

Outside the Ivory Tower:  
The Role of Academic Wives in C.P. Snow's *The Masters*, Kingsley Amis's  
*Lucky Jim*, and Malcolm Bradbury's *The History Man*

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## Abstract

Academic fiction in its current form—as novels set on university campuses and focused on the lives of faculty—has existed since the mid-twentieth century. The genre explores the purposes and the cultures of universities and the lives of their faculty. Because universities have traditionally been insular communities that interact little with the outside world, the novels contain few non-academic characters. However, one non-academic group does appear consistently throughout the genre—the academic wives. These characters host parties, care for their husbands and children, and remain largely separate from the university structure. Although they appear in nearly all academic fiction, they have escaped notice by critics because they are secondary characters who exist largely in the background. However, a comparison of academic wives and their roles in C. P. Snow's *The Masters* (published 1951; set 1937), Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (published 1954; set in the early 1950s), and Malcolm Bradbury's *The History Man* (published 1975; set 1972) shows that these characters contribute significantly to the development of universities' cultures. Their roles both influence and respond to changes within the university structure. The academics' anxiety over the wives' potential influence on university affairs in these novels, and these women's responses to this anxiety, enable the genre to explore the division between academics and non-academics within the university culture.

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## Introduction

Universities have maintained their “ivory tower” image, which is rooted in their monastic origins, even as the numbers of students attending universities increased through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The classic image of the professor as absent-minded or otherwise disconnected from reality has persevered for centuries, perhaps dating from Diogenes Laërtius’s story of Thales, one of the first Greek philosophers and mathematicians, who was said to have been so absorbed by the mysteries of the stars as he walked that he fell into a well. This image of lofty isolation and esoteric interests, however, competes with another stereotype of universities: that these are not the utopias of learning that they profess to be, but communities of intensely deep rivalries over the most minor issues. The idea that “the politics of the university are so intense because the stakes are so low” is often quoted as a way to explain the nature of politics on campuses.<sup>1</sup>

These stereotypes of the university and of professors have largely been fostered through fictional portrayals of the academy. Although portrayals of academics and university life appear as early as the thirteenth century, Mortimer Proctor notes in his 1957 exploration of the university novel in England that John Gibson Lockhart’s 1823 novel, *Reginald Dalton: A Story of English University Life* “established a number of precedents for university fiction” (63), or, at least, for university fiction that focused on the lives of students, commonly known as varsity novels.<sup>2</sup> This genre gained popularity in the mid-nineteenth century after the University Acts of 1854 (for the University of Oxford) and 1856 (for the University of Cambridge) created much-publicized reforms to the universities (Proctor 59). These acts changed the universities in Britain from places of corruption and revelry to more orderly, serious societies. As Proctor argues, the reform movement “perhaps more than anything else was responsible for the rapid growth of university fiction in the nineteenth century” because the reformers created “noisy agitation” about the

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<sup>1</sup> This idea has been repeated in various forms. In 1977, Herbert Kaufman of the Brookings Institute wrote to *PS: Political Science and Politics* to clarify its origins and attributed the quotation to Wallace S. Sayre, a professor of political science at Columbia University.

<sup>2</sup> Terminology in this genre has not been firmly established. The terms “university fiction,” “university novels,” “academic fiction,” “academic novels,” “varsity fiction,” and “varsity novels” often refer to the same genre. I use “varsity fiction” and “varsity novels” to refer to those whose subjects are mostly students and “academic fiction” or “academic novels” for those whose subject is mostly the faculty, and “university fiction” and “university novels” as the umbrella term encompassing all novels with university settings.

universities and their cultures, and created “new causes to urge, and a new cast of characters to add to the traditional rakes” (59). In addition, these new reforms created scholarships and student housing that allowed lower-income students (still almost exclusively male) to attend university. More universities were founded, mostly in provincial cities, to accommodate the increased demand, which diversified the university experience slightly as well. However, the university population remained quite homogeneous, despite the scholarships. Because academic fiction initially followed the students’ lives as they completed their studies at Oxford and Cambridge, the novels reflected similarities in the students’ experiences. Proctor argues that these novels were so repetitive that “it is possible to construct a composite plot which would, either in part or in its entirety, provide a synopsis for the majority of university novels” (1). Through the early twentieth century, to avoid the “inherent limitations” (Proctor 10) of the varsity novel, and because faculty themselves started writing novels, academic fiction increasingly focused on faculty life, campus politics, and, occasionally, murder. Academic mystery novels were among the first sub-genres to break away from the varsity novel. They became popular between the 1930s and 1950s, with one of the more famous being Dorothy Sayers’s *Gaudy Night* (1935). As Proctor notes, “The tensions within its group of ambitious and overworked Fellows need hardly be exaggerated to provide occasion for abundant shootings, bashings, and knifings” (177).

In the mid-twentieth century, two further reforms changed the composition of British universities and, with them, the academic fiction genre. The 1944 Education Act reforms sought to improve the educational system in Britain: it raised the drop-out age from fourteen to fifteen, set up a two-stream education system which separated students from all backgrounds into either a pre-university or a more general stream, and increased the scholarships granted to working class families to allow more students to attend university. Later, the 1963 Robbins Report recommended that the number of universities in Britain be expanded to allow all those who qualified to attend. Both of these events significantly increased the number and type of students who attended universities and the number of universities that were founded to accommodate the increased demand. Over the course of a century, the university system in Britain moved from one that was mainly comprised of the two “ancient” universities to one which also included “red brick” universities—which started as civic or engineering schools in the mid to late nineteenth century—and, finally, to one which also included “plate-glass” universities of the 1960s, which

were ultra modern both in their steel, concrete, and glass architecture and in their ideologies.<sup>3</sup> The expansion of the university system and the influx of those who had been previously excluded from that system due to gender and class affected the fiction written about it. The nineteenth-century varsity fiction set at Oxford and Cambridge exalted the university culture, but the focus on campus politics in the twentieth century caused the novels to become more critical. By the 1950s, academic fiction had become largely satirical in an effort to criticize what had been held since the 1854-1856 reforms as the status quo. Satire is now often mistaken as the defining feature of the genre, so much so that David Lodge, in his 1992 introduction to the Penguin edition of *Lucky Jim*, called it “the first campus novel” (vii), despite the genre’s long history. In his study of post-war academic fiction, Kenneth Womack argues that “the very publication of these works of academic fiction can be read as a form of social protest, as a means for their authors to document the institutional dilemmas and professional insecurities that problematize postsecondary education” (19). While this definition of academic fiction as solely satire or protest is prevalent, it is also limiting.

Satirical or not, academic fiction does document changes within the university system, though mainly through a very narrow lens. Many academic novels written in Britain focused on male students and faculty almost exclusively until the mid to late twentieth century because most early academic novels were written about Oxford and Cambridge, which did not allow women to receive degrees until 1920 and 1948 respectively. Several women’s colleges were created in the late nineteenth century, but they remained segregated for decades. While women could gain degrees at red brick universities,<sup>4</sup> Oxford and Cambridge dominate the focus of university fiction. Until the late twentieth century, women were rarely the focus of these novels, they rarely appeared within the novels, and the novels were rarely written by women. The criticism of academic fiction is similarly focused—on male authors representing male faculty members’ experiences.

There are a few sustained studies of academic novels; the most comprehensive are Proctor’s *The English University Novel* (1957), Ian Carter’s *Ancient Cultures of Conceit: British University*

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<sup>3</sup> The term “Redbrick” in reference to universities was coined by Bruce Truscot (a pseudonym for Edgar Allison Peers) in 1943 and the term “Plateglass” by Michael Beloff in 1968 (OED).

<sup>4</sup> As Anna Bogen notes in her study of women’s varsity fiction, women could receive a degree at twelve universities by 1895.



*Fiction in the Post War Years* (1990), Janice Rossen's *The University in Modern Fiction: When Power is Academic* (1993), Kenneth Womack's *Postwar Academic Fiction: Satire, Ethics, Community* (2002), and Elaine Showalter's *Faculty Towers: The Academic Novel and Its Discontents* (2005). These are also the most useful to my study because they have focused, either significantly or partially, on British academic fiction, rather than on varsity novels, like Bogen's *Women's University Fiction, 1880-1945* (2014), or American academic fiction, like Sherrie Inniss's *Intimate Communities: Representation and Social Transformation in Women's College Fiction, 1895-1910* (1995) and John Lyons's *The College Novel in America* (1962).

The criticism could be separated into two categories—that which is sympathetic towards the genre, like Proctor's, Womack's, and Showalter's studies, and that which is critical towards it, like Carter's and Rossen's. Proctor's study attempts to trace academic fiction from its Chaucerian origins in "The Miller's Tale" to the novels of the 1950s to ascertain the genre's reaction to change and its "profound exploration of the function and purpose of the university itself" (10). Throughout his book, Proctor argues that academic fiction has "considerable documentary value" and records "much that is elsewhere unrecorded" (189). His study is sympathetic towards the genre and the universities represented as it traces the changes reflected in the novels. He argues that the university novel developed from a genre plagued by limitations to one which, by the 1950s, explores the question of what is a university for. Womack uses his study of academic fiction to test "ethical criticism's capacity to produce socially relevant literary interpretations" (19). Through this lens, he argues that "intellectuals and institutional bodies often detract from the ethical intentions of their scholarly missions in order to satisfy their personal and political desires" (158), but that satire is often used in the genre to advocate for more positive value systems. Showalter's study is often noted as a defining text in the field due to its clear organizational structure, which groups the changes documented in the genre thematically by decade from the "Trollopian" novels of the 1950s and 1960s (118) to later works which feature increasingly "grotesque figures, full of self-doubt and self-hatred" (119). Despite Showalter's argument that the university is in decline, at least from the faculty's perspective, the study, as Bogen notes, displays "the sense of almost celebratory ownership" (2) of the university and the genre. Both Carter and Rossen, on the other hand, are much more critical of the university and the genre. In an extensive survey, Carter discusses the repeated marginalization of provincial universities, scientists, foreigners, postgraduates, women, and non-academic staff.

Similarly, Rossen's study concerns the power structures within and outside the university. She argues that academic fiction most often concerns "the influence of the power structure within academe and in relation to the world outside, the constant dialectic between competitiveness and idealism—or, scholarship as a means to an end or as an end in itself—and the implications for the creative process of the novelist's choice of such a potentially limiting and problematic subject" (3). She traces the way the university maintains power by attempting to exclude those deemed outsiders—particularly women who want to belong to the university (and the daughters of faculty who exploit their nearness to campus), lower-class men, and undergraduates.

As in the criticism generally, these four studies focus entirely on characters who are part of the academic community—the faculty and students. In addition, analysis of women's relationships to the university structure in the novels has largely been limited to female students and academics. The wives of academics have escaped notice because, as unofficial members of the university structure, they often appear in the background. As Rossen argues, "academics delight in reinforcing [the] view of themselves as comprising circles which are closed to the uninitiated" (4). Faculty wives, being fundamentally attached to the university culture and yet removed from it, are, in this view, victims of this insider/outsider culture. This belief is so prevalent that the representation of faculty wives is barely discussed. Showalter dedicates her study to the women in academic fiction, noting that, "as a reader of *Professorromane*, I've been sharply aware of the women who appear in the background, as students, as eccentric dons and dames, and especially as faculty wives. This book is dedicated to them" (13). However, academic wives are overlooked even in Showalter's study, in which no attempt is made to understand them or their functions within the novels. Similarly, Rossen, in her chapter on women's exclusion from the university, notes that a few novels do feature women who are outside of academia, but she only mentions the daughters of faculty, not the wives, even though most academic novels do include faculty wives as secondary characters.

By focusing on the British academic novel, I hope to create a more direct comparison of the role of the academic wives than could be achieved by trying to compare novels from different countries. Because C. P. Snow's *The Masters* (1951), Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954), and Malcolm Bradbury's *The History Man* (1975) represent different stages of the evolution of the British university system through the mid-twentieth century—from the Oxbridge model to the post-war redbrick model, to the plate-glass model—and because each features several academic

wives, these novels show the evolution of a role that critics have largely avoided discussing. For instance, in Showalter's discussion of *The Masters*, *Lucky Jim*, and *The History Man*, of the faculty wives who appear in the novels, only *The History Man*'s Barbara Kirk is given significant attention; *The Master*'s Mrs. Jago is mentioned only in passing—" [Jago] has an unfortunate marriage to a former pupil" (17)—and *The Master*'s Lady Muriel, *Lucky Jim*'s Mrs. Welch and Carol Goldsmith, and *The History Man*'s Mira Beamish and Mrs. Macintosh are not mentioned at all. However, the wives in these novels play significant roles within the plots and within the university cultures portrayed.

*The Masters*, Showalter argues, is "one of the most reverent, idyllic, and utopian academic novels ever written" (14). The novel was published in 1951, but set in 1937, which explains, in part, the deep sense of nostalgia—the college has returned to stability after the upheaval of the First World War and has not yet experienced the unprecedented changes to the university system caused by the Second World War, the 1944 Education Act, and the acceptance of women as full members of Cambridge. Snow's affection for the Cambridge of this time shows both in the way he elegizes Christ and Trinity Colleges as they were in the 1930's and in his narrator, Lewis Eliot, who reflects Snow's view of the university and events. Eliot participates in the action, but does so more as an observer than as a member. He seeks to understand those around him, even if he disagrees with them or does not like them. The novel's emphasis on the history and development of the college is useful as a starting point in order to explore the effects of the rapid changes through the mid-twentieth century. *The Masters* is especially useful for my study because this focus on understanding applies to the wives as much as it does to the fellows and the college's history.

Alternatively, Amis argues that universities should abandon their attempts in the 1940s and 1950s to imitate the constructed Oxbridge culture. *Lucky Jim*, published in 1954 and set in the early 1950s, reflects and savagely satirizes a provincial university, inspired by the University of Leicester, which Amis observed in 1948 when he was visiting Philip Larkin, to whom the novel is dedicated. As Amis notes in his *Memoirs*, "I looked around a couple of times and said to myself, 'Christ, somebody ought to do something with this'" (56). He compared the Senior Common Room to the *Schutzstaffel* in 1940, in that it was "sort of *developed*, a whole mode of existence no one had got onto from the outside" (56). As Showalter notes, *Lucky Jim* also contains elements from Amis's time as a faculty member at Swansea and his time at Oxford as an undergraduate

(24). His contempt for the type of donnish male academic world that he saw in these places lead to his satire of it. The university becomes an oppressive place for Amis's Jim Dixon, who wants to escape, but has nowhere to go. Much of the criticism of this novel sympathizes with Dixon and focuses on his alienation from the university culture due to his working-class background. Like Dixon himself, critics ignore the roles of wives. However, despite the extremely chauvinistic nature of this novel, the faculty wives are instrumental in the university culture and the novel's plot, as they are the cause of Dixon's "luck." Because *Lucky Jim* is one of the first satirical academic novels and it significantly influenced the genre, it provides an important contrast to *The Masters*.

In *The History Man*, set in 1972 and published in 1975, Bradbury himself appears as an unnamed liberal humanist character, one among many, who is overrun by the radical fervour of the 1970s. The novel's University of Watermouth does not reflect a particular institution like *The Masters* and *Lucky Jim* do. Rather, as Christopher Bigsby notes in the introduction to a 1982 interview with Bradbury, the novel is set "in a university presumed by Bradbury to be a setting in which one can legitimately expect to find humane values surviving" but which has been "drained of human content" (61). More than the other two novels in this study, *The History Man* seeks to reflect a trend away from liberal humanist thought and towards what Bradbury sees as radicalism for radicalism's sake. The narrator ostensibly voices the perspective of the central character, sociology professor, Howard Kirk, but continually underscores the hollowness of his values and his underlying desire for power. As Rossen argues, Howard's academic work "is depicted as exploitative in that it is a popularization and simplification of complex ideas—and totally narcissistic" (87). Howard controls his department and those around him simply because he can. He exerts control over women who oppose him by pursuing, seducing, and then discarding them. His reputation is based on his story of his radical marriage to his wife, Barbara, but, in reality, he oppresses her and confines her to the home because she knows the full story of their marriage and experiences the exploitation that his radical image is actually built on.

Within the criticism of these three novels, the analysis of women's relationships to the university structure has been limited to female students and academics. However, this view of faculty wives as merely victims or background features prevents further analysis of their functions. Throughout these novels, although their appearances are often brief, academic wives are significant figures because they represent the changes to the university—they themselves were

a significant change to the university culture when fellows were granted permission to marry—and because their roles change in each new iteration of the university structure. In addition, their long-term relationship with the academic culture partially gives them a place within it. They are the laypeople with whom the academics in these novels interact most frequently and who may understand the university structure better than anyone else outside the university's walls. Each social and ideological change to the university culture affects them as much as it affects their husbands, but the history of the university as a closed community means that they must maintain a difficult balance between fulfilling their role as homemakers and hostesses and remaining distant from the university itself.

Because the narrators of *The Masters*, *Lucky Jim*, and *The History Man* are male academics who interact mostly with other academics, their interactions with the academic wives show the way they view others outside of their closed community. A study of academic wives can also yield a different view of power within the university system. Contrary to the view of previous critics, power within these novels is not exercised in one direction only. As the wives attempt to determine their roles within their husbands' lives, they impact the university system as well.

## 1. *The Masters*: Ancient Tradition on the Verge of Change

*The Masters* follows a group of isolated, physically comfortable fellows within an unnamed Cambridge College who feel deeply ambivalent about the structure of their society and about their futures. The humanist fellows enjoy the benefits that the introduction of experimental science brought to the college in the early twentieth century, but worry about the potential effects of the radicalism<sup>5</sup> that the scientists bring with them. They wish to preserve the ancient traditions, but, at the same time, find many of these traditions tedious or uncomfortable. Despite having just survived WWI, they refuse to believe that the political problems in Europe could affect their society. Conversely, the radical scientists enjoy the comforts of the insular society, but engage in research for the government in preparation for the impending war and argue for changes to the college structure to allow for more openness to the outside world. When the Master, Vernon Royce, is diagnosed with a terminal illness, but his wife, Lady Muriel, decides to postpone telling him until absolutely necessary, the long, and unofficial, process to choose a successor highlights the tensions between traditionalism and radicalism within the college. Paul Jago, the first to declare his candidacy, specializes in early Puritan writings and is a conservative member of the college's government as the senior tutor; Thomas Crawford, who ultimately wins the mastership, is a distinguished scholar in the rapidly developing field of neurobiology and an outspoken radical who has focused on research rather than college administration. Because the Master's long illness delays the election, the fellows waver between the two candidates and debate about which direction they want the college to go for months before having to decide.

