

# Intratextual Repetition: Stylistic Consistency and Uniformity in Rendering the Profiles of the Academics in David Lodge's Trilogy *Changing Places, Small World, Nice Work*

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## Abstract

The paper aims at illustrating, through the analysis of the stylistic device of intratextual repetition, the stylistic consistency and uniformity in rendering the profiles of the academics in David Lodge's campus trilogy: *Changing Places, Small World, Nice Work*. We have considered intratextual repetition or repetition at the level of the literary text, the kind of repetition that induces the reader to return to a different point within the margins of the same text, or of the three texts, in this case. The stylistic investigation will show that this type of repetition has a double function: on the one hand, its use in the three novels is meant to signal continuity on a textual level, on the other hand, by means of this type of repetition, the characters are individuated in terms of appearance, behaviour and personal qualities. The most pervasive and evident type of repetition is the lexical one, with fixed linguistic features reiterated in different permutations and numbers. It is used in a variety of ways: single words, phrases of apposition or amplification, syntagms, in conversion, with stylistic variants, in different registers etc.

**Keywords:** intratextual repetition, the academic profile, referential registers, focalization, stylistic consistency, world-view uniformity, objectivity in reference, strategy of portraiture

The portraits of the academics in David Lodge's trilogy *Changing Places, Small World, Nice Work* are not central elements of the literary text, but auxiliaries of the narration as Lodge does not give much space to physical description or direct moral portraying. The academic profile is made up of short portraying descriptions, most of the times partial, in successive fragments displayed on the whole narrative text. The partial portraits are presented in different moments of the narrative tension and their sequence forms a parallel in time which marks similitude.

Lodge can be extremely precise in his choice of words for exact meaning or effect. This characteristic of style reflects clarity, logic of thinking. His mathematical precision is best noticeable in the use of the intratextual repetition. We have considered intratextual repetition or repetition at the level of the literary text, the kind of repetition that induces the reader to return to a different point within the margins of the same text, or of the three texts in our analysis (Metzidakis 72). It results that in this case we can not speak of repetition unless we have a global perspective upon the trilogy.

The repetition employed to emphasize the profile of the scholar is not used excessively (if we are to take into account the large scope of the three novels in the campus trilogy), but obsessively in connection with the same character. Thus, repetition has a double function: on the one hand, its use in the three novels is meant to signal continuity on a textual level (as opposed to the contextual level). In this case stylistic consistency, rather than stylistic variation attracts the attention. On the other hand, by means of this type of repetition, the characters are individuated in terms of appearance, behaviour and personal qualities.

The most pervasive and evident type of repetition is the lexical one, with fixed linguistic features reiterated in different permutations and numbers. It is used in a variety of ways: single words, phrases of apposition or amplification, syntagms, in conversion, with stylistic variants etc.

In terms of academic portraiture, Lodge uses short portraying descriptions with physiological and moral elements limited to short notations. Whenever he breaks this rule, then his intentions become parodistic, as demonstrated below. Thus, the description of Philip Swallow's physiognomy is introduced in *Changing Places*, in the third chapter, *Corresponding*, epistolary in form, made up of letters written by the four principal characters. The strategy of portraying is parodistic. Morris Zapp, intrigued and angered with Swallow's allegedly having written a vicious review to an article of his, asks Desiree for information in one of the letters:

(i) What does he look like, Desiree, for Christ's sake? What manner of man is he? Swallow, I mean. Do his canines hang out over the lower lip? Is his handshake cold and clammy? Do his eyes have a murderous glint? (C. P. 134)

(ii) If you really want to know, Philip Swallow is about six feet tall and weighs I should say about 140 pound – that is, he's tall and skinny and stooped. He holds his head forward as if he's hit it too often on low doorways. His hair is the texture of Brillo pads before they've used and is deeply receding at his temples. He has dandruff, but who hasn't? He has nice eyes. I couldn't say anything positively in favour of his teeth, but they don't protrude like fangs. His handshake is normal in temperature, if a little on the limp side. He smokes one of those patent air-cooled pipes which leaks tobacco juice all over the fingers. (C. P. 134)

