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Angry Young Men and Their Views on the British Society of the Time

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Studentka se ve své bakalářské práci zaměří na období poválečného formování britské společnosti. Kromě historicko-kulturní analýzy příslušného období, kde bude akcentovat vztah společnosti ke konzumnímu způsobu života, uvede i dobový literární kontext. Do něho zařadí vybraného autora, tj. Kingsley Amise and Johna Braina. Poznatky z teoretické části práce budou základem pro vlastní kritickou literární analýzu v části praktické.

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TITLE

Angry Young Men and Their Views on the British Society of the Time

ANNOTATION

The thesis is concerned with the post-war formation of British society. The main aim of the paper is to analyse the novels *Lucky Jim* by Kingsley Amis and *Room at the Top* by John Braine, which depict the post-war society and the possibilities of social advancement. The analysis is focused on the impact of society on the protagonists of the previously mentioned novels and their reactions to this society.

KEYWORDS

Post-war Britain, 1950s, social classes, *Lucky Jim, Room at the Top,* consumerism, Kingsley Amis, John Braine, Jim Dixon, Joe Lampton

NÁZEV

Rozhněvaní Mladí Muži a jejich pohled na britskou společnost jejich doby

ANOTACE

Tato práce je zaměřená na období poválečného formování britské společnosti. Hlavním cílem této práce je analýza románů *Šťastný Jim* od Kingsleyho Amise a *Místo nahoře* od Johna Brainea, které se zabývají poválečnou společností a možnostmi sociálního vzestupu. Analýza děl je zaměřena na vliv společnosti na protagonisty vybraných románů a jejich reakci na tuto společnost.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Poválečná Británie, 50. léta 20. století, sociální vrstvy*, Šťastný Jim, Místo nahoře,* konzumerismus, Kingsley Amis, John Braine*,* Jim Dixon, Joe Lampton

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Introduction

Post-war Britain was a significant period of British history where people and politics were in desperate need of change. The Second World War had shifted the view of many people on what the role of the government was. With the election of the Labour Party, the view of people on their life values had also shifted. In the 1950s, Britain had undergone a challenging path of changes.

The main focus of the thesis is the post Second World War period of British history, particularly the post-war formation of British society in the 1950s, with the emphasis on the effect of the consumer way of life in the newly formed society. The aim of the thesis is to analyse the historical and cultural background in the selected novels, *Lucky Jim* (1954) by Kingsley Amis and *Room at the Top* (1957) by John Braine. Both novels are examples of essential books of 1950s British literature. They reflect the possibilities of getting higher on the social ladder due to the boundaries between social classes being blurred. The blurring of the boundaries was caused by the formation of a new society after the Second World War.

The thesis is divided into two parts, theoretical and practical. The theoretical part is further divided into two separate sections. The post-war reconstruction of the country, political as well as social, is described in the first chapter. As noted by Richard Hoggart, society was divided into 'Us' and 'Them'.[1] 'Us' refers to the working class and 'Them' to the people at the top who give orders. Winston Churchill could be considered as one of the 'Them', who had been the right man to lead the British people and their country through the war. However, British citizens did not see him as the right man to lead them and the country into peace. The newly elected Labour Party, with its leader, also one of the Hoggart's 'Them', Clement Attlee, changed the social and economic infrastructure on a scale never seen before, thanks to the Labour Party's dedication to creating a new welfare state. The previously mentioned goal was achieved by nationalising industries, such as steel and coal, and welfare state reformations, e.g. the Education Act and the National Health Service Act. This 'avalanche' of changes lead to the 'class revolution,' resulting in the consumer society. After losing a significant number of soldiers and

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[1] Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-class Life* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1957), 72.

civilians in war, either due to death or their immigration, there were plenty of free job positions and opportunities in Britain that were able to secure a stable income for people. All of which had led to nearly full employment and the possibility to spend the wages on all kinds of consumer goods. Consequently, the advertising campaigns started, and surprisingly the 'dry goods' such as clothes, household furnishing, and appliances were making more money than foodstuffs.

The second chapter of the theoretical part focuses on the emergence and rise of the new literary group, the Angry Young Men. The authors of the mentioned group were revolting against the class system and welfare state reforms. Both analysed novels are products of the Angry Young Men members. Since most of the authors were from lower social classes, the Education Act enabled them to attend universities. Thus, most of the authors are university alumni. The debut works of young novelists, poets, and playwrights of the 1950s reflected the social and class revolution of post-war British society. The cultural and sociological significance of these authors is supported by the fact that literature was no longer the privilege of only the upper classes due to the democratisation of British culture. The authors of the group introduced a new type of protagonist into British literature. Angela Hague summed up the antihero of the new English novel as: "A hero training for a life in a society which is breaking up."[2] Their novels usually deal with the protagonist's conflict with the class and their hatred towards the upper-class people, their integration into the post-war society, as well as their social advancement.

The practical part of the paper is the analysis of Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* and John Braine's *Room at the Top,* followed by a comparison of the similarities and differences that the antiheroes of the selected novels went through on their ways to social advancement. Kingsley Amis and John Braine describe the different attitudes of different social classes through the main characters; they contrast the lives, desires and issues of the lower social classes with higher social classes. The pretentious upper-class behaviour is pointed out well in both of the selected novels. In addition to the previously mentioned issues, the analysis also deals with the antiheroes' spiritual and material lives, which change through the course of the book, with the

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[2] Angela Hague, "Picaresque Structure and the Angry Young Novel," *Twentieth Century Literature* 32, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 215.

main focus on the personalities, attitudes to their lives, and relationships with society and women.

The sources used in this bachelor thesis which were originally written in a language other than English, have been all translated by the author of this thesis.

1. Britain in the 1950s

The world in the 1950s was still devastated and was learning how to live with the consequences of the Second World War. Britain changed dramatically, and so did the lives of its people. Although the war ended in 1945, it was still another nine years until the rationing was stopped. Many people lost their homes as a large number of houses were destroyed by the bombarding. Thus, people desired a higher standard of living. It was a time of austerity as well as significant developments such as technological, economic, social, and cultural since the government became considerably more involved in the lives of the British people and wanted to restore the welfare state. The post-war period was also a time of growing consumerism resulting in the 'class revolution'. This new era for the British society began in 1945 with the election of the Labour Party.

The British people wanted to relinquish austerity, and everything associated with the war once and for all. Therefore, people voted for Attlee's Labour Party and not Churchill's Conservative Party. Gary McCulloch reported that for the first time ever, the General Election gave Labour Party a decisive victory and that Attlee strove to create a new welfare state[3] as the British public longed for a change and a better life. They believed that a Labour government would be the one to pursue the desired programme of social reforms. BBC Bitesize webpage stated that the Labour government aimed to address the 'Five Giants', major problems which prevented British people from escaping poverty; 'disease' caused by inadequate health care provision, 'want' caused by poverty, 'squalor' caused by poor housing, 'ignorance' caused by a lack of education, and 'idleness' caused by a lack of jobs or the ability to gain employment.[4] Thus, the new Prime Minister promised full employment, secure jobs with fair wages, a healthcare system, a decent home for all, an end to wartime rationing and education reform. Clement Attlee claimed that the welfare state reforms were tailored to take care of the British society 'from the cradle to the grave'.[5] However, Derek Brown clarifies that prior to Attlee's welfare state, the Conservative politician Richard Austin Butler proposed the 1944 Education Act that

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[3] Gary McCulloch, "Labour, the Left, and the British General Election of 1945," *Journal of British Studies* 24, no. 4 (October 1985): 465.

[4] "Effectiveness of the Labour social welfare reforms, 1945–51," BBC Bitesize, BBC, accessed January 26, 2022, https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zwhsfg8/revision/3.

[5] "1945-51: Labour and the creation of the welfare state," The Guardian, last modified March 14, 2001, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2001/mar/14/past.education.

promised free secondary education for all children no matter their class origin.[6] However, it was the Labour government that put its measures into effect after the General Election. Additionally, when Labour Party came to power in 1945, a tidal wave of reforms hit the British public; in the upcoming years, six reform acts were passed. Namely, the Family Allowances Act, National Insurance Act, Industrial Injuries Act, New Towns Act, National Assistance Act, and National Health Service, as listed on BBC Bitesize webpage.[7] These acts were designed to make life easier and affordable, especially for working-class citizens. Nevertheless, Peter Kalliney revealed that people were complaining about spending too much of their income on necessities such as education, housing, power, and health care.[8] One of the first acts to come into force that was meant to solve one of the mentioned issues was the New Towns Act.

The significance of home intensified after experiencing the horrors of war. As Leora Auslander put it in her article: "I never appreciated home before the war so much as I do now."[9] The housing situation was critical as most of the British citizens lived in slum conditions since, as Langhamer stated, one-and-a-half million houses were bombarded in the Second World War.[10] Thousands of families struggled in inadequate housing, and a large number of people were cramped up in one house. This situation also worsened due to soldiers coming back home from the war, many of them without a home to return to. Claire Langhamer pointed out that many families and young couples would desire to buy or rent houses beyond the slum condition and secure a 'home of one's own'.[11] As the government promised with the 1946 New Towns Act, affordable post-war prefabricated houses would partially resolve the shortage of available living as well as overcrowding. They most definitely were not perfect. However, after living in terrible conditions, since many households did not have a bathroom or even running water, this seemed like paradise for most people. The British people also started to value privacy and time spent with the family, as Hoggart commented on home-centred society:

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[6] The Guardian, "1945-51."
[7] BBC, "Effectiveness of the Labour."
[8] Peter Kalliney, "Cities of Affluence: Masculinity, Class, and the Angry Young Men," *Modern Fiction Studies* 47, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 106.
[9] Claire Langhamer, "The Meanings of Home in Postwar Britain," *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, no. 2 (April 2005): 343.
[10] Langhamer, "The Meanings of Home," 348.
[11] Langhamer, "The Meanings of Home," 347.

