

# CHANGING PLACES

DAVID LODGE

**VINTAGE**

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## About the Book

When Philip Swallow and Professor Morris Zapp participate in their universities' Anglo-American exchange scheme, the Fates play a hand, and each academic finds himself enmeshed in the life of his counterpart on the opposite side of the Atlantic. Nobody is immune to the exchange: students, colleagues, even wives are swapped as events spiral out of control. And soon both sundrenched Euphoric State university and rain-kissed University of Rummidge are a hotbed of intrigue, lawlessness and broken vows ...

## About the Author

**David Lodge** (CBE)'s novels include *Changing Places*, *Small World* and *Nice Work* (shortlisted for the Booker) and, most recently, *A Man of Parts*. He has also written plays and screenplays, and several books of literary criticism. His works have been translated into more than thirty languages.

He is Emeritus Professor of English Literature at Birmingham, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and is a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

ALSO BY DAVID LODGE

Fiction

*The Picturegoers*  
*Ginger, You're Barmy*  
*The British Museum is Falling Down*  
*Out of the Shelter*  
*How Far Can You Go?*  
*Small World*  
*Nice Work*  
*Paradise News*  
*Therapy*  
*Home Truths*  
*Thinks ...*  
*Author, Author*  
*Deaf Sentence*  
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*The Novelist at the Crossroads*  
*The Modes of Modern Writing*  
*Working with Structuralism*  
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*Write On*  
*The Art of Fiction*  
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*Consciousness and the Novel*  
*The Year of Henry James*

Drama

*The Writing Game*

*Home Truths*

*For Lenny and Priscilla, Stanley and  
Adrienne and many other friends on the  
West Coast*



DAVID LODGE

# Changing Places

VINTAGE

Although some of the locations and public events portrayed in this novel bear a certain resemblance to actual locations and events, the characters, considered either as individuals or as members of institutions, are entirely imaginary. Rummidge and Euphoria are places on the map of a comic world which resembles the one we are standing on without corresponding exactly to it, and which is peopled by figments of the imagination.

**I    *flying***

HIGH, HIGH ABOVE the North Pole, on the first day of 1969, two professors of English Literature approached each other at a combined velocity of 1200 miles per hour. They were protected from the thin, cold air by the pressurized cabins of two Boeing 707s, and from the risk of collision by the prudent arrangement of the international air corridors. Although they had never met, the two men were known to each other by name. They were, in fact, in process of exchanging posts for the next six months, and in an age of more leisurely transportation the intersection of their respective routes might have been marked by some interesting human gesture: had they waved, for example, from the decks of two ocean liners crossing in mid-Atlantic, each man simultaneously focusing a telescope, by chance, on the other, with his free hand; or, more plausibly, a little mime of mutual appraisal might have been played out through the windows of two railway compartments halted side by side at the same station somewhere in Hampshire or the Mid-West, the more self-conscious party relieved to feel himself, at last, moving off, only to discover that it is the other man's train that is moving first ... However, it was not to be. Since the two men were in airplanes, and one was bored and the other frightened of looking out of the window – since, in any case, the planes were too distant from each other to be mutually visible with the naked eye, the crossing of their paths at the still point of the turning world passed unremarked by anyone other than the narrator of this duplex chronicle.

“Duplex”, as well as having the general meaning of “twofold”, applies in the jargon of electrical telegraphy to

