Hello

this voice I speak with these days, this English voice with its rounded vowels and consonants in more or less the right place

this is not the voice of my childhood

I picked it up in college, along with the unabridged *Clarissa* and a taste for port

maybe this fact is only what it seems to be

a case of bald social climbing

but at the time I genuinely thought *this* was the voice of lettered people

and that if I didn’t have the voice of lettered people I would never truly be lettered

a braver person, perhaps, would have stood firm, teaching her peers a useful lesson by example

not all lettered people need be of the same class, nor speak identically

I went the other way

partly out of cowardice and a constitutional eagerness to please

but also because I didn’t quite see it as a straight swap, of this voice for that.