



The Art of Fiction: Illustrated from Classic and Modern Texts

David Lodge

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The articles with which David Lodge entertained and delighted readers of the *Independent on Sunday* and *The Washington Post* are now revised, expanded, and collected together in book form.

The art of fiction is considered under a wide range of headings, such as the Intrusive Author, Suspense, the Epistolary Novel, Time-shift, Magic Realism and Symbolism, and each topic is illustrated by a passage or two taken from classic or modern fiction. Drawing on writers as diverse as Henry James and Martin Amis, Jane Austen and Fay Weldon and Henry Fielding and James Joyce, David Lodge makes accessible to the general reader the richness and variety of British and American fiction. Technical terms, such as Interior Monologue, Metafiction, Intertextuality and the Unreliable Narrator, are lucidly explained and their applications demonstrated.

Bringing to criticism the verve and humour of his own novels, David Lodge has provided essential reading for students of literature, aspiring writers, and anyone who wishes to understand how literature works.

'Here is scholarship made human...There has been no better populist study of fiction since Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*' - Nigel Andrews in the *Financial Times*

'Agreeable and highly instructive...a real treat" - David Robson in the *Sunday Telegraph*

'His texts are useful, unpretentious, accessible...*The Art of Fiction* is a book for dipping, a book for starting up trains of thought or discussion' - A.S. Byatt in the *Sunday Times*

The Art of Fiction: Illustrated from Classic and Modern Texts Details

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From Reader Review *The Art of Fiction: Illustrated from Classic and Modern Texts* for online ebook

Michael says

This is the book that taught me how to read books. It provides a comprehensive set of critical tools for the everyday reader, and since its examples all tend to make you want to read the books they come from, it also gives you an outstanding syllabus of novels to try them out on. It was a brand-new book when I bought it; now it's dated but still rock-solid. It makes me giddy to think that I could have chosen *not* to buy it; I think the 25 years since would have gone a lot differently.

Nandakishore Varma says

Literary criticism is often daunting for a novice. I have ploughed through a lot of serious critical tomes in my life (most of them in Malayalam) to enhance my reading experience, but I must confess that I have been only partly successful: many of those erudite essays were way over my head. And when it comes to literary theory, I must shamefacedly say that I have still not understood the difference between “Classicism”, “Modernism” and “Post-Modernism”. Any mention of “Deconstruction” is enough to have me heading for the high hills! And even though I can write a grammatically correct sentence without help, the mention of “synecdoche”, “metonymy” and the like makes me go weak in the knees.

However, as an avid reader, I am always interested in knowing what makes great literature work. What magic do these wordsmiths have, which we ordinary mortals lack, which makes us go to them again and again? It has been my dream to find a critic who would explain the tricks of the trade in simple terms for me – a dream which was realised through the above book.

In *The Art of Fiction*, popular novelist David Lodge explains the tools of the writer’s craft in simple English. It comprises fifty short articles, originally published as pieces in a newspaper column. Instead of quoting theory, Lodge takes one or two novels as example and uses them to illustrate particular aspects of writing good fiction. Fittingly, he begins with “Beginning” and ends with “Ending”!

Some of the aspects Lodge describes are common to all fiction (beginning, ending, point of view, introducing a character, suspense) while some deal with specific techniques writers use (stream of consciousness, interior monologue, repetition, defamiliarisation, time-shift): yet other chapters introduce us to schools of writing (Magical Realism, Surrealism). There are also interesting chapters on titles (I never really pondered on how much authors sweat over these!), the use of lists in stories, and the possibilities of the telephone. I found every one of them fascinating.

The author quotes from the story he is going to discuss at the beginning of each chapter, which passage is then analysed. This analysis is used as a springboard for jumping into wider aspects of the subject. Before one knows, one is engrossed in the analysis; and in the case of the stories one has read, it creates the classic “aha!” reaction – like seeing the secret behind a magic trick. And it also gives one the chance to ruminate on the same technique used by different authors (for example, Lodge’s analysis of the time-shifts in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* immediately had me comparing it with *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, a novel written entirely based on this technique).

