

David Lodge

THE ART OF FICTION

Edited with Notes

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THE SIGN OF  A GOOD BOOK

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17 Chapters
from
THE ART OF FICTION
by
David Lodge

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まえがき

本書は小説家としても批評家としても著名なデイヴィッド・ロッジ (David Lodge) が、一般読者の小説理解の手引きとしてインディペンダント紙に連載したエッセイをまとめた『小説の技法』(*The Art of Fiction*, Penguin Books, 1992) を、特に日本の大学生用の教科書として編んだものである。原著では小説に関する 50 のトピックが取り上げられ、それぞれ実作者ならではの簡にして要を得た解説がなされているが、本書では教材としての性格上、17 のトピックに限らざるを得なかった。いずれも捨てがたいものばかりで、その選択にあたってはずいぶん迷ったが、重要度、並びにそこで扱われている作品、作家なども考慮して、できるだけバラエティーに富むように心がけた。また原著をテキストとして教室で実際に使ってみた二人の編者の経験に照らして、とりわけ学生たちに興味深いと思われるものを選んだ。

本書の何よりの特色は、バーミンガム大学英文科で 27 年間、主として「小説における形式」(“Form in Fiction”) という講座を担当した原著者にふさわしく、小説の諸相をただ単に解説するというのではなく、まず古今の著名な小説から精選した作品の抜粋を各トピックの例証として提示し、そのトピック (= 技法) についての簡潔な説明を施すことによって読者に一般的な知識を提供した上で、抜粋部分がいかにも小説技法として優れたものであるかを説き明かすという書き方がなされていることである。ロッジの鮮やかというほかない見事な手さばきの解説文を読んだ読者は、だれもが改めてもう一度抜粋を読んでみたくなることは間違いない。そしてその再読によって、個々の技法が実際にどのように生かされているかを具体的に確認あるいは再確認して、爽快な気分を味わうとともに、小説の読み方について重要なポイントを学んだという知的満足を感じるはずである。

The Modes of Modern Writing (1977), *Working with Structuralism* (1981),

After Bakhtin (1990) といった注目すべきアカデミックな批評書を出しているロッジの解説は、当然のことながら、1960年代の終わりごろから盛んになった新しい文学理論をふまえた上で書かれているが、とすれば難解になりがちなそのような理論も、彼が十分に咀嚼して自家菜籠中の物としているためにきわめて理解しやすいものになっている。この点でも学生たちは大いに啓発され、小説作品を新しく読み直すきっかけを与えられるはずである。

各章はそれぞれ独立して読み切りになっているので、どの章から読み始めても差し支えない。また、各章の冒頭にある原作からの抜粋は、本文中にその作品およびそのコンテキストについて要領を得た解説があるので、まず一通り目を通すだけにして、本文を読んでからそれを参考にしてもう一度精読するという方法をとるのも一考かと思われる。

注を付けるにあたっては、英和中辞典を引けば簡単に分かる語句については省略したが、文学批評用語その他、学生たちがより正確にテキストを理解するのに役立つと思われる語句についてはできるだけ詳しく注を付けた。なお、二人の編者それぞれの専攻に従って、イギリスの作家に関わる部分は内田が、アメリカの作家に関わる部分は渡辺が担当し、全体を二人で検討して間違いのないように努めたつもりであるが、説明が不十分であったり、思いがけないあやまちをおかしている箇所があるかも知れない。ご叱正、ご教授をお願いできれば幸いである。

最後になったが、編者の勤務先の同僚I.C.スターク客員教授のご助言を頂いたところがある。謹んでお礼を申し上げたい。また、本書の出版を快く引き受けて頂いた英宝社の皆様には大変お世話になった。深く感謝申し上げます。