This conflict between stability and change is most clearly seen through the fellows' attitudes towards the female figures in the novel, the fellows' wives, who personify for them these changes and the future's uncertainty. Originally, only the master could be married, which helped to make the role of master more desirable, and the role of master's wife highly public and open to criticism. When the college's rules regarding marriage were changed in the 1880s and many fellows quickly married, the society rapidly changed from a college of celibate priests to one of "bearded fathers of families" (384) who Snow portrays as more stable than their celibate predecessors. However, the change to mostly married fellows created a new class of people at college — the wives. While the men were thrilled to be able to marry, they seem to have

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<sup>5</sup> The scientists were labelled as "radicals" because of their left-leaning politics, opposition to the rise of fascism, and desire to use their research to improve the wider society.

anticipated the women taking the place of college servants — caring for their husbands while remaining distanced from the masculine society of college. By the 1930s, the fellows have become ambivalent about the women's roles: they believe that the presence of wives is necessary to stabilize the younger fellows and ward off bitterness in the older fellows, but they also want the women to have no other influence in the men's lives lest they interfere in the college's masculine society. This ambivalence leads to a precarious and uncertain position for the women, especially because the men's expectations are never explained to them.

The four wives who appear in the novel — Mrs. Gay, Lady Muriel Royce, Mrs. Alice Jago, and Mrs. Katherine Getliffe — represent four generations of women at the college over a sixty-year span and show the ways that women have attempted to cope with this uncertainty. Mrs. Gay, the oldest wife, filled the role of a college servant, caring for her husband at a distance. The distance she maintains means that she is the only wife who avoids the fellows' criticisms. However, when the younger wives try to use their positions to help their husbands, the fellows react to their slow encroachment onto their masculine society with anxiety, so they scrutinize and criticize the wives' behaviour to keep them distanced from the college. The criticism causes the women to feel isolated and incapable of supporting their husbands. Only the youngest wife, Katherine Getliff, whose husband is a radical scientist, appears to be able to achieve a balance between helping her husband and avoiding criticism because her husband is out of the college's spotlight and because her opinions about the mastership campaign are confined to private dinners at her home. By presenting four women of different generations and by allowing for space in the novel for their voices, Snow highlights the masculine society on campus and its unease with those outside of it.

### 1.1 An Ancient Society

The prosperity and relevance brought to campus by the development of experimental science and changes to college rules (such as increases in salaries and the ability to marry) made academic life more comfortable; this comfort, ironically, gives the fellows a sense that the college has become immune to further change or future decline. The men seem to live very stable, routine lives — they move from their studies or labs to the combination room, to the dining hall, back to the combination room, and, finally, to their residence rooms or homes on a daily cycle. When they live at college, servants wake them, run errands for them, clean for them, cook for them, and even send food to their rooms if they cannot attend dinner at the hall. In the

combination room before and after meals, each bottle of wine presented must be recorded in the wine book along with the name of the fellow who presented it to the group and his reason for doing so. The fellows carefully document this information for the benefit of future fellows who, they assume, will not only do the same, but will also study past entries. The Steward, an official college position, arranges important meals and the copious bottles of alcohol that go with them, illustrating the college's affluence. World issues, such as the Spanish Civil War and the "regime in Germany" (51), are taboo subjects. Although some fellows recognize the significance of such events, Showalter notes that most are too comfortable in their "snug, secure, and insulated" world (16) to notice. Even the structure of the novel embodies this sense of stable repetition: it is structured as a series of meetings at which the fellows discuss and analyze each other and a variety of college issues. Lewis Eliot, the narrator, observes these discussions and attempts to understand each person's motivation as completely as possible despite his own biases. He is both within and outside of the college structure, being a new fellow who still has a legal practice in London which prohibits him from accepting a college position, and both within and outside of married life, having a neurotic, hospitalized wife,<sup>6</sup> Sheila, about whom he never speaks. He uses his position at the college as "a refuge to hide" from her (197). Because his unstable relationship with his wife caused him to change careers and seems to cause him significant unhappiness, he tries to focus on the stability of the college and the ways wives increase or diminish the fellows' happiness.

Although Eliot perceives the college as the fellows' refuge from the world, he also highlights their ambivalence about the changes, and threat of changes, to the college. While they idealize the past as having been peaceful and orderly, not all of the reminders of it are comfortable. Regardless of whether they are single or married, the men have "monastic cell[s]" (11) on campus which are so drafty that much of the space needs to be treated as though it were "the open air" (3). The combination room, where the fellows meet before and after dinner, and the dining hall allow them to socialize amongst themselves without intrusions from students, wives, or servants, but the insular interaction between the fourteen fellows at the college leads to tensions

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<sup>6</sup> Although her condition is not explicitly mentioned in this novel or other novels in the series and she is never named in the novel, she is portrayed throughout Snow's *Brothers and Strangers* series as mentally unstable and her instability caused Eliot to become jealous and obsessive. She becomes hospitalized and, in *Homecomings* (1956), commits suicide.



and conflicts. Within the ritual of the election of a new master, change is apparent — if they are not able to choose amongst themselves, college rules dictate that the bishop must choose for them because, at the time the rules were created, all of the men were Anglican and attended service frequently. However, by the 1930s, most of the fellows are not religious and, consequently, feel that the bishop would not represent their interests. Through the election, Snow also shows the divide between the oldest members of college and the younger generations who are replacing them. The attitude that Maurice Gay — the oldest fellow and, therefore, the one in charge of conducting the election — takes in his duties seems to mock blind adherence to tradition while simultaneously upholding and reinforcing the college's traditions. Although he has been involved in five elections, some of the fellows regard him as being too old and too incompetent to hold such a position. The fellows try to meet the minimum standard that the college statutes require, but, to assert that he is in charge and more than able to be in charge, Gay focuses on meeting the spirit of those statutes. For instance, while the fellows are prepared to hold a short and “purely formal” (230) meeting to formally announce the Master's death, Gay argues that such a meeting “would not show sufficient respect” (231), so he causes the meeting to last for an hour and fifteen minutes. The other fellows' disregard for his abilities shows the ambivalence they have about change in the college: when they are directly confronted with values from the past, they argue that these values are out of date. However, when considering change in the college, they argue that the college is stable and has not, and will not, change. Because of this conflict, the large number of written rules governing the election does not quell disagreements over what is typically done for the sake of ease and what is proper or seemingly traditional. While the men argue that the traditions are the best way to maintain the college's order, they simultaneously believe that those same traditions are at best uncertain, and at worst irrelevant.

## 1.2 Unmarried Men

Eliot's focus on the men's marital status shows the ambivalence that surrounds women's role on campus. Although the college had historically consisted of unmarried men, by 1937, bachelorhood seems to be the mark of unstable or problematic men. Eliot often notes the fellows' marital status immediately upon introducing them to the reader and couples this note with a discussion of their happiness and success, or lack thereof. Of the fourteen fellows at the college when the novel begins, five are unmarried and three of those — Ronald Nightingale, Albert Despard-Smith, and Roy Calvert— are the most problematic figures.

Although Eliot does not directly attribute the older unmarried fellows' depression to their bachelorhood, he presents it as a possible reason. Nightingale, an embittered man who held great but unfulfilled promise as a theoretical chemist, attempts to undermine Jago's credibility by insulting in person and in writing anyone connected to Jago. Eliot's explanation for such malicious acts begins by noting that being "forty-three and a bachelor" was not "his abiding disappointment" (48). Even when Eliot explains the real disappointment — his unsuccessful career — that he presents Nightingale's age and marriage first suggests that married men have a different status in this society. Like Nightingale, Despard-Smith never married and had his dreams — primarily of being master — unfulfilled. He blames the rest of the college for not giving him the mastership and for turning his life into "one long disappointment" (323) and, thus, remains apart from the other fellows. Eliot notes that, "there had been rumours for years that he drank heavily in private, but he had no friends in the college, his life was lonely, no one knew for certain how he lived it" (322). The structure of Eliot's discussion suggests that these two men stew alone in their disappointments, looking for people to blame, because neither has a wife to support him in his successes and failures.

Because Calvert, a 26-year-old Orientalist, is unmarried, the fellows worry that he will ruin the college's reputation. He spends much time with his research, but he is also bipolar — suffering from alternating bouts of depression and bouts of elated or wild behaviour. Eliot watches him closely to protect him from criticism. He also dates multiple women and has stated, to Despard-Smith's horror, that "Calverts are not the marrying kind" (172). Some of the older fellows, particularly Nightingale, believe that he is "getting the college a bad name" (160), and others discuss ways to remove him from the college tactfully. Even Calvert's brilliance, which promises to bring money and prestige to the college, does not make him an acceptable member.

The exception in this group is Eustace Pilbrow, an older bachelor and one of the most exuberant and beloved fellows, who flits from country to country and party to party, "losing his head over the slightest gleam of talent" (74), has "[private] days of depression" (74), and seems to prefer to remain mostly apart from the college. Eliot states that "[h]e had never married, but he did not seem lonely" (74), as though loneliness is inherent in an unmarried fellow's life and Pilbrow happened to be the exception. Eliot describes him as a "unique figure" in the college" and as "eccentric, an amateur, a connoisseur" (73). His brightness may be caused by the fact that he is rarely on campus, his connection to the artistic world, or, as Eliot suggests, "his feeling,

gentlemanly and unselfconscious, that one went where one wanted and did what one liked” (73). Unlike the other unmarried fellows, who spend their time either alone or with the same thirteen fellows every day, Pilbrow’s connections outside of the campus may have allowed him to ward off the bitterness that Eliot attributes to singleness.

Being married appears to be the most desirable option, in Eliot’s view. Because depression is only associated with the bachelors, Eliot implies that marriage helps to keep the fellows stable and content. The men who are happily married are respectable members of the college. For instance, Eliot observes several times that two of the most active members of the college, Arthur Brown and Charles Chrystal, have loving, supportive families. Their wives and children seem to be a large part of this stability and contentment. Brown has an “amiable wife” (57) who cares enough to call him when he is late for supper. Chrystal’s success and happiness shows, for Eliot, through his home-life: “He made a more than usually comfortable academic income. He had three grown-up daughters, and had married each of them well. He adored his wife” (17). These relationships seem to give these men the confidence to lead and influence the college. Unlike the bachelors, the married men do not seem to have the same wild variations of mood. Even when Winslow sinks into depression because his son is not awarded a degree (187), this depression is clearly linked to the specific cause and seems temporary, unlike Despard-Smith’s, Nightingale’s, and Calvert’s whose depression seems to consume them.

### 1.3 Faculty Wives

However, as much as the wives seem to provide an essential balance for the men, most are an undefined part of an otherwise ordered masculine society — the men have specific places and duties within the college, but only the master’s wife has a historically based and traditionally defined role. The master’s wife has a public role because the mastership is a public position. Both the master and his wife represent the college at a variety of functions, so the master’s wife must entertain fellows and students and attend university affairs with her husband in addition to her household duties. However, the fellows’ wives have fewer clear expectations and less tradition to guide their behaviour. Their duties include the education of their children (if any), and the care of their homes and husbands. They also entertain fellows more informally than the master’s wife does, though the acceptable level of formality and the way they should behave is undefined. The degree to which they should be involved in their husbands’ lives is also undefined and, thus, uncertain. The fellows’ wives have, and often want, some influence over

their husbands; that women could use this influence to interfere in the masculine world of the college, though, threatens the fellows, who then resent and fear their colleagues' wives. Because the wives' domestic authority occasionally overlaps with the academic realm, the fellows react to their authority over their domestic spheres by judging, insulting, or ignoring them increasingly to reassert their own sense of control over the masculine society of the college.

### 1.3.1 Wife as Servant: Mrs. Gay

Mrs. Gay, most often referred to in the novel as "Gay's wife" (her first name is never given), married Gay shortly after fellows were first allowed to marry and seems to have assumed the role of a college servant. She raised their children and took care of the household; now in her seventies, she remains very active, taking care of Gay and managing household staff. When Calvert and Eliot visit, she does not sit with the men or try to entertain them. In fact, she does not even speak during their visit and only appears when Gay needs help: before the men go outside, she comes to "wrap his muffler round his neck and help him into his great coat" (291). When they return to the house, she "com[es] in almost at the run, [and takes] off his coat again" (291). They seem to be so accustomed to this ritual that they don't even speak to each other during it. She appears when needed and disappears just as quickly. To avoid disturbing them while they talk, but to ensure that they are comfortable, Mrs. Gay sends a maid into the room with "a very large tea tray" (292). She hosts them from a distance, understanding her place within the household and her husband's needs. Because she is so distant, she is the only wife who appears in the novel who neither Eliot nor anyone else criticizes. In fact, she is admired among the fellows for carrying out her role so well: when Eliot speaks with the Master, the Master asks if Gay's son had gotten "the job" in Edinburgh, stating that his getting it "will reflect the greatest credit to Mrs. Gay" (15). Her success as a faculty wife of her generation shows through her husband's comfort and her children's success.

### 1.3.2 Wife as Threat: Lady Muriel

Unlike Mrs. Gay, Lady Muriel, the Master's wife, is more involved and appears more frequently in the novel, primarily because her husband's illness initiates the novel's major conflict. Contrasting Mrs. Gay, Lady Muriel appears as a grand, authoritative, and composed figure, even (or, perhaps, especially) as her husband slowly dies. As the daughter of an earl, she learned upper-class manners and, although she has been married to Royce, an academic from a

Scottish professional family (12), for twenty-five years, she still retains her air of wealth and power and her knowledge of closed, elite societies. Thus, she understands both the expectations placed on her as the Master's wife and her role within the college's hierarchy and its protocols. She knows that she is responsible for managing her husband's private life and formally entertaining his colleagues. During Eliot's visit, she calls him "Mr. Eliot" rather than the more familiar "Lewis" or "Eliot" as he is called by his peers and calls her husband "my husband" or "the Master" rather than "Royce" (12-13). She remains formal with the fellows and the college to avoid overstepping her boundaries.

However, the Master's illness causes a potential overlap between his private life, which is governed by Lady Muriel, and his professional life, which is governed by the college. The fellows, concerned about the Master, make time to visit him both before and after he is diagnosed. Of the fellows, Jago learns of the cancer first during his visit after the doctors examined the Master, and spreads the word to the rest of the college. When Eliot visits the master's residence, the Lodge, the next morning, Lady Muriel ensures that he knows the diagnosis and the pretence that she wants to maintain — that he just has a "trace of an ulcer" (13) and will be well in a few months.

Because Royce's illness means that the fellows will have to look for a new master, they believe that they should be involved in deciding when to tell him of his illness. When Lady Muriel resolves that he should be allowed "a month or two in peace" (13) before being told that his illness is terminal, the fellows debate her decision in the common room as though they should have been the ones to make the choice. When Chrystal first voices his objection, his tone is "so curt and harsh" (24) that it silences the fellows present. Some fellows believe that she has chosen the best option, or argue that they should not be involved in making this decision. Those who argue against the decision state that keeping him "drugged by lies" on his deathbed (26) is disrespectful and that they do not want to be forced to continue the façade. However, underneath their concerns is their belief that they know what is best for him better than she does. Jago goes so far as to tell Joan, the Royces' daughter, that not telling the Master immediately was her "mother's mistake" (118) — undermining Lady Muriel's decision and authority.

The fellows become more uneasy as the timing of her decision to tell him becomes a threat to their Commemoration of Benefactors dinner: they do not want to host a celebration if the Master has just learned of his illness, but they want to use the dinner to woo a potential donor.

Although the fellows agree not to pressure Lady Muriel into waiting until after the dinner to tell him, they are nervous about whether she will inadvertently ruin their dinner and, with it, the potentially large donation. The Master's illness and the debate surrounding it highlights the men's unease about the impact of Lady Muriel's power. She controls the domestic, marital sphere, but her decisions can impinge on the professional. While they seem to have always interpreted her formality with them as arrogance, their judgements of her become harsher when they believe that her decision to lie to her husband about his condition will impact the college.

Because the men focus on Lady Muriel's formality and potential power, they do not see that she struggles with her role as the wife of an academic and a master. Though Eliot's narration is primarily critical of Lady Muriel, Snow shows her underlying feelings about this role through her interactions with Calvert, a favourite of both Lady Muriel and Joan. Her twenty-five-year marriage to the Master had "not been a joyous marriage" (148) and she never really understood him: as Calvert notes, "She's never had any idea what he's really like [and has] always been puzzled by his jokes" (148). Before he is told of his condition, the Master seems primarily concerned with his work and with the college. He tells Eliot that his chief concerns when he thought he was dying before being told otherwise by his wife and doctors were "whether the college would ever make up its mind about the beehives in the garden" and whether "Gay's son would really get the job in Edinburgh" (15). Lady Muriel's marriage does not provide her with support or comfort, so she remains distant and formal with her husband and the fellows. However, when Calvert speaks to her "as though she were a woman who wanted someone to guide her" (51), "She was taken aback, and yet relieved so that the tears came" (51). Her stiffness and formality are a way for her to maintain control during a difficult situation. When she does tell her husband of his condition, he seems to ignore her. As Calvert explains to Eliot, "She's always known that she's failed him. Now she felt she was failing him worst of all. Because anyone else would have known what to say, and she's never been able to put one word in front of another... But the hardest blow for her was that, in looking towards his death, he seemed to have forgotten her" (148-149). Despite being his wife, she has no major role in his life. While the Master dedicates himself entirely to the college and his research, she remains entirely separate in her domestic sphere.

### 1.3.3 Wife as Liability: Mrs. Jago

The direct contrast to Lady Muriel and Mrs. Gay is Mrs. Jago because both she and Jago want her to be involved in his life. While both Mrs. Gay and Lady Muriel are isolated from their husbands and their husbands' work, Mrs. Jago met her husband when she was his student. She understands his work and enjoys talking with him about it. She also prefers to read in the evenings, which gives them a common interest. However, she struggles to present the correct type of image and to fulfill the expectations placed on faculty wives because she lacks the domestic training that Mrs. Gay and Lady Muriel have. Her struggles to fit into the college culture and help her husband leave her bitter and awkward, which in turn draws the fellows' criticism. The mastership campaign only aggravates this criticism, which further heightens her sense that she has failed her husband. While her husband tries to defend her, his campaign team struggles to find ways to keep her hidden. Despite the fellows' judgements and her fears of disappointing her husband, the Jagos present themselves as a unified team at the end of the campaign. Ultimately, while the fellows and larger college community believe that Mrs. Jago is innately awkward and grotesque, her husband's faith in her and her unaffected moments show that her behaviour is caused by the unspoken expectations that surround her role.

