

1950s. His rejection of the current forms of the novel, led him to search for literary models to enable him to express his ideas; the picaresque tradition with its focus on the 'half-outsider' protagonist in conflict with his environment, provided the appropriate vehicle. The reader feels, in Wain's fiction, the struggle for shape, the use of a conscious and intelligent seriousness by a man of letters to give form to his searching observations and perceptions about contemporary experience(17). What is clear is that Wain has produced a different set of literary conventions which enables him to establish himself as a true artist.

NOTES

- 1- Gilbert Phelps, "The Post-War English Fiction" in *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*, Boris Ford (ed.), Vol. 8, *The Present* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1983), p. 430.
- 2- V.S. Pritchett, "These Writers Couldn't Care Less". *New York Times Book Review*, 28 Apr. 1957, p. 35.
- 3- Pritchett, p. 38.
- 4- William Van O'Connor, "Two Types of 'Heroes' in Post-War British Fiction" in *PMLA* 77 (Mar. 1962), 168.
- 5- O'Connor, p. 168.
- 6- Pritchett, p. 38.
- 7- Angela Hague, "Picaresque Structure and the Angry Young Novel" *Twentieth Century Literature*. Vol. 32, No. 2, 1986, 211.
- 8- Claudio Guillen, "Toward A Definition of the Picaresque", in his *Literature as System* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), p.77.
- 9- John Wain, *Hurry On Down* (London: Secker & warbury, 1953), pp. 12, 26. Further references to this edition will appear parenthetically in the text.
- 10- Hague, p. 214.
- 11- Alan Kennedy, *The Protean Self: Dramatic Action in Contemporary Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1974), p. 272.
- 12- Black Morrison, *The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s* (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 56.
- 13- Pritchett, 39.
- 14- Hague, 216.
- 15- Kennedy, p. 273.
- 16- Phelps, p. 432.
- 17- James Gordin, "John Wain" in *Contemporary Novelists*, James Vinson (ed). (London: St James Press, 1972), p. 1292.

and all identical; but he, who differed from the others in nothing else, had been deprived of his sting" (p. 18). Lumley wants to be free of any social obligation. He can seek and find his own identity, his individuality only by resisting all collective relationships. We are told that there is "a pretty widespread dissatisfaction" with the way he is going on, and that he does not even give his address to his parents (p. 11). We know nothing about his parents or any other siblings. Paradoxically, the novel ends with Lumley's reconciliation with his girl, but Wain tries to defuse this end by drawing attention to Moll Flanders who 'turns respectable and repents, but you knew that from the beginning, (*Moll Flanders* is one of the famous picaresque English novels).

The acceptance of the love of the girl is seen as a dangerous move for Lumley, one that will upset the equilibrium, the neutrality, he has achieved:

If an animal who was tame, or born in captivity, went back to what should have been its natural surroundings, it never survived. If it was a bird, the other birds killed it, but usually it just died. Here was the cage, a fine new one, air conditioned, clean, commanding a good view, mad cons, main services. And she had snapped the lock and was calling him out into the waving jungle when he got there, he would die. (p. 241).

The novel ends with the pair stand looking at each other 'baffled and inquiring'. What this jungle call of love does suggest is that the neutrality Lumley has achieved is not such a moral victory after all (15). It is not clear either, just in what way 'love' will be an escape from the 'cage' of society, since the pair, if they do choose the dangers of the jungle will presumably get married, perhaps have children, and find themselves living in a dense net of institutional commitment.

Behind the work of this group of novelists was a kind of defiant little Englandism, a reaction against the cult of foreign experimentalism, and an assertion that English fictional tradition provided all the nourishment that was needed to rejuvenate the novel. In kindle/ Anis's *I Like It Here*, for example, the hero, on a trip to Lisbon, visits the grave of Henry Fielding, who could be seen as the exemplar of the most healthy and characteristic strand in English fictional tradition (16).

The picaresque structure of Wain's *Hurry On Down* was a creative response to the problematic situation which faced the new novelists of the

as a prostitute to furnish him with food and money. When Charles Lumley blames him for that condition, he justifies himself thus:

I have only got to finish this novel and I'll be famous; then I'll give her it all back with interest. And anyway, oh, God, I feel sick! Are you still here? Anyway never mind the material aspect of it. Betty's glad to help Art' (p.38).

