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Current Research

In recent months a new, academic dissertation has appeared which should also appeal to the general reader of Irish literature.

Åke Persson's ***Betraying the Age: Social and Artistic Protest in Brendan Kennelly's Work*** (Göteborg University, Department of English, 1999), is a study of the Irish poet and critic Brendan Kennelly. By "work" is meant all the wide range of activities in which Kennelly engages in the public sphere and not only what is usually called literary work.

The concept of social and literary protest is used in this very readable new study as the point of departure from which to discuss the impact of Kennelly's critical essays, poetry and poetry readings, anthologies and media appearances in newspapers as well as on radio and television.

Brendan Kennelly remains one of the most exciting and controversial writers in contemporary Ireland. By placing the author's activities in a historical and social context, Åke Persson's study shows how closely interlinked these are with Kennelly's protest against the dominant values and norms of Irish society, a society still greatly influenced by the Roman Catholic Church.

ELISABETH WENNÖ

Work, Love and Gender in David Lodge's *Nice Work*

What seems to be the central concern of David Lodge's novel *Nice Work* is signalled in the quotation from Disraeli's *Sybil; or the Two Nations* which serves as an epigraph to the novel:

> 'Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, and fed by different food, and ordered by different manners...'
> 'You speak of -' said Egremont hesitatingly.

Unlike *Sybil,* however, *Nice Work*[1] does not simply refer to the difference between the 'nations' of the Rich and the Poor, but to a number of different worlds in terms of sex, gender, occupation, race, class, environmental areas, generations, cultures, lifestyles, institutions of production, not to mention literary genres and modes of writing. Commentators have in particular dwelt on the differences between the industrial and academic worlds that the main characters, Victor Wilcox and Robyn Penrose, move in, noting that the divison and the inherent social conflicts between these worlds remain essentially unbridged despite the note of mutual sympathy on which the novel ends.[2]

It is obvious that the main protagonists are supposed to represent opposite and antagonistic worlds in terms of ideology, values, lifestyle, politics, social structures, and working life. They are, in other words, 'formed by different breeding, and fed by different food, and ordered by different man-

[1] David Lodge, *Nice Work* (London: Penguin, 1989). All parenthetical page references are to this edition.

[2] See, for instance, Robert Burton, "Standoff at the Crossroads: When Town Meets Gown in David Lodge's *Nice Work,*" in *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 35.4 (1994): 237-43; Rudolf Böhm, "Universität und Industrie: 'Zwei Nationen' in David Lodges *Nice Work,*" in Konrad Gross, Kurt Müller and Meinhard Winkgens, eds. *Das Natur/Kultur-Paradigma in der englischsprachigen Erzählliteratur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts: Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag von Paul Goetsch* (Tübingen: Gunter Nar, 1994); Eva Lambertsson Björk, *Campus Clowns and the Canon: David Lodge's Campus Fiction* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1993). University of Umeå Diss.

ners…'. These 'worlds' are brought together, and in the course of the novel they, predictably, affect each other, and gradually there is both 'sympathy' and 'intercourse' (in the double sense of the word). Although there is no final union and merger in the form of marriage, they are no longer totally 'ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings', pipelines have been established between the different dwelling zones, and both are 'better off' in a number of respects at the end of the novel. The novel is thus optimistic in its resolution of the conflict that is set up by forcing different worlds to meet and interact, since it suggests that encountering and assimilating difference is not only possible but highly desirable. 'ONLY CONNECT' is the simple, if not simplistic, solution that echoes from an earlier decade in the form of the intertextual reference to Forster's *Howard's End.*

It is not, however, the story-level simplicity that is my concern here, but the novel's potential relevance for our understanding of the structural differences in what sociologists call 'life modes',[3] and the way in which the concepts of work, love, and gender relate to the upholding of social structures and social praxis. It seems to me that *Nice Work* bridges the division between industry and academia by emphasising the structural similarities in the work and love aspects of the two cultural spheres, thus drawing attention to the subordination of both to the forces of the economic and gender systems.

