrative.

### **The Diegesis of Sharing and Sharing the Diegesis: a Narrative Experience of Democracy**

In fact, sharing also pertains to narratives and to do so Coe and Kureishi oscillate between different points of view, tones and languages so as to increase the chances for readers to see themselves in fiction. These layers of narrative voices, tones and languages break the traditional passivity of readers and give them power to choose or to combine different versions of a story. Shared with the reader, fiction becomes a narrative experience where oscillation is the driving force and the diegetic dynamic replacing ‘the traditional postmodern pastiche and parataxis’ (Vermeulen, Van den Akker, 314, 316). This oscillation echoes Metaxy, developed by Plato’s *Symposium* where Diotima shows Socrates how storytelling, through multiple narrators, can alter perception. Indeed, narratives oscillate between different narrators just like Metaxy, ‘being simultaneously here, there, and nowhere’ (Vermeulen, Van den Akker, 325). Narration seems to come under this dynamic since it oscillates between different narrators becoming ‘a territory without boundaries, a position without parameters’ so as to include the most (Vermeulen, Van den Akker, 325). This is the case in *The Terrible Privacy of Maxwell Sim* where we have the story told by different narrators: Alison Byrne, Max, his wife, his father (Coe 2011, 171). *The Buddha of Suburbia* starts with Karim’s point of view but also provides the reader with an objective view of events. Karim questions what he sees and contradicts himself.

The use of different tones such as the crude and the vulgar questions what literature can accept and echoes Alasdair Gray’s contention that the novel, by avoiding some languages, could exclude the people who use them. The first paragraphs of the *The Buddha of Suburbia* alternate between different tones. In *The Black Album*, Shahid and Deedee alternate between the romantic and the crude. Like Coe, Kureishi also includes tragic-comic situations as when Changez kills his father-in-law with a dildo. The alternation of micro and macro-narratives also contribute to making fiction more accessible for the reader to choose the narrative that matters most for him. As in *The Terrible Privacy of Maxwell Sim*, *What a Carve up!* or *Number 11*,

Coe's novels are replete with this alternating of national and intimate features.

As Wolf suggests in *Le Roman de la démocratie*, narratives can offer a fictive experience of democracy, a stance that concurs with Coe's and Kureishi's representation of the reader's capacities. Being offered different layers of narratives, the reader is left with a choice, a democratic experience. He can choose between different opinions, different narrative techniques and be directed to their interchangeability. Everything is presented as possible and true so that the reader has to make use of his own understanding. The text becomes interactive, participative and exists thanks to its interpretation.

Moreover, Coe and Kureishi seem to provide unfinished ends to their stories that provide similar effects. The ends are neither sad nor happy and offer no political or social resolution. They do not provide answers insofar as they seem to stop and not to end. Jacques Rancière already paved the way for this reflection when he analysed Flaubert's absence of any literary message (Rancière 2000, 16). When *Madame Bovary* or *L'Education sentimentale* were published, these novels were perceived as 'democracy in literature', albeit Flaubert's political conformism and aristocratic stand. The refusal to convey any message in literature was seen as a testimony of democracy because Flaubert aimed at depicting and not moralising.

Indeed, Kureishi offers no answers to terrorism, fundamentalism, drug issues, poverty, and marriage in his novels. It is up to the reader to find a conclusion, another form of sharing and participative fiction. Asserting an answer would manipulate fiction. At the end of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, there are no answers to Karim's questions and in *The Black Album*, the lovers agree to stay together knowing that this choice is temporary. As Kenneth C. Kaleta writes 'societies continue not to answer the questions but merely to change the questions' (Kaleta 84).

Coe also uses this process by stopping and not resolving the ends of his novels, which leaves the reader perplexed. A process reinforced by the motif of interruption when characters are stopped from seeing the end of a movie; an interruption that haunts them all their lives in *What a Carve Up!* and *Number 11*. Both authors leave a situation open to provoke questions and to make the end appear democratic and shared with the reader.