“systems in which messages are sent simultaneously in opposite directions” (*OED*). Imagine, if you will, that each of these two professors of English Literature (both, as it happens, aged forty) is connected to his native land, place of employment and domestic hearth by an infinitely elastic umbilical cord of emotions, attitudes and values – a cord which stretches and stretches almost to the point of invisibility, but never quite to breaking-point, as he hurtles through the air at 600 miles per hour. Imagine further that, as they pass each other above the polar ice-cap, the pilots of their respective Boeings, in defiance of regulations and technical feasibility, begin to execute a series of playful aerobatics – criss-crossing, diving, soaring and looping, like a pair of mating blue-birds, so as thoroughly to entangle the aforesaid umbilical cords, before proceeding soberly on their way in the approved manner. It follows that when the two men alight in each other’s territory, and go about their business and pleasure, whatever vibrations are passed back by one to his native habitat will be felt by the other, and vice versa, and thus return to the transmitter subtly modified by the response of the other party – may, indeed, return to him along the other party’s cord of communication, which is, after all, anchored in the place where he has just arrived; so that before long the whole system is twanging with vibrations travelling backwards and forwards between Prof A and Prof B, now along this line, now along that, sometimes beginning on one line and terminating on another. It would not be surprising, in other words, if two men changing places for six months should exert a reciprocal influence on each other’s destinies, and actually mirror each other’s experience in certain respects, notwithstanding all the differences that exist between the two environments, and between the characters of the two men and their respective attitudes towards the whole enterprise.

One of these differences we can take in at a glance from our privileged narrative altitude (higher than that of any jet). It is obvious, from his stiff, upright posture, and fulsome gratitude to the stewardess serving him a glass of orange juice, that Philip Swallow, flying westward, is unaccustomed to air travel; while to Morris Zapp, slouched in the seat of his eastbound aircraft, chewing a dead cigar (a hostess has made him extinguish it) and glowering at the meagre portion of ice dissolving in his plastic tumbler of bourbon, the experience of long-distance air travel is tediously familiar.

Philip Swallow has, in fact, flown before; but so seldom, and at such long intervals, that on each occasion he suffers the same trauma, an alternating current of fear and reassurance that charges and relaxes his system in a persistent and exhausting rhythm. While he is on the ground, preparing for his journey, he thinks of flying with exhilaration - soaring up, up and away into the blue empyrean, cradled in aircraft that seem, from a distance, effortlessly at home in that element, as though sculpted from the sky itself. This confidence begins to fade a little when he arrives at the airport and winces at the shrill screaming of jet engines. In the sky the planes look very small. On the runways they look very big. Therefore close up they should look even bigger - but in fact they don't. His own plane, for instance, just outside the window of the assembly lounge, doesn't look quite big enough for all the people who are going to get into it. This impression is confirmed when he passes through the tunnel into the cabin of the aircraft, a cramped tube full of writhing limbs. But when he, and the other passengers, are seated, well-being returns. The seats are so remarkably comfortable that one feels quite content to stay put, but it is reassuring that the aisle is free should one wish to walk up it. There is soothing music playing. The lighting is restful. A

stewardess offers him the morning paper. His baggage is safely stowed away in the plane somewhere, or if it is not, that isn't his fault, which is the main thing. Flying is, after all, the only way to travel.

But as the plane taxis to the runway, he makes the mistake of looking out of the window at the wings bouncing gently up and down. The panels and rivets are almost painfully visible, the painted markings weathered, there are streaks of soot on the engine cowlings. It is borne in upon him that he is, after all, entrusting his life to a machine, the work of human hands, fallible and subject to decay. And so it goes on, even after the plane has climbed safely into the sky: periods of confidence and pleasure punctuated by spasms of panic and emptiness.

The sang-froid of his fellow passengers is a constant source of wonderment to him, and he observes their deportment carefully. Flying for Philip Swallow is essentially a dramatic performance, and he approaches it like a game amateur actor determined to hold his own in the company of word-perfect professionals. 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.

It would be natural, but incorrect, to assume that Morris Zapp has suffered no such qualms on his flight. A seasoned veteran of the domestic airways, having flown over most of the states in the Union in his time, bound for conferences, lecture dates and assignments, it has not escaped his notice that airplanes occasionally crash. Being innately mistrustful of the universe and its guiding spirit, which he sometimes refers to as Improvidence ("How can you attribute *that*," he will ask, gesturing at the star-spangled night sky over the Pacific, "to something called Providence? Just look at the *waste*!"), he seldom enters an aircraft without wondering with one part of his busy brain whether