Newton said: “Genius is one per cent inspiration and ninety-nine per cent perspiration.” The same can be said of literature. The author’s inspiration, without the proper craft to package it, often falls flat. This book gives us an introduction that hallowed craft of the great writers; it also illustrates the fact that one can’t separate the subject from the form in case of great writing, for the novelist chooses the form of his story based on what he wants to convey. David Lodge introduced me to that craft in a very accessible way – and he has also inspired me to read the greats with a greater appreciation for their technique.

If you are a book-nerd like me without much knowledge of the workings of the great literary machine, this book is for you.

Review also on my [Blog](#) .

Helle says

I’m taking another online course at Oxford University (continuing education) this fall, and one of the books we have to read for the course is this one. I knew of David Lodge already but have never read anything by him. I love reading literary critique, or whatever you would call this compilation of extracts analyzed with different literary perspectives, especially when the author of the book is also a writer and can thus appreciate and not merely analyze the texts. The book is a relatively small paperback, very accessible due to the short chapters and the lack of too much jargon, and very readable.

It was useful and interesting the way in which Lodge delved into a multitude of aspects, some of which I had expected (like characters, point of view, suspense, the sense of place) but some which I hadn’t thought much about (like lists, coincidence, the telephone). (I did wonder why he didn’t have a chapter about dialog, expecting an extract from a Hemingway short story or something). I enjoyed how he often put the texts he used into a literary/historical context, and of course I particularly enjoyed the sections where I had actually read the novels he referred to (e.g. by Austen, Waugh, Dickens, Forster), though thankfully he almost never refers to any obscure authors I didn’t know.

Having said this, one thing annoyed me – on several occasions, namely that he couldn’t suppress the urge to include his own work, sometimes in chapters alongside some of the Great Authors. This irked me because surely he could have found a dozen other works to illustrate some of those points (although, granted, it gave us an insider’s perspective, but still). I just basically feel that if you’ve written or otherwise done something pretty brilliant or noteworthy, it’s up to someone else to point it out, not you.

The book is from 1992 so there aren’t any very recent examples, through no fault of Lodge’s obviously, but I’d like to read something like this which might also include extracts by authors like Barnes and McEwan, or Rowling for that matter, although I do appreciate that most of the works he refers to here (apart from his own – sic!) could be considered classics of more or less international standard.

Graham Salisbury says

This book originated in the early 1990’s when David Lodge was invited by the Independent on Sunday to contribute a series of weekly articles in which he chose a literary topic (such as Beginnings, Mystery, A

Sense of Place, Allegory or Endings) and illustrated this with one or two short extracts from relatively well-known novels.

The constraint of a short weekly newspaper column has demanded that Lodge restricts his comments and analysis to the most significant elements of the passages that he has chosen.

As Lodge is not only a highly successful novelist in his own right, but also was a lecturer and professor in English Literature at Birmingham University for almost 30 years, you will be hard pressed to find a more knowledgeable, entertaining or lucid guide to accompany you through some of the landmark works of English fiction, regardless of whether you are an aspiring writer or simply wish to understand how literature works.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

The Art of Fiction: Illustrated from Classic and Modern Texts, David Lodge

The Art of Fiction is a book of literary criticism by the British novelist David Lodge. The chapters of the book first appeared in 1991-1992 as weekly columns in The Independent on Sunday and were eventually gathered into book form and published in 1992. The essays as they appear in the book have in many cases been expanded from their original format. Lodge focuses each chapter upon one aspect of the art of fiction, comprising some fifty topics. Every chapter also begins with a passage from classic or modern literature that Lodge feels embodies the technique or topic at hand. Some of the topics Lodge analyzes are Beginning (the first chapter), The Intrusive Author, The Epistolary Novel, Magic Realism, Irony and Metafiction. Among the authors he quotes in order to illustrate his points are Jane Austen, J. D. Salinger, Henry James, Virginia Woolf, Martin Amis, F. Scott Fitzgerald and even himself.

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Stela says

No wonder *The Art of Fiction* is mandatory in the bibliography of many Literature (101) students. It explains beautifully, by analyzing excerpts from various masterpieces, essential notions of literary theory and criticism. Even if its 50 sections were initially written for a weekly newspaper column, and with the declared intention to be comprehensible to a general public, "The Art of Fiction" introduces the basic notions for anyone who intends to lose the innocence of reading and become a critic *en herbe*.

