

Robyn

According to Robyn (or, more precisely, according to the writers who have influenced her thinking on these matters), there is no such thing as the 'self' on which capitalism and the classic novel are founded — that is to say, a finite, unique soul or essence that constitutes a person's identity; there is only a subject position in an infinite web of discourses — 'the discourses of power, sex, family, science, religion, poetry, etc. And by the same token, there is no such thing as an author, that is to say, one who originates a work of fiction *ab nihilo*. Every text is a product of intertextuality, a tissue of allusions to and citations of other texts; and, in the famous words of Jacques Derrida (famous to people like Robyn, anyway), '*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*', there is nothing outside the text. There are no origins, there is only production, and we produce our 'selves' in language. Not '*you are what you eat*' but '*you are what you speak*' or, rather '*you are what speaks you*', is the axiomatic basis of Robyn's philosophy, which she would call, if required to give it a name, 'semiotic materialism'. It might seem a bit bleak, a bit inhuman ('antihumanist, yes; inhuman, no,' she would interject), somewhat deterministic ('not at all; the truly determined subject is he who is not aware of the discursive formations that determine him. Or her,' she would add scrupulously, being among other things a feminist), but in practice this doesn't seem to affect her behaviour very noticeably — she seems to have ordinary human feelings, ambitions, desires, to suffer anxieties, frustrations, fears, like anyone else in this imperfect world, and to have a natural inclination to try and make it a better place."

David Lodge, *Nice Work*