While the Gays' and Royces' relationships are built on socially determined expectations and a strict separation of domestic and public worlds, the Jagos' relationship is built on an academic relationship, which has made them closer. Eliot notes throughout the novel that the Jagos love each other deeply and he shows their love by contrasting their relationship to others'. For example, Jago's reaction to his wife's illness a term before the novel opens contrasts Lady Muriel's behaviour throughout the Master's illness. While Lady Muriel is reserved and, when she does show her emotions, is mainly upset because she never really knew her husband, Jago tells Eliot that he was "utterly distracted," "useless," and a "burden to everyone and to [him]self" (6) while Mrs. Jago was ill. He hated that he could not help her and was so visibly distraught that the Master took Jago aside to tell him "how anxious he was about [Mrs. Jago] and how much he thought of her" (6). While Jago uses this moment as an example of the Master's kindness, it also shows the nature of the Jagos' relationship: he unaffectedly shows concern for her health and, unable to compartmentalize his life, he allows this concern affect his professional work.

In addition, unlike the Gays' or the Royces' relationships, the Jagos' relationship is based on common interests, goals, and ambitions. They both enjoy reading and discussion and,

because she was his student, she understands her husband's work. They have no children for her to focus on, so, instead, she attempts to support his career. While she wants Jago to win the mastership because she believes that he is the best man to fill the role, he wants to win it because he believes that she would be an excellent master's wife. Jago argues that the fellows will "be surprised how splendid [his] wife will turn out in the Lodge" because she "always rises to the occasion" (242). Thus, as part of his campaign, they present themselves as a team.

However, their relationship does not help Mrs. Jago overcome her difficulties within the isolated and exclusive university community. Unlike Lady Muriel, who was raised and educated in an exclusive society and thus is able to navigate the expectations of the university more easily, Mrs. Jago was raised in the "the suburbs of Birmingham" (171) and was not prepared to negotiate the ill-defined or unspoken expectations placed upon her. Entertaining fellows who make unannounced visits seems to be a strain for her. On one occasion, Jago apologizes to her for talking with one of his students' parents for so long and inadvertently forcing her to entertain members of his unofficial election committee because he knew that she wanted to get back to her book (63). Because she has difficulty interacting with the fellows, Jago asks her leading questions to showcase her intelligence and abilities: "Had she talked to us about the book from which we had drawn her? Why hadn't she mentioned what she told him at teatime?" (63). He knows that entertaining the fellows is difficult, so he tries to help; instead of using these prompts, however, she alternates between an imitation of Lady Muriel and uncontrolled outbursts of anger and frustration, which only intensify the awkwardness of the meeting and escalates the fellows' criticisms of her.

To compensate for her lack of training as a hostess, Mrs. Jago attempts to imitate Lady Muriel because she believes that Lady Muriel is a successful faculty wife. The topics she chooses when interacting with members of the college tend to mirror topics she believes Lady Muriel would discuss. She also becomes very formal and "stiff" (61) in her mannerisms and speaks to the fellows "with an air of *grande dame* borrowed from Lady Muriel" (61). Upon one unexpected visit, she invites them into her home using their formal titles: "'Do sit down, Dean,' she said to Chrystal. 'Do sit down, Tutor,' she said to Brown. 'A parent has just chosen this time to call on my husband, which I feel is very inconsiderate'" (61). Rather than use the more acceptable "Mr. Crystal" or "Mr. Brown" she attempts to showcase her knowledge of the college structure by using their titles. However, she does not realize that the men desire a strict separation between



college and domestic spheres and, thus, while the men use their college titles formally among themselves, they do not believe it is appropriate for her to use their titles or showcase her knowledge of their masculine society.

Even as she attempts to reinvent herself in Lady Muriel's image, her lack of confidence shows through her performance. She "was never certain of herself for an instant" (61). She becomes so uncomfortable that she becomes "assertive in any conversation" and is "determined not to be overlooked" (61-62). Eliot notes that, throughout the Jagos' marriage, she had "seized on insults, tracked them down, recounted them with a masochistic gusto that never flagged" (61-62). When the men do not seem to respond positively to her or she cannot think of something grand to say, her façade breaks and she cries out self-deprecating statements. For instance, when they visit her unexpectedly and Jago is busy, Eliot notes that "she could not keep up her grand manner" for long and, eventually, "broke out" of the façade with "I'm afraid that you will have to put up with my presence till Paul struggles free" (61). When Jago enters the room and apologizes for taking so long with the students' parents, she tries to be dignified, but, again, cannot sustain the façade: "'It doesn't matter at all, Paul,' she said with a lofty dignity, and then cried out: 'It only means that the Dean and the Tutor and Mr Eliot have had to make conversation with me for half an hour'" (63). These statements seem as though they are meant to voice what she believes to be the opinions of those in her company. However, they only create distance between her and her guests and, ultimately, embarrass Jago's colleagues (61-62).

Instead of letting Mrs. Jago find a role to which she may be more suited and which may be away from the fellows' judgements, both she and Jago attempt to correct the fellows' assumptions and opinions by inviting fellows to their home, which only gives the fellows more opportunity to criticize her. They immediately judge her "plain," "broad-shouldered," and "physically graceless" (61) appearance, and take it to symbolize her "grotesque" (62) behaviour. Just as her physical structure is unchangeable, they believe that her behaviour is unchangeable, so they judge her and attempt to distance her from Jago's campaign, rather than attempting to help her. While the fellows only see the plain woman on the exterior, in a rare moment of sympathy, Eliot notes that she had a "brilliant, open, defenceless" smile that "one seldom saw" (61). Her husband wants to showcase this woman underneath, but his reaction to the fellows' judgements only makes her situation worse. As Eliot notes, "He wanted us [the fellows] to see that she was gallant, and misjudged; he was burning to explain that she went through acuter pain than

anyone, when the temperament she could not control drove his friends away” (62). He does not seem to understand that they will likely never appreciate her.

The campaign forces her into an uncomfortable spotlight, and her attempts to show that she can live up to the expectations of the very public role of the master’s wife only highlights her lack of understanding. The men are horrified when she inquires about the number of bedrooms in the Lodge, looks into eighteenth century furniture for the Lodge’s drawing room, asks “for pity because she did not know where they were going to find more servants” (171), and inquires about “the kind of entertainment that graduate students preferred” (161) in anticipation of being able to host them. Because the fellows do not understand the efforts that are involved in running the Lodge, they do not realize that the role must be learned, so they condemn her for inquiring about it. Her attempts to learn more about the role appear to them to be overly presumptuous intrusions into college affairs, rather than necessary preparations. Even when she performs her role well, the fellows still find fault with her. Just before Easter, she keeps an “open house for fellows at Sunday teatime” (116) to encourage them to see her a hostess. She spares little expense to impress them: “[t]he tea, like all the amenities which Mrs Jago chose, was the best in college” (116). Although she is upset by the fact that few fellows come, she manages to make conversation with Joan and Eliot, joking about the usefulness of formal weddings for gathering fine china and inquiring “gently and naturally about the Master’s state” (117). While she acts appropriately and respectfully during this gathering, Eliot interprets Jago’s compliments of her and his efforts to steer the conversation away from topics that might cause an outburst as indications that her behaviour is mostly a façade. Eliot has already judged her; her efforts, and Jago’s, will not change his opinion.

While well-intentioned, Mrs. Jago’s attempts to showcase her talents and intelligence only invite further criticism from the fellows. By showing interest in the campaign and acting as though she is involved in it, she inadvertently crosses the line between her place in the home and the men’s carefully guarded masculine society. While she wants to be involved in the campaign meetings at her home — both because she wants to understand more about the college and the campaign, and because the campaign affects her as much as it affects Jago — the fellows are horrified. As Eliot explains, “This was a masculine society, and none of us would have considered discussing college business in front of our wives, not even in front of Lady Muriel herself” (63). Eliot reacts similarly when he hears her talking with Jago about the difficulties she

will face when they move into the Lodge: “Nothing would give more offence, nothing was more against the rules of that society” (119) than acting as though becoming the next master was inevitable. Eliot immediately tells Brown, who becomes “extremely vexed” (119). Although Jago is “least approachable” on the subject of Mrs. Jago, his supporters eventually confront Jago about the problem of “some” of the party acting as though Jago “had the Mastership in [his] pocket” (168), which could cost him the position. When they are not sure if Jago fully understands or is willing to talk with Mrs. Jago, Brown asks him directly, “Will you have a word with her yourself?” (169). Although he agrees, the damage to his campaign, in his party’s view, is already done.

Because Jago is determined to showcase Mrs. Jago as an asset, the only way that the party believes it can use her is to frame his commitment to her as a sign of his humanity. Eliot supports Jago through the campaign because, as he tells Francis Getliffe, “[a]s a human being there’s a great deal in him” (77). Later, in an argument with Katherine and Francis Getliffe about whether Crawford or Jago would be the better master, Katherine redirects the focus of the argument from Jago to Mrs. Jago: “Anyway ... *she* is appalling” (198, emphasis original). While Eliot agrees that “[t]here’s too much humanity in her” (198), he also uses her to further his argument: “If you’d watched Jago take care of her, you might understand what I’ve been telling you about him” (198). While she is not the ideal wife, Eliot believes that Jago’s love for Mrs. Jago makes Jago more interesting, more human, and, thus, more acceptable as a candidate.

However, Jago’s opponents’ use of Mrs. Jago to show that Jago would be an unfit master goes beyond an argument between friends. Shortly after Nightingale switches sides from Jago’s party to Crawford’s, he argues that part of the reason for his switch is that Mrs. Jago is “putting on airs about it already” (160). He later circulates a fly sheet with a list of reasons the fellows should vote for Crawford and ends it with the following: “Mrs Crawford appears to many members of the college to be well fitted for the position of Master’s wife. This is not necessarily true of a candidate’s wife, and they attach great weight to this consideration” (246). That he ends the sheet with an attack on Mrs. Jago, rather than on Jago himself draws Mrs. Jago into the conflict while simultaneously suggesting that she should not be so involved. His refusal to name the particular candidate’s wife — forcing the others to fill in the blanks — highlights that this opinion is widely shared and, thus, does not need explanation.

Mrs. Jago's realization that the fellows see her as a failure as a wife and a disadvantage to Jago's campaign confirms her own belief that she has failed Jago throughout their marriage. Jago attempts to shield her from the truth that he is losing supporters to prevent her from blaming herself; her reaction to the fellows and to the fly sheet shows the difficult situation in which she has been placed. Initially, she blames her awkwardness on the fellows' disapproval of her. After the men ask her to leave the room while they talk with Jago on one occasion, Eliot sees the hurt expression on Mrs. Jago's face and predicts that "Jago would hear her cry 'they took the opportunity to say I wasn't wanted'" (63). Later, Mrs. Jago blames Lady Muriel, suggesting that Lady Muriel is "too much a snob ... too much above the wives of the fellows" (119) to teach anyone of Mrs. Jago's social origins the requirements of the role of a master's wife. Finally, she blames herself for failing to help her husband: "I've not been a good wife to Paul. I've been a drag on him all these years. I've tried sometimes, but I've never been any good. I know I'm horrible, but I can't prevent myself getting worse" (277). Behind her behaviour is a deep sense of inadequacy, but her attempts to become more helpful to her husband — inviting the fellows into her home, hosting parties, trying to learn her potential role — only make her more open to criticism.

However, Jago's insistence on keeping Mrs. Jago involved in various ways, even after his defeat, shows that, for him, she has value beyond the stabilizing servant role the fellows traditionally assigned to wives. Throughout the novel, he refers to her as "my wife" in front of the fellows to assert their relationship and his love for her. Although Lady Muriel similarly refers to the Master as "my husband," Eliot continually notes that her speech is stiff and overly formal, while Jago's speech is full of feeling. Despite the advice from his supporters, Jago still tries to keep Mrs. Jago involved in his campaign and his career. Both fear disappointing the other if Jago does not win the mastership: Jago goes so far as to state that he "could endure" his defeat "if it were not for her" (354). He believes in her abilities so much that preventing her from assuming the role of master's wife would hurt him more than failing to win the mastership himself. After he loses the mastership, however, he still presents them as a team. When inviting Crawford to dinner after the election, Jago states that "We feel you should be our guest before you go to anyone else" (369). Eliot observes that Jago is "pale as though with an illness" (368) while issuing the invitation, that he only goes through the expected motions in the Combination Room, and that he leaves early to walk home alone, which all suggest that the defeat has created a sense of

brokenness for Jago that may eventually become a bitterness to mirror Despart-Smith's; however, Jago's post-election toast in the Combination Room and his use of "we" in the invitation frame his wife as a source of support who may help him through this difficult period.

Although Eliot and the other fellows argue that Mrs. Jago's difficulties are caused by innate characteristics — that she is jealous, silly, and "grotesque" (62) by nature — and that Jago's love for her is due to his own foolishness, Snow's portrayal of their relationship suggests that she acts the way she does because she has been forced into an uncertain role with unclear and variable expectations. She is intelligent and educated, and wants to be successful in the only role open to her — being Jago's wife. She looks forward to living in the Lodge, planning the parties that the master's wife must host, and occupying the top of the hierarchy for the women who surround the college. She desires a larger sphere of influence and an increased ability to be an asset to her husband. Eliot suggests that she hopes that becoming an asset will allow her to finally feel worthy of her husband's love, which, in turn, would allow her to control her outbursts of anger and disappointment. However, in her position, success means negotiating the undefined boundaries between the college and domestic spheres and fulfilling a role she knows little about in order to bolster her husband's career. As much as she attempts to recreate herself in a more upper-class image, even her accent indicates that it is a façade. Her attempts to remedy her shortcomings only give the fellows more reasons to dislike and insult her. Their attempt to assess her ability to be an appropriate faculty wife and, by extension, an appropriate master's wife only make her more insecure. Although Showalter, in her analysis of academic fiction, accepts, without question, the fellows' view that the Jagos' is an "unfortunate marriage" (Showalter 17), the contrast between Lady Muriel and Mrs. Jago suggests that it is the former who is trapped in a truly unfortunate marriage while the latter is trapped in an unfortunate role. Mrs. Jago's difficulties stem not from a poor relationship with her husband, but from the strict and unspoken requirements placed on women within this exclusive and isolating community.

#### 1.3.4 Wife as Assistant: Katherine Getliffe

As the youngest of the wives, at twenty-eight years of age, Katherine Getliffe seems to show the future of this role and the easing of the boundaries between the college and the domestic spheres. Her main job, like Mrs. Gay's, Lady Muriel's, and Mrs. Jago's, is to run the household and raise the children. However, unlike the others, she has been able to provide a refuge for her husband, Francis Getliffe, which allows him to escape the stresses of his work for both the college

and the Air Ministry. Eliot notes a marked difference between his “fine-drawn” look at the college and his calmness at home: “He looked at [Katherine] with love, and his restlessness, his striving, his strenuous ambition, all died away; his moves were steadied, he was content to the marrow of his bones” (196). Because of his work outside of the college, Getliffe is one of the few people at the college who sees the signs of impending war and understands that it will affect the college regardless of its insularity. However, Katherine does her job well enough that he can take comfort in her presence when he is at home.

Her success in this aspect of their lives also suggests that their relationship is much different from the other couples’. Eliot stresses throughout his description of them that they are extremely happy together: Getliffe is content and she is “happy through and through with a happiness more continuous than a man could know” (196). She talks of her children with “delight,” and of the past with “great gusto [and with] the nostalgia of a happy woman” as she sits with “matronly comfort” in her chair (196). Eliot contrasts this contented woman with the “excited, apprehensive girl” she was when he met her (196). Her role within the house seems to have been a role into which she grew, from Eliot’s perspective, quite naturally. Her manner is not overly formal and stiff like Lady Muriel’s, nor overly studied and anxious like Mrs. Jago’s; instead, Katherine seems to be very relaxed with her husband.

Her skill and grace as a hostess, and her presentation of herself as a wife and mother above all else, allow her to hold opinions about college affairs without risking criticism. Although Eliot sees her chattering about her children as a way to “[indulge] her need to linger over them” (196) and her enthusiastic discussion of her family and the past as nostalgia, she uses these topics to control the conversation to a strategic purpose. At the college, Getliffe and Eliot argue over the mastership candidacy every time they see each other. They are also under considerable personal and professional pressure: Getliffe is frequently out of the college working on a project on radar for the Air Ministry and Eliot is living at college to escape the stress of London and of his ill wife. Thus, Katherine keeps the topics light until after dinner to remind both men of “old days” (196) and to lull Eliot into a sense of ease and security. After dinner, in the garden, when Eliot is “[d]rowsy in the scented air” (197), and before he can speak, she initiates the discussion about the mastership to Eliot’s “astonishment” (197). She guides the debate — assuring that her husband’s opinion dominates the conversation. When they seem to be at a stalemate — Getliffe and Katherine becoming “more obdurate in resisting any claim [Eliot] made for Jago: [Eliot’s]

tongue [becoming] harsher when [he] replied about Crawford” (198) — she quickly guides the conversation to a point in Crawford’s favour about which they can agree: “Anyway,” said Katherine at last, ‘*she* [Mrs. Jago] is appalling ... She’d be an intolerable nuisance in the Lodge” (198). Although they do not succeed in changing Eliot’s mind, the conversation shows that she knows both the debate and the men well enough to lead the conversation.

While Mrs. Jago is not allowed to hear the business of the “masculine society” Katherine is allowed to discuss it and is capable of discussing it because Eliot believes her happiness as a wife and mother counteracts the threat such discussion poses to the masculine society. In their discussion of the two sides, Katherine calls Crawford’s side “our side” (197) — suggesting that the decision will impact her as well as her husband. Although this conversation is a “game” designed to change Eliot’s opinion, that Getliffe discusses with her information about the college, its conflicts, and its people suggests that their relationship is very close. She seems to understand more about her husband’s life than Lady Muriel or Mrs. Jago do about their husbands’ lives and work. Her knowledge in this area also suggests that he may discuss his work and his various projects with her, especially since she has been privy to academic discussion in the past with Eliot, Getliffe, and Charles, her brother. She seems very educated (though it is not clear whether she is formally educated or not), which allows her to participate in the discussions. Her success as a hostess, wife, and mother suggests that she may not become as bitter as Mrs. Jago or as isolated as Lady Muriel. Her involvement in academic life through Eliot, Charles, and Getliffe also means that she will be able to support her children’s education like Mrs. Gay did.

