

*Jim, Jake and the Years Between: The Will  
to Stasis in the Contemporary  
British Novel*

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KINGSLEY AMIS'S thirteenth novel, *Jake's Thing*, appeared by a convenient symmetry almost exactly twenty-five years after the publication of *Lucky Jim*, the first novel that shot him to immediate fame and itself to cult status.<sup>1</sup> That fact, seemingly at first of no more than passing interest — the kind of interest possessed by the unsettling photograph of a jowled, late-middle-aged face staring from the dustjacket of *Jake's Thing* — becomes on closer examination worth attention. *Lucky Jim* was unequivocally a young man's book, its ultimately affirmative disrespect calculated, and still able, to fill an undergraduate audience with a surprisingly creative joy.<sup>2</sup> *Jake's Thing*, by painful contrast, proclaims in every embittered chapter that a glory has passed away from the earth, or at least the English bit of it. It probably went for Amis some time between Suez and Vietnam, and we have long since grown accustomed to the inevitable but inaccurate view of him as the angry socialist young man who became the petulant Tory old one — “a difficult old sod”<sup>3</sup> as a recent interviewer, smarting from a harrowing lunch, proclaimed him. The tenor of *Jake's Thing*, then, surprises no-one. But the extent of its similarities to *Lucky Jim*, the strong feeling that in Jake Richardson goes, but for the grace of Gore-Urquhart and Christine, Jim Dixon, is of considerably more than nugatory interest. In situation and rhetoric the two novels have many links; in mood and resolution, they could not be more different. That distinction not only illuminates some of the things that twenty-five years have done to Amis and his work but also reflects the

quiet desperations that have typified a large number of recent British novels. What distinguishes Jake from Jim is a self-willed stasis that helps to define a national mood that the contemporary British novel has begun to suggest.

Amis created in Jim Dixon, as surely as John Osborne was to do in Jimmy Porter, a period archetype. The young university lecturer, contemptuous of the phoney academic world in which he expends a great deal of opportunistic energy trying to guarantee himself a permanent place, seemed a type almost before Amis so supremely typified him.<sup>4</sup> His eventual escape from provincial academic atrophy into the metropolitan sophistications that come from being secretary to a public figure and having a woman like Christine Callaghan is fair reward for such an inspiring piece of iconoclasm as the Merrie England lecture. Jim was a hero who vindicated us all, all we right thinkers that is,<sup>5</sup> by getting, as Philip Larkin (to whom *Lucky Jim* is dedicated) has the speaker in his poem "Toads" fantasize, "the fame and the girl and the money / All at one sitting."<sup>6</sup>

In Jake Richardson (the "son of Dick" and therefore etymological descendant of Dixon), sixty-year-old Reader in Mediterranean History at Comyns College, Oxford, Amis creates a Dixon thirty years on, transposed from his provincial redbrick but carrying with him many of his youthful alter ego's characteristics. Like Jim, Jake is contemptuous of most of his colleagues and anxious to reduce his own engagement with anything academic to the minimum that is reconcilable with professional survival: he lives in London, commuting to Oxford for a three day working week. Like Jim, with his self-parodying disdain for the one ill-starred article he has managed to produce,<sup>7</sup> Jake has a dispassionate awareness of the value of his own scholarly achievements.<sup>8</sup> Like Jim, Jake has a residual integrity that costs him professional advancement, "condemning him, with some assistance from laziness, to the non-attainment of a professorial chair" (p. 136). Like Jim, Jake's intellectual honesty makes him challengingly parade the enjoyment he derives from "low-brow" pursuits, in his case television serials and mystery novels. Like Jim, Jake suffers from the unwanted attentions of a neurotic woman who stages a fake suicide attempt. And, like Jim, Jake

eventually, also aided by drink, manages to reconcile inner thoughts and outer statements in a swingeing denunciation of a cause he is supposed to be espousing — the admission of women to the male preserve of Comyns College. In his Prufrockish self-mockery, his dislike of pretension and unwarranted self-esteem, his suspicion of intellectual posturing and consequent retreat into an aggressively anti-academic stance, and his hatred of the trendy and superficially cosmopolitan, the aging Jake is the logical extension of the young Jim.

