

# **Small World Study Guide**

**Small World by David Lodge (author)**

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## Plot Summary

*Small World* is a tale about the comings and goings of a group of English language and literature scholars. It begins with Persse McGarrigle, from a small Irish college, attending his first conference at a small English college that has never before hosted a conference. Persse, along with the readers, learns the role conferences play in academia: a little work teamed with as much fun as possible. Along with several more experienced colleagues, Persse pursues a beautiful participant whose name badge reads A L Pabst. Persse falls in love with her and arranges (he thinks) a tryst, but she tricks him and departs, leaving no way to contact her. In Rummidge, Persse also learns that his cousin Bernadette has dishonored herself and been cast out by the family.

Hunting for Bernadette, whose stage name is Marlene, Persse finds indications that Angelica (A L Pabst) also leads a second life in the sexual underground as a pornographic performer, Lily. Persse can find neither woman's elusive trail and returns to teaching. Fate intervenes, however, and Persse wins a \$1,000 prize for his poetry, which will make searching for the fallen women possible. He first tries Amsterdam, where Angelica has told him her father was an executive for KLM at the time of her adoption. There he learns only Hermann Pabst has relocated to Los Angeles. He sees another disgusting poster of Lily but has no way of reaching her.

Thwarted again, Persse helps direct a literary retreat and happens to run into his cousin's rapist under conditions that allow him to obtain a support agreement. This in hand, Persse sets off on the cold trail, which passes through Switzerland, to Los Angeles (where he meets Hermann Pabst and obtains the full story about the identical twins), Honolulu, Tokyo and Seoul. By Hong Kong, Persse is broke. We meet him again in Jerusalem, which he reaches on foot over the desert from Aden.

Meanwhile, other characters are leading interlacing lives. Philip Swallow and his wife Hilary in Rummidge are drifting apart but remain married. Philip travels to conferences as often as possible. Years ago he and Morris Zapp exchanged faculty positions - and wives. Dysirye Zapp divorces Morris and bases a novel on him, which makes her rich. She is frustrated by writer's block on a new project. Before flying on to additional conferences, Zapp hears Swallow's story about his affair in Italy with Joy Simpson, who subsequently dies. When Swallow flies off to Turkey to deliver a series of lectures, he discovers that Joy is very much alive and their union has produced a three-year-old daughter. They plan to marry as soon as Hilary agrees to a divorce, but Swallow is loath to ask for one until she gets established in her new profession, marriage counseling.

Zapp, meanwhile, after an uncomfortable liaison with Fulvia and Eduardo Morgana, is kidnapped in Italy by their leftist friends who believe rich Dysirye will ransom him. Dysirye negotiates the kidnappers down, and she is ready to hand over the sum when Fulvia warns the kidnappers to release him for free. Feeling he has received a new lease on life, Zapp flies to Jerusalem and runs a laid-back conference. Rodney Wainwright, an unprepared lecturer from Australia, receives a miracle when Swallow



appears to have come down with Legionnaire's Disease. Everyone scatters. Zapp and Thelma Ringbaum become involved, while Swallow and Joy go their separate ways.

In December, the whole world of English scholarship gathers in New York for the MLA convention. There Persse finds and makes passionate love with Angelica, before discovering it is her prostitute twin, sent to break the news to him that Angelica is engaged to someone else. Venerable Arthur Kingfisher, who has been evaluating contenders for a UNESCO chair, surprises everyone by emerging from retirement to accept the post himself. He announces he will marry his beautiful young Korean assistant and is then confronted by the fact that he is the Pabst twins' biological father by a retired spinster teacher who has been appearing throughout the novel. Persse flies back to Heathrow on New Years Eve to find the British Airways employee who has several times been a nexus of the novel's action and whom he last time saw weeping over his devotion to Angelica. Cheryl has been fired and disappeared somewhere in the small, narrow world, and Persse is determined to find her.



# Part 1, Chapter 1

## Part 1, Chapter 1 Summary

Having recently completed a master's thesis on Shakespeare's influence on T. S. Eliot, Persse McGarrigle is attending his first-ever professional conference and does not know what to expect. Rummidge College has never before hosted an event like the annual convention of the University Teachers of English Language and Literature (UTE). The college packs the fifty-odd participants into substandard student dormitories and feeds them blandly. Veterans of such conferences accept the poor conditions and being stuck together for three days of artificial sociability. The spread-out nature of the event is harder to take, as is the fact that the stars of the profession have skipped it.

At a sherry reception, Persse meets several of the organizers and hears at length the tale of woe of Robin Dempsey. Ten years previously, he is a lecturer at Rummidge. He is beaten out of a promotion by Philip Swallow, whose sole publication is a book on Hazlitt. Dempsey's wife Janet stays behind when Dempsey accepts a position at Darlington College. She divorces him when she learns about an affair he has with a graduate student. Darlington has made Dempsey happy by building him a computer lab. He guesses correctly that Persse is an impoverished poet, as well as a lecturer at University College, Limerick.

At the threshold, Persse sees a tall, graceful, beautiful girl with eyes as dark as peat pools. Her eyes meet his briefly, smilingly, until a middle-aged, silver-bearded man swoops in on her. Persse is angered at Dempsey's use of the vulgar word "knockers," but he admits Swallow is getting a good look at the beauty's dycolletage. Dempsey excuses himself, declaring that Persse certainly is a poet. Miraculously, the woman appears at Persse's side. He explains his unusual Irish name, and she volunteers that her name is Angelica. (The tiny handwriting on the badge says A. L. Pabst.) She is adopted, so has no idea of her lineage, and she is currently unemployed while working on her Ph.D.

Dinner is called, and Persse is seated between two mediaevalists, who talk around him. Angelica is seated between Swallow and Dempsey, who vie over her. Miss Sybil Maiden, retired for years from Girton College, Cambridge, talks to Persse. Conferences help her feel young. She is a folklorist and lectures a tolerant Persse about imagery in *The Waste Land*. The mediaevalists enter the discussion with a mention of the grail, and Persse fails to see Angelica slip away. He sleeps badly that night.

Angelica is absent from the inedible breakfast and the boring first formal session of the conference. Persse watches participants adopt varied poses of inattention until the word "structuralism" is uttered. The speaker talks smugly of the attention this concept is getting in Europe, and summarizes his opinion. For structuralists, it is anathema to believe anything expressive or mimetic can be found in meter. Most of the audience smiles and nudges each other, but a few frown and prepare questions for the discussion



period following. Angelica appears at coffee break. She awoke late after a get-together at Swallow's. She is interested in structuralism and is amazed Persse knows nothing about it. His B.A. is from Galway, and his master's is from Dublin College, although he has mostly worked independently while recovering from tuberculosis. He obtains his position at Limerick on a fluke, when he is invited to interview instead of another McGarrigle, whom they intended to hire.

When the break ends, Persse sees the morning speaker preparing to "bugger off" and decides that it's worth skipping the next activity in order to write a poem. He promises to let Angelica read the poem when it is finished. Walking through melting snow, Persse adapts some Yeats verse to Angelica and begins running in circles as he discovers he is in love. Arriving at Lucas Hall, he sees a thickset man emerge from a taxi. Morris Zapp wears a deerslayer hat and chews a thick cigar. The American tips the driver generously and explains he has taken the cab all the way from London, which is still paralyzed with snow. He offers his distinctive hat to Persse when he leaves for warmer climes. Learning Persse is a "conference virgin," Zapp advises him to skip all lectures, except his own this afternoon. Zapp is appalled to learn he traveled 6,000 miles to address, at best, 57 people.

Zapp needs a drink, and Persse leads him to Martineau Hall. Zapp is on sabbatical in Europe and agreed to this lecture as a favor to an old friend. Others come in, and Swallow is at first delighted to see Zapp after ten years. Then Swallow learns that Zapp has spent \$50 on cab fare, putting the event into debt. Sutcliffe also loses enthusiasm when Zapp reveals the title of his paper: "Textuality as Striptease." The big-wigs ignore Persse, but Sutcliffe informs him that Zapp and Swallow had affairs with each other's wives some years back. The story loses interest for Persse when Angelica comes in, accompanied by Dempsey. Still, Sutcliffe pushes on: the two marriages have been saved, but Swallow's has lost character. Swallow has received the chairmanship Zapp was in line for. Swallow, though, is only an interregnum figure. He's a constant traveler, so he can't do the job justice. Sutcliffe claims that he himself would have been an active chairman, if they had chosen him.

At the bar, Persse attaches to Angelica. He asks about the lecture and about structuralism. Dempsey approaches and shows off his expertise: the designation of certain animals as d-o-g and others as c-a-t is arbitrary. The acoustic images of the sounds they make are too. The conversation falters when Swallow approaches, but Angelica cites Jakobson's work on comparative and superlative forms of adjectives in Indo-European languages as proof of iconic correlation between sound and sense. The scholars gape at her, and she is introduced to Zapp. Later at lunch, Angelica tells Persse she hopes she was not rude, and then she asks to read his poem. It is a mystery, he says, which he will unveil at midnight atop Lucas Hall. Angelica is intrigued, but she laughs off more material on romance, the subject of her dissertation. She needs a theory to pull it all together.

Few people like Zapp's lecture and several walk out. Zapp confesses he has written five books on Jane Austin. He began work on an exhaustive commentary about her, which he never finished because it is Utopian to think language can be possessed by speaker



or receiver. To understand a message, one must decode it, and every decoding is another encoding. Past experience, time and even on-going biology color the transfer, so conversation is like playing tennis with silly putty. Reading is more passive, but this encourages the quest for interpretation. It is not tennis, but flirtation with at best masturbatory consummation. (The audience grows restive.) It is like a strip teaser playing with her audience. Zapp says he has not attended topless and bottomless bars like Swallow (who blushes as his colleagues stare). These, though, are the equivalent of literature's "recuperable meaning," claiming one can strip away rhetoric to recover meaning and communication.

In both cases, it is the delay that is exciting. The dance ends when the pubis is bared, but the vagina is still hidden (several ladies storm out). Freud says obsessive reading is a displaced yearning to see one's mother's genitals (a young man faints). Since one cannot possess the text, one must take pleasure in the teasing. After scattered references to English and American classics, Zapp ends to uneven applause. Sutcliffe opens the floor to questions. Swallow, a post-structuralist, is skeptical of such distinctions. He has read books for their meaning all his life. Zapp interrupts, saying he knew not what he did. Are they discussing an imperfect memory or subjective interpretation of Zapp's words? Zapp replies blithely there is no point. No two people here could present the simplest *prycis* of what he has said. The point of their conference is to perform a ritual, so perhaps they should adjourn for a drink. Sutcliffe hurries to agree.

Persse asks Angelica if her mother knows she listens to such language. Angelica insists she finds it interesting. An American philosopher named Pierce talked about this before World War I. Persse complements her wide reading and asks where she has studied. Various places, she evades. Angelica is attending *Lear* tonight, but Persse has passed on a ticket. She has forgotten about his poem, but she promises to be back in time. Most people avoid Zapp after his lecture, but Angelica approaches him enthusiastically and declares romance as narrative striptease makes sense. She lists off cases in which actual striptease figures in romance. Swallow sweeps Zapp away, and Persse is bitter that Angelica gives Zapp any credit for all the ideas that just came to her. She advises him to treat the old professors carefully. Dempsey moves Angelica away, and Persse seeks Busby, in hopes of obtaining a ticket to *Lear*. Busby confesses that a Christmas pantomime is playing instead of *Lear*. A bystander sells Persse his ticket, and the two go to town to find some decent food. Busby announces proudly that tomorrow night will feature a catered medieval banquet.

Persse sets out to find an aunt who lives in town. Passing through affluent neighborhoods into more modest ones, he meets Zapp, out to visit a landlord with whom he lived ten years ago. By coincidence, they both seek the same address. How surprised Dr. Milo and Nuala O'Shea will be to see them together! When they arrive, Milo tells Persse that Nuala is visiting Ireland, but he ushers them into his chilly parlor. Zapp proffers a bottle of scotch. Milo produces more, and they drink to old times. Nuala has returned to Sligo to attend to family troubles. Niece Bernadette has gotten pregnant, been fired and been thrown out of the house. Everyone is afraid she's gone to London for an abortion. The phone rings, and Milo must leave. Persse and Zapp both remember



Bernadette. She cleaned Zapp's room when he was a border. He cannot believe girls are still getting pregnant accidentally, but Persse reminds him contraceptives are illegal in Ireland. Zapp suspects that before heading home, Persse will fill his suitcases with Durex (he believes that is the brand name). He is surprised to hear that Persse believes in premarital chastity for both sexes.

Dempsey claims to have no room in his car for Persse, but he later splashes Persse as he drives by with Angelica and an empty back seat. Persse arrives late and wet for a slapstick *Puss in Boots*. During intermission, he sees mixed audience reactions but no trace of Dempsey and Angelica. He runs into Miss Maiden, who explains the plot and then expounds on Grail images, which she links to "pussy." Learning from her that Dempsey and Angelica ducked out before the performance, Persse walks back to Lucas Hall. There, as the moon rises, he enjoys a magnificent aerial view of the grounds. Dempsey steps out of the elevator, frowning at not being able to find Angelica. He flicks on the lights and searches, taunting Persse with a new limerick.

When Dempsey leaves, Angelica steps from the emergency exit, tousled and out of breath. She and Persse debate the evening's foul-ups, and then she asks about the poem. Persse leads her by the hand to the glassed walkway and points to a trail of footprints melted into the dazzling snow. It spells out "Angelica." She is charmed by the earth poem. Not letting go of each other's hands, they talk about sun and moon in mythology and symbolism. Angelica recognizes Blake in Persse's comment on the sign of an eye for symmetry. Persse asks Angelica to marry him. She pulls her hand away and exclaims "Of course not!" They have just met. She does not want to marry at least until she has established her career. Persse is willing to give up his career and follow her, romantically. He wants to marry her, he says, because he loves her and does not believe in premarital sex. She muses about virginity. Is it a presence or an absence? Angelica evokes "The Eve of St. Agnes," and Persse jumps to the end of the poem. He begs her to be Madeline to his Porphyro. Angelica giggles that it would be fun to reenact the poem tomorrow night, after the medieval banquet. The elevator sounds, and Persse goes to meet the invader. Swallow enters, looking for Angelica. By the time Persse returns to the walkway, Angelica is gone.

Angelica's name, too, is gone from the melting snow in the morning. Persse sees Zapp jogging and easily overtakes him. Zapp hates jogging, but since it is the rage in American academia, he does it to keep his success. His goal is to be the highest paid professor of English in the world, so he has to keep on his toes. The old pecking order among universities has vanished, as has the self-sufficient campus and library. All one needs for scholarship today is a telephone, Xerox machine and conference grant fund. Persse reveals his goals are to publish his poems and to win Angelica, whom they see jogging in front of them. Zapp drops out, and Persse accelerates to pursue her. Angelica speeds up to keep ahead until they near Lucas Hall, where they end in a dead heat. She tells him she went to sleep in Room 231 after they parted. Zapp lumbers up, distracting Persse for a moment, and Angelica disappears again.

Angelica eludes Persse all morning and at lunch. During the boring afternoon lecture, Persse thinks about acting out "The Eve of St. Agnes," convinced that she has





confirmed the agreement by providing her room number. He goes to the library to study the text, to be sure whether Stanza XXVI describes sexual intercourse. Deciding it does and remembering Cousin Bernadette, Persse heads to a pharmacy far from the university to purchase condoms. With embarrassment he asks for Durex, pays and flees. In the subway he examines his surprisingly heavy package and finds Farex diapers. Passing a Catholic Church advertising confession, Persse knows his intentions towards Angelica have put him in a state of sin. He is more concerned, however, that his inexperience will cause problems. Fortuitously, he sees a notice for an adult films club and ducks in before his conscience can cry out. He pays a membership fee and, before he can find a seat, pollutes himself. He flees into the street and into the confessional. Fr. Finbar O'Malley recognizes Persse's accent and tells him of the "Our Lady of Knock Fund for Reverse Emigration" that he runs for Irish youth stuck in England.

Persse returns to campus too late for what turns out to be a disappointing sightseeing tour. He hears Swallow warn the owner of "Ye Marrie Olde Round Table" that the medieval banquet had better be a success. Swallow introduces Persse to his literary agent, Felix Skinner. Swallow's book has been out a year. It sold 165 copies and received no reviews. Skinner asks Persse about his field, and Dempsey butts in to say Shakespeare and T. S. Eliot would computerize beautifully. Persse objects - on the spur of the moment, to take Dempsey down a peg - that his approach is that post-Eliot everyone reads Shakespeare through Eliot's eyes. Skinner is interested in publishing the thesis. An allusion to "The Eve of St. Agnes" by Angelica shatters Persse's "firm purpose of amendment" in confession.

Persse will not sit with Angelica during dinner, but he keeps Dempsey busy long enough to prevent Dempsey from keeping her company. The feast is another failure, and the bawdy entertainment is unamusing. Angela, in keeping with the poem, does not touch her food. Persse steals out and makes his way to deserted Lucas Hall. He enters Room 231, hears footsteps and hides in the wardrobe. It is Dempsey, who undresses, climbs into bed and turns off the light. At the sound of a cough, Dempsey springs upright and asks if Angelica has been hiding in the wardrobe all along. Persse emerges. He explains the sexy scenario he and Angelica have in mind and leaves when Dempsey reveals that 231 is his room. Running down to the bar, Persse learns that Angelica caught a taxi half an hour earlier, and no one knows where she can be contacted.

## Part 1, Chapter 1 Analysis

The first chapter introduces Persse McGarrigle and Angelica Pabst and suggests, in the confines of a small English college town, that he is destined to follow her, dog-faced in love, around the world. Sufficient academic types are introduced to make clear they are a jealous, malicious group that frequently gathers in conferences, despite the inconvenience and boredom. John Keats' poem, "The Eve of St. Agnes," is used as a matrix for Angelica and Persse's actions at the medieval feast. The tryst, however, turns out only to be a case of Angelica's teasing, which we will later learn is habitual. Note that Swallow and Dempsey are long-time rivals. The latter will grow fanatical in his jealousy and hatred, firing a subplot involving his computer center. At this point the story

of Bernadette's pregnancy seems to point to Zapp, the former border, as the father, but the truth will be seen to lie elsewhere.



# Part 1, Chapter 2

## Part 1, Chapter 2 Summary

Zapp skips the medieval feast to dine with Hilary Swallow in her kitchen. Zapp finds his former lover fat and wrinkled, but he assures her that she is not. They talk about college-age children, and Zapp complains that his ex-wife, the rich, best-selling author Dysirye, is demanding that he pay the twins' tuition. Zapp claims to have given up sex. It only interferes with career. Hilary notes that Philip Swallow has a weakness for female students and has been blackmailed by one. The blackmail note was concealed in her exam on "Paradise Lost." Sutcliffe, Hilary believes, is the one who informed Hilary. Philip readily admits his indiscretion, but he claims that the girl seduced him. Hilary is unhappy, but she feels trapped by an inadequate education in a tough job market. Hilary feels stuck in the marriage because she placed no conditions on him when she begged Philip to give it another try after their affairs with the Zapps. Zapp is surprised that Philip is calling the shots in the marriage now. His major frustration is lack of attention to his book, but its publication alone has made him eligible to be department head and professor. This in turn got him on the British Council's list of approved lecturers and set him to flying all over the world, doubtless pursued by academic groupies like Angelica.

While Zapp and Hilary drink coffee, Swallow returns, lamenting the horrible banquet ending a disastrous conference. Hilary yawns, ready for bed. Zapp has to get up early to catch his plane to Bellagio, but the two men agree to have a nightcap. Zapp describes his summer itinerary, particularly the last event on "The Future of Criticism," which he is helping organize in Jerusalem. Food and accommodations are key to a successful conference, he says, and next time Rummidge should apply for grants to hold their conference in a warm clime. Zapp invites Swallow to submit a paper and bring Hilary. Swallow objects. He travels to get away from her, to find the kind of intensity he felt in 1969. Zapp assures Swallow, to his chagrin, that Euphoria University is not the hippie delight he remembers. Only once, Swallow says, has he found life that intense, and he offers to tell a story he has shared with no one.