> The heart is reserved for the family, whether living at home or nearby, and those who are 'something to us', and look in for a talk or just to sit. Much of the free time of a man and his wife will usually be passed at that hearth; 'just staying-in' is still one of the most common leisure-time occupations.[12]

People were spending more time in their houses; thus, they were encouraged to engage more in home improvement. As a result, products that were supposed to minimise labour and provide comfort, together with more luxurious furniture, have become advertised more. The advertisements were gendered as it was usually the woman who used to handle the household and was in charge of home decor. In addition, the desire for nice things has encouraged women to go to work in order to afford finer amenities for their homes as working-class living standards improved. As Mark Abrams has noted:

> […] for the first time in modern British history the working-class home, as well as the middle-class home, has become a place that is warm, comfortable, and able to provide its own fireside entertainment – in fact, pleasant to live in.[13]

The working class, as it was known, was slowly disappearing. According to Brooke, femininity is no longer tied to motherhood since society accepted work as an area for both men and women.[14] In the past, the stereotypical working-class family was perceived as a male breadwinner and female homemaker and mother rather than a career woman. However, if the family wanted to 'have' nice things to make their home look nicer and more comfortable, women had to contribute to the family budget as well. As Betty Smith, who used to work in a food processing factory, commented:

> We wanted things for the home, so I went to work to get a little bit extra's money for things, such as washing machine, fridge or car. For most women, the expectation was that they would work once they left

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[12] Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 35.
[13] Langhamer, "The Meanings of Home," 341.
[14] Stephen Brooke, "Gender and Working Class Identity in Britain during the 1950s," *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 4 (Summer 2001): 774.

school for a period of time. But then they would marry, have a family, and that would be their primary job.[15]

In the past, men had the status of the 'master of the house' from whom help with the household was not expected. Things of that nature were 'women's work', and if men were involved, they would be thought of as 'womanish'. Nonetheless, considering that women were no longer just housewives, men were expected to help with the household and children. However, not everyone has accepted the 'domestication of the male', as Hoggart commented:

> […] many wives come home from work just as tired as their husbands and 'set to' to do all the housework without help from them. And not many working-class husbands will help their wives by pushing the baby round the streets in its pram. That is still thought 'soft,' and most wives would sympathise with the view.[16]

For the reason that women now had the opportunity to choose between being a housewife and being employed, their personal values have suddenly shifted. Women had not enough time to take care of children and be strictly housewives. Thus, as Brooke noted, smaller families were formed.[17] Stephen Brooks also remarked that: "More reliable contraceptives methods were introduced, and the pills came on the market."[18] Women could now control their fertility and did not have to be 'tied to the wheel of motherhood'. However, the family was still at the heart of working-class families. As Richard Hoggart demonstrated the importance of post-war family life:

> The more we look at working-class life, the more we try to reach the core of working-class attitudes, the more surely does it appear that the core is a sense of the personal, the concrete, the local: it is embodied in the idea of, first, the family and, second, the neighbourhood.[19]

In other words, since people of the working class were usually in abject poverty, their families and acquaintances became the fundamental, most important and valuable essence of their lives. And just like any other parent, no matter the social

[15] BBC Two, "Post-war Britain - women and work," posted December 13, 2013, video, 10:09, https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01n56q8.
[16] Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 57–58.
[17] Brooke, "Gender and Working Class," 781.
[18] Brooke, "Gender and Working Class," 781–782.
[19] Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 33.

class, poor people also wanted to secure better days for their families, which became easier to accomplish due to the number of welfare state reforms.

There has not been a significant change only for adults but for adolescents as well. Berry Mayall described the ordinary working-class childhood in wartime; children were sent to work to chip in as much money as possible into the family budget or were even forced to steal coal, gasoline, food or clothes, all of which was still rationed.[20] Consequently, there was no youth subculture as most working-class children had to go to work and could not develop their style, either due to lack of money or time. However, that changed thanks to the Education Act, which provided free secondary education accessible to all. As Hannah Richardson stated, secondary education was divided into two groups – grammar schools, focusing on academic studies, with the assumption that their pupils would continue to pursue higher education and secondary modern schools for children who would be going into trades.[21] In other words, because of this act, the children with the newly gained opportunity to study could get higher education and, consequently, get better-paid jobs. Therefore, these educated children could end up rising from the working class to the higher social classes. These new possibilities also led to the emergence of a new generation of writers with working-class and lower-middle-class backgrounds, which became known as the Angry Young Men.

Nevertheless, where there is a light, there must be a shadow, and even in the welfare state, it was impossible to escape the unemployment crisis. According to T. D. Sheriff, at the beginning of the 1950s, the measured unemployment rate rose from $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent to over 6 per cent of the labour force.[22] Caused by former soldiers migrating and many people being killed or injured in the Second World War. Besides that, a tremendous amount of people was too inefficient to be employed, as John Salt pointed out: "About two-thirds of the unemployed at that time were classed by the Ministry as 'difficult to place' because of age, physical condition or lack of

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[20] Berry Mayall and Virginia Morrow, "Starting Points," in *You Can Help Your Country: English Children's Work during the Second World War*, 2nd ed., (London: UCL Press, 2020), 2.

[21] "Grammar schools: What are they and why are they controversial," BBC News, BBC, last modified September 8, 2016, https://www.bbc.com/news/education-34538222.

[22] R. A. Batchelor and T. D. Sheriff, "Unemployment and Unanticipated Inflation in Postwar Britain," *Economica* 47, no. 186 (May 1980): 179.

qualifications."[23] As it was complicated to find employment for the 'difficult to place', the National Insurance Act provided financial support to the unemployed and those unable to work through sickness. However, the war greatly affected the British people's attitude towards poverty. Rationing significantly contributed to this shift of mindset as everyone was limited to purchasing a certain amount of goods which led to new buying habits as well as living habits. This freedom of buying goods unleashed an insatiable thirst for more belongings. Kerryn Higgs wrote that people were, of course, used to spending money on the necessities for life, such as clothing, accommodation, and food.[24] Thus, the rapid increase in buying material goods was unusual and new. This phenomenon was partially caused by the New Town Act, as people wanted to make their new homes cosier and the housewives' life easier by purchasing furniture, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, and washing machines. These appliances, together with televisions and cars, became social symbols of the new consumer society as the majority of people started to define 'good life' in terms of the amount and quality of material possession. However, Kalliney pointed out that by improving the quality of housing, the families were also obligated to spend higher portions of their earnings on rent.[25] Nevertheless, as the longing for modern and fashionable goods was stronger than their rational thinking, people were essentially forced by their desires to find a job so that they could afford to buy said products. Therefore, as consumerism rose, so did the demand for labourers in production jobs. Consequently, as Batchelor affirmed, the unemployment rate in Great Britain dropped to 2 per cent,[26] being a generally low unemployment rate during the post-war period. In addition, the nationalisation of steel, coal, electricity, iron, gas industries and the railways also contributed to almost full employment as it helped to create and maintain job positions.

While the new consumers were busy keeping up to date with the latest trends, Downing Street was quite busy 'playing musical chairs' in the 1950s. As it was a decade of changes and everyone wanted to 'get the floor', several prime ministers exchanged in the fifties. After Attlee lost the general election of 1951, the

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[23] John Salt, "Post-War Unemployment in Britain: Some Basic Considerations," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, no. 46 (March 1969): 99.
[24] "How the world embraced consumerism," BBC Future, BBC, last modified January 21, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20210120-how-the-world-became-consumerist.
[25] Kalliney, "Cities of Affluence," 114.
[26] Batchelor and Sheriff, "Unemployment and Unanticipated Inflation," 179.

Conservative Party returned with Winston Churchill as the Prime Minister. As a result, the domestic policy issues became less important, and foreign policy crises took over, not only during Churchill's period. In April 1955, after Churchill's retirement, Anthony Eden took the place of the Prime Minister and once again focused mainly on foreign policy. George Peden forecasted the future of the British nation: "Unsurprisingly, it is widely believed that Britain's position as a world power must have been adversely affected."[27] And as Peden predicted, after the failure of the British Empire in the Suez crisis events of 1956, Britain was no longer seen as one of the world's superpowers. John Darwin remarked: "The 1956 Suez Crisis was a savage revelation of Britain's financial and military weakness and destroyed much of what remained of Britain's influence in the Middle East."[28] Simultaneously with the Suez crisis, an uprising was taking place in Hungary. Boyle claimed that: "It was the attack on Egypt by Israel, Britain and France that led the Soviets to reimpose their domination in Hungary."[29] After the controversial handling of said incident, Eden resigned, with Harold Macmillan taking his place. Macmillan claimed that he wanted to focus more on domestic policy than his predecessors.[30] During his tenure, Britain's prosperity blossomed, and the British nation was prepared for other changes.

On a final note, it is evident that this chapter could certainly not contain the social situation of 1950s Britain in its entirety. It is safe to say that this decade in Britain began with austerity but ended with prosperity. The Labour government's acts, reforms, and changes greatly influenced the lives of many British citizens. As Harold Macmillan stated in his speech: "Most of our people have never had it so good."[31] However, as David McDowall wrote, some people were critical of these changes: "Some people objected to the cost, and claimed that state welfare made people lazy

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[27] G. C. Peden, "Suez and Britain's Decline as a World Power," *The Historical Journal* 55, no. 4 (December 2012): 1073.
[28] "Britain, the Commonwealth and the End of Empire," BBC History, BBC, last modified March 3, 2011, https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/endofempire_overview_01.shtml#five.
[29] Peter G. Boyle, "The Hungarian Revolution and the Suez Crisis," *History* 90, no. 4 (October 2005): 556.
[30] "Past Prime Ministers: Harold Macmillan," GOV.UK, accessed January 30, 2022, https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers/harold-macmillan.
[31] "Were Macmillan's 'never had it so good' days the best it ever got," The Guardian, last modified November 16, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/nov/16/harold-macmillan-never-had-it-so-good.

and irresponsible about their own lives."[32] Some of these critics happened to be the Angry Young Men authors, as some of the issues mentioned commenced said movement, which will be furtherly discussed in the next chapter.