Somehow ironically dull, the book begins with the *Beginning*, and ends, of course with the *Ending*, both chapters presenting various ways to introduce and finish a story. In between, we learn about narrative voices, about the form and the structure, the time and the space, the language, the plot and so on, as we did (and forgot!) in high school and college.

I liked a lot of text analyses and, as always, I enjoyed reading Lodge, but I have to confess I'm familiar with many of the notions presented.

However, I've learnt some, too:

- that you can use the term "skaz" "to designate a type of first-person narration that has the characteristics of the spoken rather than the written word." (*The Catcher in the Rye* is an example);
- that another term for *poetic prose* is *fancy prose*;
- that there is a form of intertextuality named "missed opportunity" (a piece of information that would have suited a novel had it been discovered while writing it);
- that there is an experimental novel named *Alphabetical Africa* in which the first chapter contains only words that begin with a, the second with b, a, the third c, b, a etc., and so on until z, and then back until a again;
- that Paul Eluard could have saved the life of the surrealist Czech poet Zavis Kalandra but he refused to intervene.

On the other hand, I don't think I'm too comfortable with the term "non-fiction novel", which is very oxymoronic (to use an euphemism for contradiction in terms) even if it was coined by Truman Capote, and I perfectly understand his reasons. Anyway, I prefer Tom Wolfe's "new journalism" to describe this type of novel.

I was amused discovering that I had already spotted many of the tricks David Lodge reveals he used in his own novels.

Overall, as usual, and I repeat myself, I love the critic Lodge as much as I love the novelist. And of course, my to-read list is longer now, including Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Fay Weldon, *Female Friends*, Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*, Evelyn Waugh, *A Handful of Dust*, and Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*.

P.S. More than five years later, I'm proud to say that I read all the books above and not a single one was disappointing, *au contraire*.

Laleh says

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Sunil says

The very fact that the book has compelled me to put down my thoughts here when I've barely finished reading a quarter of it should reflect on how much a wonderful read it is.

What David Lodge has done is quite simple - he has chosen a variety of styles in fiction eg intrusive author, unreliable narrator, suspense, symbolism, magical realism, interior monologue etc and illustrated each of them with a passage taken from a well known book with a succinct missive to go with them.

The beauty of the book is in its discretion and economy, making it easier to relate it to a lay reader (by which I mean a reader who had the fortune of escaping the painful literary expositions of neurotic university professors).

Consider these chapters - Interior Monologue, Stream of Consciousness, Symbolism - as I think of these literary techniques, left to myself, I would have chosen Edouard Dujardin, James Joyce and Scott Fitzgerald, but then I realise how wrong my choices would be, because these chaps almost master and monopolise their respective techniques, thereby rendering themselves a poorer example for an average lay reader.

Then as you read the simple missives, you see why David Lodge's choices are James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and DH Lawrence!

I gather these chapters appeared as weekly articles in the Independent in the 90s. I could easily picture myself religiously waiting for the articles every week, so that I could cut them off for my collection. Well, with the book, I guess that would be unnecessary.

N.J. Ramsden says

I've dipped into this many times during my days of teaching Creative Writing, not to use as a foundation for classes so much as backup material, or the illumination of sidelines. Lodge covers pretty good ground, and though his selection of texts is reasonable, it's not exciting – and while he's on top of his material, and his analyses of his chosen pieces are astute, again there's a kind of safety to much of it that renders these essays informative and interesting, but not exactly inspiring.

If that makes me sound negative about this collection, I'm not. It is interesting, and it is useful for those who want to be more aware of some of the aspects of writing prose fiction that a general reader (or the tyro writer) may not necessarily consider. If nothing else, the pieces in this volume will prompt the reader to explore these ideas in other, perhaps more personally intriguing, texts – which is no bad thing – and to plough beyond the thorough yet modest confines of Lodge's remit in their own ways – which is even better.

Fonch says

The first of all, that i must say before that i write my review is saying, that "Art of fiction" was written by David Lodge. It is not a bad book. If "Art of fiction" had been a bad book i would have rated with two, or one star.