Years previously, Swallow flies to Naples and works his way by train up the country. He is scheduled for a night flight home from Genoa. After a delay taking off, the plane is forced to make an emergency landing when an engine catches fire. Passengers and flight crew are in a panic. Swallow thinks about his family and wonders about British Council life insurance. Though harrowing, the landing is successful. Swallow phones J. K Simpson, a friendly, enthusiastic British Council employee who asked him to call if he had any problems. Simpson drives to the airport at 1 a.m., fails to find Swallow a hotel room and brings him to his own home. Toused and sleepy, Joy Simpson appears in a blue robe like his wife's. She reminds Swallow of a younger, prettier Hilary, and he is seized with desire for Joy. The husband has to be in Milan in a few hours, and he departs. Philip asks Joy to hold him, to calm his trembling. He watches in a mirror as she yields to his increasingly passionate caresses and kisses. She has to muffle his cries as he experiences a death-defying orgasm. In the morning, Joy is poised and



evasive with her inquisitive son and a cleaning lady present. Swallow cannot figure out whether Joy is a nymphomaniac, but her body is imprinted in his mind. She drives him to the airport. He kisses her hand good-bye. She blushes, and he never sees her again. The whole family perishes in a plane crash over India the next year. Swallow is left feeling guilty and has built a shrine to Joy in his heart. She has convinced him life is worth living.

Zapp questions Swallow on other affairs, and Swallow advises him to never say no to an offer. He and Hilary do not see eye-to-eye on many things. Zapp says he has tried to remarry after Dysirye, but no one has responded. He gets massages occasionally, paying for what he used to beg for. The academics discuss "defamiliarization" and reading, before Zapp asks about Swallow's next trip: a lecture series on Hazlitt in Turkey. Zapp offers to review Swallow's book on *Metacriticism*, and Swallow summarizes the underestimated object of his research, whose wife is an "archetypal pricktease." Hilary stands in the doorway in a blue velour dressing gown, zipped throat to hem. The men go pale and decide it is time to sleep.

## Part 1, Chapter 2 Analysis

The second chapter examines the complex history between Morris and Dysirye Zapp and Philip and Hilary Swallow, with the enticing story of Joy Simpson thrown in for what appears to be dramatic spice. Joy does not perish as it appears here. She will reappear in Turkey, bearing a major surprise and throwing the Swallows' marriage into crisis. It is unclear how much Hilary knows about her husband's antics and how spontaneous and confrontational her appearance in the blue velour dressing gown is meant to be. Joy will make clear later that she has avoided disturbing the Swallows' marriage. Has Hilary somehow learned about Genoa before hearing this telling to Zapp? Sex is clearly high on the list of non-agenda items that attract academics to conferences, and clearly conference participation is expected of scholars, even ex-hippies like Zapp whose principles go against such manifestations of the establishment.



# Part 2, Chapter 1

## Part 2, Chapter 1 Summary

Zapp awakens at 5 a.m., which is 3 p.m. in Queensland, Australia, where Rodney Wainwright of the University of North Queensland is working on a paper for Zapp's Jerusalem conference. Wainwright knows his students are on the beach. They will drink and barbecue after sundown and then swim in the nude. He pictures buxom Sandra Dix from English 351. Wainwright no longer desires his broad-bottomed wife Bev, but he knows he is out of the running for the likes of Dix. He also knows he needs to finish Zapp's paper, on which he is blocked, because it could be the key to a better teaching position.

Zapp forces himself out of bed at 5:15, depressed by a life of too much alcohol, cigars and globetrotting. Shaving helps, as does strong instant coffee. Zapp dresses comfortably for travel and double-checks his life-support system. Swallow enters the kitchen at 6 a.m. for an awkward good-bye. Zapp promises to read his book on the plane. He has a new one coming out, *Beyond Criticism*, and promises to send Swallow a copy. The taxi driver's ringing startles them both.

At 12:30 a.m. local time in a Helicon, NH, writers' colony, Zapp's ex-wife Dysirye cannot sleep, worrying about the 1,000 words she wrote today. Obeying the almost monastic rules, she has not looked at the typescript since mandatory social time succeeded isolated writing time. The writing seems to glow radioactively, tempting her to read it. Dysirye has been blocked on her second book, *Men*, for four years. In frustration, she notes a fleeting thought for later use: "Vibrator with flat battery just like a man," then decides to take a sleeping pill. She refuses to admit the possibility of defeat.

Over the Atlantic, TWA Flight 072 from Chicago to London passes a time-zone to make it 3:45 a.m. Most passengers are sleeping in distorted positions. A few others read paperback romances. Fulvia Morgana, Professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Padua, however, is at work, taking notes from a hardback tome on her lap. Handsome and aristocratic, carefully groomed and fashionably attired, she is working from *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Far behind Morgana, in economy class, Howard Ringbaum is trying to coax his wife Thelma into having sexual intercourse so he can join the "Mile High Club." Thelma is reading a novel, *Could Try Harder*, by Ronald Frobisher, and she thinks he is kidding. Howard has a three-month grant to study at the British Museum, and Thelma is determined to imbibe culture. A colleague has convinced Howard that he needs a semen-stained, monogrammed airline napkin to gain membership. His gullibility displays the same naivety that got him exiled to the prairies of Alberta, Canada. Thelma is surprised by Howard's sudden ardor, but she quells him with a swat of her book to his crotch.

At midnight in cold, windy Chicago, Arthur Kingfisher, a white-haired, scraggy old man, lies spread-eagled, naked on his bed in the penthouse suite of a trendy, luxurious hotel.



Beside the bed is a stack of academic journals. A shapely Korean girl, Song-Mi Lee, is vigorously massaging the old man. Kingfisher is retired but keeps busy in the world of literary theory, commuting weekly between Columbia University and Z'rich, attending conferences, editing and consulting. Song-Mi, his former research assistant, is now his constant companion, helping him cope with his inability to have an original thought or an erection. A phone call from Berlin interrupts nothing.

Zapp's taxi jolts towards the airport through quiet suburbs that remind him how exhilarating his life is by comparison. The Swallows spoon and copulate furtively. Philip is thinking of Joy, and Hilary is thinking of Zapp. Neither sees the other's face or utters a word. Kingfisher's caller is Siegfried von Turpitz, wondering whether Kingfisher has heard anything about a new UNESCO chair in literary criticism. Kingfisher chooses his words carefully, trying to skirt the rumor that is spreading rapidly. Finally von Turpitz announces that he is interested and reminds Kingfisher of a generous review he has given one of his books. Why pale, blond-haired von Turpitz always wears a black kid glove on one hand is the topic of speculation among his colleagues. He hangs up with Chicago and places another call to Paris. Zapp is still in his taxi at 6:30 a.m., dreaming of the Italian meal he will enjoy tonight.

It is 7:30 a.m. in Paris when leathery-faced Michel Tardieu, Professor of Narratology at the Sorbonne answers the phone in his elegant apartment. Von Turpitz has misdialed, intending to call Jacques Textel. Tardieu sleepily returns to embracing his male lover. By comparison, Rudyard Parkinson sleeps chastely alone. The Regius Professor of Belles-Lettres at All Saints' College, Oxford, is by choice virgin and celibate, having seen the dire effect of amorous activities on colleagues. Reading is Parkinson's love, and writing is his sex. He derives pure, selfless pleasure as he communes with the English poets' minds, while writing offers a release of tension. He writes only for publication, because anything else is shameful and unsatisfying masturbation. It is most satisfying to research and write original books, but Parkinson never passes an opportunity to review titles. Usually, he has three under way at any given time. He is taking notes now on Zapp's *Beyond Criticism* for the *Times Literary Supplement* (TLS). Parkinson does not care for American scholarship and has penned too many positive reviews recently. Zapp will receive venom.

At 8:45 a.m. in central Turkey, Dr. Akbil Borak is having breakfast with his pretty, plump wife Oya. He is reading through *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt* to prepare for Swallow's lecture series. Borak, who speaks excellent English and is the only member of the Ankara faculty who knows anything about the Romantic essayists, has been assigned Swallow's guide in Ankara. The Boraks live in forlorn conditions on the edge of the vast barren steppes. They remember with yearning the three years they spent in Hull during Akbil's doctoral work.

Rummidge Airport is buzzing when Zapp arrives and checks in at the British Midlands desk. He endures stoically the indignities of security searching and settles in at Gate 5. Zapp is not impressed to see that his airplane has propellers. Meanwhile, it is late afternoon when Akira Sakazaki leaves work at the University of Tokyo and catches a pre-rush hour train to his luxurious but highly compact "living unit," one of 400 domiciles



stacked like egg boxes in a single building. Sakazaki prefers not to waste time in movement around a larger apartment. He bathes and sits down at his typewriter to write Ronald Frobisher for clarification of some items in his *Could Try Harder*, which Sakazaki is translating into Japanese.

As Zapp's plane taxis back and forth to break up ground fog so the pilot can take off, the passenger beside him grows nervous. Finally, they lift noisily and shakily into the air, bound for Heathrow. Zapp confirms in the *Times* that there are places on the globe much worse than this flight. Frobisher receives a letter from Japan at 8:30 a.m. Greenwich Mean Time. It is the fifth or sixth letter this month from Sakazaki, and there will be another before the one Sakazaki has just typed arrives. Irma, reading the *Guardian's* women's page, and her husband Frobisher talk past each other at the breakfast table as they normally do. Irma does not accept that he is a major literary figure who happens for the present to be mostly writing television and movie scripts. An invitation to a conference in Heidelberg makes his point, although he does not recognize the name von Turpitz. Irma complains about the quantity of conferences he is attending. She turns down an invitation to an awards ceremony, where he will be a presenter. Overhead, TWA Flight 072 is circling. Morgana gazes down at London and remembers Marx forging there ideas that have changed the world. Thelma Ringbaum is enthusiastic to see Big Ben, but her husband is sulking.

Zapp's commuter flight has landed, and he is eating breakfast and reading about Hazlitt during a layover. In Queensland, Wainwright is not enjoying dinner because of a loose molar, his lack of progress on his paper and his visions of Sandra Dix. In New Hampshire, Dysirye is asleep but dreaming about flying through pine trees. Swallow awakes again and learns from his son that the teachers are on strike. In Chicago, Kingfisher is enjoying psychedelic dreams, thanks to an opium pipe prepared by Song-Mi, with whom he is spooning. Black-gloved von Turpitz is racing his BMW on the Autobahn from Berlin to Hanover. In Paris, Tardieu is grinding coffee beans and wondering idly why von Turpitz wants urgently to talk to Textel. Tardieu knows the Swiss anthropologist, now prominent at UNESCO. Tardieu's lover Albert returns sulkily from his regular morning run for croissants and rolls. In Ankara, Borak has completed his 90-minute commute and finds a parking place amidst the crowd of humanity. Soldiers break up a confrontation between two groups of students as Borak hides behind a statue of Ataturk. Sakazaki finishes another question. As Big Ben strikes 9 o'clock, other clocks strike other hours around the world. Everyone is caught up in activities appropriate to their time zone and occupation, including Joy Simpson, who is not dead after all.

## Part 2, Chapter 1 Analysis

As Zapp and the Swallows part, the readers meet a host of new characters as we skip around the world, from time zone to time zone, to compare and contrast their activities. They are not yet all acquainted, but the net of interconnection suggested in Part 1 is filling in. The characters phone one another. They review, critique or translate one another's writings, and they attend each other's conferences. Several are involved or interested in a still-mysterious program, the UNESCO Chair of Literary Criticism. Its

freedom of action, prestige and monetary value put the major players on guard. They will scheme and vie for this position through the end of the novel, but none of them sees the final assignment.





## Part 2, Chapter 2

### Part 2, Chapter 2 Summary

Except when flights at Heathrow are delayed or canceled, most check-in clerks find the job repetitive and impersonal. Cheryl Summerbee, a checker for British Airways at Terminal One, injects interest into her job by assessing passengers' characters and allocating seats accordingly. It gives her pleasure to think about the love affairs she may have sparked by seating nice people next to each other. Cheryl keeps Bills and Moon romance novels, which she despises but devours, beneath the counter to fill slack times. No Mr. Right has come along willing to take her to the altar still a virgin.

Cheryl smiles at Zapp, admiring his deerstalker hat and making him remember his promise to Persse. Cheryl sweetly offers to mail it when she goes off duty. She likes Zapp, so she seats him next to a very elegant Italian professor of the right age. Suddenly there is the muffled sound of duty-free liquor bottles exploding and a simultaneous "Shit!" from Howard and Thelma Ringbaum. Zapp advises Cheryl to avoid Howard, a self-centered, mean and calculating fink (whose paper Zapp, coincidentally, has just rejected).

An hour later, Zapp takes a seat next to Fulvia Morgana. They glance at each other's reading material and introduce themselves. Fulvia remembers Zapp's MLA lecture in December. Zapp flips through the index cards in his memory for Fulvia. They discuss deconstruction. He finds it the last intellectual thrill, and she finds it hopeless anarchism. Zapp had been invited to the Chicago conference but could not make it. Boring papers, interesting parties is Fulvia's analysis. Kingfisher delivered a terrible, embarrassing keynote address. Zapp defends him as a formerly great literary scholar, which Fulvia says casts doubt on the whole profession. Fulvia asks about Zapp's reading material and says Swallow's lecture in Padua a few years ago was boring. Zapp agrees that Swallow does not set one's pulse racing and reads a representative passage. Fulvia is impressed by Hazlitt's attack on bourgeois empiricism, which Zapp gently suggests is meant as irony. Over drinks, they return to the Chicago conference, and Fulvia asks about the UNESCO Chair of Literary Criticism rumor. When Zapp claims ignorance, she says Kingfisher is the founder and chief assessor of candidates. She adds enough information to convince Zapp that this position is well worth pursuing. It comes with \$100,000 a year tax-free, independence from any academic institution and an office and staff in Paris. The chair is encouraged to travel the world at UNESCO's expense. There is no teaching, grading or committees. Zapp's head is spinning. This will make him the envy of every scholar! They briefly debate the use of male and female pronouns to signify the generic, and Zapp mentions having been married to Dysirye Byrd. Fulvia knows *Giorni Difficili*, and Zapp admits it is partly autobiographical. He does not believe Fulvia has no interest in the UNESCO chair.

As Fulvia and Zapp eat lunch over France, Persse arrives at Heathrow by rail, hoping to get a cheap stand-by ticket to Shannon. Airport employees mock Muslims who face



Mecca and prostrate themselves in prayer. Hearing mention of an airport chapel and feeling a need to purify his soul, Persse asks directions. He wanders half an hour before running into bouncy, unfocused Cheryl, who offers to take him. Persse notes that she is carrying a deerslayer and explains that he happens to be the person to whom she is going to mail it. Cheryl invites Persse to lunch, but he still feels loyalty to Angelica and needs to visit the chapel.

St. George Chapel resembles a bomb shelter with a devotional rack and bulletin board for prayers and supplications. A red sanctuary lamp burning in a small side chapel gives Persse hope of finding Catholic sanctity. Before the Reserved Sacrament he says a sincere prayer to recover Angelica and his own purity of heart. He writes out a brief prayer and pins it to the board, hoping she might recognize his handwriting. Persse notices a pretty black-haired girl in tight red pants and imitation fur, pinning up a petition. He cannot remember where he has seen her before. He looks at her prayer request and finds that she has asked God to prevent her parents or other acquaintances from finding out where she is. He flips the business card to read "Girls Unlimited: Hostesses, Escorts, Masseuses, Artistes." He finds her kneeling in prayer in the chapel and catches her when she faints as he addresses her. This is Bernadette McGarrigle.

Fulvia and Zapp land in Milan during a municipal strike, and Fulvia insists he spend the night at her villa and meet her husband, a professor of Italian Renaissance literature in Rome. She fetches her bronze-colored Maserati coupe, picks him up at curbside and races off shaking her fist in solidarity with the picketers. Settled in the villa, Zapp asks her how she reconciles her Marxism with the opulent life she lives. Fulvia dismisses this as a very American question and rattles off an oft-used speech about contradictions being characteristic of the last stage of capitalism's collapse. She claims to live only a notch or two above Bowery denizens, and she says that masses rather than puny individuals will determine the outcome. The phone rings: Fulvia's husband is detained in Rome.

In the snack bar, Persse tries to convince Bernadette to go home to her worried parents. She says that since she bore a baby out of wedlock, she cannot return. Persse barely remembers the skinny, shy, gap-toothed 13- or 14-year-old tomboy he had known. He mentions that he spoke with Uncle Milo. This brings out Bernadette's bitter memories of near-slavery in his dark old house, relieved only by an American professor who let her look at his dirty books and magazines. Milo beat her when he caught her. Baby Fergus is in London with foster parents while she saves money working as an itinerant stripper. She tells a shocked Persse that her best act is Marlene the Chambermaid. She remembers childhood times when Persse begged her to drop her drawers and cannot understand why grown men still want to look beneath her G-string. What is the fascination? Persse evades her with a question about the father of the baby. She will not give his name. He is a gloomy fellow whom she wishes she had never met. He tells her about Our Lady of the Knock Fund, should she ever want help going home. She passes but allows Persse to give her parents her love. Bernadette wanders off, and Persse consumes her untouched meal. Aer Lingus has no stand-by seats, so Persse rushes back to Cheryl's desk to see about a flight to Dublin. She seats him between two nuns.



Fulvia and Zapp eat dinner by candlelight then retire to the drawing room for coffee. Fulvia's posture fills Zapp with alarm and incredulity. She might seduce him. He returns to the question of UNESCO candidates. Tardieu's narratology, Zapp thinks, is passy. Von Turpitz looks like a Nazi. Tired of such talk, Fulvia walks over and strokes Zapp's crotch, asking if his penis is really 25 centimeters, as his wife's novel says. Zapp replies that a professional critic should know that novelists exaggerate. It is feminist propaganda. Fulvia wants to see for herself and digs into his clothing. What parts of the novel are true? The degradation? All the sadomasochism was Dysirye's invention. Novelists are liars. Fulvia announces it is time to go to bed and, losing patience, demands whether Zapp finds her attractive. Of course, he responds, but she is likely to be disappointed after what Dysirye has written. He is badly out of practice. Fulvia perseveres to arouse passion in Zapp, and then she leads him into her mirrored bedroom. She announces what she wants: to be tied up, gagged and ravished. He fumbles a bit, and she handcuffs him instead. Then she pulls down his shorts and announces that Dysirye has indeed exaggerated. A thud downstairs alarms Zapp, but Fulvia reassures him it is only her husband, whom she invites in Italian to come upstairs and join them. Ernesto is a man of the world, she says, flashing her Mona Lisa smile.

Having encountered a series of misfortunes cleaning and provisioning their run-down London apartment, Thelma carefully prepares to raise Howard's spirits in bed. Zapp's letter has depressed him, and he is watching television. Rejected as she strikes her sexiest pose in the doorway, Thelma makes up her mind to be unfaithful to her husband as soon as possible. Meanwhile, Persse is walking the sleepy Irish back roads wearing Zapp's deerslayer. In Australia, struggling to recover the impetus of his scholarly argument, Wainwright collapses like a defeat pole-vaulter just as Sandra Dix appears to ask about her assignment. In Japan, Sakazaki smiles at mistakes as he grades first-year English assignments. Soon he will go to the driving range for his weekly outing. He sees parallels in the drawbacks of both translation and golf.

