

# The “Language” of Campus Novels - A Gap Between High Ideals of an Institution and Human Weaknesses

## “Limbajul” romanelor academice - o discrepanță între idealurile instituționale mărețe și slăbiciunile umane

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### Abstract

*The present paper synthesizes the importance of the campus novel and its impact upon post-war Britain, beginning with the 1950s. The intention is to explain the importance of this genre in the academic environment and not only. I focused on the works of two representative writers in this respect, that is, Kingsley Amis and Malcolm Bradbury. It is a very modern theme because it does not concern only professors but also students and implicitly their parents, and hence, the huge popularity of this literary genre. Presented in a relaxing and comic manner, this type of novel deals with all sorts of pressures, relationships, protocols, love affairs, endless meetings and historical facts which sooner or later highlight the ridiculousness of the world we live in.*

### Rezumat

*Prezenta lucrare sintetizează importanța romanului academic, de campus, precum și impactul său asupra Marii Britanii în perioada de după razboi, începând cu anii 1950. Intenția este de a explica importanța acestui gen literar pentru mediul academic și nu numai. S-au abordat două lucrări ale celor mai reprezentativi scriitori în acest sens. Este vorba despre Kingsley Amis și Malcolm Bradbury. Este o tematică foarte modernă deoarece nu face referire doar la profesori ci și la studenți și implicit la părinți, de aici rezultând imensa popularitate a acestui gen literar. Prezentat într-o manieră comică și relaxantă, acest tip de roman tratează diverse relații, protocoale, aventuri amoroase, ședințe nesfârșite și evenimente istorice care subliniază ridicoulul lumii în care trăim.*

**Key words:** campus, novel, university, popularity, humour

**Cuvinte cheie:** campus, roman, universitate, popularitate, umor

### British society and the impact of academic novels

Historical context has always had a huge impact on establishing a relationship between society and literature and therefore it is essential for the literary comprehension of the genre under discussion, that is, the campus novel. The authors have been inspired by personal experience, correlating it with the political and educational aspects of the British society. Campus novels are critical and entertaining books, comic or satirical, which use universities as settings and professors as protagonists. Campus novels all feature life at university, funny escapades, unscrupulous professors. This trend spread quickly all over the world due to the romantic twists and social integration problems which appeal so much to the reader who has once experienced academic life, either as a teacher or as an undergraduate. The academic novel has become a literary genre illustrated by some early examples such as Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim*, Malcolm Bradbury's *The History Man* or the most notable one, David Lodge, and his famous campus trilogy.

These three authors are often compared and contrasted in terms of literary output. The present paper introduces in chronological order the writers and the academic environment they depicted. If the 1950s belonged to Kingsley Amis and the 1960s characterized Malcolm Bradbury's work, then the 1970s were definitely connected with David Lodge. After analyzing the campus novel as a literary genre, the present paper set itself the task of exemplifying such features with the novels of the first two authors mentioned above.

In the post-war decades, the academic novel became extremely popular in Great Britain due to its setting and humoristic approach. However, the origins of this type of novel go back a long way – in the 1850s when Bede Cuthbert published *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green*.<sup>[1]</sup> Later on he was followed by Mary McCarthy's book *Groves of Academe*, published in 1952 in America and Vladimir Nabokov's *Pnin*. Either called “academic novel”, “campus novel” or “varsity novel” this genre focuses on British and American teachers and students as protagonists and it has developed some sub-genres like Agatha Christie's campus murder mystery. However, Amis and Bradbury have remained outstanding figures in the history of campus novels. Their unique manner of creating funny characters, lecturers at the department of English, rows with the chiefs, different views and opinions, contradictions with the students, blunders, success, failure, love affairs make these novels appeal not only to the educated reader belonging to an academic environment but also to the common, ordinary one. Campus novels have become very popular and their success is explained by David Lodge: “academic conflicts are relatively harmless, safely insulated from the real world and its sombre concerns”<sup>[2]</sup> If in the 1950s this type of literature could solve social and political problems by setting the plot in the cultural and educational environment of British universities, at the end of the 1970s, the genre changed its form and began to be perceived as satirical humour and irony.

