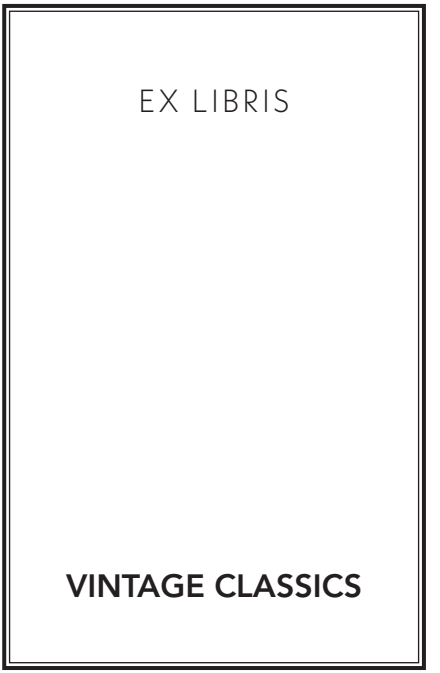
VINTAGE CLASSICS

DAVID LODGE

CHANGING PLACES

'A magnificent comic novel'
Guardian



DAVID LODGE

David Lodge (1935–2025) taught English Literature at the University of Birmingham for many years before retiring to focus on his writing full time. His novels received the Hawthornden Prize and the Whitbread Book of the Year Award, and he was twice shortlisted for the Booker Prize. He also wrote several esteemed volumes of literary criticism.

David held several honorary doctorate degrees and was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. In 1998, he was awarded a CBE for services to literature.

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
A Man of Parts
The Man Who Wouldn't Get Up and Other Stories

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Consciousness and the Novel
The Year of Henry James
Lives in Writing

DRAMA

The Writing Game
Home Truths
Secret Thoughts

MEMOIRS

Quite a Good Time to be Born
Writer's Luck
Varying Degrees of Success

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WITH A EULOGY BY
David Edgar

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A EULOGY

In his biographical novel about Henry James, *Author, Author*, David imagined attending James's deathbed and being able to tell the great American-born writer about his legacy. Henry James died out of fashion, but the time-transported David could assure him that, after a period of obscurity, James would come to be seen as an essential part of the literary canon, published, translated, studied and adapted around the world, with the late novels in particular – greeted with bafflement and indifference at the time – acknowledged as the foundation stones of the modern psychological novel after his death.

Today, it's impossible not to speculate what David would have liked to have heard, before he died, from a future novelist, about his place in history.

Well, the obituaries – I nearly said 'reviews' – should have reassured him; the *Daily Telegraph*: 'a novelist of the first order'; *The Times*: 'one of the most successful and admired novelists of his era'; Jonathan Coe in the *Guardian*: 'It's largely thanks to him that the British comic novel remains in good health.' But David being David, he might nonetheless have found something to disappoint or concern. After all, this is a man who titled the third volume of his memoirs *Varying Degrees of Success*. This volume covered a period in which, on top of the memoirs, David wrote two biographical and three original novels (*Thinks . . .* and *Deaf Sentence* being particularly glowingly received), an award-winning television adaptation of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, a third and also award-winning stage play (alongside the broadcast of the

first), and four important works of criticism. 'Varying Degrees of Success'? Yeah, sure.

For although David could be enjoyable and witty company, especially for those lucky enough to be part of the regular Writers' Lunch which he hosted at the Chung Ying restaurant in central Birmingham, this chronicler of wild Rabelaisian abandon could in person appear reticent, donnish and even dour, leading at least one visiting interviewer to the Lodge home to speculate whether the funny bits were actually written by his wife, Mary. Not a bit of it, of course (though she read and commented on everything). In fact, as with almost all writers, 'David Lodge' could never have been a nom de plume: his work is taken from a very particular life. The 1970 *Out of the Shelter* starts with a small child in wartime London (Brockley represented as 'Brickley'); the earlier *The Picturegoers* brings a young aspirant writer together with an idealised version of Mary's family; *Ginger, You're Barmy* is about David's experience of national service. Then there are the Catholic novels – though in a way they're *all* the Catholic novels – confronting the agonies and ecstasies of growing up in a church split between the reformists of the Second Vatican Council and the conservatism of the 1968 papal encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, which confirmed the church's traditional position on contraception; this dominated the plot of the 1965 *The British Museum is Falling Down* and the 1980 *How Far Can You Go?* David's lectureship at Birmingham, aka Rummidge, and visiting associate professorship at Berkeley, aka Euphoric State, inspired the first campus novel *Changing Places* in 1975, to be followed by *Small World* and *Nice Work*. Having, you might say, run out of his own life, David's work then moved inwards and outwards. Inwards to discourses on illness and grief in 1991's *Paradise News* and, in this century, on various forms of healing in *Therapy*, theories of human consciousness in *Thinks…*, and his own affliction in *Deaf Sentence*; as well as outwards to the past, telling the stories of his antecedents in *Author, Author* and in his 2011 novel about H. G. Wells, *A Man of Parts*.