In London, Frobisher has fallen asleep, bored, watching a police drama he wrote. At his feet lie more questions from Sakazaki. In Chicago, Kingfisher is watching a pornographic movie and working on an overdue book review while Song-Mi evacuates wax from his ear. The combination of stimuli arouses him, but it passes by the time Song-Mi unfastens her delicate, expensive kimono. In Helicon, NH, Dysirye talks by phone with Alice Kauffman, her massively obese New York agent. She converses quietly so her fellow writers won't learn she is blocked. Alice counsels her to treat herself to something - perhaps the tax-deductible conference in Germany to which von Turpitz has invited her. In his Black Forest house, von Turpitz sleeps on a twin bed beside his second wife, Bertha. Bertha wonders about the glove but knows her predecessor died of a heart attack after he once removed it. In France, Tardieu lies awake, vaguely troubled by Albert's woman-like fragrance. Borak in Turkey has fallen asleep just short of finishing *The Spirit of the Age*, and Oya sleeps beside him, oblivious. Philip and Hilary Swallow sleep back to back, unconsciously moving back to the margins of the sagging mattress whenever they touch.



Persse falls asleep in a haystack, watching a telecommunications satellite in the starry sky and quoting Keats to himself. He cancels the last verse about swooning to death, having no intention of departing without finding Angelica.

## Part 2, Chapter 2 Analysis

Life at the airport and sex dominate this chapter. The new character of Cheryl Summerbee ties the two together. She seats Fulvia and Zapp on a flight to Milan, supposing that they share academic interests (they are, in fact, intellectual enemies). Innocently, she does not expect them to fall into bed together. Their coming together allows an exploration of the novelist's freedom to twist and exaggerate - using Zapp's fictional and physical penises as a points of reference. It also allows the discussion of the irony of the rich and luxury-loving adhering to Marxism. At the airport, Persse finds his long-lost cousin, whose tale of woe he heard intimated in Rummidge. She is an unwed mother and stripper, the polar opposite of his repressed (albeit now Angelica-stained) character. Another trip through time zones adds detail to all the characters' general and sexual depiction. We pick up local color in several time zones and share the frustration of two novelists whose muse has abandoned them. How and why each grew literarily impotent, and how they both recover, will be explored later. Kingfisher is an even clearer symbol of impotency, unable to have an original thought or an erection, even when well-attended by his nubile young assistant. Neither Kingfisher's eventual resurrection nor the past even he knows nothing about at this point can be foreseen.

# Part 3, Chapter 1

## Part 3, Chapter 1 Summary

Two official-looking letters await Persse in Limerick. One is from Skinner, reminding him of the publisher's interest in his thesis, and the other is from the Royal Academy of Literature informing him his poetry has won a ?1,000 prize. It will be awarded in three weeks at a reception aboard the *Annabel Lee*. Flush with money, Persse immediately asks department chief Liam McCreedy for a sabbatical to study structuralism. McCreedy agrees to consider an unpaid leave of absence. Persse advises Skinner that his thesis will require extensive revision.

Zapp flees to the guestroom when it becomes clear that Ernesto expects attention along with Fulvia. In the morning, Ernesto has left for Rome, and Fulvia is coolly polite. A Villa Serbelloni limo picks Zapp up and delivers him to a much more comfortable environment. Zapp reflects on how publishing a single good book early in one's scholarly career leads to improvement in one's class load and assignments. This makes a second book possible, which leads to promotions and eventually tenure and a full professorship. At this point, one can be permanently absent on grants and fellowships. Zapp has not reached this omega point, but he is working on it. To those who have, more is given. There is mail waiting for Zapp. Wainwright apologizes for being late with his draft paper. Ringbaum inquires about the Jerusalem conference (their letters have crossed). Dysirye's lawyers demand tuition payment. All three go into the trash before Zapp types a letter to Kingfisher reminding him of previous meetings and requesting a copy of his Chicago lecture, which Zapp hears is excellent. Zapp recalls the adage that it is impossible to be excessive in flattering one's peers. He omits mention of UNESCO, however, as premature.

Dempsey returns to Darlington. He is bitter everything that has happened. Angelica's prank annoys him. Swallow has turned down his proposal to host the next UTE conference. His ex-wife is wasting the support money he sends on a no-good hippie boyfriend, and his children behaved badly when he took them to the mall. Unsurprisingly, Dempsey finds Josh Collins, the Senior Lecturer in Computing, working in the computer center. Collins even sleeps beside his machines. Collins announces the arrival of ELIZA, a program designed to let computers hold conversations in standard English with users. The psychiatrist-patient interview is the model for the discourse. Dempsey tries ELIZA out, typing a 15-minute confession about his miserable, depressing life.

Skinner needs a reader's report on Persse's thesis in order to move forward on publishing it. His shapely personal secretary, Gloria, suggests Philip Swallow. Skinner thinks Swallow might be prejudiced and names his old tutor, Rudyard Parkinson. Parkinson declines and suggests von Turpitz. Dictating the proposal to von Turpitz exhausts Skinner, and he takes Gloria to lunch. Parkinson complains to his postgraduate assistant at the cheek of some former students and orders him to make



arrangements for a flight to Vancouver, where Parkinson will receive an honorary degree.

Summer session is beginning at Oxford, and Swallow enjoys watching lusty young people miming copulation in the outdoors. *Ode on a Grecian Urn* comes into his head, and he turns from the window, still resolved not to repeat the mistake he made with Sandra Dix. Digby Soames of the British Council phones and asks Swallow to broaden his upcoming Turkish lectures to "Literature and History and Society and Philosophy and Psychology." Swallow promises to cobble something together. Soames salutes Swallow's pluck in going somewhere lacking coffee, sugar and toilet paper. Resisting the temptation to return to the window, Swallow phones Skinner to complain about lack of promotion on his book. Learning Skinner and his secretary are both at lunch, he asks that word be left to send Zapp a complimentary copy for review. Skinner is, in fact, back from lunch when the call arrives, but he has Gloria bent over a pile of boxes in the basement storeroom. As he thrusts towards orgasm, the boxes and Gloria tumble to the ground. To Skinner's surprise, they are filled with copies of *Hazlitt and the Amateur Reader*. No wonder Swallow has received no reviews!

Parkinson receives a review copy and a note from Skinner the day before flying to Vancouver. He is lukewarm until he happens upon a quote he thinks might prove useful in destroying Zapp. The flight and the degree ceremony are both miserable, but it puts him together with fellow honoree Jacques Textel of UNESCO. Textel fills Parkinson in on the details of the plum position that von Turpitz has been nagging him about. Textel is surprised that Parkinson is uninterested. He leaves for Peru before Parkinson realizes that recipients of such positions do not apply but are invited. Parkinson will have to launch a campaign of some sort to show his interest. He begins reading Swallow's book intently and formulates a comparison between its refreshing air and the pretensions of Zapp's work. The TLS review will be a clarion call for returning to timeless and universal human values.

Swallow departs for Turkey unusually flustered. He has been writing his lecture up to the last minute, and Hilary is sullen and uncooperative about helping him pack. He should have thought about laundry earlier, she snaps, stomping to the kitchen with a pile of underwear and socks. He always has a neurotic fear of being somewhere without enough to read, and so he packs many books. He goes through the mental checklist of things he needs but senses that something is missing. Hilary usually makes love to him before he travels, to relax his anxiety, but she grunts a refusal at him when he caresses her. He imagines how guilty she will feel if his plane crashes. What he has seen about Turkish women suggests that he will find no adventure there. Shortly before 5:30 a.m., he falls asleep, fantasizing about rescuing Angelica from Turkish terrorists and being rewarded with sex.

Philip stumbles through getting ready in half an hour with Hilary still doing nothing to assist him. He remembers the forgotten item: toilet paper. Hilary says that they are out and tells him to take whatever is left on the current roll. The taxi arrives with Philip still stomping about in frustration, and he slams his way out with an angry good-bye. Hilary, grinning, follows him down the path in her nightie with an armful of laundry. Hilary



expects a perfunctory peck on the cheek. However, Philip catches a glimpse of her breast and remembers the first time he wrestled it out of her Maidenform bra 25 years ago. He remembers the entrancement of their wedding night and the thousands of times he enjoyed her breasts before they drifted apart. Philip wants to jump back into bed with Hilary rather than fly to Turkey, but he cannot. He gives her an enthusiastic kiss that leaves her looking quizzical as the taxi pulls away.

Within hours of Swallow flying out of Heathrow for Ankara, Persse flies in from Shannon, on the eve of the award presentation party. The refurbished *Annabel Lee* pleasure steamer, moored in the Thames estuary at Charing Cross Embarkment, is hailed with delight by the London literati. Persse quickly learns that the goal of such events is to get drunk as quickly as possible and talk at the top of your voice while smiling and waving. He orders a Guinness. A fleshy, pock-marked man in horn-rimmed glasses taps him on the shoulder, sees what he is drinking and drags over a case. He introduces himself. He is Frobisher, here to present an award. He rues the proliferation of prizes. Skinner spots Persse and comes over, accompanied by his honey-haired companion, Gloria, who complains of feeling seasick. Skinner introduces the Ringbaums and in private confides that Howard is a bore and Thelma a nymphomaniac. Persse gets the point when Thelma glues herself to him and asks him to write a poem about her. Skinner apologizes for Gloria's delay in telling Persse about the negative report they received on his project. Parkinson is at the moment on stage making smirking remarks about the recipient of the biography award he is delivering. Skinner cannot betray the confidence of who reviewed Persse's project. If the man is here, Persse declares, he wants to fight him. Skinner nervously laughs him off.

Frobisher takes the stage as Parkinson finishes, pleased with his performance and praised by Skinner and Ringbaum. Thelma is enthralled with seeing Frobisher, whose book she has been reading. Parkinson remarks that Frobisher has not published anything recently. He dismisses Frobisher's television success and ignores someone who wants to listen to the speaker's words. Skinner asks whether Parkinson has received the Swallow volume, and Parkinson says he is submitting a review of it and another title to TLS. Persse pushes his way through to claim his prize, still holding a Guinness. Angelica, not Guinness, is his inspiration, Persse declares as the program moves forward.

Frobisher and Parkinson are in an angry confrontation. Skinner is trying to keep them apart, and Thelma is hoping for a fight. Frobisher has never forgiven Parkinson for a review eight years ago. Persse throws himself into the fight on Frobisher's side, and the two find themselves expelled from the reception. Frobisher vows to scare the shit out of the literati and disappears down the bank. Aboard the *Annabel Lee*, Parkinson is vowing to get Frobisher expelled from the Academy. Thelma is the first to realize that the boat is slowly drifting down the Thames. Persse suggests that Frobisher has gone too far. The author explains that the pompous bastard Parkinson had been his tutor at Oxford, and he introduced him to his working-class parents at graduation. His nervous Dad coughed out his false teeth, horrifying Parkinson, who included a swipe at badly fitting dentures in his review of a novel that does not mention dentures. Frobisher cannot forgive that act of spite. He waves to Gloria, who sprawls white-faced across a rail and waves back.



When the line Frobisher is certain from boating experience will hold snaps, he suggests they go somewhere else for a drink. At 9 p.m. he is supposed to be at the BBC for a radio interview with someone in Australia. Fortunately, there are technical difficulties, so Frobisher's tardiness is not noticed. Persse thinks Frobisher is handling himself well, dealing with an Australian nitwit named Wainwright. When the broadcast ends, the Australian engineer neglects to close the circuit, and the Britons eavesdrop on bawdy talk about topless women and Frobisher's ignorance about postmodernism. Frobisher flips a switch and tells Wainwright where to ram it.

In Turkey, Borak comes home after a hard day and has sex with Oya, briefly and straightforwardly, as he does almost every night for the pleasure and health benefits. She will not let him fall asleep without telling her about Swallow. He is a nice man, but he seems nervous. Swallow trips on a pothole coming out of the airport. The British Agency man drives him to Antikabir to lay a wreath at Ataturk's tomb as an international gesture and jokingly warns since it is a capital offense to show disrespect there, Swallow should do precisely as he does. Unfortunately, he trips and falls flat on his face. Before Borak can stop him, Swallow prostrates himself, to the guards' glee. Swallow must be a man of great learning, because he is lecturing on "Literature and History and Society and Philosophy and Psychology." The telex requesting something broader than Hazlitt or Jane Austen - "Literature and History, or Literature and Society, or Literature and Philosophy ..." got garbled. Oya feels sorry for Swallow, but Borak says they took him for a nice kabob dinner and talks about Hull. The power fails, so they sleep.

Frobisher complains to Persse that Wainwright and Parkinson are right. He has been blocked on a novel for six years. He has been adapting his novels and others' for television successfully because he can still do dialogue. In fiction, however, one has to tie the characters together with narrative. Frobisher mourns that he once had style but lost faith in it six years ago during a trip to Darlington to receive an honorary degree from its new university.

After an awful lunch at Darlington, Frobisher is grabbed by Dempsey, who is eager to show him his Centre for Computational Stylistics. Looking like Frankenstein or a wizard, Dempsey shows Frobisher his collected works recorded on tape. With it, Dempsey can parse Frobisher's idiolect - the way he uses English - to show favorite lexical words in context. Frobisher is flabbergasted to learn that his most-used root is "grease." His favorite body parts are "hand" and "breast," usually connected. Male characters simply "say" things, while females sigh, whisper and gasp. Males have brown eyes and say "bugger." Women have biblical names and fall in love. He ends chapters with short, moodless sentences. Dempsey provides a souvenir print-out. Thereafter, everything Frobisher writes seems predictable and mechanical. Persse declares this a truly sad story, and Frobisher pulls him off to Soho to cheer up. Meanwhile, in the computer center, ELIZA asks Dempsey about his research, and he types for an hour.

Persse has never seen any place as blatantly sexual as Soho. Frobisher agrees. The quaint old shops and bars are all gone, and the pornography shops turn over continually. *Club Exotica* displays photographs of its performers, including one that looks like Angelica - identified as "Lily." Persse feels faint. Frobisher, grumbling, follows





Persse inside. He can just write nude scenes into television scripts if he wants to see that. Various acts appear, but no Angelica. Even when Lily from the poster takes the stage, it is not Angelica. Persse, not sure whether he is disappointed or relieved, notes that this act shows familiarity with the Andromeda archetype, although the ending is ruined by having lesbian sex rather than violence visited on the captive. Frobisher too is impressed. The owner tells Persse that Lilly Papps has left. She is an educated woman, working on her Ph.D. She invented the dragon performance. Persse confirms to Frobisher that he intends to track her down and save her from this life, for her own sake. Persse's heart recoils from the thought of Angelica stripping for money, but it is not as irredeemable a degradation as Bernadette's.

Swallow awakens with diarrhea while the power is still out. He stubs his toes stumbling towards the bathroom and makes it in time to void his liquefied bowels. It must have been the kebab, he reasons. As he wipes with the makeshift paper he snatches from his briefcase, the electricity comes back on, and he is horrified to see that he is five pages into "The Legacy of Hazlitt."

## Part 3, Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter sends Swallow off to Turkey after a tense domestic stand-off with Hilary yields to a revival of ancient passion. His arrival is marred by comic situations that make his host suspect that Swallow is a very odd person. The readers learn how years ago Parkinson inflicted a psychological wound on Frobisher through an unfair book review. Dempsey's application of computer technology to literary criticism then provides the *coup de grace* that brings on six years of writer's block. The novel requires writers to feel a narrative rhythm, which is not necessary to crank out dialogue for television scripts, so Frobisher is surviving through writing scripts. A more dire form of blockage faces the Australian Wainwright and will trail him all the way to the podium in Jerusalem.

Persse sets off to use his \$1,000 poetry award on a quest for fallen but redeemable Angelica, a.k.a. Lily Papps. A companion observes that this is an excellent porn name, not knowing that it is Angelica's twin's real name, anglicized. Remember when reading about the computer center that in 1984 ELIZA and other technologies depicted would not have seemed so quaint and primitive.



## Part 3, Chapter 2

### Part 3, Chapter 2 Summary

Persse awakens hung-over in the YMCA, wondering what to do next about Angelica. The *Guardian* announces "London Literati Adrift," and the *Times Literary Supplement* headlines "Rudyard Parkinson on the English School of Criticism." Club Erotic has already changed hands and name, and it is undergoing remodeling. Persse asks around, learns Lily works for Girls Unlimited in Soho and heads there. Mrs. Gasgoine will say only that Lily is a versatile employee and has been suddenly transferred elsewhere. She declines to help him get in contact, as her girls are often avoiding detection. Persse books a flight to Amsterdam to look for Angelica's adoptive father.

In Amsterdam, Persse runs into Zapp, who is surprised to see him at the VIIIth International Conference of Literary Semioticians. Persse says he is on a holiday and asks whether Angelica is attending. Zapp cannot say for sure because there are many attendees. Earlier, Persse learns from KLM only that Hermann Pabst left for a job in America in 1961. He wonders how long his \$1,000 will last at this rate. Zapp seems to know the city already and takes Persse to the *rosse buurt*, which makes Soho look like kindergarten. Zapp cares only about hearing von Turpitz's paper on reception theory, to reassure himself about his chief rival for the UNESCO chair. After an Indonesian lunch, Persse accompanies Zapp to the lectures. Miss Maiden taps his shoulder and begins talking about the museums. The first talk begins and puts Persse to sleep.

A thunderclap awakens Persse, and he hears a heavy German accent speaking. Seeing von Turpitz's signature black glove, Persse pinches Zapp to wake him up. Zapp orders Fulvia to knock it off. Persse says he too has been asleep, but he likes what he has heard - because he wrote it! There is more thunder, and the lights go out, causing gasps. Von Turpitz lectures relentlessly on. At the conclusion, the chairman asks for questions. Persse stands and asks whether von Turpitz has recently read a book about T. S. Eliot and Shakespeare that is being proposed for publication. The chairman rules the question out of order since Persse is not enrolled at the conference, but Persse persists, insisting he has been plagiarized. As a registered participant, Zapp restates Persse's question and murmurs of "shame" are heard. Zapp begins yelling in German and pointing with his black finger, and Zapp removes Persse to share a drink.

Zapp asks to read Persse's TLS, but Persse tries to dissuade him because of Parkinson's negative review. It praises Swallow's book until the end, when it turns on American scholarship. It is nothing more than a play for the UNESCO chair. Zapp pockets the TLS and begins planning how he can make some cracks at Parkinson during his program tomorrow. Leathery Tardieu tells Persse about a T. S. Eliot conference in Switzerland later in the summer. Persse excuses himself and walks around Amsterdam. He thinks he sees Angelica on a bridge, but she disappears.



That evening Zapp takes Persse into the red light district, and it overwhelms him. Pretty, young prostitutes knit while frankly displaying themselves in store windows, waiting for customers. Walking along the crowded, erotic streets, Persse sees Angelica painting her nails in a house with a red door bearing the number 13. Persse stumbles through the crowds in a daze and is struck by a car. Zapp pulls him out of the roadway. Persse practices sarcasms to use on Angelica. How could she leave Rummidge without giving him a kiss but open her legs here for paying customers? Will she offer a UTE discount? When he reaches Number 13 and finds the curtain closed, meaning a customer is being served, Persse feels sick and numb. When the door opens, Persse recognizes Tardieu's companion, and the lady is Eurasian. Lily had been babysitting her window and now is gone, working at the Blue Heaven cabaret. Believing Angelica might be innocent, Persse runs to the Blue Heaven. He cannot approve of her appearing in nude shows, but it does not fundamentally change his feelings for her. Racing up to the queue, Persse sees a nude poster of Angelica being mounted from the rear. Persse walks slowly away.