After the second world war radical changes occurred in social attitudes and educational system in Great Britain. The society was reshaping, the Empire was gradually breaking up and the colonies became independent. The government was confronting with lots of problems and therefore, it passed several reforms like The Education Act in 1944 or The National Health Service Acts in 1946 which addresses mainly to the lower class. Health service was free and education abolished fees in secondary schools and introduced scholarships in universities. And this is how young scholarship graduates like Kingsley Amis, began to emerge on the literary scene. The upper-class felt threatened by these poor intellectuals. As Somerset Maugham said, “They do not go to university to acquire culture, but to get a job, and when they have got one, scamp it. They have no manners, and are woefully unable to deal with any social predicament. Their idea of a celebration is to go a public house and drink six beers. They are mean, malicious and envious. They will write anonymous letters to harass a fellow undergraduate and listen to a telephone conversation that is no business of theirs. Charity, kindness, generosity are qualities which they hold in contempt. They are scum. They will in due course leave the university. Some will doubtless sink back, perhaps with relief, into the modest class from which they emerged; some will take to drink, some to crime, and go to prison. Others will become schoolmasters and form the young, or journalist and mould public opinion. A few will go into Parliament, become Cabinet Ministers and rule the country. I look upon myself as fortunate that I shall not live to see it.”<sup>[3]</sup> But still the government's intention was to level social classes. Kingsley Amis and Malcolm Bradbury were two of the authors who benefited most from these new reforms.

#### **Lucky Jim – a “linguistic register” for articulating “our sense of social identity”** [4]

Along with John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger*, in 1956, emerged the Angry Young Men movement which was represented by a group of authors who devised a typology of character. They created the lower-class young and frustrated intellectual who was dissatisfied with the new social situation and who confronted with a system of social castes and empty percepts. *Lucky Jim* is considered to be the birth certificate of the Angry Young Men movement in prose, ringing the first note of protest in this field.

Coming from a lower middle-class family, Kingsley Amis was born in London and studied at St. John's College at Oxford, due to a scholarship provided by the state. He identifies somehow with his hero, Jim Dixon. After graduation he became a teacher and thus, inspired by his personal experience with the academic environment, wrote *Lucky Jim*. It was a great success because it explicitly described the post-war social reality reflected in the eyes of a generation of young intellectuals. It earned him huge popularity and his hero became the prototype of the "angry young man" who rebels against society. Walter Allen described this hero as "consciously, even conscientiously, graceless. His face, when not dead-pan, is set in a snarl of exasperation. [...] He is at odds with his conventional university education, though he comes generally from a famous university"[5]. The story of Jim Dixon, the young history lecturer who struggles to keep his job, (although he hates it) being comically at odds with the social culture of his elders, managed to capture a powerful contemporary mood. He even explained why he chose this profession: "... the reason why I'm a medievalist, as you call it, is that the medieval papers were a soft option in the Leicester course, so I specialized in them. Then when I applied for the job here, I naturally made a big point of that, because it looked better to seem interested in something specific." [6]

It is a romantic comedy having as protagonist an innocent young man who prefers to drink beer and pick up girls rather than focus on his job. He is trapped into someone else's culture, as he is lifted by social opportunity into a culture he cannot understand. As a leitmotif in campus novels, he hates the head of department, Professor Welch, although he does his best to leave a good impression. But being rather unlucky he manages to do exactly the opposite. His skepticism about the job, his resentments, emerge in a kind of clumsiness, leading him through drunken disasters with bedclothes and with the delivery of a lecture.