I must recognise, that David Losdge writes rather well, and he is a perfect Professor of Literary Theory. The topics, which he speaks are well chosen. It is a good point the division of the chapters in fifty chapters. The book is really good translated to spanish.

In my opinion the problem of this book is that some writers, that David Lodge has chosen writers that i like to me very much. All writers of the 19th century, Evelyn Waugh, Muriel Spark, Graham Greene, Anthony

Burgess (in my opinion is more than the writer of "Orange clockworth. Reverte that he is not catholic loves "Earthly Powers"). Despite not being catholic other writers interest to me really much. I am thinking in the anglo-japanese writer Kazuo Ishiguro not reliable narrator. In my shelve i have dead of sadness his novel "The buried giant". Other writers i have not any problems to read for instance William Golding. The disadvantage of this essay is that some writers who choose David Lodge made me sick (i thought that being culturally catholic Lodge would have other references as Evelyn Waugh, but i see that weight more in his heart Virginia Woolf, and James Joyce). In the case of Virginia Woolf (the woman, who accused Maurice Baring of being irrelevant). In my opinion the irrelevant is her. And her stream of consciousness does not impress to me. James Joyce Ok. i have read his "Dubliners" and it is Ok. But he is one of the most overrated writers of our planet. His "Ulyssess" is a headache to read it :- (i bet with my father 60 euros that i read it. The book continue in my Shelve). In other case Lodge persuades to me not reading authors that i had in my shelve. I am thinking in Angela Carter whom i expeled of my shelve, and more after David Lodge saying about her and her mates Fay Weldon, and Leanore Cattington (i preffer the Leanore of the Raven). Martin Amis made me to have an instinctive antipathy. Fowles is not a bad writer, but his private life scare away to me. The plot of Malcolm Bradbury`s novel reject to me that the same poles of a magnet. The beggining of "Lolita" is brilliant, but we must not forget that it is the story of an incest, pedrastian, a murder. About D.H. Lawrence he had the luck to be borned in England in other country, where the sex had not been taboo he would have died of starving. In France he had been other pornography writer. Lawrence saved because the society of his time was very puritan. Besides there are writers, who write better than him. I thought in the writer Megan Maxwell.

The main problem of this book is that this book surrendered to the political correction. We are slaves of the critics, who raised these writers to the secular shrine. I missed more names G.K. Chesterton (in words of Paul Johnson he was expelled of the English writers as the fairies, and Elves, despite being the master of Kafka, Karel Capek, or Borges) i missed Tolkien, I missed Maurice Baring, i missed Robert Hugh Benson, Nancy Mitford, Sheila Kaye Smith, Somerset Maugham the list is incredibly long.

For this reason the literary guides are not infallible. They can help us, but they are not the Holy Bible. We must find a balance between the critics, and the popular taste (because it has not ever the public taste is the best. Our age is the bitter fruit and the evidence that i say it. It is true). The thing is looking for the blessed an aristotlelic middle point. Perhaps for somebody my review might be very hard, but the lecture of Benjamin Dexter/Graham Greene in "The third man" is harder than my review, and the fair anger of the spanish writer Juan Manuel de Prada in his last novel "White blackbird, black swan", where at the beggining of his novel he whips to the authors acclaimed by the critics. They are bored, i fear it.

I want to conclude my review lighting to the Goodreads Users, saying something good. I love the references of David Lodge to their novels, and i recomend "Art of fiction" to future writers. However continue trusting in their favorite writers. Nobody speak about Mika Waltari, Louis de Wohl, and Maxence van der Meersch, and i love them. The proffessor of a friend said to her "That we were the fruit of our fantasies".

Lo primero de todo, que debo decir antes de empezar esta crítica es decir, que "El arte de la ficción" de David Lodge. No es un mal libro. Si lo fuera no le habría puesto tres estrellas, sino una estrella, o dos. Debo reconocer, que David Lodge escribe muy bien, y es un profesor de Teoría Literaria muy competente. Los temas, que trata están muy bien escogidos, así como también es un acierto la división, que ha hecho en 50 capítulos. El libro, está muy bien traducido.