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[32] David McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain* (Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited, 2006), 170.

2. The Angry Decade

Another significant change occurred in the British literature. As already mentioned, the situation in post-war Britain was difficult, so it is only natural that this social situation and atmosphere would be reflected even in literary works. The Angry Young Men emerged from the social environment in the mid-1950s as the group of writers did not sympathise with the middle-class lifestyle and social values of that period. The group of primarily working-class or middle-class novelists and playwrights, including Kingsley Amis, John Osborne, Alan Sillitoe, and John Braine, mocked and criticised the current social hierarchy and rebelled against the bleakness of the welfare state. Their political views were radical, or someone may even say anarchic. The term Angry Young Men describes both of the authors as well as the protagonists of their texts. According to Crowther, an angry young man is a young person who strongly criticises political and social institutions.[33] However, the label 'Angry Young Man' is usually more apt to the protagonists of the works than to the authors themselves.

John Holloway noted that this trend of a new movement began with *Hurry on Down* by John Wain,[34] who 'paved the way' for the new literary movement. As reported by Michael Ratcliffe, the first public use of the term 'Angry Young Men' appeared in 1956 when journalist Thomas Wiseman referred to "That angry young man John Osborne,"[35] as a response to his play *Look Back in Anger*. However, John Holloway later clarified that the term 'Angry Young Men' was taken from Leslie Paul's novel *Angry Young Man*, which focuses on the 1930s angry youth in politics and unemployment.[36] Although the novel *Angry Young Man* has no connection with what Angry Young Men expressed in their works, journalists caught on to this label very quickly as it was catchy and appealing to the readers. It is appropriate to mention that this term was used by the journalists only and not the authors themselves, as they were opposed to this label. For example, as Zachary Leader wrote: "John Wain's publishers advertised his books with the line: 'John Wain is NOT an angry young

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[33] Jonathan Crowther and Kathryn Kavanagh, *Oxford Guide to British and American Culture for Learners of English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 19.
[34] John Holloway, "Tank in the Stalls: Notes on the 'School of Anger,'" *The Hudson Review* 10, no. 3 (Autumn 1957): 424.
[35] "Angry young men," Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, last modified May 21, 2009, https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-95563.
[36] Holloway, "Tank in the Stalls," 424.

man'."[37] However, thanks to the promotion throughout all kinds of media, the impact and awareness extended significantly. Although the term 'Angry Young Men' suggests that they were a unified group, Morton Kroll pointed out that they were in fact not united and often highly critical of one another.[38] The 'Angry Young Men' label is also very inaccurate, as Malcolm Bradbury explained: "This was somewhat narrow, since a lot of the authors were not angry, many were not young, and a lot of them were women."[39] Nevertheless, the resentment and struggle to adapt to the world in which they live bound them together. According to Hilský, the most characteristic features of the Angry Young Men's publications include a satire of any manifestation of snobbery, an emphasis on 'Englishness', repugnance to everything unknown, rejection of modernism and high culture, objectivity and rationality.[40] Even though the authors were not a unified group, the dissatisfaction with the British society, its current values and the disappointment they felt toward the welfare state bound them together and became the common motif of their works. Naturally, not everyone agreed with the welfare state reforms, particularly the Education Act. For instance, T. S. Elliot expressed his resentment against the democratisation tendency of the British post-war education system, as he stated: "And we know, that whether education can foster and improve culture or not, it can surely adulterate and degrade it. For there is no doubt that in our headlong rush to educate everybody, we are lowering our standards […]."[41] In other words, working-class children were thought of as 'not worthy' of higher education, although it could help remove the inequalities in the British social structure. Evelyn Waugh also commented on the burning topic of education:

> Butler is clearly a generous fellow. In his Education Act he provided
> for the free distribution of university degrees to the deserving poor.
> […] But quite a lot of Mr. Butler's protégés choose, or are directed
> into, "Literature." I could make your flesh creep by telling you about
> the new wave of philistinism with which we are threatened by these
> grim young people who are coming off the assembly lines in their

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[37] Zachary Leader, *On Modern British Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 63.
[38] Morton Kroll, "The Politics of Britain's Angry Young Men," *Social Science* 36, no. 3 (June 1961): 166.
[39] Malcolm Bradbury, *The Modern British Novel* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1993), 318.
[40] Martin Hilský, *Současný britský román* (Jinočany: H&H, 1992), 10.
[41] Thomas S. Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1948), 108.

hundreds every year and finding employment as critics, even as poets and novelists.[42]

The rise of the young literary generation and its atmosphere is well illustrated by the statements of Elliot and Waugh. However, it was the Angry Young Men authors who gained education as a result of Bulter's Education Act and were the product of the 'new era', that turned their criticism against the values of the welfare state.

The decisive year for the intellectual and the political atmosphere of the 1950s decade was 1956, which was the year of the Suez crisis and the Hungarian uprising. The year 1956 was coincidentally a formative year for the Angry Young Men. Even though the Suez crisis and the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian uprising did not prompt this movement, they are, in fact, indirectly linked with this incident since the timing of publication of the Angry Young Men's works was in the wake of these incidents. As, for instance, Robert Hewison commented further on this issue:

> The timing of Suez and Hungary was coincidental, but their combined effect was to exacerbate disaffections and tensions. Some of these disaffections had been voiced in the novels of Amis and Wain, but there was nothing that gave them particular focus. What was needed was a myth, and in 1956 there appeared the myth of the Angry Young Man.[43]

Hilský mentioned that although the Angry Young Men condemned the Suez war, as they saw the blunt arrogance of the ruling Conservative Party, some of the authors noted the inevitable decline and impending end of the British Empire.[44] Thus, it is no coincidence that the Angry Young Men's novels erupted at a time when the British social settings were unstable. The people with the same attitude and feeling of resentment against the British government found the Angry Young Men's works appealing, as the writers expressed their discontent with the cultural, social, and political scene in post-war Britain through their characters. Susan Brook asserted:

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[42] Evelyn Waugh, "An open letter to the Hon. Mrs Peter Rodd (Nancy Mitford) on a Very Serious Subject," *Encounter* 27, no. 1 (December 1955): 11.
[43] Robert Hewison, *In Anger: British Culture in the Cold War 1945–60* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 129.
[44] Hilský, *Současný britský román,* 10–11.

The significance of these writers and texts at the time of their publication was seen to lie in the way in which they captured the voice of their generation: rebellious, radical, striking out both against the inability of the welfare state to deliver its promises, and against the cultural complacency and consumerism of the Macmillan era.[45]

As previously mentioned, a great number of these writers were from the lower-middle class or the working class, and their works reflected the social instability that surrounded them. These post-war writers were usually graduates from 'red brick universities', thanks to the Education Act and the welfare state. One of those authors was Kingsley Amis, author of *Lucky Jim,* which is one of the works this thesis deals with. Amis was born in 1922, came from a middle-class family and was educated at St. John's College in Oxford. Before he could return to Oxford to finish his studies, Amis joined the Royal Corps of Signals during the Second World War. After the war, Amis lectured in Swansea and Cambridge, which later served as a source of inspiration for his first novel *Lucky Jim*. Hans Wagner mentioned that after the publication of *Lucky Jim* in 1954, Jim Dixon, the protagonist of said novel, swiftly became a popular and favourite character among the middle class[46] as he was admired for fighting phoney and pretentious society while trying to make a better living for himself. John Holloway revealed that the world soon decided that *Lucky Jim* was simply the funniest and most disrespectful novel since the Second World War.[47] Despite the fact that the Angry Young Men writers were often highly critical of one another, as mentioned before, Kenneth Tynan, an English theatre critic, supported Amis when he commented: "Amis taught grammar schoolboys how to make rudeness genuinely funny,"[48] considering he managed to depict the picaresque character of Jim Dixon as a remarkable reflection of a post-war society undergoing social changes.

The other work this thesis is concerned with is *Room at the Top* by John Braine. This novelist was born in 1922, came from a working-class family and was educated at St.

[45] Susan Brook, "Engendering Rebellion: The Angry Young Man, Class and Masculinity," in *Posting the Male: Masculinities in Post-war and Contemporary British Literature,* ed. Daniel Lea, and Berthold Schoene (Amsterdam: Brill, 2003), 19.

[46] Hans-Peter Wagner, *A History of British, Irish, and American Literature* (Trier: WVT, 2010), 205.

[47] Holloway, "Tank in the Stalls," 425.

[48] Nadine Muller, "Angry Young Men," posted October 1, 2012, YouTube video, 5:03, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytYWK3JMFUk.

