

# David Lodge's Nice Work as Campus Novel

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Bachelor's Thesis  
2024



**Tomas Bata University in Zlín**  
Faculty of Humanities

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Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně  
Fakulta humanitních studií  
Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur

Akademický rok: 2023/2024

# ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(projektu, uměleckého díla, uměleckého výkonu)

Jméno a příjmení: Denisa Kusinová  
Osobní číslo: H20696  
Studijní program: B0231P090005 Anglický jazyk pro manažerskou praxi  
Forma studia: Prezenční  
Téma práce: *Pěkná práce* Davida Lodge jako univerzitní román

## Zásady pro vypracování

Shromáždění sekundárních zdrojů k problematice vysokoškolského románu  
Nastudování primárního díla  
Stanovení cílů práce  
Analýza románu Davida Lodge  
Formulace závěru práce

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**  
Jazyk zpracování: **Angličtina**

**Seznam doporučené literatury:**

- Bergonzi, Bernard. *David Lodge*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995.  
Farrall, Stephen, and Colin Hay. *The Legacy of Thatcherism: Assessing and Exploring Thatcherite Social and Economic Policies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.  
Fuchs, Dieter. *The Campus Novel: Regional or Global?* Leiden: Brill, 2019.  
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Womack, Kenneth. *Postwar Academic Fiction: Satire, Ethics, Community*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2001.

Vedoucí bakalářské práce: **Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Ewald Mengel**  
Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur

Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **1. února 2024**  
Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **6. května 2024**

**Mgr. Libor Marek, Ph.D.**  
děkan



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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato bakalářská práce se ponoří do románu Davida Lodge "Pěkná práce" se zaměřením na analýzu složité socioekonomické dynamiky a mezilidských vztahů v akademickém prostředí. Příběh se odvíjí na pozadí éry Margaret Thatcherové, kdy tradiční průmyslová odvětví procházejí významnými změnami, odrážejícími společenské posuny, ke kterým dochází v širším kontextu Británie osmdesátých let. Studie využívá literární a sociokulturní analýzy ke zkoumání Lodgeova zobrazení kolize mezi světy akademického oboru a průmyslu, jak dokládá nečekaná dvojice hlavních postav, Robyn Penrose, feministické literární teoretičky, a Vica Wilcoxe, pragmatického podnikatele, zaměřeného na svět obchodu.

Klíčová slova: David Lodge, univerzitní román, Pěkná Práce

## **ABSTRACT**

This bachelor's thesis analyses David Lodge's novel "Nice Work" with a focus on analysing the intricate socioeconomic dynamics and interpersonal relationships within the academic setting. The narrative unfolds against the backdrop of the Thatcherite era, where traditional industries are undergoing significant transformations, mirroring the societal shifts occurring in the larger context of 1980s Britain. The study employs literary and sociocultural analyses to examine Lodge's portrayal of the collision between the worlds of academia and industry, as exemplified by the unlikely pairing of the central characters, Robyn Penrose, a feminist literary theorist, and Vic Wilcox, a pragmatic and business-oriented industrialist.

Keywords: David Lodge, Campus novel, Nice Work

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I am incredibly grateful to my supervisor for their guidance throughout the process of completing this thesis. I also extend my deepest gratitude to my family for their enduring love, encouragement, and understanding.

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## INTRODUCTION

Nice Work is a novel by David Lodge that is often classified as a college novel because it includes scenes occurring on a college campus and one of its main characters is a college professor. However, the novel is not just about the university experience, and its themes extend beyond the academic environment.

This bachelor's thesis will explore the ways in which *Nice Work* deals with the issues of academics and industry and the ways in which it can be seen as a commentary on contemporary society. By analysing the novel's characters, plot, and themes, this thesis will offer insights into the ways in which *Nice Work* uses the university environment to address bigger concerns linked to education, culture, and society.

In the first chapter, we establish a comprehensive understanding of the campus novel genre. Through an exploration of its origins, defining characteristics, and thematic motifs, we lay the groundwork for our analysis of "*Nice Work*" and its place within this literary tradition.

The second chapter focuses on notable authors who have contributed to the campus novel genre. By examining the works of influential writers such as Kingsley Amis and Malcolm Bradbury, we gain insight into the diverse perspectives and storytelling approaches that have shaped this genre over time.

Chapter three explores David Lodge's acclaimed *Campus Trilogy*, of which "*Nice Work*" is a pivotal component. We analyse the narrative intricacies, character development, and thematic underpinnings of Lodge's trilogy, shedding light on the ways in which it both adheres to and subverts traditional conventions of the campus novel genre.

In the final chapter, we explore the broader societal reflections embedded within campus novels, with a particular focus on "*Nice Work*." By examining how Lodge's portrayal of British society intersects with themes of class, gender, and economic realities, we uncover the novel's deeper implications and its relevance to contemporary discourse.

## 1 CAMPUS NOVEL

For decades, readers have been enthralled with the campus novel as a separate literary genre, which brings forth a unique perspective on the complicated environment of academia.

This first chapter provides context for a broad analysis of campus novels, exploring their historical origins, defining characteristics, and prominent writers who have had a significant impact on the genre. We set out on a trip that explores the complicated nature of academic life, social relationships, and changes in society by exploring the literary landscape of college novels.

Whenever we discuss something, it is essential that we use our terminology precisely so that everyone knows exactly what we mean. Thus, this chapter will define the literary genre known as the "campus novel." We'll explore this word more deeply and discuss what this means in greater detail in the first sub-chapter. In the second subchapter we'll go over the common characteristics of campus novels and see how *Nice Work* varies from David Lodge's other work. Then we shall present the most well-known authors who are recognized for writing university novels in the third section and finally in the last subsection of this chapter our final topic of discussion will be the historical background to these works.

### 1.1 Defining Campus Novel as a Literary Genre

The campus novel offer storytelling characterised by its setting in the hallowed corridors of universities and colleges. This section explores the definition of the campus novel as a unique literary genre, as well as its significance in capturing the atmosphere of higher education.

Novels of this kind are often described as books written by scholars for other scholars, about scholarship. There are also alternative names used for the term "campus novel" such as "academic novel", "college novel" and "university novel". Therefore, these terms can be interchangeable.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Merritt Moseley, *The Academic Novel: New and Classic Essays*, (Chester: Chester Academic Press, 2007), viii.

Although college novels are primarily set in a college environment, this setting is not exactly the most important part of campus novels. It is much more than just setting. Campus life is depicted in early academic books as something melancholic, romantic, pastoral, and emotional. It mostly depends on the underlying concepts, characterisation, tone, and storyline.<sup>2</sup>

The college fiction frequently contains a fun element of pretence, and as a way of getaway from the reality of life.<sup>3</sup> Lodge distinguishes between the varsity book and the campus novel. He claims that varsity novels are typically set among students at Oxbridge rather than teachers.<sup>4</sup>

In the past, the pastoral genre portrayed simple rural life but was written by city-dwelling authors. Nowadays, many sophisticated urban writers still create this type of literature. They don't romanticize distant worlds; instead, they focus on their own university life. Even though people still talk about the Ivory Tower myth, Lodge believes his novels succeed because they find humour in people trying hard to excel but ending up looking foolish.<sup>5</sup>

## 1.2 Historical Background

Every genre can be affected by the sociocultural environment in which it is created. It's important to examine the social, political, and educational dynamics of post-war England to fully grasp the direct and indirect references found in the novels. The genre has evolved through different phases and has recently adopted its current form due to changes in educational and economic standards in England, particularly after World War II. The concept of "the campus novel" has been a topic of debate since the 1950s, even though there are older examples of this genre. It gained attention during this time, especially in American universities after World War II. The Education Act of 1944 and the opening of universities to people from different backgrounds, including women, changed higher education. This was directly seen in the novels of that time. The arrival

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<sup>2</sup> Andrew Madigan, "The Campus Novel", *Bookmarks Magazine* (May/June 2017): 22-23.