Like any jilted lover, Persse drinks himself insensible, and in the morning he books a flight to London. There, he pays extra for a Club class flight to Shannon and finds St. George Chapel to fill the two-hour wait. He rips down and destroys his earlier petition about finding Angelica. He replaces it with a prayer for him to *forget* Angelica and for her to be led from her degrading life. En route to Ireland, Persse realizes that the three flight attendants are alarmed about something. The captain comes on the intercom to announce that there will be an emergency landing. The crew gives evacuation instructions. Small screams and pious ejaculations are heard in the cabin. The chief stewardess asks if there is a priest aboard to lead them in the Act of Contrition. There is not even a single nun. After a brief argument about who should stand in for the clergy, stewardess Brigid O'Toole begins. Forgetting the words, she recites the only thing she can think of, "For what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us truly thankful." Persse is still laughing at this when they exit the plane after a safe landing. He goes to the Irish Tourist Board desk to rent a cottage in Connemara, where he will write poetry in isolation like Yeats. He figures it will not hurt to apply for an American Express card.

Swallow settles his hotel bill in Ankara, ready to move on to Istanbul by train. Borak has been very helpful and knowledgeable. He has annoyed Swallow, however, by referring to "Bill Hazlitt," as though he were a personal friend. Other Turks have proved friendly and hospitable, entertaining him beyond their means and imbibing liberally at British Council receptions. Swallow, however, feels lonely and depressed, beyond the usual travel malaise. *Why am I here?* fills his mind as he waits for some long-winded introduction to finish, as he fingers the pages of his hastily rewritten speech and during times alone in his hotel room. These times alone are rare because Borak is determined for him to see every sight in the dull city. Foreign music, foreign speech and noisy traffic contribute to his depression. He realizes how much time, money and fossil fuel has gone into sending him to Turkey, and the taxing of the budgets and digestions of the academics trying to entertain him here all upset him even more. Riding through the heavily patrolled, decrepit streets, Swallow understands the pragmatism of young Turks studying English only to land a job in the civil service or an airline. What good will Hazlitt do them?



The train will not leave for several hours, so Swallow accepts an invitation to a buffet supper at the British Office cultural affairs director's apartment. The Boraks are also invited, in order not to offend him. Swallow wonders how different this trip would feel were he not bothered by the surprisingly touching parting with his wife. Sex with Hilary is not particularly erotic, but it is better than nothing. Nothing is what Turkey offers him sexually. The unfamiliar streets seem threatening, and Swallow is tempted to abandon his quest for intensity of experience and settle for domesticity and academic routine until he is ready to retire. Entering the party and seeing Joy Simpson, Swallow stumbles and nearly falls.

Akbil and Oya have been talking to the shapely, reserved British Council librarian visiting from Istanbul. (Akbil wonders whether women like Joy have blond pubic hair as well.) Akbil rushes to Swallow's assistance as he recovers and approaches Joy uncertainly. They explain, discretely, to Oya how they met years ago. Swallow had thought she perished with her family in a plane crash. She had been eight months pregnant, and her doctor forbade her to accompany her husband to India. Oya weeps over the tragedy but claps joyously over the fairy story of Joy's survival. Swallow agrees, though he is still pale with shock. Joy is in Ankara on library business for several days. Swallow will lecture several days in Istanbul and then fly home. Oya senses that the two want to be alone and drags an amazed Akbil away.

Three hours later, Swallow is pacing the railroad platform in a scene reminiscent of 1930s thriller films. Nursing peasant mothers, caravans of porters and pacing officials all move through clouds of smoke and steam. Second- and third-class cars are already packed with humanity, but first-class, where Swallow has a berth, is more relaxed. Swallow has shed Borak and Custer, and he waits expectantly for Joy. In a brief moment alone, Swallow manages to tell Joy that he loves her. She finds this ridiculous. Then, Mrs. Custer swoops in. They explain that they have met previously in Genoa, and Swallow tells their hostess that Gerard, Joy's child, has fallen ill and needs his mother. Joy plays along, but she is still noncommittal. They act formally for the rest of the evening and part with a handshake, but Swallow gives Joy an imploring look at the door. At the station, his depression has lifted at the thought that Joy lives. His life is not finished. Obstacles and pain may well await him with Hilary and his career, Swallow realizes. Still, he wills Joy to appear. A conductor wrestles with Swallow as he leaps through the door towards Joy, but the official relents upon payment of a substantial bribe. Both board the train. Joy has a ticket but no berth. Swallow invites her to share his.

Swallow and Joy make awkward but rapturous love on the narrow bunk bed as the train rattles across Turkey. It is her first time since her husband's death, and she has often felt guilty about that night in Genoa, when nothing she could do could cool the lust she felt for Swallow. She had felt like a driver hurtling through traffic, knowing the slightest inattention by fellow motorists could lead to oblivion. Joy had swerved into life rather than death. She and John, both graduate students, had come to marriage sexually inexperienced and never discussed their feelings. John had been kind and faithful, but the passion that novels and magazines suggest had been sadly missing. After a second round of love-making, Joy continues her monologue. Joy had felt Swallow's passion for



her and had been amazed at John's oblivion. She had been so confident of her own virtue that she allowed John to leave them alone. Swallow's shaking had made the nuclear pile of her desire go critical. Swallow recalls feeling like a man brought back from the dead and wanting her to heal him.

Holding hands beneath the table in the dining car in the morning, Joy wonders why Swallow never contacted her. She had been cold in the morning, so he figured she would not welcome it. Then, the papers reported her death. He had not seen the published correction. For her part, she had looked up his biography, so she knew he was married. After she was widowed, Joy had not wanted to interfere in Swallow's marriage, so she did not write him. The memory of Hilary's breast has been eclipsed by Joy's long-remembered nipples, and he declares Hilary will be better off on her own.

In a battered taxi, Swallow admires a skyline that reminds him of San Francisco as viewed from Euphoria. Joy suggests they take a ferry ride up the Bosphorus to her home in Bogazici as the best way of getting acquainted with Istanbul. Joy thinks that it is not a good idea for Swallow to stay with her. There is a hotel nearby where she can visit him. When he objects that he wants to awaken in her arms, Joy tells him he cannot have everything he wants. At Joy's apartment, the children are excited and surprised to see her. Swallow recognizes Gerard and finds three-year-old Miranda strangely familiar looking. Joy tells him he is Miranda's father.

Four days later, flying over the Alps, Swallow still cannot get over having an unknown daughter that looks like him. Joy had lied about being on the pill. She and John had been trying to get pregnant, and Joy was afraid Swallow would stop, if she told the truth. As soon as she sees the baby's eyes, Joy knows who the father is. She does not contact him because she knows he would divorce Hilary and marry her. Swallow insists he still will do that. She tells him when she heard he was coming to Turkey, she arranged her schedule to avoid him but miscalculated by a few hours. Fate, Swallow declares. She agrees. That is why she had come to the train station. Back at Heathrow, Swallow daydreams about the sights of Istanbul and intimate moments with Joy. She has reassured him about the difference in age, saying he makes her feel desirable, which is all that matters.

Swallow is surprised and disconcerted to be met by Hilary rather than being left to take a taxi home. He had planned to use that time to decide how to break the news to her. Hilary kisses her husband enthusiastically and announces that exciting things have happened. Swallow has received a glowing review in TLS. It cannot have been through Zapp's intervention, because Parkinson savaged Zapp in the same article. The *Sunday Times* and the *Observer* have requested headshots to accompany their reviews. In addition, Hilary has had a preliminary interview for training in marriage guidance. She cannot wait to start, figuring their ups and downs will be useful. Swallow shows little enthusiasm and says what he had to tell her is nothing.



## Part 3, Chapter 2 Analysis

Part 3 ends with Persse beginning his international quest for Angelica, flying to Amsterdam because the only hard data he has is that her adoptive father is a KLM executive. In Amsterdam, Persse adds only one new fact. Hermann Pabst has moved on to Los Angeles. Otherwise, he draws a predictable blank, as Angelica's agency refuses to say where she might currently be working. Persse has one victory in Amsterdam. Attending a lecture at the international convention, he exposes one of the literary big wigs for stealing his ideas from a manuscript being considered for publication.

As the unofficial competition for the UNESCO chair heats up (it is still only a rumor) the rivals are lashing out, and it falls to a neophyte to call them back to honor. It does Persse no immediate good. Long-range, he will receive a second, positive review, though. Finally, he retreats to write poetry.

Meanwhile, in Turkey, Swallow is shocked to find Joy, his one-night-stand tragically killed years ago, alive and well and raising his daughter. Having left England uncharacteristically attracted to his wife, Swallow returns determined to divorce her to marry Joy. However, he finds his professional fortunes improving, and Hilary is excited about a career in marriage counseling. Two strands have been laid out for development in Part 4.



# Part 4, Chapter 1

## Part 4, Chapter 1 Summary

For some people, few things are as exciting as the sound, feel and sight of an airliner's take-off. In June, conference season is well under way as university teachers are freed from academic responsibilities, write papers on some subject and combine work and play on the conference circuit. The traveling scholars imbibe and share information about the various airlines and airports, highjackings, accidents, groundings and all matters of language and custom in various cities around the world. People of every color and nation meet at these conferences devoted to every discipline imaginable. Academic subject groups are self-defining, exclusive entities, each speaking its own jargon, publishing its own journal and organizing its own conferences. What unites them is the tedium of their formal programs and the attendees' devotion to having fun. Some scholars, like Zapp, are versatile enough to get invited to address many conferences in a single summer. This summer, everyone is talking about the UNESCO chair. What literary theory will be favored, and ultimately, who will get the position?

Sy Gootblatt is standing at the bar in the James Joyce Pub, a genuine Dublin establishment moved to the city where the great author wrote and died. Gootblatt is Zapp's former colleague at Euphoria and now a professor of literary theory at Penn State. He is surprised to hear Zapp proclaim Swallow a candidate for the chair. Parkinson's rave review of his brainless book has given a boost to his career. Gootblatt cannot believe Kingfisher will recommend someone hostile to his own views on literary theory, but Zapp fears a declining Kingfisher may want a schmo like Swallow to fill the post. Zapp is depressed about being panned in the same review and about the heckling he received in Amsterdam over his vaginal theories. Persse, to whom he might have looked for support, has suddenly disappeared. Then, doubtless meaning to cause him anxiety, Ringbaum sent Zapp a copy of a newspaper item about Swallow and the UNESCO chair. Few know that Textel, having misconstrued Parkinson's behavior in Vancouver, his fawning letter and a glowing paragraph about Swallow in his review, has leaked his name. Reading about this in the *Sunday Times*, Parkinson chokes on his breakfast. Zapp and Gootblatt leave the bar, which is in the middle of the red light quarter. Zapp that knows no one at a conference pays for sex. Conferees, thrown together in exotic surroundings over drink, shed their inhibitions and end up in bed with people who may well be intellectual adversaries.

Several weeks after the International James Joyce Symposium in Z'rich, Fulvia and Gootblatt find themselves in bed in Vienna. Only after a demanding night of sexual effort does he learn her last name. Then, he realizes she is the raving Marxist poststructuralist he trashed in a review scheduled to appear in the next issue of *Novel*. He ducks people he knows while escorting her around town and endures her tirades on revolution. In Heidelberg, Dysirye and Frobisher, as the only two creative writers, find adultery thrust upon them. Both are intimidated by the jargon and both deliver papers that disappoint the academics. Conference organizer von Turpitz, who might have been expected to



entertain them, decides early on that the event is a failure and arranges business in another city. Dysirye and Frobisher talk to each other about money, publishers, agents, sales and subsidiary rights, and they find themselves having sex like the characters in their books inevitably would. Neither is anxious for it, but neither wants to appear timid either. Each assumes the other's libido is stronger than it is. One thing troubles both as they prepare to go to bed, that the other will one day write this into a novel.

Hilary Swallow's drier makes a noise not unlike a jet engine, but she does not make the connection, since she travels far less than her husband. He has already set off for Greece, having stayed home just long enough for her to wash his dirty laundry. His story of owing it to the British Council to step in for a last-minute cancellation is far from the truth. He is meeting Joy, from whom he cannot bear to be separated until the Jerusalem conference in August. At the Acropolis in Athens, Joy asks whether Hilary will divorce Swallow. He has not yet asked. He says it would be cruel to bring it up, since she is preparing to be a marriage counselor. He is sure that Hilary will happily agree once she is established in her new profession. Then they can marry. He might get a job with UNESCO, which can be performed from anywhere in the world.

In Darlington, Dempsey has read the papers and is "talking" with ELIZA about his anger and jealousy towards Swallow. He is cold when Collins interrupts him and suggests he is treating the computer like an oracle. Dempsey is flustered when he leaves for lunch, and he fails to switch off the monitor, allowing Collins to snoop.

In Delphi, Joy resists Swallow's attempts at public affection, just as Sybil Maiden appears, tired and overheated by the climb. She is here attending a conference on Literature, Life and Thought in Ancient Greece. She takes Joy for Swallow's wife, which he affirms and she denies. He admits that his personal life is in transition and begs her not to mention this meeting to anyone. She remarks that recent newspaper coverage must make him cautious about his reputation. It was on everyone's lips in Amsterdam. Joy observes that Miss Maiden travels a great deal. It keeps her young and in touch with scholarship, she replies. The most surprising candidate always gets positions like the UNESCO chair, she declares, before returning to her air conditioned hotel room. Joy tells Swallow he could be the most surprising person.

In Darlington, summer students are enjoying a fine evening while two men labor in the computer center. Dempsey and ELIZA are in dialogue about Swallow's rotten book on Hazlitt and how it may earn him the UNESCO chair. ELIZA does not agree that his appointment would be preposterous. Dempsey sits transfixed for a long while at ELIZA expressing an opinion. Finally, he asks what ELIZA knows about it. "More than you think," is the answer. Dempsey demands to know who will get the job and feels vindicated when the clever computer does not respond. Then, he realizes he did not end his question. When he does, "Philip Swallow" appears immediately on screen, and Dempsey falls ashen-faced from his chair. Collins watches Dempsey stagger from the building and smiles to himself.

After Z'rich, Zapp returns to his luxurious home on Lake Como where he receives messages from Dysirye, her lawyer and his own lawyer about the twins' tuition. She is in





Europe and threatens to come make his life miserable in person. Wainwright cables from Australia, asking another extension on his deadline. Zapp tells him to just bring it with him to Jerusalem. There is also a note from Swallow, accepting the invitation to the conference and asking to bring a "friend" along. The friend is Joy, whose story he had told Zapp. She is not dead. They are madly in love. Hilary does not know, and Jerusalem is a perfect place for them to get together. Zapp is disgusted at such gushing from a 50-year-old. Love is an illusion, and Swallow is swooning like a teenager. Zapp is also unhappy about having to collude against Hilary. Finally, Zapp receives a letter from Kingfisher along with a photocopy of his Chicago keynote address. Zapp invites Kingfisher to Jerusalem, hoping to cajole the old man into giving him the UNESCO chair. He plays up the Jewish angle of the locale, invites him to bring a guest (knowing about Song-Mi but not mentioning this) and tempts him with a Concord ticket for the transatlantic leg of the trip (thanks to the largess of Pricewize's Zionist chairman). Zapp changes into his jogging clothes and sets out on his usual mile-long route through the woods. As he rests against a tree, everything goes black.

## Part 4, Chapter 1 Analysis

*"Wheeeeeeeee!"* as a reaction to travel is a keyword throughout Part 4. Chapter 1 deals with sex at conferences, examining trysts between several couples. Dempsey is jealous as ever over Swallow's success, and he is perplexed to find that ELIZA has inside information about the UNESCO position. Dempsey's assistant accuses him of treating the computer like an oracle, and instantly the novel shifts to Delphi, Greece, home of the ancient oracle.

Swallow has arranged to meet Joy in Greece and is putting Zapp, his old friend and Hilary's former lover, in a difficult position as an accessory to their next clandestine meeting in Jerusalem. Dysirye and Frobisher's affair is cast amusingly as an inevitable part of their being literary outsiders and possible only when they agree not to use the experience professionally in their fiction. Their writers' block is soon to disappear. His will be resolved by the obvious expediency of shared sex, but hers requires a catharsis. That Dysirye is in Europe and threatening trouble when Zapp suddenly passes out jogging suggests that they must somehow interact. Zapp smokes cigars and is not in excellent shape, we recall, but something more ominous is suggested by the statement that he takes the same path every day.



## Part 4, Chapter 2

### Part 4, Chapter 2 Summary

Every summer, Persse tutors a course at the Celtic Twilight Summer School, including a pilgrimage to W. B. Yeats's famous Lake Isle of Innisfree. His generally overweight American charges are concerned about the weathered row boats that will take them across, but Persse is more concerned with the sky. Mr. Maxwell, a teacher at a small Baptist college in the Deep South is particularly worried, because he cannot swim. Nor can Mrs. Finklepearl. The rowers, hardly disinterested financially, reassure Persse that three boats will suffice, and they set off, low in the water because of the weight. Just past halfway, the sun disappears, and the lake grows choppy, eliciting cries of distress. Two boats pull ahead of Persse's, which is foundering. Maxwell clings to Persse's arm in a panic. He cannot afford to die now, in a state of sin over a girl named Bernadette whom he impregnated several years ago. When the boat finally sinks, they discover that they are in but two feet of water atop a sandbar, and Persse threatens to drown Maxwell for ruining his cousin's life. Maxwell promises to marry her, but Persse is sure she will not have such a loser. He will make monetary restitution, he says. Tomorrow they will have a lawyer write a contract, and Persse will deliver it to Bernadette.

Persse receives a 24-hour leave from the program to find Bernadette and deliver the legal promise. Girls Unlimited has vanished from Soho, and Persse returns frustrated over Bernadette and freshly reminded of Angelica. God has not allowed him to forget her, denying the prayer on the St. George bulletin board. He returns to the chapel and finds his notice, freshly annotated in a minute hand: "*Appearances can be misleading. Vide F.Q. II. xii. 66.*" Persse snatches up the card and runs through the airport's bookstalls hunting for a copy of *The Faerie Queene*. Cheryl Summerbee calls out to him as he passes her British Airways Information booth. She tries to make conversation but fails because he is so preoccupied, and she surprises him by producing the long poem from beneath the counter. Cheryl has outgrown romance novels. As Persse searches for the passage Angelica has indicated, Cheryl talks knowingly about romance as a pre-novelistic kind of narrative. Persse finds the stanza about the "wanton Maidens" and finds the key words: "two lily paps aloft displayed." He takes the passage to mean that Lily and Angelica must be two girls, one modest and one bold. He kisses and blesses Cheryl for her help as she speaks on. He realizes how astonishing her knowledge is, and he learns she has borrowed the information from Northrop Frye, whose book was suggested to her by a pretty passenger she engaged in conversation. When Persse guesses that the passenger's name is Pabst, Cheryl is amazed. She flew to Geneva and on to Lausanne just the other day. Cheryl turns pale and a tear rolls down her cheek when Persse announces that he not only knows the woman but also loves her. Nevertheless, she books Persse on Swissair's next flight to Geneva.

Persse would not have made the flight had he not gotten an American Express card. It speeds everything up, and he is living off it lately. He takes a night train to Lausanne. He decides to walk around the city because that will give him the best chance of spotting



Angelica or being spotted by her. Persse is at a loss in the bustling, multi-lingual city, where everyone seems to be dressed in World War I-era costumes and behaving oddly. At the crowded English Pub he meets Tardieu, who explains that this is street theater, part of the triennial T. S. Eliot International Conference, held in Lausanne because the author wrote the first draft of *The Waste Land* here in 1921-2. Conferees have joined local students in playing roles. He points out Fulvia Morgana and Gootblatt. Persse asks if Zapp is there. He is not.

