

Grillet's writing, at the same time toneless, parodic, and imbued with play. From a scholar's viewpoint, the documentation is all that could be wished for: in addition to the already mentioned introduction and interarts essay, there is a list of the paintings used with their date and venue; a résumé of the plot of the novel; Robbe-Grillet's note on the French edition; and an extensive list of works cited. Stoltzfus presents an additional twenty-one Magritte paintings, similarly documented, within his essay. From the point of view of Robbe-Grillet scholarship, New Novel work, Magritte study, and the interarts field, this is a very valuable book.

David Lodge

*Therapy*

London: Secker and Warburg, 1995. Pp. 321. £15.00

Reviewed by Nora Foster Stovel

What do academics read for recreation when our taste is too refined for trash? The answer is David Lodge, academic satirist par excellence. The problem is that we can read his novels much faster than Lodge can write them. That is why the announcement of a new novel by Lodge, if not exactly *Paradise News* (the title of his preceding novel), is at least very good news indeed.

*Therapy* is Lodge's latest fiction. Why therapy? Because, as the (anti-) hero, balding and bulging, middle-aging Laurence Passmore, nicknamed Tubby, says, "I have a lot of therapy. On Mondays I see Roland for Physiotherapy, on Tuesdays I see Alexandra for Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, and on Fridays I have either aromatherapy or acupuncture. Wednesdays and Thursdays I'm usually in London, but then I see Amy, which is a sort of therapy too, I suppose" (14-15). Amy is Tubby's platonic mistress, a necessary counterbalance to his sexy wife Sally, Principal Lecturer in the Education Department at Rummidge Poly, where she sits on a committee called "F-QUAC (Faculty Quality Assurance Committee)" (71). Tubby allows, "I have a sexy wife at home and a platonic mistress in London. What have I got to complain about? I don't know" (31). Why does Tubby require all this therapy? The ostensible reason is his knee, which occasionally inspires him to shriek "Fuuuuckinell!" (4)—his Achilles heel, as it were, or what Sally terms his "thorn in the flesh" (33). His orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Nizar, diagnoses the problem as "idiopathic patella chondromalacia" (12) or "Internal Derangement of the Knee. I.D.K. I Don't Know" (13). Nevertheless, Tubby's I.D.K. of the knee provides him with a focus for his anxieties because his problem is that he *does not know* what is his problem: "What's the matter with me. I don't mean my knee. I mean my head. My mind. My soul" (4-5). That's why he needs therapy.

Therapy inspires all three epigraphs for the novel. The first, from *Collins English Dictionary*, addresses the apparent problem: "Therapy. The treatment of physical, mental or social disorders or disease." The second, by an uncle of Søren Kierkegaard, gets closer to Tubby's trouble: "You know what, Søren? There's nothing the matter with you but your silly habit of holding yourself round-shouldered. Just straighten your back and stand up and your sickness will be over."

Kierkegaard becomes Tubby's patron saint of existentialist angst, which he finds defined as "1. An acute but unspecific sense of anxiety or remorse. 2. (In Existentialist philosophy) the dread caused by man's awareness that his future is not determined, but must be freely chosen" (63). Tubby makes a pilgrimage to Copenhagen to visit the Kierkegaard museum and grave. The Kierkegaard motif ensures an intellectual thread of existential questioning plus opportunities for humor in *Therapy*. In this context Kierkegaard's very titles—*Fear and Trembling*, *The Sickness Unto Death*, *The Concept of Dread*—appear almost as absurd as Tubby's idea for writing "a drama series for Heartland Television about a Danish philosopher" (173).

Grahame, the squatter who prevents our hero from leaving his Leicester Square apartment at night—Tubby can view on his video screen this "younger, less privileged image of myself" (116) camping in the entryway—is a "Marxist vagrant" (115) who spouts existentialist theory: "'Existence precedes essence,' he said, as if reciting the beginning of a nursery rhyme" (117).

The third epigraph, by Graham Greene, is most pertinent: "Writing is a form of therapy." Tubby discovers the applicability of this quotation when his analyst Alexandra advises him to keep a journal. *Therapy* opens with "Right, here goes" (3), and his journal starts on "Monday morning, 15 Feb., 1993" (3), right after Valentine's Day. At Alexandra's suggestion, Tubby writes a self-description, reflecting a kind of "Humpty Dumpty" (178) with a "Brillo pad that grows right up to my Adam's apple" (19). Tubby lists his pros and cons: under the "Good" column he includes "Stable marriage," but under the "Bad" column he writes, "Feel unhappy most of the time." Later he adds, "Pain in knee" (23). A self-styled "privileged wanker" (86), he seems to have everything going for him: a sexy wife whose fidelity he never questions, a successful career, a nice home in residential Rummidge, and a new passion—his sleek silver grey pet of a "Richmobile" (34).

Tubby's journal—"Journal. Diary. Confession" (17)—involves a metafictional self-reflexive element: "Here I am, sitting in front of the computer, tapping out this" (25), writes Tubby, whose Spellcheck suggests he replace "Freud" with "Fraud" (82). The journal form is new to the author, who is scriptwriter of the successful sitcom *The People Next Door*, filmed by Heartland. Tubby's problem—not knowing what his problem is—soon changes when the

star of his sitcom wants to return to the stage, and "Heartland's Controller of Comedy" (73) directs Tubby to write her out of the script. But how do you terminate a character comically when most terminations are tragic? Tubby's agent Jake Endicott suggests that Priscilla leave Edward after an infidelity, but Tubby argues, "He and Priscilla are the archetypal monogamous couple. They're about as likely to split up as Sally and me" (46). At heart Jake believes in the adage, "Art for art's sake but money for Christ's sake" (82), and threatens to engage a new writer if Tubby won't replace Priscilla.

Life imitates fiction when Tubby's wife Sally informs him she is divorcing him. This genuine problem inspires a revisiting of the past through a pilgrimage to find his first love, Maureen, in their home town of Hatchford—"Hatchford, Mon Amour" (263). This quest leads him on a real pilgrimage to pursue Maureen who is on her way to Santiago on foot. Miraculously, Tubby's trick knee is cured: when queried about it, he responds, "Reason not the knee" (321).

*Therapy* is divided into four parts. The first involves Tubby's journal; his confessional narrative ends with this note: "Sally just came into my study to tell me she wants a separation. She says she told me earlier this evening, over supper, but I wasn't listening" (129). The second consists of Tubby's presentation of other characters' (Amy, Louise, and Sally's) versions of the "sexual odyssey" (210) on which he embarks after "Sally's UDI" (202)—unilateral declaration of independence. The third part returns to Tubby's journal, and the core of this segment, entitled "Maureen: A Memoir" (222), is a novel-within-the-novel. The fourth part chronicles his quest for Maureen on her pilgrimage to Santiago. Tubby returns from Santiago to discover his flat empty. But Grahame has thoughtfully left him his computer. Lodge's novel ends in true metafictional form as Tubby writes on the computer, "If this was a television script, I would probably end it there, with the final credits scrolling over the empty flat, and yours truly sprawled in one corner, his back against the wall, weeping with laughter. But that happened several weeks ago, and I want to bring this story up to date, up to the moment of writing, so that I can carry on with my journal" (320). To find out what he writes, however, the reader of this review will just have to read Lodge's delightful new novel *Therapy*.