<sup>3</sup> Edemariam Aida, "Who's afraid of the campus novel?" In: *The Guardian* [online]. 2005 London: Guardian Media Group, 2005. Available on: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2004/oct/02/featuresreviews.guardianreview37>

<sup>4</sup> Edemariam Aida, "Who's afraid of the campus novel?"

<sup>5</sup> Eva Lambertsson Björk, "Campus Clowns and the Canon: David Lodge's Campus Fiction", (Umea University in Stockholm, 1993), 37.

of many scholarship students also made the genre more relatable to more people. As the kinds of people in universities changed, so did the content of campus novels, becoming more varied and interesting.<sup>6</sup>

Originating in the 1950s, the campus novel genre gained popularity quickly. Mary McCarthy's 1952 book *The Groves of Academe* marked the birth of the campus novel in America. According to Lodge, the first British university novel is *Lucky Jim* (1954) by Kingsley Amis.<sup>7</sup> *Lucky Jim* is frequently regarded as the first British campus novel. It's an imaginative, amusing work. Jim Dixon, the central protagonist, embodies the archetype of a young, disillusioned intellectual who is unhappy with the post-war world and the role that it has placed him in. According to David Lodge's preface, this book captures the spirit of adolescents as they grew up during the 1950s. A whole generation of adolescents started relating to Jim Dixon and seeing him as a hero.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.3 Campus Novel Features

As we explore further into the study of campus novels, it becomes critical to recognize and examine the common features that define this genre. This section looks at the parallels throughout these novels, which includes their satirical portrayal of academia. Understanding the distinctive characteristics that set this genre apart helps us to analyse the novels that create this literary landscape in a more sophisticated manner.

Books of campus novel genre are distinguished by its setting in a university and by the author's preference for focusing on academics over students. Regarding the environment, although universities are meant to be the places of great thoughts, wisdom, and reality, the people who work, teach and study there are rarely like that, and the opposite is true. In these narratives, authors juxtapose human selfishness, desires, and ideals with moral values. Campuses and universities emerge as settings where these stark contradictions are most pronounced.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Sibel Erbayraktar, "*Hegemony, Class Antagonism and Capitalist Policies in Higher Education: Post-War Campus Novels by Kingsley Amis, Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge*", (Ph.D. Dissertation, Çankaya University in Ankara, 2018), 7.

<sup>7</sup> Edemariam Aida, "*Who's afraid of the campus novel?*"

<sup>8</sup> David Lodge, introduction to *Lucky Jim*, by Kingsley Amis, (London: Penguin Group, 2000), v.

<sup>9</sup> Liliana Průšová, "*The Development of the Campus Novel Genre*", (MA thesis, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, 2018), 20-21.

The protagonist is typically a member the faculty at a small-town university where the story takes place. Campus novels have importance due to one specific characteristic of their setting: people who are familiar with the academic environment and its regulations will be able to appreciate the satire more than others who are not. As a result, the readership is rather restricted.<sup>10</sup> But according to Moseley, non-academics reading academic novels is not unusual in any way, and anyone can appreciate a well-written academic book. Being an academic or an English literature professor is not necessary to enjoy it.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Irena Žampachová, “*Reflections of British Society in the Campus Novel*”, (BA Thesis, Masaryk University in Brno, 2006), 6.

<sup>11</sup> Merritt Moseley, “*Introductory: Definitions and Justifications*”, in *The Academic Novel: New and Classic Essays*, (Chester: Chester Academic Press, 2007), 7.

## 2 CAMPUS NOVEL AUTHORS

In this chapter, we explore the multifaceted lives and literary contributions of three renowned authors celebrated for their campus novels: David Lodge, Kingsley Amis, and Malcolm Bradbury. These esteemed literary figures have significantly influenced the genre, adeptly capturing the essence of academic life through a blend of humour, intellect, and often biting satire. From their humble beginnings to their enduring literary legacies, the trajectories of their lives and works underscore the enduring relevance of college fiction within the landscape of contemporary literature. Through their insightful explorations of university settings, they offer profound reflections on the complexities of academia, human relationships, and societal dynamics, ensuring their place among the pantheon of great literary voices.

David John Lodge, a prominent British author, has left a permanent impression on contemporary writing with his piercing studies of academics, religion, and modern life. David Lodge shares similarities in social background and education with the other two authors Kingsley Amis and Malcolm Bradbury. Lodge also experienced the advancements in post-war secondary and college education.

David Lodge was born on January 28, 1935, in London, to a conventional Catholic family. He pursued English studies at University College London and subsequently taught at the University of Birmingham during the 1960s and 1970s, an environment likely influencing some of his campus novels. He spent 27 years teaching English literature at the University of Birmingham before retiring.<sup>12</sup> Because he was deeply familiar with academic life, his literary works often draw from his personal experiences and when he sees that parts of his life have a theme and a story that can be told in fiction he writes about it. Additionally, he has published scholarly works and critiques, blurring the lines between criticism and fiction.

Throughout his life, he has received significant literary awards for the novels he wrote. Among these accolades is the Booker Prize for Fiction awarded to "Nice Work," which was also named the Sunday Express Book of the Year in 1989. Lodge believes that his fiction resonates with readers because academic conflicts, being relatively

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<sup>12</sup> Irena Žampachová, "Reflections of British Society in the Campus Novel", (BA Thesis, Masaryk University in Brno, 2006), 28.

harmless and detached from real-world concerns, offer a safe escape.<sup>13</sup> David Lodge explains that campuses are so funny and ironic because there's a difference between the noble quest for knowledge and the fact that professors and students are just as flawed as anyone else.<sup>14</sup>

Another of the most important authors of college novels worth mentioning is Kingsley Amis, who, according to David Lodge, is the originator of campus novels in Britain, thanks to his novel *Lucky Jim* he wrote in 1954.<sup>15</sup> Amis worked as an English lecturer at Oxford, Swansea, and Cambridge after completing his university education, which most likely served as the inspiration for his novels' academic setting. The fact that Amis drew from his own life experiences can also be seen in the character of Jim Dixon in his work *Lucky Jim*, who, just like Amis in real life, comes from a lower-class background and had the opportunity to move up the social ladder.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout his half-century career, he published over 20 satirical works. His collection of writing covers science fiction, mysteries, criticism, essays, poetry, and more. Amis is also one of the writers called The Angry Young Men. "Angry Young Men" are linked to the poet group that formed in the early 1950s. This a term used to describe the group of writers who developed an original portrayal of a young, irritated, individualistic individual who is dissatisfied with the environment of post-war society and is of a lower social status until the Act of 1944 gave him access to education and the chance to advance in society.<sup>17</sup>

The last author of this genre that we will talk about is Malcolm Bradbury. The British author, critic, and television writer was born in Sheffield on September 7, 1932. Like Amis, he was raised in a suburban area of London and comes from a lower middle-class background. He joined the University of Birmingham's English Department, where he met and became lifelong friends with novelist and colleague lecturer David Lodge.