he is about to feature in Air Disaster of the Week on the nation's TV networks. Normally such morbid thoughts visit him only at the beginning and end of a flight, for he has read somewhere that eighty per cent of all aircraft accidents occur at either take-off or landing – a statistic that did not surprise him, having been stacked on many occasions for an hour or more over Esseph airport, fifty planes circling in the air, fifty more taking off at ninety-second intervals, the whole juggling act controlled by a computer, so that it only needed a fuse to blow and the sky would look like airline competition had finally broken out into open war, the companies hiring retired kamikaze pilots to destroy each other's hardware in the sky, TWA's Boeings ramming Pan Am's, American Airlines' DC 8s busting United's right out of their Friendly Skies (hah!), rival shuttle services colliding head-on, the clouds raining down wings, fuselages, engines, passengers, chemical toilets, hostesses, menu cards and plastic cutlery (Morris Zapp had an apocalyptic imagination on occasion, as who has not in America these days?) in a definitive act of industrial pollution.

By taking the non-stop polar flight to London, in preference to the two-stage journey via New York, Zapp reckons that he has reduced his chances of being caught in such an Armageddon by fifty per cent. But weighing against this comforting thought is the fact that he is travelling on a charter flight, and chartered aircraft (he has also read) are several times more likely to crash than planes on scheduled flights, being, he infers, machines long past their prime, bought as scrap from the big airlines by cheapjack operators and sold again and again to even cheaper jacks (this plane, for instance, belonged to a company called Orbis; the phoney Latin name inspired no confidence and he wouldn't mind betting that an ultra-violet photograph would reveal a palimpsest of fourteen different airline insignia under its fresh paint flown by



pilots long gone over the hill, alcoholics and schizoids, shaky-fingered victims of emergency landings, ice-storms and hijackings by crazy Arabs and homesick Cubans wielding sticks of dynamite and dime-store pistols. Furthermore, this is his first flight over water (yes, Morris Zapp has never before left the protection of the North American landmass, a proud record unique among the faculty of his university) and he cannot swim. The unfamiliar ritual of instruction, at the commencement of the flight, in the use of inflatable lifejackets, unsettled him. That canvas and rubber contraption was a fetichist's dream, but he had as much chance of getting into it in an emergency as into the girdle of the hostess giving the demonstration. Furthermore, exploratory gropings failed to locate a lifejacket where it was supposed to be, under his seat. Only his reluctance to strike an undignified pose before a blonde with outsize spectacles in the next seat had dissuaded him from getting down on hands and knees to make a thorough check. He contented himself with allowing his long, gorilla-like arms to hang loosely over the edge of his seat, fingers brushing the underside unobtrusively in the style used for parking gum or nosepickings. Once, at full stretch, he found something that felt promising, but it proved to be one of his neighbour's legs, and was indignantly withdrawn. He turned towards her, not to apologize (Morris Zapp never apologized) but to give her the famous Zapp Stare, guaranteed to stop any human creature, from University Presidents to Black Panthers, dead in his tracks at a range of twenty yards, only to be confronted with an impenetrable curtain of blonde hair.

Eventually he abandons the quest for the life-jacket, reflecting that the sea under his ass at the moment is frozen solid anyway, not that that is a reassuring thought. No, this is not the happiest of flights for Morris J. Zapp ("Jehovah", he would murmur out of the side of his mouth

to girls who enquired about his middle name, it never failed; all women longed to be screwed by a god, it was the source of all religion – “Just look at the myths, Leda and the Swan, Isis and Osiris, Mary and the Holy Ghost” – thus spake Zapp in his graduate seminar, pinning a brace of restive nuns to their seats with the Stare). There is something funny, he tells himself, about this plane – not just the implausible Latin name of the airline, the missing lifejacket, the billions of tons of ice underneath him and the minuscule cube melting in the bourbon before him – something else there is, something he hasn’t figured out yet. While Morris Zapp is working on this problem, we shall take time out to explain something of the circumstances that have brought him and Philip Swallow into the polar skies at the same indeterminate (for everybody’s watch is wrong by now) hour.