The socioeconomic-gender focus is apparent in a number of ways apart from the obvious concerns of the story-level. Firstly, there are the direct quotations, heading each part, from 19th-century novels with a similar centre of work and love. Secondly, there are the literary references that are integral to the story through character speech (e.g. Robyn's lecture on the Industrial novel, for example), or the way an event evokes associations to similar events in earlier industrial novels (e.g. the factory mutiny). Thirdly, there is the intricate juxtaposition of 'postmodern realism'[4] in mode of writing and 'romance' in genre. It is this tension between the mode of writing and mode of genre that is characteristic of Lodge's fiction, and the location of its relevance.

[3] As defined by Liselotte Jakobsen and Jan Ch Karlsson, *Arbete och kärlek: En utveckling av livsformsanalys [Work and Love: Towards an Analytical Model of Life Models]* (Lund: Arkiv förlag, 1993), 'a 'life mode' is a social structure through which people produce work and love for the purpose of securing, on the one hand, the means of existence and, on the other, human existence in itself' (18). This theory is also partly presented in Jan Ch Karlsson, "The Concept of Work on a Rack: Critique and Suggestions," in Richard L. Simpson and Ida Harper, eds., *Research in the Sociology of Work: A Research Annual. Vol. 5: The Meaning of Work* (Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press, 1994).

[4] With 'postmodern realism' I mean the kind of writing that constructs a credible illusion of so called everyday life and adheres to the conventions of realism while displaying, through an ironic stance and exaggeration or deviation from the norm, an awareness of its own artefact.

If we assume with the historian Richard Johnson, among others, that generic forms are not produced by imaginative minds, or restricted to fiction, but are 'historically-produced constructions' with counterparts in our perceptions of historical events,[5] then the juxtaposition of mode of writing and genre is particularly interesting in view of the novel's focus on work and love: Because work and love are so central to Western cultures at least, it is inevitable that this novel, as a historically-produced construction, should represent contemporary signifying practices and structures. Clearly, the juxtapositions in *Nice Work* of realism and romance in terms of genre (or metonymy and metaphor in terms of modes of thinking, or prose and passion in terms of Forster's distinction of the monk and the beast in the apostrophied *Howard's End)* structure the signifying field as one of work and love.

It is perfectly clear that Vic and Robyn embody totally *different styles* of living as signalled through all the details and elements that make up their daily social praxis, conceptions and means of cultural expression. But the *similarities* in their *modes* of living also deserve attention. A 'life mode', as Jakobsen and Karlsson define it, is constituted by the two spheres of the material base that structure the production of the means of social existence ('work') and the production of social existence as such, or the goal of existence ('love' as 'care', or 'passion'). Different positions in these structural spheres make up separate forms of works and love.[6]

In terms of work, Vic and Robyn both exemplify the 'career form'.[7] They are employed but not in the sense of being at disposal during business hours (as in the wage-earner form), but in the sense of carrying out certain tasks for which they have specialized competence and knowledge, and they are employed in hierarchical institutions in which the possibility of promotion is held out as a promise to the able and dedicated. In this form of employment, work spills over into private time in such a way that work becomes life. Jakobsen and Karlsson point out that a characteristic feature of the career form is that leisure time (or non-work) is at the service of working life. The introductions to the protagonists in *Nice Work* are not only centred on their preoccupation with work, but also define the nature of it as a life 'mission' or a life 'calling', suitably gendered through metaphors of 'war' and 'protection' in Vic's case, and of 'cure' and 'care' in Robyn's. Vic lies awake, waiting for the alarm to go off:

[5] Richard Johnsson, 'What is Cultural Studies Anyway?, ' *Social Text* 16.1 (1986): 59-60.

[6] Jakobsen and Karlsson 71.

[7] Jakobsen and Karlsson define eight forms of social praxes, or 'life modes', each of which is a fusion of a form of work and a form of love. These are the modes of: the self-employed, the helpmate, the investor, the investor wife, the wage-earner, the housewife, the carreerist, the carreer wife (123).