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<sup>13</sup> Lucie Mohelníková, "*The Campus Novel: Kingsley Amis, Malcolm Bradbury, David Lodge – a comparative study*", (BA Thesis, Tomas Bata University in Zlín, 2009), 23-25.

<sup>14</sup> Lílíana Průšová, "*The Development of the Campus Novel Genre*", (MA thesis, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, 2018), 36.

<sup>15</sup> Edemariam Aida, "*Who's afraid of the campus novel?*"

<sup>16</sup> Irena Žampachová, "*Reflections of British Society in the Campus Novel*", (BA Thesis, Masaryk University in Brno, 2006), 9.

<sup>17</sup> Lucie Mohelníková, "*The Campus Novel: Kingsley Amis, Malcolm Bradbury, David Lodge – a comparative study*", (BA Thesis, Tomas Bata University in Zlín, 2009), 12-14.

Because Bradbury and Lodge both held academic posts as professors of English and American studies, produced literary critiques, and played prominent roles in both the academic and literary worlds, these two scholars are often contrasted. Since Bradbury spent nearly fifty years working in academic settings, most of his stories take place in places he is familiar with. Bradbury's works contain a variety of strange characters, both students and educators. His works frequently feature an idealistic protagonist crossing unknown and even unsafe territory, reflecting liberal values in their search for enlightenment and closure.<sup>18</sup>

Although Bradbury has been compared to David Lodge, his writings often portray a more challenging side of life. Bradbury's book focuses on the outside world of human behaviour. The bitter alienated world and its style became Bradbury's means of ridicule. Malcolm Bradbury's best-known work, *The History Man*, explores academic life in "glass and steel" colleges.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Doering Jonathan, "*Malcolm Bradbury: A history man for our times*", (Contemporary Review, London, 2001)

<sup>19</sup> Yekaterina Pomazova, "*And Seek for Truth in the Garden of Academus*": *British Campus Novel in the 20th Century*, (BA Thesis, Charles University in Prague, 2022), 26.

### 3 CAMPUS NOVEL TRILOGY

Lodge's novels, which combine comedy and perception, provide critical observations on the difficulties of intellectual life and the search for meaning in a world that is constantly evolving. In this chapter, we take a closer look at David Lodge's famous Campus Trilogy. By examining Lodge's writing closely, we hope to better understand how his contributions to campus fiction and modern literature continue to matter today.

Best known for his academic novels, Lodge emerged as a leading author in this genre. Consequently, it's not surprising that for many readers, Lodge's depictions of the academic realm serve as a foundation for their understanding of the British academic world.<sup>20</sup> He believes that his campus novels are popular because academics, who try to appear flawless, often end up making fun of themselves. People outside academia see the conflicts in these novels as harmless and entertaining, enjoying the familiar problems presented in an unfamiliar setting.<sup>21</sup> The college novel trilogy by author David Lodge consists of three books: *Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses* (1975), *Small World* (1984), and *Nice Work* (1988). Regarding typical elements found in Lodge's campus novels, his trilogy humorously satirizes university life, with all three books taking place at the fictional University of Rummidge, often seen as a representation of Birmingham. Additionally, certain characters reappear throughout the series.<sup>22</sup> The University of Euphoria, like the University of Rummidge, is fictional. While Lodge acknowledges that his novels are based on reality, it's worth considering the possibility that the University of Euphoria may symbolize the University of California, Berkeley, where he served as a Visiting Professor in 1969.<sup>23</sup>

The author's campus trilogy explores collaboration between academia and industry to address financial concerns at universities, as well as social disputes between academics. Lodge is regarded as an author who released the campus novel from the constraints of the educational institution and its traditional structure. His experiences abroad surely helped him start writing campus novels, making him one of the best in the

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<sup>20</sup> Dieter Fuchs, *The Campus Novel: Regional or Global?*, (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 36

<sup>21</sup> Eva Lambertsson Björk, *Campus Clowns and the Canon: David Lodge's Campus Fiction*, (Umeå University in Stockholm, 1993), 37.

<sup>22</sup> Liliana Průšová, *The Development of the Campus Novel Genre*, (MA thesis, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, 2018), 34-35.

<sup>23</sup> Zuzana Bartoňová, "Characters in Campus Novels by David Lodge", (B.A. Major Thesis, Masaryk University in Brno, 2006), 12.

genre. He believes each of his novels represents a particular phase of his life, but he's clear that they're not simply autobiographical. Lodge wrote "Changing Places" after teaching as a visiting teacher at the University of California, Berkeley. "Small World" was inspired by his travels to conferences worldwide. And his experiences living and teaching in Birmingham helped shape the portrayal of academia versus industry in "Nice Work".<sup>24</sup>

"Changing Places" and "Small World" are David Lodge's main campus novels. In "Changing Places," two campuses are compared, while "Small World" shows the world as a big campus.<sup>25</sup>

Lodge's trilogy was published during Margaret Thatcher's time as Prime Minister. The books make references to her decisions about English higher education, both directly and indirectly. So, looking at what the government was doing in education back then helps us understand these references and the criticism in the novels.<sup>26</sup>

### 3.1 Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses (1975)

Lodge's trilogy begins with the novel "Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses." Although it was published in 1975, the story is set in the 1960s.

Changing Places is a comic novel that centers on a six-month exchange program involving two university professors. One from England and the other from the United States. The novel narrates the tale of an exchange program between two fictional universities, highlighting the disparities in American and English cultures and lifestyles through contrasting characters. The connection between these two vastly different universities is quite straightforward. They are linked by two replicas of the Tower of Pisa, which stand on their respective campuses. The narrative follows Philip Swallow, a modest English literature professor at the fictional University of Rummidge, and Morris Zapp, a bold American professor from the esteemed Euphoria University.

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<sup>24</sup> Yekaterina Pomazova, "And Seek for Truth in the Garden of Academus": *British Campus Novel in the 20th Century*, (BA Thesis, Charles University in Prague, 2022), 35.

<sup>25</sup> Eva Lambertsson Björk, "Campus Clowns and the Canon: David Lodge's Campus Fiction", (Umea University in Stockholm, 1993), 89.

<sup>26</sup> Sibel Erbayraktar, "Hegemony, Class Antagonism and Capitalist Policies in Higher Education: Post-War Campus Novels by Kingsley Amis, Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge", (Ph.D. Dissertation, Çankaya University in Ankara, 2018), 227.

Euphoria University stands as one of the most esteemed institutions in the United States, while English Rummidge is depicted as a bleak, industrial city.<sup>27</sup>

Morris Zapp, from Euphoria, flies to Europe and is portrayed as sophisticated but emotionally distant. Morris Zapp doesn't appear particularly enthusiastic about the university he's visiting. In fact, he agrees to go mainly to delay his divorce with his wife Desirée. On the other hand, Philip Swallow, representing Rummidge, is depicted as modest, hesitant, and fond of literature in all its forms, lacking a specific specialization. Swallow is sent to Euphoria not because of his esteemed position at the university, but merely as a quick replacement when the first member received a professorship in Australia. Both professors initially appear quite dissimilar due to the contrasting academic systems of the United States and Great Britain. As they switch roles, Swallow navigates the competitive and materialistic world of American academia, while Zapp contends with the reserved and traditional atmosphere of English university life. Moreover, Morris and Philip not only swap universities and positions, but also exchange their wives. The tale of two professors swapping their residences, workplaces, and even spouses also depicts the social, historical, and economic conditions in both countries.<sup>28</sup>

### 3.2 Small World: An Academic Romance (1984)

Written during the mid-1980s, "Small World" mirrors numerous socio-cultural and economic shifts occurring in Britain during that decade. The same couples featured in the first novel reappear in the second novel.