However, Eliot suggests that her ability to participate in any given discussion is very limited, not by her own opinions or knowledge, but by her gender and her role as hostess. In London, when Eliot knew her and her older brother, Charles, “she had been [a] friend and disciple” (197). She listened to their conversations and “saw things with [their] eyes” (197). Listening to her talk at dinner in 1937, Eliot was “curiously saddened” because the “gulf of marriage” had divided them — “[n]ow she was happy with her husband, and everyone else’s words were alien” (197). Although his comments about her as his disciple in London seem to be intended as a compliment and those about her now being her husband’s disciple at Cambridge an insult, both show that she has not had much freedom in expressing her opinion. At the dinner party, when she begins to agree with Eliot, albeit “reluctantly” (198), that Jago is more remarkable than Crawford, she “recover[s] herself, and ask[s]: But do you want a remarkable

man as Master, don't you admit that other things come first?" (198). Francis responds to her with "Good work" (198) before criticizing Eliot's point. While she seems to have her own opinions and seems to be able to discuss them, she has to choose her position wisely.

Eliot's criticisms of Lady Muriel, Mrs. Jago, and, to a lesser extent, Katherine Getliff are designed to keep them distanced from the college. The fellows' views that these women are, in one way or another, incompatible with the grandeur, equality, sentiments, traditions, and mores of the college gives the fellows an excuse to exclude the women from the college that they are inevitably part of. However, despite the novel's focus on the masculine society, Snow also takes great care to include the women's perspectives on their positions within the academic world to show that the college's changes do not affect only the men. Many of the other changes that Eliot notes are college-level, policy-related events; the women represent a more cultural and personal change. While Mrs. Gay neither speaks nor is acknowledged within the novel, her position as one of the first wives within the college has made her a non-entity: she seems to have taken over the college servants' role in caring for her husband as though she was his nurse rather than his partner. Over the decades, the women who have followed in this role of faculty wife have not accepted such subordination. Through Eliot's sensitive, though still limited and judgemental, narration, Snow shows these women's difficulties integrating themselves into a college and foreshadows further difficulties for faculty wives in balancing their domestic duties with maintaining a non-threatening distance from college life.



## 2. *Lucky Jim*: Cultures Clash

While *The Masters*'s structure consists of a series of meetings at which the characters analyze events and other characters, *Lucky Jim* has a romantic structure that Amis uses to emphasize satirical elements. This structure and the satire also contrast the *The Master*'s nostalgic tone: while the university, for Snow, is an idyllic environment, it has, for Amis, become lazy and irrelevant. As a way to critique this environment, Amis creates, as Richard Fallis argues, "a version of heroic fantasy cased into superficially realistic situations" (66). The novel features Jim Dixon as the hero for whom university life is stifling and oppressive. Early in his education, he decides to study Medieval History because it was the "soft option" (33), rather than due to any particular fondness for the subject. His studies in medieval history provide him with greater career options than his working-class background would have otherwise allowed, but his background leaves him unprepared for academic culture, politics, and duties. In addition, his academic training does not appear to present options besides teaching in a university or a school. As David Lodge states in his introduction to the 1992 Penguin edition, Dixon, the novel's "hero," has been "promoted" to the university, "the epitome of a stuffy, provincial bourgeois world," by his education (Lodge viii), rather than by any desire to pursue the career. Feeling stuck in the academic world, he attempts to find a place for himself within the culture. This search takes the form of a quest, with a series of battles in which he attempts to assert his decision to live, as Dalton-Brown notes in her analysis of the genre, a "life of desires" within a culture focused on the "life of the mind" (592). Dixon's position as the novel's 'hero' who struggles against his oppressor (the pomposity of the university, embodied by his department head, Ned Welch), fends off romantic traps (the neurotic Margaret Peel, a lecturer in the English department), fights for 'the girl' (Christine Callaghan), and triumphs over his enemies (leaves the university and accepts a job in London that Welch's son, Bertrand, was hoping to get) suggests that assimilation into the confines of the university would be a kind of death to be avoided at any cost. Among his adversaries on and off campus, Dixon most fears Welch's wife, Mrs. Welch, who not only observes and judges his behaviour, but also stands as the guardian of the same ancient university traditions that he rebels against. His only ally, Mrs. Carol Goldsmith, the wife of one of his colleagues in the History Department, arranges his escape from the university for him. Dixon's "luck" throughout his quest is created

by these two women: Mrs. Welch's ability to see through his façade pushes him to leave the university, while Carol ensures that he has a place to escape to.

## 2.1 Class and Satire

The novel's satire focuses mostly on a class critique. As a former scholarship student and a new lecturer, Dixon is unfamiliar with the unspoken expectations of his position and disconnected from his supervisors and colleagues. This uncertainty and disconnect leads to his contempt of academic culture. Although the system expanded from the Oxbridge model to include the new redbrick universities, the newer universities, like Dixon's, attempt to replicate the old model rather than changing the status quo. The academic culture is self-replicating: despite the influx of female and scholarship students hoping for a route into the middle class, the universities attempt to assimilate students into an elite and educated class and, ultimately, to train them to become academics. In Dixon's case this training does not include insight into the academic culture and responsibilities, so, unlike his colleagues, he views the academic culture as an outsider, which allows him to see the problems this upper-class focus has caused. While he thinks that the study of "history could do people a hell of a lot of good," "[b]ad teaching" prevents it from achieving its potential usefulness (214). He does not understand the departmental politics, the customs surrounding parties and gatherings, or the reason his job requires him to participate in these extracurricular activities. All he knows is that they are a requirement: he interprets his invitation to what he refers to as the "Arty Weekend"—a weekend-long party hosted by his department head, Professor Ned Welch, ostensibly to celebrate Welch's connection to the arts community—as a cultural test. As he tells Margaret, Welch "wants to test my reactions to culture, see whether I'm a fit person to teach in a university" (24). These tests threaten his sense of security at the university because he does not understand or want to understand the social culture.

As a response to his alienation, he attempts to assert himself by subverting the cultural and professional norms as a way of resisting assimilation and the university's power over him. He stores his lecture papers in an old Royal Air Force folder which he stole when he was in the RAF during World War II, suggesting that his contempt for hierarchical, authoritative structures is not limited to his present career. His use of it within the university suggests his desire to visually mark himself as different from the insular academic world. In his job, he attempts to avoid work that he finds pointless, such as listening to his Department Head talk about concerts; writing an

article about medieval English shipbuilding techniques which will shed “psuedo-light” upon “non-problems” through its “niggling mindlessness” and “funereal parade of yawn-enforcing facts” (14); preparing a course on medieval life and culture; and giving a public lecture on “Merrie England”—a nostalgic and anachronistic version of England’s medieval period which, as Dixon yells during the lecture, “was about the most un-Merrie period in our history” (227). However, these activities encompass most of his required work.

In order to avoid having to cope with his current job and responsibilities, Dixon escapes to a fantasy world that allows him to vent his frustrations while outwardly maintaining a polite tone and “an expression of eager friendliness” (12). When working in his own office or talking with Welch, Dixon imagines beating Welch or yelling obscenities at him. During one conversation in which Dixon questions Welch about the security of his job and Welch refuses to answer, Dixon’s fantasy world allows him to cope with the uncertainty, bitterness, and frustration:

If Welch didn’t speak in the next five seconds, he’d do something which would get himself flung out without possible question – not the things he’d often dreamed of when sitting next door pretending to work. He no longer wanted, for example, to inscribe on the departmental timetable a short account, well tricked-out with obscenities, of his views on the Professor of History, the Department of History, medieval history, history, and Margaret and hang it out of the window for the information of passing students and lecturers, nor did he, on the whole, now intend to tie Welch up in his chair and beat him about the head and shoulders with a bottle until he disclosed why, without being French himself, he’d given his sons French names, nor... No, he’d just say, quite quietly and very slowly and distinctly, to give Welch a good chance of catching his general drift: Look here, you old cockchafer, what makes you think you can run a history department, even at a place like this, eh, you old cockchafer? I know what you’d be good at, you old cockchafer... (85, ellipses original)

He longs to expose the pretension and uselessness that he believes is endemic to the university, but his fear of being “flung out” of the university forces him to suppress his bitterness at being unable to expose these characteristics or change them. The violence and obscenities show the intensity of frustration that he must suppress for the sake of his job. Thus, this imagined violence is focused primarily at his department head, who is responsible for renewing or terminating Dixon’s contract.

When his presence is required at parties or by students or other faculty, Dixon subverts the rules that govern the gatherings by redirecting his focus to tasks and goals that differ from those held by those around him. As Casey Clabough notes, when Dixon is at the pub with Margaret Peel, who manipulates him into spending time with her, he attempts to “recoup himself a little for the expensiveness of the drinks” he is forced to purchase for Margaret and himself “by eating steadily through the potato crisps, gherkins, and red, green, and amber cocktail onions provided by an ambitious management” (Amis 21), rather than focus on her (Clabough 114-115). When Margaret becomes too familiar, too intimate, he turns his attention to the female bartender, thinking about “how much he liked her and had in common with her and how much she’d like him and have in common with him if only she knew him” (25) because he believes she belongs to the same class he does. At the Arty Weekend, Dixon is the only person in the crowd who cannot read music, play the recorder, or sing, but he is required to participate in the madrigal singing. He also almost gets into a fight with the Welches’ son, Bertrand, over the government’s redistributionist taxation. He eventually flees the Welches’ house to go to the pub, drunkenly breaks back in to sleep, and, finally, accidentally sets his room on fire. At his own public lecture, he is so uncomfortable with the audience and with his subject matter that he becomes intoxicated and hides in the bathroom with Christine’s uncle, the wealthy but similarly pretension-hating Julius Gore-Urquhart, until he needs to be on stage. To avoid focusing on his own discomfort during these situations, he reasserts his identity by drinking large quantities of beer and diverting his attention to attractive women around him.

## 2.2 Prizes and Traps: Women in *Lucky Jim*

Dixon’s attempt to escape a life of the mind and to live a life of desires focused on cigarettes, alcohol, food, and beautiful women causes him to concentrate on the women on campus, who he classifies as being either available or “beyond his ambition” (123). This focus and the romance structure of the novel place the women into three groups within Dixon’s battles: the female students, young and pretty, are prizes; the female lecturers, sexless and unfeminine, and the older faculty wife (Mrs. Welch), committed to upholding a status quo which excludes the working-class Dixon, are enemies to be avoided or overcome; only the younger faculty wife (Mrs. Goldsmith), as bored and disconnected as Dixon but sexually unavailable, becomes an ally. These categories objectify the women by placing them into defined roles within the novel’s romantic structure. The minor “prizes” — the female students — never speak or act. Dixon’s

“grand prize” - Christine Callahan — has more agency, but, as Lodge notes, she “rarely rises above her archetype, the blonde, beautiful, virginal, yet voluptuous object of male desire, and the conversations between her and Jim are often embarrassingly banal” (xiii). Meanwhile, the “enemies” — primarily Margaret Peel and Mrs. Welch — are obstacles who either attempt to keep him trapped in the university or attempt to eliminate him from it. Among the women, only Mrs. Carol Goldsmith, the wife of one of Dixon’s colleagues from the History Department, works for the hero’s cause. Although Dixon regards her only as “one of his allies” (45) and a woman he is unable to sleep with, and, although she works in the background of the parties and gatherings so her efforts go largely unnoticed, she is instrumental in rescuing him from Margaret and the university.

Dixon’s academic plans revolve mostly around getting the “three pretty girls” (97) — Miss O’Shaughnessy, Miss McCorquodale, and Miss ap Rhys Williams — into his honours class without Mr. Michie, a keen and intelligent student, joining them. Having them in his class, especially without Michie, becomes the reward he anticipates for a well-designed and promoted syllabus. Thus, he makes the syllabus vague and difficult-sounding in the hopes that Michie will not be interested, but, in doing so, he overestimates the women. Despite being honours students, these three women never speak in the novel. Instead, they have Michie meet with Dixon to discuss their concerns about the course for them. In the end, they are intimidated by Dixon’s syllabus because, as Michie explains, they feel “the reading is a good deal on the heavy side” (97) and, being “of rather more conservative temperament” (97), they choose to take easier classes from Dixon’s colleagues. Within the novel, they serve as the only sexual goal Dixon has on campus because he views the other women on and around campus as either inadequate in some way or unavailable. However, their own passivity and powerlessness thwarts his plan to “win” his game.

The female faculty are enemies for Dixon to avoid because they seem to have traded their femininity in exchange for careers in academia. They become objects of satire because of their appearances, like the “sexagenarian Professor of Philosophy or the fifteen-stone Senior Lecturer in Economics” (107) with whom no single man would dance at the university’s Summer Ball. Their academic careers have left them undesirable and unfeminine.

These characteristics are exemplified in Margaret, the central female faculty member in the novel. In exchange for an academic career, she has lost knowledge that Dixon considers essential

to women, such as ways to interest men and “which colour lipstick went with which natural colouring” (163). Because she does not possess this knowledge, she has “appalling difficulties” and various “vices and morbidities” (163). These difficulties, as John Kendall Eastman Curtis argues, show in her speech, which is “largely grammatically complete and formed of short sentences” (48). He cites research that has shown “[i]ndirect evidence supporting the notion that mental instability leads to the simplification of speech” because “suicide notes showed just such simplification effects” (48). These characteristics may also be understood as affectations developed to mirror the expectations at the university, especially because the only other character to speak grammatically complete sentences, Christine, does so not just in a “schoolmistressy way” but, more significantly, in an “elocutionmistressy” way — suggesting that she spent time in elocution school (135) and that her grammatically-correct speech is also an affectation. The speech of other characters contains false starts, ellipses, repetition, hesitation, and longer or rambling sentences. Thus, Margaret is linguistically marked. Her lack of femininity, her mental instability, and her possible affectations suggest that, for Amis, the university culture is devastating to women’s femininity and personalities.

Margaret’s loneliness and mental instability lead her to ensnare Dixon by manipulating the institutional expectations and rumours and by manipulating “a combination of virtues he hadn’t known he possessed: politeness, friendly interest, ordinary concern, a good-natured willingness to be imposed upon, a desire for unequivocal friendship” (10). When he started at the university, he attempted to fit into the polite society, so he did not question her motives when she invited him for coffee: “It had seemed only natural for a female lecturer to ask a junior, though older, male colleague up to her place for coffee, and no more than civil to accept” (10). He attempted to be straightforward with her — honestly stating that he enjoys her company, for instance — but her questions allowed for ambiguous interpretation. While he was searching for friendship between colleagues, he quickly finds himself trapped into being “the man who was ‘going round’ with Margaret” (10). Her well-timed confessions about her enjoyment of his company and about her previous boyfriend who had “thrown her over” (11) create a sense of vulnerability and loneliness which Dixon pities, trapping him further. In addition to soliciting his pity, she also attempts to become indispensable to him to keep him near her. Because he does not fit into the university culture and needs help navigating the extracurricular requirements, she becomes like a wife to him — reminding him of and helping him through social functions, and making excuses for him

when he leaves these parties to go to the pub. When those duties are not enough to make her invaluable to him, she attempts to manipulate him into staying with her by staging a suicide attempt.

Thus, a major part of Dixon's escape from academia depends on his escape from the neurotic Margaret. His relationship with her is akin to his relationship to the university: he passively accepts it as inevitable. As T.F. Dixon argues, "Dixon's involvement with her depends upon outside forces precisely because he elects to live a predominantly passive life" (76). However, his passivity is not enough to solidify the relationship. At the Summer Ball, he finally "grows more capable of choice and action" (Dixon 76) and abandons Margaret there in favour of Christine's company. When Margaret confronts him, he is finally able to break off their relationship: "I'll stick up for you and I'll chat to you and I'll sympathize, but I've had enough of being forced into a false position. Get it into your head that I've quite lost whatever interest I may have had in you as a woman, as someone to make love to, or go to bed with" (158). She responds by going into hysterics and screaming on his bed for several minutes, but she eventually leaves calmly. However, he still pities her and fears her potential power over him. He only becomes completely free of her at the end of the novel when he learns that she not only faked her suicide attempt, but also attempted to deceive another man in the same way at the same time. His freedom from "pity's adhesive plaster" (243) allows Dixon to escape his relationship with her and escape the university fully.

### 2.2.1 The Enemy: Mrs. Welch

While Margaret works to trap Dixon — forcing him into a relationship with her and keeping him in the university — Mrs. Welch actively works to eliminate him from the university. As one of the older faculty wives, she defends the traditional academic culture from interlopers she feels are unworthy or uncouth — primarily Dixon. She is a thematic descendant of Lady Muriel and Mrs. Jago because, as the wife of a Department Head, she plans and hosts parties and teas for the faculty and their wives. As such, she is subject to the same types of criticism and fears about her behaviour and her level of involvement in the academic culture. She is an object of satire in the novel because, through this role, she helps to create the upper-class atmosphere within the university that intentionally excludes people like Dixon. Unlike Margaret, who desires to keep Dixon close to her, Mrs. Welch would rather remove him from her home and the

university, but is forced to tolerate him because of his position as a lecturer in her husband's department.

Mrs. Welch's work creating the social atmosphere of the university means that she is Dixon's main antagonist. While the female students are passive, the female faculty easily avoided, and Margaret self-interested, Mrs. Welch actually threatens Dixon because of her potential influence over the department. She is also in a more threatening position than Dixon's male opponents — Welch, Michie, and Bertrand — because she is both tied to the university structure (unlike Bertrand) and operates outside of its official realm (unlike Welch or Michie). The novel's structure places further emphasis on her role; she is present at Dixon's three major battles and represents the traditions against which he fights. As Fallis notes,

The twenty-five chapters are structured around three major events, social occasions which are, in fact, night battles: the evening musicale at [Welch's] house, the Summer Ball, and the disastrous public lecture. Each battle is fought in what is for [Dixon] alien territory, the land of academic sophistication. (Fallis 68)

While the academics involve themselves in teaching and research, Mrs. Welch safeguards this sense of "academic sophistication" by monitoring and enforcing standards of behaviour that she learned from her upper-class background. Her role as hostess means that she not only facilitates social activity, but also enforces a "polite code of manners" (Lodge vi) at these events — effectively helping to enforce this code within the university itself.

Her power results, in part, from changes to the university: the physical structure of the new redbrick universities shifts the centre of socialization from campus to faculty's private homes, which, consequently, shifts the responsibility for hosting social events from the professors to their wives. Unlike Snow's Cambridge college, Amis's redbrick university has no dining hall or private faculty rooms. Lecturers and junior faculty, like Dixon, stay at boarding houses and apartments near campus, while those who can afford a car, like Welch, live in their own homes in the suburbs or neighbouring towns. Neither group stays on campus. The combination room, still in existence as the Common Room, provides for faculty a place to use the phone and collect their university mail, which makes it less of a social area than it was in *The Masters*. Faculty must pay a subscription now to partake in the coffee and lemon squash provided by the "overallled woman at the serving table" (88). While the gatherings hosted by faculty members' wives were optional in *The Masters*, in *Lucky Jim* few other options exist for faculty to socialize. Thus, Mrs. Welch's main



task of hosting parties and supporting her husband at social functions is essential to preserving the collegial atmosphere once created by the ancient combination rooms and dining halls.