Wain parodies the self-indulgence of modern literature, when he makes Froulish read aloud a section from his novel in a literary session:

'A king ringed with slings'... 'a thing without wings but brings strings and sings. Ho, the slow foe! Show me the crow, the I know, a beech root on the beach, fruit of a rich bitch, shoot a witch, witch foot?... Clout bell, shout well, pell-mell about a tout, get the hell out, About nowt. Court logwart hag bought a dag'... 'Deep in the grass, a cheap farce, glass weeps for Tom Thumb, a bum's dumb chum. (p.57).

We are told that the 'audience returned to life' and "drooping heads came upright" because they are relieved from this dilemma of listening to such hallucination, when some of them try to ask Froulish about his artistic creativity, he denounces them and refuses any question about his aesthetic assumption or achievement. Wain presents Froulish as "a pompous self-aggrandizing elitist whose attitude toward creative activity can be described as Mandarin" (14). Wain and through such presentation rejects the current form of the novel used by Joyce and his contemporaries and he finds in the picaresque structure the convenient vehicle to express his ideas well.

The panoramic episodic structure enables Wain to make his hero aware of the ugly and evil world. Lumley, through his succession of different jobs, manages to discover the false values and norms of his society. In his travels, Lumley moves horizontally in space and vertically through society.

The traditional picaresque, as mentioned before, is a "single-minded" hero who is always on bad terms with society and the people who compose that society, Lumley is presented in *Hurry On Down* as a person who lacks intimate friends and relatives. He does not want to commit himself to any social relationship. Lumley describes himself as having been "thrust into the jungle of the nineteen-fifties. The hive was full of wasps, all workers

is no settlement in Lumley's life, and his life is like that of the traditional picaresque, a rambling journey from one sector of society to another. Sometimes, Lumley finds himself in critical situations, when he is rebuked by this old school-master who thinks that Lumley has applied for a staff member in the school, but he discovers that Lumley has applied for "Window Cleaning". On another occasion, Lumley is publicly attacked by his old colleagues-whom he had met by chance in a party-for this job:

The sort of work ought to be done by people who are born to it. You had some sort of education, some sort of upbringing though I must say you don't bloody well behave like it. You ought to have taken on some decent job, the sort of thing you were brought up and educated to do, and leave this bloody stop-emptying to people who were brought up and educated for stop emptying.

but there are some classes of society that are born and bred to it, and ours isn't. If you take a job like that, you're just... "letting the side down".

And I don't like people who let the side down. (p.165).

"Honest work", that is, physical labour, is presented as morally edifying and Charles Lumley rejects the "codified" role the society offers and he rapidly fills a series of other social roles in the search for some kind of personal fulfillment (12). One also notices here the style and the type of the language used by Wain; it is the conversational style of people making war upon the assumption of middle-class culture. It is a debunking style. It contains the vulgar, ordinary speaking voice. It is "a weapon made for forcing away in-contrast to all educated style which by their very sense of order, can be called contrivances for preserving certain standards and keeping what is hostile to them out." (13)

Wain's contemptuous attitude toward art is rather obvious in *Hurry on Down*. Modern picaresque fiction bears the characteristic. Charles Lumley speaks slightly of the "intolerable prosing of Wordsworth, and the namby-pamby dribbling of Shelley" (p. 71). Moreover, and through the presentation of Edwain Froulish's character, who is supposed to be a Joycean novelist, Wain presents a comic caricature figure who summarizes his needs by "I'm a Novelist. All I need is a table and chair, pen and paper, a woman, food and... 'drink'" (p. 36). Having nothing to do to earn his living, Froulish depends heavily upon his girl friend who works

relationship with other people (10).

The lack of political and social commitment is an important characteristic of twentieth century picaresque novel. In *Hurry on Down*, Charles Lumley reacts against the political principles and any kind of political idealism, stating that "the men of the thirties failed" because of their desire to be one of the "people", a desire that, if fulfilled, "would have made their lives hell". Charles Lumley rejects both Freudian concepts of the "inner man" and Marxist ideas about "man in society",

At least, Charles thought with a sense of self-congratulation, he had always been right about them, right to despise them for their idiotic attempt to look through two telescopes at the same time: one fashioned of German psychology and pointed at themselves, the other of Russian economics and directed at the English working class.(p.31)

Lumley seeks instead a completely personal, individualized life-style that avoids any taint of what he calls "the corporate life". Lumley ends his battle with society in the belief that his role of comedian is some sort of allowable middle ground, like that of the fool at court, which permits him to be neutral so far as society is concerned neither alienated nor committed (11).

Neutrality, he had found it at last. The running fight between himself and society had ended in a draw; he was no nearer, fundamentally, to any rapprochement or understanding with it than when he had been a window-cleaner, a crook, or servant; it had merely decided that he should be paid, and paid handsomely, to capitalize his anomalous position (p. 239).