"Small World" by David Lodge is a humorous novel that follows Persse McGarrigle, a young lecturer from Ireland, as he journeys through the world of academic conferences and global travel. The story unfolds within the academic realm, where scholars, professors, and students travel worldwide to participate in conferences, present papers, and pursue intellectual endeavours. Along the way, Persse encounters a diverse array of characters, including academic rivals, romantic interests, and quirky colleagues. The book humorously critiques the academic world and its competitive nature while delving

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<sup>27</sup> Lucie Mohelníková, "The Campus Novel: Kingsley Amis, Malcolm Bradbury, David Lodge – a comparative study", (BA Thesis, Tomas Bata University in Zlín, 2009), 25-27.

<sup>28</sup> Kenneth Womack, "Postwar Academic Fiction: Satire, Ethics, Community" (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 81-82.

into themes of love, ambition, and the desire for recognition. Through its clever humour and sharp observations, Lodge provides an entertaining and insightful portrayal of the quirks of academic life and the complexities of human relationships.<sup>29</sup>

Some characters from "Changing Places," including Swallow and Zapp, make a return. However, the story primarily revolves around Persse McGarrigle, a young lecturer from a small university in Ireland. As an outsider among established colleagues, he strives to demonstrate his academic and romantic prowess.<sup>30</sup> Persse is a young Irishman traveling worldwide in search of true love and he's ready to search for his soul mate anywhere on the planet. The book cleverly examines the competitive and sometimes ludicrous aspects of academia, explores themes of romance, ambition, and the quest for acknowledgment. Through a sequence of lively interactions with diverse characters, Persse travels continents in pursuit of career triumph and individual contentment.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Yekaterina Pomazova, "And Seek for Truth in the Garden of Academus": *British Campus Novel in the 20th Century*, (BA Thesis, Charles University in Prague, 2022), 35-40.

<sup>30</sup> Wojciech Nowicki, "Academia at a critical point: David Lodge's *Small World*," 195.

<sup>31</sup> Liliana Průšová, "The Development of the Campus Novel Genre", (MA thesis, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, 2018), 42.

#### 4 NICE WORK (1988)

In Lodge's next novel, *Nice Work*, he shifts focus from academia to the relation of academia and society. Here, the worlds of academia and British industry collide, both affected by the economic struggles of the 1980s. In the last book of the trilogy, Lodge changes things by not starting the story on a campus or featuring an academic as the main character. Instead, "*Nice Work*" begins with a chapter about a successful businessman and provides a new perspective on the city of Rummidge. In Lodge's trilogy up to this point, little information is given about the city surrounding the campus, other than it being small and underdeveloped. However, in "*Nice Work*," Rummidge is portrayed as a grim industrial town with numerous factories and overcast skies. The novel follows the professional collaboration and romantic relationship between businessman Victor Wilcox and junior academic Robyn Penrose. It explores the outcomes of their partnership, highlighting the challenges of bridging the worlds of academia and business. The novel frequently explores the idea of bridging the gap between these two vastly different worlds through the characters' efforts to adapt to each other's spheres.<sup>32</sup>

Victor Wilcox and Robyn Penrose are from different worlds, even though they live in northern Britain in the 1980s. Victor cares about money, while Robyn cares about knowledge. *Nice Work* aims to present, to its readers, two contrasting systems or viewpoints, each embodied by a main character. This clash of values is a big part of the novel. Lodge cleverly contrasts industry and academia in his novel, capturing the 1980s atmosphere. Victor Wilcox, a practical man, runs an engineering company in Rummidge. In 1986, the government launches the "Shadow Scheme" to connect universities with industry, assigning Robyn Penrose, a Women's Studies lecturer, to shadow Victor. This plan has been devised to enhance understanding between the university and industry in Rummidge. Robin Penrose, a feminist scholar, is reluctantly tasked with shadowing Victor Wilcox, the factory manager, in his daily business operations. The purpose of this arrangement is to facilitate dialogue between the

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<sup>32</sup> Sibel Erbayraktar, "*Hegemony, Class Antagonism and Capitalist Policies in Higher Education: Post-War Campus Novels by Kingsley Amis, Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge*", (Ph.D. Dissertation, Çankaya University in Ankara, 2018), 204-205.

academic realm of Rummidge and the industrial environment. Their clash is inevitable due to their opposing values.<sup>33</sup>

Robyn's hopeful idea of a university for everyone is shattered when she sees the tough conditions at the foundry, where mostly non-white workers toil. Victor, focused only on profit, clashes with Robyn. Despite their differences, they grow closer over time, and eventually become romantically involved. Victor falls in love with Robyn and contemplates leaving his family, but she's no longer interested in him. Nonetheless, they remain friends, realizing the benefits of the Shadow Scheme. After losing his job, Victor reunites with his wife, while Robyn inherits money and stays at the university. Eventually, Victor starts a new business with Robyn's help.<sup>34</sup> Throughout the novel, both Robyn and Vic seem to redefine their own environments while gaining deeper insight into each other's communities. As a result, they appear to bridge the divide between the perceived isolation of academia and the external world.<sup>35</sup> The novel explores a link between unemployment in the industry and immigration and racism issues. Following World War II, many immigrants, including Danny Ram, an Indian worker, joined the manufacturing workforce. The author highlights delicate matters surrounding Danny's effectiveness and the managers' discriminatory attitude towards him. Despite his struggles, socially conscious Robyn defends Danny during a meeting, surprising the managers with her disapproval of their plans to dismiss him.<sup>36</sup>

David Lodge aims to unite contrasting worlds in his novels. Critics believe he accomplishes this successfully, thanks to his dual role as both a writer and literary critic. Although "Nice Work" doesn't precisely follow the pattern of swapping professors, it still explores the concept of exchange. The novel presents the clash between two disparate worlds, offering humour, contrasts, and multiple perspectives.<sup>37</sup>

Vic and Robyn are paired up in a significant way in the story, and the book explores what happens because of that. Vic finds Robyn intriguing and attractive, and they develop feelings for each other. A lot of the book's humour comes from how they handle

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<sup>33</sup> Liliana Průšová, "*The Development of the Campus Novel Genre*", (MA thesis, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, 2018), 46.

<sup>34</sup> Irena Žampachová, "*Reflections of British Society in the Campus Novel*", (BA Thesis, Masaryk University in Brno, 2006), 29.

<sup>35</sup> Eva Lambertsson Björk, "*Campus Clowns and the Canon: David Lodge's Campus Fiction*", (Umea University in Stockholm, 1993), 109.

<sup>36</sup> Irena Žampachová, "*Reflections of British Society in the Campus Novel*", (BA Thesis, Masaryk University in Brno, 2006), 30.