But it is precisely in the adjectives that the primary distinction lies. Jim is still a young man, young enough to escape from an early unwise choice, made through drift and lethargy, into a braveish new world of post post-war austerity in London. His horizons are expanding, circumscribed only by the magical London names that he lovingly savours on his provincial tongue: “Bayswater, Knightsbridge, Notting Hill Gate, Pimlico, Belgrave Square, Wapping, Chelsea.”<sup>9</sup> Jake, by contrast, is undeniably aging; indeed, the central plot of the novel is concerned with his once libidinous body telling him so. The sexual ennui that Jake faces after a lifetime of very successful womanizing — “well over a hundred” (p. 43) as he proudly tells his apparently adolescent therapist — is not, however, his basic problem but merely the most obvious indication of the general world-weariness from which he suffers. In searching, via the latest psycho-medical faddery, for a cure for his loss of interest in sex, Jake is constantly forced into recognizing the extent of his deliberate disengagement from the contemporary world. He eventually accepts that disengagement as a refuge, rejecting the physical treatment that will revitalize his moribund libido and retreating into absolute solitude. His basic difficulty is not that he has become a misogynist, but rather a misanthropist.

If the end of *Lucky Jim* was a triumphant opening up of the future as Jim and Christine headed to London and success, the end of *Jake's Thing* is a jaded closing down, a closeted spurning of a world for which Jake can have, at best, only indifference — a retreat into TV dinners and TV movies. O tempora, o mores.

The differences are embodied in the ways that Jim and Jake respond to their immediate environment. One of the main

indices of Jim's developing capacities is his increasing ability to control his life, in however piecemeal a way, by controlling those who would take his fate out of his own hands. Those memorable moments of mock-epic contortion in which Jim improvises his way to salvation are stages in the process that will eventually allow him this control. When he escorts Christine home from the Summer Ball, having appropriated someone else's taxi and browbeaten a churlish driver into submission, the cavalier command of situation is a key to his development, and Amis makes the transition explicit:

More than ever he felt secure: here he was, quite able to fulfil his role, and, as with other roles, the longer you played it the better chance you had of playing it again. Doing what you wanted to do was the only training, and the only preliminary, needed for doing more of what you wanted to do. (p. 149)

*Jake's Thing* has its own echo of Jim's insight, but with a significant modification. Jake is discussing his therapist, to whom he has thus far shown an absurd deference:

. . . my "therapist" works on the principle that the way of getting to want to do something you don't want to do is to keep doing it. Which seems to me to be a handy route from not . . . pause . . . wanting to do it to not-wanting, wanting not, to do it. But I am paying him to know best. (p. 227)

Once one has worked out the syntactical riddle, one recognizes the willed stasis in Jake's response. The verbal game, by introducing and playing on a negative, turns Jim's affirmation into Jake's denial. Jake has arrived by the end of the novel at a stage of "not-wanting" everything, the novel closing with a final denial: "'No thanks,' he said" (p. 285).

Jake always finds himself confronted by negatives in his dealings with others. Like Jim, he encounters class-churlishness but, unlike Jim, he emerges the loser. At the beginning of the novel he makes a purchase at a liquor store, lured in by a notice advertising a discount:

"Er, the. . . You've charged the full price for the chocolates."  
 "Right."  
 "But your notice says 10p in the pound off everything."

"Everything bar chocolates and smokes."

"But it says everything."

"It means everything bar chocolates and smokes."

"But. . . ."

"You want them, do you, squire?"

". . . Yes."

"Right."

After a short pause, during which he took a blow on the kneecap from the corner of a wire basket in the hand of a man in a blue boiler-suit, Jake paid, picked up his goods and left, remembering he should have said Cheers just as the exit door swung shut after him. (pp. 13-14)

His failure, not only to carry his point but also to establish linguistically his membership in the new classless Britain by use of the ubiquitous and equalizing "cheers," establishes him as an outsider by the end of the first chapter. The extent of his alienation is revealed in almost all his subsequent dealings with the various sections of society that he encounters.