Much like in any of his verbal manifestations, Zapp exaggerates by suggesting a hyperbolized negative image of Philip. His portraying (as he not only asks for information, but also provides his own information in an attempt to express his discontent with his "opposite number") in (i) consists of a series of questions dislocated at one time (to delineate and draw attention on the depiction furthered by him) by a declarative clause with emphasis on the nominal direct object, *Swallow*, foregrounded by fronting and stylistically functioning as anaphor for the antecedent *he*, repeated every time in the two questions: *What does he look like, Desiree, for Christ's sake? What manner of man is he? Swallow, I mean.* Semantically, Zapp's portraying explores the category of horror: *canines hanging out over the lower lip* as symbol of or metonymic representation of the vampire (with the word itself avoided so as to stir the reader's attention and to mark this special psychological moment), epithets marked [- Presence of Life] with references to senses as symbols of life: touch, *handshake cold and clammy*, and sight, *a murderous glint*.

Desiree's portraying in the form of a reply to Morris's solicitation (ii) mimes objectivity in an attempt to present Swallow as an ordinary man. The passage consists of two referential registers: the specific references to physiognomy (*about six feet tall and weighs [...] about 140 pound; he's tall and skinny and stooped; He holds his head forward; deeply receding at his temples; He has dandruff, but who hasn't?; He has nice eyes; His handshake is normal in temperature*) and linguistic terms and devices which shift the perspective away from the objective of the narrative. Thus, the details of height, weight, figure, posture in the opening of the paragraph are specific enough, but as we read on physicality is supplemented with similes, explicit or implicit: *his head forward as if he's hit it too often on low doorways;*

*His hair is the texture of Brillo pads before they've used; I couldn't say anything positively in favour of his teeth but they don't protrude like fangs; His handshake [...] if a little on the limp side.* In decoding these stylistic devices we notice that the choice of lexemes suggests negative portraying such as clumsiness (through the alleged head hitting on low doorways), mediocrity (through the comparison of the hair with the scouring pads used for cleaning dishes, *Brillo pads*) and lack of stamina and determination (through the description of the handshake *as a little on the limp side*).

Continuing the stylistic analysis of Philip's portraiture, we should mention that Lodge's distinctive technique of portraying is the employment of several focalizers for the description of the same character. As a result of this narrative strategy the reader has some expectations such as avoidance of monotony, the completion of a full portrait from the fragments delivered by the several distinctive points of view which also accentuate the impossibility of certitude. However, the author entices these expectations through the use of an unsophisticated linguistic strategy, the lexical repetition. Thus the description in Desiree's portraying, *tall, skinny and stooped* is repeated several times in all novels, in different permutations and variants (morphologic or stylistic) by several focalizers:

(i) Then, to his extreme annoyance, *a tall, slim, distinguished-looking man of middle age*, with a rather *dashing silver-grey beard*, and *a good deal of wavy hair of the same hue around the back and the sides of the head*, but not much on top, darted forward to greet the girl, blocking Persse's view of her. (*S. W.* 8)

(ii) 'What is he like?'  
'*Tall, thin, stooping. He has a fine silver beard.*' (*S. W.* 179)

(iii) He is *a tall, thin, stooped man*, with *silvery grey hair, deeply receding at the temples*, curling over his collar at the back. Robyn has been told that he once had a beard, and he is forever fingering his chin as if he missed it. (*N.W.* 61)

The three excerpts provide approximately the same information coming from different focalizers. In (i) the focalizer is Persse McGarrigle, a romantic by nature, who adds to the same constant features, unmarked stylistically, *tall, slim*, elements of novelty through the presence of the silver-grey beard in the same hue as the hair (the beard is a symbol of the new Philip, a man of authority, a man in command of his life and desires, but the new Philip fails in the role of hero and as such, towards the end of the novel *Small World*, the beard disappears). We notice again the shift from the objective realized by means of the epithets (*distinguished-looking, dashing silver-grey*), the quantifying determiners (*a good deal of, much*), the choice of lexemes, *middle-age man* instead of "aging man" *hue* instead of "colour," *not much [hair] on top* instead of "receding hair." Another element of novelty in the description is the presence of the dynamic verb *darted*, suggesting determination and stamina, elements missing from the previous portraying in the first novel, *Changing Places*.