Bede's Grammar School in Bradford, where he had been a scholarship student. Apart from Kingsley Amis, he has had no other formal education, thus he is not considered as one of the 'red brick' alumnus. Before he became a writer, Braine also served in the Second World War as a Naval telegraphist and worked as a librarian after the war. In 1957 Braine published *Room at the Top*, and just like Amis, he reflected his attitude towards the post-war situation into the character of Joe Lampton. Kenneth Allsop made an accurate prediction: "Joe will set a new fashion in heroes: brash, innocent, cynical-wide and wide-eyed – imitations of him will be bothering us for quite a while."[49] Amis and Braine became associated with a disparate group of novelists, critics, playwrights collectively known as the Angry Young Men since these working-class and middle-class voices of Jim Dixon and Joe Lampton represented the dissatisfaction with the British post-war establishment. Leader stated that these novels rank among the most important works of the 1950s whose purpose was to mock the snobbish society, bourgeois professions and to criticise social and cultural hypocrisy.[50] Kenneth Tynan commented on the impact of Amis' and Braine's novels on the British society:

> I think Kingsley's books, and John Braine's books, and John Osborne's books all reflect a feeling that it is possible to take people of all classes serious in their opinions and their intelligence and their wit seriously, their attitudes of irreverence towards the established order. Kingsley's book, especially, had that sort of 'Why the hell do I have to accept this' attitude about it. And I think since his book, the effect has been to liberate lots of people who had shared this attitude for years into becoming unconscious socialists by becoming rebels and satirists.[51]

The Angry Young Men novels reflected economic, political, and social changes throughout the post-war period. Since the world and the British society's perception changed after the war, writers felt the urge to register the development of society. Thus, they used literature as a 'mirror' of society, reality, and life making their novels realistic. Lionel Stevenson explained: "They indicate little or no effect of the

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[49] Kenneth Allsop, *The Angry Decade: A Survey of the Cultural Revolt of the Nineteen-fifties* (London: Lowe & Brydone Ltd., 1964), 87.
[50] Leader, *On Modern British Fiction,* 72.
[51] Nadine Muller, "Angry Young Men."

experiments in language and structure by which novelists for half a century had been seeking […]."[52] This means that the Angry Young Men novelists aimed to capture the atmosphere of post-war Britain as realistic as possible. Malcolm Bradbury described the essence of the Angry Young Men literature:

> Fiction in this tradition explored the story of a Britain that was gradually emerging from austerity to growing confidence and greater wealth, changing in its fundamental class relations, witnessing the rise of new working-class affluence and meritocratic prospects. It reflected the decline in political and ideological hostilities, and the growth in social consensus, that came in the early 1950s […].[53]

These young writers introduced new themes to the British literature as they mainly focused on working-class and lower-middle-class life in their novels. Thus, they managed to spread the literature to lower social classes as most of the British population came from a working-class or lower-middle-class background. Among other things, the Angry Young Men also introduced a new type of hero into the British literary scene, which later became fashionable to call 'antiheroes' as they were different from the usual literature heroes. Chris Baldick described an antihero as "a central character who lacks the qualities of nobility and magnanimity expected of traditional heroes in romances and epics."[54] Angela Hagues compared this type of protagonist to picaro, a hero from Spanish novels, which is "a 'half-outsider' who is both in and out of society, living on the fringes of the middle-class world but involved in forays upon it that usually involve some trickery or deceit."[55] Meanwhile, Zachary Leader used another expression, 'lad', describing the same type of protagonist. In Leader's words, lads are "often losers and boozers, liars, wanderers, and transients."[56] No matter how people decide to call them, they are always the same type of person with the same goal. An antihero is used as a mediator to express a reaction to economic growth, class revolution as well as the political stability of 1950s Britain. As Leslie Paul mentioned, the young British generation

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[52] Lionel Stevenson, *The History of the English Novel: Volume XI: Yesterday and after* (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1967), 405.
[53] Bradbury, *The Modern British Novel,* 312–313.
[54] Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 13.
[55] Hague, "Picaresque Structure," 213.
[56] Leader, *On Modern British Fiction*, 60.

was let down by Labour Party for not fulfilling their expectations; thus the Angry Young Men, particularly their heroes, were apolitical.[57] The antihero's main interest was easier and improved social mobility and a classless society. This is supported by Morton Kroll's statement:

> The protest in the novels and plays of a number of young British writers in the 1950's is more a plea for the reduction of class barriers and inequities than outright rejection of the social and political system. Their concern is for greater upward mobility among the social classes and, barring this, for detachment and dissociation from what they regard as the inanities of modern life.[58]

Hilský, for example, defined the antihero of the Angry Young Men's novels as a young, politically disillusioned, individualistic intellectual who is dissatisfied with the post-war British society and with the role that the society had given or intended to assign to him.[59] They are also part rebels, part victims of society, and they are trying to seek an escape from boredom, hypocrisy, and ignorance of contemporary life. They try to find their place in society as 'the doors of opportunities' opened for them as a result of the social changes and reforms of the welfare state. Hilský also added that these individuals came mostly from working-class or lower-middle-class families, and as a result of Butler's Education Act of 1944, they received a university education and thus the possibility of social advancement.[60] Among other essential characteristics of the new hero of the 1950s novels is the social ambivalence. Amis' Jim Dixon and Braine's Joe Lampton are among these heroes who come from the lower-middle class; however, they move up the social ladder by marrying an attractive upper-class girl at the end of the novel. Nonetheless, these unattainable women are portrayed as inferior to men. Morton Kroll offered his insight into this matter:

> The female as an individual has evidently not yet reached the consciousness of these writers. In the middle and upper classes, they are, it seems, second class human beings. The emancipated Englishwoman is not here depicted. Her powers to control her own

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[57] Leslie Paul, "The Angry Young Men Revisited," *The Kenyon Review* 27, no. 2 (Spring 1965): 344.
[58] Kroll, "The Politics," 157.
[59] Hilský, *Současný britský román,* 7.
[60] Hilský, *Současný britský román,* 7–8.

destiny as an individual or a human being are limited to what she can accomplish by indirection, innuendo, or her sexual attractiveness (and willingness).[61]

As it is apparent, even women could not escape from the anger of the Angry Young Men since they do not portray women as equals to men. Yet, paradoxically, the future of these antiheroes is in the hands of these women. As they refuse to live in a society that denies them to get whatever they want only because it is 'out of their class' and desire the privileges of the upper classes, which marriage to such women may provide.

Although the Angry Young Men became highly influential in the development of British literature, the downfall was inevitable. Nevertheless, the peak of the literary influence and significance of the angry novelists was in the 1950s. Although, some of them continued in writing. The later literary works were, however, not as successful as their debut novels. Stevenson managed to aptly name the Angry Young Men as 'men of one book'.[62] The Angry Young Men undoubtedly influenced the British literature as they, for example, introduced a new type of protagonist who revolted against the newly formed society. The social hierarchy, women and other issues that these young writers were angry about will be furtherly discussed and reflected in the Angry Young Men's selected works in the following chapter.

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[61] Kroll, "The Politics," 163.
[62] Stevenson, *History of British Literature,* 404.

3. The Incredible Luck of Jim Dixon

Jim Dixon is the protagonist of the eponymous satirical novel *Lucky Jim* by Kingsley Amis, first published in 1954. Carpenter clarified that Amis called his novel *Lucky Jim* to emphasise the ironic application of the luck theme in the first three-quarters of the book.[63] Amis humorously attacks aspects of modern life and reflects the mood of post-war Britain. The success of *Lucky Jim* also results from the authenticity of the university environment drawing from Amis' experience as a university lecturer.

The previously mentioned protagonist, Jim Dixon, is a first-year lecturer in history at an English provincial 'red brick' university with lower-middle-class background, educated thanks to the Butler's Educational Act. Jim has low self-esteem and no aspirations and is seemingly bored with life. The protagonist quickly picks up on the expectations of people around him and tries to behave as others wish. Hague explained that Jim's role-playing ability is possible due to the fluidity of his personality.[64] Consequently, as he is also unable to oppose other people, he often finds himself in situations unpleasant for him, which he often solves with excessive drinking. Additionally, Jim has little respect for authorities, especially Professor Welch, on which Jim's future as a lecturer at the university depends. Jim is very aware of his situation: "[…] this man had decisive power over his future […] Until then he must try to make Welch like him."[65] Thus, Jim puts up with everything Welch thinks of and expects of him to carry out. Thus, Jim created a 'collection of faces', which Kenneth Allsop listed and explained the reason behind them:

> Eskimo, crazy peasant, Evelyn Waugh, sex life in Ancient Rome, Edith Sitwell, lemon-sucking and ape faces – with which he expresses his true feelings about situations in which he has to pretend interest or agreement, and behind his back his hands twist into obscene gestures while he talks to the people upon whose favours he depends for a living.[66]

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[63] Humphrey Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men: A Literary Comedy of the 1950s* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2003), 53.
[64] Hague, "Picaresque Structure," 218.
[65] Kingsley Amis, *Lucky Jim* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2012), 2.
[66] Allsop, *The Angry Decade,* 55.

Jim's anger sometimes accumulates to the point where he simply bursts out in harmless bouts of aggression. One of the incidents happened while staying as a guest in Welch's house when Jim wrote a message on a steamy mirror: "Ned Welch is a Ƨoppy Fool with a Fase like A Pigs ꓷum."[67] Nevertheless, Jim is fundamentally a decent man. Thus, he wipes off even this seemingly harmless message as he does not want to jeopardise his future employment at the university. As Allsop explained, Dixon is driven by fear of "getting the sack."[68] The climax of his accumulated anger is reached during his lecture on 'Merrie England'. Intoxicated Jim is unable to speak other than in a voice of imitation of Welch himself and the principal of the university. However, Jim finally summons up the courage to speak up and express his opinion:

> Well, if this was going to be his last public appearance here, he'd see
> to it that people didn't forget it in a hurry. […] No more imitations,
> they frightened him too much, but he could suggest by his intonation,
> very subtly of course, what he thought of his subject and the worth of
> the statements he was making. Gradually, but not as gradually as it
> seemed to some parts of his brain, he began to infuse his tones with
> sarcastic, wounding bitterness. Nobody outside a madhouse, he tried
> to imply, could take seriously a single phrase of this conjectural,
> nugatory, deluded, tedious rubbish.[69]

It may seem that Jim is rather unlucky than lucky, as the name of the novel suggests. However, it seems like Jim's luck lies in his friends. Even though Jim at first lacks close friends or confidants, he gains some valuable friendships along his way to a brighter and maybe not so dull future. Jim's acquaintances often help him get out of inconvenient situations and, most importantly, build up his confidence. Namely his housemates Alfred and Bill, together with Jim's future girlfriend Christine, who is eventually a 'ticket' to Jim's bright future out of the university. Bill Atkinson also shows his devotion to Jim as he offers his help to create a distraction during Jim's lecture:

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[67] Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 63.
[68] Allsop, *The Angry Decade,* 57.
[69] Amis, *Lucky Jim,* 237.