> Worries streak towards him like enemy spaceships in one of Gary's video games. He flinches, dodges, zaps them with instant solutions, but the assault is endless: the Avco account, the Rawlinson account, the price of pig-iron, the value of the pound, the competition from Foundrax, the incompetence of his Marketing Director, the persistent breakdowns of the core blowers, the vandalizing of the toilets in the fettling shop, the pressure from his divisional boss, last month's accounts, the quarterly forecast, the annual review...(13).

Robyn sleeps fine, but once awake, 'worries rush into her consciousness, as into his, like clamorous patients who have been waiting all night for the doctor's surgery to open... thinking mostly about the nineteenth-century industrial novel on which she has to lecture this morning' (41). Even the reading of the morning newspaper is for both of them work-related: Vic turns to the Business Section of the *Sunday Times* and Robyn to the Women's page of the *Guardian,* which does not feature recipes but articles on women-related political issues and a forthcoming public discussion with Marilyn French of her book *Beyond Power: Women, Men and Morals.*

Also their workplaces display fundamental similarities. The factory and the University are set off from the community, surrounded by barriers and guards, allowing access to authorized persons only. Subjected to economic forces, these institutions share the problem of deciding whether diversification or specialization is the best policy. Besides, the need for rationalization is similar at the factory and the university. Meetings are held at both places in which problems of operation and management are discussed. At their respective workplaces, Vic and Robyn wield a certain power and authority, but both are at the same time pawns in an economic power game. As Vic puts it: 'I am the biggest cog in this particular machine. But a small cog in a much bigger one – Midland Amalgamated. They can get rid of me whenever they like' (135). In a similar way Robyn might be the biggest cog in the course machinery, but her position is far from certain. Despite the difference in the line of production ('goods' as opposed to 'meaning'), it is pointed out in the text that there is a structural resemblance in being a managing director and a teacher: 'Pringle's was definitely a business dealing in real commodities and running it was not in the least like doing literary theory, but it did strike Robyn sometimes that Vic Wilcox stood to his subordinates in the relation of teacher to pupil' (219). Indeed, the rest of the passage describes and defines Vic's pedagogical method as Socratic. As if to underline the simlilarity in their professional relational positions, there is a verbal echo in the description of the faces they encounter when they are placed in the similar situation of addressing an audience: 'curious, expectant, sullen,' (72) and 'expectant, sullen, quizzical' (251) respectively.

The structural similarity that defines the protagonists' 'production of the means of existence' as the career form is repeated in their social existence. They both have caring partners who tend to their needs, without receiving

similar attention. In the love form that they exemplify, they are both placed in the position of the 'empowered' rather than the 'empowerer'.[8] The latter position is occupied by Vic's wife, Marjorie, the frustrated homemaker, and Robyn's week-end live-in companion, Charles, whose position as the 'empowerer' is accentuated in his admiration for Robyn and in his tea-making, but most of all in his narrative function as the wholly sympathetic narratee, responding and performing adequately to Robyn's accounts, questions and needs. In both relationships, love equals 'care' on the part of the empowerer rather than 'passion'. Vic and Marjorie have abandoned love-making, and Robyn and Charles practise 'non-penetrative sex' in the form of massage, which seems to have more to do with technique than passionate ecstasy.

Thus, for the empowered, passion is displaced onto work, which becomes both the means and the goal of existence, and for the empowerer, the goal of existence is threatened, rendering both work and social existence meaningless. The Valium-addicted Marjorie sleeps most of the day (unless she goes shopping), worrying about Vic's lack of interest in her, and Charles quits his job as a university teacher for a job in the financial world of the City, and for a new and equally unsuccessful relationship with another workaholic, the financial wizard Debbie.

