Racial/ Facial Discrimination in Malcolm Bradbury's
Eating People Is Wrong

NOUREDDINE FRIJI
King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia

Abstract
As unprecedented waves of immigrants poured into Britain in the wake of World War Two, racism reared its ugly head. Literary works, like several branches of learning, made a considerable contribution towards bringing the problems of otherness and foreignness to the forefront of public attention. Malcolm Bradbury's academic novel, *Eating People Is Wrong* (1959), is a typical case in point. This essay attempts to turn the spotlight on the unjust and unjustifiable racist judgments and practices inflicted on black African students in the said novel's provincial redbrick university and, by extension, in the social universe. Unlike previous scholarly research on Bradbury's work, the present paper pursues a new line of investigation by leaning on George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's analysis of metonymy in their *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). This interdisciplinary venture aims to gauge the extent to which metonymic concepts involving skin colour and certain body parts inform race-related attitudes and demeanour. More precisely, I maintain that by purposely boiling the appearance and identity of a Nigerian student called Eborebelosa down to a "black face" or a "black head," some prejudiced white academics cast him in the role of an inferior other and an unwelcome alien. This is all the more lamentable as intellectuals are supposed to ensure the prominence and permanence of tolerance, equality, and justice, instead of assuming the role of complacent and complicit social actors.

Keywords: Malcolm Bradbury, Lakoff and Johnson, liberal intellectuals, metonymic concepts, black face, black head, racial prejudice, racial cannibalism

> A black statue of a nude Nubian slave grinned out at me from beneath a turban of gold. I passed on to a window decorated with switches of wiry false hair, ointments guaranteed to produce the miracle of whitening black skin. "You too can be truly beautiful," a sign proclaimed. "Win greater happiness with whiter complexion. Be outstanding in your social set." (Ellison 260)

Dated back to the Renaissance and to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century periodical literature (Shaw 45), the academic novel, also known as the campus novel, the college novel, and the university novel, gained a firm foothold in the Anglo-American literary scene in the second half of the twentieth century. It is typically set in a university; is populated by professors, students, deans, and librarians; and is centered on a variety of topics, such as conferences, publication, academic freedom, tenure, student protests, teacher-student relationships, social class relations, race relations, etc. Bradbury's *Eating People Is Wrong* is an exemplary work of this subgenre. Taking a satirical look at academic life, it gives witness, amongst other things, to the stereotyping and stigmatization of black Africans in 1950s' British universities (and society) and sets alarm bells ringing for the advocates of such values as tolerance, equality, and justice. It pits a Nigerian student called Eborebelosa off against a number of white academic characters, including two allegedly liberal intellectuals, namely Emma Fielding, a graduate student, and Stuart Treece, a professor and Department head. While initially sympathetic towards the African student, Emma turns him down in the long run, on the grounds that he belongs to a different culture. Similarly, Treece at first takes action to help Eborebelosa integrate into the local community, but, in the end, sloughing off his liberal responsibilities, he turns his back on his advisee and withdraws into his ivory tower.

In the present essay, I argue that certain whites' tendency to equate blackness with backwardness and to dismiss blacks outright as inferior and worthless is both unfair and unpalatable. In order to lend originality to my investigation, I draw on Lakoff and Johnson's elucidation of the metonymy THE PART FOR THE WHOLE in order to problematize the motifs of racial prejudice and "Nergophobia" (Roth, *Human Stain* 3) in

Bradbury's novel. While aware that only a limited number of textual examples lend themselves to the said metonymic reading, I think that the novel's handling of the race relations motif revolves around these examples and that its moral message radiates out from them. In other words, the white characters' (mis)treatment of Eborebelosa is firmly rooted in their belief that his face's and head's colour is eloquent evidence of his inferiority. While Martin Tucker hypothesizes that the novel's title is proof of "the emotional cannibalism" practiced by Treece with regard to his involvement in affairs with both Emma and Viola Masefield and to his responsibility for the misery of two other heartbroken suitors of Emma's, Louis Bates and Eborebelosa (Elphick 55), I believe that the title is also suggestive of the practice of racial cannibalism on the part of Treece and the other white characters. This surmise is, symbolically enough, corroborated through the utilization of body parts to articulate blacks' purported inferiority. It also stands the time-honoured representation of blacks as cannibals on its head (Rice 107; Behrend 49-50). The analysis starts by surveying the major readings of Bradbury's novel. In the second part of the paper, I locate the novel within its historical and literary contexts. After that, I briefly outline the essay's theoretical backdrop. Finally, I examine the manifestations and ramifications of racial prejudice in the novel under consideration.

Bradbury's novel may not have ascended to the pantheon of great literary works, but it has stirred some critical attention since its publication. However, this interest has mainly yielded a few reviews (Gransden, 1960; Snow, 1960; Price, 1960) or cursory comments in collections of essays about academic literature in general. J.A. Sutherland, for instance, proposes that the novel "partakes of the *roman à clef*," in that it draws heavily on its writer's teaching experience at Leicester University (80). To Merritt Moseley, it offers a unique illustration of "[t]he central administrator [the Vice Chancellor] as destructive agent" ("Types of Academic Fiction" 105). He also dismisses Treece as "an ineffectual lecturer in English" (204), whose "baffled" and "troubled" liberalism (205) accounts for his failure "to do anything meaningful about Louis Bates or the women in his life" ("Randall Jarrell" 206). In a similar vein, while insisting that Treece is "at best a marginal man, professionally,

socially, politically, historically, and morally," Robert Morace concedes that it is not easy to decide whether this character's "diminishment" is ascribable to his own shortcomings or to external factors (32).