He fails to accept and to understand the academic and moral values of his chief. He disgraces himself with a drunken lecture making his revolt plain. He gives up the academic environment turning to the girl he is in love with – Christine. His second decision is to begin work in the real ordinary world. He is rescued from the confusions of this academic life, ironically, by a member of the moneyed classes he despises. For him, it is the beginning of a new life – a happy one, because he gets a well-paid job and the girl he loves. This happy ending make *Lucky Jim* seem much more simply a comedy, than the social criticism of the angry young man it was often considered at the time. The ludicrous and funny characters of the boom cannot represent "tools" of anger. His "luck" at the end of the novel also exemplifies a tendency towards reconciliation with society, rather than any real desire to change or to improve it. He is a rebel without a cause fighting against human stupidity, but however, he settles for compromise and social acceptance. The force and the comic strength of the book, lie in the cultural and linguistic values it displays as well as in the stereotypical character the author drew up. Jim Dixon is the man with a poor educational background and humble origins, being in love with a girl above himself socially. Kingsley Amis created a comedy that actually avoided the social themes that could have dominated the novel, raising instead issues that remained personal. A distinct moral theme surfaces in *Lucky Jim*, that is, the need to find respect for oneself and others. The protagonist does not rebel against contemporary British society but against upper-classes culture. He is an honest man, with common sense, who likes to tell the truth. His revolt represents the author's own dissatisfaction with the people surrounding him. Jim is disgusted by books and medieval history. His accent indicates his social origin. Most of his hatred is directed towards his superior's family, Professor Welch. Both him and his wife have well-paid jobs and they belong to the middle class. Their son Bertrand is described as an ignorant boy who looks down on Jim. The whole family is portrayed as snobbish, as made up of persons who pretend to be something else than they really are. They like to have an intellectual lifestyle and to climb on the social ladder as high as they can. Bertrand and Jim become rivals when they fall in love with the same girl, Christine. Jim's final victory embodies in fact a victory of honesty and simplicity over hypocrisy and snobbery. Another character belonging to middle-class is his colleague Margaret who cannot acknowledge the fact that she will never be able to achieve more beauty than she already has. In an attempt to appear more sophisticated she put a lot of make-up on

metaphorically creating a “mask” of hypocrisy. Gore-Urquart, a man of the upper-class and Christine’s uncle as well, stands as a symbol of elegance and distinction. Well-mannered and discrete, he helps Jim escape the maze of academic life and finds him a well-paid job.

One weekend, when Jim attends Welch’s party (more out of obligation or necessity), a clash occurs between Jim and the Professor. Our protagonist becomes horrified by the sophisticated entertainment the family is trying to display. He considers they are all showing off by play-reading, reciting or playing instruments, as opposed to him, whose main way of having fun is by drinking beer. There is a huge gap between Dixon and the Welch family which will come to a surface later on, when Jim can’t put up with this snobbery anymore. While drunk, he delivers a lecture in which he clearly states all his points of view about life and about his Professor and other people like him belonging to middle-class. The consequence is his dismissal.

Critics claimed that this novel represented an attack on the academic environment as it reflected the reality of post-war British society when anybody could attend university even if only for getting a degree. It was a moment in history when people preferred to focus on quantity rather than quality. The author mocks both at students and at professors who are regarded as absent-minded persons. The tools Kingsley Amis employs for depicting this society are satire and irony. These elements appear throughout the book, but however, they are best displayed in Jim’s final lecture. The protagonist ridicules his colleagues emphasizing their clumsiness and stupidity. He also makes fun of the French names Welch’s sons have – as an allusion to anti-foreignness.

When *Lucky Jim* was published, many young people identified themselves with our protagonist, due to the changes that were taking place in the post-war society and most of all, in the educational system. As a result of high unemployment rates there were few opportunities of finding a job on the British market – that is why Jim decided to stick to his position at university. But situation changed in the 1960s. austerity was replaced by progress and liberalization. Everything was beginning to change and the technological developments played a major role in the improvement of working conditions, domestic chores, education and even free time activities. The average wage rose and people were starting to benefit from new ways of entertainment as well as from greater freedom. The sixties became an epoch of openness to new ideas and behaviours and the narrow-mindedness of the society could finally be defeated. The youth had a huge contribution to this change due to their growing interest in new technologies, sexual revolution, fashionable clothes and music. These new attitudes might also account for the publication in 1960, of the controversial novel *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* by D. H. Lawrence. In the beginning it had been forbidden as it contained obscene scenes and sexual themes; later on these taboos were removed from people’s minds. Women’s movement was also in its beginning when the Parliament gave more freedom on sexual matters. The Abortion Act and the Divorce Reform Act were also passed in 1969. people did not reject homosexuals and contraception anymore. In the educational system, there was a shift from traditional to innovative - universities were upgraded and the new ones rivaled the American ones. Sociology became a very fashionable subject in schools as it focused on subcultures as well. People were more and more concerned about their rights, about alternative medicine and about everything that was new and revolutionizing.