The description in (ii), with Akbil Borak, a Turkish academic, as focalizer shows clear preference for simple lexical and syntactic structure. The sentences are short, with the first one elliptical of subject and copula, *Tall, thin, stooping* and the second with a simple structure S-V-O, *He has a fine silver beard*. There is a marked absence of morphologically complex and stylistically adorned adjectives. These aspects contribute to the impression that we are given a simple, objective, external and factual description.

The third excerpt (iii) from *Nice Work*, with Robyn acting as focalizer, does not bring any element of novelty in the depiction of Philip. On the contrary, it insists on the same elements of physiognomy depiction through the lexical repetition, *tall, thin, stooped, silvery grey hair, deeply receding at the temples*. All this information, which has achieved objectivity through its repetition throughout the three novels, is contained in one sentence. The second sentence of the fragment introduces the element of the beard marked [-Presence] by the adverb of time, *once*, and the verb in the past tense, *had*, set in contrast with the present tense as the predominant tense of the description.

Irrespective of the time gap among the three stories and the number of character-focalizers providing their perspectives on the same character, the information never changes. Lodge, otherwise a master of words and details throughout the trilogy, refuses to enlarge upon the topic of the academic profile. As such, he rejects variety in vocabulary items, grammatical and stylistic devices, showing no preoccupation for diversity, as formula of acceptance and recognition of the differences between individuals' perceptions of the world. On the other hand, the consistency in the description of the character may be interpreted as preference for objectivity, although we guess a secondary goal for the use of this strategy of portraiture, that behind all the other style minds of the various focalizers, there is only one mind style, that of the author as the real authority in the novels.

The same strategy of repetition, applied in the next three fragments, highlights Philip's moral attributes as undetermined, insecure, emotionally opportunistic, susceptible to influence:

(i) To speak the truth, he approaches most of life's challenges in the same spirit. He is a mimetic man: unconfident, *eager to please*, infinitely suggestible. (C. P.10)

(ii) [...] a middle-aged parasite on the alternative society, hanging around the young folk with a doggy, ingratiating look, *anxious to please, anxious not to offend*, hoping for a game that never materialized: [...]. (C. P. 180)

(iii) 'No, don't do that,' said Philip. He was always *cravenly eager to please* his hosts on these trips abroad; *eager to please* the British Council, too, in case they stopped inviting him to go on them. (S. W. 159)

In an overall analysis we easily notice the repetitive pattern *eager to please*, in (i), (iii) with the stylistic variant *anxious to please* in (ii). The repetition constitutes a departure point for the rest of the moral features which are semantically derived from it: *mimetic, unconfident, suggestible, doggy, ingratiating*. On a stylistic level we have a display of synonyms intended to strengthen the timid, introvert, unconfident image of Philip as a man and as an academic.

The same traits of Swallow's personality are highlighted in two novels through the repetition of the adverb *plaintively* which shows modal achievement of the lexical verb *said*. Because of the repetition in the same pattern, that is with the same agent, *Philip*, the same verb, *said*, the adverb *plaintively* becomes stylistically relevant and semantically incorporated not only in the verbal element, but also in the nominal one:

[...] Philip Swallow said *plaintively* [...]. (S. W. 52)

'Who shall I nominate them?' says Philip Swallow *plaintively*. (N.W. 87)

The same device of repetition realized at the level of the whole literary text is employed to portray one of the characters in *Small World*, Ronald Frobisher, a writer who is introduced as belonging to The Angry Young Men Movement. Dismissing the overall perspective upon the cultural movement, the characters in the story focus on the linguistic aspect of the phrase coined for the group of intellectuals from the 1950's:

(i) 'Why are all your fans foreigners, these days? Don't they know that the *Angry Young Man thing* is all over?'  
'It's got nothing to do with the *Angry Young Man thing!*' says Ronald Frobisher, *angrily*. He opens another envelope. (S. W. 108-109)

(ii) 'Really? You know Mr. Frobisher? But that is wonderful! You must tell me all about him. What kind of man is he?'  
'Well,' says Persse. 'He's very nice. But rather *irascible*.'  
'*Irascible*? That is a new word to me.'  
'It means, easily *angered*.'  
'Oh yes, of course, he was *Angry Young Man*.' (S. W. 295)