The dilemmatic characterisation of protagonists is another technique to test the reader and make the novel an interactive medium. In many of Kureishi's novels contrary to Coe's, characters are contradictory and their characterisation becomes



blurred. The character that embodies the best the motif of dilemma is the immigrant who struggles between the dream of assimilation and cultural heritage. This stance starts from the very first page of *The Buddha of Suburbia* when Karim introduces himself: ‘a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories’ (Kureishi 1990, 1). The motif of dilemma also pertains to a conflict between the flesh and the soul, the burden of old age and youth, sexual desires versus intellectual ones. Adam, the main protagonist in *The Body*, affirms that his life revolves around dilemmas at the very beginning of the novel: ‘If you asked me, I would probably say that my problems are myself, my life is my dilemmas. I’d better enjoy them.’ (Kureishi 5). In this novel focusing on the body/mind dichotomy, Adam, a sexagenarian writer wanting to become young again and live out his dreams, has his brain transplanted into a young’s man body who is well-built, ‘lightly toasted, with a fine, thick penis with heavy balls’ (Kureishi 25). After a short period of excitement and self-indulgence, his journey ends up as a nightmare of loneliness, drugs, emotionless sex and odd jobs. He increasingly feels as a prisoner of his new body, bitterly regrets his old body and misses giving people the pleasure of knowing about him, that is to say his inner-self. In *Intimacy*, the main protagonist Jay also faces a dilemma and is torn between individual and collective choices. He actually wants to leave his wife and two daughters and spends twenty-four hours reflecting on marriage, social conventions and love. The novella through flashbacks and inner thoughts oscillates between reason, to wit the family seen as a hypocritical institution, and the desire for love, passion and sex. Jay eventually asserts that ‘that there are some fucks for which a person would have their partner and children drown in a freezing sea’ (91) and a few pages further on, he decides to leave his family.

As Wolf in *Le Roman de la démocratie* and Rancière in *Le Spectateur émancipé* put forward, the modern novel has achieved a degree of democratisation of experience (Rancière 2008, 72). This democratic experience that Wolf mainly analyses as narrative is reinforced by the motif of dilemma, by the struggle between individual and collective choices. As a matter of fact, the reader navigates between different characters that are antagonistic, another feature of metamodernism. Thereby, Coe’s and Kureishi’s novels have given the narratee star billing. Narratives and their reception have been shared with the reader who has been given more power to choose the tone, the point of view, the language, the end and the characterization of protagonists thanks to the recurrent motif of oscillation. However, this oscillation that

gives the reader the power to choose and to become a dynamic actor may show downward slides to democracy and present challenges to the definition of political literature and democracy.

### **The Narrative of Un-Democracy and the Inability to Transform the Real**

It seems that to foster democracy, avoiding politics and being discrete (Zaoui 30, 119) would be the alternatives to give the narratee space. Indeed, Pierre Zaoui advocates discretion as a means to disappear so as to give way to the Other. Coe and Kureishi are two authors who, from the beginning of the century, have turned their back to political issues. Indeed, Coe has swerved to a bowdlerised satire even a-political novel and Kureishi maintains that his main goal is to tell stories and avoid political commitment. My contention is that Coe's and Kureishi's fictions definitely hinge on indeterminacy, when readers are expected to make their own decisions about the text's meaning. As aforementioned, Coe's and Kureishi's novels do not provide full closure. The meaning of the texts remains open to interpretation. In indeterminacy, the gap is never filled or closed; this is the task of the readers to fill it, to 'concretize the text' to quote Brian McHale (McHale 31). In other words by writing in an a-political way, the reader is made to think politics and to avoid consensus.

After this new way of thinking politics, what both authors' novels have to face is their counter-effective use of humour that has proved to foster un-democracy. Humour has been a strategy to tackle hard issues according to Kureishi (Kaleta 19). This is the same idea with Coe who notes that laughter, recalling his childhood, is 'something that drew people together...something shared' (Coe 2013, 3422).

Indeed, humor invites us to question the role and the consequences of laughter itself. In 2013, Coe determined 'a growing disillusionment with the role played by laughter in the national political discourse' (Coe 2013, 1586). Coe even argues that 'laughter is just ineffectual as a form of protest but...it actually replaces protest' and turned into a 'substitute for thought' (Coe 2013, 3587). In *Number 11*, Coe examines the efficacy and the purposes of humor when it intends to expose society's evils. Humour seems to have encroached on political life as 'every kind of public discussion has to have a veneer of comedy. Politics especially' (Coe 2011, 190). Coe gives the example of Boris Johnson to illustrate political comedy and explores the attitude and responsibility of public audience. In fact, public performance has been a weapon for politicians in avoiding politics. Johnson is one of the best instances of this trend with

his repartee and his escapades. The politician has built his career by creating a grotesque character of himself, the image of 'a self-mocking buffoon' (Coe 2013, 3582). The narrativisation and dramatisation of politics, a phenomenon underlined in *Number 11* and in Coe's article 'Will satire save us in the age of Trump', seems to be a great peril to democracy. Coe questions the difficulty keeping up with the reality for a satirist since 'the boundaries between reality and caricature have become so thoroughly blurred'.