Structurally speaking, the exemplified mode of living, that is, the combination of the forms of the means of existence and social existence, is not harmonized but characterized by the *absence* of 'the career wife' or 'backing up woman': Marjorie has not adjusted to Vic's career moves, but remains a 'housewife' (which sociologically speaking goes with the wage-earner work form), unable to partake mentally and socially in her husband's world; Charles embodies a mixed mode of living, that is, the career form in terms of work and 'the career wife' in terms of love. The possibility of this mix is not only ruled out by his non-presence in the home, but also by contemporary patterns since 'career wife' is a woman-specific love form, and Charles, although emasculated, remains as much a 'non-female' as Robyn remains a 'non-male' despite the androgynous suggestions. Vic's and Robyn's modes of living thus suffer from a similar flaw: In neither case is there the happy fusion of form of work and form of love that is conductive either to the demands of the economic system or to the demands of the sex/gender system. What we are presented with are in fact two mergers that are equally unsuccessful whether traditional in terms of the economic and sex/gender systems (Vic and Marjorie), or non-traditional (Robyn and Charles). The undercutting of the sex/gender system that is promised in Robyn's and

[8] Jakobsen and Karlsson 86-87. The argument here is that not only work but also love is a social praxis, a socio-sexual sphere which incorporates a material base with different properties than the economic base. The mechanism at work in this social structure is empowerment, the way people can empower each other as indivuduals and as a species.

Charles' inverted gender roles and gender attributes is as challenged as the 'given' nature of the 'normal' combination of the bread-winning man and the house-making woman.

A significant form of 'disconnection', then, turns out to be this failure to connect (what in contemporary society would seem to be) compatible and complementary modes of work and love. Just as Robyn's car won't start because of 'Loose electrical connections' (150), so have the dynamics and energy of love gone flat. Vic and Robyn both display passion but ostensibly only passion of the mind (Forster's 'monk' or 'prose'), which is work-related, and not passion of the body (Forster's 'beast' or 'passion'). In Vic's case it is a passion for machines, the skillful performance of men at work, and making a profit. In Robyn's case it is a passion for ideas, principles, and the victims of the system, whether at the factory or at the university. The most illustrative examples of Vic's lack of passion in the material sense are his sublimations of the desires of the body, for instance, his love of romantic pop songs, his puritanical objections to sex enacted on TV, and his daily, highly metaphorically orgastic drive to work in his powerfully potent Jaguar (28-30), in which he experiences 'pure sensation, total control, effortless superiority' (28), as well as his assertion that he 'never lets himself go' (287). But most of all, the lack is highlighted in his voyeuristic peep at the love-making in progress on the sofa in the office lounge:

> It was a passion Vic himself had not experienced for a very long time, and he was doubtful whether Marjorie ever had... Vic had never imagined that he would envy Brian Everthorpe anything, but he did now. He envied him the full-blooded fucking of a passionate woman, and the woman's full-throated hurrah. (231)

But the 'total control' and 'effortless superiority' of his car-driving 'musical masturbation', are not ascribed to him at the time of the Frankfurt experience, but to Robyn, who masterfully controls events every step of the way and 'like to be on top' (293). Robyn has passion *for* the body rather than *of* the body: Stretching her muscles, doing yoga exercises, eating healthy food, playing squash, and sweating in the sauna. The needs of the body, she thinks, are biological reflexes that can be observed and they have very little to do with passion, let alone love:

> 'Language and biology,' she says, opening her legs wider.
> 'Of course we have bodies, physical needs and appetites. My muscles contract when you touch me there – feel?'
> 'I feel,' he says.
> 'And that is nice. But the discourse of romantic love pretends that your finger and my clitoris are extensions of two unique individual selves who need each other for ever and ever.' (293)