Writing biographically has its problems – David famously wrote about his distress that the James book was published simultaneously with Colm Tóibín's novel on the same subject; as a writer whose work has also occasionally and annoyingly overlapped with that of his peers, I thought David's essay on the matter (*The Year of Henry James*) was refreshingly honest and insightful, though some thought it self-serving. David also acknowledged his and his colleagues' unease at the portraits he painted of contemporary academic life, one of his reasons for leaving teaching in 1987. And it wasn't just his professional colleagues who feared that they might find themselves in his pages. *Deaf Sentence* is one of the most directly autobiographical of the novels: on top of being deaf, Desmond Bates is a retired academic, with a saxophonist father succumbing to Alzheimer's, and a strong-willed wife. In the novel, Desmond hosts a Boxing Day party, finds he's run out of hearing-aid batteries, knows he won't be able to listen to anyone else, and so uses the opportunity to lecture a left-wing playwright on the errors of his play about the miners' strike. Well, I'm a left-wing playwright, and I've written a play about the miners' strike. I hadn't attended a Boxing Day party at the Lodges', but then neither had David, as he, Mary and their son Christopher were regular attenders at *our* Boxing Day party, at which they gave a persuasive impression of having a pretty good time. They certainly ate enough. Confronted, when I'd read the book, with this Goneril-like level of social ingratitude, David affected to have mislaid his hearing aid.

So what did David do with the life and the lives he drew on? Well, first, as Jonathan Coe underlined, there was the comedy; not just the wit (though there was enough of that, including of course the whole idea of the game of Humiliation). David was a master of the tried-and-tested comic set piece, from the chase around the backways of the British Museum to the hotel bedroom farce of *Small World*; from outrageous coincidences to double entendres and mistaken identities. If I had to single out one laugh-out-loud moment from *Changing Places* – hard enough

to do – it would be the baffled Professor Masters misunderstanding how circulating paternoster lifts operate, and standing on his head as it goes over the top. If I were required to select a favourite verbal gag from *Small World* – even harder – it would be the enquiry by the Japanese translator of Ronald Frobisher's gritty proletarian novel *Could Try Harder* as to the meaning of the hero's unexpected culinary request to his wife: 'Bugger me, but I feel like some faggots tonight.'

And then there was the sheer ingenuity of the plotting and the wealth of light-touch literary reference with which it was so often intertwined. *Nice Work* is about a getting-to-understand-you professional exchange between a female academic and the boss of a Rummidge engineering firm. Its wonderfully elegant last chapter ignites the brilliantly laid plotting fuses that simultaneously solve the financial and career problems of the protagonists, in the manner of the mid-Victorian industrial novels by which David's novel was inspired. David's encyclopaedic knowledge of the literary canon – he would fail lamentably at Humiliation – also led to a series of literary parodies, from *The British Museum is Falling Down*, where Barbara Appleby evokes Molly Bloom's *Ulysses* monologue, onwards. David was particularly skilled at employing – and where necessary pastiching – different modes of non-literary writing, from letters to press cuttings, from lectures to diaries, from small ads to suicide notes. In *Therapy*, intercut monologues we assume to have been written by minor characters turn out to have been penned by the protagonist. The last chapter of *Changing Places* is a film script.

In these devices David drew on his own scholarship, particularly of modernist writing and postmodernist criticism. He concluded that structuralism – about which he wrote an important early book – was spent by the turn of the century, though he continued to enjoy its babble (Professor Morris Zapp's insistence that 'every decoding is another encoding') and employ some of its tropes. His academic writings influenced

generations of students and other writers. If I make particular mention of *The Modes of Modern Writing* it is not just because it introduced me to a canon of work I knew I should know better than I do – my Humiliation winner: *Ulysses* – but because its analysis of metaphor and metonym (patiently explained in the book and in person) has helped me to understand my own craft, then and now. Unsurprisingly, a writer who understood and enjoyed different literary forms was going to indulge in cross-genre dabbling; like Henry James, he was justly disappointed by the failure of his three adept and witty stage plays to have London outings (two of them about novelists, interestingly); his television adaptations of Dickens and Lodge (*Chuzzlewit* and *Nice Work*) confirmed his skills weren't confined to the page.

Satire is about exaggeration and it inevitably tends towards cynicism. It's superficially surprising that Jonathan Coe insisted on the poignant truthfulness – personal and social – that underlay David's work, particularly in its endings. Tubby Passmore in *Therapy* finds healing in the arms of a former lover on a pilgrimage. *Deaf Sentence* is predicated on the idea that blindness is tragic but deafness is comic, but after much uproarious comedy the novel ends with Desmond's visit to Auschwitz, his father's death from Alzheimer's and his admission that he had assisted in the death of his cancer-ridden wife.

And while David was not a political radical or even less a utopian – as any left-wing playwright caught in his glare can attest – *Nice Work* contains a heartfelt critique of the Thatcherite revolution which was destroying British industry and threatening British universities. Its penultimate chapter ends with Robyn Penrose's utopian vision of Vic Wilcox's workers transported from the hellhole of his foundry to the dappled lawns of the Rummidge campus on a sunny day, to be welcomed by beautiful students and their teachers, eager to exchange ideas with the workers on 'how the values of the university and the imperatives of commerce might be reconciled and more equitably managed to the benefit of the whole of society'. At which point Robyn

realises that Professor Swallow was talking to her, and confesses, 'I was daydreaming.'

In *The Tempest*, Prospero speaks of actors as 'such stuff as dreams are made on' whose 'little life is rounded with a sleep'. But writers are dream-makers too. Now, after his long battle with dementia is over, David's life is rounded with a sleep, but the dreams he conjured with such virtuoso brilliance – from Rummidge to Europhic State and the whole Small World in between – will clearly survive him. As they will survive us all.

David Edgar
Delivered at David Lodge's funeral
21 February 2025

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

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 bluebirds, 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 assignations, 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 Rummidge at Euphoric State; while Euphoric State, if the truth were told, had sometimes encountered difficulty in persuading any of its faculty to go to Rummidge. 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 Rummidge, which few of them had even heard of. Hence the American visitors to Rummidge 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 Rummidge, 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 fiend-

ishly 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 adolesence – 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 invented 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