In contradistinction to the above critics, Linda L. Elphick undertakes an in-depth investigation of the theme of liberal humanism in the novel. While taking Treece to task over his failure to carry out his liberal commitments, she blames his "inherent weaknesses" on circumstances beyond his control by suggesting that his "outer world is not very encouraging" and that his "surroundings are dismally uncongenial" (35). For example, the students are mediocre and most of the professors are "crass, or fools, or both" (36). Treece's liberal predicament is best illustrated by his attempt to help Bates and Eborebelosa overcome their sense of alienation by involving them in a romantic relationship with Emma (60). However, these "matchmaking efforts are both, of course, power plays." Elphick also contends that Treece's organization of the reception party for foreign students is not meant to get them to know each other but rather to prove that they are funny (63). She then proceeds to have a hasty look at Treece's encounter with Eborebelosa, the latter's proposal to Emma (64), and Treece's insistence that Emma give the helpless Nigerian student a chance (65).

While offering useful insights into some of the novel's major preoccupations, Elphick does not lavish attention on Eborebelosa's plight, and she does not provide enough textual evidence to validate the causal correlation between the demise of liberal humanism and the perpetuation of the racial status quo. Nor do other scholars rectify this critical shortcoming. For example, Ian Carter suggests, in passing, that Eborebelosa's presence allows Bradbury to "pillory funny foreigners," to highlight Treece's "liberal confusion and guilt" (79), and to throw "a stronger light on what it means to be 'in here'" for people from "'out there'" (180). Morace, on the other hand, does not even mention Eborebelosa by name, referring to him, instead, as "a foreign student," whose "megalomantia and depressive withdrawals make him a fit caricature of Treece's own personality" (35). With these considerations in mind, it is now useful to locate the novel within its wider historical and

literary contexts before proceeding to subject its handling of the motives, manifestations, and repercussions of racial bias to further examination.

Katharine Cockin and Jago Morrison trace the coinage of the word *race* back to the nineteenth century, when the debate about colonialism and slavery was at its apex. As it presupposes the possibility of subdividing human species politically into "a number of radically different and essentially incompatible sub-groups or 'races,'" racism is naturally associated with xenophobia and nationalism. In post-war fiction, in particular, "such racism often takes the form of a generalized, patronizing disdain for the other, mixed with a helping of imperial sentiment and/or 'little Englandism'" (74). The arrival of a ship called MV Empire Windrush at Tilbury on 22 June 1948, with 492 Jamaican immigrants aboard, signalled the onset of an era of "postcolonial diaspora" and of "what Louise Bennett famously named '[c]olonizing in reverse'" (Mead 137). The proliferation of accounts of this event attests to its historical significance:

> The iteration of the Windrush as a cultural symbol, and in particular of the figure "492," marks a transformation of the event from a collection of individual histories into a composite, symbolic, imagined and monadic moment of arrival. The figure, repeated across a variety of cultural texts, ceases to mark quantity, and comes to stand metonymically for a myth of post-war migration. (Mead 140)

The calypso composed by a Caribbean immigrant called Aldwyn Roberts before the aforesaid ship disembarked adumbrates the air of expectancy and the array of expectations surrounding the immigrants' experience. The first stanza of the song reads as follows:

> London is the place for me
> London this lovely city,
> You can go to France or America,
> India, Asia, or Australia,
> But you must come back to London city. (Perry 1)

Life in Britain was not a bed of roses, however. West Indian blacks' hopes of a better life in a "brave new world" (Shakespeare, *Tempest* 1.5.217) were utterly dashed. Dismissed as a naturally uncivilized, backward, and

inferior race, they had difficulties finding houses and jobs and were badly treated by the police (Perry 146). The British Government itself had ambivalent attitudes towards immigration. On the one hand, it was disinclined to display overt objection to the influx of immigrants, and, on the other hand, it was anxious about their swelling number (Mead 144). Therefore, it took preventive legislative measures, such as the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act and the subsequent Immigration and Nationality Acts and White Papers in 1965, 1968, 1971, and 1981 (Mead 145).

Meanwhile, the cultural hybrid ensuing from snowballing Commonwealth immigration was enriched by the arrival of renowned writers and intellectuals, like Claudia Jones, Stuart Hall, Andrew Salkey, Roger Mais, and George Lamming, amongst others (Ron 141). While a number of 1950s' Caribbean writers focus attention on life conditions in the Caribbean itself (153) or on the arrival experience (156), others confront the race issue, refusing and refuting the inferiority allegations levelled against foreigners, in general, and against blacks, in particular (142). The promotion of anti-colonial thinking and activism on the part of several writers sowed "the initial seeds of political blackness, as an identity combining African, Caribbean, and South Asian anti-colonial unities" (145).[i] Interestingly, the race motif figures prominently even in several white novelists' works, where it is yoked to the theme of the waning empire. A case in point is Doris Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing* (1950). Other novels, however, address the same topic at the domestic level only. Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958), for instance, revolves around a black soldier working for the British army (Ron 165). Similarly, following the fortunes of a Nigerian student called Johnny Fortune (Ron 166), Colin MacInnes's *City of Spades* (1957) sets out to unveil both British people's hypocrisy on racism and policemen's mistreatment of blacks (Ron 168).