Between the State University of Euphoria (colloquially known as Euphoric State) and the University of Rummidge, there has long existed a scheme for the exchange of visiting teachers in the second half of each academic year. How two universities so different in character and so widely separated in space should be linked in this way is simply explained. It happened that the architects of both campuses independently hit upon the same idea for the chief feature of their designs, namely, a replica of the leaning Tower of Pisa, built of white stone and twice the original size at Euphoric State and of red brick and to scale at Rummidge, but restored to the perpendicular in both instances. The exchange scheme was set up to mark this coincidence.

Under the original agreement, each visitor drew the salary to which he was entitled by rank and seniority on the scale of the host institution, but as no American could survive for more than a few days on the monthly stipend paid by Rummidge, Euphoric State made up the difference

for its own faculty, while paying its British visitors a salary beyond their wildest dreams and bestowing upon them indiscriminately the title of Visiting Professor. It was not only in these terms that the arrangement tended to favour the British participants. Euphoria, that small but populous state on the Western seaboard of America, situated between Northern and Southern California, with its mountains, lakes and rivers, its redwood forests, its blonde beaches and its incomparable Bay, across which the State University at Plotinus faces the glittering, glamorous city of Esseph – Euphoria is considered by many cosmopolitan experts to be one of the most agreeable environments in the world. Not even its City Fathers would claim as much for Rummidge, a large, graceless industrial city sprawled over the English Midlands at the intersection of three motorways, twenty-six railway lines and half-a-dozen stagnant canals.

Then again, Euphoric State had, by a ruthless exploitation of its wealth, built itself up into one of America's major universities, buying the most distinguished scholars it could find and retaining their loyalty by the lavish provision of laboratories, libraries, research grants and handsome, long-legged secretaries. By this year of 1969, Euphoric State had perhaps reached its peak as a centre of learning, and was already in the process of decline – due partly to the accelerating tempo of disruption by student militants, and partly to the counter-pressures exerted by the right-wing Governor of the State, Ronald Duck, a former movie-actor. But such was the quality of the university's senior staff, and the magnitude of its accumulated resources, that it would be many years before its standing was seriously undermined. Euphoric State, in short, was still a name to conjure with in the senior common rooms of the world. Rummidge, on the other hand, had never been an institution of more than middling size and reputation, and it had lately suffered the mortifying

fate of most English universities of its type (civic redbrick): having competed strenuously for fifty years with two universities chiefly valued for being old, it was, at the moment of drawing level, rudely overtaken in popularity and prestige by a batch of universities chiefly valued for being new. Its mood was therefore disgruntled and discouraged, rather as would be the mood of the middle class in a society that had never had a bourgeois revolution, but had passed directly from aristocratic to proletarian control.

For these and other reasons the most highly-qualified and senior members of staff competed eagerly for the honour of representing Rumbridge at Euphoric State; while Euphoric State, if the truth were told, had sometimes encountered difficulty in persuading any of its faculty to go to Rumbridge. The members of that élite body, the Euphoric State faculty, who picked up grants and fellowships as other men pick up hats, did not aim to teach when they came to Europe, and certainly not to teach at Rumbridge, which few of them had even heard of. Hence the American visitors to Rumbridge tended to be young and/or undistinguished, determined Anglophiles who could find no other way of getting to England or, very rarely, specialists in one of the esoteric disciplines in which Rumbridge, through the support of local industry, had established an unchallenged supremacy: domestic appliance technology, tyre sciences and the biochemistry of the cocoa bean.

The exchange of Philip Swallow and Morris Zapp, however, constituted a reversal of the usual pattern. Zapp was distinguished, and Swallow was not. Zapp was the man who had published articles in *PMLA* while still in graduate school; who, enviably offered his first job by Euphoric State, had stuck out for twice the going salary, and got it; who had published five fiendishly clever books (four of them on Jane Austen) by the time he was thirty and achieved the rank of full professor at the same precocious

age. Swallow was a man scarcely known outside his own Department, who had published nothing except a handful of essays and reviews, who had risen slowly up the salary scale of Lecturer by standard annual increments and was now halted at the top with slender prospects of promotion. Not that Philip Swallow was lacking in intelligence or ability; but he lacked will and ambition, the professional killer instinct which Zapp abundantly possessed.