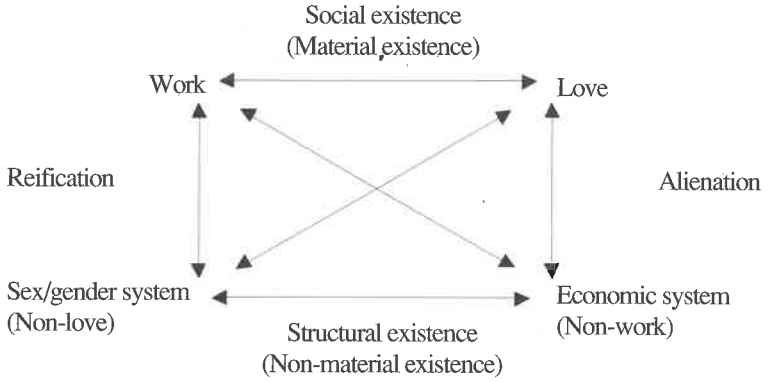
The separation and the reduction of body and mind to biology and language are, however challenged throughout the novel in the characters' bodily reactions to events, as, for instance, when Charles announces that he might not come for the weekend: 'To her surprise and annoyance she was trembling slightly' (260). If Vic in his romantic sublimations is a victim of romantic discourse, then Robyn is, ironically, a victim of theoretical discourse, the purpose of which is to save people from being victims of systems: 'Once you realize there is nothing outside the text, you can begin to write it yourself' (362).

The major opposition in this novel is not then necessarily industry/academia, or the production of goods/meaning, but work/love, or mind/body. For it is not 'running a factory' as opposed to 'teaching at a university' that are manifested as contraries; it is *work* as 'running a factory *or* teaching at the university' as opposed to *love* (in terms of 'care') represented as 'making a home *or* paying a visit' (including 'making tea or making conversation' or in general adjusting to Roby's needs the way we see Charles do). In terms of passion, the opposition centres on the displacement of bodily passion in such a way that 'work' (or love as Marjorie's and Charles' 'care') equals 'passion' (non-work) whereas 'love' ('passion') equals 'substitution' (non-love). In other words, we get the following sets of opposites:

WORK = PASSION		vs	LOVE = SUBSTITUTION	
in the form of:			in the form of:	
'making a profit'	(Vic)		'driving a car'	(Robyn & Charles)
'making meaning'	(Robyn & Charles)		'giving massage'	(Robyn & Charles)
'making adjustments'	(Charles)		'receiving massage'	(Robyn & Charles)
'making a home'	(Marjorie)		'taking valium'	(Marjorie)

If, as Robyn suggests, the truth of existence is represented 'realistically by a set of metonymies', but that the meaning of it can only be grasped metaphorically (178-179), then we can see the novel's narrative elements as representing an inversion of that claim: Work, which is supposed to be the 'truth' (the 'prose' and the realism), the nitty-gritty material reality of existence is transformed into the *meaning* of existence through conceptual, abstract ideals (the left-hand list). Conversely, love, supposedly more linked to a meaningful non-material ideal, is metonymically (the right-hand list), and ironically, evoked to represent the 'truth' of the characters' actual reality.

Work and love are certainly opposed in this novel, but they are also two forms of the same thing at a higher conceptual level, which in turn generates its opposite. For, if we see work and love as the material and social base of human existence, 'producing' the means and the goals of it, we must see the economic and sex/gender systems as the ideological structures that organize the spheres of human production of existence. This relationship in the novel can be shown graphically with the help of Greimas' famous 'semiotic square':



The primary opposition is between 'Social existence' (concrete) and 'Structural existence' (abstract). Work and Love are both defining aspects of Social existence – its potential synthesis – but also, as we have seen, opposed in this novel as one excludes the other. The two systems are defining and opposed aspects of 'Structural existence', and at the same time they signify 'all that which work and love is not', i.e. their contradictions (non-work and non-love). For, if work is the production of the means of human existence and love is the production of human existence *per se,* then this novel does "nice work" in demonstrating that the economic system is not in the service of producing the means, and the sex/gender system is not in the service of producing the goal. It does not matter how much skill and passion Vic and Robyn put into their work, the economic system (non-work) does not guarantee job security, or the means of production, but is a constant threat to it. Likewise, it does not matter that Robyn is highly skilled in deconstructing the gender system, exposing its devious mechanisms, her *awareness* of the existence of the system is an obstacle to love, or the production of the human existence in a bodily or reproductive sense. Independence is the watchword that effectively excommunicates her from the dynamics of love. It does not matter that Vic is completely *unaware* or the workings of the gender system, he is a clear victim of the sex/gender system, seeing Marjorie, not as an individual, but as a female with a repulsive body that does not arouse his desires, and we see him an easy prey to romantic love once his desires are aroused by Robyn.