<sup>37</sup> Liliana Průšová, "*The Development of the Campus Novel Genre*", (MA thesis, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, 2018), 47.

their relationship, which shifts between professional, friendly, romantic, and briefly, sexual. As the story progresses, they both seem to dismiss each other's jobs. The novel focuses on the gap between different parts of British society, not just academia. In "Nice Work," both university and industry settings are vividly depicted. Overall, the book is more than just about academic life; it's a snapshot of England in 1986. According to Bergonzi, "Nice Work" highlights the typical indications of Thatcherism, such as reductions in public spending and a prevailing attitude of anti-intellectualism.<sup>38</sup>

In social terms, survival in both the university and industry is a common concept. However, the meaning of work differs. For Vic Wilcox, work is a priority and reading is something done after work; whereas for his shadow, Robyn Penrose, reading is a productive activity, particularly for academics who generate meaning through their exceptional reading abilities. In "Nice Work," the university is portrayed as being in direct confrontation with the modern industrial plant, highlighting that neither side fares better than the other in this confrontation.<sup>39</sup>

#### 4.1 Victor and Robyn

Victor Eugene Wilcox, aged forty-six, serves as the Managing Director at Pringle & Sons Casting and General Engineering, primarily based in the factory. Prior to this role, he held engineering positions at various Rummidge enterprises. Married to Marjorie with three children. Victor embraces capitalist principles, valuing money greatly. He embodies the stereotypical image of a businessman. Despite his affluent appearance, Victor identifies with the working class, eschewing status symbols, speaking the local dialect, and maintaining modesty. However, he feels a profound dissatisfaction with his life and marriage, sensing he has missed out due to excessive work. His wife embodies the archetype of a consumerist middle-class housewife whose pastime revolves around spending her husband's money. Thanks to Victor's hard work and adherence to conservative values, he progressed to owning a house boasting four toilets.<sup>40</sup> He believes in the societal importance of industry, viewing factory workers,

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<sup>38</sup> Bernard Bergonzi, "David Lodge", (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), 26.

<sup>39</sup> Wojciech Nowicki, "Academia at a critical point: David Lodge's *Small World*," 200-201.

<sup>40</sup> Irena Žampachová, "Reflections of British Society in the Campus Novel", (BA Thesis, Masaryk University in Brno, 2006), 32.

particularly men, as essential contributors engaged in meaningful labour. He is diligent, bright, and passionately supportive of British values. Victor Wilcox epitomizes precision and seriousness in his role as Managing Director, occasionally displaying harshness towards factory workers, emphasizing their replaceability.<sup>41</sup> His name, "Victor Wilcox," hints at Victorian attitudes and a strong leadership persona, with "Wilcox" symbolizing his assertive stance in life's situations. "Wil" symbolizes will and determination, while "cox" could represent Vic's senior position within the company.<sup>42</sup>

In the opening chapter, we're introduced to Doctor Roberta Anne Penrose, a woman who holds the position of Temporary Lecturer in English Literature at Rummidge University. Robyn exudes confidence in her abilities and prioritizes her career over starting a family. She is a feminist with radical perspectives on literature and life. However, she has limited knowledge about life beyond the academic sphere. While Vic lacks interest in universities, Robyn, conversely, is unfamiliar with the world beyond academia and hopes she won't need to seek employment outside of it. As a feminist, she believes women do not need men, advocating for love between women or self-love. Though not a lesbian, she's open to relationships with men. Intelligent and assertive, Robyn displays some arrogance towards those less educated, while gravitating towards strong female companions.<sup>43</sup> Just like Victor's name her own name carries significance: "Robyn" conveys a masculine undertone, reflecting her preference over "Roberta," while "Penrose" suggests her academic pursuits, with "pen" symbolizing her connection to literature and writing, and "rose" evoking feminine qualities like romanticism, beauty, and the potential for danger.<sup>44</sup>

## 4.2 The Plot

In the first chapter of this novel, we meet the two main characters for the first time. We learn something about their past and gain important information about their characters,

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<sup>41</sup> David Lodge, *Nice Work*, (London: Secker & Warburg, 1988), 13-20.

<sup>42</sup> Stephanie Warnke, *A Clash of Two Different Worlds in David Lodge's Nice Work*, (Munich: GRIN Verlag, 2009), 9.

<sup>43</sup> David Lodge, *Nice Work*, (London: Secker & Warburg, 1988), 39-45.

<sup>44</sup> Stephanie Warnke, *A Clash of Two Different Worlds in David Lodge's Nice Work*, (Munich: GRIN Verlag, 2009), 7.

motives, and background, which helps us better understand their decisions and behaviour throughout the story. *Nice Work* aims to elucidate, for its readers, two contrasting systems or ideologies, each embodied by a protagonist.

Robyn was selected to participate in the "Shadow Scheme" due to her expertise in nineteenth-century Industrial Novels. Vic, persuaded by his colleagues, opted to join the project as it offered favourable publicity for his department within the company.

The "Shadow Scheme" involves an academic shadowing an industry professional throughout their daily tasks, with both parties reciprocating the experience. Subsequently, they are required to compose a brief report detailing their observations.<sup>45</sup>

The disparities between the corporate and academic realms are vividly depicted in the novel, particularly through the portrayal of a government-initiated project. Recognizing the mutual benefit of strengthening resources in both academia and the business sector, the government introduces the "shadow scheme." This initiative mandates collaborative efforts between universities and companies, aiming to foster cooperation and innovation.<sup>46</sup>

The initial encounter between Robyn and Vic is a misunderstanding. Vic anticipated a male "shadow" and was taken aback to find Robyn Penrose, assuming the name "Robyn" indicated a man. In this instance, Lodge employs situational comedy by playing on the dual gender nature of the name "Robin," resulting in humorous situations. However, upon seeing Robyn, he was captivated by her physical beauty. Conversely, Robyn's initial impression of Vic was that he appeared shorter than herself. Their first conversation in Vic's office revealed stark differences between them, leading to a strong mutual antipathy. At the beginning of the Shadow Scheme, both Vic and Robyn firmly hold onto their biases. Vic remains completely disconnected from perceiving and understanding the world through literature, while Robyn, despite her expertise in nineteenth-century industrial novels, lacks knowledge about how modern industries operate at the time. During their first encounter, Wilcox comes across as a strong supporter of Mrs. Thatcher's capitalist ideas. While explaining to Robyn about the unavoidable job losses in manufacturing plants like Pringle's, he paints a sarcastic picture of a utopian "dark country" with factories devoid of light, run by computers. Vic

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<sup>45</sup> David Lodge, "*Nice Work*", 93.

<sup>46</sup> Sibel Erbayraktar, "*Hegemony, Class Antagonism and Capitalist Policies in Higher Education: Post-War Campus Novels by Kingsley Amis, Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge*", 216.

questioned the value of Robyn's role as an English Literature lecturer, failing to take her seriously and conveying a sense of dismissal towards her profession. Robyn begins to wonder about the fundamental distinction between the university and the factory, and the role academia plays in improving society if education focuses solely on churning out qualified students for professional services, rather than nurturing ideas and values. After their initial encounter, Robyn forms the impression that Vic is a controlling, uncompromising realist who values everything solely in terms of its monetary worth.<sup>47</sup> Both characters exemplify, albeit in contrasting ways, the perception of the academy as a secluded Ivory Tower within the industrial town. Their beliefs regarding work, justice, literature, and love are fundamentally divergent. Clearly, Robyn and Vic's differences will serve as rich material for examining conflicting ideologies. Initially, their clash is intense. Robyn is deeply troubled by Vic's business practices, considering them unethical. She sparks a walk-out at the foundry by sharing confidential information with a worker whose job is at risk. However, Vic pressures her to retract the information to avoid a strike. Despite this tumultuous beginning, an unlikely relationship gradually forms between them.<sup>48</sup>

Marjorie, Vic's wife, starts to believe that her sexual desire has returned, unlike Vic, who had accepted a few years ago that his wife no longer arouses him sexually. Suddenly, Vic admits to himself for the first time that even Robyn excites him more than his wife.<sup>49</sup> Meanwhile, Robyn's weekend with Charles is unexpectedly interrupted by her brother Basil and his girlfriend Debbie, who works as a foreign exchange dealer. During their visit, Basil and Debbie mainly discuss the rapidly evolving world of finance, a topic in which Robyn shows little interest. Debbie's lack of university education and her Cockney accent led Robyn to make judgments about Debbie's social status. Based on Debbie's plain and ostentatious clothing and hairstyle, Robyn perceives her as uncultured and vulgar, someone focused on quick financial gains. Robyn believes that Debbie is not a suitable match for her brother and does not meet the standards of elegance and prestige expected by her family. After they leave, Charles accuses Robyn of being condescending towards Debbie. In contrast, Robyn's boyfriend, Charles, who

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<sup>47</sup> David Lodge, "Nice Work", 106-109.