[…] Atkinson had insisted, not only on coming to the lecture, but on announcing his intention of pretending to faint should Dixon, finding things getting out of hand in any way […] "It'll be a good faint," Atkinson had said in his arrogant voice. "It'll create a diversion all right. Don't you worry."[70]

Readers might not find Jim likeable due to his outbursts or idleness; however, Allsop's view of Jim differs: "Despite his flaws and his foolishness, Lucky Jim is likeable, good-hearted and sympathetic, and you know that he is essentially a decent chap."[71] Nonetheless, Jim still does not make a good impression as he is, among other things, a typical example of a misogynist. The antihero is involved with two women at once. Margaret is depicted as a manipulative, hysterical woman who "feeds on emotional tension."[72] Jim feels obligated to help her while she searches for love and emotional support. Even though Jim does not find Margaret attractive and sometimes even resents her, he keeps her as a 'backup' because even Margaret is 'better than nothing.' Jim may also be unable to break things off with her as he is not confident enough nor strong enough. In Jim's own words: "I've got tied up with her without really meaning to […] there's nothing to be done about it. It's just we can't split up, that's all."[73] Christine, on the other hand, is like an unattainable princess who is not only beautiful but also does not share the pretentious values of the Welches. Jim and Christine bond over Jim's faux pas caused by Dixon's smoking in bed while, of course, intoxicated. Christine good-naturedly offers help to hide the damage while Margaret, the 'wicked witch' blocking his path to Christine and happiness, uses the situation to blackmail him. While Leader defined Jim as "a vulnerable hero, easily undermined and crippled by feelings of pity, guilt, and shame,"[74] Jim proves that with newly obtained confidence he is, in fact, able to capture the attention of the seemingly unattainable and out of his class, Christine.

Jim has always been short of money, and one would assume he would like to change that on his own initiative. However, Jim's only concern is his future at the university he resents. It seems like he has no aspirations nor initiative to look for a better-

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[70] Amis, *Lucky Jim,* 235.
[71] Allsop, *The Angry Decade,* 59.
[72] Amis, *Lucky Jim,* 248.
[73] Amis, *Lucky Jim,* 209–210.
[74] Leader, *On Modern British Fiction,* 64–65.

paying job where he does not have to put up with irritating and difficult supervisors. Thus, Jim's incredible luck strikes when Christine's uncle Julius Gore-Urquhart offers him a prestigious job in London as his private secretary. One would assume that after seeing Dixon's disastrous lecture, where Gore-Urquhart was present, Jim would not be offered the job. However, Julius seems to understand Jim's feelings about the pretentious academic atmosphere and, on top of that, is impressed by his cynicism. Thus, all of a sudden, a promising job basically falls into his lap. When Julius explains why he offered the job to Jim and not Bertrand Welch, he says:

> I knew young Welch was no good as soon as I set eyes on him. Like his pictures. It's a great pity he's managed to get my niece tied up with him, a great pity. […] I think you'll do the job all right, Dixon. It's not that you've got the qualifications, for this or any other work, but there are plenty who have. You haven't got the disqualifications, though, and that's much rarer.[75]

Gore-Urquhart's straightforwardness and 'laid-back' attitude is a luxury acquired by his wealth. In other words, Julius knows that Jim is by no means an intellectual. Nevertheless, he cannot stand being surrounded by upper-class 'wannabes'. Welch family is a perfect caricature of snobbish people. For instance, Professor Welch holds occasional gatherings for his friends and colleagues to sing madrigals. Welch's interest in high culture might be nothing more than a pose intended to establish his higher-class status. One would assume that Welch teaches at a prestigious university rather than a provincial college, with the way he behaves. Bertrand Welch shares many of his father's faults and is a shameless social climber since he is using Christine in the hope of obtaining a job as a secretary for her uncle. Both Bertrand and Professor Welch are trying to make a statement and be distinctive by wearing a beret and fishing-hat. Thus, it looks like their only goal is to constantly prove their worth to other people. Carpenter described the Welch family as: "[…] Professor Welch, his wife, and their arty-poseur son Bertrand, ride roughshod over everyone else's needs. Compared to them, Dixon is pure altruism, acutely sensitive to his fellow human beings."[76] Which is an interesting point of view considering how cold-hearted and emotionally unavailable Jim can be to his loved and close ones.

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[75] Amis, *Lucky Jim,* 246–247.
[76] Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men,* 68.

Nonetheless, as Carpenter continued: "Welch is not merely selfish; he seems to be neurologically unable to recognize the existence of any other person."[77] Welch's self-absorbed personality is also one of the aspects Jim has to put up with on a daily basis as he often addresses him by his predecessor's name. Even Welch's conversational habits may serve as an analogy to his driving skills as he does not pay full attention to either of those activities. Consequently, he repeatedly lets the direction of an ongoing conversation dictate the course of his car as well. Professor's son, Bertrand, is also clearly full of himself and his conversation habits are similarly automatic. When Jim asks Bertrand about his occupation, he replies:

> I am a painter. Not, alas, a painter of houses, or I should have been able to make my pile and retire by now. No no; I paint pictures. Not, alas again, pictures of trade unionists or town halls or naked women, or I should now be squatting on an even larger pile. No no; just pictures, mere pictures, pictures *tout court,* or, as our American cousins would say, pictures period.[78]

Bertrand's speech makes an impression that it has been rehearsed and undoubtedly given many times before. He tries to make an impression that he is a professional and proper artist by identifying with the French culture, which he expresses, among other things, by wearing the previously mentioned beret. One of Jim's conflicts with society is that he resents this kind of behaviour of phoney people and finds it laughable. In Kroll's words: "The theme of the book centres about Jim's private battle, which emerges into a public battle, against social and personal sham."[79] In other words, Jim tries to escape from public hypocrisy to a decent and sincere life. Consequently, Jim has chosen to be an 'outsider' as he does not want to unnecessarily interact with fake people. Additionally, he tries to fight his inner battle with society via his practical jokes and a collection of faces and movements. It seems like for Jim, these habits serve a therapeutic function for his frustration with surrounding society.

Jim's luck strikes again at the end of the novel when he hurries to catch the train to London where Christine is supposed to be. And almost like in a romantic comedy,

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[77] Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men,* 69.
[78] Amis, *Lucky Jim,* 38.
[79] Kroll, "The Politics," 160.

Jim gets there just in time to reunite with her. However, his misogynist side comes to light again. As Jim expresses his feelings and emotions about Margaret and Christine:

> It was all very bad luck on Margaret, and probably derived, as he'd thought before, from the anterior bad luck of being sexually unattractive. Christine's more normal, i.e. less unworkable, character no doubt resulted, in part at any rate, from having been lucky with her face and figure. […] Christine was still nicer and prettier than Margaret, and all the deductions that could be drawn from that fact should be drawn: there was no end to the ways in which nice things are nicer than nasty ones.[80]

He considers himself to be lucky as he thinks about how he has 'escaped the clutches' of manipulative Margaret and rushes into the arms of beautiful Christine. Jim enjoys his great moment of victory as he looks forward to his new promising job in London with a beautiful girlfriend on his arm. In a final stroke of luck, Jim with Christine run into the entire Welch family. Since Jim has now the opportunity to be openly disrespectful, he laughs in their faces which brings him the longed-for satisfaction. He is finally free and not dependent on arrogant 'phoney' people who have used to manipulate the course of his life.

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[80] Amis, *Lucky Jim,* 256.

4. The Journey to the 'Top' of Joe Lampton

The novel *Room at the Top* by John Braine*,* where Joe Lampton is the protagonist, was published in 1957. The story of the rise of an ambitious young man of working-class origin was an instant success for Braine and established him as one of the Angry Young Men. Allsop revealed what inspired the plot for *Room at the Top*: "I [Braine] saw a man sitting in a big shiny car. He'd driven up to the edge of some waste ground, near some houses and factories, and was just sitting there looking across at them. It seemed to me there must have been a lot that led up to that moment."[81] Therefore, John Braine made up a backstory for this man embodied by Joe Lampton.

Joe is fundamentally a self-confident man; however, he fights an inner battle between his real, authentic self and his ideal self; the man he desires to be. Since the story is told retrospectively ten years on, Joe is able to look back self-critically at his younger version. Since Joe comes from a working-class family, he is expected to be modest with little chance to succeed. Nevertheless, due to Butler's Education Act, Joe could graduate from university despite his working-class origin. However, during his studies, Joe was enlisted in British military service during the Second World War. While being imprisoned, Joe studied for the accountancy examination, proving his devotion to the social advancement that a university education could provide. However, since Joe's aspirations could not be achieved in his hometown Dufton, where "no dreams were possible,"[82] he leaves to a prosperous Warley, which allows Joe to begin his journey to the 'Top.' In Warley, he seizes the opportunity to climb up the social ladder and to fulfil his dream "an Aston-Martin, three-guinea linen shirt, a girl with a Riviera suntan."[83] As Allsop describes the protagonist's will to achieve the dream: "Joe's eyes are fixed on the place there is for him at the top and he isn't wasting his breath bemoaning life."[84] Therefore, it is no surprise when Joe's humanity starts to disappear and is replaced by the focus on material wealth. Thus, Dominic Head aptly called Joe "the classic sell-out"[85] with an explicit plan to achieve his goal, which is undoubtedly a fitting description of Joe. The desire and

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[81] Allsop, *The Angry Decade,* 90.
[82] John Braine, *Room at the Top* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 85.
[83] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 29.
[84] Allsop, *The Angry Decade,* 86.
[85] Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 53.

drive towards material, as well as physical beauty, may have been triggered by the terror he experienced when both of his parents were killed by a missile during the Second World War. Head adds that the death of Joe's parents symbolises the death of traditional working-class values: "The loss of class identity 'frees' him and makes possible an assault on society perceived as a hierarchy based on wealth alone."[86] At first, Joe resents people who prioritise social prestige and material success. However, later on, the antihero decides pragmatically and gives priority to social advancement instead of a meaningful relationship. Eventually, Joe finds himself inside the prison of consumerism. Not only does Joe not show any intention to stop the 'zombification', but he is also fully aware of what is happening to him:

> What has happened to me is exactly what I willed to happen. I am my own draughtsman. Destiny, force of events, fate, good or bad fortune – all that battered repertory company can be thrown right out of my story, left to starve without moment's recognition. But somewhere along the line – somewhere along the assembly line […] – I could have been a different person. […] I suppose that I had my chance to be a real person.[87]

The final realisation of the metamorphosis into the "Successful Zombie"[88] came with the death of Alice, Joe's mistress: "I hated Joe Lampton, but he looked and sounded very sure of himself sitting at my desk in my skin; he'd come to stay, this was no flying visit."[89] In other words, Joe might have exactly known what he wants out of his life. However, after reaching his 'goal destination – the Top', he realises that it is not what he actually desired. This tragedy also reveals how superficial and selfish Joe really is: "O merciful God, I thought, she's committed suicide and left a note blaming me. That's finished it. That's finished me in every possible way."[90] Instead of mourning over Alice, Joe immediately thinks of himself and the social degradation after he realises that people could find him guilty of Alice's death.