Like Burgess's Enderby, who over the three volumes devoted to him fleshes out more expansively the failure of an artist and individualist to adapt successfully to the ad-mass world that he is forced to inhabit, Jake is an elitist, a traditionalist, and an individualist who values his privacy. His misfortune is to live in a rapidly changing world which is egalitarian, liberal, and communal. His alienation is inevitable and, since it is in part caused by people like those who are trying to cure him, untreatable. What he faces as soon as he leaves his home, which is why he does so increasingly reluctantly, is an accelerating process of change to which he has neither the desire nor the ability to adapt, that very ability which allowed Jim Dixon to emerge triumphant. In throwaway comments that litter the developing narrative, Amis establishes Jake's distance from the England of the seventies, a distance that makes him, in effect, a stateless person.

The examples are legion, the following a representative cross-section that establishes Jake's distance from what was once his own familiar territory, England. His Harley Street doctor cuts short a consultation in order to see another patient, an Arab sheikh; Jake decides against taking a taxi since "No sooner had

one black, brown or yellow person, or group of such, been set down on the pavement than Americans, Germans, Spaniards were taken up and vice versa" (p. 12); he has difficulty in negotiating his way through the endless streams of traffic in the centre of London; a dirty overalled customer in the off-licence talks nonsense about wine, communicates in formula phrases, and peels off twenty pound notes while Jake wonders if he can afford one bottle; his is the only house in the neighbourhood that has not been trendied up by new young owners; his train-fare to Oxford is outrageously high; English place-names have been changed and are unfamiliar to him; the telephone refuses to work. The list is virtually inexhaustible, a litany of day-by-day stimuli that constantly grate on Jake's nerves and compel further and further withdrawal until the final statement of denial: "No thanks." Like the solitary player in Beckett's *Act Without Words* who, having failed to order his small world at all, sits in solitude on an empty stage looking at his hands, Jake refuses any longer to respond and retires permanently into his television room.

If the surrounding stimuli are increasingly foreign, the elements of his own private and professional life offer no sanctuary. He is led into humiliating public exercises in consciousness-raising by a therapist who turns out not to know where Freud did his major work and has no idea what happened in Europe in 1848; his wife, who can no longer tolerate his lack of interest, deserts him; his college is about to admit the women whose minds he despises, and his existing students are illiterate. Even the areas that were most particularly his, college and home, are selling out to the opposition, forcing on Jake the isolation that he will eventually, willingly, take on. While Jim Dixon had a world that he could move into in triumph, Jake Richardson has only one from which he is being gradually dismissed in ignominy. His need to look back, if not in anger then in petulant irritation, is far more stultifying than Jimmy Porter's, for at least the young man can look forward too, if only with the anticipatory pleasure of seeing the upper-middle classes inevitably evaporate.

The distinction between the backward and the forward look is the basic distinction not only between *Lucky Jim* and *Jake's*

*Thing* but between the British novel of the early 1950's and the British novel of the late 1970's. *Lucky Jim* pictures a world of constant process, a world subject to rapid change, but change for the better, change from post-war grey and the last restraints of pre-war class constipation to post-Festival of Britain release and the quick ten year run to the Britain that had never had it so good. The Welch family attempts to hold on to the cultural privileges that are the obvious hallmark of their class position and Jim Dixon, having discovered that he really doesn't have to pretend to be able to read music and glorify the past to survive, leaves them to it. He is off to a new medialand non-job — "meeting people or telling people I can't meet them" (p. 238) — which will have him strategically placed for when London starts swinging in the sixties. Within a few years of the publication of *Lucky Jim*, the British novel became dominated for a while by the work of regional naturalists like Barstow, Braine, Sillitoe or Storey, all writing of a working class that, within whatever limits, was on the move; even those not upwardly mobile were becoming financially powerful and threateningly articulate. If Jim Dixon was an imaginative "type" of the early fifties, John Braine's Joe Lampton from *Room at the Top* (who would rather join the middle-classes than beat them) and Alan Sillitoe's Arthur Seaton from *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (who would rather beat them than join them) are corresponding types from the early sixties. The degree of their success is evidenced in the alienation of a Jake Richardson, for whose generation and class in the England of 1979, the mood has to be at best elegiac, at worst stagnant.