A mí modo de ver el problema del libro es que algunos escritores me gustaban los del siglo XIX, Evelyn Waugh, Muriel Spark, Graham Greene, Anthony Burgess. Otros pese a no ser católico tengo interés por leerles, como Kazuo Ishiguro. Ahí tengo en mi estantería muerto de aburrimiento "El gigante enterrado". Otros no me incomodaba leerles como William Golding. El talón de aquiles de Lodge es que muchos de los escritores de David Lodge me producen abierta repulsión. Pienso en Virginia Woolf (la mujer, que acusó a Maurice Baring de ser superficial). Es curioso, pero a mí es ella la que me parece superficial, y su flujo de la

conciencia. No me inspira mucho confianza. James Joyce vale que le he leído, y aprobé sus "Dublineses" (que son correctitos), pero es que uno de los escritores más sobrevalorados del planeta, y su "Ulises" es un dolor de cabeza leerlo. En algunos casos el libro de Lodge, me ha disuadido de leer a otros escritores que tenía en mi estantería pienso en Angela Carter, a la que he apartado de mi estantería, después de lo que dice Lodge de ella, y de sus compañeras Fay Weldon, y Eleonora Cattington. Martin Amis es un escritor, que inspira en mí una antipatía instintiva. Fowles no sería un mal escritor el problema es que su vida privada me retrae. El argumento de la novela de Macolm Bradbury me repelía como un imán. Estoy de acuerdo que el arranque de Nabokov es brillante, pero no nos engañemos es la historia de una pedrastia, un incesto, y un asesinato. Que voy a decir de D.H. Lawrence, que tuvo la suerte de nacer en Inglaterra si hubiera nacido en una sociedad, que se escandalizase menos del sexo se hubiera muerto de hambre. Lo que le salvó fue el puritanismo de la sociedad en la que vivía. En Francia hubiera sido un escritor más de literatura pornográfica, y no se le consideraría una figura para este tipo de literatura pueden leer a mi amiga Megan Maxwell, que lo hace mejor, que Lawrence.

Ahí está el problema del libro, que se ha rendido a la corrección política, y ha elevado a los altares a los ad lateres proclamados por los popes y críticos que han modelado el pensamiento del siglo XX (por desgracia). Se echan de menos nombres, que eran muy populares, aunque hoy no nos digan nada el gran G.K.

Chesterton (en palabras de Paul Johnson relegado y expulsado de las universidades británicas, pese a ser el maestro de Kafka, K. Capek, y Jorge Luis Borges). Echó de menos a J.R.R. Tolkien, echó de menos al valiente Baring. Echó de menos a Robert Hugh Benson. Echó de menos a Nancy Mitford, echó de menos a Sheila Kaye Smith. Echó de menos que se tratase otras novelas de Burgess. Echó de menos a Somerset Maugham, y a tantos otros.

Por eso yo pienso, que las guías literarias pueden ayudarnos, pero no son la Biblia, ni tienen la infalibilidad. Creo, que hay que buscar un equilibrio entre la crítica, y los gustos populares (porque no siempre lo que le gusta al público es bueno, y prueba de ello es lo que compra actualmente). La cosa está en buscar el bendito, y aristotélico punto medio. A Algunos les podrá parecer duro mi análisis, pero no menos duro, que la conferencia que BenjaminDexter/GrahamGreene pronunció contra sus contemporáneos en el "Tercer hombre", ni la justa ira de mi adorado Juan Manuel de Prada en su brillante novela "Mirlo blanco, cisne negro", dónde al principio fustiga a los autores consagrados por la crítica actual, y que son aburridísimos, me temo.

Con todo quiero finalizar mi crítica insuflando un poco de luz (diciendo algo bueno) me gusta las acotaciones de David Lodge a sus novelas, y recomiendo leer este libro a futuros escritores en ciernes. Con todo sigan confiando en sus escritores predilectos. Ya nadie habla de Mika Waltari, Louis de Wohl, o Maxence van der Meersch, y a mí me encantan. Como diría el profesor de una amiga mía "somos el fruto de nuestras fantasías".