Like the aforesaid writers, Bradbury chooses to venture into the sensitive province of racism.[ii] Taking his cue from F. R. Leavis, he treats literature as "a moral entity" and gives primacy to "moral values" in his approach to democracy and history (Bradbury, "Malcolm Bradbury" 29). Bradbury also believes that a novelist should not regard form as "a sequence of technical skills or as a pure subject" but rather as a

"historicized" entity, "not in Marxist terms but in terms of an obligation for the novelist to be thinking in his or her culture – here and now – with a special responsibility for language" (31). Accordingly, he breaks with experimentalism, a technique associated with modernism and with "the older forms of scholarship and scholarly life and the spirit in arts and academe that was called Bloomsbury," and he jumps on the bandwagon of realism with a view to capturing the changes and challenges sweeping through the British academia and society (Bradbury, "Campus Fictions" 51). This is at its most obvious in his exploration of racial and facial discrimination in *Eating People Is Wrong*, an undertaking which the present essay seeks to investigate by employing Lakoff and Johnson's hypotheses about metonymy.

Embarking on a lengthy exploration of the use of metaphors in everyday communication, Lakoff and Johnson cast some light on metonymy, a figure of speech which uses "one entity to refer to another that is related to it." By way of illustration, they offer a range of examples, such as the following:

> He likes to read the *Marquis de Sade*. (= the writings of the Marquis)
> He's in *dance*. (= the dancing profession)
> *Acrylic* has taken over the art world. (= the use of acrylic paint)
> The *Times* hasn't arrived at the press conference yet. (= the reporter from the *Times*) (35)

The two authors then go on to inspect "a special case of metonymy . . . called synecdoche, where the part stands for the whole." Once again, they give a few examples, in which "*automobile*" stands for "a collection of automobiles," "*strong bodies*" stands for "strong people," and "*new blood*" at an organization stands for "new people" (36). Being a vital "part of the ordinary, everyday way we think and act as well as talk" (37), metonymic concepts help us both refer to things and gain an understanding of them:

> For example, in the case of the metonymy THE PART FOR THE WHOLE there are many things that can stand for the whole. Which part we pick out determines which aspect of the whole we are focusing on. When we say that we need some *good heads* on the project, we are using "good heads" to refer to "intelligent people." The point is not just to use a

part (head) to stand for a whole (person) but rather to pick out a particular characteristic of the person, namely intelligence, which is associated with the head. (36)

The same applies to a specific type of the above-mentioned metonymy, namely THE FACE FOR THE WHOLE PERSON, on which the portraits made by photography and painting are based. If we look at a picture of a person's face, we feel satisfied, but if we look at a picture of a person's body without the face, we treat it is a strange and uninformative thing. In other words, the key to identifying someone and to building a picture about them is their face, rather than their postures or movements. Common examples include: "She's just a *pretty face*. There are an *awful lot of faces* out there in the audience. We need some *new faces* here" (37, original italics). The logical conclusion to draw is that, as they lead us to react to people according to the perceptions we garner from their faces, metonymies, like metaphors, "are not random or arbitrary occurrences, to be treated as isolated instances" but are rather pregnant with "systematic" concepts. Put differently, we "function in terms of metonymy when we perceive the person in terms of his face and act on those perceptions" (38).

Using the above postulates as inspiration, it is now interesting to try to figure out where liberal figures like Emma and Treece as well as the novel's other white characters stand in relation to race relations. I contend that their deep-seated racial prejudice and attendant conduct set in motion the "systematic" function of metonymic concepts. Thus, the way they perceive and treat Eborebelosa throughout the novel is encapsulated by the fact that they boil his appearance, identity, and background down to a "black face" or a "black head." By so doing, they maintain their role as self-appointed arbiters of taste and civilized manners while aggravating the African student's inferiority complex and confining him in the recesses of society.

Eborebelosa is described as an eccentric character, hence his habit of hiding in lavatories to avoid socializing with other people. It happens, for instance, that the Vice-Chancellor, leaving the University late one night, frees him from the lavatory where he has been unconsciously locked by the porter. The noise emitted by a window's broken glass having drawn his attention, the Vice-Chancellor sees "a frightened black

face" appear from a lavatory's window and complain, "I am in prison in the toilet." The "black face" turns out to be Eborebelosa (Bradbury, *Eating People* 29),[iii] whose "white eyes" (30), glistening in the darkness, highlight his blackness. The night, one may surmise, is possibly used as both a symbol of Eborebelosa's colour and a symptom of his isolation and desolation. Figuratively speaking, one may add, the word "prison" articulates Eborebelosa's inability to break free from the shackles of prejudice. As demonstrated by Michel Foucault's study of the stigmatization and marginalization of a number of unwanted people in the Middle Ages, prejudice, in general, is too hard to eradicate. This applies to the figure of the leper, for example:

> What doubtless remained longer than leprosy, and would persist when the lazar houses had been empty for years, were the values and images attached to the figure of the leper as well as the meaning of his exclusion, the social importance of that insistent and fearful figure which was not driven off without first being inscribed within a sacred circle. (Foucault 6)

By deliberately delaying the disclosure of the African student's name and introducing him simply as a "black face," Bradbury's complicit narrator, speaking on behalf of the Vice Chancellor and the other white characters, uses the special case of metonymy THE FACE FOR THE WHOLE PERSON not only to communicate Eborebelosa's colour, but also to accentuate the common negative undertones of blackness, which stand in contradistinction to the positive connotations of the metonymic expressions "white arms" (Bradbury, *Eating People* 85) and "pretty face" (87) used to describe Emma. It is equally telling that we are not informed whether "Eborebelosa" is the African student's first name, last name, or even a nickname. The implication, I would conjecture, is that his name is redundant as long as he can be identified through his undervalued and unappreciated "black face." In this sense, his insignificance may be said to have precedent and echoes in the "invisibility" of Ralph Ellison's nameless black eponymous protagonist, Invisible Man. Ellison explains:

> "Invisibility," as our rather strange character comes in the end to conceive it, springs from two basic facts of American life. From the racial conditioning which often makes the white American interpret cultural, physical, or psychological differences as signs of racial inferiority; and, on

the other hand, it springs from great formlessness of Negro life wherein all values are in flux and where those institutions and patterns of life which mold the white American's personality are missing or not so immediate in their effect. (qtd. in Callahan 24)

Eborebelosa's "invisibility" seems to have another American parallel in Philip Roth's *The Human Stain* (2000). The protagonist, a classics professor of Latin and Greek called Coleman Silk, checking the students' attendance, is reported to have posed the following question about two absentees: "Does anyone know these people? Do they exist or are they spooks?" When a charge of racism is brought against him by the concerned students, the repentant professor claims that he used the word to mean spectres or ghosts, that he did not know the students were black, and that he forgot that the word was applied to blacks (6).

