**Nice Work by David Lodge, August 2008**

This month I've decided that the best feedback for Nice Work is to direct everyone to listen to the World Book Club programme. This is a very good summary and we can hear David Lodge's answers to questions from readers around the world (including me!). (see link on our website)  [http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/programmes/world_book CLUB.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/programmes/world_book_CLUB.shtml)

Our groups are also a feature on the programme. I had hoped that the programme would be broadcast before our meeting, as it was recorded in July, but unfortunately it was scheduled eventually for the day after.

I'll just add a few points arising from our discussion:

We enjoyed the cultural contrasts between the academic world and industry. Other contrasts were well drawn between: a chauvinistic man and a feminist woman, young and old characters, boss and workers, professor and students.

The ending was disappointing intellectually- Robyn's sudden inheritance gave her the freedom to support Vic's own business venture. it was somewhat unrealistic.

300 pages of Nice Work was hard work!

In Japan we value engineering very highly - there is much respect for actually making things - nearly everywhere in the world respects engineering skills more than in Britain.

I studied in Birmingham so I could picture the setting - especially the industrial landscape. At first I thought I would be bored but I was gradually drawn into the story and eventually enjoyed the book very much.

Vic seemed a very dated character. Robyn was more realistic. I've known lots of academic women just like her. But the style was repetitive- it seemed too much of an intellectual exercise.

I didn't like Vic at all in the beginning but as I got to know more about him I warmed to him. Robyn seemed a stereotypical university intellectual- only two dimensional.

A zeitgeist novel of the 80's. It may well be seen as a very good portrait of that decade in years to come. Thatcher's cuts in education are well signposted.
I was so disappointed in the ending – I wanted Robyn to go to America. She would have had so many more opportunities there, especially in the field of women's studies.

My favourite part was the trip to Frankfurt – Vic and Robyn's brief fling – Robyn feels carefree at being away from home and ready to assert her independence sexually from her "semi-detached" lover Charles. Vic has been slowly falling in love with Robyn and has never felt such passion before. They were sure to end up in bed together. Lodge even tells us that this will happen in advance. We agreed that Lodge handled the romantic realism well and with humour.

Lodge brought two disparate worlds together and showed the value of opening our eyes to other people's worlds and points of view.

I really, really enjoyed it. But I didn't think Vic should have gone back to his wife. He should have been brave and broken free from his old life.

I don't agree – Marjorie, his wife, supports him 100% when he is made redundant and she finds a new lease of life, offering to help him with his new business. Her aimless shopping trips are at an end. They find each other again through adversity. Their long marriage had become stale but is revitalised.

Lodge portrays the world of industry as hell and the world of the university as paradise. Robyn has a dream of more workers being able to become students in the future. Targets of 50% of the population achieving university entrance is current government policy. Her vision is becoming reality.

Robyn is a typical feminist woman in my experience. She starts and ends the relationship. It is Robyn who suggests they go to bed together.

Robyn learns less from Vic than he does from her. Vic acquires an interest in literature and they finally respect each other and become friends.