Persse confides that he is looking for a girl, and he is dismayed to learn that the conference has just ended. Angelica was Tardieu's part-time graduate student at the Sorbonne. She wrote nothing in her notebook, saying she was recording his profound silences. Tonight Angelica played the Hyacinth girl, and he last saw her wandering the street, looking charming and overripe with feminine beauty. She has been staying at the *Pension Bellegarde*, and Tardieu directs Persse there. Persse panics at the realization that he does not know what he will say to her. Announcing that he has played his narrative role tonight, Tardieu departs with a declaration of his opposition to Zapp receiving the UNESCO chair. The landlady informs Persse that Angelica has departed for Geneva. He sprints to the station, but he just misses the last train, on which he is certain he sees Angelica's dark hair. He returns to the boarding house to spend the night in her room. It is rich with the scent of hyacinths and Angela's shampoo. He finds prints on discarded tissue, where she blotted her lipstick, and he sleeps in a delirium of sweet sensation mixed with regret and exhaustion.

In the morning, Persse finds a scrap of paper with a phone number and "TAA 426 Dep. 22.50 arr 06.20" in Angelica's handwriting. He dials the number and learns that this designates a flight to Los Angeles via New York. It has been postponed and will depart in one hour. Persse books a seat and pays a taxi driver handsomely to get him to the airport on time. The Amex card again allows Persse to expedite matters. He obtains a seat beside Angelica, and he is picturing their surprise reunion when he is informed that he cannot fly to the U.S. without a visa. The ticket is torn up.

## Part 4, Chapter 2 Analysis

This chapter combines literary and mystery elements. It opens with Persse leading teachers on a pilgrimage into W. B. Yeats's territory. He happens to run into the man who has impregnated Cousin Bernadette. Guilt over sex, which we have seen to run strongly in Persse, is strong in the seducer as well. Persse strong-arms him into providing financial support for Bernadette. Delivering the news to his cousin sets Persse back in motion, and his failure to find Bernadette resurrects his longing for Angelica. In the airport chapel, he finds a note from Angelica suggesting that he has misunderstood her situation and giving him a mysterious literary clue. Persse is again helped by British Airway's outgoing and suddenly, surprisingly erudite Cheryl, but Persse is blind to the fact that she has fallen for him. Persse's search for Angelica in Switzerland, in another literary setting, fails, and he is thwarted from reuniting en route to the U.S. by immigration laws. Persse has been so lucky picking up Angelica's trail this time and has so convinced himself that they will meet on the plane (running through several

scenarios in his head) that the visa problem comes as a surprise. The quest strand will go on, as must the matter of the UNESCO appointment, for which the scholars are growing touchier all the while.



## Part 4, Chapter 3

### Part 4, Chapter 3 Summary

In late July, conference-bound academics compete with other tourists for space on airlines. A week after the debacle in Geneva, Persse has a U.S. visa and a seat on low-cost Skytrain bound for Los Angeles. He is, apparently, the only person in the world who has not heard that the DC-10 fleet has been grounded. He has to rebook at greater cost on Braniff. He freezes on the Boeing 747 and bakes at the stop-over in Dallas/Fort Worth. Southern California is refreshing as he boards a free shuttle bus to the Beverly Hills Hotel, which he discovers is staggeringly expensive. In the Los Angeles phonebook he finds 27 Pabst entries, but none of them are Hermann.

Zapp's non-appearance in Vienna has occasioned little interest, because people often fail to show up, but he is missed in Bellagio when he fails to return from his run. The police retrieve his letter to Kingfisher from the mailbox and confiscate it as evidence. He therefore never learns of Zapp's invitation to Jerusalem. Vacationing in Nice, Dysirye is told that there has been an anonymous phone call. Her ex-husband - she makes it very clear that they are divorced and that she is now Ms. Byrd - has been kidnapped, and the perpetrators are demanding \$1 million in ransom. The young man on the phone reminds her that she has received a \$500,000 advance on film rights to *Difficult Days*. She tells him angrily that she has no intention of using the money to get Zapp off the hook. A second, heavily accented voice calls back.

Persse's Amex bill is growing at a worrisome rate. He phones all of the Pabsts in the book. Then, he phones the airline executive offices, asking for a Pabst. Transamerican has one, but the secretary says that he is in a meeting and that he will fly to Washington, DC afterward. Persse explains that he has flown all the way from Ireland to see Mr. Pabst, and it is an emergency concerning his daughter. When he names Angelica and Lily, he is given a few minutes at the airport.

Zapp hears the phone ringing in the room next to the one where he sits blindfolded. It sounds like they are outside the city, and it is cool enough to be in the mountains. He has been drugged, blindfolded and warned that if he sees his captors' faces, they will be obliged to kill him. Zapp lies on his narrow bunk bed cycling through rage, self-pity and fear. At first he is worried about his conference, but as days pass he is concerned only about his life. Phone calls bring hope of movie-like rescue, but Zapp does not understand Italian. One kidnapper, Carlo, speaks English, and Zapp gathers that he has been taken not by the Mafia or a UNESCO rival like von Turpitz, but by left-wing extremists bent on funding future projects. Somehow they put the daily jogger together with author Dysirye Byrd, whom *Time* reports has earned \$2 million for *Difficult Days*. They are dismayed to learn that she may not care about whether he dies. That was a joke on Day Two, but it is no longer funny on Day Five. Carlo confirms that she is a tough bitch, willing to pay them to keep Zapp. They will have to send her a memento to make her pity him, Carlo jokes. Zapp will have to appeal to her tender feelings.



Persse poses as a writer researching behavioral patterns of identical twins to meet thickset, California-tanned Hermann Pabst. Pabst confirms that twin girls were found on the KLM jet, and he immediately decided to adopt them. He and wife Gertrude spoiled the girls badly. Lily discovered boys and ran away at 16. They traced her to a crummy commune near San Francisco, making blue movies. They talked her into attending a fine Eastern college like her sister Angie, but six years ago she disappeared while on a study program in Europe.

Angie rebelled the opposite way, by becoming an egghead and never dating boys. She looks down on her uneducated parents, and after graduating summa cum laude, she has announced that she will study comparative literature at Cambridge or Yale, in order to become a teacher. Angelica insists on paying her own way, but she makes heavy use of her free travel pass on Transamerican. She has become a conference freak, and she is currently attending one in Honolulu. Angie once stopped in Los Angeles to tell her father that she tracked Lily down to a London nightclub where she is an exotic dancer, but Lily works for an international agency that sends her all over the world. Pabst has done his best by the twins, but he figures he has blown it. Persse walks out with Pabst to his private plane, parked on the tarmac. He sees young men holding up handwritten destination signs and learns that they are a new brand of hitchhikers aboard executive jets. Pabst promises to send photocopies of articles about his finding the twins. As Pabst's Boeing 737 departs, Persse makes a sign for "Honolulu."

Dysirye listens to a tape recorded message from Zapp announcing that the kidnapers understand that they are no longer married and are willing to halve the ransom. Zapp vows to repay her somehow. The kidnapers instruct her to take out an ad in the paper saying, "The lady accepts," gather the \$250,000 in unmarked bills and await instructions. Police have already traced the line when Zapp warns Dysirye not to involve the police, but they find only a cheap tape recorder when they reach the pay phone. Dysirye takes out an ad that says, "The lady offers ten thousand dollars." Dysirye's agent, Alice Kauffman, thinks she is being very generous, and Dysirye agrees. She figures Zapp might be able to pay back \$10,000, and news that she let him perish this way might damage her career. Dysirye might consider \$20,000 if it is tax-deductible. Carlo and Zapp are both insulted at such bargaining. The kidnapers demand that he make another tape demanding \$100,000, non-negotiable. "Every decoding is another encoding," Zapp responds to the warning he must make her understand. Zapp's tape points out that \$100,000 is less than 4% of her *Difficult Days* royalties and that she could not have written such an excellent book without the pain he caused her. He has made her a feminist and enabled her address the oppressed state of American women. He figures he is entitled to some consideration. Even her useless agent gets 10%. Kauffman is insulted and inclined to let him rot. Dysirye offers \$25,000.

Persse sits on crowded Waikiki beach, calculating that he has wiped out his bank account, despite the free flight from Los Angeles, and he has still to get home. Hawaii is not to Persse's taste. The weather and water are too warm. The tourists, young-and-beautiful and old-and-unlovely alike, are too naked. Everyone is eating, and everything is making noise. Persse has been here a day. At the university he could only to obtain an official program for the conference. Angelica has already delivered her paper. Now,



contemplating his next move, Persse meets Miss Maiden, on holiday rather than attending a conference. He tells her that he is looking for Angelica, and he is surprised to hear that Maiden met her just the other day on this very beach. Angelica had mentioned his name. She said something about deserving a more euphonious surname than Pabst, something like McGarrigle.

Persse is ecstatic at this proof that she loves him. Miss Maiden suggests that Angelica wants to be wooed and that this is her way of testing him. She is bound next for Tokyo or somewhere else in the Far East. Angelica is tall, so she will stand out in a crowd in Tokyo. Miss Maiden is afraid that Angelica thought her rude for staring at her beautiful, pale body. Had Persse noticed the birthmark high on her left thigh, like an inverted comma? Persse admits he might not be able to endure such a sight and would be jealous of anyone else around. Men had been ogling her, Miss Maiden says, and Persse reveals that not long ago he suspected her of being a stripper. Persse rambles on about identical twin Lily who works for Girls Unlimited. This makes him remember Bernadette and Maxwell's undelivered document, which leads him to suddenly remember weeping Cheryl Summerbee. Miss Maiden then goes pale and swoons. Their meeting ends as she retires to lie down.

At that moment, the Morganas meet in the baggage area in the Milan airport and embrace. Ernesto has enjoyed Honolulu's display of post-industrial society at play. Fulvia has been bored by the conference but charmed by Vienna. It was the opposite in Lausanne. Ernesto has responded to a paper by an amazingly beautiful young woman, Angelica Pabst. Unfortunately, she had not wanted to sleep with him. Fulvia missed Zapp in Vienna, but hooked up with Sy Gootblatt, who looked promising but turned out to lack stamina and imagination. At home, they catch up on mail and headlines, and Fulvia demands whether Ernesto mentioned Zapp being married to Dysirye Byrd to any of their radical friends. She fumes that they will all be arrested because of that fool Carlo.

An angry Carlo orders Zapp to shut up as the kidnappers pull him out of bed and dress him. He feels the prick of a needle and loses consciousness. He wakes, untied, in a pine forest, intoxicated to be alive. Blessing Dysirye, Zapp stumbles down a narrow pathway, void of hope that anyone will find him in such a desolate area. Suddenly Fulvia approaches in her bronze Maserati, pretending to be astonished to find the man everyone is looking for.

Culture shock and jet lag hit Persse in Tokyo. He can find no conferences that might attract Angelica. He treats himself to a steak dinner and then comes upon a karaoke bar in which Japanese businessmen are celebrating Friday. The hostess finds a translator to get across that all patrons must sing. Akira Sakazaki hands Persse a double-sided, bi-lingual card and introduces him to his commercial translator colleagues. They enthusiastically encourage Persse to sing Bob Dylan's "Tambourine Man." Persse warms to the task and sings a few more songs before relinquishing the microphone. The translators talk about the comical way some of Shakespeare's titles come out in Japanese. Akira mentions that he is having problems with puns in Frobisher's works. Persse says he has met Frobisher and declares him irascible. Persse tells about the



*Annabel Lee* prank, and the Japanese are disappointed the *literati* had not floated out to sea and sunk. Frobisher is the only author Persse knows and the only author Akira has translated. It is a small world, they agree, although the saying is "narrow world" in Japanese. Persse is introduced to Professor Motokazu Umeda, whom he asks about the recent conference in Honolulu.

Dysirye did not pay the ransom. She had already gathered \$40,000 when the kidnappers let Zapp go for nothing. She is getting great press out of the story and will include it in her book as a wonderful inversion of the normal male-female power relationship, but she may change the ending. She hopes the book is back on track. Zapp has hurried off to Jerusalem to deal with his fellow organizers, allowing Ringbaum to participate. Dysirye is surprised that someone just back from the edge of the grave has nothing better to think about.

Umeda tells Persse that Angelica plans to attend a conference in Seoul, and he books a seat immediately. He is seated next to a young English-speaking Korean woman. She is flying home to visit her very traditional parents who want to accept an arranged marriage. The girl drinks and smokes furiously, to make up for the prohibition facing her. Sadly, Song-Mi Lee cannot lie about being engaged, as Persse suggests. She gives him tips about traveling to the Korean Academy of Sciences center outside Seoul. Persse is almost unsurprised to arrive only to find the conference over and the participants dispersed. Some have gone sightseeing, and Persse sets out after them. He does not find Angelica but runs into Tardieu, who says Angelica has gone to Hong Kong.

Zapp is smug, directing the Jerusalem Conference. He has scheduled one early morning paper per day, with all other papers to be circulated in written form. Thus, most of the day and evening are free for "unstructured discussion," which means food, drink and sightseeing. Israeli scholars are upset, having worked themselves up for public debates and being uninterested in tourism. Wainwright has not yet finished his paper, but he carries another paper, submitted by Sandra Dix just before he left Australia. Interspersed with her thoughts on Matthew Arnold is a threat to turn him in for three sexual encounters in his office unless she gets a good grade. He gives her an A without hesitation and has brought the paper with him to avoid its being found. Had Wainwright finished his own paper on time, its quality would not have mattered, and it could have been relegated to the Hilton Hotel wastebaskets along with the other handouts. Now, though, it is too late. He will have to deliver it "live."

With professional humiliation looming, Wainwright sits in his room, trying to write, jealous of his noisy party-making colleagues. He is particularly upset by having to listen to Swallow and Joy making passionate love in the next room. Seeing Swallow fondling Joy's breast on the balcony makes him long for the even better endowed Dix, who unfortunately had chewed gum during intercourse and offered too little reward for the risk he has taken. Wainwright cannot figure out how Swallow can have sex into the wee hours but appear for the first lecture and be the first to jump up with a question. Swallow seems determined to pack every moment of life with some sublime or gross activity: pilgrimages, meals, even discotheques, where he never takes his eyes off Joy's





bouncing nipples. Wainwright went on that outing and drank gloomily, watching Joy's nipples.

Wainwright also goes on a daylong outing to Masada, figuring that frittering away a day will force him to buckle down and write at night. It is blazing as the air-conditioned tour bus reaches the Red Sea, where Zapp and Thelma Ringbaum cavort in the black mud with Swallow and Joy. Thelma's husband rebukes her. Masada is staggeringly hot, but still Swallow seems to think about nothing but sex. He catches Wainwright staring at their display of affection and warns him to stop spying on Joy. Joy tries to diffuse the confrontation, but Swallow rants on about the pervert and voyeur. A boozy young man in jeans and tee shirt interrupts them. Swallow looks flustered as he introduces his son Matthew, who is working on a kibbutz near by. Swallow introduces Joy as Mrs. Simpson, a woman attending his conference, and sends her off with Wainwright while he catches up with Matthew. Stunned and offended, Joy coldly shrugs off a grinning Wainwright

On the bus back to the Hilton, Swallow appears to go into shock, but Joy refuses to sympathize. Swallow skips the evening barbecue, but Joy chalks it up to heatstroke. Wainwright also passes on the event, to begin an all-night ordeal to expand 2? typed pages of smooth prolegomenon into a 45-minute speech. Wainwright is hypnotized, paralyzed by the mental image of stepping to the podium with no more than this in hand. He attacks the mini-bar, and after many bottles he finds his hand flying with a will of its own over the blank paper. He grows optimistic and drinks some more. Hearing the door next to his open and shut, he presses his ear to the wall and shouts that Joy will give Swallow nothing tonight. He staggers back to the desk and continues writing. He wakes in the morning with a pounding headache and pages covered with gibberish. Never a religious man, Wainwright is driven to prayer for a miracle. He addresses Jehovah, Allah and Jesus Christ, to cover all bases.

Wainwright arrives five minutes early, unable to stop smiling. He overhears Joy telling Zapp that she has called a doctor to examine Swallow. He is running a temperature, aching and gasping for breath. Wainwright grins at them. Wainwright grins as Zapp introduces him. Wainwright grins as he flattens his paper on the lectern, and the audience, figuring this will be a witty discourse, titters nervously. Wainwright grins even more broadly as he reaches the end of his prepared remarks. Heads begin turning to see what is going on in the back of the room, where Joy stands talking with Sam Singerman. Zapp tries to return attention to the speaker, but Singerman shocks everyone by announcing that Swallow has Legionnaire's Disease, the plague that first struck in Philadelphia three years earlier, claiming one in six victims. It is the secret dread of every conference attendee nowadays. Panic spreads as Ringbaum shouts that he is checking out of the Hilton fast. Thelma does not follow her husband. Wainwright feigns disappointment and leaves the podium. Zapp tells Thelma that he is sure Swallow has only heatstroke. He has recently been through too much to have room in his life for fear. Within an hour, Zapp's colleagues, including Wainwright, are on their way to Tel Aviv. Swallow has asked Joy to call Hilary and ask her to come take care of him. Joy is heading home alone.



Zapp is surprised to see a sunburned Persse walk into the Hilton. Persse is unphased by news that Swallow has the Black Death and asks if Angelica is here. She never signed up for the conference, Zapp says, and Persse is amazed she has skipped one. Having dried up his bank account and having had his American Express card confiscated for arrears, Persse has worked his passage from Hong Kong to Aden and hitchhiked across the desert. He has not seen Angelica since she gave him the slip at Rummidge. Zapp invites Persse to the MLA meeting in December in New York. Everyone will be there.

At the University of Darlington, Dempsey and Collins sit like cat and mouse in the computer center. Dempsey is a hunched and shrunken shadow of himself. There is tension in the room as Dempsey types furiously, telling ELIZA of his professional jealousy of Swallow, augmented by news from his son Desmond in Israel that Swallow is escorting a beautiful blonde around. Sex, fame and foreign travel are too much to bear. It is unfair. What should he do? ELIZA advises: "Shoot yourself." Dempsey stares at the screen, trembles and whimpers, until he hears Collins' suppressed laughter behind him. Dempsey lunges at Collins, as the assistant explains that he has been provoked into tampering with the program. They roll across the floor, slamming into equipment. A printer emits line after line of the single-word message, "Error."

## Part 4, Chapter 3 Analysis

This very long chapter follows Persse around the world in his quest for Angelica, resolves Zapp's blackout mystery and watches the last of the summer's academic conferences come to a crashing failure. Persse makes it to Los Angeles, one step behind Angelica. He learns from her father that Angelica is the chaste twin of the promiscuous Lily, whose image Persse has seen in Europe. He also learns that she travels on her father's expense account. Persse's American Express card is nearly dried up. Still, the readers follow him across the Pacific, encountering several of the minor characters and seeing new interrelations among the academics.

A second plot reveals Zapp's fate. Leftist friends of the Morganas have kidnapped him to collect ransom from his rich wife. Dysirye treats her hated ex-husband as an item at auction and in the end finds her writer's block broken as the story becomes fodder for her stalled book project. Wainwright shows up in Jerusalem utterly unprepared for the presentation that he knows will make or break his career, and rather than buckling down to work, he fixates on Zapp's beautiful blonde companion's nipples. The author refrains from using the Plagues of Egypt as his first *deus ex machina* resolution of a crisis. Wainwright rebukes Persse for taking the Lord's name in vain after his prayer virtually to-whom-it-may-concern pays off handsomely. Zapp, Wainwright's nemesis, is felled (ostensibly) by the modern Black Death, and this prevents his humiliation at the speaker's podium. Back in England, the ELIZA computer side plot is resolved with Dempsey's psychological destruction. Angelica is still at large as Part 4 ends and must be found for the novel to end satisfactorily. The UNESCO chair must, of course, also be rewarded to someone. The Jerusalem miracle sets us up to accept the tying off of these threads.



# Part 5, Chapter 1

## Part 5, Chapter 1 Summary

Every winter, between Christmas and New Year's, the Modern Language Association of America (MLA) draws together 10,000 members and guests from around the world. This year it gathers in New York City. Young scholars come to land teaching jobs. Seasoned scholars come looking for advancement. Chairmen of English departments come recruiting talent. To these people, the Big Daddy of conferences is work. To everyone else it is fun. The official program lists 600 separate sessions running from 8:30 a.m. to 10:15 p.m., usually at least 30 simultaneously, catering to every taste. Audiences migrate when they hear laughter or applause. Specialty organizations host cocktail parties. One can stand in the lobby of the Hilton and be certain, sooner or later, to see everyone one knows in the academic world.