The economic growth of the society brought about changes in different areas like family relationships, incomes, salaries, attitudes in general. Wages rose considerably, new houses were built and television became an element that influenced all spheres of social life. People had more time to dedicate to hobbies like football, gambling or restaurant eating. But, on the long run, all these benefits had drawback as well. Many young people became addicted to drugs and alcohol, others manifested racist attitudes regarding the immigrants, turning into violent and aggressive citizens. But the real revolution expressed by Kingsley Amis was a cultural one. The dominant air was a cynical exploration of the new society, of the new landscapes, of the revival of local and regional cultures. Kingsley Amis continued for a time to direct his anger against variety of hypocrisies. His novel is the most vigorous and effective example of the protest, particularly in the passage that expose the academic environment and the pseudo-culture and social pretensions. The

romantic university novel, once shifted out of Oxbridge, turns into the “campus novel”, set in a world where culture is not taken for granted but struggled for, and where rapid social transitions are taking place. The author proved an outstanding modernity through his interest in character in a world that was radically changing. With Kingsley Amis, not only the “campus” or “provincial” life came to be seen through different eyes and from a different standpoint. Britain and the world got to be viewed from a different angle, because old meanings were too outdated, and the new ones had to emerge from an environment of instability.

*Lucky Jim* has stood the test of time and remained, over the decades Kingsley Amis’s most widely appreciated book. It was the first piece of writing following the tradition of the campus novel, to mock at the faculty rather than at the students. However, there have also been unfavourable critics as the author was accused of vulgarity because of the protagonist’s behaviour. The atmosphere depicted in the novel and the so-called vulgarity have been caused by the tense climate of post-war Britain. On the background of this tense atmosphere, Amis underlines “...his theory that nice things are nicer than nasty ones”[7] – which proves Jim Dixon’s simplicity and fidelity. He is perfectly aware of what he likes and wants, and the only thing he has to do is to learn how to act on those instincts. Dixon becomes very determined and by expressing his contempt for social functions he manages to get a well-paid job in the end. The quotation above, finds some correspondence in the end of the novel as well, when characters are rewarded for making their own decisions and doing what they want. The alienated and confused students from that period of history, were reflected in the character of Jim Dixon, who resents Professor Welch due to his hypocrisy and inability of doing his own work properly. Jim points out the obscurity of the academic environment in general, by criticizing his own article which seems to reflect something it is not. “It was a perfect title, in that it crystallized the article’s niggling mindlessness, its funereal parade of yawn-enforcing facts, the pseudo-light it threw upon non-problems.”[8] Thus, he underlines once again his hatred for the phoniness of the campus. The quotation above is not only critical but also funny and amusing as it ridicules a real life situation.

Being a member of the Angry Young Men movement along with John Osborne, Colin Wilson or Alan Sillitoe, Amis explains his preference for and concern about the oppression of the working-class. He also protested against the romantic literature of the thirties, supporting a more straightforward and even humouristic style. Therefore, some critics regarded him as a comic writer. There is a quotation describing Dixon’s hangover: “Consciousness was upon him before he could get out of the way”[9], which represents an example of how comedy works in *Lucky Jim*. It is an absurd phrase, because Jim often takes clichéd language of others and modifies it.

Jim Dixon is a sardonic and frustrated character who comments on other people’s language or appearance and who makes faces to himself in private. Despite being a submissive and docile man in the beginning, he fears of being fired due to his behaviour. He shares his likes and dislikes and rejects pomposity, hypocrisy and the special needs of certain people like high-class representatives. Dixon belongs to the category of unfortunate people whose luck changes towards the end of the novel due to the strength of taking radical decisions. Therefore, the author sets forth a socialist protagonist who fits perfectly in, with the atmosphere of post-war Britain. Another funny character who displays false maturity is the woman Jim is in love with, Christine Callaghan. However she is not as phony as the reader might expect because at a certain point, in a shy manner she expresses her unremorseful attitudes and her personal problems. She dislikes the same people Jim does, having a tendency of evaluating her feelings and attitudes objectively. She opens up to Jim, even if they belong to different social classes, thing which pushes Dixon into loving her even more: “The sight of her seemed an irresistible attack on his own habits, standards, and ambitions: something designed to put him in his place for good.”[10] She represents the forbidden fruit as she is already engaged with a man who doesn’t love her. Despite his hatred and sarcasm towards high-class society, he has a different opinion about Christine – she is the only person that manages to intimidate him. “Dixon was interested by this conventional absence of conventional sensitivity; for almost the first time in his life a woman was behaving in a way alleged to be typical of