Were Amis alone in this rendering of a mood of defeat and confusion the phenomenon would be worthy of note as a significant development in an important novelist, but nothing out of the ordinary in one who has himself gone from relative youth to late middle-age in those years. But far from being alone, Amis synthesizes in the single character of Jake a variety of confusions that have become evident in a wide range of recent British novels. One can of course say that most novelists of established reputation will be of a certain age, and therefore more susceptible to bouts of jaundice that will yellow their environment.

But that elementary possibility is insufficient to account for Margaret Drabble, a writer who is nearly twenty years Amis's junior, producing in *The Ice Age* (1977) a "state-of-England" novel that pictures an England "sliding, sinking, shabby, dirty, lazy, inefficient, dangerous, in its death throes, worn out, clapped out, occasionally lashing out."<sup>10</sup> Nor does it account for John Fowles, whose *Daniel Martin* (1977) says things as interesting about England as about his eponymous hero, providing as an epigraph an extract from Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* which reads: "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appears."<sup>11</sup> Nor does it account for William Golding, after many years of silence, producing a book in which the texture of contemporary England is an important part of the moral complexities with which he is dealing and which bears as title the threatening Miltonic paradox (in its original incarnation a reference to hell) *Darkness Visible* (1979).<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the Miltonic context is powerfully suggestive:

A dungeon horrible, on all sides round  
 As one great furnace flamed, yet from those flames  
 No light, but rather darkness visible  
 Served only to discover sights of woe,  
 Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace  
 And rest can never dwell, hope never comes  
 That comes to all; but torture without end  
 Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed  
 With ever burning sulphur unconsumed.<sup>13</sup>

Not since Eliot's epigraph from Petronius's *Satyricon*, standing on bleak guard at the entrance to *The Waste Land*, have we seen such weighted associative couplings in a major work of British literature.

Since the process I am charting is one that we are still in the midst of, the map cannot be definitive. But for the purposes of suggesting certainly the literary, and perhaps the national, mood that subsequent commentators may well see dominating the Britain of the late seventies and early eighties, Drabble's *The Ice Age* is the most telling accompaniment to discussion of *Jake's*



*Thing*, and this despite the fact that the two novels are radically different in style, subject-matter, and even "political" viewpoint. *The Ice Age* begins with an extended image that sums up the mood of what I have called the will to stasis very economically:

On a Wednesday in the second half of November, a pheasant, flying over Anthony Keating's pond, died of a heart attack. . . . Anthony Keating, who had not died of his heart attack, stared at the dead bird, first with surprise . . . and then with sympathy, as he guessed the cause of its death. There it floated, its fine winter plumage still iridescent, not unlike a duck's in brilliance but, nevertheless, unlike a duck's, quite out of place in the water. It gave rise to some solemn reflections, as most objects, with less cause, seemed to do, these solitary and inactive days. . . . It was large, exotic, and dead, a member of a species artificially preserved. It had the pleasure, at least, of dying a natural death. (p. 9)

The attributes of the bird — its stature, its artificial preservation, its death against an alien background — image the solitude and inactivity of the displaced Keating. The subsequent narrative records not only Keating's displacement but that of nearly all his contemporaries, struggling as they are with various aspects of a collapsing and increasingly foreign Britain. What they encounter are changes that are similar to those that infuriate and baffle Jake Richardson. The first character to appear after Keating, Kitty Friedmann, has just sent him a letter whose opening words are "These are terrible times we live in" (p. 10), a judgment she is particularly qualified to make since her foot has just been blown off by the same terrorist bomb that has killed her husband. The novel develops, via a broad panorama of characters, into a state-of-the-nation lament that ranges over the property development that renders the environment unfamiliar, the misplaced egalitarianism that apparently destroys the educational structure, the sexual anarchy that ensures impermanence in relationships, the youthful unenlightened self-interest that casts even darker shadows over the future — in short, becomes a parade of disasters, both personal and public, physical and psychic, that makes the crazed comment of an aging prison inmate a central touchstone: "Something has gone wrong . . . with the laws of

chance” (p. 169). At times, Drabble assumes a Dickensian narrative distance that allows her to indulge in expansive assessment:

