

Three Brief Notes on the Misery

1 A Letter to *The London Review of Books*

The economic metaphor came to be applied to every aspect of modern life, especially areas where it simply did not belong, says Mr Lancaster towards the end of his detailed and thoroughly honest article.

It is no doubt ungrateful of this reader—and he does not for a moment expect you to publish this—to point out that, embedded on a previous page of the same article in an advert for the company of which T. S. Eliot used to be a director, there is an invitation to join an “intensive” short course in “becoming”, sorry, “the *process* of becoming”, a poet, with “unparalleled insights into the *industry*”.

And later, Manchester advertises both competitions with loadsamoney prizes and creative writing courses, at the “University for World-Class Professionals”. Headed instantly by Carol-Anne Duffy, the brand-name of the moment in poetical productivity.

Are these examples of what Mr Lancaster meant?

Brian Lee

2 The Cutting Edge of Cliché

The Future is launching in the UK—says the envelope.

Flyers for new magazines still turn up despite the depression, now economic as well as cultural. One seems to have achieved the perfect formula for success. *Wired: Your Life in the Future*.

“Subscribe now and save 48%.” (First cliché, but exciting novelty of 48%: usually you are offered 50%.) “Welcome to the UK’s most exciting new magazine.” What is less exciting (even for people who relish excitement) than *exciting*? *UK’s* is incorrect. *Wired* is not a magazine of or belonging to the UK. But “in the UK” is now not cliché so cannot be used.

Wired: Your Life in the Future, the flyer tells us, using the novelty of *square* bullet points reproduced here as circles, will

- be first to bring you what’s next . . . ideas, technology, culture, business

Query: will what’s next be any different from what’s now? No, but it will be next. Cliché is eternal.

- have unique access to the people, products and ideas that are shaping our world

and therefore who by definition have made it the misery we know so well,

- showcase compelling long-form journalism

= publish longer boring essays as well as snippets and illustrations?

Subscribe to the Future! in the sure and certain hope that it will be exactly the same as the present, only more so. Guaranteed 100% correct cliché. As Lawrence says, “the flesh goes tired on one’s bones.” Save 100% by not subscribing.

Wired = Tired

3 A World-Class Broadcaster *ironing out the language*

The *Radio Times*: Classic Serial: *Troilus and Criseyde*: Sunday 26 April 2009 3.00 p.m. Radio 4:

“And now Lavinia Greenlaw has taken Chaucer’s romance of courtly love, ironed out the language and the poetry, and made it into a Classic Serial.” (Presumably it is part of the drive to create a Classic Serial that the *Radio Times* blurb has this classic line to entice us with: “I have my reputation to consider.”)