In this respect both men were characteristic of the educational systems they had passed through. In America, it is not too difficult to obtain a bachelor's degree. The student is left very much to his own devices, he accumulates the necessary credits at his leisure, cheating is easy, and there is not much suspense or anxiety about the eventual outcome. He (or she) is therefore free to give full attention to the normal interests of late adolescence – sport, alcohol, entertainment and the opposite sex. It is at the postgraduate level that the pressure really begins, when the student is burnished and tempered in a series of gruelling courses and rigorous assessments until he is deemed worthy to receive the accolade of the PhD. By now he has invested so much time and money in the process that any career other than an academic one has become unthinkable, and anything less than success in it unbearable. He is well primed, in short, to enter a profession as steeped in the spirit of free enterprise as Wall Street, in which each scholar-teacher makes an individual contract with his employer, and is free to sell his services to the highest bidder.

Under the British system, competition begins and ends much earlier. Four times, under our educational rules, the human pack is shuffled and cut – at eleven-plus, sixteen-plus, eighteen-plus and twenty-plus – and happy is he who comes top of the deck on each occasion, but especially the last. This is called Finals, the very name of which implies that nothing of importance can happen after it. The British

postgraduate student is a lonely, forlorn soul, uncertain of what he is doing or whom he is trying to please – you may recognize him in the tea-shops around the Bodleian and the British Museum by the glazed look in his eyes, the vacant stare of the shell-shocked veteran for whom nothing has been real since the Big Push. As long as he manages to land his first job, this is no great handicap in the short run, since tenure is virtually automatic in British universities, and everyone is paid on the same scale. But at a certain age, the age at which promotions and Chairs begin to occupy a man's thoughts, he may look back with wistful nostalgia to the days when his wits ran fresh and clear, directed to a single, positive goal.

Philip Swallow had been made and unmade by the system in precisely this way. He liked examinations, always did well in them. Finals had been, in many ways, the supreme moment of his life. He frequently dreamed that he was taking the examinations again, and these were happy dreams. Awake, he could without difficulty remember the questions he had elected to answer on every paper that hot, distant June. In the preceding months he had prepared himself with meticulous care, filling his mind with distilled knowledge, drop by drop, until, on the eve of the first paper (Old English Set Texts) it was almost brimming over. Each morning for the next ten days he bore this precious vessel of the examination halls and poured a measured quantity of the contents onto pages of ruled quarto. Day by day the level fell, until on the tenth day the vessel was empty, the cup was drained, the cupboard was bare. In the years that followed he set about replenishing his mind, but it was never quite the same. The sense of purpose was lacking – there was no great Reckoning against which he could hoard his knowledge, so that it tended to leak away as fast as he acquired it.

Philip Swallow was a man with a genuine love of literature in all its diverse forms. He was as happy with

Beowulf as with Virginia Woolf, with *Waiting for Godot* as with *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, and in odd moments when nobler examples of the written word were not to hand he read attentively the backs of cornflakes packets, the small print on railway tickets and the advertising matter in books of stamps. This indiscriminating enthusiasm, however, prevented him from settling on a "field" to cultivate as his own. He had done his initial research on Jane Austen, but since then had turned his attention to topics as various as medieval sermons, Elizabethan sonnet sequences, Restoration heroic tragedy, eighteenth-century broadsides, the novels of William Godwin, the poetry of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and premonitions of the Theatre of the Absurd in the plays of George Bernard Shaw. None of these projects had been completed. Seldom, indeed, had he drawn up a preliminary bibliography before his attention was distracted by some new or revived interest in something entirely different. He ran hither and thither between the shelves of Eng. Lit. like a child in a toyshop – so reluctant to choose one item to the exclusion of others that he ended up empty-handed.