<sup>48</sup> Eva Lambertsson Björk, "Campus Clowns and the Canon: David Lodge's Campus Fiction", (Umea University in Stockholm, 1993), 110-112.

<sup>49</sup> David Lodge, "Nice Work", 163-165.

comes from a humble family background, can empathize with Debbie. Robyn confides in Charles that her family will likely view Debbie as common if her brother Basil introduces her to them.<sup>50</sup>

When Vic shadows Robyn at the university, Lodge portrays how the relaxed work atmosphere in academia might seem to someone like Vic, who isn't part of that world. One morning, Vic joins Robyn in the Senior Common Room and is completely surprised to see the academic staff lounging around, engaging in idle chatter, pleasantries, and trivial activities. Vic's view of academic life deeply upsets Robyn. She sees academic work as "nice work," easy and enjoyable, unlike the tough, demanding labour in factories. Robyn realizes how lucky she is to have a job she enjoys, especially when she sees the tough conditions in Vic's factories.<sup>51</sup>

In the fourth chapter, the main characters of the story start to connect with each other. Vic and Robyn cultivate a friendship grounded in mutual respect and admiration, accompanied by a growing understanding of each other's respective worlds. It's primarily Robyn who learns many previously unknown facts. She gradually grows to value her weekly visits to the other world. Initially hesitant about participating in the shadow scheme, she discovers that it's not as dreadful as she had imagined. As the scheme nears its conclusion, Robyn finds herself feeling content with her job. She gradually starts to see the Shadow Program in a positive light and recognizes that, in some respects, she has been on the outskirts of society until now. Moreover, she notices some similarities between her work and Vic's and over time they begin to influence each other. Robyn also engages in conversations with Vic regarding her work environment, sharing insights and discussing various aspects of her professional life.<sup>52</sup>

In the fifth chapter, Robyn joins Vic on a trip to a fare in Frankfurt. They enjoy each other's company immensely, engaging in various activities such as shopping, swimming, and dining out together. Vic exhibits a youthful enthusiasm, reminiscent of a teenager spending time with someone to determine if they could be a potential romantic interest. Through this journey, Vic undergoes a transformation, breaking free

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<sup>50</sup> Sibel Erbayraktar, "Hegemony, Class Antagonism and Capitalist Policies in Higher Education: Post-War Campus Novels by Kingsley Amis, Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge", 210.

<sup>51</sup> David Lodge, "Nice Work", 177-185.

<sup>52</sup> David Lodge, "Nice Work", 247-253.

from the constraints of his usual daily routine and starts paying closer attention to his appearance. His fascination with Robyn is at its peak, especially since she has recently discovered Charles's infidelity with Debbie, who has now split from Basil. This leads to Victor Wilcox and Robyn Penrose ending up in bed together during their time in Frankfurt. Neither of them intended this when they left Rummidge. Robyn only seeks this enjoyment as a means of moving on from her ended relationship with Charles and is chasing validation from other men to reassure herself of her attractiveness. The following morning, Robyn wakes up sober and prefers not to dwell on the events of the previous night. Recognizing that Vic's presence might become bothersome, she decides to leave him behind and return home. Upon returning to Rummidge, Vic surprises Robyn with a declaration of love, expressing his intention to divorce Marjorie and marry Robyn. Vic is persevering and proposes to her, leaving Robyn feeling trapped and unsure of how to respond. Despite her refusal to meet him, Vic persistently contacts her through calls and letters to win her over. Meanwhile, Robyn receives a letter from Charles, revealing his aspirations to pursue a career in banking and he also mentions that he now lives with Debbie.<sup>53</sup>

As the final chapter unfolds, both protagonists are faced with significant life decisions. However, circumstances take an unexpected turn, presenting challenges beyond their expectations. In *Nice Work* we encounter Morris Zapp and Philip Swallow again. Phillip remains the head of the English department but can no longer afford to attend conferences due to budget cuts affecting the university.

At the start of the new semester, Morris Zapp makes a stop in Rummidge on his way to an international conference, and the Swallows host a party in his honour, inviting Robyn to attend. At the party, Morris offers Robyn a job, but she later learns he did it just so he doesn't have to work with his ex-wife. Despite this, Robyn is happy about the offer. At the same time, Vic's life changes when he loses his job after the Pringle company is sold to a competitor.<sup>54</sup>

Until now, Robyn had been the only one concerned about her job, but now Vic finds himself facing the same uncertainty. As Robyn finally secures a job, unfortunately, Vic loses his. Right from the start in his role as managing director, Vic faces challenges that

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<sup>53</sup> David Lodge, "*Nice Work*", 267-280.

<sup>54</sup> David Lodge, "*Nice Work*", 356-358.

ultimately lead to his downfall. This includes intense competition from cheaper foreign markets and pressure from the company for higher profits. He even faces betrayal from his business partner, who attempts to steal Wilcox's company's main suppliers, but Vic catches him in the act. This intense rivalry highlights the cutthroat nature of capitalism in the business world.<sup>55</sup> The convergence of these factors creates a perfect storm, ultimately resulting in Vic's professional demise. This self-made man, who always adhered to principles of fair play, is deeply disillusioned by market practices. However, to Vic's surprise, losing his job strengthens his family bonds. His wife, Marjorie, immediately suspects that he anticipated losing his job, which explains his recent odd behaviour. Their children began to exhibit noticeable improvements in their behaviour, showing signs of positive change. Their daughter Sandra volunteers to work while studying, while their son Raymond, who dropped out of university some time ago and has been unemployed since then, manages to find a job, leveraging his expertise in electronics. Vic makes the decision to start his own business, and Marjorie offers to assist him as his secretary. Vic maintains a degree of optimism regarding his personal prospects. Despite the necessity of scaling back on luxuries and adjusting to a more modest lifestyle, he reclaims his pragmatic and realistic outlook. This shift back to his practical mindset, which momentarily wavered during his infatuation with Robyn, enables him to approach a new business venture with renewed hope and aspirations for success. However, it's clear that his earlier confidence in the corporate industry's structures has been fundamentally shaken and cannot be fully restored. This development appears to signal a positive turn for Vic's marriage. As the novel progresses, both Vic and Robyn begin to understand each other's viewpoints better and become more open-minded. Vic begins to value the work that Robyn does and recognizes the influence of her ideas everywhere. He also develops a newfound appreciation for literature, thanks to Robyn's insights.<sup>56</sup>

Robyn receives another letter from Charles, stating that he has ended his relationship with Debbie and suggesting that they get married. Robyn declines his proposal. As a result, the novel loses another potential for a sentimental reunion between two former lovers. However, it's worth noting that Robyn's acceptance of Charles' offer would have contradicted the independent nature and development of their relationship,

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<sup>55</sup> Sibel Erbayraktar, "Hegemony, Class Antagonism and Capitalist Policies in Higher Education: Post-War Campus Novels by Kingsley Amis, Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge", 215.