Laurent Mellet, in his article 'From laughing along to mislaughing oneself away and coming out in Jonathan Coe's fiction' questions the role of laughter but also Coe's sense of humour in order to account for the author's satirical distance. Mellet argues that the failure of a satirical form of laughter and Coe's allegiance to comedy have led the author to spurn ironic distance and swerve towards a sweeter form of satire. This could explain *Number 11*'s satirical tone and its more humanist content. In his article on *Expo 58*, Jean-Michel Ganteau demonstrates that Coe's novel has become 'a comic novel that is not so comic, a satire that is not quite a satire, and a comedy that is full of *gravitas*' (Ganteau 20). Mellet and Ganteau put forward the idea that Coe has distanced himself from the traditional satire to a more 'grave comedy', endowed with emotion. I would add that the main reason of this swerve is because irony has created a gap between readers and the message delivered by satire. This antagonistic mixture of gravity and comedy is representative of metamodernism and responds to a growing desire to include, to reconcile and to reconstruct what has fallen apart in the postmodern era. This swerve seems to represent a transition in twenty-first century literature, one that has emerged from a postmodern one revolving around deconstruction towards one that intends to yearn for answers and to embody a modernist quest for meaning, distancing itself from the 'defeatist attitude of postmodernism' (Stravis, Rudrum 306). The terminology of this literary transition, to wit 'metamodern', may be discussed but it is clear that it has shaken the parameters and calibration of postmodernism.

To conclude, sharing literature may appear as a collective need and plaster in a context of distrust and demise of politics and seems to have become a substitute for political action. A political action that has become a show, a narrative order to make us forget the growing powerlessness of politics to transform the real. This pessimistic dimension may explain the return of the human in literature, a place to find

representation. As Karim who only becomes visible when he performs, let's hope that the invisible should not substitute narratives to the real. Indeed, one should not come down to the novel as the only means of representation.

Contrary to Wolf in her article 'Le roman comme démocratie', who asserts that the novel developed and appeared by dealing with ordinary lives, I would affirm that now it is quite the contrary. Extra-ordinary lives and sexual marginality have become priorities thus breaking the hierarchy of representation and suggesting a return of realism and a withdrawal of moralisation. It should also be stressed that the role of narratives has become seminal in this democratisation; the narratee has enlarged his presence and his power. Indeed, literature has become interactive and participative, as democracy should be.

Democracy is therefore struggling and taking refuge in a more intimate space hence a return for the human, and the epitome of this humanity is the quest for sex and gender identity. This democratization of the novel entails the arrival of new subjects, new elements in fiction and a new role for the reader whose growing place can be questioned. In fact, the author has shared a lot with the reader, in the name of democracy, so that literature appears to have become permissive.

Reading Coe's and Kureishi's novels, the literary form and content may perform the ambiguities of democracy, and this through the motif of sharing and oscillation. The metamodern oscillation via this negotiation of opposite poles may be a way to include and not exclude; the essence of narrative democracy. These motifs are part of a theoretical debate: the transition from a postmodern literature, that is to say irony and narrative complexity, to a metamodern one that heralds a new era where meaning and humanity shall prevail.