Daniel Schechtel says

If you are looking for a book who teaches you the language of literature, the craftwork, so as to improve both your reading and your writing, THIS is the book you want.

Based upon classic novels in the English Language, David Lodge shows you the different tools a writer serves upon to create fiction. I just LOVED it.

Pooya Kiani says

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Ian Laird says

David Lodge's book has made me think differently about my reading: indeed to read differently.

Lodge examines aspects of approach and technique authors use to enhance our understanding of what they do to tell their fictional stories. He does not deconstruct so much as analyse the angles we can use to understand and appreciate fiction. And he provides some telling examples. He talks about, among other things: beginning, ending, the intrusive author, the stream of consciousness approach, place, weather, time-shifting, staying on the surface, the telephone, irony, motivation and symbolism.

Because I read it gradually I was able to take in the different points as he makes them, dipping in and out of the text. Given also that it is a little time since I read it and I have completed a number of novels since then, the lessons in Lodge's book have stayed with me.

A lot of this stuff I knew already, at least on a sub-conscious level. Articulating it raises the matters to a conscious level. So what did I learn? Lots:

- **Names:** an author chooses names carefully they 'are never neutral'. They can be comic (*Pumblechook*), or realistic (*Emma Woodhouse*). Just recently I read a world war two spy story, **Restless** by William Boyd, where one the ambiguous characters, always on the move, was named *Romer* (= roamer = restless). It's a bit of a clue. Dickens did it all the time: witness the hard man Mr *Murdstone* and the obsequious *Uriah Heep* from **David Copperfield**. My favourite example, not from Lodge's book, is Ian Fleming's choice for his spy hero. He had a book of his shelf at his home Golden Eye in Jamaica called **A Field Guide to the Birds of the West Indies**, by ornithologist *James Bond*, published in 1936. Fleming wanted a plain simple name. A spy is born.
- **Magic realism** is principally practised by authors who have experienced national upheavals.
- There are different ways of telling a story, different voices to use, you can reference other works (intertextuality) and you can use repetitive prose, plain or fancy prose.
- **Co-incidence** can be used to bring characters together and to tie events. It tends to feature more in the comic world than the more serious work.

Throughout the book Lodge uses good examples (Austen, Hemmingway, Bennett, Eliot) and sometimes his own novels, which has the advantage of the author knowing exactly what the creator of his illustration was trying to achieve.

I recently read a Biggles book, **Biggles Goes to War**, and paused to wonder why I liked it and what its enduring appeal might be, it is after all a book written for boys a very long time ago and contains outdated attitudes, is touchingly naïve and follows a pattern immediately familiar to readers of Captain WE Johns' series. Biggles and his loyal comrades come to the rescue of a small mythical European principality being monstered by a bullying neighbour, by shooting down enemy aircraft, blowing up a bridge, rescuing a diplomat and generally interfering in the politics of the warring states.

In Lodge's terms though, the author gives us a sense of place, an exotic one, he changes our point of view, shifts time, uses co-incidence (quite a bit) and tellingly, gives us the motivation of the characters. For me the daring-do is pleasing enough but it is the doubts, apprehensions and anticipated difficulties in our hero's head that make the story worthwhile and transcend its original purpose of spinning a yarn for the boys of pre-war Britain.

Caroline says

I'm not in the mood for fiction at the moment - I know, that is a ridiculously sweeping thing to say, but really I'm not. I had hoped that in reading this basic introduction to literary criticism that I might have a surge of wonder and excitement, see all that I was missing, and rush out and bury myself in a novel.

It was not to be. I huffed and puffed my way from chapter to chapter, feeling irritated and disgruntled. Firstly by the extracts from various novels - none of which appealed - and then by the analysis of each piece. It all felt flat and boring, and either difficult to understand, or blindingly obvious. (Yes, I was feeling *that* ratty.) I did learn a bit though, so there is therefore a second star in my rating.

I am just grateful that in this amazing universe of books there is something for everyone, and the world of fiction will be ready and waiting for when I am once again in the mood.

I feel it relevant to mention that most other reviews for this book are incredibly complimentary. I think a lot of my negativity just comes from my current reading preferences.