Not everybody in Britain on that night in November was alone, incapacitated or in jail. Nevertheless, over the country depression lay like a fog, which was just about all that was missing to lower spirits even further, and there was even a little of that in East Anglia. All over the nation, families who had listened to the news looked at one another and said “Goodness me” or “Whatever next” or “I give up” or “Well, fuck that”, before embarking on an evening’s viewing of colour television, or a large hot meal, or a trip to the pub, or a choral society evening. All over the country people blamed other people for all the things that were going wrong — the trades unions, the present government, the miners, the car workers, the seamen, the Arabs, the Irish, their own husbands, their own wives, their own idle good-for-nothing offspring, comprehensive education. Nobody knew whose fault it really was, but most people managed to complain fairly forcefully about somebody: only a few were stunned into honourable silence. . . . A huge icy fist, with large cold fingers, was squeezing and chilling the people of Britain, that great and puissant nation, slowing down their blood, locking them into immobility, fixing them in a solid stasis, like fish in a frozen river: there they all were in their large houses and their small houses, with their first mortgages and second mortgages, in their rented flats and council flats and basement bedsits and their caravans: stuck, congealed, amongst possessions, in attitudes, in achievements they had hoped next month to shed, and with which they were now condemned to live. The flow had ceased to flow: the ball had stopped rolling: the game of musical chairs was over. *Rien ne va plus*, the croupier had shouted. (pp. 64-65)

For those who stay in Britain, like Anthony Keating’s mistress Alison, watching over a daughter who suffers from cerebral palsy, there seems no likelihood of escape. Keating himself, who ends up in an Eastern European prison camp, escapes into an inner world of spiritual contentment which may eventually find external expression in the book he is writing on “the nature of God and the possibility of religious faith” (p. 295). But if Britain is to escape from its ice age, with its population fixed in a “solid stasis,” — a possibility which is suggested somewhat dutifully in the novel’s last sentence — it is presumably only Anthony Keating’s newly rediscovered God who knows how.

The fragments he has shored against *his* ruins are clearly supporting an exceptionally fragile structure.

In the light of *Jake's Thing*, a minor character in *The Ice Age* becomes especially relevant. Linton Hancox is a classics don at Oxford, prepared by upbringing and native bent for conspicuous academic success. His failure to realize his potential becomes apparent "in the late sixties, when everyone else was beginning to do better," and the dissatisfactions from which that failure derives are identical to some of Jake's:

His sourness took a common . . . course: he began to complain about falling standards in education, about the menace of trendy schoolteachers who couldn't even teach children to read, about the dangers of assuming that all learning could and should be fun. . . . These remarks about education were paralleled by remarks about the state of poetry. Linton's own poetry was, naturally, academic, intelligent, structured, delicate, evasive, perceptive, full of verbal ambiguities and traditional qualifications: his reaction to the wave of beat poets, Liverpool poets, pub poets, popular poets, was one of amusement, then of hostility, then of contempt tinged with fear. (p. 73)

Drabble's analysis of the withdrawal and alienation that Hancox endures centres on his total rejection of the contemporary world and his retreat into the misanthropy of the impotent. The decline of Hancox's chosen academic discipline, and the comfortably enclosed world that fostered it, causes him, like Jake, to reject *in toto* what could be salvageable in part:

A pond, out of which the water had slowly drained, leaving Linton stranded, beached, useless. Unable to adapt, unable to learn new skills, obstinately committed to justifying the old ones — and alas, as so often happens, ruining quite unnecessary and disconnected parts of himself in his willed, forced, unnatural, retrogressive justification. For there was no reason in nature why Linton should not teach classics to a lot of second-rate students, and yet continue to write first-rate poetry. Why should the whole man grow sour, because one part of him was no longer vital? . . . It was as though Linton, in his rejection of the modern world in education, had resolved to reject the modern world altogether, and his poetry too had become sour, petty, carping, reactionary, lightened only by the odd flash of fairly useless and despicable nostalgia. . . . (p. 77)

The image of himself as a stranded whale, like that of the dead pheasant at the novel's beginning, gives graphic visual embodiment to Hancox's suicidal retreat from action, expressing more assertively the automatic glibness of the fish-out-of-water simile. In the new ice age, no-one is more decisively beached than the educator.