<sup>56</sup> David Lodge, "Nice Work", 361-364.

contrasting with the characters' established traits. However, Robyn is in for a delightful turn of events in both her financial and professional life. She learns that she will inherit a sum of money from her uncle in Australia and Robyn decides to invest a portion of this inheritance in Vic's new company. Robyn also announces that, thanks to the newfound opportunities for financial redistribution, the university will be able to employ her from the following year onward.<sup>57</sup> In the end, she is offered a chance to remain in Rummidge and pursue her academic endeavours. However, her business partnership with Vic implies that she is not only involved in sustaining the women's writing course but also plays a role in upholding the capitalist system that she had vehemently criticized earlier.<sup>58</sup>

The final chapter diverges from its earlier adherence to strict realism, culminating in a surprisingly upbeat ending. In the end, they cultivate a shared admiration and understanding for each other's lives. Robyn changes her opinion not just about Vic but also individuals like him and most of the population, whom universities often overlook or dismiss. Even from the outset, she recognizes Vic's intelligence and honesty, which unsettle her as he consistently stands his ground in discussions on education, capitalism, and labour issues, despite not having her level of education. By the end of the novel, she believes that the public, who may not have a university education, should visit universities on weekends for an enlightening experience. The novel wraps up with both characters evolving personally and gaining a deeper empathy, indicating that genuine connections can bridge societal barriers.

However, the two worlds didn't merge completely; David Lodge aimed to bridge the gap between them. He endeavoured to convey insights about universities to readers unfamiliar with academia. His goal was to elicit laughter from all readers, achieved using various comedic techniques and elements in his writing.<sup>59</sup>

Numerous paradoxes and opposing dynamics emerge in this novel. Victor's enduring marriage and conventional family dynamics starkly contrast Robyn's independence and casual relationship with her partner. Class disparities are prominently highlighted, particularly in the comparison between affluent managers and businessmen and impoverished blue-collar workers. Lodge also addresses race issues and unemployment.

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<sup>57</sup> David Lodge, "Nice Work", 367-375.

<sup>58</sup> Eva Lambertsson Björk, "Campus Clowns and the Canon: David Lodge's Campus Fiction", (Umea University in Stockholm, 1993), 114.

<sup>59</sup> David Lodge, "Nice Work", 375-380.

The overarching tone of the novel is anti-Thatcher, as Lodge portrays the struggles of higher education under impoverishment and positions Victor in a battle between conservative and socialist values.<sup>60</sup>

### 4.3 Thematic points

Nice Work is a complex work that addresses various themes, including class, gender, work, and economic change. Through its satirical yet compassionate depiction of its characters and their environments, it encourages readers to reflect on the intricacies of modern life and how different societal elements intersect and impact one another. The relationship between the two main characters demonstrates the potential for personal development and mutual understanding despite societal divides.<sup>61</sup>

#### 4.3.1 Class and Social Divides

Nice Work is set against the contrasting worlds of industry and academia. Vic Wilcox, an engineering firm's managing director, symbolizes the practical, profit-focused industrial sphere. In contrast, Robyn Penrose, a temporary lecturer in English literature, represents the intellectual, theory-oriented realm of academia. The novel uses these characters to examine the tension between practical, materialistic concerns and intellectual, cultural values. Vic views Robyn's academic pursuits as impractical and irrelevant, while Robyn perceives the industrial sector as dull and devoid of creativity. Their interactions reveal the biases and misunderstandings each world has about the other, emphasizing the cultural and social divides between them.<sup>62</sup> The novel also explores the potential and constraints of social mobility. Vic's ascent from a working-class background to a managerial role is juxtaposed with Robyn's middle-class, educated upbringing. Although Vic has climbed the social ladder, he remains

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<sup>60</sup> Irena Žampachová, "Reflections of British Society in the Campus Novel", (BA Thesis, Masaryk University in Brno, 2006), 34.

<sup>61</sup> Sibel Erbayraktar, "Hegemony, Class Antagonism and Capitalist Policies in Higher Education: Post-War Campus Novels by Kingsley Amis, Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge", (Ph.D. Dissertation, Çankaya University in Ankara, 2018), 205.

<sup>62</sup> Stephanie Warnke, "A Clash of Two Different Worlds in David Lodge's Nice Work", (Munich: GRIN Verlag, 2009), 10.

uncomfortable in more refined, intellectual environments. Meanwhile, despite her academic qualifications, Robyn grapples with job insecurity and the challenges of the working world. Through these characters, Lodge questions how attainable social mobility really is and whether it brings true satisfaction.<sup>63</sup>

### 4.3.2 Economic and Cultural Changes

Nice Work takes place in the 1980s, a period of significant economic and social transformation in the UK during Margaret Thatcher's government. Thatcherism, with its focus on free-market policies, privatization, and deregulation, deeply affected British society, especially traditional industries like manufacturing. Vic's company grapples with the pressures of globalization, competition, and the need to modernize, which put the jobs and livelihoods of his workers at risk. The novel delves into the human consequences of these economic shifts and the conflict between profit and people. Although Robyn, as an academic, is somewhat shielded from these changes, her interactions with Vic increase her awareness of their impact. The novel also critiques the wider cultural shifts linked to Thatcherism, especially the growing commercialization of society. Both industry and academia are impacted by these changes. Vic's company faces pressure to reduce costs and boost efficiency, often to the detriment of workers, while Robyn's university struggles with funding cuts and the need to market itself to attract students. Through the characters' experiences, Lodge critiques the commodification of labour and education, raising questions about the sustainability of this system and its effects on human values.<sup>64</sup>

### 4.3.3 Work as an Identity

Work is a central theme in Nice Work, where the novel explores how closely people's identities are connected to their jobs. For example, Vic Wilcox derives much of his self-esteem from his role as managing director. His sense of self is intertwined

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<sup>63</sup> Irena Žampachová, "Reflections of British Society in the Campus Novel", (BA Thesis, Masaryk University in Brno, 2006), 35-36.

<sup>64</sup> Eva Lambertsson Björk, "Campus Clowns and the Canon: David Lodge's Campus Fiction", (Umea University in Stockholm, 1993), 105-107.

with his position at the factory, and he takes pride in his work, despite the pressures of economic change. Robyn, on the other hand, strongly identifies with her academic role, finding purpose and meaning in her teaching and research. The novel asks what happens when these identities are threatened whether through Vic's potential job loss or Robyn's struggle with the uncertainty of her academic career. It examines the anxieties that emerge when individuals are forced to reassess their place in the world. The novel also contrasts different views on work. Vic sees it as a proud and honourable means of livelihood, while Robyn questions the capitalist focus on material success and advocates for a more reflective, humanistic perspective. Their interactions prompt a broader examination of work's role in our lives.<sup>65</sup>

#### 4.3.4 Gender Roles

Robyn Penrose's character is key to the novel's exploration of gender roles. As a feminist academic, she is acutely aware of the obstacles women face in professional environments, especially in male-dominated fields like Vic's. Throughout the novel, Robyn deals with both overt and subtle sexism and often navigates a workplace culture that can be unwelcoming to women. In contrast, Vic initially embodies a more traditional perspective on gender roles and interacts with Robyn with a degree of condescension. However, he gradually comes to respect her intelligence and strength, indicating a change in his views on gender. Robyn's feminist principles are closely tied to her academic work, where she both studies and teaches feminist theory. She often seeks to apply these theories to real-life contexts, including her interactions with Vic and her observations of the industrial workplace. However, the novel also points out the challenges of translating academic theories into practical scenarios. Robyn's idealism sometimes conflicts with the harsh realities outside the academic sphere, prompting her to reevaluate her beliefs. Through this, Lodge critiques the sometimes insular nature of academic feminism while also recognizing its role in challenging societal norms.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Stephanie Warnke, "A Clash of Two Different Worlds in David Lodge's *Nice Work*", (Munich: GRIN Verlag, 2009), 11.