women.”[11] Jim is impressed by the girl’s honesty, strength and lack of pretense and is totally fascinated by her imperfections, or to put it in a more sensitive way, her lack of feminine habits. As opposed to Christine, there is Margaret Peel, another university lecturer, who sympathizes with Jim’s problems in an attempt of trying to win his heart over. Employing all sorts of emotional tactics, she turns into a menace for the male protagonist. She is less refined than Christine, but however, she seems more natural in the way that she clearly expresses her thoughts. However, she fits into the hypocritical and self-centered typology of characters suffering of loneliness and insecurity. A dramatic and manipulative woman, she even fakes a suicide attempt in order to draw Dixon’s attention. An essential symbol outlined throughout the novel is luck, be it good or bad. The humour of the book is expressed through bad luck, which later on turns into self-pity. When he finally realizes that there is more to life than bad luck (there is also good luck) he changes his fate for the better. He bravely faces the self-centered Bertrand Welch who considers that Christine is his property because they belong to the same social class and this is the way things should be. It is all a matter of luck. But his theory is contradicted when, in the end of the novel, the woman chooses Jim. Another example of bad luck is Margaret’s favourite dress and quasi-velvet shoes. She insists on wearing this outfit being convinced that Jim likes it; the truth is he hates it. Another major feature of the present book is hypocrisy which seems to be like a contagious disease. The Welch family is full of social pretensions while Bertrand poses as an outstanding artist. Jim’s initial failure of revealing his real feelings and opinions about the people surrounding him, puts him in a bad light. However, he learns his lesson and eventually understands what to appreciate or not in people’s demeanour.

The differences between social classes are strongly highlighted in the novel because they separate people into refined characters and vulgar ones. Even though rich people display nice clothes, social etiquette and aesthetic appreciation of art, lower-class representatives are far more admirable due to their lack of falsity and hypocrisy. Professor Welch wears a fishing hat pretending to be a great fisherman, although he has never fished in his life. People like him keep using useless things just to show off. This class distinction also divides people into good and bad ones. Professor Welch, Bertrand and Margaret are incapable of conveying sympathy or compassion because they have flat and expressionless faces unlike Jim, who often thinks of Catherine’s mimicry or who even makes faces to himself in the mirror. Only genuine people who have nothing to hide can do this.

### **The History Man – an arena of social, political and cultural change**

If the comic novel was a favourite of the young novelists, it is time we mentioned the second important figure in the area of campus novels. Malcolm Bradbury is the author of a many novels that investigate the academic world with an unexpected sarcasm from a teacher who enjoyed university work so much. He was a British writer born in a working class family. After graduating from university, he worked as a professor until retirement. During his “academic” years he met his lifelong friend, the writer David Lodge. They were often compared and contrasted because they both focused on the same literary genre and on critics. He was an expert on the modern novel publishing extensively not only on modern classics but also handbooks of modern fiction. His novels are dark satires of academic life, less playful in language and style. He established a new trend in fiction by means of the humour rendered by the clash of cultures and the multitude of malentendues and most of his work belongs to the realist tradition. As David Lodge suggests, his “creative practice” is clearly connected to the fiction of the fifties: he and Malcolm Bradbury are the principal English novelists to follow Kingsley Amis’s *Lucky Jim*, in comically depicting campus life.

Malcolm Bradbury spent almost half a century in academic surroundings, setting all his novels in an environment he is familiar with. However, when discussing his literary output he said about the novels: “they are not, I believe campus novels, rather novels about self-aware intellectuals capable of irony and doubt, concerned with the issues of change and liberation, the problems of humanism, and so might well have been in other settings.”[12] The author focused on liberal values and changes of attitude in the British society of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His books

proved to be a real success and he won many prizes. The most notable ones would be: *Eating People Is Wrong* and *The History Man*. The latter one, which shall be thoroughly discussed in the present paper is one of his best works satirizing an entire society. He abandons conventional narrative techniques in favour of a rapid narrative pace. He presents in a humorous way university life in the 1960s, when the Vietnam conflicts could be felt in the background. As a consequence of the social changes that occurred after the Second World War, people became full of hopes. Malcolm Bradbury was very interested in these radical changes and depicted them in his novel *The History Man*. He focused on a rather critical approach of the “new” society.