Also, each defining aspect of 'Structural existence' serves to signify the negative definition of the term above it. The sex/gender system (non-love), that is, the way the protagonists relate to each other as belonging to opposite sexes is characterized by reification, which is also a negative aspect of working life: Marjorie is seen as a body (that he does not desire) and as a function of the home, but not as an individual with sets of talents and needs; Charles is seen as a body (consisting of parts, including pimples) and as a function of discourse, but not as an individual to commit to. Every worker is a dispensable item to Vic, replaceable by machines, and every student is a potential proselyte to Robyn, or a victim of the system, subordinated to her love of 'knowledge and freedom', although the fact that she blushes at Vic's suggestion that she cares about the students 'because they're are individuals', as usual contradicts her protestations to the contrary (362).

The alienating effect of an economic system that is based on profit, competition, rivalry, is even more clearly evoked as the negative definition of love. Vic can only make love to Marjorie by thinking about Robyn: Robyn almost falls asleep while Charles administers his technique-oriented massage; Marjorie resorts to drugs; the unemployed sons hang listlessly about or sit by the computer; and Marion uses the alienating attributes of commercial 'love' to pay her way through university. We are also reminded of the negative aspect of love as essentially an economic transaction in Marjorie's dependency on Vic's money and in exchange of services in the giving and receiving of massage: 'Quite soon she reached a very satisfying climax. Then it was Charles' turn' (158).

Another form of 'disconnection' is to be found, then, in the counterproductive force that the economic system and the sex/gender system exert on the material base, since they seem to be set up to *prevent* rather than promote human ends. In this sense the novel is a true humanist plea for a reconstruction of an economic system that is based on a social and political vision rather than on profit, and for a deconstruction of a sex/gender system that reduces the view of humanity to biology or language, whether it be in the form of the ideals of romantic or theoretical discourse.

But the story resolution is not as radical in its implications as the novel's exposure of the tensions in the structural relationships seems to promise. The threats to their life mode represented by the failure to connect work and love and the counterproductive forces of the economic and sex/gender systems are averted through a reassertion of the normalizing code of traditional institutions and the possibilities for individual fulfilment *within* the existing systems.

At the end of the novel we see Vic, who has lost his job, busy setting up a business of his own, something that brings his whole family to their feet and together. Everybody has a function to fill in the company. Vic moves from the 'career form' to the 'self-employed' form, and Marjorie changes from being a 'housewife' (or a failed 'career wife') to being the 'helpmate', which, in the sphere of love, is the compatible form to this mode of work. The dimples that made Vic once choose her as his wife returns to her cheeks and he now sees her as a person to love with passion. The institution of the family is thus upheld by the conductive connection that is established between the form of work and the form of love: The Wilcoxes make a perfect example of *neoculturation* which is the sociological term for the process by which threats to a given life mode are averted.[9] It is, of course, significant

[9] Jakobsen and Karlsson 200.

that marriage as a social and economic institution is central in this novel, and that male and female perform the roles prescribed by the sex/gender system. In structural terms, the neoculturation represents an elimination of oppositions and tensions: Work and Love are synthesized in the social processes of existence and the structural effects of alienation and reification have been replaced by economic and marital partnership.