1995年9月

内 田 憲 男
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CONTENTS

1	The Unreliable Narrator (Ishiguro)	7
2	The Intrusive Author (Forster)	11
3	The Reader in the Text (Sterne)	15
4	Point of View (James)	19
5	Symbolism (Lawrence)	25
6	The Stream of Consciousness (Woolf)	30
7	Epiphany (Updike)	36
8	Defamiliarization (C. Brontë)	40
9	The Uncanny (Poe)	45
10	The Exotic (Greene)	50
11	Time-Shift (Spark)	55
12	Names (Lodge, Auster)	61
13	Repetition (Hemingway)	67
14	Teenage <i>Skaz</i> (Salinger)	72
15	The Telephone (Waugh)	77
16	Duration (Barthelme)	83
17	Metafiction (Barth)	87
	Notes	93

1 The Unreliable Narrator

"It is from Mrs Johnson, a companion of my aunt. She says my aunt died the day before yesterday." She paused a moment, then said: "The funeral is to take place tomorrow. I wonder if it might be possible for me to take the day off."

"I am sure that could be arranged, Miss Kenton." 5

"Thank you, Mr Stevens. Forgive me, but perhaps I may now have a few moments alone."

"Of course, Miss Kenton."

I made my exit, and it was not until after I had done so that it occurred to me I had not actually offered her my condolences. I could well imagine the blow the news would be to her, her aunt having been, to all intents and purposes, like a mother to her, and I paused out in the corridor, wondering if I should go back, knock and make good my omission. But then it occurred to me that if I were to do so, I might easily intrude upon her private grief. Indeed, it was not impossible that Miss Kenton, at that very moment, and only a few feet from me, was actually crying. The thought provoked a strange feeling to rise within me, causing me to stand there hovering in the corridor for some moments. But eventually I judged it best to await another opportunity to express my sympathy and went on my way. 10
15
20

KAZUO ISHIGURO *The Remains of the Day* (1989)

Unreliable narrators are invariably invented characters who are part of the stories they tell. An unreliable “omniscient” narrator is almost a contradiction in terms, and could only occur in a very deviant, experimental text. Even a character-narrator cannot be a
5 hundred per cent unreliable. If everything he or she says is palpably false, that only tells us what we know already, namely that a novel is a work of fiction. There must be some possibility of discriminating between truth and falsehood within the imagined world of the novel, as there is in the real world, for the story to engage our
10 interest.

The point of using an unreliable narrator is indeed to reveal in an interesting way the gap between appearance and reality, and to show how human beings distort or conceal the latter. This need not be a conscious, or mischievous, intention on their part. The narra-
15 tor of Kazuo Ishiguro’s novel is not an evil man, but his life has been based on the suppression and evasion of the truth, about himself and about others. His narrative is a kind of confession, but it is riddled with devious self-justification and special pleading, and only at the very end does he arrive at an understanding of himself
20 — too late to profit by it.

The frame-story is set in 1956. The narrator is Stevens, the ageing butler of an English stately home, once the seat of Lord Darlington, now the property of a rich American. Encouraged by his new employer, Stevens takes a short holiday in the West Coun-
25 try. His private motive is to make contact with Miss Kenton, housekeeper at Darlington Hall in its great days between the Wars, when Lord Darlington hosted unofficial gatherings of high-ranking politi-

cians to discuss the crisis in Europe. Stevens hopes to persuade Miss Kenton (he continues to refer to her thus, though she is married) to come out of retirement and help solve a staffing crisis at Darlington Hall. As he travels, he recalls the past.

Stevens speaks, or writes, in a fussily precise, stiffly formal style 5
—butlerspeak, in a word. Viewed objectively, the style has no literary merit whatsoever. It is completely lacking in wit, sensuousness and originality. Its effectiveness as a medium for this novel resides precisely in our growing perception of its inadequacy for what it describes. Gradually we infer that Lord Darlington was a bungling 10
amateur diplomat who believed in appeasing Hitler and gave support to fascism and antisemitism. Stevens has never admitted to himself or to others that his employer was totally discredited by subsequent historical events, and takes pride in the impeccable service he rendered his weak and unamiable master. 15

The same mystique of the perfect servant rendered him incapable of recognizing and responding to the love that Miss Kenton was ready to offer him when they worked together. But a dim, heavily censored memory of his treatment of her gradually surfaces in the course of his narrative—and we realize that his real motive 20
for seeking her out again is a vain hope of undoing the past.