There was one respect alone in which Philip was recognized as a man of distinction, though only within the confines of his own Department. He was a superlative examiner of undergraduates: scrupulous, painstaking, stern yet just. No one could award a delicate mark like B+/B+?+ with such confident aim, or justify it with such cogency and conviction. In the Department meetings that discussed draft question papers he was much feared by his colleagues because of his keen eye for the ambiguous rubric, the repetition of questions from previous years' papers, the careless oversight that would allow candidates to duplicate material in two answers. His own papers were works of art on which he laboured with loving care for many hours, tinkering and polishing, weighing every word, deftly manipulating *eithers* and *ors*, judiciously balancing difficult

questions on popular authors with easy questions on obscure ones, inviting candidates to consider, illustrate, comment on, analyse, respond to, make discriminating assessments of or (last resort) discuss brilliant epigrams of his own invention disguised as quotations from anonymous critics.

A colleague had once declared that Philip ought to publish his examination papers. The suggestion had been intended as a sneer, but Philip had been rather taken with the idea – seeing in it, for a few dizzy hours, a heaven-sent solution to his professional barrenness. He visualized a critical work of totally revolutionary form, a concise, comprehensive survey of English literature consisting entirely of questions, elegantly printed with acres of white paper between them, questions that would be miracles of condensation, eloquence and thoughtfulness, questions to read and re-read, questions to brood over, as pregnant and enigmatic as *haikus*, as memorable as proverbs; questions that would, so to speak, contain within themselves the ghostly, subtly suggested embryos of their own answers. *Collected Literary Questions*, by Philip Swallow. A book to be compared with Pascal's *Pensées* or Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* ...

But the project had advanced no further than his more orthodox ones, and meanwhile the Rumridge students had begun agitating for the abolition of conventional examinations, so that his one special skill was in danger of becoming redundant. There had been times, lately, when he had begun to wonder whether he was entirely suited to the career on which he had been launched some fifteen years earlier, not so much by personal choice as by the mere impetus of his remarkable First.

He had been awarded a postgraduate studentship automatically and had accepted his Professor's suggestion that he write an MA thesis on the juvenilia of Jane Austen. After nearly two years his work was still far from



completion and, thinking that a change of scene might help, he applied in an idle moment for a Fellowship to America and for an Assistant Lectureship at the University of Rummidge. To his great surprise he was offered both (that First again) and Rummidge generously offered to defer his appointment for a year so that he would not have to choose between them. He didn't really want to go to America by this time because he had become sentimentally attached to a postgraduate student called Hilary Broome who was working on Augustan pastoral poetry, but he formed the impression that the Fellowship was not an opportunity that could be lightly refused.

So he went to Harvard and was extremely miserable for several months. Because he was working on his own, trying to finish his thesis, he made few friends; because he had no car, and couldn't drive anyway, he found it difficult to move around freely. Cowardice, and a dim, undefined loyalty to Hilary Broome, prevented him from dating the intimidating Radcliffe girls. He formed the habit of taking long solitary walks through the streets of Cambridge and environs, tailed by police cars whose occupants regarded gratuitous walking as inherently suspicious. The fillings he had prudently taken care to have put in his teeth before leaving the embrace of the National Health Service all fell out and he was informed by a contemptuous Boston dentist that he needed a thousand dollars' worth of dental work immediately. As this sum was nearly a third of his total stipend, Philip thought he had found the perfect excuse for throwing up his fellowship and returning to England with honour. The Fellowship Fund, however, promptly offered to meet the entire cost from its bottomless funds, so instead he wrote to Hilary Broome asking her to marry him. Hilary, who was growing bored with Augustan pastoral poetry, returned her books to the library, bought a wedding dress off the peg at C&A, and flew out to join him on the first available plane. They were married by an Episcopalian

minister in Boston just three weeks after Philip had proposed.

One of the conditions of the Fellowship was that recipients should travel widely in the United States, and Fellows were generously provided with a rented car for the purpose. By way of a honeymoon, and to escape the severity of the New England winter, the young couple decided to start their tour immediately. With Hilary at the wheel of a gigantic brand-new Chevrolet Impala, they headed south to Florida, sometimes pulling off the highway to make fervent love on the amazingly wide back seat. From Florida they crossed the southern States in very easy stages until they reached Euphoria and settled for the summer in an attic apartment on the top of a hill in the city of Esseph. From their double bed they looked straight across the Bay at the verdant slopes of Plotinus, location of the Euphoric State campus.