Bradbury's African student blames his plight on society, but an unconvinced porter, alluding to Eborebelosa's potential eccentricity, counters that he is the only one to blame, since he "spent his days closeted in the toilets" (Bradbury, *Eating People* 30), and since each time the cleaners "turned him out of one cubicle . . . he bobbed up in another." The narrator, too, confirms that the porters habitually check the toilets before closing them, "but who could foresee wilful self-incarceration?" (31). Being "full of *bonhomie*" (167), the Vice Chancellor frees the terrified "black face" from the bathroom and asks Treece to talk to him and to see if "he's refusing to face up to the reality of the world, or whether he's got a weak bladder" (31). Supposedly, Treece is the right man for this task, not only because he is Eborebelosa's advisor, but also because, as a "liberal . . . humanist" and "a messenger from somewhere" (56), he should be "more than fair to the underprivileged, the Eborebelosas" (203).

Bradbury confides that Treece is based on his own younger self and is "a projection of my own commitments and anxieties about the liberal humanism of personal relations that I now espoused and questioned" ("Afterword" 292). What matters most in his novel, he explains, are the "personal relations" between his characters and their aspiration to lead a life of "decency and goodwill, in a period whose historical and political significance they cannot quite grasp" ("Afterword" 294). These preoccupations, he goes on, have to be grasped against the wider context

in which his text was published. At that time, writers such as George Orwell and E. M. Forster focused their attention on moral, rather than political issues, and several other writers, including Bradbury, followed suit ("Afterword" 295). Finally, Bradbury stresses that the spread of liberalism in universities is conductive to the application of Treece's moral principles ("Afterword" 297).

Indeed, not only does Treece take pride in being a liberal humanist who believes in the original sin, but he also considers man a good and noble creature (Bradbury, *Eating People* 15), and he tries to prove it through his own behaviour. Thus, although he is sometimes unwilling to do certain things like watching plays, playing sports, or going on holiday, he would not mind doing them for the sake of other people. In order to entertain a few academics taking part in a poetry conference in the Midlands, for instance, he volunteers to play one of the parlour games in which he "found himself . . . wrapped from head to foot in toilet paper and swaddled like a mummy, and then released again" (252). Had he been a woman, we are told, "he would have been pregnant all the time" (149). It now remains to be seen whether Treece measures up to his liberal principles vis-à-vis Eborebelosa's predicament.

When his advisee knocks his office's door but fails to walk in as instructed, Treece, treating him like a child, opens the door for him, leads him to a chair, and sits him down (32). The disgruntled student complains that people despise him because of his black colour and that English women despise him because he is circumcised. Treece, however, assures him that "[p]eople don't laugh at people because they're black" and that "[w]e're all pleased that you've honoured our country by coming here" (33). What is more, as Eborebelosa admits that he has an inferiority complex and that he feels offended as a result of having been turned out from "my house" on racial grounds, Treece offers to talk to the landlady and to settle the matter. At the same time, echoing the housing difficulties encountered by blacks in the 1950s, he reminds his discontented interlocutor that it is difficult to find landladies who are willing to host Negroes (33) and that he should not take people or animals into his landlady's house without her permission because the British "have different customs" (34). He winds up by advising Eborebelosa to "come

out into the real world and face these problems sensibly and maturely" and to stop hiding in lavatories since they are a mere "dream world" and "an adolescent escape mechanism, like going to the pictures" (34). Notwithstanding Treece's reassuring words, promises, and subsequent support, the "Negro student" will continue having difficulties (37).

His clumsiness is at its most obvious during the English Department reception for foreign students. Being unused to mixing with people, he becomes so nervous that he spills a cup of tea over another student (37). In order to help this "difficult case" (40) shed his reserve and sense of alienation, Treece introduces him to Emma, a "liberal-minded" woman who is "careful of the feelings of others" (67). Standing face to face with her, Eborebelosa, betraying the extent to which he has interiorized other people's stereotypical perceptions of his appearance, looks down shyly and says, "No, no," but Emma, who is "sincerely wanting to do something" to help Treece help his advisee, offers the shaking Negro "a generous smile" and holds his cup for him. As he steps back, however, he loses his balance and falls down, and Emma helps him to his feet. Observing the scene, Treece hastens to explain that Eborebelosa is "[s]ocially maladept" (41). An understanding Emma also takes and talks to the latter amiably and, continuing to hold his teacup for him, gives him a sip now and then until he calms down and is able to hold his cup by himself (42-43). Having warmed to her, he enthuses that he likes her smile and asks her to keep smiling, and she, being "a thoroughly amiable personality," obliges (43). This mood of amiability is, however, spoiled by racialist attitudes. When Eborebelosa confides to Emma that he wants her to wear his country's clothes and promises to make her present of a goat, Herr Schumann, a German student and one of Emma's suitors, reminds him that he is talking to a white woman and that Europeans do not ride goats or drink their milk since "[w]e have gone past the goat. Culture has trod on" (43). He also rebukes Emma for having "no taste" and claims that he would have given her high-quality chocolate and food and introduced her to important people had she chosen to talk to him instead of her present interlocutor (42).