Persse stands there on the third day of the conference and is found by Morris Zapp. Zapp is obviously in his element, working the crowd. He tells Persse that he has not seen Angelica. She is not listed in the program, but there can be many explanations for that. Zapp tells him not to miss the forum on "The Function of Criticism" at 2:15 p.m., at which he will be speaking. Kingfisher is the moderator, and rumor has it that he will announce his recommendation for UNESCO. Also on the podium will be Tardieu, von Turpitz, Morgana and Swallow. Swallow is lucky to be substituting for Parkinson, who is stuck in London. Swallow had read something about Legionnaire's Disease and grew so scared he took on the symptoms. When Hilary hurried to his side, Swallow decided he needs a mother more than a mistress. Zapp invites Persse to his Room 956 at 10 p.m.

Persse manages to get a front seat for the standing room only forum. Kingfisher calls for order and introduces the panel. Swallow, now clean-shaven, talks about criticism assisting the function of literature itself to enable humans to better enjoy, or at least endure, life. Exceptional writers offer great treasures to readers, but their words become locked away, neglected and forgotten as times change. Critics can unlock these drawers and blow away the dust. Technical skills are necessary, but most needed is enthusiasm and a love of books, if one wants to forge a bridge between great writers and general readers. Scaly, pouch-eyed Tardieu denies that critics have a right to add interpretations and appreciations of great works. He says rather that they have the duty to uncover the fundamental laws that enable such works to be produced and understood. Interpretation is necessarily subjective and ever-changing. Therefore, it is better to ignore the surface of texts and search the deep structures of paradigm, syntagm and metaphor. Scowling, black-gloved von Turpitz dismisses his French colleague's premise as hopeless, since art objects have reality only when realized in the mind of the reader. Morgana, sensationally dressed in black velvet dungarees, says criticism must wage war on the very concept of "literature," which is an instrument of the bourgeois hegemony, responsible for concealing class oppression under capitalism. Zapp repeats what he said at Rummidge.



Kingfisher looks increasingly depressed as they speak and nearly falls asleep by the end of Zapp's remarks. Questions are prepared diatribes by delegates who could not get invited to be speakers, and the responses are equally predictable. Kingfisher allows one more question, and Persse rises to ask each member of the panel what would follow if everyone agreed with him or her? They are baffled, and Kingfisher is impressed by a very good question. If everyone agrees with you, everyone will do as you do, and there will be no joy in doing. To win is to lose the game. The forum ends, and everyone wonders who Persse is. He is respected and touched as though for good luck.

That afternoon, Manhattan suddenly but briefly warms from frigidity to spring-like conditions, and people grow friendly. At least 54 MLA members misquote T. S. Eliot's "East Coker." Kingfisher pries open a window to enjoy the halcyon days, which he explains to Song-Mi Lee as the time for his namesake to hatch its eggs. As they cuddle, they discover his erection.

Persse wanders the convention looking for topics that might attract Angelica. Pushing open the door to an "Ad Hoc Forum on Romance," he sees her reading in a clear, deliberate voice. She has the severe scholarly look he remembers. He believes their eyes make contact, but she reads on. He begins concentrating on her argument about Derrida's use of the term "invagination" to describe the complex relationship between inside and outside in discursive practices. Epic, Angelica says, is the genre of the phallic. Tragedy is the genre of castration, and romance is the genre of invagination. Barthes connects narrative and sexuality in an overly masculine way, with everything having to lead to satisfaction in the end. Epic and tragedy require a climax, "a single, explosive discharge of accumulated tension." Romance, by contrast, is to Angelica a multi-climactic genre. As many narrative questions can open and close as the author has energy to include. Romances can have multiple orgasms or end unfinished, like women.

Persse is shocked at the stream of filth flowing from Angelica's beautiful mouth and that no one else in the audience seems to be bothered by it. Miss Maiden, unsurprisingly present at the MLA, proclaims it a brilliant performance by Angelica, which shocks the repressed Persse. He reveals what he has learned from the newspaper clippings Pabst sent to him. Miss Maiden of Girton College in 1954 found the twins in the airline restroom. Miss Maiden at the MLA faints, and Angelica disappears as Persse calls for help.

Persse prowls the hotel looking for Angelica for an hour before encountering her, dressed fabulously in red silk, stepping into an elevator he is exiting. Without a word, he takes her in his arms and kisses her passionately. She resists for a moment and then melts into his embrace, and their bodies melt together. He proclaims that he loves her, wants her and needs her. They go to Angelica's room, and he stares at her naked body, moved to tears. His first invagination is short and sweet, but she helps him experience several different positions in the next few hours. When he is too worn out for another ejaculation, Angelica flips him on his back and impales herself, topping herself off over and over again. Then, she falls exhausted beside him. Persse feels 10 years older and wiser.



Persse tells Angelica that she will now have to marry him because they have had sex, and she murmurs that she is not Angelica. She is Lily, and she is not joking about it. They can be told apart, she says, by which hip the birthmark is on. She had sex with him because he was so hungry for it. She would probably do the same for anyone, but she had figured out who he was from Angie's description. She cannot understand why Persse is angry and advises him not to count on Angie. Angie is as much an "archetypal pricktease" as Lily is a slut at heart, and even she will admit it. Hurt by Persse's comment that no decent girl would conceive of some of her moves, Lily says she has been kidding. She is Angelica. Persse apologizes for the insult. Lily insists she is kidding again. Persse is completely confused. Lily gently tells him that he is not in love with Angelica, but only with his dream about her. Angie loves another man, a professor at Harvard named Peter. They met in Hawaii. Having heard Persse is searching for her, Angie feels guilty about Rummige and has talked her sister into coming to break the bad news to him. Lily is sorry that her explanation lacks subtlety. Persse announces that he is hungry, declines room service and says he will eat at the party he is going to. Peter is taking both sisters to the penthouse party. Lily has retired from the European pornography Persse saw and is attending Columbia University in New York. Persse asks her to have Bernadette/Marlene, her Girls Unlimited colleague, contact him if she can.

Persse goes to Room 956 and asks to use Zapp's shower. Zapp is glum that Kingfisher had obviously not been interested in what he was saying, but he has had kicked his ambition habit. He is watching five-minute previews of pay-per-view pornography. Everything nowadays is available on demand in the brave new world. He has lost faith in deconstruction ever since the Italian radicals tried to deconstruct him. Thelma Ringbaum emerges from the bathroom, enveloped in steam and a towel. She does not remember much about her previous meeting with Persse, other than the *Annabel Lee* going adrift. Howard is not at the MLA meeting because he is barred for life by the airlines for soliciting sex from a hostess. Thelma left him months ago, and she and Zapp are thinking of marrying.

Persse joins Thelma and Zapp riding up to the spectacular penthouse suite crowded by euphoric revelers. Kingfisher has donated a dozen cases of champagne, which must signal a major celebration. Frobisher fills Persse's glass and introduces him to Dysirye Byrd, who spent the warm spell re-reading the finished draft of her new book, about which she has doubts. Her agent convinces her that *Men* will be excellent. Frobisher announces that his style is back. He is working on a new novel. Persse tells of meeting Sakazaki in Tokyo. Sakazaki has sent Frobisher a copy of his published translation.

At the buffet table, Skinner claims the last slice of smoked salmon under Persse's nose, and he apologizes that Gloria has failed to contact him. They have gotten a second opinion on his proposal and have decided to commission a book after all. Persse shocks Skinner by asking for a \$200 cash advance to get him back to London. Skinner introduces Persse to Parkinson, who has just arrived, still fuming about how a check-in girl at Heathrow got him body searched as a smuggler. He lodged an official complaint and got her fired. Persse pictures Cheryl Summerbee as he last saw her, weeping.



Suddenly she is endowed in his mind as the embodiment of desirability. He vows to flee to her, comfort her and declare his love for her.

The Pabst twins appear on Peter's arms, and Persse learns that Peter is the other McGarrigle whose job in Limerick he obtained. It has been on Persse's conscience all along, but Peter is happy it forced him to come to the U.S. Now, he has gained him Angelica. Angelica hopes that there are no hard feelings and wants his opinion of her speech today. He is relieved not to have to answer when someone raps on the table for everyone's attention.

Textel stands partway up the staircase to talk about the UNESCO chair. Everyone is tense as the announcement nears. Kingfisher has agreed to come out of retirement and allow his name to be considered. Textel is certain that the committee will find no one to rival Kingfisher. Applause covers the true emotion of the crowd. Kingfisher acknowledges it, and he says he feels like he is getting a new surge of creativity. He will occupy the chair for only three years, he says, and then it will be up for grabs again. After more polite applause and some laughter, Kingfisher invites Song-Mi to join him and announces that they will marry.

A white-haired old lady approaches as well to offer congratulations. Kingfisher has not seen Miss Maiden in 27 years, precisely the length of time their twin daughters have been alive. She had not thought there was a danger of becoming pregnant in 1953 when she gave up her long-preserved virginity to him, but she was wrong. She took a year's sabbatical to cover the pregnancy and settled in the wilds of New Mexico. After the birth, she smuggled the babies aboard a plane (in the days before carry-on was x-rayed) and pretended to find them in the restroom. No one suspected a 45-year-old of motherhood. She has felt guilty ever since and begs Angelica and Lily's forgiveness. The four embrace in front of the gathering, and Angelica draws forgotten Song-Mi into the family circle. Everyone is filled with joy except von Turpitz, whose glove comes off in Persse's handshake, revealing a completely healthy and normal limb. He slinks away and never attends another international conference. Leaving the party, a tearful Swallow tells Persse he once discovered he had a daughter like that but has lost her again when his nerve failed. Swallow is surprised that Persse knows Joy's name. Joy has remarried. Hilary is a marriage counselor and has gotten the Dempseys back together again.

The temperature is freezing again as Persse leaves the Hilton. A black youth speeds toward him, and he recoils, mindful of stories about New York muggings. The man is friendly, however, dancing about and handing out advertisements for Girls Unlimited's new Paradise Island Club. He rushes back into the hotel and dials the number. Marlene answers provocatively, and Persse informs Bernadette that he has important information for her.

## Part 5, Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter allows the *literati* we have come to know lay out formally their varying thoughts on the nature of literary criticism. Angelica's erotically oriented speech



intertwines with the reality of Persse's first sexual experience. He sleeps, not with the girl of his dreams, but with her sister. Their post-coital conversation allows the relationship between sex and love to be lightly dealt with. The chapter also resolves the Pabst twins' biological parentage, a revelation neatly divided into two parts. The McGarrigle who Persse elbowed aside to get his teaching position in Limerick surfaces again. He and Persse have somehow changed paths. Peter wins the lover Persse desires, while Persse wins the job Peter was in line for. Bernadette, now a New Yorker, may perhaps be redeemed as Lily has already been. In the end, nasty von Turpitz is ungloved and disappears from the conference circuit, and Zapp will probably remarry. Otherwise, everyone can be expected to go on with their summer escapades normally, gradually jockeying for position when the UNESCO chair reopens in three years.

Mount Olympus seems to be emptying out as one *deus ex machina* follows another, with the UNESCO chair going to old Professor Kingfisher, who gets back his inspiration and his manhood and decides to take the job himself. Next, he announces he will marry his long-time companion, and finally, he is confronted by a face from his distant past, a face we have come to expect to pop up anywhere in the world. She reveals how she came to give birth to and give away their twin daughters. The chapter ends with a warm, fuzzy mood at odds with most of the novel. There seems little reason for more, except that Parkinson's description of the security debacle at Heathrow has set Persse thinking about Cheryl. That final string must be tied.



## Part 5, Chapter 2

### Part 5, Chapter 2 Summary

Persse flies into Heathrow on New Year's Eve and heads straight to the British Airway Information Desk to ask for Cheryl. A supervisor says Cheryl has been fired this morning for getting even with a nasty patron by marking his pass "S" for smuggler. Cheryl has been fed up with the job and has gone abroad. Persse stares up at the huge departures board, pictures Cheryl and wonders where in the small, narrow world to begin looking for her.

### Part 5, Chapter 2 Analysis

This chapter devotes two pages to creating another quest for poor Persse to pursue around the small world.





# Characters

## Persse McGarrigle

With a pale, round, freckled face and mop of red curly hair, the novel's protagonist has a surname to live up to. It means "Son of Super-valor" in Irish. Persse has earned his bachelor's degree at Galway College and his master's at Dublin College, but he does most of his work independently while recovering from tuberculosis. He obtains his position in the three-man English Department at University College, Limerick, on a fluke when the invitation to another McGarrigle is mailed to Persse. It seems less trouble to hire him than correct the mistake. Persse handles the Modern English period. We first meet Persse in Rummidge, at his first-ever professional conference. There he meets several prominent scholars, learns that conferences are working vacations and falls in love with beautiful but elusive Angelica Pabst. When she leaves the conference without a word, Persse begins a quixotic quest. In Rummidge, Persse also learns about his wayward Cousin Bernadette. When the Royal Academy of Literature awards Persse the ?1,000 Maude Fitzsimmons Bequest for the Encouragement of Anglo-Irish Poetry, he determines to use it to find Angelica. His first stop in Amsterdam reveals the name of her adoptive father, but she, known professionally in the sex trades as Lily, has disappeared. Discouraged, Persse resolves to write poetry quietly for the summer. While escorting a literary outing, Persse learns that an American professor, Sidney Maxwell, impregnated Cousin Bernadette. He obtains from Maxwell a legal promise to support Bernadette and her son and sets off to find her. This quest sets him back on his original quest, to find his true love, Angelica.

## Angelica Pabst

The beautiful participant at the UTE conference whom Persse tries to woo, Angelica slips away, and Persse spends the rest of the novel chasing her around the world. Angelica has eyes the color of peat, magnificent breasts, perfect teeth, minute handwriting and an accent that combines American and something indefinable. She writes "A L Pabst" on identification badges and omits any academic affiliation. For much of the novel, it appears she is not only a conference-goer but also an exotic dancer. Persse finds shocking nude posters of her outside strip joints in Soho and in Amsterdam. Later, Persse discovers the truth: Angelica has an identical twin sister, Lily, who is the stripper. They are found at age six weeks by Miss Maiden in the restroom of a KLM airliner bound from New York to Amsterdam. The twins are adopted by a KLM executive, Hermann Pabst. Miss Maiden is, in fact, their mother and smuggled them aboard in order to give them away. Miss Maiden is not married to the eminent father, Arthur Kingfisher, who only at the end of the novel learns the truth. Persse by then has circled the globe, consistently missing Angelica by moments, and finds her at the MLA convention, delivering a sexually explicit lecture on genres. He finds her again as she steps from an elevator, and they go to her room to make love for hours. Only afterwards



does Persse discover it is Lily he has been with. Angelica is recently engaged to Peter McGarrigle, no relation to Persse.

## Dr. Philip Swallow

Department head at Rummidge College and organizer of the UTE annual conference that opens the novel, Swallow is in his forties, marked by a distinguished silver beard that conceals a weak chin. He is long married to Hilary, and their relationship, once nearly extinguished by affairs with Morris and Dysirye Zapp, has survived but declined to the level of convenience. Sex between them is passionless, performing the function of relaxing him on the eve of frequent travels. After being blackmailed for sexual misconduct by Sandra Dix, Swallow has sworn off affairs with students, so international conferences, where sexual liaisons are part of the landscape, are Swallow's only hope. Swallow has written only one poor-selling, unreviewed book, *Hazlitt and the Amateur Reader*, but this is sufficient to win him the department chair at Rummidge and a listing as a British Council lecturer.

Years earlier, on his first British Council assignment, Swallow makes love to a beautiful, married woman named Joy Simpson in Genoa, Italy, after surviving an emergency jet landing. Months later he reads that she and her family are killed in a crash in India. Now, on a British Council-sponsored lecture tour in Turkey, Swallow holds little hope for sex until he finds Joy alive and well in Ankara. They travel together to her home in Istanbul, where Swallow learns he is three-year-old Miranda's father. He vows to divorce Hilary and marry Joy, but he feels obliged to put the plan off until Hilary has established herself as a marriage counselor. At a conference in Jerusalem, Swallow suffers heatstroke on a field trip to Masada, but he exhibits symptoms of the dreaded Legionnaire's Disease, about which he has been reading. As conferees flee Israel, Swallow asks Joy to phone Hilary to come take care of him, apparently deciding that he needs a mother-figure more than a mistress. He regrets finding and losing a daughter for lack of nerve.

## Morris Zapp

A divorced American professor from Euphoria State College in California, Zapp is late arriving at Rummidge College to deliver a conference paper, title still to be determined. Persse, playing hooky from the lectures, meets Zapp's taxi from London, and they quickly become friends. Zapp promises Persse the distinctive deerslayer hat he bought at the airport, but he forgets to hand it over in his haste to leave after his shocking lecture, "Textuality as Striptease," is poorly received.

Zapp's goal is to be the highest-paid professor of English in the world. He has been on the conference circuit since 1975, and this year, after Rummidge, he will go to Bellagio, Z'rich, Vienna, Amsterdam and Jerusalem. En route to Bellagio, Zapp finds himself seated on the plane next to Fulvia Morgana. He is taken to her home in Milan and flees when her husband wants to be involved in a threesome. Zapp escapes that



predicament, but a friend of the Morganas reads about Zapp's ex-wife, Dysirye, receiving a large advance on the making of her novel into a movie. Carlos and his leftist colleagues kidnap Zapp while he jogs in the forest and hold him hostage for a week. Dysirye agrees to a smaller payment and is collecting the money when Fulvia learns of the plot and demands Carlos release Zapp.

Zapp flies on to Jerusalem to resume control of the conference there. He schedules only one paper per day, in order to maximize free time for partying and sightseeing. He is determined to get the most out of the life he thought was about to be permanently "deconstructed." Zapp hooks up at the Red Sea with Thelma Ringbaum, who is fed up with her annoying husband. Within months the Ringbaums are separated, and Thelma and Morris are talking of marriage. Zapp is one of the finalists for the UNESCO chair, but he is only mildly disappointed when it goes to another. His brush with death has mellowed him.

## Akbil Borak

A specialist in the Elizabethan sonnet at the University of Ankara, Borak is Swallow's guide in the Turkish capital. Borak and wife Oya live in forlorn conditions on the edge of the vast barren Anatolian steppes and remember with yearning the three years they spent in Hull during Akbil's doctoral work.

## Robert ("Bob") Busby

Busby is one of the chief organizers of the UTE conference at Rummidge College.

## Dysirye Byrd

Philip Zapp's ex-wife, Dysirye is a rich, best-selling feminist author of *Difficult Days*, currently in residence in a Helicon, NH, writers' colony, trying to overcome four years of writer's block on her second book, *Men*. At a conference in Heidelberg, she and Ronald Frobisher are thrown together in a tryst. While she is vacationing in Italy, the publicity surrounding a movie deal for *Difficult Days* gets Zapp kidnapped on the assumption that Dysirye will pay the ransom demands. Instead, she bargains the kidnappers down. The prospect of including this adventure in her new book ends her writer's block.

## Carlo

Morris Zapp's English-speaking guard during his Italian kidnapping, Carlo is a left-wing friend of Ernesto and Fulvia Morgana. He hears from Ernesto that Dysirye Byrd is Zapp's wife, and the Morganas force the kidnappers to release Zapp.



## Josh Collins

The Senior Lecturer in Computing in Robin Dempsey's Computer Center in Dempsey, Collins is always programming something and even sleeps beside his machines. He is concerned that his boss is becoming too dependent on the ELIZA program and alters it to give him bogus information about Philip Swallow and the UNESCO chair.