Set in Watermouth University, *The History Man* is the story of two modern people, Barbara and Howard Kirk. It captures the complexities of academic life, from all sorts of meetings and work-place machinations to corruption at the highest level. A radical, promiscuous and sexually predatory sociology teacher, the protagonist, Howard Kirk, is an intellectual who observes the chic pretensions of the period. Even if women are attracted to him, he is shallow and superficial and therefore not very dangerous. The Kirks are very trendy people, but living together for many years and the advance of middle age have left some unfavourable traces in their relationship. It is Barbara Kirk who notices this change, whereas Howard is as enthusiastic and self-assured as always.

The author frequently lingers upon the University of Watermouth and on the way it has developed along the years. It is a contemporary construction built under modern auspices. In this respect, the architect created one giant canteen both for students and for teachers as well as a chapel within the university. The latest technological developments are also mentioned in the book, emphasizing their importance for the effectiveness of the lectures and of the teaching process. Malcolm Bradbury wanted to draw up the image of an enclosed intellectual community by setting the university outside the city centre, by introducing various services in the campus like supermarkets, pubs or post offices. But one major drawback of this plan is the feeling of loneliness and isolation one might have in such a self-sufficient place. In contrast with the modern university there are the slums, run-down buildings, drug-takers or homeless people.

The book sets forth the atmosphere of the sixties seen through the eyes of a middle-class family. The Kirks and the society are both undergoing a little revolution. As the protagonist shifts his views from radical ones to revolutionary ideas, he starts having affairs with his students and colleagues. The same attitude is approached by his wife Barbara, who is aware of her husband's escapades and instead of protesting she also finds a lover. Howard is self-centered and a bit conservative due to his position at university. He writes books, while his wife would like to, but never gets round to actually doing it. There are always female students who come to live with them rather than work for them and they are ruthlessly turned into baby-sitters and maids performing off sorts of domestic chores.

The author also makes references to the Kirks' past. They have not always been rich; when students, they belonged to the working class and could not afford more than was strictly necessary. As a married couple they had a normal life, until one day when Barbara's affair with an Egyptian affects in an awkward manner both spouses and they decide to change their values and attitudes. They begin throwing parties, smoking pot, they develop new interests, they change their appearance and start having small escapades. When Barbara has to give birth, her husband takes all his students to the hospital to watch her. The action of the novel ranges on a period of a couple of months. Professor Howard is totally against non-Marxist concepts and as a consequence insults one of his students who has another opinion and even gets him expelled. The two spouses become obsessed with sex. During her many trips to London, Barbara spends long weekends with her new lover, while her husband chooses his victims from the university – either students or colleagues. The success of a party in their vision is determined by the number of guests who are having sex in the rooms upstairs. His promiscuity gets him into trouble when a student complains about his indecent behaviour but he manages to get away with it. Moreover, he lures other teachers into this dangerous game of love affairs. For example Dr. Macintosh decides to have a sexual encounter with one of his students, despite having a pregnant wife at home; Flora Beniform sleeps with men only to achieve

her professional goals. In the end Barbara and Howard are still together, as a happy married couple – to the amazement of all their friends. Howard is a character interested in challenging social norms, who believes his rhetoric only as it applies to others. He uses people and takes advantage of each situation; he is manipulative and does everything in his power to secure his position. The main irony of the book is that the so-called radical rebel, desires nothing more than to remain comfortable in the social milieu he has created for himself.