No sooner does Eborebelosa shed his custom of hiding in lavatories (57) than he gets into the habit of pursuing Emma everywhere. While she

is having coffee with her friends in the refectory, for instance, he keeps hovering around her, and when she invites him to sit down, he nods "his black head in a somnolent fashion" (58). As an instance of the metonymy THE PART FOR THE WHOLE, "black head" seems to stand not only for Eborebelosa's colour, but also for his and his race's inferiority, since exclusive focus on the colour diverts attention away from the other positive connotations of the head, most notably wisdom and intelligence. This contrasts sharply with the positive connotations attaching to the metonymic concept "*good heads*" introduced by Lakoff and Johnson. It is little wonder that Emma turns down the gift given to her by her African admirer, namely the skull of his grandfather (61, 63). While to Eborebelosa it is a highly treasured inheritance and a symbol of his race's unity and continuity, this skull is, to Emma, a mere reminder of the persistent negative overtones of "black head."

Worse, her rejection of her unsuitable suitor's marriage proposal spells the end of his hopes of bridging the gap between races and of integrating with the white community. Broaching the subject of "*that* Negro student" with Treece, she protests that he has "gone too far" by publicly announcing that he wants to make her his fifth wife and that he is going to offer her as many goats as she wants (61). While conceding that it is women's fate to face marriage proposal dilemmas, Emma believes that having to deal with a Negro makes a woman's role more complex and problematic. When Treece pleads with her to give her African suitor the "fair deal" she would have given to a white suitor (62), she objects that they have nothing in common, although "it is very flattering, to be admired by someone out of a different culture" (63).

Her contemptuous response to Eborebelosa's marriage proposal spills over into her attitude towards foreigners in general. While initially sympathetic towards them, she later gives up on them and decides that England is the norm for civilization and good manners. She also sympathizes with Treece, whose effort to prove that foreign students are not funny has come to nought (43). Her attitudes, in this regard, accord with the spirit of the age. As a matter of fact, even religious rites are open to public derision. After chatting in a corner for some time at the abovementioned reception party, a group of Negroes, "dressed in their

native robes," suddenly cause a "striking interruption" by deciding "to pray to Allah—or someone like that." When Treece alerts them that there is no consecrated room to pray in, they decide to consecrate one of the rooms by using boiled water (40). Finding dogs' hairs in the consecrated room, however, they decide to pray in the grounds, much to the amazement of the "passing traveller," who, "wending his way along Institution Road, would have been refreshed that day with a strange sight – the sight of a group of Negroes, in long robes, ceremonially pouring hot water over one another and making obeisance on the flagstones of the courtyard" (41). Soon later, a letter appears in the local evening paper, complaining about these religious rites (57).

In view of the foregoing, Bradbury's novel seems to warn and lament that racism has taken root in the British academia and society, that blacks are often pigeonholed offhandedly as an inferior race, and that whites and "black faces" continue to inhabit different worlds, figuratively speaking. However, this is not to suggest that white citizens, including universities' populations, should discriminate in favour of blacks by way of righting wrongs. Nor am I suggesting that Emma should wear Eborebelosa's country's clothes, accept Eborebelosa's gifts, reciprocate his love, or marry him as a token of good will. What matters most is to accord equal respect to people regardless of their ethnic background and nationality and to ascertain that individuals are judged on their merits and moral qualities, not on their colour. But old habits die hard, don't they? Thus, it transpires that even Treece is prejudiced against his African protégé. His enquiry if the latter hides in public lavatories in his own country and whether he does it only in England to take advantage of the Welfare State (32) may be said to savour of racialist attitudes. Equally revealing is the fact that he cannot determine if foreigners are inferior to the local people:

> Treece knew that he and Pontius Pilate were brothers under the skin; if he had lived in Jerusalem and met the son of God he would have said, with monumental fairness, with no wish to be illiberal or to suggest that the foreigner was in any way inferior to ourselves: "Well, perhaps he is and perhaps he isn't, but you really can't expect *me* to tell; perhaps they're all this; I just don't know the cultural background." (31, original italics)

Having failed to convince Emma that Eborebelosa is "an admirable man" and an "extraordinary male" who is "close to his roots" (64), Treece releases her from responsibility towards him (89). The truth, however, is that he himself is a prime contender for Emma's affections, hence their subsequent tryst (187). Bringing up the subject of the Nigerian victim with Emma, he admits that it has been a mess:

> I'm afraid people like us are too reasonable to be true. Personal relationships, civilised human contacts—how splendid it all sounds, doesn't it, like some intellectual Fabian club, you know, full of good will and rather spinsterly. Poor Mr. Eborebelosa! What does he want to get mixed up with people like us for? We're much too dried-up for him. I suppose it's something that cultural boundaries conceal. (143)

The sense of guilt that subsequently weighs him down is exacerbated by his failure to come to Eborebelosa's rescue when he is attacked and injured by a few "nigger-hunting" "teddy boys" in a market-place.[iv] Having just joined a crowd of onlookers and failed to intervene, Treece discovers that "the face was black, and belonged to Mr. Eborebelosa" (218). He tries to rectify the situation by taking the "victim" (218) to hospital and then home. However, his shame is such that he finds it "useless to apologise" (219), and a gnawing and "hideous sense of incapacity" will haunt him ever after (252). Once again, by using the special case of metonymy called THE FACE FOR THE WHOLE PERSON, by mentioning the face before the name, and by emphasizing the face's colour, the narrator reiterates the insignificance of Eborebelosa's personal identity and existence. Now, taking into account both the regrettable custom of assaulting blacks and the novel's title's allusion to cannibalism, it seems logical to suggest that the novel may well be entitled (*B)eating People Is Wrong*.