If *Jake's Thing* and *The Ice Age* can offer only visions of contemporary decline and willed retreat, a late-seventies stasis that is given visual rendering in the dustjacket illustration for *The Ice Age* that shows tortured eyes staring out from the blue depths of a cube of ice, Anthony Burgess's *1985* (1978) apocalyptically projects his version into the future in an uncertain attempt to redefine Orwell. Again Arabs and Trade Unions loom large, uniting to become the main cause of the moral and social petrification that have overtaken the country. Burgess has working for him the inherent overstatement that the anti-Utopian conventions he is using allow, although they are conventions that easily allow propaganda to take the place of imagination. Just as the distance between Jake's attitudes and Amis's own seems short, so the responses of Bev Jones, the central character in *1985*, clearly reflect some of Burgess's own irritations, and they are surprisingly close to Amis's. In 1985, inflation gallops, England is ruled by Arabs and trade unionists, language is the standardized and corrupt "Worker's English" — in fact, England has become the stuff of which Jake Richardson's wildest nightmares might be made. While Jake watches what he sees as a prostitution of education that makes his own profession increasingly untenable, Bev lives in an England in which educators have become outlaws, and in which youth gangs yearn for the education of which they have been deprived:

"We go to school, we lot, till we're sixteen. That's the law. Okay, we go and we don't listen to the crap they call sociology and Worker's English. We sit at the back and read Latin."

"Who teaches you Latin?"

"There are these antistate teachers about. You a teacher?"

"History. Very useless."

"Okay, there are these thrown out of schools for not wanting to teach the crap they're supposed to, right? They wander, like you're wandering. We give them the odd wad like we're doing

to you. Then they give us a bit of education in return. Real education, not State school crap."

"You want something now?"

"One thing. . . How did we get into this mess?"<sup>14</sup>

Anything approximating to education becomes the preserve of the social outcast, and it is never able to withstand the pressures of the automatized society against which it rebels. Bev, imprisoned for life as a hopeless recalcitrant who refuses to adapt or keep quiet, commits suicide by pressing his body against the electrified fence that encloses him, "puzzling an instant about why you had to resign from the union of the living in order to join the strike of the dead" (p. 219). His only resource is the ultimate retreat, the ultimate act of stasis — self-destruction. His final verbal defiance could have come from Jake Richardson's lips:

"Look, I can't see where I've gone wrong. I was brought up under a system of government that was regarded as the triumph of centuries of instinctual sanity. I see the world changed. Am I obliged to change with it? . . . It won't do, it won't, it won't, it won't." And then: "Forget it. It's like addressing a couple of brick walls. Do what has to be done. I'm in your hands." (pp. 214-15)

There is no need in the present context to go beyond Burgess's imagined 1985, although Kingsley Amis's new novel, *Russian Hide and Seek* (1980) does precisely that, looking forward to a twenty-first-century England that has been taken over not by Arabs and unionists but by Russians, who inherit the disaffection.<sup>15</sup> We are concerned with the past and the present, which have created the will to stasis in the contemporary British novel, rather than the future. That the mood is there in the literature, a reading of almost any significant novel published in England in the last five years will establish. That it is there in the nation will take longer to establish, although the anecdotal usually contains a sufficient germ of truth to give pause for thought. In 1971, much was made of the identity crisis that the British passed through with the introduction of that most alien intruder, decimal currency. One of the much reported stories was of the old age pensioner who, having ordered a pint of beer at his local, was quoted the price in the new currency. He pulled out a hand-

ful of coins, looked at them in a mood that passed from confusion to irritation to rage and, throwing them at the barman, shouted "There you are; take the bloody lot," walking out of the pub sans both beer and money. That gesture of impotence, puzzlement, anger and eventual retreat, from that bastion of comfort and custom, the English local, is one that Jake Richardson and his literary peers would well understand.