Stevens repeatedly gives a favourable account of himself which turns out to be flawed or deceptive. Having delivered to Miss Kenton a letter reporting the death of her aunt, he realizes that he has not “actually” offered his condolences. His hesitation about 25
whether to return almost distracts us from his extraordinarily crass omission of any expression of regret in the preceding dialogue. His

anxiety not to intrude on her grief seems to bespeak a sensitive personality, but in fact as soon as he finds another “opportunity to express my sympathy”, he does no such thing, but instead rather spitefully criticises her supervision of two new maidservants. Typically, he has no word more expressive than “strange” for the feeling he experiences at the thought that Miss Kenton might be crying on the other side of the door. We may be surprised that he should suspect her of doing so, just after noting with approval her calm reception of the news. In fact many pages later he admits that he has attached this memory to the wrong episode:

I am not at all certain now as to the actual circumstances which had led me to be standing thus in the back corridor. It occurs to me that elsewhere in attempting to gather such recollections, I may well have asserted that this memory derived from the minutes immediately after Miss Kenton’s receiving news of her aunt’s death . . . But now, having thought further, I believe I may have been a little confused about this matter; that in fact this fragment of memory derives from events that took place on an evening at least a few months after the death of Miss Kenton’s aunt . . .

It was an evening, in fact, when he humiliated her by coldly rejecting her timid but unambiguous offer of love—that was why she was crying behind the closed door. But Stevens characteristically associates the occasion not with this private, intimate episode, but with one of Lord Darlington’s most momentous conferences. The themes of political bad faith and emotional sterility are subtly interwoven in the sad story of Stevens’s wasted life.

2 The Intrusive Author



To Margaret—I hope that it will not set the reader against her—the station of King’s Cross had always suggested Infinity. Its very situation—withdrawn a little behind the facile splendours of St Pancras—implied a comment on the materialism of life. Those two great arches, colourless, indifferent, shouldering between them an unlovely clock, were fit portals for some eternal adventure, whose issue might be prosperous, but would certainly not be expressed in the ordinary language of prosperity. If you think this ridiculous, remember that it is not Margaret who is telling you about it; and let me hasten to add that they were in plenty of time for the train; that Mrs Munt secured a comfortable seat, facing the engine, but not too near it; and that Margaret, on her return to Wickham Place, was confronted with the following telegram:

All over. Wish I had never written. Tell no one.—Helen.

But Aunt Juley was gone—gone irrevocably, and no power on earth could stop her.

E. M. FORSTER *Howards End* (1910)



The simplest way of telling a story is in the voice of a storyteller, which may be the anonymous voice of folk-tale (“Once upon a time

there was a beautiful princess”) or the voice of the epic bard (e.g., Virgil’s “Arms and the man I sing”) or the confiding, companionable, sententious authorial voice of classic fiction from Henry Fielding to George Eliot.

5 Around the turn of the century, however, the intrusive authorial voice fell into disfavour, partly because it detracts from realistic illusion and reduces the emotional intensity of the experience being represented, by calling attention to the act of narrating. It also claims a kind of authority, a God-like omniscience, which our sceptical and relativistic age is reluctant to grant to anyone. Modern fiction has tended to suppress or eliminate the authorial voice, by presenting the action through the consciousness of the characters, or by handing over to them the narrative task itself. When the intrusive authorial voice *is* employed in modern fiction, it’s usually
 10 with a certain ironic self-consciousness, as in the passage from *Howards End*. This concludes the second chapter, in which the Bloomsburyite Margaret Schlegel, having heard that her sister Helen has fallen in love with the younger son of a *nouveau-riche* captain of industry, Henry Wilcox, despatches her aunt (Mrs Munt)
 15 to investigate.
 20

Howards End is a Condition-of-England novel, and the sense of the country as an organic whole, with a spiritually inspiring, essentially agrarian past, and a problematic future overshadowed by commerce and industry, is what gives a representative significance
 25 to the characters and their relationships. This theme reaches its visionary climax in Chapter 19, where, from the high vantage point of the Purbeck hills, the question is posed by the author, whether