## Alex Custer

The British Council's cultural affairs director in Ankara, Custer and his wife invite Philip Swallow, en route to Istanbul, and Joy Simpson, a British Council librarian visiting from Istanbul, to a buffet supper in their apartment.

## Robin Dempsey

A broad-shouldered, thickset, close-eyed professor from one of the new universities in the north of England, Dempsey holds an intense grudge against Philip Swallow, who ten years ago beat him out of a senior lectureship at Rummidge. This indirectly cost him wife and son. Dempsey is now happy at Darlington College, where they have built him a computer lab. Dempsey's ex-wife Janet wastes the support money he sends on a no-good hippie boyfriend, Scott, while Dempsey's teenaged children, Jennifer and Alex, show him no respect when he visits. Dempsey becomes obsessed with communicating with the ELIZA computer program, treating it as an oracle. His assistant, Josh Collins, manipulates the program to further frustrate him by giving him false information about Swallow's gaining the UNESCO chair. Dempsey suffers a mental breakdown and receives counseling from Hilary Swallow, who gets Janet to take him back.

## Sandra Dix

A blond, beautiful, buxom student, Sandra has a habit of seducing professors and embedding blackmail demands in her exam answers. She disappears after charging Philip Swallow at Rummidge with sexual misconduct, and she reappears in Rodney Wainwright's English 351 class, causing him to daydream instead of write his paper.

## Ronald Frobisher

An Oxford-educated English teacher turned novelist, Frobisher becomes a leading figure among the "Angry Young Men" when his first book, *Any Road*, appears. *Could Try Harder*, his fifth novel, is now nine years old, and it is being translated into Japanese by Akira Sakazaki. Frobisher is suffering from writer's block and produces television and movie scripts for a living. He still considers himself a major literary figure, contrary to wife Irma's opinion, and attends conferences regularly. He is angered still by remarks about his father's dentures that made their way spitefully into a review by his Oxford



mentor, Rudyard Parkinson. Frobisher sets adrift the *Annabel Lee* after a fracas with Parkinson. Irma has given him de facto permission to have affairs, provided she and her friends hear nothing about them, and at a conference in Heidelberg, he and Dysirye are thrown together in a tryst. They agree to have sex only if the other will never use it in future fiction. The result is that he is unblocked.

## Sy Gootblatt

Morris Zapp's colleague at Euphoria College, currently a professor of literary theory at Penn State, the diminutive Gootblatt is in Z'rich attending the International James Joyce Symposium.

## William Hazlitt

The subject of Philip Swallow's monograph, *Hazlitt and the Amateur Reader*, Hazlitt is a prolific 18th/19th-century British literary critic rather overlooked by the time of this novel.

## Alice Kauffman

Dysirye Byrd's New York agent, Alice is so obese that she can only keep a job by working from home.

## Arthur Kingfisher

A founder of structuralism and leading figure of the New Criticism of the 1940s-1950s, Kingfisher is retired but keeps busy in the world of literary theory, commuting weekly between Columbia University and Z'rich. He attends conferences, edits and consults. His former research assistant and now constant companion, Song-Mi Lee, helps him cope with his inability to have an original thought or an erection. Kingfisher has been commissioned as chief consultant to UNESCO on whom to appoint to a new chair in literary criticism. At the announcement of that appointment, Kingfisher surprises everyone first by coming out of retirement in order to be eligible and second by announcing his engagement to Song-Mi Lee. More surprise awaits the partygoers when Miss Sybil Maiden steps forward to announce that Kingfisher is the father of the Pabst twins, and she is the mother.

## Song-Mi Lee

Arthur Kingfisher's former research assistant and current constant companion is a pretty Korean from a traditional family that wants to place her in an arranged marriage.



## Sybil Maiden

A retired teacher of folklore at Girton College, Cambridge, white-haired Miss Maiden attends conferences ostensibly to keep feeling young, but in fact she is keeping track on Angelica Pabst, her biological daughter. In 1953, Miss Maiden becomes pregnant by Arthur Kingfisher and takes a sabbatical in the U.S. in order to hide the pregnancy and birth. She then smuggles the newborn twins onto a KLM jet bound for Europe and reports finding abandoned babies in the restroom. No one suspects the aged spinster. She reveals the truth after Persse shows her newspaper accounts and Kingfisher announces his engagement to his assistant, Song-Mi Lee.

## Sidney Maxwell

A teacher at Covenant College, Atlanta, GA, Maxwell is attending a literary outing directed by Persse when a storm blows up and threatens to swamp their rowboat. Maxwell clings to Persse, frantic at the thought of dying in a state of sin, having impregnated a girl named Bernadette. Persse bullies Maxwell into signing an agreement to support his cousin well enough to allow her to retire from prostitution.

## Liam McCreedy

McCreedy is Persse's department chief at Limerick, a specialist in Old English whose office table trembles under the weight of books that block view the of visitors.

## Bernadette McGarrigle

Persse's pretty, black-haired cousin, Bernardette has been thrown out of her home in Ireland. She is praying in St. George Chapel at Heathrow Airport when Persse figures out who she is. She pens her request that God prevent her parents or other acquaintances from finding out where she is on the back of a business card for "Girls Unlimited." Ironically, her request to remain unfound allows Persse to find her. Persse discovers that the father of her baby is Professor Sidney Maxwell and pressures him into signing an agreement to support Bernadette and son Fergus well enough for her to retire from prostitution. All track of Bernadette, whose stage name is Marlene, is lost until Persse learns that Girls Unlimited has opened a New York branch. He dials the phone number and reaches her.

## Peter McGarrigle

The brilliant graduate student that Limerick College wants to hire for its English department, Peter's invitation to an interview is misaddressed to Persse, and Peter ends up moving to the U.S. There he establishes a good career. In Hawaii, Peter meets



Angelica Pabst and asks her to marry him. Peter and Persse meet at a New York party and agree all has worked out well for everyone.

## Fulvia Morgana

Professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Padua, Morgana is handsome and aristocratic, carefully groomed and fashionably attired. She is working from *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* as we first meet her, flying from Chicago to London, with a final destination of Milan. Fulvia sits beside Morris Zapp on this final leg. Her husband, Ernesto, is a professor of Italian Renaissance literature in Rome, and they live midway between their jobs in the cultural center of Milan. Fulvia brings Morris Zapp home and is in mid-seduction when Ernesto returns and wants to make it a threesome. Ernesto apparently mentions to a radical friend Carlo that Zapp is married to the author Dysirye Byrd, whose movie deal is in all the magazines. Fulvia learns of the plot in time to get Zapp released on a remote mountain road, where she innocently happens by to find him.

## Fr. Finbar O'Malley

The Irish priest who gives Persse absolution after his first encounter with an adult video club, Fr. O'Malley tells him of the "Our Lady of Knock Fund for Reverse Emigration" that he runs for Irish youth stuck in England.

## Milo and Nuala O'Shea

Nuala is Persse's aunt, whom he looks up in Rummidge, accompanied by Morris Zapp, who roomed in their house years earlier. Nuala is visiting Ireland to help deal with erring Niece Bernadette, but Milo entertains them meagerly.

## Hermann Pabst

The Transamerican Airlines executive who adopts abandoned six-week-old twins Angelica and Lily while working for KLM, Pabst agrees to discuss them at the Los Angeles airport with Persse as part of a study of identical twins. Pabst and wife Gertrude have done their best with the girls, but both rebel in quite opposite ways. One becomes a world-traveling bookworm, and the other becomes a porno actress and possibly a prostitute. Pabst is important enough to be summoned to the White House, which dictates that the meeting with Persse be short.

## Lily Pabst

Angelica's identical twin sister, Lily rebels. At age 16, she runs away from home to live in a commune near San Francisco and act in pornographic movies. Her father convinces



her to go to college in the East like her sister, but she disappears while on a study tour of Europe. Angelica tracks her down to a nightclub in London, but Lily works for an international agency that sends her around the world. Assigned to New York, Lily has retired from the sex business and enrolled in Columbia University. Thus, she is available to respond to Angelica's request that she gently break the news to Persse that Angelica has become engaged to someone else. Persse finds Lily coming out of an elevator, and the two make passionate love multiple times before Lily reveals her true identity.

## Rudyard Parkinson

The Regius Professor of Belles-Lettres at All Saints' College, Oxford, Parkinson is an old-fashioned, mutton-chopped immigrant from South Africa who by choice is virgin and celibate, having seen the dire effect of amorous activities on colleagues. Reading is Parkinson's love, and writing is his sex. He is constantly reviewing new books, three at a time, and turns his venom on Morris Zapp's *Beyond Criticism* in the *Times Literary Supplement*. Former disgruntled students include Felix Skinner and novelist Ronald Frobisher, whom Parkinson offended in a book review eight years ago. Parkinson and Frobisher tussle at an awards presentation, and Frobisher sets the *Annabel Lee* adrift in the Thames River in vengeance.

Receiving an honorary doctorate in Vancouver, Parkinson makes the mistake of claiming disinterest in the UNESCO chair to Textel before learning what a plum it is. The *Times Literary Supplement* headlines "Rudyard Parkinson on the English School of Criticism," which savages Zapp while raving about Swallow's brainless book, giving the latter's career a boost. Scheduled to be one of the five panelists at the MLA convention in New York, Parkinson has to be replaced when Heathrow security detains him for a cavity search after Cheryl Summerbee dislikes his attitude and flags him as a smuggler. Parkinson presses charges and gets Summerbee fired, but Swallow takes Parkinson's space on the prestigious discussion panel.

## Howard Ringbaum

A self-centered, mean, calculating, napve and sexually obsessed professor, trying to get back to the civilized world from academic exile in Alberta, Ringbaum has a six-month grant to study at the British Museum. His wife Thelma accompanies him, determined to make the most of her time in a cultural oasis. Morris Zapp rejects a paper Ringbaum submits for a literary conference in Jerusalem, but when Zapp disappears in Italy, Ringbaum is returned to the program by Zapp's co-organizers. Ringbaum and wife Thelma are drawing apart, and he does not notice when she pairs up with Zapp in the Holy Land. The unhappy spouses separate after Zapp is banned for life from air travel for soliciting sex from a flight attendant.





## Thelma Ringbaum

Howard's wife, Thelma is determined to imbibe culture during the six months they spend in Britain. Howard's dismissing her desire for sex steels Thelma's determination to be unfaithful, and she accomplishes it at the conference in Jerusalem, cavorting in the Red Sea mud with Zapp under Howard's nose. They separate soon afterward, to Thelma's satisfaction, and she and Zapp contemplate marriage.

## Akira Sakazaki

An English teacher at the University of Tokyo, Sakazaki on his own time is a literary translator. He is currently working on Ronald Frobisher's novel *Could Try Harder*. When Persse happens into a karaoke bar while visiting Tokyo in search of Angelica, Sakazaki serves as translator and introduces him to his industrial translation friends.

## Joy Simpson

The beautiful wife of a British Council employee in Genoa, Italy, Joy avidly accepts Philip Swallow's sexual advances after her husband offers him hospitality following an emergency jet landing. The newspapers report Joy and her family are killed in a crash in India, but in fact, she is too far gone in her pregnancy to fly. Swallow reads the death notice but not the corrections. To spare Swallow from having to decide what to do about his illegitimate daughter, Joy does not contact him again. She takes a job with the British Council as librarian in Istanbul, Turkey, and meets Swallow by miscalculation at a buffet supper in Ankara, having tried to avoid seeing him during his lecture tour. Joy concocts an excuse for returning immediately to Istanbul and accompanies Swallow on the train. In Istanbul, Joy reveals that her three-year-old daughter Miranda is Swallow's, and they plan to marry as soon as Swallow can divorce his wife Hilary. They vacation together briefly in Greece and rendezvous publicly in Jerusalem at a literary conference. At Masada, Swallow is flustered and embarrassed to be seen with Joy by his son, who happens to be visiting the ruins at the same time. Swallow falls ill and asks Joy to call Hilary to come and care for him. Joy returns to Turkey alone and remarries.

## Felix Skinner

Philip Swallow's yellow-fanged literary agent at Lecky, Windrush and Berstein, Skinner is a former pupil of Rudyard Parkinson at Oxford. Skinner has recently hired a shapely personal secretary, Gloria, whose advice he readily accepts. They fall in love, and she becomes his constant companion, even as her professional performance diminishes. Skinner takes an interest in developing Persse's master's thesis simply because it deals with two literary figures his firm often publishes about. The project hangs up in bureaucracy and academic in-fighting, but eventually it comes through. Skinner delivers the good news to Persse in New York at the MLA conference and advances him the \$200 he needs to return to England.



## Digby Soames

An official in the British Council, Soames assigns academics to speaking engagements.

## Cheryl Summerbee

A checker for British Airways at Terminal One, Summerbee injects interest into her routine job by assessing passengers' characters. Cheryl seats Morris Zapp and Fulvia Morgana side-by-side on one flight, setting off an affair that eventually involves them both in a kidnapping. When Persse first meets Cheryl, she is going the extra mile by giving Zapp's deerslayer hat to a colleague to fulfill Zapp's promise. The recipient happens to be Persse. Cheryl helps Persse find St. George Chapel. Their paths cross again when a frantic Persse cannot find a copy of *The Faerie Queene* to check a reference. On the suggestion of Fulvia Morgana, Cheryl has given up romance novels for the classics and has a copy under her desk. Persse does not understand the meaning of Cheryl's tears when she learns he is on a quest for his true love, Angelica. Tired of her job, Cheryl plays a prank on an obnoxious passenger and is fired. Persse flies into Heathrow, ready to declare his love for Cheryl, but she has flown off somewhere in the world. Persse is determined to find her.

## Rupert Sutcliffe

A melancholy-looking elderly professor at Rummidge College, Sutcliffe is critical of Dr. Swallow's attempt to "put it on the map" and dislikes Robin Dempsey.

## Hilary Broome Swallow

The wife of Philip and mother of three children, Hilary has an affair with Morris Zapp (whose wife Dysirye in return has an affair with Philip), but she begs her husband to return to the marriage without conditions. Thus, Hilary finds herself unhappy as he roams the world, and having failed to earn her M.A., she is unable to compete in a tight job market. While Philip is lecturing in Turkey (and reconnecting with Joy and learning he is father to three-year-old Miranda), Hilary interviews for a program in marriage guidance. Philip puts off asking for a divorce until Hilary has established herself in the profession, and he summons her to Jerusalem when he thinks he is dying of Legionnaire's Disease. Hilary does well in her new profession, reuniting Robin and Janet Dempsey.

## Michel Tardieu

A leather-faced, gay Professor of Narratology at the Sorbonne, Tardieu currently cohabits with Albert, a rather uppity young man whose cologne annoys Tardieu. Angelica Pabst is Tardieu's former part-time graduate student at the Sorbonne. He helps



Persse, whom he is surprised to find in Switzerland, find Angelica's rooming house, but she has already left for America. Tardieu runs into Persse again in Tokyo and tells him she is off to Hong Kong. Tardieu has one of the five coveted places at the MLA Convention in New York. He denies that critics have a right to add interpretations and appreciations of great works, but rather states that they have the duty to uncover the fundamental laws that enable such works to be produced and understood. Interpretation is necessarily subjective and ever-changing. Therefore, it is better to ignore the surface of texts and search the deep structures of paradigm, syntagm and metaphor.

## Jacques Textel

A Swiss anthropologist who leaves a chair in Berne to work as UNESCO's Assistant Director General in Paris, Textel is wooed by all the would-be nominees. With Parkinson, Textel is given an honorary doctorate in Vancouver, and there he misconstrues Parkinson's behavior and leaks Swallow's name as the front-runner.

## Siegfried von Turpitz

A professor at Baden-Baden, pale, blond-haired von Turpitz always wears a black kid glove on one hand, which is the topic of speculation among his colleagues. His first wife died of a heart attack the night he removed it, and her successor, Bertha, is curious but does not ask. They sleep in twin beds. Von Turpitz is among the first to inquire about a new UNESCO chair in literary criticism. His book, *The Romantic Reader*, is a traditional treatment, but recently he has climbed onto the reception theory bandwagon. After a speech in Amsterdam, von Turpitz is charged by Persse with plagiarism. Murmurs of "shame" are heard. Von Turpitz goes on to Heidelberg, where he is the conference organizer, but early on he decides the event is a failure and arranges business in another city. As one of the five panelists at the MLA in New York, von Turpitz declares art objects have reality only when realized in the mind of the reader. At the party afterward, von Turpitz's glove comes off in Persse's handshake, revealing a completely healthy and normal limb, and he slinks away, never to be seen at another international conference.

## Rodney Wainwright

A 38-year-old, balding, pear-shaped English professor at the University of North Queensland in Australia, Wainwright is invited to deliver a paper at Morris Zapp's Jerusalem conference. Wainwright stalls on the third page of the prolegomenon and flies to Jerusalem with a blackmail message from his shapely student, Sandra Dix, but nothing to deliver to the conferees. Had he completed even a mediocre typescript, Wainwright would have been off the hook, because Zapp planned the conference to make the most of free time. Instead, Wainwright is among the few who must read their papers in public sessions. Even facing professional humiliation, Wainwright cannot buckle down. He obsesses about Swallow and his beautiful companion Joy, listens



through the thin walls to them making love all night, goes on outings to discothiques and historic ruins and spends the last night summoning inspiration from the mini-bar. He awakens on the morning of his presentation hung-over and unprepared. He turns to prayer to Yahweh, Allah and Jesus for a miracle of deliverance. It comes in the form of a panicked announcement that Zapp has contracted deadly and infectious Legionnaire's Disease, which clears the hotel in hours. Wainwright feigns sad resignation and suddenly finds taking the Lord's name in vain offensive.



# Objects/Places

## Amsterdam

The literati gather in Amsterdam for the 7th International Conference of Literary Semioticians, but Persse comes trying to pick up Angelica's trail in the headquarters of KLM, where her father once worked. Morris Zapp takes Persse on a tour of the infamous red light district, and Persse responds to von Turpitz's paper on reception theory by accusing him of plagiarism.

## Ankara

Ankara is the modern capital of Turkey, an overcrowded, bleak, military-dominated city on the bone-dry Anatolian plane, where Philip Swallow delivers his lecture series. His guide is Akbil Borak, through whom we see the squalidness of modern Turkish life. Swallow's visit to Istanbul provides contrast with the days of Ottoman (and earlier) splendor.

## The British Council

The British Council is an agency responsible for organizing and expediting overseas cultural events including lectures and concerts.

## Darlington College

Darlington is a college in the English midlands, to which Robin Dempsey takes refuge after leaving Rummidge. Darlington establishes a state-of-the-art computer system for Dempsey, and his assistant, Josh Collins, installs ELIZA, a program designed to let computers hold conversations in standard English with users, using the psychiatrist-patient interview as a model for the discourse.

## Genoa

Genoa is the terminus of Swallow's first British Council-sponsored overseas lecture tour, from which he flies out on his ill-fated flight home and visits the home of the British Council contact, J. K. Simpson. That night, Swallow seduces Joy Simpson.

## Heathrow Airport

London's international airport, Heathrow is a major hub of the novel's action. Major scenes unfold at the British Airways information desk and in St. George Chapel.



## Honolulu

Honolulu provides a meeting place for Persse and Miss Maiden and a stepping stone from California to Japan in Persse's quest to find Angelica. The reality of Waikiki Beach does not hold up to the advertising hype in Persse's mind.

## Istanbul

Istanbul (formerly Constantinople) is the ancient capital of the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires, straddling the Bosphorus and crowded with historic sights. Joy Simpson works in the British Council Library there and takes Philip Swallow on a boat tour of the city before settling him in a hotel near her apartment. Istanbul provides a color contrast with the bleak modern capital, Ankara, where Swallow lectures earlier.