Her authority in her position is aided by her upper-class background. Like Lady Muriel's, Mrs. Welch's background gives her an insight into academic culture and tradition. She understands ways to organize her household, staff, and parties, and brings that knowledge to her role as the wife of a Department Head. At the Arty Weekend, she organizes the food, servants, schedule, and guests. She also provides for her guests a bedroom for the night and a full English breakfast the next morning, before the festivities begin again. During the evening party, she maintains control over the group and its proceedings. When her husband begins to analyze "violently" (36) the madrigals the group will be singing, she gently, but forcefully, keeps him focused: "'We're all waiting, Ned,' Mrs. Welch said from the piano. She played a slow arpeggio, sustaining it with the pedal. 'All right, everybody?'" (36). This scene, her first appearance in the novel, shows her position within the group: although Welch has chosen the music and is conducting the choir, she, behind the piano, is actually the one in control. Once order has been restored and Welch's attention returns to his task, she leaves the piano and takes her place beside Margaret as the other soprano. Later, when Dixon and Bertrand begin to argue, she interrupts them and redirects their attention towards the performance which is about to start: as Bertrand becomes louder and more excited by the conflict, Mrs. Welch calls from behind them "Come along, dear ... If we wait for Father we'll be here all night. Shall we make a start? If you'll come over here we can all sit down" (52). When they continue to fight after the performance has started, she and five others turn to shush them, enforcing the polite code of manners.

Mrs. Welch's role in the background of various events enables her to be one of the most perceptive characters in the novel — one of the main reasons she poses such a threat to Dixon. Dixon's career relies on the absent-minded Welch not noticing, for instance, the several times Dixon physically assaults a member of the faculty by accident, his verbal and physical fights with Bertrand, the severe damage he drunkenly causes to the Welches' home, or his lack of interest in university teaching and research, but Mrs. Welch is an acutely observant hostess. She sees that Dixon's behaviour does not fit within her standard. Although Dixon believes that Welch would not notice or care about his off-campus behaviour even if Mrs. Welch told him, Dixon fears that she would "to go on telling Welch until he did notice" (118). He fears that she will have Welch fire him, so he attempts to deceive Mrs. Welch, but these attempts only lead to more deception

when she discovers them. His transgressions begin a series of conflicts with her; he fights against her power and influence by attempting to deceive her the way he has been deceiving her husband.

While she cannot see his violent fantasy world or his behaviour on campus, her position within the home allows her to see, in detail, the ways he violates expectations. She notices his quiet escape from the Arty Weekend: as Margaret tells Dixon later, “Mrs Neddy thought it was a bit off” (56). His return through a window violates their space. Once he gets to his guest room, he passes out while smoking a cigarette and burns the bedsheets, end table, and rug. In the morning, he desperately attempts to hide them, worrying that his transgression will result in the loss of his job. Finally, he receives a pre-arranged phone call from a friend, which allows him to invent an excuse to leave the weekend early. While Welch responds “with incomprehension” at his announcement of his need to leave, Mrs. Welch is offended and reacts “censoriously” (79).

While Dixon attempts to hide the evidence of his transgressions, Mrs. Welch is too observant to be fooled by his stories and games. Her important role within the larger campus community also means that he cannot avoid her. When he attempts to call Welch to give him a message from Christine about the Summer Ball, Mrs. Welch not only answers, but recognizes his voice and questions him about the burnt bedsheets. In an effort to deceive her, he pretends to be a London reporter looking for Bertrand. While Bertrand believes the reporter was one of his acquaintances from London, Mrs. Welch knows that it was Dixon. When Dixon next returns to the Welches’ house at Welch’s insistence, Mrs. Welch again confronts him about the bedsheets and the phone call. She pressures him to speak truthfully by threatening to fire the maid — the only other likely culprit. Later, when Dixon calls the Welches in an effort to contact Christine and Mrs. Welch answers the phone, he pretends to be “Mr. Forteskyah” with a bad connection and a heavy accent to avoid telling her the reason he was calling. However, she immediately recognizes his voice and threatens to “ask [her] husband to take the matter up with [Dixon] from a disciplinary point of view” (190), confirming his fears regarding the extent of her influence. While he is able to fool Bertrand and Welch, Mrs. Welch is more observant and more forceful in her defence of her family and of propriety.

Her threat of having him fired frightens Dixon because she influences her husband’s decisions due to their close relationship and her understanding of the university. While the fellows in *The Masters* worried that Lady Muriel would affect college proceedings, she was

distanced from the academic world because she was not highly educated and did not understand her husband's work. Mrs. Welch, however, is educated: she understands her husband's work and debates current issues with him. Welch seems to enjoy this interaction. As he drives Dixon to the Welches' home, he "go[es] on about her political views, her attitude towards 'so-called freedom in education', her advocacy of retributive punishment, her fondness for reading what Englishwomen wrote about how Parisians thought and felt" (176-177). While Welch maintains his own views on various subjects, he enjoys discussing them with his wife, rather than with his colleagues only. The Welches also attend functions together, such as the symphony, the Summer Ball, and Dixon's public lecture for the university's "College Open Week" — a wide variety of events at which her appearance is not required. She keeps track of her husband's schedule and personal appearance for him to ensure that he is present and presentable. This close relationship with her husband gives her greater influence than the wives in *The Masters*.

While Dixon only sees Mrs. Welch's acute observation of the faculty members as a threat and as a way to maintain a strict code of behaviour, she also observes them because they become like members of her extended family. After Margaret's suicide attempt, Mrs. Welch fetches her from the hospital and "install[s] her at the Welches' home for convalescence" (19). Margaret tells Dixon "how good Mrs. Welch had been" (19), although Dixon finds it "rather annoying to hear how kind she'd been" because "it entailed putting tiresome qualifications on his dislike for her" (19). Mrs. Welch also arranges for neighbours and friends to visit Margaret and, when Margaret returns to her own apartment, invites her to lunches at the Welches' home. Mrs. Welch's sense of responsibility for the members of the husband's department suggests itself in the way she entertains, looks after, and houses if necessary the faculty her husband supervises.

However, regardless of the work that Mrs. Welch does for the department's faculty, she is not entirely respected by them. Despite Margaret's gratitude towards Mrs. Welch for taking care of her, she still is "awfully glad to get out of that place" (22). Mrs. Welch's attempts to cheer Margaret — particularly by inviting neighbours to visit her — appear to be more of an inconvenience for Margaret than an appreciated gesture. While Margaret's comments may just be her attempt to bond with Dixon over a common enemy and not entirely representative of her feelings, her comments still imply a lack of respect. Similarly, when Dixon stays with the Welches for the Arty Weekend, he views the Saturday morning disparagingly as "breakfast technics" that recall "an earlier epoch" and function as "visual proof[s] of the Welches'

prosperity” (66). He does not view it as thoughtful or reflective in any way of Mrs. Welch, other than as a show of her wealth. Within the functions she attends or hosts, she is in the background and only rarely speaks in the midst of larger groups. In addition to her lack of influence over university proceedings, she is, as Shari Benstock notes, occasionally “referred to as “Mrs. Neddy,” a diminutive of her husband’s given name” (333). When Margaret discusses Mrs. Welch with Dixon, she criticizes her work by calling her “Old Mother Welch” (22). This naming reinforces that Mrs. Welch is not respected for her work or seen as a valuable member of the larger campus community.

Dixon’s conflicts with and fear of Mrs. Welch ultimately end because, despite her appearance of power and importance, her role within the university is limited and has not changed much from the wives’ roles within *The Masters*. She operates mostly in the background, so she has no real power to change the system. She facilitates and controls social events, but is not at the centre of them. Her activities are spatially distanced from campus, so she can only control events that happen off campus. Her energies are mostly focused on allowing her husband to maintain his social and professional position rather than directly gaining power for herself. Dixon fears that she will insist on his being fired; however, ultimately, it seems unlikely that she has the power or influence to do this. Her husband is so self-absorbed that he cannot remember Dixon’s name, let alone social mistakes Dixon might make. In the end, Dixon’s behaviour at the disastrous public lecture, not at the Welches’s home, gets him fired.

Mrs. Welch is disposed of, along with the rest of the university system, when Dixon leaves. Despite his fear of her, she is only marginally part of the novel’s final image, in which the Welch family first sees Dixon, triumphant with his ultimate “prize,” Christine; Welch and Bertrand feature much more heavily:

On Mrs Welch’s face appeared an expression of imminent vomiting; Dixon inclined his head indulgently to her. (He remembered something in a book about success making people humble, tolerant, and kind.) The incident was almost closed when he saw that not only were Welch and Bertrand both present, but Welch’s fishing-hat and Bertrand’s beret were there too. The beret, however, was on Welch’s head, the fishing-hat on Bertrand’s. In these guises, and standing rigid with popping eyes, as both were, they had a look of being Gide and Lytton Strachey, represented in waxwork form by a prentice hand. Dixon drew in breath to denounce them both, then blew it all out again in a howl of laughter. (251)

This scene is “almost closed” (251) with the moment between Mrs. Welch and Dixon; however, the men, Bertrand and Welch, overshadow her. Dixon’s indulgently inclined head suggests a gracious defeat; he realizes that she is neither important nor a threat to him anymore. He does not even care enough to confront her, though he does have the impulse to denounce Welch and Bertrand. Her power to affect or threaten him dissipates as soon as Dixon is no longer employed by her husband; she has no authority or respect on her own.

### 2.2.2 The Ally: Carol Goldsmith

Although Carol Goldsmith, Dixon’s strongest ally, does not have the relative status Mrs. Welch does, she shapes Dixon’s escape from academia more than anyone else. Throughout the maze of prizes and enemies who alternate between making Dixon’s employment potentially more enjoyable and making it nearly unbearable or non-existent, she helps Dixon win his ‘grand prize,’ Christine Callahan, and gain non-academic employment — allowing him to beat out Bertrand, his competition for both. Because her husband is a member of the History Department, Mrs. Goldsmith is required to attend the various department functions that the Welches host; however, she does not participate in the activities at these functions. Like Dixon, she is critical of the pretension and code of manners upheld by the Welches and other members of the university. She furthers their alliance by revealing to him that she is having an affair with Bertrand in order to encourage him to pursue Christine Callahan. While her function in the novel may seem to be only a way to further the romantic plot between Dixon and Christine, she is significant in that she represents a different model of academic wife and academic marriage than that of either Mrs. Welch or the wives in *The Masters* because she does not attempt to assimilate. Rather, she is a predecessor of *The History Man*’s Barbara Kirk, who attempts to make the position of faculty wife change to suit her.

Carol’s appearance at the three social events — the three “night battles” — provides a diversion from the social events themselves. Unlike the other faculty wives who presumably attend the events but are not important enough to be mentioned, Carol distances herself from the other wives in her subversion of the university’s polite code of manners. She acts the way Dixon would like to act — remaining apart and critical rather than being forced to participate. At first, she seems to attend from a sense of duty to provide her husband with “wifely support” (45). However, her husband is much more engaged in the activities than she is. While he sings “tremulously and very loudly” (37) in the choir, she “refuse[s], with enviable firmness, to do more

than sit and listen to the singing from an armchair near the fireplace” (39). This firmly stated refusal marks an important distinction from the previous generations of wives — both the wives in *The Masters* and Mrs. Welch: these women stayed silent or participated in the required tasks as much as they could for the sake of their husbands’ careers. Mrs. Goldsmith is unreserved in expressing her opinions. When talking with Dixon and Margaret after the madrigal, she questions “why the hell [she] come[s]” (45) to these sorts of events — a sentiment which mirrors Dixon’s own. However, while Dixon must hide his criticisms of the Welches and the university to preserve his job, she is able to speak her opinions aloud.

Amis’s use of variations on Mrs. Goldsmith’s name suggests that she plays several roles at the functions she attends. At the Arty Weekend, when Amis describes the crowd, he connects her identity to her husband’s—as “Mrs. Goldsmith” or “Goldsmith’s wife,” or “the Goldsmiths—” even though she is one of Dixon’s allies and friends. This naming suggests that, at this event, she is viewed as an accessory of her husband—almost a non-entity like Mrs. Gay in *The Masters*. Even though, or perhaps especially because, she refuses to participate in the required activities, she seems to be at the party for her husband’s sake. Later, when Dixon sees her and Bertrand kissing after the party, his first thought is concern for Goldsmith: “To have seen and talked to Cecil Goldsmith several times a week for some months didn’t make the fellow any less a nonentity, but it gave him a claim on one, a claim which was somehow invoked by the sight of his wife being handled by a third party” (55). At this point, her identity is intimately connected to her husband, both to emphasize the impropriety of her actions, but also to indicate that her role, even when kissing another man, is that of a faculty member’s wife. Thus, Amis’s use of her first name at the Summer Ball, during which Goldsmith is in Leeds for a history conference, suggests that she is acting outside of her marriage commitments at the ball and that she has an individual identity. The use of her first name also marks a distinct change from other wives: unlike Mrs. Gay, Mrs. Jago, or Mrs. Welch, whose first names are only mentioned in passing, or Lady Muriel, whose title and first name is used to distinguish her social standing and personal separation from her husband, Mrs. Goldsmith’s first name shows her as a separate individual who has the power to act outside her primary role as a faculty wife. Her appearance at the ball without her husband suggests that her motivation for attending these sorts of social functions is not entirely to provide wifely support, but also may be a way to keep herself amused.

Carol is an effective ally for Dixon because she is as unhappy with her profession — being Goldsmith’s wife — as he is with his. Both her frustration at being rejected by Bertrand and maneuvered into accompanying Gore-Urquhart to the ball and her anger at seeing Bertrand ignore Christine cause her to “feel so fed-up” (123) that she has “got to tell someone” (120) — Dixon — about her unhappiness in her marriage. Although, as Benstock suggests, the Goldsmiths’ marriage, unlike any other relationship in the novel, does appear to have “some level of equality and honesty” (333), Carol is still very unhappy. As she explains to Dixon, she married Cecil in her mid-twenties, a time, for her, of “illusion” and “false maturity” (125). She “couldn’t have done anything else” because she “was in love” (125) with him. However, now in her mid-forties, she believes that there are two requirements for love: “You want to go to bed with [someone] and you can’t, and you don’t know [that person] very well” (124). These no longer apply to her marriage. She maintains the role of the supportive wife at faculty gatherings, but they are no longer really in love. Regarding sexual intimacy, she tells Dixon that she and her husband have “more or less packed it in” because “old Cecil isn’t much of a boy for that kind of business” (122). Because she “still quite like[s] it” (122), she has affairs, with his approval, with men like Bertrand.

Carol acts on Dixon’s behalf, and mostly without his knowledge, to win him Christine and a job as Gore-Urquhart’s secretary in London to free him from the type of unhappiness she feels. Her account of her loveless marriage and her affair with Bertrand serve as a warning for him in his relationship with Margaret. She uses it to provide reasons to “put dear Margaret out of [his] mind” (124). His sense of the inevitability of his relationship with Margaret parallels Carol’s sense of not being able to do anything other than marry Cecil. Similarly, her experience with Bertrand provides Dixon with a “moral duty” (125) to “get [Christine] away from Bertrand” (125). In addition, she secures the secretarial position for Dixon to ensure that Bertrand does not win it. During the ball, she talks “fairly hard” with Gore-Urquhart about Dixon while they sit away from the rest of the guests. While never specifically noted within the novel, the subject of their conversation is indicated by Gore-Urquhart’s later use of Dixon’s name before the two men have been introduced and Gore-Urquhart’s comment to Dixon before the public lecture — “I’ve a notion that you’re not too happy in it [the university]” (214). Their limited interaction before the public lecture suggests that Carol has mentioned Dixon’s skills and his need for another, non-academic job.

Ultimately, the contrast between these two women — Mrs. Welch with her self-imposed duty to uphold the customs and traditions of the university and Mrs. Goldsmith with her boredom and affairs — suggests that the places for non-academic women who are connected with the academic world are very limiting. While Mrs. Welch seems to enjoy her duties as a way to exercise her limited power and as a way to showcase her husband, she still is performing these activities unofficially. She can enact no real change and is as ridiculed by Amis's satire as the system of which she attempts to be part. For Mrs. Goldsmith, the faculty wife's duties threaten to erase her identity. While she subverts the code of conduct in small ways — refusing to sing at parties, having an affair with Bertrand, helping to take Bertrand's girlfriend and potential job from him — she does so in the background without interrupting the main action. Dixon and her husband seem to be the only ones who are aware of her activities, and Dixon does not seem to realize the extent of them. She is also not in a position to alter the atmosphere of the university; she has just enough influence to get Dixon a new position. Her refusals to play the game — to comply with the expectations and activities associated with her role — do not stop or change it. Her resistance does not provide her with any power; it just keeps her amused enough so she can continue to play the supportive wife role at parties.

Although more women are portrayed in *Lucky Jim* than in *The Masters*, they are placed in limiting positions both within Dixon's quest and within the university culture itself. The female students need a man to speak for them and are intimidated by potentially difficult classes, and the female faculty have traded their femininity to gain acceptance into the traditionally male-dominated life of the mind. The women who have the most influence — the faculty wives — are still limited in their ability to effect change because, despite all that they do for the university, they are still outside of the university culture. This role means that they are patronized and not given credit for their work — in the case of Mrs. Welch, by the faculty for her role in maintaining the social atmosphere, and, in the case of Mrs. Goldsmith, by Dixon for her work in securing for him the girl and the job. However, unlike the wives in *The Masters* who attempt to conform to the fellows' changing and unclear expectations, both Mrs. Welch and Mrs. Goldsmith attempt to change the position as much as they can to suit themselves. Later wives, like *The History Man's* Barbara, have the possibility of more freedom from this restrictive role.



### 3. *The History Man*: Experimentation

#### 3.1 The University

The novel's history man is the self-proclaimed radical, Dr. Howard Kirk. However, unlike the masters of *The Masters* or Jim Dixon of *Lucky Jim*, this eponymous character was not written to be sympathetic: Howard represents the problems with the newest iteration of the university system. Because the university has long been perceived as out of touch and out of date, the plate glass university of *The History Man*, with Howard Kirk at its centre, revolutionizes itself. Both claim to be radical forces for social and individual liberation, but, behind the promise of freedom and revolution, both Howard and the new university oppress intellectual dissent and women. As Howard attempts to build an overarching story of historical inevitability that favours himself, the narrator, who ostensibly voices Howard's perspective, builds a narrative that parodies the radical passions of the early 1970s. The tone in the long, detail-filled paragraphs mirrors Howard's constant self-promotion and, in doing so, satirizes the hypocrisy of the university and of self-styled radicals like Howard. Howard manipulates students, staff, and faculty in order to build support for himself, but his power within the university is based on his exploitation of his wife, Barbara, who has become "trapped" (3) as a housewife. His exploitation of her allows him the time and freedom to create discord at the university. Her increasing realization over the fall term of 1972 that the revolutions of the 1960s failed to deliver the excitement and liberation they promised and her increasing acknowledgement of Howard's oppression of her lead her to "savagely" slice her arm on a window at the final party of the term (230). While the narration satirizes the university, it also allows for Barbara's story of exploitation and oppression to undermine Howard's radical façade.