Born in England, Howard grew up in a working-class family just like the author himself. He won a scholarship and went to study at university which represented an opportunity of climbing the social ladder. He resembles Kingsley Amis's protagonist, Jim Dixon, because they come from the same social background and manage to get a job in the academic environment due to a scholarship. The difference is that, if Jim hates his profession and does not gain recognition, Howard enjoys being a professor and is really appreciated by the society. It is very possible that both authors, Bradbury and Amis, identified with their protagonists when conceiving and writing the books, being also inspired by events from their everyday lives. When faced with the opportunity of moving to Watermouth Howard is delighted as the city is full of amiable radicalism, bourgeois and trendy events and persons. The subject he was teaching, that is sociology, was becoming more and more popular in universities and this began to change people's way of thinking and acting. Barbara becomes a radical open-minded woman, while Howard emancipates and starts sympathizing with the socialist groups at university. He reflects the changes taking place in society through his personal transformation. He becomes aware of the fact that personal image counts and therefore wears clothes as a way of showing his allegiance to different movements. As a revolutionary hero, Howard is appreciated by his students despite the sexual scandals, alcohol drinking and marihuana smoking. He also accepts women's emancipation and understands his wife's actions. Despite being an intelligent and friendly character, the whole image of Howard represents a satire aimed at the radical society of the sixties. The author placed his action in a decaying environment, in a permissive society full of frustrations and desperation. Barbara develops in the shadow of her husband leading the same promiscuous life as him. They accept each other's love affairs and sex was no longer a taboo in society. Women's magazines were more and more liberal dealing with subjects such as types of orgasm and other themes which once have been regarded as controversial. She is involved in many fashionable activities like studying French or learning about healthy eating habits. Although she seems happy with her life, her attempt to commit suicide (in the end) suggests deeper problems caused by the pressure of modern life and by the emergence of alcohol and drug use. Although not obvious, the loss of sexual intimacy was very depressing.

Bradbury created two female characters, who stand as symbols for the permissive society of the sixties. One is Melissa Todoroff, specialized in women's studies and the other one is Felicity Phee who is still exploring the possibilities the society has to offer. Due to the many manifestations and groups that have been formed, young people felt the need of belonging somewhere. The Kirks are totally against the policy of punishing their children. Celia and Martin have a very relaxed relationship with their parents. The main influence is Howard who sympathizes with them even when they did something wrong.

Multiculturalism and ethnic problems are other ideas debated by the author. In the post-war period many immigrants like Indians, Afro-Americans and even Pakistanis came to settle down in Britain. But when their numbers grew significantly, racism spread among the English. Such an attitude is manifested by Howard's colleague, Henry. When treated by an Indian doctor, he clearly expresses his aversion and disgust towards immigrants. However, their influence was becoming more and more poignant as they start introducing their musical style in campuses or at parties. Indian rugs or household decorations represent other elements of their ethnicity that remind the reader about their presence. With the beginning of the 1970s, the atmosphere changed and disillusionment and lack of hope spread everywhere. Such concerns are also voiced by Bradbury's characters who discuss radicalism and the loss of enthusiasm.

The novel ends on a pessimistic tone because of Barbara's depression which pushes her into committing suicide while her husband is having sexual intercourse with one of his colleagues. Therefore, what the reader should learn from the Kirk's experiences is the fact that too much freedom, open-mindedness and radical movements might cause a tragedy because, eventually, people wake up from the state of euphoria and realize they are insignificant people, living miserable lives in a miserable society.

In an attempt of making realism and fictiveness coexist Malcolm Bradbury combines tradition with other styles of writing while realism remains in close-up. He continued the tradition of the comic novel, which has gained an important role in British fiction being more and more complex and diversified along with the shift of focus towards campus life.

Campus novels in general, highlight absurdities and contradictions as well as strange concerns about all sorts of social and cultural effects. Resorting to satire, their writers emphasize on the respect for the individual and for the educational system, on one's moral responsibility for one's actions or on social progress. They set forth feelings of a whole new generation of university graduates while the technique employed pins the characters to the page, without revealing their inner thoughts.

### Conclusions

In conclusion, the world changed considerably after the Second World War and this had a huge impact on the evolution of the campus novel, because it reflected the realities of British society. As the novels discussed in the present paper have been written in the fifties and seventies, I focused on the social, economic but mostly educational aspects of the time. Due to the new traditions and social attitudes, people adopted a consumerist way of life. If Jim Dixon rebelled against social conventions and old-fashioned values *The History Man* was characterized by modernity taken to extremes and intellectual freedom. By creating comic characters, the authors contributed to the public perception of higher education.

This literary genre comes to criticize British higher education by providing first-hand experiences. Both Kingsley Amis and Malcolm Bradbury resorted to satire in order to highlight the most important aspects of the permissive society of the 1970s or the hypocrisy and snobbery of upper-class. Therefore, the paper emphasized the importance of academic novels both in the past and in the present, as they had and still have a major influence upon the professional development of lecturers and university professors. This overview of academic life does not address only to professionals belonging to the university atmosphere but also ordinary people who are familiar with higher education and who can thus read and learn about its problems, as if from the inside.

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