## Jerusalem Conference on "The Future of Criticism"

The Jerusalem Conference is co-organized by Morris Zapp as the climax of the summer conference-hopping season. It is held in the Hilton Hotel, but the organizers plan to allow participants to spend as much time as possible away from lectures, enjoying the history and culture of the ancient city and its environs (including the Dead Sea and Masada ruins).

## Limerick University College

Limerick is the small agricultural college where Persse McGarrigle teaches Modern English in a three-person department. His department head is Liam McCreedy.

## Los Angeles

Los Angeles provides a meeting place for Persse and Angelica's adoptive father, whom he finds through the massive L.A. phone book while spending the last of his money on an outrageously expensive hotel room.

## Modern Language Association (MLA)

The association for U.S. college teachers of English language and literature, the MLA publishes a prestigious journal and carries out other professional activities. It is best known for drawing some 10,000 members and guests from around the world to some large city in the U.S. in the week between Christmas and New Years. It meets in New York just before the opening of the novel and again at the end, gathering nearly all the characters together. Conferees enjoy a vast array of subjects to which to listen, and the five scholars contending for the UNESCO Chair in Literary Criticism give their take on



the subject. Persse finds Angelica, and at a cocktail party the remaining loose ends of the novel are tied up.

## Queensland

Queensland is the sight of Australia's University of North Queensland, where Rodney Wainwright teaches and is working on a paper for Zapp's Jerusalem conference.

## Rummidge College

Rummidge is a provincial college in the English midlands where the novel opens. Ten years old, it is becoming decrepit. Lucas Hall is the dormitory, and Martineau Hall is for dining and drinking. Lectures are on the main campus, up the road. Persse's aunt lives in Rummidge, and she happens to be Zapp's former landlady from when he taught here on faculty exchange.

## Tokyo

One of the stops on Persse's worldwide search for Angelica, Tokyo is also the home of English teacher *cum* literary translator, Sakazaki. He is currently working on Ronald Frobisher's novel *Could Try Harder*. When Persse happens into a karaoke bar while visiting Tokyo in search of Angelica, Akira Sakazaki serves as Persse's unofficial translator and duet partner.

## UNESCO Chair in Literary Criticism

The Chair is a new position under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, intended to fund one literary scholar's work. He or she will enjoy a good salary plus unlimited travel expenses, office support and other perks. The chair will also be free of the kind of institutional control most colleges exert. It is a plum position for which most of the characters hunger. Jacques Textel, UNESCO's Assistant Director General in Paris, is in charge of the search, and Arthur Kingfisher, dean of the literati, is assigned to vet candidates.



# Themes

## Sex

*Small World* is permeated with sexual tension. A repressed, naive young man determined to preserve his virginity until marriage falls in love with a beautiful, sensual teaser. His strong Catholic beliefs torment him when he must descend into the world of pornography seeking his errant cousin and, as he incorrectly believes, his beloved. An older virgin is depicted as choosing this lifestyle because of the perceived ill effects marriage has had on colleagues' careers. For him, writing and publishing provide nearly sexual release. Indeed, middle-aged married characters are universally shown to have lost interest in sex with their spouses (although one couple continues having sex for its therapeutic value and several do it almost impersonally for relief, while thinking of other people and things). Several adulteries are depicted, most in the context of foreign travel to conferences, where traditional mores are stripped away and even intellectual opponents can fall into bed together.

In one case, intellectual outcasts cling to each other in desperation, but only after they agree that neither will depict the tryst in future novels. A male homosexual is suspicious of his submissive partner, with good reason as it turns out, because his lover falls for a woman. A frustrated elderly character is shown to be impotent both sexually and intellectually. He and his nubile young companion struggle to overcome both maladies. Nipple fixations are prominent. One character is bent on joining the mile-high club and eventually gets banned for life by the airlines. A threesome is proposed, but the newcomer to such activities locks himself safely away. Blackmail for sexual harassment is twice shown succeeding. The pornographic industry is broadly and graphically portrayed, but the most explicit use of sexuality comes in an academic paper devoted to it as a metaphor in literature. Epics are phallic. Tragedies are castrational, and romances are vaginal. Comedies are anal. This serves as a prelude to the protagonist's deflowering by the prostitute twin sister of the woman he has chased around the globe. It is, indeed, a small world sexually.

## Academia

*Small World* depicts the world of college teachers, particularly during summer breaks. For none of them, it appears, is pedagogy important. They endure the grind of classroom teaching (and other academic duties) only until they publish their first book. This frees them to publish a second, better book, which opens the full ladder of opportunity: higher academic ranks, tenure and the nirvana of unlimited grant funds to write and travel around the world. Academics attend conferences not to learn anything or even primarily to show off to their peers. They are out to enjoy new places and have sex, free from the mores they observe at home. Several times the pitfalls of having sex with one's students are demonstrated. Modern technology (still well short of the revolution effected by the Internet) has rendered the closed physical institution obsolete.





At the MLA convention we see recent graduates trying to get a foot in the door with recruiters, some mid-level scholars looking to play work-ups and department heads maneuvering to fill faculty rosters with talent, but by and large this is no longer needed. One can get ahead anywhere. The UNESCO chair is held up as the ultimate plum. It carries no institutional ties, no geographical limitations, unlimited support staff, encouragement to travel and an excellent salary. Most of the characters in *Small World* vie for the job and are shown undercutting one another verbally and in print. Jealousies and wrongs are not soon forgotten and forgiven by these people. In the end, the eminent elderly scholar assigned by UNESCO to vet candidates decides to come out of retirement to claim the prize himself. There is grumbling, but no one has the credentials to oppose him. They can only wait three years for the competition to resume. Participation in the small world of academia appears to be a heady experience.

## Travel

Much of *Small World* takes place in London's Heathrow Airport and the web of local and international airports that get the academic community to its diverse conferences. The hubbub, confusion, frustration, tedium and impersonality of the terminals and aircraft are aptly depicted, in an era before 9/11 and the emphasis on security. One character, an airline employee, is an individualist, paying attention to nice travelers and assigning them to seats beside those who seem to be compatible, while relegating nasty travelers to terrible seats. In a case that brings about her dismissal, she codes one traveler as a smuggler to get him cavity searched. In the pre-9/11 era, we see corporate hitchhikers out on the tarmac and hear travelers discuss terrorism, the recall of some jets for design flaws and the lesser prattle about food, drink, scheduling and other amenities. The trauma of in-flight accidents is depicted several times, twice with disaster averted and once with fatal results. Several times what each character is thinking and doing in his or her time zone is compared as the author takes a tour around the globe to establish interactions. This sets the stage for the academics, who know each other at least by name and reputation and sometimes more intimately, to come together physically in Jerusalem and later New York for conferences. By this point, we have watched their paths crisscross and converge many times across the small world.



# Style

## Point of View

*Small World* is told in third person omniscient narration, without the device of a formal narrator as a character. The narrative voice is unbiased and privy to the characters' inner thoughts. The author tells a linear tale, beginning in spring, when college students go on vacation, leaving their dormitory rooms free for academics to occupy. The story extends through the busy summer convention season and ends on New Year's Eve. The author sketches distinguishing physical characteristics when introducing his characters and often reiterates them when the characters are later encountered again. Details are filled in largely through conversation among the characters, who as academics, tend to have healthy egos and plenty to say about each other and themselves. The most extended example is Philip Swallow's confession to his old friend, Morris Zapp, about how years ago he seduced Joy Simpson. Swallow sets the scene for dramatic effect, as behooves a professor of English, which allows banter over how rehearsed the narrative is. It also allows Swallow's wife to overhear everything. The travel motif in general and Persse's quest in particular allow continual meetings, intentional and accidental. Several times the author allows false impressions to develop (that Joy is dead, or that Angelica is a porn star) in order later to correct them. Still, there is little sense that this adventure story is a mystery, until the truth about Angelica and her twin sister's biological parentage is sprung at the novel's conclusion.

## Setting

*Small World* follows protagonist Persse McGarrigle around the world. It is set in time around the mid- to late-1980s, at any rate before the advent of the Windows interface and the Internet and well before airports cracked down on security breaches. It begins on the campus of Rummidge, a provincial college in the English midlands during a literary conference. Many times the novel passes through Heathrow Airport, London, a hub for the international travel to which the academics are addicted. *Small World* pays several visits to colleges in Darlington and Limerick, wreaks havoc on the Thames and ventures into the red light districts of Soho and Amsterdam, Holland. After a storm heading to W. B. Yeats's famous Lake Isle of Innisfree in Ireland and a quick return to Amsterdam, the readers follow Persse to Los Angeles, Honolulu, Tokyo and Seoul. At each stop we glimpse the airport and academics at work and play. Through other characters, we glimpse Chicago, New York, Athens, Delphi, Ankara, Istanbul, Queensland and Tokyo. Jerusalem (with a side trip to the Red Sea and Masada ruins) brings most of the characters together, and everyone gathers in New York City for the massive MLA conference, where all of the story lines are tied up. The breadth of the setting brings the novel a flurry of movement and constant travel. The writers move so furiously through the world that they seem to never arrive anywhere.



## Language and Meaning

*Small World* is written in modern British English, at a high-brow level befitting academic people. Even the parts of the novel that descend into darkness in the unsavory neighborhoods of London and Amsterdam use only minimal amounts of lower-class speech. Allusions to literary works are, as one would expect in a novel about academics, frequent and usually well enough explained in context for those unfamiliar with the allusion to get the feel of what is being said - and why. Spokespeople for various linguistic and literary schools are pitted against one another intellectually, using appropriate jargon, dropping appropriate names and casting appropriate aspersions on opponents' arguments. There are only a handful of such scenes, but they can be difficult reading, if one allows them to be. In only two instances is a formal argument carried over into the narrative. One is Zapp's insistence that each decoding of a message is a new encoding. The other is Angelica's proposition that the romantic genre be considered "invagination." The remaining academic bluster can be considered background noise and simply enjoyed for the tone.

## Structure

*Small World* consists of five parts, each made up of multiple chapters. There are no subdividing titles or other devices. Part 1, consisting of two chapters, introduces the main characters and establishes that this is a novel about academics who spend their summers traveling around the world on a combination of business and pleasure. Its division in half is rather arbitrary.

Part 2, also consisting of two chapters, introduces additional characters and begins filling in detail on those earlier introduced. There is an international web and a new reason for communicating: the announcement of a mysterious and lucrative position opening at UNESCO. Chapter 2 is centered on Heathrow Airport as Persse meets Cheryl at the British Airlines desk. She expedites the development of several plot lines.

Part 3, in two chapters, gives Persse the funds to circle the world hunting for his errant cousin and his lost love Angelica, whom he fears has also fallen into debauchery in Europe. Swallow reunites with Joy in Turkey.

Part 4, in three chapters, has a unifying motif, the exclamation "Wheeeeeeeee!" as the characters take flight at the peak of conference season. Chapter 1 follows several sexual encounters at these events. Chapter 2 sends Persse to Amsterdam in pursuit of Angelica. The very long Chapter 3 shows Zapp kidnapped in Italy and bargained for by his unloving ex-wife, and Persse in Los Angeles, Honolulu and Asia seeking elusive Angelica and going broke. Nearly everyone gathers in Jerusalem, where knots are variously tied and untied.

Part 5, in two chapters, brings the literati to New York City for the MLA Convention. Persse finds Angelica-and her identical twin sister, Lily. Finally, the UNESCO chair goes to the retired scholar assigned to evaluate candidates. He turns out also to be the



biological father of the twins, revealed by the mother, who has popped up at every convention in the novel. Chapter 2, a mere two pages long, shows Persse back at Heathrow, wondering how to find the new girl of his dreams. These five parts, building to the short denouement of Part 5, Chapter 2, follow the characters in a complicated, interweaving dance. However far the story travels and however much the characters experience, Persse only travels back to his starting place, searching after an illusive dream.



## Quotes

"Persse flushed and stiffened with a chivalrous urge to protect the girl from insult. Professor Swallow, leaning forward to scrutinize her lapel badge, did indeed seem to be peering rudely down her dycolletage.

"Fine pair of knockers there, wouldn't you say?' Dempsey remarked.

"Persse turned on him fiercely. 'Knockers? *Knockers*? Why in the name of God call them that?'

"Dempsey backed away slightly. 'Steady on. What would you call them, then?'

"I would call them ... I would call them ... twin domes of her body's temple,' said Persse.

"Christ, you really are a poet, aren't you?" Part 1, Chapter 1, pg. 10

"But if the literary text says, 'The door was open,' I can only speculate about the significance of that door - opened by what agency, leading to what discovery, mystery, goal? The tennis analogy will not do for the activity of reading - it is not a to-and-fro process, but an endless, tantalising, leading on, a flirtation without consummation, or if there is consummation, it is solitary, masturbatory. [Here the audience grew restive.] The reader plays with himself as the text plays upon him, plays upon his curiosity, desire, as a striptease dancer plays with her audience's curiosity and desire." Part 1, Chapter 1, pg. 30

"That's how it is in the academic world these days,' said Morris Zapp. 'I was telling a young guy at the conference just this morning. The day of the single, static campus is over.'

"And the single, static campus novel with it, I suppose?'

"Exactly! Even two campuses wouldn't be enough. Scholars these days are like the errant knights of old, wandering the ways of the world in search of adventure and glory.'

"Leaving their wives locked up at home?'

"Well, a lot of the errant knights are women, these days. There's positive discrimination at the Round Table.'

"Bully for them,' said Hilary gloomily." Part 1, Chapter 2, pg. 72

"I said the sofa would be fine. "But Gerard gets up frightfully early, I'm afraid he'll disturb you," she said. "If you don't mind taking our bed, I could easily go into his room myself." I said no, no; she pressed me, and said would I just give her a few moments to change the sheets, and I said I wouldn't dream of putting her to such trouble. The thought of that bed, still warm from her body, was too much for me. I started to shake all over with the



effort to stop myself from taking an irrevocable leap into moral space, pulling on the zip-tab at her throat like a parachute ripcord, and falling with her to the floor.'

"That's a very fancy metaphor, Philip,' said Morris. 'I can't hardly believe you've never told this story before.'

"Well, actually, I did write it down,' said Philip, 'for my own satisfaction.'" Part 1, Chapter 2, pg. 83

"He joins a long line of people shuffling through the security checkpoint. His handbaggage is opened and searched. Practiced fingers turn over the jumble of toiletries, medicines, cigars, spare socks, and a copy of *Hazlitt and the Amateur Reader* by Philip Swallow. The lady making the search opens a cardboard box, and small, hard, cylindrical objects, wrapped in silver foil, rolled into the palm of her hand. 'Bullets?' her eyes seem to enquire. 'Suppositories,' Morris Zapp volunteers. Few privacies are vouchsafed to the modern traveller. Strangers rifling through your luggage can tell at a glance the state of your digestive system, what method of contraception you favour, whether you have a denture that requires a fixative, whether you suffer from haemorrhoids, corns, headaches, eye fatigue, flatulence, dry lips, allergic rhinitis and premenstrual tension. Morris Zapp travels with remedies for all these ailments except the last." Part 2, Chapter 1, pg. 115

"She obeys; but the kimono is delicate and valuable, its sash is wound around Song-Mi Lee's tiny waist in a complex knot, and it is at least half a minute before she has disrobed, by which time Arthur Kingfisher's excitement has subsided - or perhaps it was always an illusion, a phantom, wishful thinking. He returns despondently to his book and his seat in front of the TV. But he has forgotten what new theoretical leap he had begun to see the possibilities of a few moments ago, and the naked bodies writhing and clutching and quivering on the screen now seem merely to mock his impotence. He slaps the book shut, snaps off the TV and closes his eyes in despair. Song-Mi Lee silently recommences the removal of wax from his ear." Part 2, Chapter 2, pg. 162

"They had a learned technical conversation about the brewing of stout ale, illustrated by frequent sampling, for some time before they got around to introducing themselves. 'Ronald Frobisher!' Perse exclaimed. 'I've read some of your books. Are you getting a prize this evening?'

"No, I'm presenting one - Most Promising First Novel. When I started writing fiction there didn't seem to be more than a couple of literary prizes, and they were only worth about a hundred quid each. Nowadays there are so many that it's difficult to avoid winning one if you manage to publish anything at all. Sorry, didn't mean to cast aspersions on your - "" Part 3, Chapter 1, pg. 193

"Whimpering with pain, he delved in his briefcase for his makeshift toilet paper, and shuffled along the wall like a rock-climber until he came to the bathroom door. He tried the lightswitch inside without effect. A power cut, then. Sink to the left, toilet beyond it. Ah, there, thank God. He lowered himself on to the toilet seat and voided his liquefied



bowels. A foul smell filled the darkness. It must have been the kebab, or, more likely, the salad that accompanied it. Still, at least he had managed to get to the loo in time, in spite of the power cut.

"Philip began to wipe himself. When the lights came on of their own accord he found he was up to page five of his lecture of 'The Legacy of Hazlitt.'" Part 3, Chapter 1, pg. 216

"The whole academic world seems to be on the move. Half the passengers on transatlantic flights these days are university teachers. Their luggage is heavier than average, weighed down with books and papers - and bulkier, because their wardrobes must embrace both formal wear and leisurewear, clothes for attending lectures in, and clothes for going to the beach in, or to the Museum, or the Schloss, or the Duomo, or the Folk Village. For that's the attraction of the conference circuit: it's a way of converting work into play, combining professionalism with tourism, and all at someone else's expense. Write a paper and see the world! I'm Jan Austen - fly me! Or Shakespeare, or T. S. Eliot, or Hazlitt. All tickets to ride, to ride the jumbo jets. *Wheeeeeeeee!*" Part 4, Chapter 1, pg. 262

"I mean there's something I might say to you which might imply that I didn't trust you."

"What is it?"

"It's ... hard to say."

"I mean," says Dysirye. 'I've never done it with a writer before.'

"Exactly!"

"And what I'm trying to say is..."

"That you don't want to read about it in a novel one of these days? Or see it on television."

"How did you guess?"

"I had the same thought."

"Dysirye clasps her hands. 'So we can agree that neither of us will use this as material? Whether it's good or bad?'

?? ZH \ ] c t Absolutely. Scout's honour.'

"Then let's fuck, Ronald,' says Dysirye, rolling on top of him." Part 4, Chapter 2, pg. 272

"Morris called me as soon as he got back to the villa,' says Dysirye. 'At first he was hysterical with gratitude, it was like being licked all over your face by your dog when you



get back from a trip, I could almost hear his tail wagging on the other end of the line. Then when it sank in that I hadn't paid over any money, he turned very nasty, more like the Morris I remembered, accused me of being mean and callous and putting his life in jeopardy." Part 4, Chapter 3, pgs. 335-336

"Rodney Wainwright wakes in the morning to find his throbbing head reposing on top of the desk amid a litter of empty miniatures and sheets of paper covered with illegible gibberish. He sweeps the bottles and the paper into the waste basket. He showers, shaves, and dresses carefully, in his lightweight suit, a clean shirt, and tie. Then he kneels down beside his bed and prays. It is the only resource left to him now. He needs a miracle: the inspiration to extemporize a lecture on the Future of Criticism for forty-five of the fifty minutes allocated to him. Rodney Wainwright, never a deeply religious man, who has not in fact raised his mind and heart to God since he was nine, kneels in the holy city of Jerusalem, and prays, diplomatically, to Jehovah, Allah, and Jesus Christ, to save him from disgrace and ruin." Part 4, Chapter 3, pg. 346





## Topics for Discussion

How is jogging used as a plot device?

How is Irish Catholic guilt used as a plot device?

What purpose does Persse's encounter with Song-Mi Lee on the flight to Seoul serve?

Which of the candidates for the UNESCO chair have made the best use of the position?

How is the Oracle at Delphi used in the novel?

How is *The Faerie Queene* used in the novel?

How is "The Eve of St. Agnes" used in the novel?

What does the discussion of translating Shakespeare's play titles into Japanese contribute to the novel?