By pointing an accusing finger at certain intellectuals' tendency to speak "with double tongue," instead of putting their "creed" into their "deed" (Emerson 69), Bradbury's novel, I think, both confirms and conforms to the academic novel subgenre's customary bias towards satire (Adams 37; Showalter 3; Womack 1), a "literary mode" (Cannon 61) or "literary species" which "tends to mock" (58), and "a highly rhetorical and moral art" whose aim is to "attack vice or folly" through the use of

"wit or ridicule" while not forsaking the "real world" and its "moral standards" (Griffin 1). As David Lodge, one of the leading exponents of the academic novel, puts it, the university is "a small world, a microcosm of society as a whole, in which themes like the operation of power, ambition, and sexual desire, can be studied in a comic and satiric rather than tragic manner." This is premised on the assumption that "while theoretically committed to the preservation of high culture and the pursuit of truth," professors are also "fallible human beings with ordinary human weaknesses and perhaps more than usual eccentricities" (Lodge, "Interview").[v] In a similar vein, Moseley maintains that academic satires range over various topics, such as professors themselves, conditions undermining "*education or faculty liberty*" ("Types of Academic Fiction" 110, original italics), "*the publish-or-perish syndrome*," and "*the political environment"* ("Types of Academic Fiction" 111, original italics). Like Mary McCarthy's *The Groves of Academe* (1952), Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954), Vladimir Nabokov's *Pnin* (1957), and *Pale Fire* (1962), Bradbury's *Eating People Is Wrong*, Moseley theorizes, fits the category attacking the professoriate ("Types of Academic Fiction" 110).

This, I think, explains why Bradbury's narrator zeroes in on Treece's failure to practice what he teaches and preaches: "Like so many liberals, he had conceived of actions in terms of ideas, when there was nothing in the action but pure action. As soon as he observed the treacherous nature of the moral stance he had taken, he was bathed in apology" (Bradbury, *Eating People* 68). In other words, he has nothing to offer but "[w]ords, words, words" (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 2.2.192), when actions speak louder than words. Significantly enough, while drinking with Treece, a girl called Mirabelle Warren reminds him of "that bit in *Macbeth* about drink increasing the desire but diminishing the performance" (Bradbury, *Eating People* 152). The implication is that Treece's version of liberalism, like a drunken man's sexual desire, cannot be acted out, for lack of self-control and energy. The confused professor's fear of the driving test bears further testimony to his failure to confront real-life challenges. He confides to Emma:

> What I'm getting at is how cruel life is in the spheres in which you aren't influential. You think you have a *protected corner*, and you're safe; but

> once you emerge from it, war is declared. You think life is ideal, so long as you can pursue it along the lines you favour; and then it suddenly comes upon you that it isn't, it's corrupt, that the area in which you are resolute, and make decisions, is so very small. And now and then life goes to work to remind you of it. (65, original italics)

It is revealing that the role Treece generally assigns to academics is limited to the level of theorizing and contributing to an inflation of discourses. According to him, professors do not teach for the sake of money or mere love of scholarship, but because they are fond of "circulating ideas and critical valuations." Their function, he adds, is to "*talk* about what is good when the rest of the world is talking about what is profitable" (114, my emphasis). An infuriated Viola protests that she distrusts abstracts, hates talking about culture and civilization, and disapproves of middle-class intellectuals' habit of reading and haunting libraries (115) and of their being absolutely "impotent" and "invisible" people "who don't make actions of their thoughts" (174).

To be sure, hostility to immaterial discourse and abstract language reaches epidemic proportions in the novel. A socialist called Jenkins intimates to Treece that he sometimes feels "like a traitor to sociology" and that he considers intellectuals a mere "little group of disordered citizens" who play no role in society (27). He also questions the role of university teachers, who are promoting, rather than protesting against "the processes of middle-class business morality" (28) and who are too "busy taking notes" to pay heed to "the sphere of national effectiveness" (207). Similarly, feeling intimidated by the jargon and "ambiguities" used by a teacher, poet, and novelist called Carey Willoughby (227), the Vice-Chancellor protests: "You people are slippery fishes … You have a faculty for defining the simple in terms of the grandiose, so that a poor devil like me can't understand it. You're all the same. Well, a plague on your abstractions. Facts, my friends, facts" (230).

It is worth adding that, like Bradbury's Vice-Chancellor, numerous academic characters elsewhere join the chorus of protest against scholars' obsession with mystification and against their attendant aloofness from their surroundings. To begin with, in Bradbury's *Stepping Westward* (1965), a student called Miss Lindstrom, talking to a teacher and writer

named James Walker, wonders why "these writers have to be smart" and why they don't simply say what they think right out, 'stead of going around confusing people?" (323). In Philip Roth's *The Professor of Desire* (1977), too, a professor's wife puts her loathing for "those poor innocent theoretical bookworms who do the teaching" down to the fact that they distort reality, turning it into something "ghastly" (40). Finally, Vic Wilcox, a businessman and one of the leading characters in Lodge's *Nice Work* (1988), objects to intellectuals' leaning towards impenetrable jargon, to their unwillingness to "take things at their face value," and to their unrelenting search for "hidden meanings in things." He rails at Robyn Penrose, a temporary Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Rummidge: "A cigarette is a cigarette. A piece of silk is a piece of silk. Why not leave it at that?" (221).