As already mentioned, Joe comes to Warley with a plan – to become wealthy. The fastest way to achieve his goal is by marrying a girl from the 'top' of the social

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[86] Head, *Modern British Fiction,* 70.
[87] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 124.
[88] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 123.
[89] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 219.
[90] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 217.

ladder. After meeting Susan Brown and learning she is the daughter of the town's richest factory owner, he saw her as the easy doorway to, as Allsop called it, "Aston-Martin land."[91] Susan is portrayed as a shallow, empty-headed, immature, spoilt character who is attracted to Joe mainly because her parents disapprove. Joe makes a pragmatic decision and chooses Susan as "the key to the Aladdin's cave of [his] ambitions."[92] Reading Susan's childish outbursts, attitudes, and reactions really 'makes one's toes curl'. Allsop, too, found it difficult to believe that even cold-blooded ambitious Joe "could stomach a girl who chirps like a sexy tom-tit."[93] However, due to his destructive drive for material success and his "If I want her, I'll have her"[94] attitude, he overlooks these imperfections and, indeed, marries into the Brown family. Joe eventually chooses marriage of convenience over the deep emotional connection he has built with Alice. Thus, he achieves the desired social advancement, however, not thanks to his determination for career progression but as a result of persistent courting Susan. Mr Brown, the father of Susan, is actually the one who can truly influence Joe's future well-being and his following social ascent. According to Head, *Room at the Top* is considered to be "the most famous post-war novel of class mobility."[95] This is an apt statement since Braine managed to capture Joe's journey quite realistically. Thanks to Joe's retrospective view, readers are also enabled to 'have a peek' in Joe's mind and see that he actually feels some remorse for his actions. He realises that all that glitters is not gold as he had to transform himself into a different person not only to carry out his plan, marrying Susan, but also to be able to live at the 'Top'. He feels a sense of melancholy as he reminisces about his old life at the beginning of the novel:

> […] I always wear the best. But sometimes I feel uncomfortably aware that I'm forced to be a living proof of the firm's prosperity, a sort of sandwich-board man. I've no desire to be ill-dressed; but I hate the knowledge that I daren't be ill-dressed if I want to. […] And I shall never be able to recapture that sensation of leisure and opulence

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[91] Allsop, *The Angry Decade,* 88.
[92] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 139.
[93] Allsop, *The Angry Decade,* 88.
[94] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 90.
[95] Head, *Modern British Fiction,* 53.

and sophistication which came over me that first afternoon in Warley
[…].[96]

When it comes to women, they can hardly resist Joe as he is well aware of his physical attractiveness. Thus, he takes advantage of this quality of his. Bradbury commented: "Joe Lampton exploits his looks and his body to ensure his personal success and his greedy social ascent […]."[97] This statement summarises Joe's approach to women very accurately and is only confirmed by his relationship with Susan. Joe is naturally seductive and flirty around women as he seeks their appreciation and attention. However, after getting into the 'love triangle' with Alice and Susan, Joe reveals the light as well as dark sides of his romantic personality. With Alice, Joe can be sincere, open a vulnerable. Whereas in Susan's presence, Joe 'plays pretend'. On the other hand, Susan also idealises Joe and looks at him 'through rose-coloured glasses:' […] she was taking me as the perfect lover and delightful companion, passionate and tender and exciting and infinitely wise […]."[98] Meanwhile, Alice accepts Joe as he is and not as she wants him to be, which causes the readers to wish for Joe to choose Alice over immature Susan. However, as already mentioned, the exact opposite happens since he sees Susan as a 'ticket' to the 'Top'. Not only Joe but also his best friend Charles see women as objects and 'indicators of wealth' of men. Joe and Charles have put together an elaborate grading scheme for women, "having noticed that the more money a man had the better looking was his wife"[99] almost as if women had an imaginary price tag attached to them. Nevertheless, this is exactly what Joe wants, a 'Grade One' woman by his side.

Besides profiting from the welfare state, Joe also experiences post-war rationing and austerity, which might have also sparked the insatiable flame of lust for money and material possession. As already mentioned, a great number of goods was rationed in the 1950s. In post-war Britain, it was common for working-class people to have just enough money and food to 'get by'. Joe reminisces about the days of rationing "[…] one was always hungry. Not hungry in the way I'd been at Stalag 1000, but hungry for profusion, hungry for more than enough […]."[100] Nevertheless, even though Joe

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[96] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 13.
[97] Bradbury, *The Modern British Novel,* 324.
[98] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 139.
[99] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 36.
[100] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 129.

experienced starvation, he shows incredible selfishness after discovering that Alice posed as a nude model once, purely for the need of money for food. Alice's response to Joe's self-centeredness was perfectly reasonable: "What's it to do with you? It was years before I met you. Was I supposed to starve because some day I might meet a narrow-minded prude from Dufton who wouldn't like the idea of me showing the body God gave me?"[101] Just like Alice has adapted to the 'starvation situation' by posing as a nude model, Joe now also has to transform himself into a different person to be able to 'fit in' the higher society, as he understands that people from higher social classes had never experienced hardships poor people had usually faced:

> She [i.e. Susan] was lucky, she'd always been lucky, she'd never known the reality of the cold bedroom […], she'd never had to worry about exams or a job or the price of new clothes, even her way of speaking with its touchingly childish affectations was a luxury no one of the working classes could afford.[102]

Braine lets the readers know what the older and wiser Joe feels about his successful social advancement and adaptation to this society; he was retrospectively jealous of his younger self for being a "better person rather than the smooth character he became."[103] Even though he regrets some of his decisions, he would not change places with his younger self. If his parents could see what their son had grown into, they certainly would not be proud. Considering that his mother often used to praise Joe's father: "Your father would starve before he'd sell himself for a handful of silver,"[104] which is exactly something Joe had allowed to happen. Humphrey Carpenter defined Joe as "a social climber, or rather a go-getter for the good things in life – sports cars, pretty girls from well-off homes, and above all money and power."[105] Joe's parents would probably share the same opinion with Carpenter. Joe's parents, apart from their son, had never pursued money or social advancement even when they had the opportunity: "If Ah'd joined t'Con Club, lad, Ah'd be riding to work in mi own car…"[106] Although Joe feels intensely embarrassed at the thought

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[101] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 116.
[102] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 138.
[103] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 123.
[104] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 94.
[105] Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men,* 163.
[106] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 94.

of how his parents would feel about his 'new version', it does not stop him from deciding pragmatically to reach his 'dream destination' – the 'Top'.

When Joe was younger, his father warned him against wanting too much: "Mind what Ah say, Joe. There's some things that can be bought too dear."[107] Joe does not seem to have taken his father's advice to heart, as he did the exact opposite. Although Joe got everything he desired, the price he paid was too high. Nevertheless, Carpenter sympathised with the protagonist: "Joe's ambitions to further himself socially are a reaction to the extreme austerity of the immediately postwar years [...]."[108] Even so, one may find it hard to feel compassionate for the antihero as he is sometimes unnecessarily ruthless in his journey to achieve his goals. Joe paid the highest price as he lost the only sincere relationship due to his drive for money and material success. Thus, it is not surprising when Joe finally fully transforms into the 'Zombie' and feels that he has no home or place to return to. He eventually acknowledges he has 'sold-out' himself beyond the point of no return and simply gives in.

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[107] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 95.
[108] Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men,* 161.

5. Comparison of the Selected Antiheroes

The personalities of both characters develop throughout their journey. At first, Joe is a self-confident, motivated young man who excels in communication with people. In contrast with Jim, Joe consciously uses other people to reach the desired 'Top'. After achieving his goals, he realises that he has sacrificed more than he would have wished or liked. Joe is fully aware that he needs to be merciless to secure his 'room at the Top'. Even though Joe understands the wrong in what he has done at the end of the novel, he learns that the surrounding society does not, in fact, share the same belief:

> "Oh, God," I said, "I did kill her [Alice]. I wasn't there, but I killed her." […] "Poor darling, you mustn't take on so. You don't see it now, but it was all for the best. She'd have ruined your whole life. Nobody blames you, love. Nobody blames you." I pulled myself away from her abruptly. "Oh my God," I said, "that's the trouble."[109]

Jim, on the other hand, is a man with low self-esteem and no aspirations. While Joe is driven by the desire to accumulate material possessions and wealth, Jim simply exists and tries to 'survive' the middle-class academic life. Jim's only concern is keeping his job at the university and having just enough money for beer and cigarettes. After realising how corrupted and fake the upper-class people are, he declares a personal war with them. Paradoxically, Dixon eventually finds his way into the social class he resented so much. However, unlike Joe, Jim reaches his 'Top' by chance and without any sacrifices or obstacles. What is common to both of the protagonists is the fact that they undergo a transformation; Jim becomes a more confident man, whereas Joe becomes a lifeless 'zombie'. Another shared aspect is achieving their social advancement thanks to a socially better-situated woman.

