

CHANGING SPACES, CHANGING MOODS IN DAVID LODGE'S *CHANGING PLACES*

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David Lodge presents two different scenes of English and American cultural and academic life in his campus novel *Changing Places*. Philip Swallow, English professor, has low self-esteem, no ambition in his academic career. He works at University of Rummidge, an obscure college in an industrial city in the English Midlands. On the other hand, Morris Zapp, is a distinguished American professor at the State University of Euphoria, a famous learning centre located between North and South Plotinus. In an exchange programme for six months, the two professors replace each other's working and living positions. While Philip aims to recover from his lack of idealism in his academic life by going to the University of Euphoria, Morris tries to overcome his marital problems with his wife Désirée. However, throughout the book Philip indulges in sexual affairs, the student riots and gets arrested and Morris is interested in pornographic magazines. This indicates that they try to find out their identities in the post-war social circumstances. Therefore, the argument of this paper is that although the two professors change their places, this transformation does not contribute to the resolution of their problems and the establishment of their personal identities in that timeline.

Keywords: Campus Novel, David Lodge, Changing spaces, Identity, Post-war period.

As one of the major literary types of the twentieth century, campus novel reflects the humanity in that timeline. It elaborates on the aspects, which the authors find problematic. In Kenneth Womack's words, "academic novels often satirize and problematize the contradictions and sociological nuances of campus life" (1). However, the two world wars in the first half of the century cause destruction not only by the death of millions of people, but also the termination of reliance on such social institutions and values as family, marriage, religion, communication. The European society's development of an anxious attitude towards the traditional way of life and its norms leads to the void of belief in them. Therefore, the argument of this paper is that David Lodge (b. 1935), in his *Changing Places* (1975), presents individuals' identity crisis and their efforts to find ways to express themselves in the twentieth century context, using university campuses as the microcosm of the society in that period.

The novel focuses on the two instructors, Philip Swallow and Morris Zapp, who live in England and the USA respectively. While Swallow works at the University of Rummidge, his American partner is an instructor at the University of Euphoria. They shift their settings due to their participation in an exchange programme. At this point, the writer deals with the loss of family bond and void of belief in the ideals of the academic life as the issues that make the work a representative of the post-war social circumstances:

Actually, it was more complicated than that. Désirée, Morris's second wife, wanted a divorce, but Morris didn't. It wasn't Désirée that he was loth to part from, but their children, Elizabeth and

Darcy, the darlings of Morris Zapp's otherwise unsentimental heart. Désirée was sure to get custody of both children – no judge, however fair-minded, was going to split up a pair of twins – and he would be restricted to taking them out to the park or movie once a month. (35-6)

In the quotation, Morris Zapp has problems with his family life. His wife expects to get divorced from him. He considers the matter not only with regard to his relation with Désirée, but also in terms of his daughters. For that reason, he considers the exchange programme as a chance to recover his marriage. Philip Swallow is different from Morris Zapp and the novelist explains its reason as follows:

Zapp was distinguished, and Swallow was not. Zapp was the man who had published articles in PMLA while still in graduate school; who enviably offered his first job by Euphoric State [...]. Swallow was a man scarcely known outside his own Department, who had published nothing except a handful of essays and reviews [...]. Not that Philip Swallow was lacking in intelligence or ability; but he lacked will and ambition, the professional killer which Zapp abundantly possessed. (11)

Here, Swallow is depicted as a binary opposition to his partner. He is not as academically ambitious as Zapp is. He has few articles published. Hence, his purpose for the participation in the exchange programme is to reverse his characteristics in his job, while Morris aims to cope with his marital problems. In Siegfried Miew's words, the novel deals with "the [...] tribulations of the two professors of English Literature" (715). However, the author clarifies the major reason leading Zapp to exchange his university with Philip Swallow, suggesting that "he was prone to indigestion after rich restaurant meals, he usually needed a sleeping-pill after retiring, he was developing a pot-belly, and he found it increasingly difficult to achieve more than one orgasm in a single session – or so he would complain to his buddies over a beer" (42). He spends his time at expensive restaurants, eating and drinking excessively. Moreover, he is involved in the sexual affairs. So, Morris Zapp does not exhibit a sincere attitude towards his bond with his wife and children. He acts in this manner, since he does not attribute significance to such concepts as family and marriage. Therefore, as a post-war individual, he cannot communicate with Désirée, Elizabeth and Darcy. In order to express his self in the social sphere which is devoid of values and ideals, he chooses to spend his time in expensive restaurants and satisfy his sexual desire in different sessions. Thus, his deeds and viewpoints as well as Philip's situation, create a microcosm of the second half of the twentieth century context; because, they reflect a "marked lack of sympathy for the traditional claims" (Bergonzi 14).

Accordingly, the two major characters take part in the exchange programme to change their places. However, the shift in their settings does not contribute to the resolution of the matters they face, but it rather makes them more alienated from the established values and institutions; namely, the family, marriage and the university life as a result of the post-war social circumstances. Although Philip aims to recover from his lack of idealism in his academic life by going to the University of Euphoria, he not only becomes estranged by these values, but he also loses his attachment to his family. He has a sexual intercourse with Melanie, who is depicted as Morris Zapp's daughter, though he is not aware of her status as his partner's child:

Melanie's eyes were fixed on his, but vacantly. Her body was listening to the music. Her eyelids listened, her nipples listened, her little toes listened. The music had gone very quiet, but they didn't lose it. She swayed, he swayed, they all swayed, swayed and nodded, very slightly, keeping time, responsive to the sudden accelerations and slowings of the plucking fingers [...]. Philip lay face down on the floor while Melanie walked up and down his back in her bare feet.