This long honeymoon was the key that unlocked the American experience for Philip Swallow. He discovered in himself an unsuspected, long repressed appetite for sensual pleasure which he assuaged, not only in the double bed with Hilary, but also with simple amenities of the American way of life, such as showers and cold beer and supermarkets and heated open-air swimming pools and multi-flavoured ice-cream. The sun shone. Philip was relaxed, confident, happy. He learned to drive, and flung the majestic Impala up and down the roller-coaster hills of Esseph with native panache, the radio playing at full volume. He haunted the cellars and satirical night-clubs of South Strand, where the Beats, in those days, were giving their jazz-and-poetry recitals, and felt himself thrillingly connected to the *Zeitgeist*. He even finished his MA thesis, almost effortlessly. It was the last major project he ever finished.

Hilary was four months pregnant when they sailed back to England in September. It was raining hard the morning

they docked at Southampton, and Philip caught a cold which lasted for approximately a year. They rented a damp and draughty furnished flat in Rumridge for six months, and after the baby had arrived they moved to a small, damp and draughty terraced house, from which, three years later, with a second child and another on the way, they moved to a large, damp and draughty Victorian villa. The children made it impossible for Hilary to work, and Philip's salary was small. Life was riddled with petty privation. So were the lives of most people like the Swallows at this time, and he would not perhaps have repined had he not tasted a richer existence. Sometimes he came across snapshots of himself and Hilary in Euphoria, tanned and confident and gleeful, and, running a hand through his thinning hair, he would gaze at the figure in envious wonder, as if they were rich, distant relatives whom he had never seen in the flesh.

That is why there is a gleam in Philip Swallow's eye as he sits now in the BOAC Boeing, sipping his orange juice; why, despite the fact that the plane is shuddering and lurching in the most terrifying manner due to what the captain has just described soothingly over the public address system as "a spot of moderate turbulence", he would not be anywhere else for the world. Though he has followed the recent history of the United States in the newspapers, though he is well aware, cognitively, that it has become more than ever a violent and melodramatic land, riven by deep divisions of race and ideology, traumatized by political assassinations, the campuses in revolt, the cities seizing up, the countryside poisoned and devastated – emotionally it is still for him a kind of Paradise, the place where he was once happy and free and may be so once again. He looks forward with simple, childlike pleasure to the sunshine, ice in his drinks, *drinks*, parties, cheap tobacco and infinite varieties of ice-cream; to being called "Professor", to being complimented on his accent by anonymous telephonists, to being an object of

interest simply by virtue of being British; and to exercising again his command of American idiom, grown a little rusty over the years from disuse.

On Philip's return from his Fellowship, newly acquired Americanisms had quickly withered on his lips under the uncomprehending or disapproving stares of Rumridge students and colleagues. A decade later, and a dash of American usage (both learned and vulgar) had become acceptable – indeed fashionable – in British academic circles, but (it was the story of his life) it was then too late for him to change his style, the style of a thoroughly conventional English don, keeping English up. American idiom still, however, retained for him a secret, subtle enchantment. Was it the legacy of a war-time boyhood – Hollywood films and tattered copies of the *Saturday Evening Post* having established in those crucial years a deep psychic link between American English and the goodies of which he was deprived by rationing? Perhaps, but there was also a purely aesthetic appeal, more difficult to analyse, a subtle music of displaced accents, cute contractions, quaint redundancies and vivid tropes, which he revives now as the shores of Britain recede and those of America rush to meet him. As a virgin spinster who, legatee of some large and unexpected bequest, heads immediately for Paris and points south and, leaning forward in a compartment of the Golden Arrow, eagerly practises the French phrases she can remember from school-lessons, restaurant menus and distant day-trips to Boulogne; so Philip Swallow, strapped (because of the turbulence) into the seat of his Boeing, lips perceptibly moving but all sound muffled by the hum of the jet engines, tries out on his tongue certain half-forgotten intonations and phrases: “cigarettes ... primarily ... Swiss on Rye to go ... have it checked out ... that's the way the cookie crumbles ...”

No virgin spinster, Philip Swallow, a father of three and husband of one, but on this occasion he journeys alone. And