Featuring professors as inconsistent figures and as "literal Dr Doolittles" (Sheppard 19) who are locked away in their academic ivory-tower, as it were, is not the only satirical feature of Bradbury's novel. Treece's failure to address and redress the injustices done to disadvantaged individuals and groups is contrasted with his longing for the thirties, a period when liberalism gained momentum and was something to boast about (Bradbury, *Eating People* 55). "[T]he thing about the 'thirties," he confides to Emma (143), is that one's allegiance lay with a single doctrine, such as socialism "and there were all these socialist clubs, with people doing things about human quandaries" (144). In this "funny age," however, he laments, "one doesn't know where to turn," given the proliferation of philosophies, religions, cultures, and literatures (143). This nostalgic backward look tallies with one of the key ingredients of satire:

> Satire has a generally conservative bias: it is intensely interested in topical, present day questions, but it considers these questions in the light of an enduring ideal. The satirist examines a current situation, tests it against standards of virtue or common sense (which may be either implied or explicit), and finds it wanting. As Gilbert Highet sums up this dualism, satire compares "a noble dream with a debased reality." (Wiegenstein 143)

To conclude, observing Lakoff and Johnson's analysis of the metonymy THE PART FOR THE WHOLE in general, and of the specific example

THE FACE FOR THE WHOLE PERSON in particular, this paper has sought to explore and deplore the racial prejudice plaguing the provincial redbrick university around which Bradbury's *Eating People Is Wrong* revolves. It has proposed that the metonymic concepts' "systematic" functions are constantly brought to bear on people's daily interactions and reactions with respect to race relations. As seen above, the intimate correlation between one's face and fate is best encapsulated by the stereotypical value-laden metonymic expressions "black face" and "pretty face" applied to Eborebelosa and Emma, respectively. This polarizing distinction tips the scales in Emma's favour, of course, which accounts for the African student's failure to carve a niche for himself in the white community – how could he have done that within an utterly discriminatory community? In addition, by sporadically throwing some light on the black academic characters' exposure to racial prejudice outside the university, the novel seems to suggest that this institution is, indeed, a microcosm of society and that the problems afflicting it have roots and parallels in its social environment. As has been noticed, for instance, blacks have difficulty finding houses, may be turned out of their rented houses without warning, are despised on grounds of colour, are ridiculed for performing their religious duties, and are subject to insults and assaults in public places.

Be that as it may, I believe that the novel does not entirely give up hope of curtailing discriminatory attitudes and practices in academic and social circles. This finds substantiation in Treece's and Emma's attempt, if uncertainly, to help unclog the channels of communication between foreign students and their British peers and teachers through reception parties. Equally significant is the sense of guilt gnawing at the two abovementioned characters in relation to the Nigerian student's emotional entanglement and intensified inferiority complex. Finally, it must not be forgotten that the teddy boys' racial assault on Eborebelosa is a big wake-up call for Treece, whose rescue operation, so to speak, belated as it is, is of great help to the physically and psychologically injured foreigner. In the light of this, I am of the opinion that their contradictory feelings and practical failings, notwithstanding academics, especially liberal intellectuals, can still make a valuable contribution towards lifting the lid

on abusive practices and healing racial divisions. To optimize this role, they should, first and foremost, set the example for their students and for the public by according equal respect to human beings, irrespective of their colours and ethnic backgrounds. They also have to press political authorities to take a firm line on racial discrimination and to make it up to the victims of oppression, including "black faces." Finally, they ought to implant the values of tolerance, equality, and justice into their students' minds to guarantee lasting peaceful coexistence for future generations.

Notes:

[i] The rise of postcolonial theory in the 1970s helped put the race issue on the map, as it sought to invalidate "the very foundation of the distinction between West and East (or North and South), colonizer and colonized, metropole and periphery, by showing their historical, political, and cultural imbrications" (Israel 87). Black writers also attempted to challenge the 1980s' widespread negative media stereotypes by producing "what Hanif Kureishi terms 'cheering fictions'" (Procter 103).

[ii] Racial prejudice continues to be a presiding preoccupation in British academic fiction well into the twenty-first century. In James Lasdun's *The Horned Man* (2002), for instance, one of the senior professors, overhearing "a sophomore warning some freshmen about the chiggers –insects that burrow under your skin; a local hazard," comes out with "a foolish witticism," suggesting that they had better be called ''chegroes'' rather than "chiggers." Immediately after, the students lodge a protest with the student council (11) and the Disciplinary Committee charges the cornered professor with contempt for minority students. Asked to write an apology, he resigns, and the press publicize the event (12).

[iii] The same is true for the narrator's description of the working-class student Louis Bates as a "weak voice" (Bradbury, *Eating People* 287). As a symptom and symbol of Bates's humble origins and marginal role at the University and in society, the voice's weakness stands in stark contrast to the positive connotations of the metonymic concept "*strong bodies*" proposed by Lakoff and Johnson.

[iv] Like skinheads, rockers, punks, and mods, teddy boys are a group of British young men who gained notoriety in the 1950s as advocates of an idiosyncratic subculture (Hebdige 2). Although they were working-class, they were so hostile towards coloured immigrants that they took up arms against them during the 1958 Race Riots (51).

[v] While claiming that his satirical attack on the university is meant to spotlight its "absurd and ridiculous aspects," Lodge denies that this attack is "destructive . . . wicked or mischievous," given that he belongs to this institution ("David Lodge" 161).

Works Cited

Adams, Hazard. *The Academic Tribes*. 2nd ed. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1988.

Behrend, Heike. *Resurrecting Cannibals: The Catholic Church, Witch-Hunts, and the Production of Pagans in Western Uganda*. Suffolk: Currey, 2011.