The experience was an exquisite mixture of pleasure and pain. Though his face was pressed to the hard floor, his neck twisted, the breath squeezed out of his lungs, his shoulder-blades pushed nearly through his chest and his spine was creaking like a rusty hinge, he could have had an orgasm without difficulty – hardly surprising when you thought about it, some men paid good money in brothels for this kind of thing. He groaned softly as Melanie balanced on his buttocks. She jumped off. (94-5)

The narrator elaborates on the rhythm of their affair by means of the words such as “sway”, “orgasm”, “brothel”. Even if Philip Swallow comes to the USA to excel himself in his academic branch, he not only fails in this matter, but he also loses his attachment to his wife, Hillary, who “stays in Rummidge to attend to her and Philip’s children and maintain their home” (Martin 27). Therefore, like his partner, Morris Zapp, Philip also alienates himself from the established institutions such as family and marriage. He cannot express his self-identity in his domestic life. Kenneth Womack puts emphasis on the role of sex in the work and argues that while it “functions in Lodge’s aesthetic as a mechanism for relieving the scholarly woes of his intellectual characters, it also operates as a means for engendering interpersonal communication between his often introverted and hyper-intellectualised academics as well. [...]. They remain virtually unable to communicate [...] without the benefit of [...] scholarly jargon” (78). Thus, Philip resorts to sexual intercourse with his partner’s daughter as a solution to resolve his identity crisis in the post-war society due to the loss of belief in the traditional values and ideals.

In addition to the experience of affair with Melanie, he attends the entertainments organised by the striptease clubs and tries to satisfy his desires and hence reveal his self-identity in the twentieth century context. As the narrator emphasises, “he now stands gawping incredulously at the strip-joints that jostle each other all along Cortez Avenue – topless and bottomless ping-pong, roulette, shoe-shine, barbecue, all-in wrestling and go-go dancing – where [...] now GIRLS! GIRLS! GIRLS! and STRIP-STRIP-STRIP-STRIP in giant neon letters strain against the sun” (106). Participating in these parties, he makes efforts to recover his identity crisis and find new values on which he can establish his daily life.

A similar situation is seen in Morris Zapp’s case. Although he does not take part in such sexual entertainments, he is depicted as a character who is indulged in pornography magazines. The author reflects this matter, suggesting that “he retired to his bedroom with a copy of *Playboy* that had caught up with him in the mail. Stretched out on the penultimate resting place of Mrs O’Shea, Sr., he ran an expert eye over Miss January’s boobs and settled down to read a photo-feature on the latest sports car” (86). Zapp is interested in the pornographic journals; because, by reading them and looking at their pictures, he aims to reveal his identity in the post-war society that is devoid of values.

Along with the shattered notion of family and marriage, the author reflects the insecure conditions of the universities that function as the microcosm of the society in that timeline. In the novel, the references to the newspaper headlines put emphasis on this issue. In relation to Morris Zapp, the newspaper entitled *Rummidge Evening Mail* suggests that “the non-professorial staff association at Rummidge University has proposed that a mediator be nominated to chair negotiations between the University Administration and the Students’ Union Executive, to try and bring the sit-in to an end. [...]. Professor Morris J. Zapp [...] has been suggested as a possible candidate for the job of mediator” (159). Zapp takes part in student demonstrations; because, he considers involvement in these activities as a means of discovery of his identity in the post-war social circumstances. A similar situation is seen in Philip Swallow. Like Zapp, he also participates in the students’ unions at Euphoria University. As the newspaper entitled *Euphoric State Daily* writes, “professor Philip Swallow, British visitor to the English

department, was among sixteen people arrested on Saturday for allegedly stealing bricks from the demolition site [...]. ‘I’ve never been busted before,’ he said. ‘It was a memorable experience [...]’ ” (151). His case is different from Zapp, since Swallow is arrested. However, the common point between them is that they both search for another method by which they can communicate their ideas with the individuals who, like these academics, are in quest for their identities in the post-war social circumstances. Therefore, riots against the university administrations and the police force represent the twentieth century humanity’s reaction against the established manners, values and institutions. The individuals in that period shatter their attachment to the traditional systems due to the destructive effects of the two world wars on mankind. The indulgence in illegitimate sexual affairs and opposition to the authoritative institutions indicate the humanity’s oblivion in that timeline. Therefore, the events handled in the newspaper headlines in the novel reflect the century’s circumstances.

Consequently, the author elaborates on the period’s context “on the road of realism” (Head 6). The transformation of places between the two characters does not contribute to the resolution of their problems. Their moods change; however, this shift occurs negatively. Although Philip goes to the USA to improve himself academically, his sexual intercourse with Melanie, Zapp’s daughter, indicates the adverse effects of his changing mood, which signifies his search for an identity in the twentieth century context. Similarly, though he aims to recover his marital issues, Zapp is indulged in the pornographic magazines in Rummidge. So, he reveals his quest for an individual identity. Thus, David Lodge’s *Changing Places* establishes the campus settings as the microcosm of the period’s society and hence it serves “a distinctly postmodern purpose” (Morace 158). Therefore, it is a significant work in the literary canon.

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