The university becomes a crucible for new ideas and experiments as radical research fuels revolutionary sentiment. The university's history from the 1950s onwards mirrors Howard's personal history: he started his academic career at a redbrick university with very serious and tedious research, but, during the 1960s, turned to modern society and produced two books that become popular both within academic circles and among the general public. He begins to define himself by his research into sexual politics and social mores, and is offered a job at a ten year old university in a recently established sociology department. The modern buildings reflect the sensibility of the new iteration of the university structure: for example, the bathrooms had

“strange modern symbols of man and woman on them, virtually indistinguishable” (64) to force students to question gender, and the lunch room was designed to mix faculty and students to avoid a classist hierarchy.

The focus on academic work has also changed: academic work is rarely mentioned in *The Masters* and is portrayed in *Lucky Jim* as “niggling mindlessness” (14), but, in *The History Man*, research has become trendy and it defines not only academics’ jobs, but also their behaviours. Howard’s approach to hosting parties highlights this phenomenon. Like *Lucky Jim*, *The History Man* is structured around parties — the Kirks’ beginning of term party and the Kirks’ end of term party. Parties at faculty members’ homes are the primary places that faculty socialize in both novels. Like the parties at the Welches’ home, the parties at the Kirks’ home are designed to show off Howard’s connection to the wider community. However, unlike in *Lucky Jim*, Howard and Barbara plan the party together and Howard uses the parties as outward expressions of his research: as a “theoretician of sociability” (6), he becomes “the creator of social theatre” (71) through his shifting of the furniture and his choices in music and guests. Just as this new university has attempted to define itself by the form of the buildings within it, so too have the faculty’s relationships and lives become defined by their research and theories. Their social successes and failings are viewed as indicative of their abilities as researchers.

Although the bridging of academic research and public popularity initially suggests that the university may be reforming its insular traditions, Bradbury portrays the university and the academics’ research as maintaining traditional hierarchies. The university buildings in practice isolate and alienate the students. For instance, the deliberately sparse interior of the social sciences tower does not allow for chairs or common rooms; students waiting outside faculty offices are forced to sit on the floor. The junior and senior common rooms were also removed to encourage faculty and students to socialize with each other in the cafeteria where “every sort of social mixture” could occur (148). However, the cafeteria reinforces the same hierarchical structure because it contains a luxurious, expensive side and a cheap, uncomfortable side, so “it is the faculty who sit among the rubber plants, eating *oeufs en plat* and *pommes frites à la chef* [while] the students sit at the plastic tables, with their plastic implements, eating their egg and chips” (148). The bathroom signs as well create a hierarchy of knowledge: those who understand the signs’ purpose and those who do not, and thus are prevented from using the bathroom of their choice.

Sociological study at Watermouth is designed to criticize without providing solutions, and to justify further interrogation. Although classes are supposed to be “moments of communal interaction” rather than occasions for the “one-directional transmission of knowledge” (127), students’ lives are used to justify the need for sociology: lecturers interrogate students’ casual remarks to “come up clutching something in [the students] called ‘bourgeois materialism’ or ‘racism’”(128). Students then feel that they need to learn more sociology in order to rid themselves of these limiting qualities. Both faculty and students use sociological theories to criticize the town and townspeople: when he first moves to Watermouth, Howard visits the Social Security department to “reassure himself that the place ... really did have a sociology — had social tensions, twilight areas, race issues, class-struggle, battles between council and community, alienated sectors, the stuff, in short, of true living” (41). He seeks these places out, not to help heal these tensions, but to encourage them because their existence assures him that his theories are needed. The already vulnerable people within the community are exploited by Howard, who uses their existence to justify his promotion of revolution for revolution’s sake.

In Howard’s view, sociology is synonymous with radical politics. As in *The Masters*, Watermouth contains tensions between faculty with different ideologies, in this case, the traditional liberal-humanists and the radical forces. However, unlike *The Masters*, in which the radical scientists attempted to warn their reactionary colleagues of the potential effects of the spread of fascism across 1930’s Europe, *The History Man*’s radicals have no such threat to fight and, thus, invent their own oppressors. Howard engineers a radical uprising by spreading a rumour that a geneticist, Mangel, has been invited to speak at the university during the term. He has the department secretaries unknowingly distribute a fake memo from the Department Head notifying the department of Mangel’s visit and, in conversations with faculty and students, couples Mangel’s name with racism. Radical students and faculty fight on Howard’s behalf, calling Mangel’s research “fascist,” despite not having read it. When Dr. Zachary, one of the liberal sociologists, defines fascism from the perspective of a Jewish man who fled Nazi Germany, the radical sociologists try to interrupt because they have their own definitions of fascism. Although the memo is denounced by the Department Head as a fake, members of the department who know that Mangel’s work is not racist or fascist suggest that he does come to speak as a way of encouraging tolerance within the department. However, this suggestion only rewards Howard with his intended goal—an invitation to Mangel that radicalizes the student

population to such an extent that they riot and literally trample a liberal faculty member, Henry Beamish, and symbolically trample liberal tolerance on campus. Bradbury's Watermouth rejects *The Masters's* argument that the university is the one place where the faculty must learn to live together as a community; within this university, groups and ideas must fight each other for supremacy or be overrun.

## 3.2 Women on Campus

### 3.2.1 Female Students

Watermouth's goal for its students is not to teach them, but to transform them. Within Howard's class, for instance, "A neat, respectful public schoolboy has become the irritable, proletarian Michael Bennard" and "a frail, bright teenager has become the dark-eyed Felicity Phee" (131). The seminars are designed to disorient students and make them nervous in order to achieve this transformation. As in *Lucky Jim*, the female students, seen through the male protagonist's perspective, are deprived of identity and classified by their appearance. Echoing Dixon's "three pretty girls" (Amis 97), Howard's two first-year students are referred to in the novel only as "the bra-less girl" and "the fat girl" (66). When they have a question about sociology — "who was Hegel?" (67) — Howard is too arrogant to answer. He uses the question to justify their need for his class and makes a joke about Hegel's philosophy that they do not understand. His joke suggests to them that he, as the fat girl notes, "know[s] more" (67) than the people they will study that term, so, when he invites them to the Kirks' first party, they are speechless: "'Ooooo,' says the fat girl" (71). They continue asking the question about Hegel throughout the novel until the final party, where the bra-less girl, having presumably learned it herself, explains it while an actor gropes "the bra-lessness" (241) — a legitimate question becomes merely a party trick. During the semester, when Howard faces the consequences of alienating and bullying a conservative student and his job is rumoured to be threatened, the two girls promise to stand by him without knowing the reason for the threat. Their belief that he may lose his job because he is "such a radical" (198) only adds to his allure.

For the female students, attraction to Howard leads them to become willingly domesticated and exploited within the Kirks' home — a high price in a society that views domesticity as beneath all other occupations because of its connection to tradition. When the Kirks moved to Watermouth and are restoring their home, both male and female students came to help with the

renovations, exchanging supplies and knowledge for a radical and exciting environment. Once the renovations were finished, female students moved into the guest bedroom and, thankful for the experience of living with the Kirks, became the unofficial childcare — feeding and bathing the children, washing dishes and cleaning the house in exchange for a place to live. They leave when they realize that they have been exploited, but there are always more female students to take their place.

### 3.2.2 Female Faculty

In *Lucky Jim*, female faculty members exchanged their femininity for a place in the university community; in *The History Man*, more women have places within the community, but they become part of the exploitative system. Though a new department, the Sociology Department itself seems to be undergoing an uncomfortable change between the old male-dominated model and the new model in which women are not only present, but also bring their infants to meetings and classes as a way both of balancing their maternal and academic duties and of showing their refusal to let their role as mothers prevent them from participating in the university. Two female faculty appear most prominently: Flora Beniform, a radical sociologist who attempts, unsuccessfully, to correct Howard's perspective, and Annie Callendar, a liberal humanist who eventually is seduced by Howard. Their fates — Flora as a Cassandra figure and Annie as Howard's ultimate conquest — suggest that, despite the ostensible freedoms, the position of women within this new university is still limited.

As in *Lucky Jim*, the women in *The History Man* appear to be faulted for accepting the masculine status quo. Myra Beamish, the wife of one of Howard's colleagues, notes that "Even the women are men" (78) on the university campus: they read the same critics, work on the same problems, and exploit the same students. Despite being greater in number than in the past, and despite having fought in the equal rights movements of the 1960s, the women have attempted to blend into the established community by acting like the men. However, Bradbury portrays them as remaining subordinate within the still-masculine culture. Conveying Howard's perspective, the narrator introduces both Moira Millikin and Flora as children: Moira is described as "one of Howard's colleagues, a girl called Moira Millikin, unorthodox economist and unmarried mother" (59) and Flora as "a handsome big girl in her late thirties" (53). Only Melissa Todoroff, a visiting scholar from Hunter College, New York, is introduced as an adult, or, rather, as "a strong-minded American lady" (146). During a departmental meeting, the women must fight to

be heard. Although there are seven women at the table, including Moira, who has her infant beside her, Professor Marvin still starts the meeting by saying, “Can we now come to order, gentlemen?” (154) — a reminder of Gay’s “Remain seated, gentlemen” (232), the start of the all-male college meeting to announce the Master’s death in *The Masters*. Melissa’s objection to the term “gentlemen” and her suggestions of “persons” or “colleagues” as substitutes are drowned out by a flurry of other questions and are not actually acknowledged.

Bradbury gives Howard an almost equal match in Flora: she is powerful, manipulative, and exploitative herself. Her close relationship with him means that she sees the way he controls the department and oppresses Barbara. However, she cannot impact him because he is too arrogant to listen to her, so he disregards her opinion just as he disregards those of other female students and faculty. To research “the intricate politics of families” (53), Flora exchanges sex for information: she sleeps with married men who have troubled marriages so she can question them intimately. She gossips with colleagues to discover whose marriages are currently failing and uses the men for information. This practice allows her insight into the personal and professional lives of those around her. In return, they have an affair with her and receive free therapy. She sees Howard’s manipulations of the department, even when the other faculty and students are unaware of them. She also recognizes the signs of Barbara’s unhappiness and warns Howard that he “ought to watch Barbara” (121). However, despite Howard not being “quite sure whether he is having an affair with her, or a treatment” (54), he chooses to believe that he is having an affair, so he uses his time with her to boast about his lifestyle, make fun of Barbara, and ignore Flora’s advice. Her warnings about Barbara go not only unheeded, but also mostly unnoticed as Howard, confident in his radical theories, believes that he knows more about Barbara’s happiness than Flora, an expert in families, does. While Flora stands apart from the rest of the department because of her ability to ascertain the truth and to question Howard, she is unable to use this ability to create change for Barbara or within the university society.

The ultimate challenge to Howard’s power and authority appears in the form of Annie Callendar, a new faculty member in the English Department, who uses her liberal humanist values to challenge the radicals’ beliefs. At the Kirks’ first party of the term, she stands in a formal trouser suit and white hat in the middle of a cluster of “bearded Jesuses” and Revolutionary Student Front students (85) challenging the basis of the radicals’ arguments and questioning the need for a revolution. Preferring privacy, she refuses to give Howard her first

name, introducing herself only as “Miss Callendar” (87), and refuses to disclose her home address. Later in the term, she defends a conservative student in Howard’s class, George Carmody, when Howard wants to force him out of the university. While Howard sees Carmody only as a “juvenile fascist” who is “both incapable and dishonest” (142) because he challenges Howard’s radical agenda, she sees “a person” and “a background” that needs understanding (142). Because she wishes to treat Carmody fairly, and ridicules Howard while defending Carmody, she directly threatens Howard’s power on campus.

Miss Callendar’s opposition to the radical element on campus attracts Howard’s attention, and her respect for privacy and her desire to produce research that does not conform to a particular ideology make her a “provocation” and a “serious challenge” (108). He can only make sense of her as an object to pursue and reform. While he spent the summer writing a book called *The Defeat of Privacy* (5) about “the fact that there are no more private selves, no more private corners in society, no more private properties, no more private acts” (73), she maintains a private residence with a private address; and, while he promotes liberation through sexual promiscuity, she questions his motives and asks after his wife.

However, she is completely defeated once she allows him into her home. She uses her apartment to shield herself from the onslaught of radicalism at the university, but, once he is inside, she cannot force him to listen to her and, ultimately, she loses both her values and her objectivity. He finds her address after much research and offers her the choice between having “[l]ife and sexuality and love” and becoming “a neurotic little old lady” (212), presumably like Margaret Peel. She has nowhere to hide from his aggressive advances. As he pursues her around the room, she repeatedly refuses his advances, telling him that she does not want him to be interested in her, that she does not want to go into her bedroom with him, and that she does not want “it” — the sex or Howard’s help (212). He ignores her and leads her as she cries to her bedroom. Because she does not have her fortress of privacy to protect her, she can no longer escape. Once he is in her apartment, he no longer needs to respect or listen to her because she has nowhere to go and, thus, is no longer a threat. While the narration does not explicitly portray Howard’s actions as rape because Howard does not believe it is rape, but merely a remaking of Miss Callendar, it is acquaintance rape and its inclusion in the novel reinforces Bradbury’s portrayal of Howard’s personality. Veronique Valliere, in her study of non-stranger assaults, notes that acquaintance rapists are motivated by “sexual deviance” – marked by their

ability to maintain sexual arousal despite their victim's tears or resistance – and display a “narcissistic” personality that lacks “the internal barriers that prevent offending, like guilt, remorse, empathy, or compassion” (2). Valliere also notes that “[t]he offender also may feel that the rules of society do not apply to him” (2). In addition to Howard's ability to have sex with Miss Callendar despite her tears and refusals, his view that he is above those around him, that his vision for society is historically inevitable, and that he is justified in controlling and manipulating those around him to achieve this vision align with Valliere's description of an acquaintance rapist. He feels justified in using her because, despite his assertion otherwise, she is just another obstacle that he needs to overcome. Miss Callendar merely accepts her new position as Howard's mistress. Her unwilling alliance with Howard changes her identity from “Miss Callendar” to “Annie Callendar” to “Annie” (229-230). She knows that she has been exploited and does not believe, as Howard does, that it was a “nice price” to pay for her place in the “plot of history” (230), but she seems to believe that sleeping with Howard was inevitable. Now used, her opinion is no longer important to Howard. When she does object, he talks to her like a child by shushing her and interpreting her thoughts for her. His behaviour towards her shows the position of women within this revolution: once they have served their purpose within Howard's plans, they are discarded.

### 3.3 Faculty Wives

#### 3.3.1 Radical but Oppressed: Barbara Kirk

Although Howard discards the female students and faculty whenever he believes that they are no longer useful to him, he remains married to Barbara, but he oppresses her to keep her controlled. Like Mrs. Gay and Mrs. Welch, Barbara has become a housewife and primary caretaker for their two children. However, these activities must be glossed in a radical tone to maintain Howard's image because Howard's radical identity is based on the Kirks' radical history. They started as a quiet couple in a conventional marriage, but the revolutions of the 1960s and Barbara's brief affair with one of Howard's fellow graduate students propelled them into a radical, sexually liberated marriage built on a conflict, rather than consensus, model in which “ultimate resolution must depend on the defeat of one of the parties” (31). Barbara's version of their marriage, which contains her oppression and depression, only enters the official story that they tell to friends when Howard “very honourably” (24) allows it or when she forcibly



interjects. Her interjections into his story show her unwillingness to be silently swept into Howard's redefinition of himself and their marriage, but this unwillingness threatens Howard's radical identity. As his reputation grows, so too does his need to silence Barbara and bar her from using her "shrewd, bitter intelligence [and] strong nature" (31). Like the faculty wives in *The Masters* and Mrs. Welch in *Lucky Jim*, Barbara is mostly regarded with fear—fear that she will cross the boundary between her private role and her husband's university life—but, instead of accepting her oppression inevitable, she commits suicide. This final act in the novel shows both her acknowledgement of her limited and oppressed position and her firm unwillingness to allow this oppression to continue.

Barbara's story of their marriage begins with the false promise that a university education would lead her to a more rewarding or fulfilling life than she could otherwise have achieved. Although she had originally wanted to be a housewife, a "sympathetic, socialistic teacher of English" had "mocked her sentimental domestic ambitions" and encouraged her to attend university (19). A university education held the promise of an important career. However, the reality of a university education for her was little different than her original career goal: she met Howard and, though "inherently brighter" (19) than he was, she achieved a lower second degree in English to Howard's first in sociology because she spent more time editing his essays than her own. Upon graduation, they married and Howard became a graduate student and Barbara a "flatwife"(20). The promised freedom disappeared as she sunk into "graduate student poverty" (20) and spent her days cleaning, weeping over their lack of money, and desiring the "things" that symbolized success and respectability to her—"a good three-piece suite for the lounge, a well-stocked kitchen cupboard, a white tablecloth to eat off of on high days" (21). She found that her new marriage "had become a prison" and "had closed out her opportunities" because her time was "geared to nothing else but the running of a house" (24). While she did read occasionally, it was "unorganized" (21) because her new occupation left little time and money for hobbies or further education.

Just when her "sentimental domestic ambitions" (21) proved to be stifling and her education failed to liberate her from this oppressive role, the revolutions of the 1960's arrive to promise Barbara more freedom. Her first rebellion from her oppressive marriage, an affair with one of Howard's colleagues in 1963, starts the Kirks' own sexual revolution. They start "transcending reality" by "making love in parks, smoking pot at parties, going up on the moors

past Adel and running with their clothes off through the wind,” making new radical friends, and hosting parties (26). Although Barbara “remained in his [Howard’s] eyes essentially property” (28), she finds new freedoms: she “went to lectures, attended political meetings, visited filmshows, and stapled provocative posters on boards when no one was looking” (28). When Howard becomes a lecturer at Leeds, she begins going “to all of the faculty parties, and became very outgoing and popular, standing in corners in lowcut dresses raising tendentious issues, and drinking a great deal” (28). Both Howard and Barbara start having affairs and contemplate divorce. When Barbara becomes pregnant, she starts to lose the freedom she had started to gain, both because of her new responsibilities and because of Howard’s reaction to the change in their relationship. She “greatly enjoyed the pregnancy” (29), but caring for the baby full-time proved to be just as isolating as her life before their personal revolution. To escape this isolation, she gets a neighbour to look after the baby part time so she can get a part time job and has Howard share parenting responsibilities. The atmosphere of the times allows her to depart from the traditional faculty wife role in order to find more equality.