This happy state of affairs is not, however, to be seen as a point at which everything comes to rest. The attentive reader will call to mind Vic's description of the fate of Pringle's in the 'cycle of commerce':

> Somebody gets an idea of how to make something cheaper or better than anybody else, and sets up a factory with a small team of employees. Then if all goes well he takes on more labour and brings his sons into the business to take over when he retires. But either the sons aren't interested, or they think to themselves: why risk all our capital in this business, when we could sell out to a bigger company and invest the money in something safer? So the firm gets sold to a conglomerate like Midland Amalgamated, and some poor sod like me is brought in to run it on a salary. (200)

It is also telling that this sudden reversal of fortune is brought about by Robyn, who, finding herself unexpectedly in possession of capital, becomes an 'investor', making Vic's business venture possible. So, just like Margaret in *North and South,* Robyn is "on the side of the master" (79). The 'cycle of commerce' is repeated on the narrative level as the side of the master" (79). The 'cycle of commerce' is repeated on the narrative level as the 'cycle of the Industrial Novel', because it is not hard to see that Robyn's lecture on the Industrial Novel is also a lecture on the novel in progress: 'In short, all the Victorian novelist could offer as a solution to the problems of industrial capitalism were: a legacy, a marriage, emigration or death' (83). Robyn gets a legacy, a proposal of marriage, and an offer to emigrate. In place of death, however, she gets the ardently desired offer of a post at the university (does such a fate ironically imply death?), and like Vic she restores the imbalance between work and love: She does not accept Charles's marriage proposal, but she sends him a 'gorillagram' (which is 'worse' than a kissogram, according to Marion), clearly indicating an acknowledgement of the necessity of the 'beast' (passion) in human relationships.

Lodge has been criticized for the sudden and fairytale-like wrapping up of this novel.[10] And it is true that the novel does not offer a radical solution to the problems of social existence in the era of late capitalism, only an idealized and romanticized version, one which the text itself suggests that we should regard with suspicion if we consider the way Robyn rounds off her analysis of *Hard Times:*

[10] For instance, by Terry Eagleton, 'The Silences of David Lodge', *New Left Review* 172 (1988): 101.

> '... The message of the novel is clear: the alienation of work under industrial capitalism can be overcome by an infusion of loving kindness and imaginative play, represented by Cissie and the circus.'
> Robyn paused to allow the racing pens to catch up with her discourse, and to give emphasis to her next sentence: 'Of course, such a reading is totally inadequate. Dickens's own idelological position is riddled with contradiction.' (77)

I would not presume to know about Lodge's ideological position, but there is every reason to suspect that *Nice Work* is equally 'riddled with contradiction', or at least that the message of the novel is not quite as clear as the resolution suggests. The happy ending, of course, signals Comedy in terms of 'modes of emplotment', as defined by Frye.[11] The focus of Comedy is not so much on the individual as on a higher unit, for instance, society, of which the individual seems to be an organic part. Following a period of troublesome tensions and events, in which hindering characters play a central role, there is, in this mode of emplotment, a transition to a new and better society, in which the individuals are integrated with the help of assisting characters. The part-whole relationship (synecdoche) paves the way for seeing the Wilcoxes' succesful neoculturation as representing the worldview of 'Organicism' in Stephen Pepper's terminology. Just as each member of the family now has a function in the whole, so does the family as a unit have a function in society. The Wilcoxes, as part of the whole (society), also represent and reflect society qualitatively, i.e. what it can be for better or for worse. In this form of argumentation, it is fortunate that Vic loses his job since it sets him free to do what he really wants do do and to reconcile with his family.

The ideological implication is conservative: Trust in the restorative powers of the system (the economic) and by implication, in the power of the individual. In this way, the successful harmonization of work and love also ties in neatly with the parallel emplotment of Romance and its idiolectic worldview, since Vic and Robyn also exemplify the questing individuals in search of their true selves and inner meanings that will restore plenitude and reestablish meaningful relationships. In this reading, the dark forces to be eliminated are the forces and values of the economic and sex/gender systems. We have already seen how Vic has moved from his initial question 'Who am I?' to a fulfilment of his dreams. Robyn's movement is through a descent from the ivory tower of theory into the realities of 'hell', which equips her to resist the temptation of accepting the total alienation from 'life' that the prestigious and well paid post in America would entail. Instead, the connection between her work and her political vision is reestablished (384). It is to be noted that in terms of the social processes that constitute human life, it is *through* the possibilities of securing the means of production (work) that

[11] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957

the end of human existence (love) is seen to be obtained. In this sense the novel emphasises the *primacy* of work in modern life in opposition to the trend of self-fulfilment and romantic view of love as the means of happiness, or as Vic puts it: 'I'm afraid I have been a bit foolish' (380).