## Works Cited

- COE, Jonathan, *What a Carve Up!*, London: Viking, 1994.
- COE, Jonathan, *The House of Sleep*, London: Viking, 1997.
- COE, Jonathan, *The Rotters' Club*, London: Viking, 2001.
- COE, Jonathan, *The Rain Before It Falls*, London: Viking, 2007.
- COE, Jonathan, *The Terrible Privacy of Maxwell Sim*, London: Penguin, 2010.
- COE, Jonathan, *Expo 58*, London: Penguin, 2013.
- COE, Jonathan, *Number 11*, London: Penguin, 2015.
- COE, Jonathan, *Middle England*, London: Penguin, 2018.
- COE, Jonathan, *Marginal Notes, Doubtful Statements: Non-Fiction. 1990-2013*, Kindle ed., London: Penguin, 2013.
- COE, Jonathan, 'Will satire save us in the age of Trump?', *The Guardian* 6 January 2017.
- GANTEAU, Jean-Michel, 'Innocent Abroad: Jonathan Coe's *Expo 58* and the Comedy of Forgiveness', *Focus on the Comic Turn in Contemporary British Fiction*, ed. Barbara PUSCHMANN-NALENZ, *Anglistik* 27.1. March 2016.
- KALETA, Kenneth C., *Hanif Kureishi. Postcolonial Storyteller*, Austin: Texas UP, 1998.
- KUREISHI, Hanif, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, London: Faber and Faber, 1990.
- KUREISHI, Hanif, *The Black Album*, London: Faber and Faber, 1995.
- KUREISHI, Hanif, *Intimacy*, London: Faber and Faber, 1998.
- KUREISHI, Hanif, *The Body*, London: Faber and Faber, 2003.
- KUREISHI, Hanif, *Something to Tell You*, London: Faber and Faber, 2008.
- MCHALE, Brian, *Postmodernist Fiction*, London and New York: Routledge, 2004.
- MELLET, Laurent, "[Laughter] was something that drew people together. It was something shared'. ('The Paradox of Satire [I]'): from laughing along to mislaughing oneself away and coming out in Jonathan Coe's fiction." *Etudes Britanniques Contemporaines*, October 2015.
- RANCIERE, Jacques, 'Le partage du sensible', *Multitudes*, Revue politique, artistique, philosophique.
- <http://www.multitudes.net/le-partage-du-sensible/>
- RANCIERE, Jacques, *Le Partage du sensible. Esthétique et politique*, Paris: La Fabrique, 2000.
- RANCIERE, Jacques, *Le Spectateur émancipé*, Paris: La Fabrique, 2007.

REBEIN, Robert, 'Turncoat: Why Jonathan Franzen Finally Said "No" to Po-Mo' in Neil Brooks and Josh Toth (Eds), *The Mourning After: Attending the Wake of Postmodernism*, New York: Rodolphi, 2007.

ROTH, Philip, *Portnoy's Complaint*, New York: Random House, 1969.

RUDRUM, David, STRAVIS, Nicholas, *Supplanting the Postmodern. An Anthology on the Arts and Culture of the Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2015.

TURNER, Luke, *The Metamodernist Manifesto*, 2011.

<http://www.metamodernism.org/>

WAUGH, Patricia, 'The Naturalistic Turn, the Syndrome, and the Rise of the Neo-Phenomenological Novel', in T.J. Lustig and James Peacock (Eds), *Diseases and Disorders in Contemporary Fiction: The Syndrome Syndrome*, New York: Routledge, 2013.

WOLF, Nelly, *Le Roman de la démocratie*, Saint-Denis : Vincennes PUF, 2003.

WOLF, Nelly, 'Le Roman comme démocratie', *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France*, Presses Universitaires de France, 343-352, 2005.

<https://www.cairn.info/revue-d-histoire-litteraire-de-la-WOLF-france-2005-2-page-343.html>

ZAOUI, Pierre, *La Discrétion. Ou l'art de disparaître*, Paris : Autrement, 2013.

---

<sup>i</sup> As a PhD Student, my research currently examines oscillation as the main characteristic of metamodernism, particularly among Armand van den Akker and Timotheus Vermeulen. These two academics term it metaxis and compare it as a pendulum swinging between modernism and postmodernism. Analyzing Jonathan Coe's and Hanif Kureishi's fictions, I have noticed that the aesthetics and politics of oscillation are major themes and chime with Van den Akker's et Vermeulen's research works. I'm mentioning one aspect of oscillation in this article, that it so say a diegetic one, but oscillation may take various forms and conveys different subjects that I'm exploring in my thesis: the oscillation of points of view, the oscillation of politics, the oscillation of genders and sexual identities, the oscillation between the Other and the Self, the oscillation of genres, the oscillation between a romantic and a raw writing, eventually the oscillation between a form of humanism and a certain disenchantment of politics and satire. In Kureishi's fiction, the motif of oscillation has

---

taken on a postcolonial and therefore identity dimension, opposing Indian culture and Western culture, tradition and modernity, the city and the suburbs. Other metamodern elements, according to Luke Turner in *The Metamodernist Manifesto* (Turner 2011), are present in Coe's and Kureishi's novels, such as romanticism expressed by male narrators in crisis, the presence of new technologies and social networks facilitating the democratization of History, the theme of nostalgia exploring our relation to time, or even the quest for truth oscillating between science and magic.