Lumley and his generation reject any kind of commitment and their rancours are private. What is important to Lumley is his self-interest and not society.

In fact, it is only work which aspires to social status—work in the province of the established society Charles Lumley wishes to avoid—that is devalued in this novel. Lumley takes a real pleasure in manual work. Though he is a university graduate, yet he finds his solace in manual labour; for that reason he takes on a variety of jobs—window-cleaner, dope-runner, hospital orderly, chauffeur, and bouncer. One can notice that there

tion or slang phrase or image to avoid the literary expression of feeling, so soaked in the associations of bourgeois romance" (6). They rejected the genteel Bloomsbury traditions of fine writing and cultivated a deliberately "slap dash" style of writing.

The social and political situation of post-war England was similar to that of the eighteenth century in that it was in a state of very rapid of change; Picaresque literature usually flourishes when a society is in a state of flux: the picaresque character is a reflection of a society undergoing social changes(7). These new novelists, including Wain, discerned that the old picaresque novelists were products of a revolution that they were engaged in, and the modern adventure was a rambling journey from one conception of society to another. Therefore, this panoramic episodic structure is the most convenient one to express their ideas fully.

Glaudio Guitten describes the picaro as an individual in a "tangle", "an economic and social predicament of most pressing nature". The picaresque novel presents a confrontation between the individual and his environment. That individual can neither join nor actually reject his society or fellowmen and he functions as a "half-outsider"(8). Charles Lumley the protagonist of Wain's *Hurry on Down* is such a "half-outsider" who is both in and out of society. A graduate "with a mediocre degree in history", Lumley wants to discern his way in life far away from any relative or acquaintance, for that reason he decides to settle in "a place where he [has] no relatives". He does not want any kind of social commitment, because he is rather fed up with those who "tried to help him" and he wants to be left alone to make his life without "guidance" (9)

Charles Lumley is in flight from society and its rigid classes. He feels the heavy burden of class upon his shoulders in the way people treat him. When he visits Sheila, his girlfriend, he is received coldly by her family, and he believes that "their objection to him was that he did not wear a uniform. If he had worn the uniform of a prosperous middle-class tradesman, like Robert, they would have approved of him" (p.9). Charles Lumley tries his best to be "outside the class structure" as a whole, for that reason he refuses to join the Union in order not to have an "official, involvement as a member of the working class" (p.44). Charles Lumley describes himself as a "fugitive" who is travelling "without passport" (p.64). He has chosen to inhabit a marginal position in regard to society a position which determines his response to politics, work, art and

Picaresque Structure
In
John Wain's
Hurry On Down
Ra'ad A. Salch
College Of Arts, Mosul University

After the Second World War there appeared in England a new group of English novelists. They have put forward a new kind of hero and narrative structure and they have a distinctly new attitude to life. It would be risky to say that there is a self-conscious or organized movement John here; but the novels of Kingsley Amis, Thomas Hinde, John Wain and Braine- are very different from those of their predecessors (1). They break sharply with war and pre-war decades. As people these novelists are products of the social revolution of the 1940s. They regard the welfare State with cynical detachment, and they direct their "anger" towards its bleakness. Mostly, they belong to the working-class or lower middle-class. An aristocratic society like the English can only survive if it contrarily draws firm from below and is continually broadening(2). The novelists who come from below manage to rejuvenate the English novel.

There has been a switch from "idealism" to the doctrine of "self-interest" in their work. Uncommitted to the world outside themselves, these novelists are intimately committed to a new England which had not up to now been written from within (3). The England of the new novelists is the direct product of the Industrial Revolution, the ugly England of the industrial suburbs. Moreover, they have presented a new type of hero who is a rather a seedy youngman, suspicious of all pretensions. He spends a lot of time in pubs; and he is always in trouble with his landlady and boss. There is nothing heroic about him except his refusal to be taken in by humbug(4). John Wain presents precisely that hero in *Hurry on Down*.

As it is known, experimentation was characteristic of pre-war English fiction. There was Joyce's impersonal mode and Lawrence's characters attracting or repelling each other. There was the effaced narrator, the novel of ideas, stream of consciousness, and the novel seen as a poem(5). The new group of novelists rejected all the current forms of the novel and adopted the traditional loose picaresque structure as symptomatic rejection of the old Jamesian concept of the form in the novel. Furthermore, these novelists wrote in "desultory vernacular, using every popular circumlocu-