*Novel and Censorship or Eros’ Bad Faith*

The modern novel, psychological, sentimental and social by definition, has always sought to deal, directly or indirectly, with sex. The subject having strong psychological implications and being liable to be a butt for censorship, the novelist had to invent sophisticated strategies to keep his good image as an artist and make his works acceptable to a comparatively large public, without losing sight that he might run into serious difficulties with the law. The present essay, a continuation *The Figure of the Author,* examines some sexually explicit novels published in the last four hundred years, notably *L’Académie des dames, Fanny Hill, Tristram Shandy, Madame Bovary, Ulysses, Lady Chatterley’s Lover* and *Lolita* It studies their various narrative strategies to deal with this risky subject and the trials instituted against them. It lays stress on the structural link between censorship and poetic innovation where the modern novel is concerned, and on the bad faith involved in its composition, publication, circulation, prohibition and reading.

*The Figure of the Author*

After proclaiming “the death of the Author”, Roland Barthes showed in *Le Plaisir du texte* that the reader needs “the figure of the author” as that figure needs mine if “babbling is to be avoided”; Henry James poetically prefigured his theory in “The Figure in the Carpet”. This essay examines some of the major novels since the eighteenth century, from *Moll Flanders, Pamela, Tristram Shandy, Madame Bovary, What Maisie Knew, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Remembrance of Things Past, How It is, Look at the Harlequins!.* It investigates Barthes’ proposition, as well as that of Michel Foucault on “the author function”, and presents an intersubjective theory of the modern novel, showing how author and reader seek and avoid each other, interacting asymmetrically, sometimes contentiously, through transitional subjects, namely the narrators and the characters. It also analyzes the various parts of a novel, from the title page, the various paratexts or “thresholds” to borrow Genette’s terminology, and offers an anatomy of the writing and reading process.