## NOTES

- 1 The extent of the cult can easily be forgotten. *Lucky Jim* was first published in January 1954. By February 1956 it was into its sixteenth impression, a success story rarely equalled in contemporary fiction.
- 2 The appeal of *Lucky Jim* to North American undergraduates has frequently provoked comment, most recently in Bruce Stovel, "Traditional Comedy and the Comic Mask in Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim*," *English Studies in Canada*, 4 (1978), 69-80.
- 3 "Pendennis," "A difficult old sod," *Observer* London, 3 Feb. 1980, p. 44.
- 4 *Lucky Jim* was the first significant post-war "campus" novel in Britain, and the founder of a substantial line of which the most successful have been Malcolm Bradbury's *Eating People is Wrong* (1959) and David Lodge's *Changing Places* (1975).
- 5 The appeal to unaffected good sense and intellectual honesty is a crucial part of Jim Dixon's popularity and Amis's own assumed populist mask. In a 1973 interview, Amis defended this stance: "Jim and I have taken a lot of stick and badmouthing for being Philistine, aggressively Philistine, and saying, 'Well, as long as I've got me blonde and me pint of beer and me packet of fags and me seat at the cinema, I'm all right.' I don't think either of us would say that. It's nice to have a pretty girl with large breasts rather than some fearful woman who's going to talk to you about Ezra Pound and hasn't got large breasts and probably doesn't wash much. And better to have a pint of beer than to have to talk to your host about the burgundy you're drinking. And better to go to the pictures than go to see nonsensical art exhibitions that nobody's really going to enjoy. So it's appealing to common sense if you like, and it's a way of trying to denounce affectation." Dale Salwak, "An Interview with Kingsley Amis," *Contemporary Literature*, 16 (1975), 8. The extent to which for Amis this *is* a mask is made apparent when one considers that the year before he gave this interview, he published *On Drink*, which spends some considerable time discussing wine, including burgundy.
- 6 Philip Larkin, "Toads," *The Less Deceived* (London: Marvell Press, 1955).
- 7 Jim's article ("The Economic Influence of the Developments in Shipbuilding Techniques, 1450 to 1485") has a disconcerting air of authenticity about it. In his *Anatomy of Britain Today*, Anthony Sampson lists "the first four entries . . . for the degree of Bachelor of Letters in Modern History at Oxford in 1961"; they read:  
 A study of the "Narratio de Fundatione" of Fountains Abbey.  
 The rise and influence of the House of Luxemburg-Ligny from 1371-1475.

A bibliography of Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke.

The Archiepiscopate of William de Corbeil 1123-36.

Anthony Sampson, *Anatomy of Britain Today*, 2nd ed. (1965; New York, Harper Colophon, 1966), p. 228.

- <sup>8</sup> "Books? Don't make him laugh: apart from the juvenile one about the sods in Asia Minor there had been three others, all solidly 'researched', all well received in the places that received them, all quite likely to be on the shelves of the sort of library concerned, all combined still bringing in enough cash to keep him in bus fares. Three or, in the eye of charity, four books were probably enough to justify Dr Jaques ('Jake') Richardson's life. They were bloody well going to have to." Kingsley Amis, *Jake's Thing* (London: Hutchinson, 1978), p. 100. All subsequent references will be to this edition and cited in the text.
- <sup>9</sup> Kingsley Amis, *Lucky Jim* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1954), p. 225. All subsequent references will be to this edition and cited in the text.
- <sup>10</sup> Margaret Drabble, *The Ice Age* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), p. 97. All subsequent references will be to this edition and cited in the text.
- <sup>11</sup> John Fowles, *Daniel Martin* (Toronto: Collins, 1977), p. iii.
- <sup>12</sup> William Golding, *Darkness Visible* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979).
- <sup>13</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost* I, 11. 61-69.
- <sup>14</sup> Anthony Burgess, *1985* (London: Hutchinson, 1978), pp. 134-35. All subsequent references will be to this edition and cited in the text.
- <sup>15</sup> Kingsley Amis, *Russian Hide and Seek* (London: Hutchinson, 1980).