'Tis not all a muddle' then but a very clear structure that reflects the struggle in contemporary society to harmonize the seemingly opposing practices of life and work, while exposing their relationship to the structures that organize these activities. If the concepts of work and love are enacted through the Comic and Romantic emplotments, then the structures of the systems that govern these plot developments are evoked through her ever-present Gladstone bag to another morally committed, but unsuccessful liberal liberation fighter. There is also the fact that we find the economically integrated Vic reading *Culture and Anarchy* at the end of the novel, which suggests that the predestined (and therefore tragic) 'cycle of commerce' might yet be broken. But most of all, the satire is evoked in the amassment of random events and connections, and utter irrationality that brings the story to its happy resolution. When everything else is said and done, Robyn's fate is ultimately decided by Professor Swallow's fortunate and timely discovery of the meaning of 'virement'. There is, indeed, nothing outside the text. Or, rather, as this novel cries out, there are bodies, physical beings, that are victims of the text (systems), but with the ability to momentarily transcend the restrictions and agendas of systems that seem designed to defy the right to the production of the means of existence and human existence *per se* to everyone. For, as the randomness of this novel makes clear, you cannot, as Robyn mistakenly believes, write the text yourself.

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JANINA NORDIUS

Teaching Modern Gothic: Discourses in Doris Lessing's "To Room Nineteen"

The gothic novel, or the novel of horror, is sometimes thought of as a phenomenon specific to the late eighteenth century – a result of the 'gothic revival' which swept Britain in the wake of neoclassicism, and which lent its name to the increasingly popular body of spine-chilling fiction that so famously stirred and thrilled its, largely female, readership. Yet although the heyday of the gothic 'proper' lasted only till about 1830, the genre lives on, if considerably diffused and transformed as we reach the twenty-first century.[1] Modern gothic addresses fears that may at first seem very different from the horrors that faced the heroines of a Mrs Radcliffe or Monk Lewis in the ancient castles or underground dungeons where they invariably ended up confined. But as is often pointed out, a main feature of the genre is its reliance on "a code of iteration,"[2] and thus certain elements, notably the horrors and fears evoked by incarceration, have continued to be reproduced throughout the ages. In modern gothic, however, the material prison walls and catacombs of the eighteenth century novels have given way to a more abstract threat: to "the sense that there is no exit from the darkly illuminating labyrinth of language," as Fred Botting puts it.[3]

Referring to language as a "prison-house" has, to be sure, become a postmodern commonplace, in the sense that very few would contest the role of language as such in the process of constituting the human subject. Yet when dealing with the claustrophobia so manifest in certain modern gothic texts, it seems nevertheless fruitful to focus, specifically, on the play of *different* discourses that, in Foucauldian terms, structure and determine the way we think of reality and of ourselves. A discourse, understood in this way, consists of a set of practices (for instance thought practices and speech practices) that rely on certain, more or less hidden assumptions about the world, and which by shaping also our notion of our own self may certainly be seen as imprisoning – especially as dominant discursive structures often serve to maintain existing power relations among groups of people or individuals in society. However, as Sara Mills points out, discourses are not

[1] See Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London; Routledge, 1996) 13ff.
[2] Victor Sage and Allan Lloyd Smith, *Modern Gothic: A Reader* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996) 1.
[3] Botting 14.
[4] Sara Mills, *Discourse* (London: Routledge, 1997) 16. Mills' book gives an accessible introduction to the way Foucauldian practices have influenced e.g. feminist studies.