J. Watson (aka umberto) says

When I first picked it up some months ago and browsed some pages inside, I didn't want to read it due to its seemingly formidable technical terms in 50 headings but I later changed my mind due to its affirmation as follows, "Bringing to criticism the verve and humour of his own words, David Lodge has provided essential reading for students of literature, aspirant writers, and anyone who wishes to understand how literature works." (back cover) Moreover, Professor Lodge's fame and contribution as a university academic as well as a highly-acclaimed novelist himself have impressed me; his novels include *The Picturegoers* (1960), *The British Museum is Falling Down* (1965), *Out of the Shelter* (1970), to name but a few. His *Changing Places* (1975) was awarded the Hawthornden Prize and the *Yorkshire Post* Fiction Prize; *Nice Work* won the 1988 *Sunday Express* Book of the Year Award; *Paradise News* (1991) was regional winner and finalist for the

1996 Commonwealth Writers' Prize, and more. (p. i)

I found reading this book arguably rewarding and challenging due to his narratives tinged with appropriate examples; however, I wouldn't claim I understood all he said there, rather I left a number of highly-technical points at that for those who know to digest since I need time to reflect on some issues as far as I can and hope someone out there with his/her charismatic wisdom could shed me some glimpses of light when the time comes.

As we can see from the title, it deals with the art of fiction covering 50 headings (sections as mentioned by Dr Lodge, I wonder if there are more); each one being immediately presented by an exemplified text from a novelist and his/her work. This implies we should read from our familiar novelists and novels first, one of the reasons is that it is easier and more manageable to read about what we have read written by our favorite novelists. In retrospect, I found reading the following 27 headings, their texts, the novelists and the novels twice harder because I had never read them:

- 1 Beginning (Jane Austen, Ford Maddox Ford)
- 3 Suspense (Thomas Hardy)
- 5 The Epistolary Novel (Michael Frayn)
- 6 Point of View (Henry James)
- 8 Names (David Lodge, Paul Aster)
- 12 The Sense of Place (Martin Armis)
- 14 Introducing a Character (Christopher Isherwood)
- 15 Surprise (William Makepeace Thackeray)
- 17 The Reader in the Text (Laurence Sterne)
- 22 The Experimental Novel (Henry Green)
- 24 Magic Realism (Milan Kundera)
- 25 Staying on the Surface (Malcolm Bradbury)
- 26 Showing and Telling (Henry Fielding)
- 27 Telling in Different Voices (Fay Weldon)
- 28 A Sense of the Past (John Fowles)
- 31 Allegory (Samuel Butler)
- 33 Coincidence (Henry James)
- 38 Surrealism (Leonora Carrington)
- 39 Irony (Arnold Bennett)
- 40 Motivation (George Eliot)
- 41 Duration (Donald Barthelme)
- 42 Implication (William Cooper)
- 43 The Title (George Gissing)
- 44 Ideas (Anthony Burgess)
- 45 The Non-Fiction Novel (Thomas Carlyle)
- 46 Metafiction (John Barth)
- 48 Narrative Structure (Leonard Michaels)

As for the remaining 23 I would leave them for those readers interested in tasting themselves as they like since it's time consuming and not challenging to do all; therefore, I would say something on a heading based on the accompanied text with three queries: 1) What does the heading mean? 2) Why is it an art of fiction? and 3) How does it play a role in the exemplary extract taken from the fiction?

The one I mean is No. 35 The Exotic, its two-paragraph excerpt has been taken from Graham Greene's *The*

Heart of the Matter (1948) followed by the author's five-paragraph, nearly three-page text. Now I would try to find the answers from the text itself.

1) By "exotic", the author means foreign, not necessarily glamorous or alluring. (p. 159)

2) Since "the exotic in fiction is the mediation of an "abroad" to an audience assumed to be located at "home"" (p. 159); therefore, it has primarily been adopted as an art in fiction by means of depicting anything exotic, that is, things naturally or physically different from what the novelists have long been familiar in their motherland. Moreover, it's interesting to read/hear him mention imperialism, its aftermath and exotic settings inevitably narrated especially in British novels in the last 150 years.

To continue . . .
