

## CRITICAL EYE

### A kidult sage and exquisite stories

"I had no difficulty in lapping up page after paragraph of this fare . . . For a self-confessed lazy man . . . he's a notably diligent researcher whose writing bespeaks a confident - although never showy - erudition." **Will Self** in the Financial Times admired Geoff Dyer's collection of essays, *Working the Room*, even if it "doesn't quite pack a heavyweight punch . . . Dyer, who makes much of his writerly lifestyle, revolving through the world high and unanchored . . . sometimes strikes me as a sort of kidult sage - but then that would be an oxymoron." **Colin Waters** in the Herald put the question: "Is what Dyer does great? I could read his non-fiction all day. There's a danger that we underestimate him given the approachability of his prose. His language isn't matey but it hits a relaxed, intimate note, a directness that never lapses into the demotic". "An autodidact and magpie, Dyer . . . enthuses when putting himself in the picture," noted **Rob Sharp** in the Independent. "His writing is insightful, humorous and mostly easy to follow", but "it is odd that he feels the need to tell just how little he cares".

"Had I read this novel without knowing who wrote it, I would have expected it to be packaged in a pastel-coloured cover sporting an image of a sexy babe toying with an auctioneer's gavel." **Lee Randall** in the Scotsman was perplexed by Steve Martin's novel *An Object of Beauty*, which, while "not officially 'chick lit', since the subject is the Manhattan art scene rather than snaring a mate . . . does share the light,

bright breeziness so characteristic of that genre. . . this is a perfectly serviceable, racy potboiler." **Amy Parker** in the Sunday Express felt that Martin's "characters let him down": the protagonist Lacey Yeager is "a one-dimensional career woman with no feelings to speak of, and the reader therefore never cares about her or her carefully planned adventures". "She's a likeably complicated anti-heroine," remarked **Christian House** in the Independent on Sunday of the same character: "Martin is a celebrated polymath: stand-up, actor, playwright and bluegrass-band leader . . . He writes prose like he plucks a banjo: pitch-perfect."

"It is conceivable that the theme of Polly Samson's brilliant latest collection was dreamt up only to leaven readers' jealousy on seeing her adoring acknowledgment to her rock legend husband David Gilmour," wrote **Katy Guest** in the Independent on Sunday about *Perfect Lives*: "The stories here are about the cracks behind the façade of the perfect life: the secrets, lies and bitter compromises that eat away at apparently blissful marriages in enormous stuccoed houses in picture-book seaside towns." **Sue Gaisford** in the Financial Times was fervent: "This is a masterly book . . . More than simply a series of exquisitely crafted miniatures, it encompasses many of the larger delights of a full-length novel." For **Lucy Scholes** in the Sunday Times, "All the stories are so carefully and cleverly connected that the more one reads, the more novel-like the collection becomes . . . Samson is an accomplished writer who . . . has produced an original and compelling take on short fiction."

'Light, bright, breezy' . . . Steve Martin's *An Object of Beauty*

AN OBJECT  
OF BEAUTY  
STEVE MARTIN