However, she only has these freedoms because Howard and her support network allow for it; when Howard becomes depressed at his new responsibilities as a parent, acquires a “bewildered expression and a faint air of defeat,” and begins to suspect Barbara of neglect because she was becoming “very bright and contented” (30), he begins to undermine her freedom. Her ability to publish “the ultimate statement ... in the ultimate way” highlights for Howard the fact that he had only “pushed sympathetically on the floor of the clinic, but ... had produced nothing” (30). He begins to use his education to punish her. He writes his first book—a retelling of the Kirks’ revolution story—in retaliation against Barbara’s new power and happiness. Howard’s production—his book—fuels his reputation and allows him more opportunities, but Barbara’s “ultimate statement” bound her more firmly to the home. He publishes it in spite of Barbara’s objections that it shows him as a “radical poseur” who had “substituted trends for morals” (32), applies for jobs without her knowledge, and, finally, accepts the position at Watermouth without discussing the move with her. In this way, the book becomes a “powerful weapon in the power politics ... of his marriage” (32).

The move to Watermouth, which Barbara recognizes as “a victory for Howard, a defeat for her” (36), ties Barbara more firmly to the home and eliminates all of the freedoms she had been enjoying. In Leeds, they were the centre of a circle of radical friends and Barbara had a

support system that provided childcare when she worked or attended lectures; she arrives in Watermouth knowing only Henry and Myra Beamish and pregnant with her second child. Howard, on the other hand, arrives with “a reputation ahead of him” and thus “was in the vastly stronger position” (36). In Watermouth, Barbara is relegated firmly to the domestic sphere, though the Kirks create a radical façade to hide this position. The narrator’s first description of Barbara in 1972 reflects the Kirks’ mutual attempt to frame her activities—which are solely related to traditional motherhood or helping women in traditional roles—in a radical tone that befits their radical reputation:

She is, amongst her many competences and qualifications, a cordon bleu cook, an expert in children’s literature, a tireless promoter of new causes (Women for Peace, The Children’s Crusade for Abortion, No More Sex for Repression). And she, too, is a familiar figure, in the streets, as she blocks them with others to show that traffic is not inevitable, and in the supermarkets, as she leads her daily deputation to the manager with comparative, up-to-the-minute lists showing how Fine Fair, on lard, is one pence up on Sainsbury’s, or vice versa. She moves through playgroups and schools, surgeries and parks, in a constant indignation; she writes, when it is her turn, for the community newspaper. When you visit the Kirks, there is always a new kind of Viennese coffee-cake to eat and a petition to sign.

(3)

The narrator uses a radical, urgent tone to highlight the Kirks’ façade. However, the Viennese coffee-cake, like all of Barbara’s other activities, aligns her with the past, despite being continually “new” and always accompanied by a petition.

Barbara’s role places physical and intellectual limitations on her. The only places that the narrator mentions in his description of her activities are those she visits with her children or in the execution of her duties as a homemaker; she no longer attends lectures, reads for herself, or attends faculty parties that other people host. Their home, too, physically shows the limitations Barbara now faces: although they have two studies, Howard uses his for writing books and having sex with students and faculty members during parties, while Barbara’s sits unused. It is “where she means to” write books, but is prevented from doing so by her familial responsibilities (5). As Howard writes his book over the summer of 1972, “Barbara has been domestic” despite believing that “domesticity is an evasion” because “the soul has bigger business to perform” (6). Even though the Kirks have free student labour, Barbara’s household tasks still consume much of

her time, leaving her little freedom for the writing, research, or activism that she would like to pursue. Howard not only does not help, but actually hinders her ability to care for their two children by encouraging them to rebel against her. At one breakfast, for instance, he instructs them to resist “cornflake fascism” by protesting the limited breakfast choices Barbara gives them (100).

The contradiction inherent in Barbara’s role — a traditional housewife married to a man who has “redefined” marriage (28) and rejected tradition — means that she is the only character who completely sees through the façade that is Howard’s radicalism. Annie Callendar, when she initially opposes him, does so on ideological terms, and Flora, despite being able to see his manipulation of the department and his oppression of Barbara, still seems to believe in his radicalism. However, Howard’s exploitation of Barbara undermines her belief in his theories. While Howard’s books are “staple radical documents” (145) and his followers look to him for guidance in their actions, only Barbara realizes that he had “dispense[d] with action” (73). Throughout the term, he manipulates others for his own amusement rather than to create actual change. While he and his followers believe that he is “with them [women] in their fight” against male oppression (101) and with the impoverished in their struggle, Barbara observes the sexism and inequality in his behaviour and theories.

Howard’s image is based on his distorted narrative of the radicalization of his marriage, so he prevents Barbara from telling her version, which centres on her unwilling domestication and her continued oppression. In Howard’s narrative, Barbara’s early oppression is an inherent part of traditional marriage, rather than a reflection of his lack of attention to or interest in her. Her brief affair with Hamid becomes in the retelling Hamid’s attempt to “establish intimacy between the male parties” rather than, as Barbara argues, that Hamid “just liked me” (25). The affair itself is couched within a grand set of “Historical circumstances” in which “the whole world was in transformation, undergoing a revolution of rising expectations, asserting more, demanding more” (24). Howard argues that, within this context, Barbara “probed herself” (25) and found her situation unacceptable, ignoring Barbara’s explanation that she “was probed” by Hamid because she felt unloved by her husband, or because, as she yelled at him after the affair, “I’m a person, Howard. I’ve been a person here all this time, stuck in this room, and he saw it, and you never have” (26). Howard’s narrative centres on his suspicions that she was “out to destroy him” by having him help her care for their baby which then justified a retaliation — his book and

subsequent job — and a full shift to a conflict model marriage. His move to a conflict model allows him to rationalize his oppression of her: if she wanted more freedom, she would defend herself, so, because she does not defend herself, her position as a homemaker and virtually single parent is of her own choosing. In later retellings of the Kirks' Story, when she interrupts his story with her version, he either ignores her interruptions, recontextualizes them to make them fit into his story, or asserts that he knows better than she does.

To emphasize Howard's grand, nearly uninterrupted narrative, Bradbury structures the novel in long paragraphs that nearly eliminate individual voices. Brândușa Prepelită-Răileanu analyzes this narrative structure as a conflict between individual voices and the engulfing whole:

On the one hand [Bradbury] tended to foreground his speakers by obsessively adding a 'he/ she says' tag to every spoken line, and on the other hand the lines of dialogue are not recorded individually. They are grouped together in long paragraphs in which individual speakers are engulfed in the larger context. Moreover, what Bradbury recorded were never conversations as such, but merely one-sentence exchanges. (236)

Because the narration ostensibly voices Howard's perspective, the structure of the novel also represents Howard's sense of control. Although Barbara frequently criticizes Howard, her statements are not distinguished from the flow of his story. They do not interrupt Howard's self-aggrandizing nor do they stand apart from Howard's corrections and explanations. For example, when planning their first party, Barbara questions the logistics to no avail. Her complaint that Howard's "idea of a good party is to invite the universe. And leave me to wash up after" goes unnoticed as Howard concerns himself with attempting to create "an unpredictable encounter" (7). In his enthusiasm for the party, his self-assurance that he is correct, and his desire to uphold their reputation as The Radical Kirks, he ignores her sarcasm and unhappiness. As they organize the second party, he treats her more forceful statements curtly. Rather than ignore her comments, he explains them, then dismisses them:

'The more we get into this,' says Barbara, 'the more I feel the last thing we need is a party. I think it's a very doubtful celebration.' 'You thought that the last time,' says Howard, 'and it cheered you up.' 'My God, Howard,' says Barbara, 'what in hell do you know about my cheerfulness or my misery? What access do you have to any of my feelings? What do you know about me now?' 'You're fine,' says Howard. (219)

Her comments do not stand alone or break the page-long paragraph streams; they are immediately engulfed to decrease their impact. Howard presents himself as the expert on her behaviour and dismisses her concerns with a final short sentence. Barbara's comments, however, show the damage created by Howard's domination of her. Despite the gestures towards equality within their marriage — splitting the tasks for planning the party, for instance — Barbara pays the price of Howard's extravagant lifestyle. In return, Howard fears Barbara and the power she holds. The more she attempts to challenge him, the more he has to oppress her to maintain his image, and the more depressed she becomes.

Barbara's freedom is also limited because the revolutions of the 1960s produced no positive change for her. Before the beginning of term party, the news of the suicide of a man who had attended one of the Kirks' parties earlier confirms for Barbara that she is not alone in feeling confined and depressed. While she is upset about the suicide, the man's suicide note — "This is silly" (15) — upsets her even more because it encapsulates for her the absurdity of the age. Barbara's sense that the radical moment has passed, that "so many of our friends feel that way now" (16), causes her to analyze her life and the events of the semester more closely, which, in turn, causes her to become more depressed. Howard's dismissal of her concerns — that she should just "take a Valium" (17) — makes her more upset. She also becomes disillusioned with the nature of their marriage: their redefined marriage has allowed Howard to have multiple affairs, but Barbara has only one, with Leon, an actor in London. Her "shopping weekend" in London with him is her only happiness during the semester, and it ends when Leon announces that he is going on tour. When she returns to Watermouth, Howard is too busy inciting riots and having affairs to notice the new dresses she bought in London or to learn that Leon has left. Visiting Leon gave her an escape from Howard; his departure makes her feel even more trapped.

These events — the man's suicide, her weariness of the swinging Kirk scene, Leon's departure, and her recognition that Howard does not care about her — cast a shadow over the second party. In the preparation and planning, Barbara is continually reminded of the disappointments of the semester. The narrator introduces the second party in a similar way to the first — they "catch the mood [of the holiday season] and decide to have a party" (215) and plan the party together. However, this time, Barbara realizes that she is "appallingly miserable" and that "the last thing we need is a party" (219).

The night of the party brings further reminders for Barbara that her life has stagnated. Felicity, tired of “being exploited” by the Kirks (217), leaves on Howard’s advice. In advising Barbara’s childminder to “keep moving” (220), Howard prevents Barbara from doing so. At the party, she merely repeats the same questions and comments that she had during the first party: “Eat ... it’s sociable” (223) and “What kind of contraceptive do you use?” (223). For her, the party is a repeat performance rather than the fresh new experience that it is for Howard and the other guests. When she disappears in the middle of the party, no one notices, but, unlike the last party, no guests speculate that she has disappeared with someone; she is forgotten in the midst of conversations about the eventful and radical semester that Howard engineered.

Barbara’s suicide at the end of the novel is the result of the sacrifices she has made for Howard’s image and career. Her method of suicide — “savagely slicing [her right arm] on the glass” of an upstairs window (230) — shows her final acknowledgement of her position as a woman who has been barred from learning and writing because of her position as a faculty wife and who has been oppressed by a husband who fears her. When Henry Beamish, one of the Kirks’ friends from Leeds and one of Howard’s colleagues at Watermouth, slices his left arm in one of the Kirks’ upstairs windows during the first party, Flora notes that “When a man who publishes, like Henry, chooses [to injure] his left arm, you can be sure he has hopes of going on writing with his right” (118). Flora’s comment suggests that a person who means to write books but never can would choose her right arm, as Barbara does, once she no longer has any hope of being able to write. To further this sense of limitation, the narrator describes the event in a passive, isolating voice. The last scene focuses on Howard and Annie in the basement, where they cannot hear the party:

... down in the basement they do not hear [a small altercation on the main floor]. Nor do they hear when, higher in the house, in a guest bedroom empty of Felicity’s things, a window smashes. The cause is Barbara who, bright in her silvery dress, has put her right arm through and down, savagely slicing it in the glass. In fact, no one hears it; as always at the Kirks’ parties, which are famous for their happenings, for being like a happening, there is a lot that is, indeed, happening, and all the people are fully occupied. (230)

In this novel of short sentences and long paragraphs, which obsessively notes who speaks and acts, and a narrator who seems to stand within the action, Barbara’s suicide marks a tone shift. In the shortest paragraph in the novel, Barbara’s action is almost on the periphery. The focus is

foremost on Howard and Annie's separation from the party, followed by Barbara's isolation — the top floor away from the action, the empty bedroom, the lack of awareness from the guests — and finally the atmosphere of the party that has excluded Barbara. The window seems to break itself, though the cause is Barbara. Only after two long sentences does the narrator mention the “savagely slic[ed]” right arm, a description which is immediately diminished by a shift to the seemingly successful party which surrounds Barbara.

However, within this isolating, depressing moment is Barbara's refusal to accept her oppression as historically inevitable or acceptable. Although the narrator describes it in a passive voice, Barbara's suicide is the only free choice she has made in the novel, and it is the last action of the novel. She causes the window to break while the others at the party are vaguely and passively described as “fully occupied.” The movement from Howard initiating the novel's action by fetching the household diary in order to start planning the first party to Barbara ending the novel's action by putting her arm through the upstairs window emphasizes the significance of her action. In a 1981 interview with Christopher Bigsby, Bradbury states that Howard is “the only person who acts” (Bradbury 75) within the novel; the rest of the characters are “self-satisfied” and remain passive in the wake of his radical agenda. However, Barbara's suicide is an act of resistance: she removes herself from the flow of Howard's “historically inevitable” oppression. Throughout the Kirks' history and the semester, Barbara is only described as “bright” when she has freedom from Howard — in the early days of the swinging Kirk scene and in London with Leon. The use of the term “bright” in the description of her suicide suggests that this act has given her freedom because she is finally acting on her own. In contrast to Henry's suicide attempt, Barbara's actions are not contextualized or explained, giving her, for the first time, a statement which is not swept under by the flow of the narrative or contextualized by Howard's explanations. Barbara stands alone in a paragraph of faceless guests and the novel ends with her action. The paragraph also stands apart from the rest of the text because of the tone change. In this way, even though her story is, as Bradbury stated to Bigsby, “absented from the book to a very large degree,” she is “the one person who has not betrayed [the reader]” (Bradbury 67) because she is the only one who, at the end, stands against Howard's oppression.

### 3.3.2 Alternatives to the Swinging Kirk Scene: Myra Beamish and Mrs. Macintosh

Over the course of the semester, the two other faculty wives in the novel, Myra Beamish, Barbara's closest friend, and Mrs. Macintosh (whose first name is never stated), the wife of a new



lecturer in the sociology department, attempt to address the deficiencies in their own relationships using Howard and Barbara's example. However, the way they interpret the Kirks' relationship indicates that the freedoms that Barbara fought for in the early stages of her marriage are inherited by the next generation of wives. Myra offers a view of the path not taken by the Kirks; her key position within the novel is to provide a traditional foil to Barbara's radical marriage. While her close friendship with the Kirks allows her a critical perspective on their marriage, in the loneliness and isolation she experiences in her role as a traditional housewife, she envies Howard's power and control. Mrs. Macintosh, on the other hand, appears at the first party as Barbara did during her first pregnancy — a bright, pregnant wife with a dour, cheating husband — which suggests that they will follow the Kirks' example. However, Mrs. Macintosh, like Myra, realizes by the end of the semester that the Kirks' reinvention of marriage only gives freedom to the husband at the expense of the wife. While Myra uses her knowledge of the Kirks to attempt to reinvent herself in Howard's image to gain the freedom he has, Mrs. Macintosh's realization forces her to confront her husband and avoid the exploitation Barbara faces. Although Showalter believes that "Barbara's story is that of a faculty wife at the moment when she was becoming desperate, when her species was becoming extinct, when the women's movement had cut her off from the pleasures of her role without giving her a new one" (60-61), Mrs. Macintosh's action suggests that the species of faculty wife was not becoming extinct. Both Myra's inability to update herself and Mrs. Macintosh's confrontation suggest that it is not the role of the faculty wife that is ending, but rather the inequality traditionally embodied within that dynamic.

The Beamishes present the traditional alternative to the Kirks' radical marriage. While Henry and Howard were students in Leeds together, the Beamishes' lives paralleled the Kirks': Myra was a flatwife while Henry was a student and they were so impoverished that they had to borrow a kettle from their friends whenever they wanted tea. Henry was witty, and both were radicals. However, after the Beamishes' move to Watermouth, they became less like the Kirks and more like the Welches. Myra was already Henry's "social superior" and had "all of the bourgeois ambitions" of her class (119), so the move from "Leeds' radical bedsitterland" to an "architect-converted farmhouse" in the country to live in a "world of Tolstoyan pastoral" (37) where they could collect mushrooms and grow their own organic onions only separates them further from the radical lifestyle. Like the Welches, Henry drives into the city every day to work

and Myra cares for their home. As Henry becomes “ridiculous” and “banal” according to Myra (77), Myra becomes out-of-date — wearing her hair in a “tight Victorian bun” (706), attending parties in an outdated “fluffy pink chiffon party dress” and a wig (72) and being unable to understand the zeitgeist that drives the Kirks. She is the non-revolutionary, non-intellectual figure Barbara fears becoming: when Howard insults her choice to take Commercial French because the course will not be intellectual enough, Barbara responds by saying, “Don’t patronize me ... I’m not Myra Beamish” (99). Because Myra is physically distanced from the action of the city and because the university has begun to rely less on faculty wives for social events, Henry’s decision to live in a place “where you can get down deeper into yourself and into ... the real rhythms of living (40) actually stifles Myra. Mrs. Welch was able to busy herself with raising a family, organizing department parties, and caring for faculty members, but Myra has none of that work. She quickly becomes disconnected from her husband and assumes this disconnect is the natural result of academic marriage:

Look around you at all these sad pairs. How can they work? The man goes out to the university, his mind’s alive, he’s fresh with new ideas ... He talks all day to pretty students who know all about structuralism, and have read Parsons and Dahrendorf, and can say “charisma” properly, and understand the work he’s doing. Then he comes home to a wife who’s been dusting and cleaning. He says “Parsons” and “Dahrendorf”, and she says “Huh?” What can he do? He either gives her a tutorial and thinks she’s pretty B minus, or he shuts up and eats the ratatouille. ... she keeps getting older, and the students manage to stay eighteen. And then comes the bit where all of your friends start separating and divorcing, because the husbands run off with the alpha students who can say “charisma.” (78-79)

This analysis is Myra’s own, darker, version of Howard’s theory of historical inevitability. Removed from the city and the university community, she becomes stagnant and depressed. Although her argument is based on this depression, she is able to connect her unhappiness to her position as a faculty wife more than any other character.