(iii) When Persse got back to his point of origin, he found Ronald Frobisher in *angry* confrontation with Rudyard Parkinson. 'What would you know about literary creation anyway, Parkinson?' Frobisher demanded. (S. W. 174)

In the three excerpts above Ronald Frobisher is described each time through the use of the adjective *angry* and its morphological and stylistic variants. Thus, in (i) in a discussion on the obsolescence the cultural movement fell into, the name of the movement, derisively described as *thing*, *Angry Young Man*, appears twice and Ronald Frobisher's utterances are described by the adverbial variant, *angrily*. In (ii) the Japanese academic translating one of Frobisher's novels is eager to find out more about him from Persse McGarrigle. This one cannot think of another word to describe the author, but one pertaining to the semantic field of [Angry], *irascible*, explained in the context as *easily angered*. The conclusion is paradoxical: it is obvious that Mr. Frobisher should be *easily angered* as *he was an Angry Young Man*. In (iii) Lodge resumes the adjective *angry* in another depiction of Frobisher who is, ironically, but somehow expectedly, involved in *an angry confrontation* with an academic.

The repetitions of the adjective *angry* and its morphological variants *angered* and *angrily* and its stylistic variant *irascible* render irony at the categorization and the coined phrases the literati come up with and are so proud of. In fact, the irony is directed against the excessive use of theoretical aspects of literature, critic and language, which deny the thrill of discovery, of reinvention of the act of reading, turning it into toilsome labour with scholastic implications.

Another instance of repetition at the level of the literary text as a means of foregrounding a specific trait of character is employed in the next excerpts:

(i) 'Parkinson was a Research Fellow at the same college. He'd tutored me for a term – a *pompous* bastard I thought he was even then, though admittedly he'd read a lot.' (S. W. 175)

(ii) [...] which Textel, irritated by Parkinson's *pompous* complacency at Vancouver, had chosen [...]. (S. W. 236)

(iii) A man [Rudyard Parkinson] with muttonchop whiskers and a plump, *self-pleased countenance* had mounted the platform and was addressing the assembled guests. (S. W. 171-172)

The epithet *pompous*, meaning here “arrogant,” is lexically repeated in (i) and (ii) and stylistically reiterated in (iii) through the syntagm *self-pleased countenance*, which also refers to “an offensive attitude / display of one’s own exaggerated worth or superiority.”

Rudyard Parkinson, “the only one [of all academics] who attracts real animus” (Bergonzi 22), is not only pompous, but also malicious in his continual reviews in the metropolitan journals. His reviewing activity is perceived as solicited intellectual prostitution and as a consequence Parkinson is repeatedly referred to as *ponce* in a climatic gradation:

‘What would you know about literary creation anyway, Parkinson? Frobisher was demanding. ‘You’re just a *ponce* for the Sunday papers. Once a *ponce*, always a *ponce*. Remember you *poncing* about the quad at All Saints – [...]’ (S. W. 174)

One of his victims is Ronald Frobisher whose novel was unprofessionally reviewed eight years ago. The intensity of the despising attitude of the focalizer, Ronald Frobisher, is rendered through an artful climatic gradation. Thus, *ponce* as a subject complement in the first sentence attributes identity: *You’re just a ponce for the Sunday papers*. The tense of the reference is the present. In the second sentence *ponce* is repeated twice in the same syntactic positions, subject complements, with the same function of identity attribution, but the sententious form of the construction enlarges upon the temporal sphere of reference for *ponce* from the past, through the adverb *once*, to the future, through the adverb *always*: *Once a ponce, always a ponce*. The climax in the obsessive enumeration of the lexical repetition is achieved with the conversion of the noun *ponce* into the verb in the non-finite form *poncing*: *Remember you poncing about the quad at All Saints*.