As already mentioned, Kroll pointed out that Angry Young Men writers have depicted women as beings whose powers to control their own destiny are limited by their sexual attractiveness or social status.[110] Braine and Amis are no exception, as both of them created antiheroes with poor judgement when it comes to women. Both Lampton and Dixon are misogynistic characters as they do not acknowledge or even

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[109] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 235.
[110] Kroll, "The Politics," 163.

respect women unless they find them attractive. Joe dates two women at the same time without shame. He is confident around women, communicates with them without a problem, and is often flirtatious. In comparison to Joe, Jim is not as confident when it comes to communication with women. For this reason, Dixon was unable to end his relationship with Margaret, who was not an object of his desire. With newly gained confidence, Jim tells himself that "it was no use trying to save those who fundamentally would rather not be saved,"[111] thus he finally breaks things off with Margaret. Morton Kroll accurately described Jim's and Joe's relationship with the women in their lives:

> Jim Dixon's Margaret is a neurotic, perhaps even psychotic, colleague with whom he is involved out of a combined feeling of human warmth, responsibility, and guilt. […] Christine is the unattainable, a girl from the other upper class world, whom Jim Dixon triumphantly attains. […] Alice in *Room at the Top* personifies a commitment to love which Joe Lampton regards as selfless. She is destroyed by his quest for success. Lampton marries an insipid symbol of middle class womanhood who attains meaning to him only when she bears him a child.[112]

In other words, Joe is determined to go the extra mile for his social advancement and courts Susan just for her social status without genuine feelings for her. Jim, on the other hand, attains a girl he actually desires, and his intentions towards her are most honourable. For Jim, Christine's social status is just a pleasant bonus. Carpenter described these types of relationships as "hypergamous,"[113] meaning that an individual aspires to attach themselves to a woman of higher social status. This description is very fitting for Joe Lampton, however, not for Jim Dixon since Christine is not of significantly higher status than him, she just has the right connections, i.e. her uncle.

Both novels have a similar structure in terms of protagonists making archenemies as both antagonists are partners of their future love interests; Susan's boyfriend Jack Wales, whom Joe described as "bags of money, about seven foot tall and a beautiful

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[111] Amis, *Lucky Jim,* 256.
[112] Kroll, "The Politics," 163.
[113] Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men,* 163.

RAF moustache"[114] and Bertrand Welch, whom Braine depicted as a pretentiously posing 'Bohemian' who believes that being an artist allows him to be free of the liability to behave appropriately. Therefore, he feels no shame while cheating on Christine. As if the fact that he is dating her purely for the possibility of gaining the job at her uncle's company was not inconsiderate enough. Both Bertrand and Jack are undeniably full of themselves. Nevertheless, both Jim and Joe envy them after seeing how one's life can be easy when born into an influential family. Especially Jim envies Bertrand's freedom in choosing his profession and actually enjoying his life while he has to suffer at the university. Although both protagonists envy the life of higher social classes, they mock their ways of entertainment. As already mentioned, Hilský noted that the Angry Young Men writers rejected high culture;[115] Joe does not understand the excitement about ballet: "as far as I'm concerned ballet is something with which to occupy the eyes whilst listening to music."[116] Jim, however, is more explicit when talking about high culture with references such as "Brahms rubbish,"[117] "Teutonic bore,"[118] and "filthy Mozart,"[119] which one might find ridiculous as Jim himself acquires a job for a devotee of the arts at the end of the novel. Carpenter clarified that: "*Lucky Jim* is actually not attacking culture itself, but the way people use the idea of culture to achieve mastery over others."[120] In other words, some people of higher social classes may not actually be fond of the high culture. Nevertheless, the 'elites of society' are expected to enjoy this kind of entertainment.

Apart from Joe, Jim does not have any romantic or sexual encounter with his 'girlfriend' Margaret as he was not 'fool enough' to get tangled into their alleged relationship even more. Nevertheless, when Jim has the opportunity to 'go all the way' he does not hold back:

> Why shouldn't he go on? It seemed he'd be able to, though he couldn't tell how far. Did he want to? Yes, in a way, but was it fair to her? […] Was it fair to him? He could only just handle her as a female

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[114] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 40.
[115] Hilský, *Současný britský román,* 10.
[116] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 73.
[117] Amis, *Lucky Jim,* 33.
[118] Amis, *Lucky Jim, 43.*
[119] Amis, *Lucky Jim,* 62.
[120] Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men,* 70.

friend; as her 'lover' he'd be a cowboy facing his first, and notoriously formidable, steer. No, it wouldn't be fair to him. […] On the other hand – Dixon battled for clear, or any, thought – she certainly seemed to want it.[121]

Although Jim takes Margaret's feelings into consideration at first, his selfish lust eventually takes over him. Nevertheless, Jim is primarily honourable and does no one any harm, whereas Joe is relentless and is able to even hit a woman in a fit of rage: "I took hold of her roughly, then slapped her hard on the face."[122] Richard Hoggart described how the quarrels of working-class families were usually dealt with: "A wife will say how worried she is because something is amiss, and 'the mester will be mad' when he gets home; he may 'tell yer off' harshly or in a few cases may even 'bash' you, especially if he has had a couple of pints on the way from work."[123] Thus, Joe's acting up is apparently not something unusual since he comes from a working-class background, which is, needless to say, a very stereotypical point of view.

Amis's protagonist barely mentions the war. For Jim, the important experience is to live in the present. At the same time, Jim casually mentions his parents in passing, however, with no further information about these individuals. It seems like his family has little meaning for Jim, if any at all. On the contrary, Joe reminisces about his years in the army often, especially about his imprisonment in Stalag. Joe explains why he did not escape like his rival Jack Wales: "It was all right for him to escape. He had a rich daddy to look after him and to buy him an education. He could afford to waste his time."[124] Thus, Joe cleverly spent his time in Stalag to study for the accountancy examination. Additionally, Braine's protagonist reminisces often and fondly about his parents, who both died due to the Second World War strategic bombing. As previously mentioned, due to the bombing raids, the housing situation was critical; low accommodation capacity led to the housing crisis and further to shared living, which is reflected in both of the analysed novels. Even though both protagonists live in a shared house, Joe has better conditions as he stays with a middle-class couple who live at 'T'Top', a better part of Warley, with "big houses

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[121] Amis, *Lucky Jim,* 56.
[122] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 198.
[123] Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 54.
[124] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 118.

with drives and orchards and manicured hedges."[125] Whereas Jim lives in a boarding-house with three other residents and a stereotypical landlady. Thus, it is evident that Joe has won a higher standard of living conditions.

Neither of the selected novels shows the protagonists' particular sympathy for a specific political party. Nevertheless, the protagonists' enemies are Conservative Party supporters, thus it makes the Conservative Party also hostile. As Carpenter described the 'Conservative enemy' in *Lucky Jim:* "Mrs Welch funds her husband's arty goings-on and Bertrand's self-indulgent lifestyle from a private income, and she has right-wing views – Dixon mentions her 'advocacy of retributive punishment'."[126] Additionally, Bertrand Welch opposes the government's efforts to help out the poor. Both Joe and Jim feel like the Conservative Party is intellectually oriented since the lower classes were usually pro-Labour Party. Thus, when Joe steps into the Conservative club, he feels inferior among them as he is originally from the working class, which usually indicated a Labour Party favouritism. Joe even thinks about his father: "My father'd turn in his grave if he could see me."[127] However, as he is not bound by his father and longs for social advancement, he adapts to the new society where the money grew. As both of the protagonists 'entered' the higher social class at the end of the novel, they undeniably eventually became the 'enemies' political party' supporters.

Overall, the antiheroes' personalities are completely different as Joe is fundamentally confident in every aspect of his life, whereas Jim is a clumsy ambitionless man. Nevertheless, they both manage to charm seemingly unattainable women. In *Lucky Jim,* readers would likely cheer for Christine as she is more likeable than manipulative Margaret. However, in *Room at the Top,* one is disgusted even by Susan's appalling and immature way of speaking and would most likely cheer for a more charming and likeable Alice. Nevertheless, they both climb up the social ladder at the end of the novel.

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[125] Braine, *Room at the Top, 9.*
[126] Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men,* 72.
[127] Braine, *Room at the Top,* 206.

Conclusion

The aim of this bachelor thesis was to analyse the historical as well as the cultural background in the two selected novels by the Angry Young Men authors, *Lucky Jim* (1954) by Kingsley Amis and *Room at the Top* (1957) by John Braine. Both of the novels are concerned with four main shared aspects; namely the antiheroes' personalities, attitudes to their lives, and relationships with society and women.

The thesis first depicted the historical and cultural context of the Angry Young Men period, the 1950s Britain, starting with the focus on the post Second World War period of British history and the depiction of the post-war formation of British society in the 1950s. Even though Britain had emerged victorious from the Second World War, the losses were immense. The British citizens showed their stiff upper lip attitude during the war and the years after. Considering that they had survived the strict rationing, bombing raids, which had caused the loss of hundreds of thousands of houses and lives. At that time, Britain was trying to 'rise from the ashes' and regain its great power status, which was lost due to the Second World War. Thus, the Labour Party government implemented many reforms and acts held under the auspices of the welfare state. The later re-elected Conservative Party has opposed a large number of the Labour Party reforms. However, after recognising the popularity of the reforms, they kept the majority of them. The standard of living in Britain had undeniably improved during the 1950s, owing to the political reforms. The shift in society's values had resulted in changes in social structure as well as the reflections upon the working class; working-class living standards had undoubtedly enhanced, the number of working women drastically increased, and the Education Act provided free secondary education for all children, no matter their social class background. The thesis also examined the shift in society's perception of material wealth and the changes in class identities. Full employment with regular incomes had endorsed the newly discovered enjoyment of consumer goods after years of rationing, which gave rise to the emergence of a powerful consumer society.

