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HOW FAR CAN YOU GO WHEN UNDERMINING RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE? DAVID LODGE’S PARODIC NOVEL AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Keywords: *religious discourse, Catholicism, power and authority, resistance, doctrinal changes, parodic novel*

Abstract: *The article aims to illustrate how the novel constructs a picture of reality, or rather the realities of power and authority held by the Catholic Church, counterbalanced by the resistance of individuals, the religious discourse being presented on two levels: the institutional dogma and its actual impact on the community members. Using a plethora of characters, David Lodge chronicled the doctrinal changes and the moral uncertainty within Catholicism in England, covering two decades starting with the 1950s. It is also shown that the (hi)stories in the novel unfold in a comic tone, which lightens the serious matter of discussion. In order to achieve this, the paper includes an attempt to ‘define’ postmodernity and postmodernism from the perspectives of some influential thinkers or theoreticians, namely Jean-Francois Lyotard, Michel Foucault, Zygmunt Bauman, Jacques Derrida, Brian McHale and Linda Hutcheon. Next, parody and its means of realization - metafiction mainly - are briefly explained, then illustrated in the novel under scrutiny.*

Edward W. Said supported the view that “texts are worldly, to some degree they are events, and, even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted” (Said 4). Consequently, David Lodge’s novel How Far Can You Go?, which constitutes the focus of this paper, cannot be an exception to the rule. And since we are looking at this novel from the perspective of the topic “Genres and Historicity: Text, Context, Context”, it follows logically that we should try to locate the production of the novel and its contribution to international literature in time and even space. Winner of the Whitbread Award for Novel of the year, How Far Can You Go? was first published in the United States under the title Souls and Bodies, in 1980. Using a surfeit of characters, David Lodge chronicled the doctrinal changes and the moral uncertainty within Catholicism in England, covering more than two decades starting with the early 1950s and going up to the late 1970s.