(i) ‘A *fink* is a generally despicable person, like Howard Ringbaum.’  
‘What’s so awful about him? He doesn’t look so bad.’  
‘He’s very self-centered. He’s very mean. He’s very calculating.’ (S. W. 117)

(ii) Another thing he’s sore about is that a *fink* called Howard Ringbaum whom Morris specifically excluded from the conference took advantage of his temporary disappearance to get himself accepted by the other organizer. (S. W. 296)

(iii) He *bores the pants off you* and she seems to be some kind of nymphomaniac – kept playing footsie with me in the restaurant. (S. W. 171)

*Fink* is another instance of an intratextual repetition (within the same text of the novel, *Small World*). It is descriptive of a single person, the academic Howard Ringbaum. In (i) the term is explained in a didactic manner, definition accompanied by an example: *A fink is a generally despicable person, like Howard Ringbaum*. When the explanation doesn’t prove sufficient, the focalizer Morris Zapp provides in a ternary syntactic enumeration three synonymous adjectives in the superlative degree: *He’s very self-centered. He’s very mean. He’s very calculating*. This first portraying is the reference point for other repetitions in the literary text. Thus, the information contained in *fink* is reiterated in (ii) through the lexical repetition, provided by another focalizer, Desiree Zapp, *a fink called Howard Ringbaum*, and

in (iii) through the synonymous slang with hyperbolic expressive force, *bores the pants off you*.

Another artful instance of intentional repetition as a consciously-used device is in the following fragments in which Siegfried von Turpitz is described through several lexical marks, symbolic of his personality, either as an individual or an academic: *black, pale, expressionless / impassive, coloureless / blonde*:

(i) The hand that replaces the telephone receiver in its cradle in a sleekly functional hotel room on the Kurfurstendamm is sheathed in a *black kid glove*, in spite of the fact that its owner is sitting up in bed, wearing silk pyjamas and eating continental breakfast from a tray. Siegfried von Turpitz *has never been known* to remove this glove in the presence of another person. *No one knows* what hideous injury or deformity it conceals, though there have been many speculations: a repulsive birth mark, a suppurating wound, some unheimlich mutation such as talons instead of fingers, or an artificial hand made of stainless and plastic – [...]. [...] Then he removes the receiver and with a *black leathern index finger* dials the operator. Consulting a *black-leather bound notebook*, he places a long-distance call to Paris. His *face is pale and expressionless beneath a skullcap of flat blond hair*. (S. W. 96-97)

(ii) [...] behind which, under a *skullcap of flat, colourless hair*, floats the *pale impassive visage of Siegfried von Turpitz* – and, [...]. (S. W. 111)

(iii) On the rostrum, a man with a *pale face and a skullcap of blond hair* was speaking onto the microphone in Germanically accented English, biting off the consonants and spitting them out as if they were pips, gesturing occasionally with a *black-gloved hand*. (S. W. 197)

(iv) You were quite right to stand against *Black Hand*, young man. (S. W. 199)

The image of von Turpitz in (i) is the result of a mystery atmosphere created by means of language, through repetitions, lexical and syntactic, enumerations of NPs and epithets within the semantic field of [+ Unwholesome], [+ Monstrosity]. The (mock) suspense-arousing atmosphere is generated by the repetition of the adjective *black*, symbolic of darkness, mystery and, even horror, in different associations which enhance its expressive force: *black kid glove, black leathern index finger, black-leather bound notebook, a black-gloved hand, Black Hand*. On a semantic level we have a display of [+ Body parts], [+ Clothing items], [+ Stationery] meant to create an atmosphere of unease in the academic universe (suggested through the stationary item and other indicators of modernity, the telephone, the microphone etc). On a stylistic level we have an interesting use of the noun *hand* which in (i) is foregrounded in subject position as an independent agent performing actions (*The hand that replaces the telephone receiver*), while in (iii) has an instrumental reference (*gesturing occasionally with a black-gloved hand*) and in (iv) it becomes metonymic of the man, in fact, of the academic von Turpitz (*You were quite right to stand against Black Hand, young man*).

The discomfort rendered through the employment of the lexical repetition is enhanced at syntactic level by means of the repetition of the verb-predicate *to know* in the passive voice *has never been known* with the omitted (implied) agent *by no one*, openly mentioned in the following sentence with the verb-predicate in the active voice *No one knows*. The non-affixal negative words *never, no one* in combination with the repetition of

the lexical verb *to know* build up narrative tension by enlarging the reference area to dimensions unattainable by the human being.