The post-war situation in Britain had led to the emergence of the Angry Young Men. The next chapter of the theoretical part provided insight into the young literary movement. Memorable, however, in many aspects inaccurate and misleading label that has been assigned to a number of young novelists, poets and playwrights. The

media helped immensely with the invention of the mentioned literary group. In addition, the critics had gradually turned the term 'Angry Young Men' into a concept that became essential for the history of British post-war literature. As the novels were written in the 1950s, the authors were noticeably influenced not only by the Second World War but also by the social revolution which followed. Thus, these young writers expressed vigorous discontent with the cultural, social, and political scene in Britain through their newly introduced characters, later recognised as 'antiheroes'. The new type of protagonist was usually a young man of working-class or lower-middle-class background who lacks the usual positive attributes characteristic of the 'classic heroes' such as honesty and loyalty. The common narrative thread of their works was the disenchantment and the inability of the protagonist to integrate into the new British class system and the desire to rise up from their current social position. The literary style of their works is realistic as they wanted to capture the everyday life and reality of that time. Subsequently, both of the analysed novels, *Lucky Jim* and *Room at the Top*, became essential pieces of British literature.

As already mentioned, the practical part is divided into three subchapters. The first one deals with Joe Lampton, the protagonist of *Room at the Top* by John Braine, and his journey to social advancement following his elaborate plan to reach the 'Top'. The next chapter focuses on Jim Dixon who is the protagonist of the eponymous novel *Lucky Jim* by Kingsley Amis, and his story of achieving a better life he never could have dreamed of. Both subchapters depict the antiheros' conflicts with society, attitudes towards women, and additionally even their social status. The last subchapter compares the protagonists' attitudes and their approaches to life, together with their opportunities for integration into the higher society. It shows the differences between Dixon's and Lampton's processes of achieving social advancements.

The outcome of this culture-historical analysis of the thesis is that both of the novels provide a depiction of the fragility of post-war society and social structure. The stories are, needless to say, altered and significantly dramatized for the readers' enjoyment. As well as in real life, the world in both of the novels has also changed after the Second World War. Due to the creation of the welfare state and its reforms, the values of lives changed for many British citizens. Thus, the antihero is able to swiftly climb up the social ladder as the boundaries between the lower and upper

classes are blurred more than ever before. The excerpts from the novels are used to demonstrate the thoughts and attitudes toward current society, higher classes, and the various situations in which the protagonists can find themselves.

Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá historicko-kulturním vyobrazením poválečného formování britské společnosti v dílech *Šťastný Jim* od Kingsleyho Amise a *Místo nahoře* od Johna Brainea. Cílem práce je analyzovat vztah vybraných protagonistů, Jima Dixona a Joea Lamptona, k ženám, vyšším sociálním třídám, a také k nově utvořené společnosti po druhé světové válce. Práce je rozdělena na dvě části.

První, teoretická, část se dělí na dvě kapitoly. První z nich vyobrazuje Británii v 50. letech 20. století a její cestu k obnově po válečném konfliktu. Jsou zde popsány i problémy, které doprovázely britskou společnost způsobené druhou světovou válkou, jako například přídělový systém a nedostatek ubytovacích jednotek. Většinu z těchto akutních problémů vyřešila nově zvolená Labouristická strana, která plánovala vytvořit z Británie stát blahobytu, k čemuž dopomohly jejich nově zavedené reformy. Díky těmto reformám se britský lid poprvé od války setkala s pohodlím a téměř nulovou nezaměstnaností. Díky vysoké zaměstnanosti vzrostly příjmy obyvatel, které mohly naplnit chtíč a potřeby pro zvelebování svých domovů. Lidé do této doby byli zvyklí utrácet svůj příjem pouze za nezbytnosti k uspokojení základních životních potřeb, jako je jídlo či oblečení. A proto měla nově objevená touha po hmotném bohatství za následek vznik konzumní společnosti. V důsledku zvýšených výdajů domácnosti byly ženy nuceny, ale zároveň motivovány hledat si zaměstnání. To mělo za následek změnu ve způsobu života rodin z dělnických vrstev. Ženy již nebyly vnímané jen jako matky a hospodyně, stejně tak jako na muže již nebylo přihlíženo jen jako na živitele rodiny. Další z reforem zajistila středoškolské vzdělání pro adolescenty bez ohledu na jejich sociální třídu. Díky této reformě ve vzdělávání dostali příležitost studovat mimo jiné i budoucí spisovatelé, kteří později vstoupili do dějin literatury jako Rozhněvaní mladí muži.

Druhá kapitola teoretické části se zaměřuje právě na tyto zmíněné autory. V 50. letech 20. století se na britské literární scéně objevila nová skupina mladých autorů, kteří byli médii označeni za ‚Rozhněvané mladé muže'. Tito autoři ve svých dílech, ať už v románech či divadelních hrách, kritizovali nově zformovanou poválečnou společnost a jejich nově nabyté hodnoty. Svou popularitu mezi čtenáři získali právě díky jejich pohledu na společnost a politické názory se kterými se mnozí čtenáři ztotožňovali. A to i z důvodu, že v období, ve kterém autoři vydávali své prvotiny,

Británie zahájila vojenský konflikt v Suezském průplavu. Britští občané si proto vyhledávali literaturu, která by odrážela jejich myšlenky na společnost a politiku, což byly právě knihy Rozhněvaných mladých mužů. Tento termín byl poprvé použit v roce 1956 britskými médii. Ačkoliv tento pojem napovídá, že by se mohlo jednat o organizovanou skupinu, není tomu tak. Jelikož se samotní autoři neztotožňovali s tímto označením a psali nezávisle na sobě. Co je však spojovalo byla kritika soudobé společnosti a také volba realismu jako formu literárního žánru. Tato literární skupina představila, mimo jiné, nový typ protagonisty, který byl označován za ‚antihrdinu'. Jelikož tato nová postava postrádá, na rozdíl od tradičního hrdiny literárních děl, ušlechtilost a upřímnost. Naopak jsou to často ztroskotanci, opilci a ‚intrikáni', pocházející z nižších sociálních tříd. Díky větší míře vzdělanosti byla literatura přístupnější i pro nižší společenské třídy, což vedlo k popularizaci literárních děl, včetně těch od Rozhněvaných mladých mužů. Ačkoliv autoři této mladé literární skupiny slavili se svými prvotinami úspěch, a to zejména díky jejich novému pohledu na Británii, další literární pokusy těchto autorů se s tak velkým úspěchem nesetkali. Což mělo za následek postupné vymizení Rozhněvaných mladých mužů z popředí britské literární scény.

Druhá část bakalářské práce je věnována analýze vybraných románů od Rozhněvaných mladých mužů, a to *Šťastný Jim* od Kingsleyho Amise a *Místo nahoře* od Johna Brainea. Tato část je rozdělena do tří kapitol.

První z kapitol se zabývá analýzou románu *Šťastný Jim* a jeho hlavního hrdiny, Jima Dixona. Popisuje jeho strastiplnou cestu k dosažení lepšího života, ač neplánovaně. Kingsley Amis vyobrazil svého hrdinu jako nešikovného univerzitního učitele, který se ‚potácí' životem a snaží se přežít ve svém zaměstnání. Jimovou životní náplní je pití alkoholu, kouření cigaret a sledování krásných žen. Ve svém životě se potýká s manipulativní přítelkyní Margaret a snobskou společností zastoupenou profesorem Welchem a jeho synem Bertrandem. Ačkoliv se Jim nesnaží svůj život nijak zlepšit, jeho příběh končí šťastně. Díky nově nabyté sebejistotě dokáže okouzlit krásnou, zdánlivě nedosažitelnou Christine. V závěru se na něj taktéž usměje štěstí v podobě nové prestižní pozice v Londýně.

Druhá kapitola se věnuje analýze knihy *Místo nahoře* a jeho protagonisty, Joea Lamptona. Tento ‚antihrdina' pochází z dělnického prostředí, jehož cílem je sociální

vzestup a oproštění se od jeho dělnických kořenů. Braineův protagonista přichází s promyšleným plánem jak svého ‚místa nahoře‘ dosáhnout, a to sňatkem s dívkou s vyšším společenským postavením, čehož na konci románu dosáhne. Avšak se mu při cestě na jeho vysněný vrchol připlete objekt jeho touhy – Alice. Jelikož však Joe uvažuje pragmaticky, vybere si výše postavenou Susan, což má za následek Alicinu tragickou smrt. Joe si, bohužel příliš pozdě, uvědomí následky jeho činů, zjišťuje však, že okolí tragickou smrt nevnímá negativně. Nicméně, i přesto Joe dosáhne svého požadovaného a vysněného společenského vzestupu.

Třetí a zároveň poslední kapitola praktické částí se soustředí na porovnání ‚antihrdinů‘ vybraných románů, Jima Dixona (*Šťastný Jim)* a Joea Lamptona (*Místo nahoře)*. Na rozdíl od Jima, má Joe jasně stanovené životní cíle, kterých se snaží dosáhnout, a to i na úkor ostatních. Nicméně si oba protagonisté plní svůj ‚americký sen‘. Jak Jim, tak i Joe pocházejí z nižších společenských vrstev. Oba protagonisté dosáhnou svého vzestupu na společenském žebříčku, a to díky ženám, které jim zlepšují jejich společenské postavení a umožní jim tak postup do vyšší společnosti. Oba protagonisté využívají tyto možnosti vzestupu, způsobené mimo jiné novým formováním společnosti po druhé světové válce.

Výsledkem této kulturně-historické analýzy je, že romány *Šťastný Jim* i *Místo nahoře* poukazují na oslabenost poválečné společnosti. Díky vzniku státu blahobytu a reformám se v poválečné Británii změnily životní hodnoty mnoha britských obyvatel. Tyto hodnoty promítají i v analyzovaných románech. Díky novému vnímání společenských vrstev, jsou oba ‚antihrdinové‘ schopni vyšplhat po společenském žebříčku. Netřeba však dodávat, že události v těchto románech jsou přikreslené a zdramatizované. A to zejména, aby přilákali co nejvíce čtenářů.

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