Bevan, David, ed. *University Fiction*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990.

Bradbury, Malcolm. Afterword. Malcolm Bradbury. *Eating People Is Wrong*. Chicago: Academy Chicago, 2005. 291-98.

---. "Campus Fictions." *University Fiction*. Ed. David Bevan. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990. 49-56.

---. *Eating People Is Wrong*. Chicago: Academy Chicago, 2005.

---. "Malcolm Bradbury." Interview by John Haffenden. *Novelists in Interview*. London: Methuen, 1985. 25-56.

---. *Stepping Westward*. Cambridge: Riverside, 1966.

Callahan, John F., ed. *Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man: A Case Book*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004.

Cannon, Christopher. *Middle English Literature: A Cultural History*. Cambridge: Polity P, 2008.

Carter, Ian. *Ancient Cultures of Conceit: British University Fiction in the Post War Years*. London: Routledge, 1990.

Cockin, Katharine, and Jago Morrison. "Literary and Cultural Contexts." *The Post-War British Literature Handbook*. Ed. Katharine Cockin and Jago Morrison. London: Continuum, 2010. 57-78. Web. 28 Aug. 2019.

Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. New York: Vintage, 1995.

Elphick, Linda L. "*A World without Real Deliverances*": *Liberal Humanism in the Novels of Malcolm Bradbury*. Diss. Ball State U, 1988. UMI, 1988.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Ode." *Emerson: Poems*. London: Everyman's Library, 2004. 69.

English, James F., ed. *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British Fiction*. Malden: Blackwell, 2006.

Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Vintage, 1988.

Gransden, K. W. "New Novels." Review of *Eating People Is Wrong* by Malcolm Bradbury. *Encounter* (May 1960): 78-79.

Griffin, Dustin. *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction*. Kentucky: UP of Kentucky, 1994.

Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London: Routledge, 1988.

Israel, Nico. "Tropicalizing London: British Fiction and the Discipline of Postcolonialism." *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British Fiction*. Ed. James F. English. Malden: Blackwell, 2006. 83-100.

Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003.

Lasdun, James. *The Horned Man*. New York: Norton, 2003.

Lodge, David. "David Lodge." Interview by John Haffenden. *Novelists in Interview*. London: Methuen, 1985. 145-67.

----. Interview by Mark Thwaite. *Book Depository Interviews*. 9 June 2009. n.p. Web. 6 Sep. 2019.

---. *Nice Work*. London: Penguin, 1989.

Mead, Matthew. "Empire Windrush: The Cultural Memory of an Imaginary Arrival." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. 45.2 (2009): 137-49. Web. 4 July 2019.

Morace, Robert A. *The Dialogic Novels of Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1989.

Moseley, Merritt, ed. *The Academic Novel: New and Classic Essays*. Chester: U of Chester, 2007.

---. "Randall Jarrell, Mary McCarthy, and Fifties Liberalism." *The Academic Novel: New and Classic Essays*. Ed. Merritt Moseley. Chester: U of Chester, 2007. 184-207.

---. "Types of Academic Fiction." *The Academic Novel: New and Classic Essays*. Ed. Merritt Moseley. Chester: U of Chester, 2007. 99-113.

Perry, Kennetta Hammond. *London Is the Place for Me: Black Britons, Citizenship and the Politics of Race*. New York: Oxford UP, 2015.

Price, Martin. "Some Novels from Abroad." Review of *Eating People Is Wrong* by Malcolm Bradbury. *Yale Review* 49 (1960): 618-27.

Procter, James. "New Ethnicities, the Novel, and the Burdens of Representation." *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British Fiction*. Ed. James F. English. Malden: Blackwell, 2006. 101-20.

Rice, Alan. "'Who's Eating Whom': The Discourse of Cannibalism in the Literature of the Black Atlantic from Equiano's 'Travels' to Toni Morrison's 'Beloved.'" *Research in African Literatures* 29. 4 (1998): 107–121. Web. 26 Oct. 2019.

Ron, Matti. "A Vision of the Future: Race and Anti-Racism in 1950s British Fiction." *The 1950s: A Decade of Modern British Fiction*. Ed. Nick Bentley, Alice Ferrebe, and Nick Hubble. London: Bloomsbury, 2019. 141-76. Web. 30 Aug. 2019.

Roth, Philip. *The Human Stain*. New York: Vintage, 2001.

---. *The Professor of Desire*. New York: Vintage, 1994.

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. London: Penguin, 1980.

---. *The Tempest*. Ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Simon, 1994.

Shaw, Patricia. "The Role of the University in Modern English Fiction." *Atlantis* 3.1 (1981): 44-68. Web. 17 Apr. 2018.

Sheppard, Richard. "From Narragonia to Elysium: Some Preliminary Reflections on the Fictional Image of the Academic." *University Fiction*. Ed. David Bevan. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990. 11-47.

Showalter, Elaine. *Faculty Towers: The Academic Novel and Its Discontents*. Pennsylvania: U of Pennsylvania P, 2005.

Snow, C. P. "No Faculty for Finding Love." Review of *Eating People Is Wrong* by Malcolm Bradbury. *Saturday Review* 9 Apr. 1960. 29.

Sutherland, J. A. "Campus Writers." *The Academic Novel: New and Classic Essays*. Ed. Merritt Moseley. Chester: U of Chester P, 2007. 76-88.

Wiegenstein, Steven Christopher. *The Contemporary Academic Novel: A Study in Genre*. Diss. U of Missouri, Columbia, 1987.

Womack, Kenneth. *Postwar Academic Fiction: Satire, Ethics, Community*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.