The real climax of the atmosphere of discomfort (physical and cognitive) comes with the enumeration of a series of neologisms semantically marked [+ Monstrosity], *hideous, deformity, repulsive, suppurating, unheimlich, mutation, artificial* grouped as appositive explanations for the head noun *speculations*, which places them under the sign of possibility / assumption.

The atmosphere of uneasiness is prolonged with other lexical repetitions which semantically can be circumscribed to the domain of [+ Discomfort], feeling whose explanation is provided by Morris Zapp's comparison of von Turpitz with a Nazi, "Well, he looks like a Nazi. Like all the ones I've seen, anyway, which is admittedly only in movies" (S. W. 134):

- "face is pale and expressionless beneath a skullcap of flat blond hair" in (i)
- "under a skullcap of flat, colourless hair, floats the pale impassive visage" in (ii)
- "a pale face and a skullcap of blond hair" in (iii)

Von Turpitz's appearance is distinct in only two physical aspects, a) the face with the colour and expression/ mobility rendered through modifiers marked semantically [- Presence]: *face is pale and expressionless, the pale impassive visage, a pale face* and b) the hair with the texture and the colour with modifiers marked [- Consistence] in the former case and [- Presence] in the latter case, *a skullcap of flat blond hair, a skullcap of flat, colourless hair, a skullcap of blond hair*. It is well-known that colour terms can acquire, in specific contexts, specific meanings and *blonde* as a hue of *yellow* is associated with energy, dynamism etc, but Lodge denies this traditional symbolism by setting *blonde* in a relation of stylistic synonymy with *coloureless*.

(i) [...] Zapp is a Jane Austen man, of course – indeed *the* Jane Austen man in the opinion of many. (C. P. 123)

(ii) I used to be a Jane Austen man. I think I can say in all modesty I was *the* Jane Austen man. (S. W. 24)

(iii) She was familiar with his publications: originally a Jane Austen specialist in the Neo-Critical close-reading tradition, he had converted himself (rather opportunistically, Robyn thought) into a kind of deconstructionist in the nineteen-seventies, and enjoyed an international reputation in both guises. (N.W. 322)

An interesting case of repetition based on a semantic contrast between the indefinite and the definite articles is used to portray Morris Zapp. Traditionally, the function of *the* is to identify something which is contextually known to be unique, while the function of *a* is to express indefiniteness or new information. Lodge, as a skilled stylist, plays on this linguistic convention to create interesting effects. Thus, the indefinite article in (i) and (ii), in the descriptive subject complement, "Zapp is *a* Jane Austen man" tags as new (for the reader) the information on Zapp's academic specialty field, while, at the same time, it implies that the referent is one among many of the academics specialized in Jane Austen's oeuvre. However, the perspective of the focalizers changes within the same sentence and the shift in

articles together with the graphic emphasis in italics claims unique reference on the basis of academic contextual knowledge: “indeed *the* Jane Austen man in the opinion of many.”

These contrastive perspectives on the same referent, meant to foreground uniqueness and notability of the academic Morris Zapp, are repeated in the first two novels of the trilogy, *Changing Places* and *Small World*. In the last novel, *Nice Work*, the perspective on Zapp’s academic career tends to be more objective and Zapp is referred to as *originally a Jane Austen specialist*. The reference connoted hyperbolically by means of the definite article misses. Thus the playful perspective from (i) (rendered by the use of the evaluative modals *of course – indeed* expressing climatic degrees of truth which emphasize the conviction of what is being said is undebatable) and from (ii) (rendered by the use of the PP *in all modesty* functioning as an understatement for the reference by means of the definite article) is counterbalanced by objectivity in reference in (iii). The ironic approach is lost and Zapp’s portraying is closer to the reality of the academic proper.

The intratextual repetitive structures as stylistic mark in rendering the academic profile are obviously planned patterns destined to emphasize continuity of the literary text in the campus trilogy. At the same time, recurrence is perhaps the best and the simplest way to draw the readers’ attention and help them manage through the multitude of characters in the trilogy. These narrative technical aspects of the intratextual repetition are doubled by a stylistic effect of intended objectivity in the academic portraiture through the expression of a single world-view by means of which stylistic consistency and uniformity are provided.

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