<sup>66</sup> David Lodge, "Nice Work", (London: Secker & Warburg, 1988), 39-45.

#### 4.3.5 Academic and Industrial Stereotypes

Nice Work uses satire to examine and critique both academia and industry. Lodge amplifies the traits of these spheres for comedic effect—academics are shown as excessively theoretical, detached from practical realities, and fixated on deconstruction and postmodernism, while the industrial world is depicted as inflexible, profit-focused, and unimaginative. Through these exaggerated representations, Lodge critiques the shortcomings and absurdities of both areas. However, the satire is not harsh. It aims to reveal the real challenges and contradictions within these worlds, prompting readers to look past the stereotypes.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Lucie Mohelníková, “*The Campus Novel: Kingsley Amis, Malcolm Bradbury, David Lodge – a comparative study*”, (BA Thesis, Tomas Bata University in Zlín, 2009), 15-17.

## 5 REFLECTIONS OF BRITISH SOCIETY

In contrast to the other campus novels, *Nice Work* depicts academics who are actively engaged with the social and economic dynamics of their environment. Only after the university's influence has waned does Lodge broaden the scope of the campus in his novel, allowing the outside world to enter and depict a more intricate society, where various non-academic perspectives compete.

The plot of "Nice Work" revolves around a situation change. During Industry Year in the United Kingdom, initiatives were introduced to enhance the university's connections with the local industry, aiming to shift perceptions and attitudes towards the industrial sector. The novel presents conflicting views on Thatcher's policies, aiming to highlight both the positive aspects of academia while also reflecting the universities' demoralization. The novel features a Shadow Scheme initiated by a government program aimed at fostering improved relations between the academic and business communities of Rummidge. Vic and Robyn are brought together by fate, and the narrative explores the outcomes and repercussions of this pairing. The resulting clashes of cross-cultural ideologies add dramatic tension to the story. Vic and Robyn cautiously approach each other with preconceived biases rooted in their ages, social backgrounds, and occupations. Despite harboring doubts about Robyn, Vic finds her captivating and becomes romantically interested in her. *Nice Work* also addresses the impact of resource cuts imposed by the central government on British universities. Additionally, it explores the economic downturn of the 1980s and the principles of Benthamite ethics.<sup>68</sup> The author criticizes Thatcher's education policies through Robyn's unstable job, which depends on state funds. Despite her popularity and respect among students and colleagues, the university can't keep her for more than three years due to financial constraints. Robyn, with her strong left-wing views, refuses to accept government actions quietly and joins the picket line during the strike. Lodge holds Thatcher responsible for the shortage of university jobs and the decline of higher education.<sup>69</sup>

Margaret Thatcher, the UK's initial female Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990, significantly impacted British higher education. Her implementation of budget

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<sup>68</sup> Eva Lambertsson Björk, "*Campus Clowns and the Canon: David Lodge's Campus Fiction*", (Umea University in Stockholm, 1993), 107.

<sup>69</sup> Irena Žampachová, "*Reflections of British Society in the Campus Novel*", (BA Thesis, Masaryk University in Brno, 2006), 31.

reductions for university funding and alleged initiation of university privatization are notable aspects of her legacy.<sup>70</sup>

The budget constraints imposed by the Thatcher administration, the elimination of tenure, and the emergence of class-related tensions are evident in the backdrop of the novel. However, this time, the narrative highlights how these challenges impact individuals both within and beyond the confines of the campus.<sup>71</sup> After World War II, there were big changes in English higher education. The government tried to change how education worked in the whole country. During the Thatcher era, government officials pushed for market-oriented changes in higher education. They criticized universities for not preparing students for the competitive job market. This negative view influenced policies mentioned in *Nice Work*. The collaboration between an academic and a businessman in the novel reflects the interaction between commerce and academia.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Liliana Průšová, “*The Development of the Campus Novel Genre*”, (MA thesis, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, 2018), 44.

<sup>71</sup> Stephen Farrall, “*The Legacy of Thatcherism: Assessing and Exploring Thatcherite Social and Economic Policies*”, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 138.

<sup>72</sup> Sibel Erbayraktar, “*Hegemony, Class Antagonism and Capitalist Policies in Higher Education: Post-War Campus Novels by Kingsley Amis, Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge*”, (Ph.D. Dissertation, Çankaya University in Ankara, 2018), 206.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this bachelor's thesis has looked into David Lodge's novel "Nice Work," focusing on analysing the intricate socioeconomic dynamics and interpersonal relationships within an academic and industrial setting. "Nice Work," situated in 1986, offers a contemporary take on the Victorian industrial novel genre. Lodge's contribution enriches the college novel by juxtaposing the realms of academia and industry. It's as though, following his departure from university lecturing a year prior, Lodge chose to incorporate an outsider's perspective of academia into his novel. In his author's note, Lodge expresses his deep gratitude to several corporate executives, particularly one individual, who generously guided him through their factories and offices, patiently addressing his sometimes-foolish inquiries as he prepared this novel. Lodge endeavours to persuade readers of the mutual benefits derived by both Robyn and Vic from their encounter. While characters from "Changing Places" and "Small World" play secondary roles in this narrative, the trilogy is still referred to as the Campus Trilogy.

Lodge's ability to impartially assess both sides of the argument contributes to a balanced portrayal of contrasting perspectives. Robyn Penrose finds some success as her needs are met, whereas Vic Wilcox confronts numerous challenges, which he overcomes through his pragmatic approach. However, in the broader conflict between academia and industry, and the associated debate between literary theory and realism, it appears that Vic holds the advantage. Despite the author's departure from the university environment, the university novel remains a prominent theme in his work, undergoing enrichment through new perspectives. It balances two different worlds and their representative characters in perfect harmony. At the time of writing "Nice Work," Thatcher's policies had led to budget cuts and subsequent staff reductions in British universities. Higher education, once widely regarded as inherently beneficial during the era of the Robbin's Report, came under scrutiny. Lodge doesn't just focus on contrast and opposition he also explores the similarities and intricate interactions between seemingly contrasting viewpoints. There's a change or progression towards a positive exchange of roles and commitments. Lodge mainly draws from his own life for inspiration, aiming to give his stories a universal meaning. Even as Lodge tackles more serious topics in his novels, he typically leans towards happy and hopeful endings. Lodge concludes the story with Robyn Penrose remaining a lecturer and Vic Wilcox

continuing as a businessman. The novel outright dismisses the possibility of the two characters uniting on equal terms, but they can still coexist.

The novel suggests that David Lodge, as both a novelist and a philosopher, is more focused on broadening human empathy and aiming for personal and societal improvement rather than just highlighting one absolute truth.

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