Myra’s close friendship with the Kirks — she is the closest friend Barbara has — allows her a critical perspective on the Kirks’ marriage, but her unhappiness leads her to envy Howard’s power. Myra is able to see through Howard’s façade almost as much as Barbara does. She arrives early for their first party to help Barbara prepare, even though the Kirk message is that

the work is shared equally. She calls Howard a “historical rapist” because of his focus on historical inevitability and because, as she says to him, he continues “Prodding the future into everyone you can lay your hands on” (74). She knows that the Kirks’ advanced marriage does not keep Howard on “a very tight rein” (226) but ties Barbara firmly to the home. Despite this knowledge, Myra is so bored with her life that she begins to believe that the Kirks’ is “the only successful academic marriage I know” (78). She desires the freedom Howard has and tries to recreate herself in his image. One afternoon, in 1968, she turned to Howard for comfort and an affair, but she cared so much about her role and her husband that she anxiously cleaned to “make everything exactly and precisely as it was before” (75). However, after four years and after a summer of caring for Henry as he tries unsuccessfully to write a book she cannot understand, she wants to free herself from anxiety and stagnation. She originally seeks to divorce Henry to gain this independence, but his suicide attempt makes her reconsider, so she tries to recreate herself with new clothes and affairs. She wants to become part of the new age and, in doing so, force Henry to accept her new lifestyle as Barbara has had to accept Howard’s.

Although Myra believes that these superficial changes will fix her marriage and allow her full membership into the swinging Kirk scene, she is unable to assimilate into the culture. She is so outdated that she gets the part wrong. At the second party, she appears wearing a “sacklike” dress, uses outdated slang like “square” (225), and criticizes the revolution Howard engineers. To compensate, she clings to the idea of acquiring Howard’s power and control within her own marriage through extramarital affairs. While examining her lipstick in the kitchen, she coolly suggests that Howard should “come again sometime” because she is not “so bloody bourgeois now” (225). However, she still does not seem to understand Howard’s theories or politics and her attempt at seduction is cut short by another party guest looking for wine. While Henry does not protest her attempt to gain power, her inability to start an affair with Howard and her inability to update her image suggest that he will not have to accept many changes. Her figure is overtly comic, but is ultimately tragic: she is so laughably out-of-date that she is doomed to continue the lifestyle she is fleeing.

Mrs. Macintosh, on the other hand, begins like Barbara, but, after experiencing the result of that path, tries to find a more equal alternative. The Macintoshes arrive early for the first party — he a new lecturer in the sociology department and she pregnant with their first child. He is dour throughout the entire evening, while she is “sharp with the divine anger of a bright

wife” (80). She appears at the party unwillingly and, soon, disappears to find a place to rest. When she believes that she has gone into labour, he stays at the party, cradling his drink near the phone while other people take her to the hospital. The other wives at the party sense “a case of suppression” (83): they worry that her career in social work is being sacrificed for “mere child-bearing” (83), and that this sacrifice will make their decision to prioritize their careers seem less valid. The repetition of phrases used to describe the Kirks’ early marriage and the Macintoshes’ suggests that this couple is repeating the Kirks’ history. However, the general opinion about the place of motherhood in this culture means that Mrs. Macintosh will not be confined to the home easily.

Although the Kirks’ marriage is touted as the epitome of equality, by the end of the semester, Mrs. Macintosh realizes its inherent exploitation and oppression. At the second party, the couple seems to have transitioned into a version of the Kirks. Mrs. Macintosh is largely ignored by the narrator and her husband as she cares for her new twins, while Mr. Macintosh takes Howard’s place as Felicity Phee’s counsellor. Halfway through the party, Mr. Macintosh leaves Mrs. Macintosh to feed and care for the babies while he goes upstairs to have sex with Felicity. Unlike Myra, who wants to assume the male power, or Barbara, who thought this type of advanced marriage could hold freedom for both parties but who can no longer tolerate it, Mrs. Macintosh seeks a more truly equal marriage. Rather than accepting her husband’s cheating and his excuses that he was just consoling Felicity, Mrs. Macintosh asserts that this party, the last of the semester, will be his last party entirely: “‘You slipped upstairs with her,’ she says, ‘and I was breastfeeding.’ ‘The girl was crying,’ says Dr Macintosh, ‘she was very upset.’ ‘Right,’ says Mrs Macintosh, ‘this is the last party you come to’” (230). The Swinging Kirk Scene and its marginalization of motherhood is no longer acceptable for the next generation of faculty wives. Mrs. Macintosh’s stand against inequality may stem from her own sense of independence: she has a career in social work, although it has been interrupted by her pregnancy and new responsibilities. Significantly, she is the final character to speak in the novel and her statement ends the novel’s penultimate paragraph, so it, like Barbara’s suicide that follows it, cannot be recontextualized by her husband. While she replaces the traditional academic wife activities of organizing parties and caring for faculty members with a career outside of the home, she is still an academic wife, and the use of “Mrs. Macintosh” at the end of the novel, rather than a first

name, suggests that she will continue in that role. However, her matter-of-fact statement at the Kirks' last party suggests that she will assert power to ensure equality within her marriage.

In the midst of a restricting and manipulative culture in which the roles of traditional academic wives and mothers are a symbol of restriction and a source of fear, these women's refusals to fulfil their husbands' expectations offer a degree of hope for change. Barbara, viewed by the community around her as the epitome of freedom and revolution, chooses to end her repression with an unequivocal statement. Although Myra gets the part wrong, she at least attempts to update herself to find a better role. Ultimately, though, Mrs. Macintosh — even though fully defined within the novel by her relationship to her husband — is the only wife in the three novels who rejects her husband's expectations that she will passively accept a traditionally oppressive role.

## Conclusion

The three novels discussed, C.P. Snow's *The Masters*, Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim*, and Malcolm Bradbury's *The History Man*, focus on brief periods within the development of the British university system between the 1930s and 1970s. While they predominantly focus on the affairs of faculty, they also analyze and comment on the roles of the academic wives, the only people outside of the universities to be featured within the novels. These women impact the plots of the novels substantially, but they function as more than plot devices. The interaction between the faculty and their wives (or their colleagues' wives) may indicate the way the university views the world outside of it. However, unlike the "town and gown" dynamic, where each side remains distinct and separate from the other, academic wives are tied, through their husbands, through their roles in hosting students and faculty, and through their very identities, to the university. In *The Masters*, Lewis Eliot repeatedly observes the benefits that marriage brings to the college's fellows. And marriage remains beneficial throughout the three novels. However, the university communities, famously insular, remain ambivalent towards the wives, and the wives attempt to cope with this ambivalence by trying to understand the expectations placed on them, to ignore those expectations, or to reform them.

In *The Masters*, *Lucky Jim*, and *The History Man*, despite the benefits gained from marriage, the academics react to the academic wives with fear. In *The Masters*, the wives are viewed as outsiders who, if allowed, would damage the idyllic, masculine society within the sheltered Cambridge college. Any suggestion of the wives' interference in college affairs—whether it is Lady Muriel trying to care for her husband in his final months, or Mrs. Jago trying to attend a meeting with her husband in their home to learn news that will affect them both—is met with sharp criticism. Only those who stay within their place in the home are immune. In *Lucky Jim*, the wives, like the university system, have evolved. No longer is the college entirely the closed, masculine society it was in *The Masters*: following World War II and policy changes, universities become increasingly open to female and working class students and faculty. The wives host faculty, organize parties, and accompany their husbands to university events and, in fulfilling these roles, play an active part in maintaining a traditional, upper-class environment. Thus, Mrs. Welch, wife of the Department Head, becomes an object of fear and derision for the working-class Dixon because she controls the elements of the culture that exclude him. By the 1970s, in

*The History Man*, women are accepted at the university as both faculty and students. However, the academic wives, especially those who are tied to the domestic sphere, are still objects of fear for both female and male faculty. They are necessary to keep the home running, but the tradition they represent is antithetical to the radical lifestyle many of their husbands live. As Myra Beamish notes, the academic wives are also at an educational disadvantage: even if they are university educated, they are rarely able to remain informed of the latest research in which their husbands are involved. Thus, they remain outsiders in a community that once welcomed them as students.

The novels show the wives responding to this fear and exclusion in an evolving pattern. Lady Muriel, Mrs. Jago, and Myra Beamish try to understand and work within the system. Lady Muriel understands the fellows' positions, the correct way to address them, and the role she is supposed to fulfil as the Master's wife. Her knowledge and behaviour, which stem from her upper-class background, become the basis for the fellows' criticism of her: they believe that she is cold and snobbish. Her attempt to fulfil the expectations placed on her—mostly, to respect the fellows and remain removed from college affairs—means that she is not only subjected to this criticism, but also never had a close relationship with her husband. Mrs. Jago wants to be involved in her husband's professional life, especially as he campaigns for the mastership. Because she does not understand the new role she could occupy, she mimics Lady Muriel and she asks the fellows for guidance in navigating their world. However, her impression of Lady Muriel exposes her to the same criticisms Lady Muriel faces, but, more detrimentally, her inquiries and her confusion about the expectations placed on her suggest to the fellows that she is too uncouth for the position. Due to changes to the college structure, Mrs. Welch successfully integrates into university life. However, her parties are considered boring and ridiculous by the younger members of the community, and her potential to become involved in university affairs causes fear. Myra Beamish attempts to fulfil her role as an academic wife by allowing her husband a refuge from the university in their home outside of the city, but, unlike the others, finds the homemaker role limiting and attempts to update her marriage by pursuing her own sexual liberation at her husband's expense. Both her role as a traditional academic wife and her failed attempt to update herself make her the object of ridicule.

Katherine Getliffe and Carol Goldsmith both attempt to avoid criticism by influencing the universities in less public ways. Katherine tries to help her husband's side of the mastership

campaign by inviting Eliot for an intimate dinner with her and her husband. Her "matronly comfort" (196) shields her from some of the criticism she may have received otherwise. Carol rebels against the boredom she feels as an academic wife by having quiet affairs with her husband's permission. When she sees Dixon following a similar path to hers—bored and isolated at the university and slowly becoming trapped in a loveless relationship—she holds intimate conversations in the backrooms and on the dance floors of parties to arrange a new job and a new girlfriend for Dixon. While these women mostly avoid the criticism of their husbands' colleagues, their actions in the backgrounds change little within the wider institutions. Katherine's campaigning does not sway Eliot, or make women's involvement in the campaign more acceptable. Carol's actions do achieve change for Dixon, but only by giving him an escape, not by making the university more accommodating to people like him or her.

Finally, Barbara Kirk and Mrs. Macintosh, directly confront their systematic exclusion. Barbara Kirk believes that she could remake the role of faculty wife into one that is freer and more intellectually stimulating. She tries to use her university education and her involvement in the radical movement to create lasting change within her marriage and for her community. However, her new freedoms are unable to survive her husband's demands and her children's requirements. Even with childcare help, she remains tied to the home. Ironically, her attempt, and failure, to create change for herself makes her husband fear her even more: his publications, and thus his reputation, are based on his ostensibly radical marriage, and Barbara knows the lies behind his grand story. Among the wives, Mrs. Macintosh is unique in that she has a career and children. Her confrontation of her husband at the Kirks' last party may be considered a private action, more akin to Katherine's and Carol's; however, she confronts her husband in the middle of a party, in a community that compares and critiques its members' marriages publicly, and her action, unlike Carol's, is emphasized by its placement at the conclusion of the novel. By her refusal to tolerate her husband's assumption of sexual privilege, Mrs. Macintosh not only confronts the system of hierarchy and exclusion, but also highlights her own power within their marriage. Having her own career allows her to leave him if he continues to have affairs or treat her unequally. She is able to matter-of-factly state that he will not be coming to another party because of the power her career gives her.

That the roles of the wives in these three novels are so integral to the plots and the university cultures suggests a, perhaps unconscious, authorial sympathy for these characters.



Snow, Amis, and Bradbury all highlight the balance these women must maintain and the difficult position in which they have been placed. The male characters in these novels are able to concern themselves with their academic work or campus politics, so, with the exception of Dixon, who rarely concerns himself with academic work at all, none of them notice the problems with the university structure. Similarly, with the exception of Dixon, they understood the lifestyle that accompanies an academic career because their time as students prepared them for it. The wives, however, have no such work to distract them, and had no such context on which to base their decisions to become faculty wives. While several have children, only Katherine Getliffe and Barbara Kirk have young children in need of care. Similarly, while several have obtained higher education, there is little indication that the wives understood the duties being a faculty wife would entail.

Overall, the use of faculty wives in these three novels is part of a larger goal of academic fiction—to question the function and purpose of the university, and to question its relationship to the world around it. That relationship has, on the surface, become a cliché—"town and gown"—that emphasizes the distance and division between the university and all outside its walls. Academic wives subvert this division. Thus, their presence in academic fiction highlights the more nuanced relationship between those inside and those outside the university and aids the genre's questioning of the university—not so much regarding its purpose, but, rather, regarding the necessity of its hierarchies and the role of non-academics in academic life.

Later academic fiction develops the role of the academic wife (and eventually, the academic husband) further to serve these critical ends. Michael Frayn's *Copenhagen* (1998) features one of the most prominent wives in the genre because the play has only three characters—the ghosts of Werner Heisenberg, Niels Bohr, and Margrethe Bohr, Niels's wife, who, together, try to remember why Heisenberg visited the Bohrs from Germany in 1941. Heisenberg worked on the *Uranprojekt* (the German Nuclear Weapon Project) during World War Two, which caused his reputation to suffer after the war. Controversy surrounded his 1941 visit to Bohr, his mentor, because neither men agreed afterwards whether Heisenberg came to ask Bohr to help with the project, discuss the feasibility of creating a nuclear weapon, or express his own unwillingness to help Nazi Germany develop such a weapon. Margrethe begins the play by asking why he came to Copenhagen and tries throughout to keep the men focused on answering this question. Heisenberg and Bohr frequently diverge from this topic to discuss their research instead, but

interrupt their discussions about their work with a call to speak "plain language" for the benefit of Margrethe. She, having typed her husband's articles and hosted his students, understands their discussions, but is excluded from the conversations anyway. Rather than fight for recognition, she questions Bohr's relationship with Heisenberg, which, to her, overshadows his relationship with his own children. In doing so, she, like many other faculty wives in academic fiction, questions her position in the hierarchy her husband has created. Because she is outside of the academic world despite her position as Bohr's wife and assistant, her role throughout the play is not only to explore the relationship between the two men, but also to create the tension needed to explore the reason for Heisenberg's visit.

Academic fiction that was written and set in the 1980s and 1990s reflects the increasingly diverse academic world of this period that had shifted from the stable, closed community depicted in *The Masters* as it responds to government funding cuts and increased numbers of people trying to find an academic career. The genre and the role of faculty wives adapt. Academic fiction analyzes this changing world and speculates on the role of the university in an uncertain future. In James Hynes's American academic novel, *A Lecturer's Tale* (2001), for instance, the university is officially taken over by a corporation that has eliminated tenure, research, and graduate students; Nelson Humboldt, a former sessional lecturer turned corporation employee, views the start of the next semester as idyllic because he can now devote his time to teaching. The roles of academic wives in the novels become more complicated as well. With both men and women teaching at universities, academic characters decide whether to marry colleagues and whether their relationships or their careers must be a priority, such as in David Lodge's novel, *Nice Work* (1988). Other novels, such as Christine Poulson's academic mystery novel, *Dead Letters/Murder is Academic* (2002), feature a wider range of relationships—not only academic wives, but also academic husbands, academic boyfriends, and divorced academics. Some of the spouses remain disconnected from the academic world, and some are fellow academics. Unlike their predecessors, the spouses are engaged in their own careers, which lessens the threat of their potential influence on academic society. However, the academics discuss university affairs with their spouses more readily than their predecessors did, which allows for the characters to question the role and culture of the university and the division between academic and non-academic work. The exchange of "insider" knowledge of the university still raises concern—in *Dead Letters/Murder is Academic*, Cassandra James, a lecturer of English in a

Cambridge College, discusses university affairs with her boyfriend, Stephen, a lawyer. When she mentions Stephen's opinions to an older colleague, he warns her that Stephen should remain quiet on the subject in public. While the academics seem more comfortable with and accepting of their colleagues' spouses, the division between the academic and non-academic worlds remains. However, this division allows the characters to question the university and its culture more deeply.

Through their idealism and criticism, praise and satire, academic novels have continuously questioned universities' roles in and value to society. Although these novels, and the critical analyses of them, have typically focused on the campus politics, the wives--and later the husbands--of academics within these novels are instrumental in exploring the genre's central questions and broadening its scope to those beyond the tower. The stereotype of universities as islands, ideologically and physically disconnected from the cities and towns around them, remains throughout the genre; academic spouses, however, continue to be inevitable, yet complicating, bridges to the non-academic world.

Because the goal of academic fiction has been to explore the university structure, it ultimately reveals the university's hierarchical nature. While these novels reflect the university's gradual inclusion of women and the lower classes, they do not address the persistence of racial exclusion. Over the three novels, only seven characters are identified as not English -- *The Masters'* Vernon Royce and Crawford (both Scottish), *Lucky Jim's* Miss O'Shaughnessy, Miss McCorquodale, and Miss ap Rhys Williams (Irish, Scottish, and Welsh, respectively), and *The History Man's* Melissa Todoroff and Hamid (American and Egyptian, respectively). Hamid's ethnicity is emphasized in his brief appearance -- he brings Turkish Delight and pictures of Abu Simbel to the Kirks' flat and has "big dark eyes" (25) -- to satirize Howard's colonialist interpretation of Hamid and Barbara's brief affair. Barbara maintains that the affair was a response to her loneliness and Hamid's interest in her, but Howard only sees Hamid as a man from "the Third World" (26) who, in sleeping with Barbara and confessing, acted according to his "cultural standpoint" and "culturally determined view of women" in order to "establish intimacy between the male parties" (25). Howard's racializing perspective ironically reflects more of Howard's view of women than Hamid's. Other recognition of race or British colonialism, however, is excluded from the novels. These novels reflect, largely without question, the white, British, and male-dominated university hierarchy. However, racial issues do appear in

academic novels from the United States and other countries. These novels, and more recent British academic novels, may explore a wider variety of exclusions beyond class and gender. Because many critics have been largely sympathetic to the genre or have studied the genre as a way to lament the changes to the university during the late twentieth century, future studies of academic fiction could be more critical of the representations of the university in order to identify the way its hierarchy is achieved and maintained, or satirized and criticized. One way to do this may be to focus, as I have done here, on characters at the margins of the novels and those who are typically dismissed as “stock characters.”

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